

# Funds for church starting dominate Executive Board discussion

May 19, 2015

DALLAS—Discussion about increased funds to start churches dominated discussion at a [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) Executive Board meeting that featured an otherwise light agenda.

The board approved a finance committee recommendation that \$50,000 from the J.K. Wadley Mission Fund be used to support community ministries, such as literacy programs, healthcare initiatives and community development.



During the Texas Baptist Executive Board meeting, John Pearce, Wayne Dillen, Buddy Young, Robert Hooker and Joel Bratcher were recognized for their service as Baptist Student Ministry directors. (Photo courtesy of Texas Baptists Communications)As part of the same recommendation, the board voted to establish the J.K. Wadley Income Fund for Community Ministries at the [Baptist Foundation of Texas](#) with \$500,000 of accumulated income from the Wadley Fund.

Gerald Caldwell from [Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas](#), chair of the finance committee, noted the Southern Baptist Convention's [North American Mission Board](#) historically had provided most funds for community ministries, but that money no longer is available.

The Wadley Mission Fund is designated to state missions, in accordance with the donors' wishes, and the board has authority to determine specific allocations of its proceeds. In recent years, the board primarily has used income from the fund for church starting.

However, other sources of funding have met church-starting needs, and the fund had \$1.5 million available in accumulated income, providing sufficient funds for the community ministries request, Caldwell reported.

Craig Christina from [Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church in Dallas](#), chair of the church starting committee, noted his committee understood \$460,000 from the J.K. Wadley Fund was available for church starting. With more money, Texas Baptists could do more to start churches, he noted.

Randy Wallace from [First Baptist Church in Killeen](#) asked why unspent funds accumulated in the Wadley Fund if church starting needs money.

### **Church-starting funds allocated 'according to requests'**

Jill Larsen, BGCT chief financial officer and treasurer, explained funds allocated to church starting have been in line with requests.

Paul Atkinson, director of church starting for the BGCT, affirmed the convention has not had to deny church-starting requests due to lack of funds. Every new church-starting request that is approved constitutes a three-year commitment on the part of the convention, and the convention needs to make sure funds are available for the life of every covenant, he added.



Albert Reyes, president of Buckner International, presents BGCT Executive Director David Hardage with the Jeremiah's Hope Award, recognizing gifts of close to \$18 million over the past 20 years from Texas Baptists. (Photo courtesy of Texas Baptists Communications) At the same time, Christina noted, the number of church-starter consultants on the BGCT Executive Board staff was reduced in recent years, and each of the six remaining staff covers large geographic areas. For instance, the West Texas church starter is responsible for a region stretching from the top of the Texas Panhandle to the tip of Big Bend—more than 600 miles.

Mike Harkrider from [First Baptist Church in Boerne](#) proposed the BGCT allocate more funds to church starting. He expressed hope the level of support for individual startup congregations could increase, more money would be available to help churches start new congregations and the number of field staff in church starting could be increased.

Christina noted as a matter of “best practices” the BGCT follows, no church start receives more than 50 percent of its budget from the convention. He reported Texas Baptists have provided funds to help start 400 churches in the last five years, and the success rate for new-church survival in Texas is 97 percent, compared to a national NAMB average of 40 percent.

Wesley Shotwell from [Ash Creek Baptist Church in Azle](#) moved to refer Harkrider's proposal to the board's finance committee.

## **‘Strong desire’ to increase church-starting funds**

“Along with that, communicate the Executive Board has a strong desire to see funding increased for church starting,” he said.

Michael Evans from [Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield](#), chair of the board’s ethics and Christian life committee, pointed out other BGCT ministries could make similar appeals, and he expressed his desire to consider “the broader perspective.”

Shotwell noted he hoped his motion to refer would accomplish that goal.

“Give the finance committee the opportunity to look at the bigger picture,” he said.

The board approved Shotwell’s motion to refer the matter to the finance committee.

## **Buckner award**

Also at the meeting, Albert Reyes, president of [Buckner International](#), presented the Jeremiah’s Hope Award from his agency to the BGCT and its Executive Board for significant ongoing financial contributions to Buckner ministries.

In the last 20 years, Texas Baptists provided \$16.96 million to Buckner through the Cooperative Program unified budget. During that same time, Texas WMU has raised more than \$582,000 through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions to support a variety of Buckner programs, including its Shoes for Orphan Souls ministry, a summer mission program in Guatemala, retirement elder care, and ministries in Kenya, Mexico and along the Rio Grande.

In addition, the [Texas Baptist Hunger Offering](#) contributed \$393,224 to Buckner-affiliated ministries in Kenya, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and

along the Texas/Mexico border.

“These gifts represent almost \$18 million to serve vulnerable children, orphans, seniors and their families in the name of Jesus,” Reyes said.

**In other business, the board:**

- Elected four directors to the BGCT Executive Board to fill vacancies—Roy Soto from Iglesia Bautista La Ciudad in Irving, Juan Moreno from La Casa Del Alfrero in Lufkin, Kevin Van Hook from St. Peter’s Baptist Church in Victoria and T. Wayne Price from First Baptist Church in Refugio.
- Revised a personnel policy regarding paid family medical leave. The new policy extends to adoptive parents and foster parents the same benefit—based on years of service—granted to biological parents of a newborn child.
- Elected Jill Teague from Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene to fill an unexpired term on the Hardin-Simmons University board of trustees.
- Voted to give half the income from the Larry and Jane Harlan Endowment Fund directly to Baptist University of the Américas, with the other half of the income devoted to the convention’s new-church program. The \$318,000 fund produces about \$16,000 annually.
- Agreed to transfer the W.J. and Kate Stiteler McKie Memorial Fund from U.S. Trust/Bank of America to the Baptist Foundation of Texas.