

CBF of Texas supports ministry students who will lose scholarships

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The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas has established a fund to support ministry students who will lose their scholarships because their congregations have been removed from the Baptist General Convention of Texas for affirming same-sex relationships.

Last fall, messengers to the BGCT annual meeting approved a motion declaring “any church which affirms any sexual relationship outside the bonds of a marriage between one man and one woman be considered out of harmonious cooperation” with the convention. In February, the BGCT Executive Board voted to apply the new ruling to First Baptist Church in Austin, Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco and Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.

One of the benefits of congregational affiliation with the BGCT is scholarship support for church members who prepare for ministry at the convention’s nine universities and two seminaries.

Scholarships through May

Since the Executive Board action occurred during the spring semester, current students in the affected churches are covered through the end of this academic year in May, reported Bill Tillman, coordinator of theological education for the BGCT.

The BGCT ministerial scholarships escalate as students advance. Freshmen and sophomore ministerial students receive scholarships totaling \$50 per

semester hour. Juniors and seniors get \$75 per hour. Graduate students in two-year degree programs, such as a master of arts degree in religion, receive \$100 per hour. And students in the master of divinity and doctor of ministry programs get \$150 per hour.

Some schools also provide supplemental scholarships, which are not affected by the BGCT's decision, Tillman said.

Together, the disfellowshipped churches are home to seven ministry students, six at Baylor University and its Truett Theological Seminary and one at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary satellite in North Texas, their pastors said.

First Austin has one undergraduate student at Baylor, reported Griff Martin.

Lake Shore has two Truett master of divinity students and one undergraduate student, said Kyndall Rae Rothaus.

Wilshire has one Truett master of divinity student, who is on a full scholarship and may not be affected, noted George Mason. Wilshire also has one doctor of ministry student at Truett and a Logsdon master of divinity student.

Casualties of conflict

The ministry students are casualties of Baptist conflict, noted Rick McClatchy, field coordinator for CBF of Texas. "They were just going to church and training for ministry, and they got caught in the middle."

A new CBF of Texas fund will support these ministry students when they continue their education after the spring semester, he added.

"Hopefully, by May, the students in the affected churches will complete an application form" to receive scholarship funding next fall, he said. "Down

the road, we will put together a longer-term scholarship fund” for members of CBF of Texas churches across the state.

CBF of Texas has collected about \$2,500, which is a good start but not enough to fund the students’ scholarships during the next academic year, McClatchy said.

To support the scholarship program, send a check to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas, designated “Theological Scholarship Fund,” to P.O. Box 15648, San Antonio, TX 78212.