

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE



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Executive Minister

With the beginning of the new millennium, we have witness tremendous

changes in our world. The Internet and globalization of countries has opened the doors of economic opportunities and the interaction of world cultures. With increased mobility and interaction with other cultures we are beginning to see changing values in the black community. There is the question of long-held beliefs about God and traditional cultural norms in African American families and communities. Some are already raising the question about the continuing need for black institutions and organizations in an integrated society. This question and others about the necessity of particular culture-based expressions of faith such as the black church must be answered by this and future generations of African American Christians.

Obviously the Christian faith is not limited by culture or history, but the beginning of the faith journey starts out of a people's experience with God and one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

How the changing times affect our mission work together through the Baptist General Convention of Virginia will depend upon our ability to answer the questions of faith and to respond to the needs of associations, individual churches and new leaders. Much of that direction will come from the Scriptures, the churches and their leadership through participation in the General Board, Commissions, Task Forces and study committees of the Convention. Additional direction for the future will come through the activities of the staff and their identification and assessment of the need. Of course, direction for the future also comes from the collaboration that occurs between officers of the Convention and the Executive Minister in determining mission support and new ministries.

The process of futuring is ongoing in the Baptist General Convention and already there are some concerns and suggestions that have emerged and placed in our strategic plan..

The development of leadership through training and exposure to specialized workshops is needed. We have determined that trained and supported leadership makes the critical difference in what occurs in the local church. To help that happen we continue to support the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University; and, we are exploring through the Evans-Smith Certificate Program and the weekend seminary programs, ways to encourage clergy and laity to continue to prepare for leadership in this new century.

The crisis situation with African American youth, particularly males, indicates to us the need to expand the outreach of our Youth Division and the Men's Division. To this end, having staff in the Men's and Youth

Divisions provides a strong foundation for bridging the gap with the needs of our young males today. Also our Women's Ministry through the Division of Women will continue to reach out to younger women to meet their needs.

In response to the aforementioned crisis, the BGC Foundation believes that we must position ourselves to **Care for Our Own: Taking the Lead, Nurturing the Seed.** Regardless of where we look around us in this Commonwealth, more of our young black men are in jail or prison than in our schools of higher education. We, the church, must take a leading role to curb and even cure the problems of our society such as youth dropouts, violence, incarceration, etc. To this end, response kit training resources will be developed for the local church to provide services for at-risk youth in our communities.

Expanding our missions concerns in the areas of the homeless and housing, disaster relief, prison ministry, and children's ministry are some of the directions that Convention leadership coalescing around.

Under girding the futuring process is the need for increased stewardship for the support of Convention ministries that currently exist as well as those we desire, and need, as we move further into the 21st Century. The continuous development of quality stewardship and leadership resource materials will aid the local church, associations, and the Baptist Convention in becoming more proactive in meeting the needs and challenges of today and the new millennium. Such resources include, but certainly are not limited to, the expansion of the BGC Foundation and more of an investment in technology.

There are many other mission and ministry ideas that could be expressed about the vision of the Convention for tomorrow, but I will close on this note. As we move forward in this new Century, the Convention has decided that its major focus will be evangelism. Our task as the church is to share the Good News of Salvation in Christ Jesus. The Baptist General Convention is committed to the task of equipping and under girding the local church as we reach out to this and future generations to proclaim "**the gift of God is eternal life!**"