

Texas Baptists elect female president: Growing diversity in state convention

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The Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting narrowly elected the state body's first female president and continued a two-decade trend of choosing officers endorsed by the moderate Texas Baptists Committed organization.

Joy Fenner, 70, of Garland, Texas, a former missionary to Japan and incumbent BGCT first vice president, was elected 900-840 over pastor David Lowrie.

Some of the more than 5,600 congregations affiliated with the BGCT are also affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, but the state convention has distanced itself from the more conservative denomination in recent years.

Fenner's election last month marked another in a series of presidential elections demonstrating an increasing amount of diversity within the state convention. In recent years, the group has elected its first Hispanic president and its first African-American president.

Many convention delegates, called messengers, attributed the close margin of Fenner's election less to her gender and more to dissatisfaction with current BGCT leadership, as well as Lowrie's West Texas ties. The convention was held in Amarillo.

Lowrie, whose father once served as a BGCT president, had been endorsed by several Baptist bloggers who called for an end to what they saw as the Texas Baptists Committed organization's control over the BGCT.