

## BGCT RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER BAPTIST ENTITIES

The Baptist General Convention of Texas is an autonomous body that relates to other Baptist bodies voluntarily. That is nothing new. The Southern Baptist Convention historically has emphasized the autonomous nature of Baptist state conventions such as the BGCT. As far back as 1928, the SBC stated:

*All Baptist general bodies are voluntary organizations, established by individuals who wish to cooperate for some common end or ends in the Kingdom of God . . . In all cooperative endeavors the principle of autonomy or self-determination should be carefully conserved.* (SBC Annual, p. 35)

**Voluntary cooperative relationships with various entities of the SBC by the BGCT remain.** This is illustrated by official agreements with:

- The Annuity Board concerning retirement plans
- The North American Mission Board concerning mission funding and strategy
- The International Mission Board concerning Texas Partnerships

The BGCT staff helps churches understand resources available from Lifeway Christian Resources, formerly known as the Baptist Sunday School Board. BGCT staff teach, lecture, and work on cooperative efforts with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Furthermore, at no cost to the SBC, the BGCT promotes, collects, accounts for, and distributes Cooperative Program funds. Record amounts of Cooperative Program funds and mission offering dollars continue to go to the SBC from Texas Baptist churches through the BGCT Treasurer's Office.

**The BGCT also voluntarily relates to other Baptist entities in various ways.** For example, churches may channel their Cooperative Program giving through the BGCT to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), Criswell College, Logsdon Seminary, Truett Seminary, and Woman's Missionary Union of the SBC. Churches relating to the BGCT also participate in World Hunger and Texas Partnerships projects of the BWA and CBF, as well as the SBC North American Mission Board and International Mission Board.

*None of these entities is in the budget of the BGCT. Rather, the BGCT serves as a **channel of choice** for each church as to which worldwide Baptist bodies it wants to support.*

Such voluntary cooperation with entities such as the SBC, BWA, or CBF does not mean that everything any one of these bodies does is affirmed by the BGCT, nor that everything the BGCT does is affirmed by these other Baptist bodies. In fact, disagreements have and do exist on how best to carry out the Lord's work, but the overall cooperation remains in place because of the conviction that cooperation among Baptists is the best way to achieve the missionary mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As an expression of voluntary cooperation, if a church does not want to support any item of these cooperative endeavors, it may exclude that particular program, ministry, institution, or agency from its Cooperative Program giving. To maintain

some cooperative wholeness, there is a limit of five exclusions for the funds to be counted as “*Cooperative Program*.” A church may direct its giving for Baptist causes through the BGCT.

**The primary organization in Baptist life is the local congregation of baptized believers. Baptist churches in Texas choose voluntarily to relate to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, to associations of churches, and to national Baptist entities. These various Baptist bodies, in turn, can choose to cooperate with each other. None of these has authority over the others.**