News 21 November 2026 | English article

Georgia Baptists Report 26,131 Baptisms in 2025 as Annual Meeting Celebrates Growth

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Together for the Mission."

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Georgia Baptists reported 26,131 baptisms in 2025, a number that brings the state convention back to a level comparable to 2011 after years of decline. Executive Director Thomas Hammond shared the figure with messengers at the 204th Annual Meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention, held November 8-10 at Second Baptist Church in Warner Robins, where 1,095 people registered, including 861 messengers and 234 guests.

The meeting ran under the theme "Wide Open," drawn from 1 Corinthians 16:9, and the mood matched the words. Messengers reaffirmed their commitment to evangelism and missions, elected new officers, and approved resolutions and a new budget for 2027, all while celebrating reports of growth across the state's churches.

The baptism number is the headline, but the story behind it took years to build. Georgia Baptist churches reported just 12,886 baptisms in 2021, then 15,204 in 2022, then 21,179 in 2023, then 25,673 in 2024. The climb has been steady, year after year, and 2025 marks the moment the state finally returned to ground it had not stood on in 15 years.

Average worship attendance climbed too, rising from 349,865 in 2024 to 356,561 in 2025. Among the churches reporting the highest baptism totals were Cascade Hills Baptist Church in Columbus with 1,142, Bethlehem Church in Winder with 604, Revolution Church in Canton with 490, West Ridge Church in Hiram with 422, and Peavine Baptist Church in Rock Spring with 271.

Messengers elected Stephen Fountain, pastor of First Baptist Church Buford, as president of the Georgia Baptist Convention by acclamation. Neal Dose, pastor of Mansfield Baptist Church, was elected first vice president, and Lee Brewer, pastor of Palmetto Baptist Church, was elected second vice president.

They also approved a $33.5 Million Cooperative Program budget for 2027, unchanged from last year, with 40 percent of receipts going to Southern Baptist Convention causes and the remaining 60 percent supporting Georgia Baptist ministries. Ten new congregations were welcomed into the convention.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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