

Texas Baptists create task force to address generational change

November 17, 2021

GALVESTON—Texas Baptists addressed generational change at their annual meeting, voting overwhelmingly to create a task force to explore ways to increase Millennial and Generation Z involvement in churches and the denomination.

At the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in Galveston, messengers also approved a related resolution about ministry to Millennials and Generation Z, elected officers and adopted a nearly \$34.6 million budget.

The Galveston meeting was the first in-person annual meeting Texas Baptists held since 2019. Last year, a streamlined version of the meeting was moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting's hybrid format allowed messengers to vote online via Zoom, as well as in person at the Galveston Island Convention Center. However, of the 1,113 registered messengers, only 88 participated online.

Involve Millennials and Gen Z in BGCT

Chris McLain, pastor of First Baptist Church in Bandera, submitted a motion calling for the convention to form and fund a task force that will recommend ways to involve Millennials and Generation Z in Texas Baptist life and ministry.

Demographers generally define Millennials as individuals born between 1981 and 1996. They typically describe individuals born between 1997 and

2015 as belonging to Generation Z.

McLain's motion called on the BGCT president to "appoint a task force to study and recommend ways to increase involvement of Millennial and Gen Z Baptists in the life of the convention and its cooperating churches. The task force will have a budget of up to \$10,000 to cover the expenses of the committee. The task force will report its findings and recommendations at the September 2022 Executive Board meeting for review and to the 2022 annual meeting of the convention for consideration."

Speaking in favor of his motion, McLain expressed appreciation to Texas Baptists for investing in his life—nurturing him spiritually, shaping his faith through Super Summer youth discipleship camp and Baptist Student Ministry, and providing for his theological education.

However, he noted, many in his generation and those in the generation behind him lack those deep connections to Texas Baptists. Furthermore, those who want to "give back" to the convention may struggle to find opportunities to serve, he added.

Prior to the annual meeting, McLain said he and others in [The Pastor's Common](#) network wanted Texas Baptists to think strategically about how to "have younger leaders in the pipeline and provide on-ramps for them to get involved."

Related resolution adopted

Messengers also approved a related resolution on generational change commending Texas Baptists for their "long tradition of sharing the gospel and reaching the 'next generation' for Christ." However, it acknowledged "young people are leaving the church at alarming rates."

The resolution cited Gallup as reporting only 36 percent of Millennials are

members of a church. It noted American Bible Society asserts only 9 percent of Generation Z are “Bible-committed Christians.” The resolution also noted the median age of Texans is 34, according to the U.S. Census.

The approved resolution reaffirmed Texas Baptists’ “commitment to reaching, discipling, caring for and welcoming Millennials and Gen Z” into churches and “calling into ministry and training up Millennial and Gen Z Christians, equipping them as pastors and leaders.”

The resolution encouraged the BGCT and “all its churches to make a purposeful effort to minister to Millennials and Gen Z, both through the promotion of young leaders and shifts in ministry strategy that engage those generations’ language and cultural ethos with the gospel.”

Messengers approved two other resolutions—one expressing appreciation to the annual meeting’s host city and its churches, and the other affirming “the ongoing efforts of Texas Baptists following Christ’s example of engaging, empowering and entrusting women with the gospel.”

Officers elected

Texas Baptists re-elected as president Jason Burden, pastor of First Baptist Church in Nederland, and as first vice president Julio Guarneri, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen.



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president Jason Burden (center), pastor of First Baptist Church in Nederland, and as first vice president Julio Guarneri (right), pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen. They elected Nebiye Kelile (left), pastor of Pathway Church and Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland, as second vice president. (Texas Baptists Communications Photo)

They elected Nebiye Kelile, pastor of Pathway Church and Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland, as second vice president. The incumbent second vice president, Jordan Villanueva, now a professor at Howard Payne University, did not seek a second term.

Other officers reelected at the annual meeting were 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.

In his presidential address to the annual meeting, Burden called on Texas Baptists to recognize current “extraordinary times” as “an inflection point” that demands both continued innovation and faithful obedience to God’s clear commands.

“God gives simple instructions to people like you and me so we can respond in simple obedience,” he said.

Budget approved

Messengers approved a \$34,588,280 total Texas budget for 2022, a \$321,592 increase over the 2021 budget.

The 2022 budget, [recommended by the BGCT Executive Board](#), projects a \$32.8 million net Texas budget based on Cooperative Program giving and investment income. It depends on \$27.37 million in Texas Cooperative Program receipts from churches.

Next year's budget anticipates slightly more than \$5.4 million in investment income and more than \$1.77 million in additional revenue from conference and booth fees, product sales and other sources.

In his report to the annual meeting, BGCT Executive Director David Hardage highlighted advances by Texas Baptist churches, support offered by BGCT staff and wide-ranging efforts by ministry partners globally and in other parts of the nation.

"We are enjoying a season of peace and unity. Texas Baptists, guard that," Hardage urged. "Anytime the enemy sees an advancement of the Kingdom like that of which we're a part of today, he will seek to destroy that. We are going to guard our unity and peace. Good days are ahead."

Messengers to the annual meeting also:

- Agreed to continue the division of undesignated receipts from affiliated churches, with 79 percent allocated for the BGCT and 21 percent for worldwide causes. Each church determines the recipient or recipients of its worldwide giving.
- Voted to allocate an anticipated \$1 million in worldwide missions

initiatives and partnerships in this manner: \$340,000 for missions mobilization, \$200,000 for River Ministry and Mexico missions, \$100,000 for Texas Partnerships, \$55,000 for the Baptist World Alliance, \$5,000 for the North American Baptist Fellowship, \$50,000 for intercultural international initiatives, \$200,000 for Go Now Missions, \$20,000 for the Hispanic Education Task Force and \$30,000 for chaplaincy.

- Approved a motion by Chad Edgington, pastor of First Baptist Church in Olney, calling for the [GC2 statement of faith](#) to be amended to include a reference to the Ascension of Christ. GC2—an emphasis on the Great Commission and Great Commandment—is envisioned as a movement to share the gospel and show God’s love. In September, the BGCT Executive Board approved the statement of faith, designed to establish theological parameters for cooperation with others outside of Texas Baptist life who want to cooperate with Texas Baptists. While most of the GC2 statement summarizes central theological beliefs, it also includes some social issues not included in the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message, the statement of faith adopted by BGCT annual meeting messengers. The GC2 statement affirms “the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death,” defines marriage in terms of one man and one woman, and identifies gender exclusively as male and female.
- Approved a slate of directors to the BGCT Executive Board and trustees of affiliated institutions [nominated](#) by the Committee on Committees, Committee to Nominate Executive Board Directors and the Committee on Nominations for Boards of Affiliated Ministries.
- Collected \$3,618 during a worship service to benefit relief and development ministries supported by the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering.

The 2022 BGCT annual meeting will be held Nov. 13-15 in the Waco Convention Center.