

Leadership and gratitude highlight 2025 Convención

July 2, 2025

Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas 2025 annual meeting attendees gathered at First Baptist Church in Duncanville to celebrate longtime leaders, develop new leaders, give thanks for financial blessings and elect new officers.

Bea Mesquias of Agape Baptist Church in San Antonio was recognized for her lifetime of service to Unión Femenil Misionera de Texas and her 15 years of service as UFM executive director. Mesquias also was the first woman elected president of Convención. Mesquias' successor is Silvia Ake, who also followed Mesquias as director of UFM de Texas.

Raquel Contreras Smith was honored for her years of service as she retires as editor and executive director of Casa Bautista de Publicaciones (Baptist Spanish Publishing House), now known as Editorial Mundo Hispano.

Alfonso Flores also was celebrated for his 63 years of service in ministry and 35 years as pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana in San Antonio.

Along with these recognitions, Convención celebrated record attendance. Compared to the 600 who attended the 2024 annual meeting in Houston, 911 attended this year's meeting.

Growing new leaders

The 2025 annual meeting theme "From Generation to Generation" and workshops focused attendees on growing and training new leaders.

Hispanic education initiatives are a significant part of growing and training new leaders. These efforts seek to expand opportunities for Hispanic students to attend college and graduate school.

Financial blessings

Convención Executive Director Jesse Rincones gave thanks for the efforts of churches joining together to grow the cooperation of churches and to further outreach for training new leaders for the next generation.

Rincones reported a five-year extension of a Lilly Endowment Thriving in Ministry grant funding the Conexión Pastors Initiative [launched in 2019](#). The initiative is designed “to connect pastors in healthy peer groups to help them thrive in ministry.” The grant expanded the program to minister to the wives of Hispanic Baptist pastors through the new work of [Conexión Esposas](#).

Another Lilly [grant received in 2024 established CANTA](#), the Spanish word for “sing.” The acronym translates in English as Congregations Helping Children Be Transformed into Worshippers.” The program creates children’s worship and training materials for Hispanic churches.

Another Lilly grant, received in February, supports [a collaborative capacity development collaboration](#) between Convención and the National Hispanic Baptist Network called Adelante. The grant enables Convención to hire a Director of Development and Church Engagement and launch an initiative to develop young Latino leaders through a year-long cohort experience.

New officers elected



New Convención officers, L to R: Lidia-

Salazar, secretary; Demetrio Salazar, second vice president; Convención Executive Director Jesse Rincones; Edson Lara, president; Fernando Rojas, first vice president. (Convención photo)

During the Tuesday morning business session, Edson Lara, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Emanuel in McAllen, was elected Convención president.

Fernando Rojas, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Azle Avenue in Fort Worth, will remain as first vice president. Demetrio Salazar, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista of Belton, also was reelected second vice president. Lidia Salazar, school teacher, wife of Demetrio Salazar, and member of Primera Iglesia Bautista of Belton was elected secretary.

Celebrating a leader's retirement

Retiring after 12 years as CEO, publisher and editor of Baptist Spanish Publishing House/Editorial Mundo Hispano, Raquel Contreras, a native of Chile, is a lawyer by profession. She is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has a Doctor of Divinity from Dallas Baptist University.

Editorial Mundo Hispano was started by missionaries J. Edgar and Mary Davis in Toluca, Mexico, in 1905, and later moved to El Paso. Contreras was praised because she was able to keep the company afloat and serving the Hispanic Christian community even during hard times, including COVID.



Retiring Baptist Spanish Publishing House
CEO and Publisher Raquel Contreras with

Board Chair Gus Reyes, director of Hispanic partnerships at Dallas Baptist University.
(Courtesy photo)

The Editorial Mundo Hispano/Hispanic Baptist Publishing House is celebrating its 120th anniversary of service to Spanish-speaking Christians throughout the globe. It provides Bibles, Sunday school curriculum, and a great variety of books. [Carolina Carro de Mangieri](#), director of global events and fellowship for the Baptist World Alliance, will begin serving as the new CEO and publisher of the publishing company this August.

UPDATED: Reporting on the Texas Baptists Hispanic Education Banquet was removed and will be corrected and [published separately](#).