

Baptist General Convention of Texas History

Baptist work in Texas is older than the state itself. In fact, the first Baptist service was held in 1820, a full quarter of a century before statehood. Although Baptists were among the earliest Anglo settlers in Texas, the first Baptist church was not established until 1834 when Daniel Parker led a Primitive Baptist congregation from Illinois.

Over the next six years, numerous Baptist churches were formed. In 1840 three churches organized the Union Baptist Association, the first in Texas. By 1848, many churches saw the need for a statewide body. Representatives of these churches gathered at the First Baptist Church in Anderson and formed the Baptist State Convention. In the 1850's and 1860's other statewide bodies were formed as a result of disagreements among the churches. The strongest of these new groups was the Baptist General Association.

By the 1880's, many Baptists in Texas believed that Baptist work in the state could be strengthened if the statewide bodies would unite. After the smaller bodies dissolved or merged with larger ones, the Baptist State Convention and the Baptist General Association began formal merger talks in the fall of 1885. A special committee comprised of members from each group agreed to form a new consolidated body to be called the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). The first session of this new convention was held June 29, 1886.

The new convention was not without controversy. In the 1890's, S. A. Hayden, one of the major proponents of consolidation, accused the BGCT leadership of misappropriating funds. The allegations were baseless, and Hayden was excluded from BGCT meetings. As a result, Hayden's followers left the BGCT and formed the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA).

From its inception in 1886, the BGCT has been actively involved in education and social ministries, as well as evangelism and missions. The BGCT has supported and/or established numerous schools, including Baylor University, the world's largest Baptist university, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (now operated by the Southern Baptist Convention), currently the largest seminary in the world. The BGCT has assisted in the development of seven hospitals, four children's homes and five homes for the aged. The Convention also assists in starting hundreds of new churches each year as it strives to share the gospel with every person in the state of Texas.

Throughout its existence, the BGCT has weathered controversies, recessions, a major depression and wars to become the largest state convention of its kind.

