

Search committee names executive director nominee

September 3, 2023

DALLAS—Texas Baptists' executive director search committee announced Julio Guarneri, lead pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, as its nominee for Baptist General Convention of Texas executive director.

The identity of the committee's nominee was [announced in an update](#) posted to the executive director search committee webpage of Texas Baptists' website on Sunday afternoon.

In a previous update, the committee announced it had [selected a nominee](#) but withheld the candidate's name to allow him the opportunity to inform his congregation prior to the information becoming public. Guarneri informed his congregation of the nomination just prior to the committee's announcement's release.

In its announcement, the search committee praised Guarneri's character, courageous leadership and calling.



Julio Guarneri

“We believe Dr. Julio Guarneri meets and exceeds the qualities listed in the search prospectus. His personal characteristics of humility, meekness and courageous leadership confirmed a sense of calling and affirmed the committee’s selection,” the committee stated.

“We believe these qualities will further the cause of Christ in carrying out the mission and purpose of Texas Baptists in the days to come.”

Guarneri will be presented by the search committee to the BGCT Executive Board meeting Sept. 18. He is the first Hispanic nominee for the executive director position in the BGCT’s 137-year history.

“Dr. Guarneri is a respected Baptist statesman. He has a rich and longstanding history as a pastor, coupled with a proven capacity to lead our convention with sensitivity, conviction, humility, grace, and strength,” said Wendell Wright, chair of the search committee and director of church and denominational relations at Dallas Baptist University.

Guarneri has a long history of service in the convention, and he is currently carrying out his second term as president. Prior to being elected president, Guarneri served two terms as first vice president.

He is the current chair of Buckner International and also served as vice chair of the Buckner board, chair of Stark College and Seminary and on the BGCT Executive Board.

Guarneri has also served as a Baptist pastor about three decades. He has led Calvary Baptist Church since 2010, and he previously was senior pastor of Iglesia Bautista Getsemaní 17 years.

Additionally, he has served as the minister of education and youth at Segunda Iglesia Bautista in Corpus Christi, founding pastor of Shalom Baptist Mission in Corpus Christi and pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Taft.

Guarneri completed his undergraduate degree from Texas A&M University in Kingsville. He also earned a Master of Arts in Religious Education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in leadership studies from Dallas Baptist University.

He and his wife, Monica, have four children and two grandchildren.

During his [president's remarks at the February board meeting](#), Guarneri called for seven weeks of prayer from Easter to Pentecost in anticipation of the 2023 Family Gathering in McAllen. He described the Family Gathering as a chance to practice Pentecost by joining in worship together and celebrating the diversity of Texas Baptists.

“God sees you and invites you to his table,” Guarneri said. “The inclusion of every people, every nation and every language is the celebration of the great diversity God has created. Pentecost for us today is an invitation to practice that celebration.”



President Julio Guarneri, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, moderated the business sessions at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting. (BGCT Photo)

In his [president's remarks at the 2023 Family Gathering](#) in McAllen,

Guarneri celebrated the rich diversity of the BGCT and urged convention members to focus on unity in Christ.

“We are one big family of men and women, children, youth and adults,” he said. “Anglo, Black, Hispanic, Asian. From remote places and from large cities. From small churches and from megachurches. And what binds us together is Christ. That’s who we are, *familia* Texas Baptists. We are the family of God, unified in diversity.”

In its announcement, the search committee noted its commitment to prayer dating back to its first gathering in August 2022.

“With firm conviction, we believe God has directed our steps,” the committee stated.

“After much prayer, dedication, hard work and perseverance, the committee is pleased and humbled to present its nominee to the Executive Board,” the announcement reads.

Since its creation, the executive director search committee has asked Texas Baptists to pray for discernment throughout the process.

“We thank the entire Texas Baptists family for your continued prayers and support as we look forward with anticipation to the next step in this process. God is good, and we are grateful to him for his provision,” the committee said.

The committee initially was formed in July 2022 after [David Hardage announced his retirement](#) earlier that month.