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## Texas Executive Board embraces report of missions study committee

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) --The report of a committee studying missions-sending agencies received enthusiastic support from the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board May 22.

The largest number of questions asked of Jim Denison, chairman of the Mission-sending Agencies Study Committee, related to the committee's recommendation that it be disbanded after approval of the report by messengers to next fall's BGCT annual session. Several speakers expressed the opinion that the study committee ought to remain in place to do additional work.

The Executive Board affirmed the study committee's 21-page report, which notes six concerns about the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board and six separate concerns about the SBC's North American Mission Board.

The report calls for no change in funding of the IMB. However, it calls for intensive negotiations with NAMB about mission work in Texas and for keeping in Texas about \$1.28 million that the BGCT sends to NAMB but that NAMB eventually sends back to Texas ministries.

During extended discussion of the committee's report, no one spoke against the committee's recommendations. Instead, speakers repeatedly lavished praise on the committee.

Denison highlighted several areas of the report and insisted that early responses from some SBC leaders about the report are inaccurate.

For example, a recent Baptist Press article quoted David Hankins, a vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, saying the BGCT recommendation would take \$600,000 away from the IMB.

"Let me categorically assure you this is not true," Denison said, noting that Hankins "did not speak to any individual who had knowledge of this recommendation or process."

The committee's recommendation "would in no way affect the BGCT's support of the IMB," he added.

The NAMB funding change recommended by the study committee is not based on theology or politics, Denison said. Rather, it is simply a means of reducing red tape and improving efficiency.

Denison said the BGCT is not alone in expressing concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of NAMB, which was created from a merger of three SBC agencies in 1997. "There are concerns voiced by a number of state conventions related to the operation of NAMB -- concerns that are not political or theological

... but about efficiency."

However, further negotiations with NAMB are imperative, Denison continued, because of some potential problems that do touch on theology and politics.

As an example, he cited NAMB's revised policy on endorsing chaplains. Many military, hospital and prison chaplains are required to show endorsement from their denomination as a condition of employment.

While NAMB gives extra scrutiny to any missionary candidate who will not wholeheartedly affirm the 2000 version of the "Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the SBC, chaplains are required to endorse the revised faith statement, Denison reported.

This is significant because Texas Baptists have not embraced the SBC's revisions in the document.

"If you are a chaplain and will not sign the 2000 'Baptist Faith and Message,' you cannot be endorsed," Denison reported. This applies not only to new chaplains seeking endorsement but also to chaplains needing re-certification.

"This is a significant matter," he warned.

Also, the committee contends NAMB has violated a 1991 cooperative agreement between the BGCT and the SBC Home Mission Board, a predecessor to NAMB.

That document states that "new projects may be initiated, administered and promoted in the state by the Home Mission Board after consultation with and affirmation of the Baptist General Convention of Texas." NAMB has violated this provision by funding staff members and mission projects of the competing Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Denison said.

In response to a question about how the committee intends to get its report read and understood by the vast majority of Texas Baptists, Denison urged Executive Board members to speak truth about the report and encourage attention to it.

Among many churches and pastors, "there exists an intentional ignorance, a desire not to know, ... or not to communicate to their members," he lamented.

The study committee's full report is available at the Baptist Standard's Web site, [www.baptiststandard.com](http://www.baptiststandard.com).

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## **Support for adopted Texas budget growing every month, treasurer says**

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- The percentage of churches embracing the adopted budget of the Baptist General Convention of Texas continues to grow each month, convention Treasurer Roger Hall told members of the BGCT Executive Board May 22.

For the period from Jan. 1 through May 18, 20 percent of all Cooperative Program gifts sent through the BGCT were given in the adopted budget, Hall reported. For the month of May, that had increased to 26 percent of all gifts.

The adopted budget is the plan approved by messengers to last fall's BGCT annual session that significantly reduces funding for the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, defunds the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and gives only a token amount to the SBC Executive Committee. The money diverted from SBC entities is earmarked for three Texas seminaries, Hispanic ministries, human-welfare needs and moral concerns.

Even though the convention adopted this as an official budget, the BGCT has allowed churches this year to choose among three giving plans, while presenting the adopted budget as the preferred option. Another option is the 67 percent/33 percent split between Texas missions and worldwide missions previously offered. The final option allows churches to create customized giving plans.

Use of the new adopted budget started slowly in January but has gained momentum each month, Hall said.

Nevertheless, the dramatic funding changes in theological education envisioned when the BGCT adopted the budget last fall have not been enacted on a large scale.

Hall projected the three Texas Baptist schools intended to benefit from the new budget would get a combined total of about \$940,000 in new funds this year. That's less than one-fourth of the \$4.3 million they potentially could have received.

Based on current trends, Hall said, a conservative estimate would predict \$250,000 in new funds going to Hispanic Baptist Theological School this year and a combined total of \$690,000 in new funds going to Truett Seminary at Baylor University and Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University.

Gifts to the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, which were targeted for funding cuts by the report of a BGCT Seminary Study Committee last year, have continued to flow freely, according to a document distributed by Hall at the Executive Board meeting.

During the first quarter of this year, the six SBC seminaries received \$977,657 in funding from the BGCT. That includes \$38,978 in funds from the BGCT adopted budget and \$938,679 in other church-directed funding through the BGCT.

