

Johnson proposed for 2nd BGCT presidential term

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Jeff Johnson will be nominated for a second one-year term as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Jesse Rincones, president of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, announced he will propose Johnson's re-election during the BGCT annual meeting July 14-17. Johnson is pastor of [First Baptist Church in Commerce](#), and Rincones is pastor of [Alliance Church in Lubbock](#).

Rincones' respect for Johnson grew as they worked together to plan The Gathering, the conventions' unprecedented combined meeting this year, he said.

Normally, the BGCT meets in the fall, and Convencion—the Hispanic Convention, which is a distinct organization but also part of the BGCT—convenes in mid-summer. This year, the two conventions, along with Texas Baptists' African-American Fellowship and other affinity groups, will gather together in San Antonio.

Rincones recalled he first worked with Johnson several years ago, when they participated in a committee that drafted a BGCT/Convencion reunification agreement. The document marked Convencion's 100th anniversary and spelled out the relationship between the two statewide organizations.

"I could tell Jeff's heart was not (simply) on a document, but he cared about a relationship between the two conventions," Rincones said. "His main concern is: What is most going to benefit the congregations? What are the steps to take? What is going to benefit the Hispanic community?"

So, now that they have partnered to plan The Gathering, Rincones appreciates Johnson even more, he said.

‘Competencies’

“My favorite word Jeff uses is ‘competencies,’” he added. “When he looks at partnerships, he looks at the competencies—the strengths—of each group.”

Such an outlook enables the groups to treat each other as equals and not merely providers or recipients of money, he explained.

“That’s empowering for the partner. There’s not a majority partner and a minority partner. ... There are different competencies in each group that can be valuable assets to all parties.”

Johnson is the ideal leader to guide all Texas Baptists during their combined meeting this summer and to help chart a shared path afterward, Rincones said.

“We’re going to have cross-cultural and cross-generational experiences those days in San Antonio. Jeff has experience in both situations,” he added, noting Johnson wrote a book on generations and served as a pastor on the Rio Grande.

Launchpad

“When we bring those things together in San Antonio, it would be great to have a leader who can take us from that one-time event and maybe make it a launchpad to do great things going forward.”

“Every time I talk to Jeff, I leave refreshed and energized,” Rincones said. “Whatever it is about him that’s encouraging, we always can use more of that in our leadership.”

Johnson noted he’s become inclined to seek a second term for a couple of

reasons. First, fellow Texas Baptists have urged him to carry on. And second, if elected, he hopes to continue initiatives he hasn't been able to implement fully in his shortened first term.

Because the BGCT annual meeting is being held in the summer and not the fall, this term is only 8 and a half months, not the usual 12. If he's re-elected, the second term will last 15 and a half months, to the fall of 2014.

The first initiative to be implemented is closer collaboration between the BGCT's affinity groups, he said. Leaders of those groups met recently in Austin, and they plan to convene again and present a report during the BGCT Executive Board meeting Feb. 25-26.

"Several affinity group leaders say we need to connect and communicate, because we want our voice to be a collective voice," Johnson said. "I'd like to follow through and help us as Texas Baptists understand the basics of cross-cultural ministry. ... This is a step toward Texas Baptists reflecting the mosaic we already are."

Passion for evangelism

Johnson also hopes to continue helping Texas Baptists fuse their passion for evangelism and missions with their historic concern for advocacy and care.

"I've seen this work through ministry, not only on the (Texas-Mexico) border, but also right here in Commerce," he said, advocating for blending evangelism and compassion to produce community transformation.

For example, Texas Woman's Missionary Union, the Christian Life Commission and the BGCT Executive Board teamed up to sponsor a conference on human trafficking for regional law enforcement officers at First Baptist Church in Commerce, he reported.

"We decided we wanted to reach out to law enforcement officers, to

increase awareness and also to share Christ with people,” he said. “We found that through ... being an advocate for those issues, it translated into people coming to know Christ.”

So, in a second term, “I would like to work with Texas Baptists on understanding the relationship between advocacy and evangelism and how that holistic approach can transform churches and our communities,” he said. “Maybe in this next year, I can help Texas Baptists with initiatives that will be cross-culturally savvy and be able to understand how to implement evangelism and advocacy on the local level.”

Advocacy

Finally, Johnson would like to help Texas Baptists fill the “gaping hole” left by the imminent [departure of Suzii Paynter](#), director of the Christian Life Commission and the BGCT’s Advocacy/Care center. She has been selected to lead the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

“I would not choose the person, but I would like to help go forward—not to replace Suzii, but to find someone for that position to take us even further than she’s taken us. That’s a tall order, but we have Texas Baptists who can do that.”

During his presidency, Johnson has visited a region of the state each month, “trying to build bridges ... and listen and challenge people to understand who Texas Baptists are, to do evangelism, advocacy and care, and to transform our state for the kingdom of God,” he said.

“As a convention officer, I hope to motivate and encourage people, but also come alongside them and let them know they matter and Texas Baptists are listening,” he stressed. “We have an amazing group of people in the BGCT, and we’re poised to do some really great things.”