

Texas Baptists challenged to think and act missionally

November 11, 2008

FORT WORTH—The call to involve churches in missions and engage members to share the gospel took center stage during missions night at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting.

BGCT President Joy Fenner requested the evening focus on missions rather than bringing the traditional president's address to the state convention meeting.

Rick Shaw, director of the Wayland University Missions Center, speaks during missions night at the BGCT annual meeting in Fort Worth.
(PHOTO/Brianna McLane/Baylor)

Too often, churches find it difficult to think about what is strategic because they are focused on what is immediate, said Julio Guarneri, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Getsemani in Fort Worth.

"A couple of years ago, we found ourselves overwhelmed with the idea of being missional as a church. ... But we weren't being strategic, so people started pulling their involvement," Guarneri said.

"WorldconneX helped us ... plan strategically how to better involve more people. We learned that we needed to focus more on developing authentic disciples and, to be strategic, we decided to focus on one church plant, in Madrid and KidsHope USA."

Also during the missions time, Pastor Bill Gravell of Sonterra Fellowship Church, shared his testimony in church planting, saying that his church

started with 60 people and will be moving to a new location.



Members of the Company, a drama troupe from Fort Worth, present a theme interpretation during missions night at the BGCT annual meeting. (PHOTO/Robert Rogers/Baylor Photography)

His church quickly sponsored a Hispanic church, and that church is already looking to begin new congregations.

“Anybody can do church planting,” Gravell said. “Some of you may say your church is too small or you don’t need another church. Take a Wal-Mart test. If there are more cars in your local Wal-Mart parking lot than there are in the local church parking lots, you need a new church.”

Randy Wood, a professor of education at Baylor University, shared a testimony involving the Learning English Among Friends program, developed to involve Baylor students in providing literacy training for non-English-speaking families.

“We need to help these folks coming into Texas to appreciate what we have and to learn how to fit into it,” he said. “If you live in a neighborhood where there is a school, I implore you. I beg you. Look to see how you can be a solution to the educational struggles in our state.”

Rick Shaw, director of the Missions Center at Wayland Baptist University and assistant professor of religion, shared the story of a young woman who approached him about her dream of becoming a missionary.



Members of the Company, a drama troupe from Fort Worth, present a theme interpretation during missions night at the BGCT annual meeting.
(PHOTO/Eric Guel)

She told him that her mother had abandoned her mother at age 13, but that she wasn't there to talk to him about her past. She was there to talk about her future. She wanted to be a missionary.

He told her about a trip to Kenya, and she was concerned that she wouldn't be able to pay for it, but he told her that God would provide.

"We landed in Kenya on July 7. That evening, I asked my students to tell the Kenyan people to tell them what God called them to do. (The girl) said, 'God has called me to be a missionary. I want to be a missionary nurse and I want to serve the people of your land.'

“They said, ‘You probably don’t’ understand. Many of our women have AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. They aren’t loose women. They’ve been infected by their husbands. But they need someone to minister to them.’

“She said, ‘Dr. Shaw, can I do this?’

“I said, ‘That’s why you’re here.’ ...Three of those women died while we were in Kenya.

“On her flight back she said, ‘This was a very hard time in my life, but I figured something about myself and God.’ And she said, ‘I know that this is what the Lord is calling me to do in my life. I know this is what I want to do with my life. Thank you for making this happen.’

“This is what we do at Wayland, and we want to say, ‘thank you’ to Texas Baptists for allowing us to do it.”