

Nebiye Kelile nominee for BGCT first vice president

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

David Foster, the groups and connections pastor at Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church in Dallas, will nominate Kelile, incumbent BGCT second vice president, at Texas Baptists' annual meeting in Waco, Nov. 13-15.

Kelile is able to "bridge multiple groups" culturally and generationally, Foster said.

"He is the pastor of two different congregations in the same location that are reaching two completely different demographics," Foster said. "There are not many who are able to do that, and he can do it quite well."

Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church sponsors Pathway Church—a cross-cultural start-up congregation geared toward Millennials and Generation Z—and is the host site for Orchard Hills Baptist Church, a traditional congregation comprised primarily of senior adult Anglos.

Foster praised Kelile as a gifted preacher who can "apply the word of God to the people of God," and as an important young voice in Texas Baptist life.

"He is a receptive learner while also being a strategic thinker," Foster said.

‘A good season’ to take on new tasks

Kelile was born in Ethiopia but grew up in California, where his family moved when he was 2 years old. He helped an immigrant church in Sacramento develop an English-language ministry to reach and disciple the next generation before moving to the Dallas area to start Pathway Church.

Half a year into his term as BGCT second vice president, Kelile agreed to allow his nomination as first vice president, noting it is “a good season” to take on additional responsibilities, both in terms of his family and his two congregations.

He noted the two congregations in recent months have begun collaborating “on kingdom business”—not only enjoying fellowship, but working on purposeful missions initiatives and leadership development.

That’s the kind of cross-cultural, multigenerational, cooperative work Kelile likes to see in Texas Baptist life.

“I love to serve, and I love being a part of something bigger than myself,” he said. “It is wonderful to be part of a convention that is about seeking to accomplish its vision and mission together.”

‘Healthy churches ... need healthy leaders’

As the pastor of a church filled with Millennials and Generation Z, many of whom did not grow up in Baptist churches, he wants members of Pathway Church to become more aware of Texas Baptists and involved in convention life.

At the same time, he wants the BGCT to continue the initial steps it has

taken to respond to the concerns and facilitate the involvement of Millennial and Generation Z pastors in Texas Baptist life.

Kelile noted he is encouraged by Texas Baptists' emphasis on church health and leadership development.

"The church needs to think about its future, and if we're going to have healthy churches, they need healthy leaders," he said.

Particularly in light of recent news about sexual abuse in the Southern Baptist Convention, he wants Texas Baptists to "make sure we have integrity in our own ministries."

"We can't exempt ourselves from what we see in the national convention. Our priorities as shepherds and church leaders need to be in order," he said.

Kelile is optimistic about what lies ahead for Texas Baptists.

"I am excited for what the future holds," he said.

Kelile and his wife Hiwot have four children—Lydia, Daniel, Haset and Zaema.