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**Texas Baptists use media  
to respond to allegations**

By Ferrell Foster

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Baptist General Convention of Texas is turning to secular newspapers to counter what leaders call false charges by conservatives.

Full-page advertisements with the headline "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor" appeared May 27 in the Sunday newspapers of three midsize Texas communities -- Amarillo, Lubbock and Tyler. Other ads were planned for the future in other communities.

Leaders said the ads, placed by a 3-year-old BGCT Baptist Integrity Committee, were bought with private donations. No funds from the state's Cooperative Program unified budget were used.

Committee members said the ads are intended to communicate with Texas Baptists who don't subscribe to the Baptist Standard, the BGCT news journal, which has reported similar information.

"This approach allowed us to communicate to Baptist laity that we otherwise could not reach," said committee member Howard Batson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Amarillo. "It was something of a setting of the record straight approach. We've really grown tired of the guilt by association and political innuendo that has come from Baptist Press and others."

The ads respond to "half-truths and personal attacks" that they say BGCT opponents are using to "divide and deeply trouble all Texas Baptists of good faith."

The ads list eight "guiding principles" of the state Baptist group, including fidelity to Scripture, commitment to missions and opposition to abortion and homosexuality.

Political opponents of the BGCT -- including a rival Southern Baptists of Texas Convention -- have campaigned to persuade local churches that the BGCT's moderate leadership is out of the mainstream on those and other issues.

"It's very unpleasant to answer accusations, but suspicion has been cast," said Robert Jenkins, a member of the Integrity Committee living in Plano "We need to defend ourselves."

Barry Peterson, a committee member in Amarillo, said there has been a "great deal of current activity" in spreading incorrect information about the BGCT and "prominent individuals." Some people are "painting

an inaccurate picture of what the Baptist General Convention of Texas stands for," he said. "They're spreading untruths."

Batson said running the newspaper ads allows the BGCT to "define ourselves" rather than be defined by "someone who doesn't even understand us or has purposely chosen to misrepresent us."

Not everyone is enamored with the idea, however.

"I think if you stand for certain things," like those listed in the guiding principles, people don't have to be told, they "know it," said Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church in Amarillo, which is affiliated with both the BGCT and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Coffey also criticized the idea of airing differences among Texas Baptists in public. "I just think it's a very poor strategy," he said.

Another critic, David Wilson, pastor of Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock, said: "My first reaction was that of sadness. . Why are we involving all of the lost community," people who "don't have a clue" about Baptist life? The ad "did a lot more damage than good."

Mike Massar, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tyler, however, said he believes the ads are the right thing to do.

"No one likes to take a family squabble on the streets," he said. But "a lot of Baptist churches have chosen not to receive the Baptist Standard, so how else are you to communicate with people."

Batson said that while the committee was concerned about taking the conflict public, he doubts that many Texans are unaware of strife among the state's Baptists, which has been well covered by the news media.

Committee member Peterson agreed that, "We're always hurt that you have to go to this extreme" of using the public media. "I think that everybody would have preferred to not speak out and exhibit our dirty laundry before the public."

"We just felt like we're backed against the wall," he said. If BGCT didn't respond, "perhaps the perception is there that you're guilty."

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## **Texas committee awaiting response to clarification of missionary count**

By Mark Wingfield

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (ABP) -- A committee studying Texas Baptists' relationship with missions-sending agencies says it is still waiting for an answer to its question about how many missionaries are fully funded by the North American Mission Board.

While recommending only minor changes in funding for the Southern Baptist Convention agency based in Alpharetta, Ga., the Baptist General Convention of Texas committee communicated several continuing concerns about the agency. One was confusion about the way NAMB counts its missionaries.

NAMB says it supports more than 5,000 missionaries. The Texas committee, however, observed that most of those are funded only partially by NAMB in cooperation with state Baptist conventions or are volunteers.

Texas leaders claim the 5,000 number is misleading when compared to the nearly 5,000 missionaries of the SBC International Mission Board, most of whom are supported solely by the IMB.

The Texas committee said it asked NAMB officials how many missionaries are fully funded by NAMB and never got an answer. The committee's own estimate of the number is about 40.

However, NAMB President Bob Reccord told Baptist Press May 25 that the term "fully-funded missionary" cannot be used in conjunction with NAMB, because the agency intentionally partners with state conventions to jointly support missionaries.

He described three categories of missionary service, with each comprising about one-third of the NAMB missionary total:

-- Appointed missionaries receive "virtually all of their support from NAMB and its mission partners," the BP story said.

-- Approved missionaries "receive a stipend from NAMB and its mission partners, often for a limited period of time, having other sources of income," the BP report explained.

-- Mission Service Corps missionaries are volunteers who serve at least 20 hours a week for more than two years and receive no funding from NAMB.

The Richmond, Va.,-based IMB has also had little to say about six concerns critical of its work in the BGCT report.

IMB President Jerry Rankin issued a brief statement through Baptist Press saying the IMB "is grateful for the rather positive affirmation of our work around the world by the BGCT mission-study committee."

