

Board honors Hardage, approves budget proposal

September 20, 2022

DALLAS—The Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board honored David Hardage prior to his year-end retirement as executive director and approved a proposal for an increased BGCT budget for the second consecutive year.

At its September meeting, the board also heard a report from two members of Texas Baptists' Gen Z/Millennial Task Force. (See related story [here](#).)

Guard against adopting 'worldly ways'

In his final executive director's report to the board, Hardage urged Texas Baptists to avoid the indictment pronounced on Israel in Psalm 106:34-35. The psalmist accused God's people not only of mingling with unbelievers, but also adopting their customs.



David Hardage, who retires at the end of the year as executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, presents his

final report to the BGCT Executive Board. (Photo / Ken Camp)

While it is appropriate to engage with society and seek to influence it, Christians must guard against adopting worldly ways, Hardage warned.

The BGCT, churches and individual believers all are “being constantly tugged toward the ways of the world,” Hardage said. “It has never been more difficult. But living in that tension is where Texas Baptists are.”

He urged Texas Baptists to resist the forces pulling toward extremes. Instead, he encouraged the convention and its churches to stand firm on biblical convictions but maintain a gracious attitude toward those who do not share those beliefs.

In a society in which tensions run high and differences are magnified, he called on church leaders to “calm down” and work for unity.

“In the world we live in today, everybody’s on edge, everybody has a platform, and everybody just needs to calm down a little bit,” Hardage said.

“Unity and peace are treasures, but they are very fragile. ... Guard the unity we have. Protect the peace we have. It is a treasure, but it is fragile.”

Make disciples, help people who are hurting

Hardage underscored his continued commitment to the GC2 emphasis on the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

He acknowledged “a couple of mistakes along the way”—particularly regarding the [GC2 statement of faith](#).

“When you start trying to put an idea on paper, it doesn’t always go just the way we want it. ... It is time for us to take the documentation we have tried to put on paper and let us continue to think through, work through, pray through and talk with more of you and others around the state about that, and so that’s what we’re going to do,” Hardage said.

While statements of faith and other documentation “will all be worked out in time,” he encouraged Texas Baptists to “ramp up” the emphasis on sharing faith and showing love.

“We can’t do enough when it comes to focusing on making disciples. And we can’t do enough when it comes to helping hurting people,” Hardage said.

In addition to words of commendation from Executive Board Chair Clint Davis, the board also heard a tribute to Hardage—part toast, part roast—by BGCT President Jason Burden, Center for Church Health Director Phil Miller and Associate Executive Director Craig Christina.

BGCT will consider nearly \$35.46 million budget

The board recommended a \$35,459,500 total Texas budget for 2023, a 2.5 percent increase over the 2022 budget. Messengers from Texas Baptist churches will vote on the proposed budget at the BGCT annual meeting in Waco, Nov. 13-15.

The board’s budget recommendation projects a \$33.9 million net Texas budget—based on Cooperative Program giving and investment income—for 2023.

The budget proposal depends on \$27.25 million in Texas Cooperative Program receipts from churches.

The recommended 2023 budget anticipates about \$6.65 million in investment income, up from \$5.4 million anticipated for 2022. It also anticipates about \$1.77 million in additional revenue from conference and booth fees, product sales and other sources.

The board also recommended continued 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.

If approved at the annual meeting, an anticipated \$1 million in worldwide missions initiatives and partnerships will be allocated in the same manner as the previous year: \$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.

Relationship with Denison Ministries proposed

Scott Wiley, chair of the institutional relations committee, reported the BGCT had entered into renewable one-year memoranda of understanding with the Baptist Union of Uganda, the Baptist Churches of Tanzania and Brazosport Christian School in Lake Jackson, as well as a three-year memorandum of understanding with the Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg.

At the recommendation of the institutional relations committee, the board voted to propose a special relationship agreement between the BGCT and Denison Ministries. The agreement is subject to approval by messengers to

the BGCT annual meeting.

Among other items, the agreement calls for:

- Jim Denison, co-founder and CEO of Denison Ministries, to be designated as theologian-in-residence for Texas Baptists.
- Denison Ministries to make available a keynote speaker or workshop leader for Texas Baptists' annual meeting, and the BGCT to make available at no cost booth space to Denison Ministries at the annual meeting.
- Texas Baptists and Denison Ministries to work cooperatively on ministry projects such as training events and conferences.

In other business, the board elected officers for 2023: Bobby Contreras, pastor of Alamo Heights Baptist Church in San Antonio, as chair, and Janice Bloom, a member of First Baptist Church in Garland, as vice chair.

Filling vacancies

The board also filled vacancies on councils, commissions and committees by electing:

- Rolando Aguirre from Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas to the Affinity Ministries Council.
- Sharon Darwin from First Baptist Church in Dallas, Ed Rogers from First Baptist Church in Georgetown, David Mahfouz from First Baptist Church in Warren and Jordan McKinney from Hillcrest Baptist Church in Cedar Hills to the Baptist History and Distinctives Council
- John Gerlach from Crestview Baptist Church in Midland, Lon Graham from The Woods Baptist Church in Tyler, Jeremiah Smith from University Baptist Church in Fort Worth and Andrew Bedo from Oak Ridge Baptist Church in San Antonio to the Baptist

Student Ministry Council.

- David Cross from First Baptist Church in Lumberton, Gary Patterson from Berean Baptist Church in San Antonio, Judy Collins from The Crossing Church in Mesquite and Richard Brown from Bonsack Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., to the Chaplaincy Endorsement Council.
- Erica Currie from Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene, Laura Rodriguez from Erez Church in Greenville and Tedrick Woods from Living Word Fellowship Church in Dallas to the Christian Life Commission.
- Joshua Hayes from First Baptist Church in Waco and Davey Gibson from Sugar Land Baptist Church in Sugar Land to the GC2 Press Advisory Council.
- Mike Figer and Lane Northcut, both from Woodlawn Baptist Church in Austin, to the Institutions Audit Council.
- Clint Davis from First Baptist Church in Mount Pleasant, Joseph Adams from First Baptist Church in Hughes Springs and Joe Fields from New Beginnings Church in Lewisville to the Missions Funding Council.
- John Hall from Field Street Baptist Church in Cleburne to the Theological Education Council.
- Sam Jones from First Baptist Church in Arlington, Joel Allison from First Baptist Church in Waco, Bill Brian from First Baptist Church in Amarillo, Ed Dyer from Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, D.M. Edwards from First Baptist Church in Tyler, Buster Snellgrove from First Baptist Church in O'Donnell, Charles Whiteside from First Baptist Church in Kilgore and Bill Bevill from First Baptist Church in Corpus Christi to the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation Council.
- Bryan Miller from 3C Cowboy Fellowship in Salado and Tuffy Williams from Bowie County Cowboy Church in De Kalb to the Western Heritage Council.