However, as of April 2, the \$1 million funding cap for SBC seminaries included as a part of the Texas adopted budget was met, meaning no additional money from the Texas adopted budget will go to the SBC schools this year. Nevertheless, designated gifts and gifts to the traditional SBC Cooperative Program model will continue to flow to the SBC schools.

As predicted, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth has received the majority of funds given through the Texas adopted budget to SBC schools. This budget allocates funds to SBC schools based on enrollment of Texas students. This year, 86 percent of Texas students attending SBC seminaries are at Southwestern, meaning Southwestern has received \$33,599 in gifts from the Texas adopted budget -- in addition to the \$272,573 sent in the first quarter from church-directed BGCT funds.

On a related front, additional funds intended to be redirected this year from two other SBC entities toward Texas missions causes have been processed slower than anticipated.

Based on current trends, Hall projected that Hispanic ministries in Texas will receive about \$115,000 in new funds through the Texas adopted budget this year. Human-welfare needs in Texas will receive about \$50,000 in new funds, and the BGCT Christian Life Commission will receive about \$45,000 in new funds, he reported.

This \$210,000 in redirected funding is about one-fifth of more than \$1 million that could have been taken from the SBC Executive Committee and SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Although Cooperative Program giving through the BGCT has been down slightly during the first quarter, things appear to be picking up in May, Hall said. "We anticipate reaching and surpassing budget."

As of April 30, gifts to the overall Cooperative Program were 1.6 percent below budget, and funding for the Texas portion of the Cooperative Program was 8.1 percent below budget.

Undesignated allocations from the BGCT to the SBC for April continue to decline, as more Texas churches embrace the adopted budget or create customized budget plans. Funds forwarded from the BGCT to the SBC in April, for example, were \$6.74 million. That is \$1.8 million or 21.3 percent less than the SBC received through the BGCT in the same month last year.

According to SBC financial reports, the alternative Southern Baptists of Texas Convention sent

\$731,134 to the SBC Cooperative Program in April. While that is a 468 percent increase for the new state convention, it accounts for less than half of the decrease in funding to the SBC through the BGCT. When gifts from the two Texas conventions are considered together for the month of April, the SBC still received more than \$1 million less in undesignated gifts from Texas this April than in April of the previous year.

That is tempered, however, by increases in designated giving to the SBC from both the BGCT and Southern Baptists of Texas. Apart from gifts to the Annie Armstrong Offering and Lottie Moon Offering, the BGCT increased its designated gifts to SBC causes in April by \$2.5 million. That presumably is due to the number of churches using the Texas adopted budget, which funds SBC entities selectively.

The bottom line is that the SBC received \$1.26 million more from the BGCT in April than it did the previous April, excluding gifts to Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong.

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## **IMB refuses missions gifts from 'Mainstream' group**

By Tim Palmer and Bill Webb

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is saying "no thanks" to missions gifts being routed around a conservative-led state convention.

IMB President Jerry Rankin says the Richmond, Va.,-based mission board doesn't want money from Mainstream Missouri Baptists, an organization opposed to conservatives who recently solidified control of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

After failing in repeated efforts to defend the state against a conservative takeover, Mainstream Missouri Baptists recently turned their attention to promoting alternative giving plans that support selected causes inside and outside the state while excluding others.

In a March 20 letter to Doyle Sager, president of the Mainstream group, Rankin said accepting money from alternate channels undermines the Cooperative Program unified budget that supports the SBC and state convention simultaneously.

Rankin said it is inappropriate for an SBC agency to accept money while another Southern Baptist entity -- in this case the Missouri Baptist Convention -- is excluded.

"We're committed to each other," Rankin said. "As much as we need that support, we're not interested in benefiting to the detriment of others."

Rankin said the decision is consistent with IMB policy of refusing gifts from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate group that supports its own missionaries and church programs but in earlier days also forwarded money to selected SBC ministries. "CBF, however you see it, is an alternative to our cooperation," Rankin said.

"If a church feels led of the Lord to support the IMB, I would presume they would be obedient to the Lord's leadership and find an appropriate channel to do that," Rankin said. He said no state group other than Mainstream Missouri Baptists has offered to channel funds to the IMB.

The Mainstream group includes the IMB in one of three giving plans it promotes in the state. Despite Rankin's letter, Sager said the organization would continue to honor donor wishes.

Sager called Rankin's letter "sort of a thanks, but no thanks." He added, "They preferred to receive Cooperative Program funds and not to bypass the approved channels of CP."

However, because the funds had been designated for IMB by churches, "We're seeing that it gets to the IMB," Sager said. "There are many ways to see that that happens. We're using appropriate channels." The MMB president declined to specify how the funds were being forwarded.

"Every penny that people are designating to IMB is getting there," Sager said. "Good accounting principles are being followed. We would pass any good CPA's audit.

"These are giving plans that Missouri Baptists asked us to create," Sager said. "People wanted this choice. In other words, these combinations of plans didn't show up willy-nilly."

Because of that, Sager said, the organization plans to continue to honor the designations. "The philosophy behind it was that we didn't think Jerry Rankin and his board set the giving policy for Missouri Baptists," he said.

"It is inconceivable to us that the IMB would refuse Baptist money that is trying to go to Baptist missionaries -- that we would want to cut off funds to missionaries when faithful Baptists want to get funds to them," Sager said.

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