Rankin said, "The concerns expressed are not accurate perceptions of our work and strategies, and we look forward to addressing these issues with additional clarification and explanations to those involved."

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## **First ABP development director stepping down for church post**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Charles Qualls has resigned as development director of Associated Baptist Press, effective June 8, citing family concerns.

Qualls, 36, has been named associate pastor of Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta.

"I'm excited about what I'm going to do," Qualls said. "It's a dream job for me."

Qualls said the main consideration in his decision, however, was a gradual realization that frequent travel required by the job was taking a toll on his family life.

Qualls was the first person hired for the newly created development position in October 1999. In the job, he has been responsible for cultivating and soliciting major donors for the independent national news service based in Jacksonville, Fla. He also has assisted with marketing of FaithWorks, a Christian lifestyle magazine started by ABP in 1988, along with other tasks related to fund raising.

He plans to continue as a regular contributor of materials for the FaithWorks Web site, [www.faithworks.com](http://www.faithworks.com)

ABP Executive Editor Greg Warner said Qualls "has tremendous gifts which have served us well.

"I'm sorry the burden of travel for this national position was too much for him and his family, but I'm glad he's found another ministry opportunity that will use those gifts to the benefit of a great church," Warner said. "And we're delighted that he will stay plugged in to the ministry of ABP."

Qualls is a native of the Atlanta suburb of Roswell, Ga., where his parents still live. He is a graduate of West Georgia College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

While working for ABP, Qualls has continued to live in Greensboro, N.C., where he formerly worked as associate pastor for Christian education at First Baptist Church. His wife, Elizabeth, has also worked at the church as librarian. Before moving to Greensboro, he held a similar position at First Baptist Church of Milledgeville, Ga.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Washington news briefs from Associated Baptist Press**

### **D.C. Baptist Convention taps African American for top post**

WASHINGTON -- Jeffrey Haggray, 37, pastor of Pennsylvania Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., has been elected by the D.C. Baptist Convention to be executive director/minister.

The June 4 unanimous vote by the DCBC Executive Board makes history in the roughly 70-year-old convention with Haggray becoming the first African American tapped for the post.

A press release from the DCBC said Haggray will resign his duties at his church and begin work with the convention Aug. 1.

Before coming to Pennsylvania Baptist Church, Haggray led DCBC's Mt. Gilead Church from 1992 until 1999. Outside the pulpit, Haggray serves as a member of the Baptist Joint Committee, the Baptist House of Wesley Theological Seminary, the Council of Churches of Greater Washington and more.

Born in Savannah, Ga., he holds degrees from the University of Virginia, Yale Divinity School and Wesley Theological Seminary. He is married to Shelby Martin Haggray and they have two children. (ABP)

### **Bush statements anger congressman**

WASHINGTON -- President George W. Bush's recent statements implying that critics of his plan to fund religious ministries with tax dollars do not understand the power of faith have angered advocates of church-state separation.

Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, read Bush's comments in a daily newspaper and went to the floor of the House of Representatives to react. Bush said, "Those who worry about faith in our society, and government's willingness to stand side-by-side with faith, don't understand the power of faith and the promise of faith and the hope of faith."

"I do not think it is fair to question the religious faith of decent Americans who happen to disagree with his policy proposals," said Edwards, a long-time critic of "charitable-choice" initiatives that grant tax dollars to religious ministries. "Challenging people's religious faith because of public-policy differences is not a way to bring Americans together; rather it is a prescription for religious divisiveness."

Edwards continued that "numerous groups such as the Baptist Joint Committee and the American Jewish Committee differ with the president on faith-based initiatives, not because they question the power of faith, but because they want to prevent government from regulating our faith."

Bush's comments came at a Habitat for Humanity event. He noted that opponents to his plan would favor not giving funds to the Christian organization that makes homes for low-income families.

But Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat, said the organization is thriving under current law. The Washington Post said Fuller expressed fear that Bush's initiative could upset the "balance" between church and state. (ABP)

### **Conference highlights environmental justice**

WASHINGTON -- More than 350 religious leaders participated in a recent conference to proclaim that environmental justice is a religious issue.

The conference was spearheaded by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Religious leaders took a break in the middle of the three-day conference to conduct a rally outside the U.S. Capitol to criticize President George W. Bush's new energy plan.

The group visited 200 senators and representatives, presenting each with an energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulb. Most who attended the conference were environmental-justice ministry leaders in NCC-member Protestant and Orthodox congregations. Participants also included leaders in the Interfaith Climate Change Campaign,

Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., said at the rally: "God put Adam and Eve in the Garden to work it and to guard it -- not just to work it. And that speaks to the heart of environmental protection that we have an obligation to protect God's creations and to guard them."

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, added: "I believe we can create an energy policy that will create sufficient energy for us and our children while upholding our duty to provide stewardship of the Earth."

NCC General Secretary Bob Edgar, a United Methodist, preaching at the conference's closing worship, said: "As a foundation for public policy, conservation should be a centerpiece not an afterthought, a solemn vow not a concession. God is calling us to be stewards of this fragile planet." (ABP)

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-- By ABP Washington bureau staff

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