

Hardage highlights Texas Baptists' accomplishments

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GALVESTON-David Hardage, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, celebrated the diverse accomplishments of Texas Baptists in his report to Texas Baptists' 136th annual meeting.

Hardage introduced the young leaders from across Texas who make up the sixth cohort of Leadership Texas Baptists, an effort to raise up the next generation of leaders for the convention. He celebrated the young leaders' active role in the convention.

"We want this convention to be as bright in the future as it is today," he said.

To work on building a bright future, Hardage said, the Center for Church Health recently called Jonathan Smith to lead in church revitalization and replanting. That ministry will be especially needed as churches come out of the pandemic and need to rethink and "re-vision" who they are, he added.

Hardage also spotlighted the Missionary Adoption Program, first established in a partnership with the Brazilian Baptist Convention to allow churches in Texas and churches in Brazil to team up to support a Brazilian missionary in Brazil.

"Four-and-a-half years ago, when we signed that partnership, we had zero MAP missionaries in zero countries," Hardage said. "God has opened doors, and we now have more than 80 Missionary Adoption Program participants in nine countries. God continues to open the doors."

Hardage spoke of the good and hard work being done through the Center

for Cultural Engagement and the Christian Life Commission.

“In Austin, Texas, it’s a challenge sometimes to represent causes that are good, right and biblical,” he said. “But we Texas Baptists are doing that and standing against causes that are not good, not right and not biblical. I’m grateful for our CLC and what they do.”

The Center for Ministerial Health has proven indispensable through the tumult of the pandemic, providing both counseling services and financial assistance to pastors in crisis, Hardage said.

“This past year, our counseling service had more calls than we ever had before from pastors and their families,” he reported. Through the counseling services, pastors are able to access the mental and emotional help they need during challenging times, he explained.

“You’ve helped more than 1,000 pastors this past year,” Hardage said.

“In the early stages of the pandemic, you provided more than \$1 million,” he continued. “With that, we helped almost 400 small church, bivocational pastors literally survive the early stages of the pandemic, many of whom had lost their jobs. You helped them not only keep food on the table, but keep ministry going in their churches.”

Hardage also celebrated the Center for Collegiate Ministry.

“You put campus missionaries this fall on 120 college and university campuses in this state. Every day on those campuses, students are coming to Christ,” Hardage said.

He offered closing words of encouragement to Texas Baptists.

“We’re enjoying a season of peace and unity,” he said. “Texas Baptists, guard that. Anytime the enemy sees an advancement of the kingdom like that of which we’re a part of today, he will seek to destroy that. We are

going to guard our unity and peace. Good days are ahead.”