

# GEN Z | MILLENNIAL TASK FORCE

## Texas Baptists Annual Meeting 2022

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS:** David Adams, Jason Atchley, Jason Burden, Clint Followell, David Foster, Meghan Hendrickson, Ryan Jespersen, Neb Kelile, Nathan Mahand, Ray Malone, Chris McLain, Nataly Sorenson, Scotty Swingler

The task force was commissioned to assist both the BGCT and our local churches in reaching Generation Z and millennials. After several initial Zoom meetings, the task force gathered in person in Waco this past April and adopted the term “emerging adults” (E.A.) as an inclusive term for both generations.

While the youngest among Gen Z are under the age of 20 and the oldest millennials are over 40, “emerging adults” readily brings to mind those in their 20s and 30s. The task force conversations, both online and in person, have uncovered opportunities to enhance our connections to E.A.s and explored ways to intentionally incorporate E.A.s into the story God is writing through Texas Baptists.

A report of the task force study was delivered to the BGCT Executive Leadership and to the Executive Board during the September Executive Board meeting. The content of these conversations regarding Gen Z and millennial Baptists can be categorized under four major themes.

## FOUR THEMES

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### INVITE EMERGING ADULTS TO THE TABLE

There is a world of knowledge we can glean from E.A. Baptists in Texas. We need places, and intentional times, to hear their voices. Along with creating special times of listening and learning, we desire intentionality in including E.A.s in the work of our committees, boards and leadership teams.

Our work of listening will not only allow Texas Baptists to know our E.A.s better but will serve to provide our E.A. Baptists with platforms (speaking opportunities, stage time, social media exposure, etc.) to gain valuable experience and abundant avenues for professional development within Texas Baptists life.

In the same line of thought, we want to make sure the goal of developing our E.A.s is at the forefront of all our leadership initiatives. Providing E.A.s opportunities to express their passions, giftedness, struggles and situations by engaging them with seasoned leaders will benefit Texas Baptists by passing along generational wisdom and institutional knowledge. These intentional engagements will strengthen E.A.s in their ministries and safeguard the future of Texas Baptists.

## **SHARE THE STORY**

The realm of communications is a dynamic and rapidly changing sphere. Our communications venues and processes are evolving and improving to meet the needs of Texas Baptists. We desire to increasingly be in the communications spaces unique to E.A.s in order to better reach them where they are. The rise in popularity of short form video, for example, is an opportunity to creatively tell our story to E.A.s and also include more E.A.s in the storytelling process. We aspire to share our story in compelling ways that differentiate our message through authenticity, honesty and sympathy.

Similarly, we want to harness the opportunities afforded to us at meetings, such as the Annual Meeting, to start conversations with E.A.s that live on after the meeting is over. We seek means and methods to turn our times of information sharing into lasting conversations that keep us connected.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION**

Texas Baptists is like an aircraft carrier in that it takes a long time to turn, but we must also be nimble to follow the Spirit's leading. In a changing world, and with the challenge of growing generational differences, we need to reflect upon the structures, purposes and processes of our institutional forms to ensure we are headed where God is leading us.

We desire to be forward looking as we allocate resources, anticipating the needs of tomorrow by staying in touch with the E.A.s of today. Similarly, we want to make sure we are maximizing the wealth of relationships we have with E.A.s coming out of Texas Baptists institutions.

Knowing many E.A.s serve in small churches early in their ministries, we want to ensure we are providing valuable resources to them with the hope of making a meaningful impact in the beginning stages of their ministries that will pay lifelong dividends for our state.

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Texas Baptists stand upon a rich theological heritage, and upon that firm foundation, our calling has been to establish institutions and plant churches for the sake of God's Kingdom in our state and beyond. By building on our strengths and focusing our resources on that calling, Texas Baptists can navigate the difficult cultural conversations of our day. E.A.s are skilled in navigating those divisive issues. They can help us avoid the rhetoric of condemnation while maintaining strong biblical convictions. As our state grows and changes, engaging with and resourcing E.A.s to follow their unique callings will both revitalize established congregations and plant the next generation of Texas Baptists churches.

Today's E.A.s are more transient than previous generations. As they relocate and establish new community networks, they not only bring fresh faces but also fresh energy, innovative methods and new perspectives to our 21st century ministry contexts. But in most cases, they do not bring their extended families with them, so Texas Baptists are met not only with extraordinary opportunities to partner with E.A.s in ministry, but also to welcome them into their family life — not just an invitation to church, but to Sunday dinner.

# FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

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A full slate of near-term (1-3 year) and long-term (3+ year) goals are under development, but the following five recommendations constitute a representative sample of the task force's work.

## 1 Listening Sessions

Conduct listening sessions around the state with E.A. Baptists and listen to their concerns, struggles, passions and aspirations. We need to hear from them directly and not assume we know what they need or want.

## 2 Supplement our Communications Department

Invest in our communications department for the purpose of reaching E.A.s with the stories of Texas Baptists and providing platforms for E.A.s to share their stories with Baptists across the state.

## 3 Emerging Adult Attendance Goal at Annual Meeting

Record how many E.A. messengers are in attendance at this year's Annual Meeting, with the goal of doubling that number by the next Annual Meeting.

## 4 Launch a Statewide Initiative

Launch a month-long, statewide initiative to encourage and equip churches to invite E.A.s into the family life of the church.

## 5 Residency Program Task Force

Commission a task force to study the viability of a BGCT pastoral residency program that helps E.A. ministers grow under seasoned pastors in both rural and urban settings.