

# Kelile nominee for BGCT second vice president

July 16, 2020

Nebiye Kelile, pastor of Pathway Church and Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland, will be nominated for second vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Bedilu Yirga, pastor of Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church in Garland, announced his intention to nominate Kelile for what is—at this point—the only contested officer's race.

Pastor Dennis Wiles of First Baptist Church in Arlington already had voiced his plans to [nominate Jordan Villanueva](#), pastor of Indian Hills Baptist Church in Grand Prairie, for second vice president during Texas Baptists' online annual meeting.

Yirga, a former BGCT vice president, said he understands what the office requires and is confident Kelile “has what it takes” to be “a valuable addition to Texas Baptists' leadership team.”

Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church is the sponsor of Pathway—a BGCT-supported start-up church geared toward reaching Millennials and Gen-X—and also is the host site for Orchard Hills Baptist. [Kelile serves both churches](#) as pastor.

Yirga characterized Kelile as a “diligent and faithful worker with a heart for the lost” who would bring the zeal of a church planter and the enthusiasm of the younger generation to the role of second vice president.

# Challenges call for ‘adaptive leadership’

For his part, Kelile said he agreed to allow his nomination for office to “encourage the up-and-coming generation of young leaders.”

He expressed his desire to support Texas Baptists’ cooperative efforts in helping to start churches and strengthen existing congregations.



Nebiye Kelile

“The more together we are, the stronger we are,” he said.

The current challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and the multiple ways it has affected congregations and the state convention call for “adaptive leadership,” Kelile said.

“COVID-19 and its effects are not leaving tomorrow. Even as our mission remains the same, our methods need to be changing,” he said.

Racial tension in society at large could negatively affect the mission and ministries of Texas Baptist churches and the work they do cooperatively unless they focus on their common mission, Kelile said.

“We need to strengthen the bonds that unite and not cause further division. We must respond to it from a gospel-centered, Christ-honoring perspective,” he said.

Kelile, who was born in Ethiopia, grew up in California after his family moved there when he was 2 years old. He has served as a preacher and pastor for 15 years.

In California, he served an immigrant church in Sacramento and helped that congregation develop an English-language ministry to reach and disciple the rising generation.

Leaders of Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church learned about Kelile and his work through a network of churches devoted to reaching Ethiopian immigrants in the United States.

They invited him to move to the Dallas area to launch Pathway Church, which not only reaches English-speaking individuals with family ties to Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also has drawn interracial couples from other backgrounds.

Kelile and his wife Hiwot have been married 13 years, and they have four children—Lydia, Daniel, Haset and Zaema.