

# Joy Fenner receives Elder Statesman Award

June 17, 2010

INDEPENDENCE—Joy Fenner, who has encouraged missions work and missionary education around the globe for decades, was honored June 6 with the Elder Statesman Award from Independence Association.

Fenner served two decades as executive director-treasurer of [Woman's Missionary Union of Texas](#) and was the first woman president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. She is the 59th recipient of the Elder Statesman Award, presented by the Independence Association and Baptist Distinctives Committee/Texas Baptist Heritage Center. The honor was bestowed at [Independence Baptist Church](#), the oldest continually active Baptist congregation in the state.

Fenner clearly represents the purpose of Independence Association—to emphasize the importance of education and missions in Baptist life, said Bill Pitts, president of the association.

Joy Fenner, who served two decades as executive director-treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union of Texas and is a past president of both Texas WMU and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, received the Texas Baptist Elder Statesman Award from BGCT Executive Director Emeritus Bill Pinson.

He noted Baylor University and the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor, which trace their origin to Independence, were founded as a result of the

missionary fervor of Baptists.

Bill Pinson, executive director emeritus of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said Fenner unites Texas Baptists' strong commitment to education and reaching the world with the gospel. She built upon and expanded the foundation that generations of Texas Baptists laid before her, he noted.

In 1967, Joy and Charlie Fenner married, and they packed their bags for Japan, where they served with the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board as missionaries until 1980. In their service there, they grew to love the Japanese culture and people, looking to share the hope of Christ as often as possible.

They returned to Texas in 1981, and Joy Fenner became the executive director-treasurer of Texas WMU. During her 20-year tenure in that position, Texas WMU continued to encourage Texas Baptists to share the gospel with a growing and diversifying population.

She spearheaded efforts by WMU during the Mission Texas emphasis to raise funds for starting new churches, including the triple-triple campaign for the Mary Hill Davis Offering, an effort to triple one year's offering and then triple it again the next year.

She also helped develop the WorldTouch and Touch Tomorrow Today endowments, which support mission work through Texas WMU. These funds help with mission work in a number of ways, including ministry to missionaries and their children, providing resources in various languages, supporting the Texas Baptist Nursing Fellowship and African-American work, and assisting in leadership development. She also served as president of Texas WMU, and she has served on the board of trustees of East Texas Baptist University.

In the Elder Statesman Award program, Carolyn Porterfield of Texas WMU

taught the Bible study, BGCT Executive Director Randel Everett preached the sermon, retired BGCT Treasurer Roger Hall shared about the history of Independence Association and Independence Baptist Church, and Ruth Landes Pitts, Deirdre LaNoue and Ed Wittner provided music.

Charlie Fenner, who provided a musical interlude on the old 1874 church organ, was recognized for the shared ministry he and his wife have had.

Also recognized were several former Texas WMU presidents who had served with Fenner during her term as WMU executive director/treasurer—Millie Bishop, Gerry Dunkin, Mary Humphries, Kathy Hillman and Jeane Law.

Upon accepting the honor before many of the friends and colleagues she has served alongside, Fenner thanked Texas Baptists for all that they have done. She called herself a product of Texas Baptist life.

“Thank you, Texas Baptists,” she said. “Thank you for loving me, for growing me and for gifting me today with this honor.”