

# Hispanic Baptists condemn sexual abuse and call for action

June 25, 2019

MCALLEN—Messengers to the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas annual meeting in McAllen approved a resolution condemning sexual abuse as both a crime and a sin against God.

It calls on Hispanic Texas Baptists to report any case of abuse to proper authorities, minister to people affected by it and lead congregations to implement policies and procedures to protect children.

“As churches, we get to be present in some of life’s most beautiful events. Births, weddings, quinceñeras, baptisms and people coming to Christ,” said Convención Executive Director Jesse Rincones. “But our ministry also faces very difficult situations—sin, evil and abuse.”

## Abuse in Baptist churches

A major investigative report by the *Houston Chronicle* and the *San Antonio Express-News* revealed about 400 ministers and volunteers in Southern Baptist churches sexually abused more than 700 people in 20 years. Of the offenders who pleaded guilty or were convicted of sexual offenses, more were from Texas than from any other state, the newspapers reported.

Four of the churches identified in the newspaper articles are Hispanic Baptist congregations, Rincones noted.

“Abuses happened in Anglo churches where they have counselors, teachers, principals, police officers, doctors, judges and people who are very much prepared to understand what policies say about abuse,”

Rincones said. “If this happens at those churches with so many resources, how much more at risk of facing abuse cases are Hispanic churches?”

Texas law requires anyone who knows about the abuse of a child to report it to authorities, he noted.

The resolution condemns all forms of abuse and calls churches to action.

“Many times, survivors of sexual abuse suffer again because churches do not know how to handle their cases or provide care for them,” Rincones noted.

He called attention to the [Caring Well](#) initiative launched by the Southern Baptist Convention and the resources it makes available.

Anyone affected by sexual abuse in a congregation affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas can receive assistance through Texas Baptists’ [Counseling Services](#). The BGCT also makes educational resources and training available through a partnership with [MinistrySafe](#).

Rincones also announced a recent donation that will enable small-membership churches with limited financial resources to conduct criminal background checks on leaders and volunteers.

## **Convención elects officers, approves budget**



Tony Celelli, president of Stark College and Seminary; Tony Miranda, newly elected president of Convención Bautista Hispana; Jesse Rincones, executive director of Convención Bautista Hispana visit.

In other business, Convención messengers elected as president Tony Miranda, campus pastor at Stark College and Seminary. Miranda also oversees the teaching ministry at Primera Iglesia Baustista in Robstown.

He succeeds Pastor Rolando Aguirre of Calvary en Español in McAllen, who completed his term as president.

Messengers also re-elected Carlos Valencia of Victoria en Cristo at Fort Worth as first vice-president, elected Edson Lara of Iglesia Bautista Emanuel in McAllen as second vice-president, and re-elected Abiel Aké of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Edinburg as secretary of Convención.

Messengers also approved a \$118,000 budget for the next year. It represents a \$3,400 increase over the 2019 budget.

The budget increase will enable Convención to secure the services of a financial accountant, advancing its efforts to ensure transparency and maintain responsible handling of finances, Rincones explained.

In submitting the budget for approval and talking about the funds for the Conexión Pastors Initiative, Rincones announced Guide Star awarded its Silver Seal of Transparency to Convención. The seal places Convención in the top 10 percent of nonprofits in the country, he explained.

The 2020 Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas will be held in Dallas. At the invitation of Dallas Baptist University, next year's annual gathering for Convención will take place on the university campus.