

Motions on women in ministry introduced at BGCT meeting

July 17, 2023

MCALLEN—Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in McAllen introduced two motions related to women in ministry during the July 17 business session.

Meredith Stone, a messenger from Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, introduced a motion that the BGCT “affirm women in all ministry and pastoral roles, and that the BGCT Executive Board be instructed to have staff create programs, resources and advocacy initiatives to assist churches in affirming appointing and employing women in ministerial and pastoral roles.”



Ellis Orozco, a messenger from First Baptist Church in Richardson, introduced a motion that the BGCT “uphold the autonomy of the local church to affirm a member church’s authority to call women to congregational and vocational ministry as they, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the

guidance of sacred Scripture, see fit.” (BGCT Photo)

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President Julio Guarneri referred both motions to the committee on the annual meeting for consideration at the second business session of the annual meeting on Tuesday, July 18.

Contrast to SBC action

Both motions stand in sharp contrast to actions taken last month during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, where messengers [upheld the ouster of two congregations](#)—Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and Saddleback Church in Southern California—for allowing women to serve as pastor.

Messengers to the SBC also granted initial approval to a [constitutional amendment that limits the office of pastor to men](#). The amendment—which stipulates a cooperating Southern Baptist church “affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture”—requires two-thirds approval at two consecutive annual meetings. So, it will face a second vote at the 2024 SBC annual meeting.

In an [opinion article](#) published in the *Baptist Standard* last week, Stone noted both the BGCT and the Baptist General Association of Virginia “hold unique positions as state Baptist conventions that endorse local church autonomy with regard to women’s roles in leadership as ministers and pastors.”

Stone, executive director of Baptist Women in Ministry, asserted, “In moments like these, neutrality is not enough.”

“Pointing to local church autonomy is the equivalent of taking a neutral position on women in ministry. When a neutral position is taken on any issue of oppression, the dominant position and practice simply continues. When we are silent, nothing changes,” Stone insisted.

Orozco, in an interview with the *Baptist Standard*, said he introduced his motion to accomplish two goals—“to affirm the high role of women in ministry of women in our churches who serve in myriad ways and to affirm the actions of every local church to call anyone to any position.”

“It is a decision left to the local church, not mandated by a convention,” he said.

In other business, messengers to the BGCT:

- Re-elected Guarneri, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, to a second one-year term as president and elected Ronny Marriott, pastor of First Baptist Church in Burleson, as first vice president.

Messengers marked ballots to determine the outcome of the only contested race—between Debbie Potter, minister of children at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, and Glenn Lackey, layman at Canyon Creek Baptist Church in Temple and co-founder of the First Blessings ministry. Results will be announced during the July 18 business session.

Two officers were elected by unanimous consent—Bernie Spooner from Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving as secretary of the corporation and David Cozart from Meadowbrook Baptist Church in Waco as registration secretary.

- Heard a report on actions taken by the BGCT Executive Board presented by Chair Bobby Contreras. He reported the board voted to create a task force to study and recommend responses to sexual abuse issues in Texas Baptist churches. The nine-member task force will include three Executive Board members, three Texas Baptist pastors who are not on the board and three licensed counselors who are not on the board.

The Executive Board report included action taken in executive session on May 23 to declare two congregations—Woodland Baptist Church in San Antonio and Second Baptist Church in Lubbock—outside of “harmonious cooperation” with the convention for not complying with the BGCT position on human sexuality.

- Approved new relationship agreements with Hendrick Medical Center and the *Baptist Standard*.

The relationship agreement with Hendrick Medical Center calls for the BGCT to elect no more than 20 percent of the medical center’s board of directors. Currently, messengers to the BGCT annual meeting elect 75 percent of the board. The agreement calls for all board members to be members of BGCT-supporting churches.

The relationship agreement with the *Baptist Standard* states the BGCT and the Baptist Standard remain “autonomous and independent organizations.” The BGCT will continue to elect a simple majority of the *Baptist Standard*’s board of directors, and the agreement stipulates all directors on the board will be “members in good standing” of Baptist churches.

- Approved a slate of nominations from the [Committee on Nominations for Boards of Affiliated Ministries](#), the [Committee to Nominate Executive Board Directors](#) and the [Committee on Committees](#).