

# BGCT's Rodriguez to nominate Carlisle for president

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SAN ANTONIO—Victor Rodriguez has announced he plans to serve only one term as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and he will nominate the convention's first vice president, Jerry Carlisle, as his successor.



Rodriguez's term extends until the 2011 BGCT annual meeting, Oct. 24-26, in Amarillo. The next president will assume convention leadership at the conclusion of that meeting.

BGCT presidents may serve two one-year terms. But six out of the last seven presidents, including Rodriguez, have chosen to accept only one term.

Convention presidents travel extensively, and Rodriguez cited the needs of his family and congregation as primary factors in deciding to step down. He is pastor of [South San Filadelfia Baptist Church](#) in San Antonio.

"Our church is preparing to start building, and there's a huge construction process we'll be going through. That's what we're looking at as a church

and ministry," he said. "So, between the time I need to spend with my family and my church, I wanted to stay closer to home."

Rodriguez predicted Carlisle, pastor of [First Baptist Church in Plano](#), would make an excellent convention president.

"I believe Jerry is going to be the person God will use for the future of our convention," he said. "I see a future that is strong. We are blessed by young leaders who are on fire for God, and Jerry is one of them."

Carlisle particularly is gifted in leading his church and other Christians to bridge cultural, racial and ethnic divides, Rodriguez said. The first time they met, Carlisle instinctively called him hermano, the Spanish word for "brother," he recalled.

Under Carlisle's leadership, predominantly Anglo First Baptist in Plano has started mission congregations with other racial and ethnic groups in the community, sponsored three ongoing ministries in southern Mexico, and also supports two hospitals in Mexico.



"Jerry's effort to reach out to the multiple cultures that surround us is a plus. He knows the Hispanic and other ethnic work in Texas," Rodriguez said. "He is going to be a key leader."

For his part, Carlisle began praying about the possible nomination after

Rodriguez brought it up a couple of months ago, he said.

If elected, Carlisle would focus on making Texas Baptists strong by building relationships—between churches and with institutions, he noted.

"We must enable the churches to connect with one another. That's something the convention definitely can help with," he said.

Rather than thinking of the convention as an old hierarchical structure, Texas Baptists can benefit by seeing the convention as a support system for horizontally connecting churches for individual support and to fulfill common purposes, he added.

"I know I need pastor friends and church partnerships in our city and the region as well as on a statewide level," he said. For example, First Baptist in Plano has been enriched by a partnership with Oak Island Baptist Church in Southeast Texas, which began as a response to devastation cause by Hurricane Ike in 2008, he explained.

"A lot of churches have missed out because they don't have those relationships," he said. "If we're going to reach the state, we need each other. Because of demographics and personal preferences, no one church can reach everybody in their community. The key thing our convention can do is help us all fulfill our calling—not just to our communities and to Texas, but to the world."

Texas Baptists also need to strengthen their relationships with about 25 institutions—universities, hospitals, children's ministries and others—supported by the convention, stressed Carlisle, who chaired the BGCT Executive Board's institutional relations committee.

"We need to keep the conversations alive with them—about our relationships and what the future holds for us," he said. "I think that future is positive and bright. It may be different than what we've had in the past,

but it can benefit the churches, the institutions and the entire convention.  
...

"As our institutions increasingly become organizations that help us reach far beyond Texas to create a worldwide impact, that influence amounts to leverage—not for control or power, but for the sake of the gospel."

If elected, Carlisle would become BGCT president in the wake of what Rodriguez called "a very interesting year" in the convention's history.

Within weeks of Rodriguez's election last November, BGCT Executive Director Randel Everett resigned to become pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland.

Rodriguez unexpectedly found himself leading the process to move the convention forward, particularly working with BGCT and Executive Board officers to select an executive director-search committee.

Although the committee has not nominated Everett's successor, "I think they're doing a great job, and I pray God is going to continue to use them," Rodriguez said.

Also during the year, Houston Baptist University and Baylor University decided to name non-Baptists to their governing boards, steps that stirred controversy across the convention.

"The university relationships ... have taken a lot of our effort, and it's been a good effort," Rodriguez said. "We continue to strive for unity between Baylor and the convention. Baylor needs the convention, and the convention needs Baylor."

In retrospect, Rodriguez believes God had a unique task in mind for him when he was elected last year.

"I've asked God, 'What was the purpose you have for me here?'" he said. "I

see God used the officers to bring unity—to hold our leadership together and to continue to look forward into the future."

Carlisle has been pastor of the Plano congregation since 2002. The church averages 682 in worship attendance. In 2010, it contributed \$518,037 to missions causes—17 percent of all receipts, which totaled \$3,137,149. Last year, it allocated \$87,623 to the Cooperative Program and gave \$77,348 to the Cooperative Program for Texas causes.

Previously, Carlisle was pastor of First Baptist Church in Temple and Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Coppell. He served on the staffs of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston and Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving. As a college student, he was a pastor and student minister of churches in Missouri and Alabama, and he spent a summer starting a church in Victoria, British Columbia.

He earned doctoral and master's degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and an undergraduate degree from Southwest Baptist College.

Carlisle is an adjunct professor at Dallas Baptist University and has supervised doctor of ministry candidates for Baylor University's Truett Seminary and the B.H. Carroll Theological Institute.

He serves on the governing boards of the Baptist World Alliance, Dallas Baptist University, Baylor Regional Medical Center of Plano, Mission to Unreached Peoples and the International Technical Assistance Group.

He previously served on the board of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and has been active in the Baptist associations with which his churches have affiliated.

Carlisle and his wife, Dedi, are the parents of three children, Elyse, Collin and Caleb.