

Hardage reaffirms ‘strong biblical policy’ on homosexual behavior

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DALLAS—An expressed desire by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s chief elected officer to see that organization revisit its policy against hiring homosexuals prompted the new executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas to underscore Texas Baptists’ stated position on the subject.

CBF Moderator Colleen Burroughs recently [told the Fellowship’s Coordinating Council](#) she hopes CBF will take a fresh look at a policy that prohibits funding for organizations that affirm homosexual behavior and bars the hiring of staff members or missionaries who are practicing homosexuals.

BGCT Executive Director David Hardage insisted two things need to be understood regarding the BGCT—Texas Baptists are opposed to homosexual behavior, and they love all people.

First, the convention “has a very strong biblical policy” regarding homosexual behavior, he said. In 1996, messengers to the BGCT annual approved a report stating the Bible teaches “the ideal for sexual behavior is the marital union between husband and wife and that all other sexual relations—whether premarital, extramarital or homosexual—are contrary to God’s purpose and thus sinful.”

Texas Baptists subsequently reaffirmed that statement—most recently in 2007, he noted.

When two churches—University Baptist Church in Austin and Royal Lane

Baptist Church in Dallas—publicly acted contrary to that position, the convention took action by refusing any further contributions from the congregations and asking the churches to cease identifying themselves as affiliated with the BGCT.

At the same time, Hardage insisted: “Texas Baptists love everybody. ... We are a people of grace.”

Hardage also noted, “Cooperative Program dollars are used exactly as churches instruct us.” In 2011, the BGCT forwarded \$1,048,352 to the CBF because that is how individual churches directed their money.

Jill Larsen, BGCT treasurer and chief financial officer, reported Texas Baptists gave \$32,735,315 to the Cooperative Program unified giving plan for Texas causes in 2011, finishing the year at 99.65 percent of budget.

Churches directed an additional \$14,622,952 to worldwide Cooperative Program causes—including \$11,311,490 to the Southern Baptist Convention and \$2,263,110 to BGCT-related worldwide causes.

In its business sessions, the BGCT Executive Board:

- Granted the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor authority to reduce the size of its governing board from 48 to 37 trustees, with 19 elected by the BGCT and 18 elected by the university effective Jan. 1, 2014. The reduction will be accomplished by attrition.
- Approved a resolution of appreciation to Associate Executive Director Steve Vernon for his service as acting executive director during the period before Hardage was elected.
- Learned almost \$100,000 has been collected toward construction of a community center in Japan. Last year, Texas Baptists provided disaster relief there after an earthquake and tsunami hit.

- Approved a recommendation from the BGCT Administration Support Committee setting church starting funding for 2011 at \$3,321,681, with \$1,562,065 from budget funds, \$1 million from the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions and the balance from other sources.