

Garcia wants to see Hispanic Texas Baptist history preserved

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Jimmy Garcia believes the changes in Hispanic Texas Baptist life in the past five decades are too important to ignore, and he wants to make sure that history is preserved.

Garcia observed Hispanic Baptist life in Texas as a pastor, associational director of missions and denominational worker with the Baptist General Convention of Texas language missions department.

Even before he entered ministry, he saw it from the perspective of a preacher's kid, as his father served as pastor of churches in Houston and San Antonio.

He even remembers when the unification agreement between Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas and BGCT took place in the 1960s. His father was a member of the committee that presented the motion to unify Convención with the BGCT.

Preserve history before it is lost

As the years went by, he discovered surprisingly little information preserved on key figures such as Oscar Romo and Joshua Grijalva, who both served in what was then known as "ethnic missions" with the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board.

Garcia, who retired in 2016 after 16 years on the BGCT staff, noted the need for a coordinated effort to collect and preserve Hispanic Texas Baptists' history.

So, with the encouragement of Alan Lefever, director of the Texas Baptist Historical Collection and Bill Pinson, executive director emeritus of the BGCT and volunteer director of the Baptist Heritage Center, Garcia began to gather and curate historical data, seeking what is available from Hispanic pastors and churches.

Since the stories of previous generations often are not transmitted, their history—and the history of the churches in which they ministered—may be lost, he noted.

Developing trends among Hispanic Texas Baptists



Jimmy Garcia

One trend Garcia has observed in recent decades has been a movement toward churches that attract people from multiple cultures and ethnicities.

On the one hand, Texas Baptists remain “way behind” in developing truly multicultural congregations, he noted.

However, he also pointed to pastors of Hispanic heritage who lead congregations where the membership historically was largely Anglo, such as Ellis Orozco at First Baptist Church in Richardson, Jason Paredes at Fielder Church in Arlington and Julio Guarneri at Calvary Baptist Church in

McAllen.

Garcia also notes the significant number of young adults who grew up in predominantly Hispanic churches but now attend congregations that are more ethnically diverse.

As a keeper of history, Garcia now tries to contact Hispanic pastors, churches and associations to find those who remember their stories.

He wants rising generations to understand their heritage, as well as recognize developing trends in congregational life.

“Tell me where you’ve been, and I tell you where you’re going,” Garcia said. “I have been here. I have seen the transitions, and I want churches to know what happened as they seek where to go.”