

IN FOCUS: 2008 BGCT reminder: What a family

November 13, 2008

We have just completed a family reunion. We did some business while we were there, but the annual meeting was a time when members of our family came together from all over Texas—and beyond—and celebrated what God is doing.

Before the convention even started, the party was on. Woman's Missionary Union of Texas and Texas Baptist Men commemorated the 100th anniversary of Royal Ambassadors. It was a time of nostalgia and dreaming around the theme of preparing our children for a lifetime of missions.

The Hispanic Baptist Fellowship met for a three-night evangelistic meeting. Twenty-eight professions of faith in Christ were made on Friday and Saturday, with dozens of recommitments. The African American Fellowship met at Greater St. Stephen First Baptist Church. We were challenged by a prophetic word from Joseph Parker and stirred by an inspirational choir.

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Texas Baptists are a mosaic of ethnicity and diversity. We elected three officers, two men and a woman. David Lowrie was elected president, Carolyn Strickland, first vice president, and Bobby Broyles, second vice president. David's church supports the Southern Baptist Convention in its worldwide ministries, Carolyn's relates to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Bobby's church has members who support both.

Forty-one percent of the churches of the BGCT are predominantly non-Anglo. In addition to African-Americans and Hispanics, we have a growing population of churches from numerous ethnic groups. Four national Baptist fellowships have presidents who are Texas Baptists. The average worship

attendance is 75. Forty percent of our churches have bivocational pastors. Yet we also have churches with thousands of members.

Joy Fenner, Mike Massar and Jeff Raines completed their terms as convention officers with excellence. They guided us during a year when there was a transition of all three executive officers of the BGCT. Joy guided us to focus on missions, which was obvious during each of the presentations.

The mission focus Monday evening was a highlight of the meeting. Through dramatic presentations, interviews, videos and music, Texas Baptists told their stories. We heard about church starts, western-heritage churches, life-changing mission trips and ministries to communities, including assistance to children and parents who cannot read English.

A casual trip through the exhibit hall reminded us of the plurality of our ministries. We spoke to students and faculty from our universities and seminaries. Our children's homes, missions partnerships, benevolence ministries and staff resources were highlighted. We listened to conversations of pastors whose churches were destroyed by recent storms and who are being restored through Texas Baptist churches and convention resources.

The meeting's recurring theme was Texas Hope 2010. Reports and sermons referenced commitment to share the hope of Christ with every person in Texas within their own language and context by Resurrection Sunday 2010. We who have been given so much have such a tremendous responsibility.

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