

COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS REPORT 2018

Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

Resolution 1: ON PASTORS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

WHEREAS, the essence of the church's mission, as defined by the Great Commission, is to spread the gospel and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-21; Luke 24:46-49); and

WHEREAS, John the Baptist confronted Herod over his sin and called for repentance, prioritizing his mission and Herod's soul over his own freedom and ultimately his life; and

WHEREAS, the church's gospel-spreading, disciple-making mission is in many cases accelerated by religious, cultural, and governmental opposition; and

WHEREAS, Paul consistently defines the role of the pastor in his letters to Timothy and Titus in terms of preaching and teaching the Word (1 Timothy 2:7; 4:13, 16; 6:2b-6; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2, 14-15; 3:14-4:5; Titus 2:1, 11-15); and

WHEREAS, Paul prescribes prayer as a first step toward living peaceful lives and gospel advancement in society (1 Timothy 2:1-6); and

WHEREAS, political engagement by marked by hostility, strife, dissensions, and factions, rather than kindness and gentleness, displays works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), not fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); and

WHEREAS, *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, Article XV "The Christian and the Social Order" summarizes well the Christian duty to "make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society," while acknowledging that these efforts will be "truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ"; and

WHEREAS in our political system, the biblical responsibility of government to encourage good and restrain evil (Romans 13:1-4) falls ultimately to all citizens, and loving our neighbors (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8) includes seeking their good by all means, including engagement in the political process; and

WHEREAS the worthiness of specific policies and candidates is often difficult to assess, but biblical principles are worthy of unqualified affirmation and defense; and

WHEREAS, our experience of religious freedom and public policy in our society that reflects the will of Christ is, in large part, fruit of public engagement by Christian leaders who exercised influence without compromising the priority of our gospel-spreading, disciple-making mission; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, enthusiastically affirm our appreciation for those Christian leaders who have secured our liberties and advanced biblical principles in government and simultaneously demonstrated primary commitment to the church's mission; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we deny dependence upon the support of government officials to accomplish our gospel-spreading, disciple-making mission; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we acknowledge the danger of political engagement overwhelming the priority of our mission; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we acknowledge the opposite danger of disengaging from public issues and disregarding our obligation as citizens to encourage good, restrain evil, and thereby love our neighbors; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we refuse to compromise the reputation of Christ and the clarity of the gospel message, regardless of perceived political implications or potential loss of religious liberty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commit ourselves to model and encourage voices of truth, kindness, and gentleness, rather than those that stir up hostility, strife, dissensions, and factions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we repudiate as unworthy of Christian leadership any political engagement characterized by works of the flesh rather than fruit of the Spirit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we guard against binding the consciences of believers to support policies, vote for candidates, or engage politically in ways that exceed what Scripture requires; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we reaffirm our confidence in the sufficiency of prayer and proclamation of the Word to accomplish God's purposes among his people as we teach them to obey all Jesus' commands and equip them to serve as salt and light in society.

Resolution 2: On a Call for Civility in these United States

WHEREAS, article XV of *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000* exhorts "all Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society" (Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; Luke 4:18-21; Colossians 3:12-17); and

WHEREAS, article XVI of *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000* speaks of the "duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness" (Matthew 5:9, 38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Romans 12:18-19); and

WHEREAS, today's political climate is such that disputes and disagreements are widespread in these United States; and

WHEREAS, these disputes and disagreements have resulted in violence against civilians, police officers, politicians, and people engaged in worship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, commit to make the will of Jesus Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commend, in political debate and activity, righteous, nonviolent means and methods for the improvement of these United States and the establishment of righteousness among men; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commit ourselves to the priority of gospel proclamation, even as we discuss controversial issues (Matthew 28:19-20); and be it further

RESOLVED, that we seek to be at peace with all men as prescribed by Scripture (Romans 12:18); and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we will always be careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising our loyalty to Jesus Christ and His truth.

Resolution 3: On Justice Reform

WHEREAS, Scripture affirms that persons of all races are created in the image and likeness of God with equal dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:20, 9:5-6; Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 3:11); and

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches that our role in society is to be “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16), to be “doers of the Word” (James 1:22), and like the prophet Amos to seek, through God’s Word and our godly actions, to work to see “justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24); and

WHEREAS, the United States is a country whose Pledge of Allegiance states that we are “one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all,” so in addition to praying for authorities we must also actively encourage local churches, community leaders, elected officials, and law enforcement to work toward equal justice across all races and socio-economic statuses; and

WHEREAS, for all of the many virtues of the United States justice system, it is possible for both Christians and others holding positions of influence to be negligent in challenging or correcting, or complicit in failing to apply the law equally, resulting in, among other injustices, unequal sentencing of minorities and the poor; and

WHEREAS, a bipartisan coalition led by the White House, having seen the gravity of these concerns, has drafted legislation to address them that has cleared the House of Representatives and has been introduced to the Senate; and

WHEREAS, it is possible for policies and practices intended to help the most vulnerable to end up hurting the very persons they are intended to help; and

WHEREAS, individuals who enter the juvenile or adult penal system become more likely to re-enter it and less likely to become fully-functioning, flourishing, and contributing members of society, which is contrary to what Christians desire for all persons (Romans 13:4; 1 Timothy 2:2-3); and

WHEREAS, we are often unfamiliar with or uninformed regarding the aforementioned challenges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, express our appreciation for government officials and public servants who labor to enforce the laws of the United States faithfully, justly, and compassionately; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we realize we must become better informed regarding the aforementioned challenges; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we staunchly reaffirm the truth that persons of all races are created in the image and likeness of God with equal dignity and value; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we ardently call upon and pray for decision-makers at every level in the United States judicial system to apply the law equally, irrespective of race or socio-economic status; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commit to pray for all in authority, to uphold God's laws, and to devise ways to prevent injustices imposed upon persons of any race or socio-economic status; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we call to repentance all in positions of influence who are guilty of unjust application of the law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we encourage all in positions of influence to evaluate whether policies and practices intended to help the most vulnerable actually do so; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we support bills, policies, practices, and organizations in the state of Texas and beyond that work toward prudent justice reform, including sentencing and prison reform; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we call upon ourselves and indeed all Christians to end unfair and unjust treatment of any race or socio-economic status.

Resolution 4: On Our Physical Health

WHEREAS, while the great variety of foods of the earth is a gift from God (Genesis 1:29, 2:16-17, 9:3-4; Mark 7:19) and to be enjoyed (Proverbs 24:13; Ecclesiastes 2:24, 3:13), God created the good gift of our physical bodies (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7, 21-23), commanded us to steward well His creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:15), and to do all for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31); and

WHEREAS, stewarding our bodies well is one way to let our light shine before people (Matthew 5:14), to keep our behavior excellent among unbelievers (1 Peter 2:11-12), and one fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5:23); and

WHEREAS, the New Testament assumes that believers will have a level of self-control that would render them capable of practicing fasting as a spiritual discipline; and

WHEREAS, article XV of *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000* exhorts believers that “In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose . . . every form of greed, selfishness, and vice”; and

WHEREAS, all else being equal, a longer, healthier life is potentially of greater service to the Lord, His church, our families, and the world; and

WHEREAS, it is tempting in our culture either to neglect our physical health needlessly (sometimes leading to gluttony and wastefulness) or to idolize health and appearance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, ardently call upon and urge one another to consider prayerfully the stewardship of our physical health; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we aim to use not only our words, deeds, and resources, but also our actions and lifestyle – including how we steward our bodies – as means toward living as salt and light; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we consider how the resources we spend on physical overindulgence might be better spent on the well-being of our neighbors; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we realize and repent of the fact that we sometimes desire too strongly and spend time and effort too liberally on the pursuit of physical health; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that by God’s common grace working through our wholesome, wise choices, we aspire to live stronger, healthier, more balanced lives for God’s glory and for the good of our families, churches, and the world.

Resolution 5: On Abuse

WHEREAS, God has created every person—male and female—in His own image and with equal value and dignity (Genesis 1:26–27); and

WHEREAS, God abhors violence against the weak and defenseless and calls His people to defend the hurt and oppressed (Psalm 82:4), to stand for justice (Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 31:8–9), and to deliver victims of abuse from the hands of their oppressors (Proverbs 6:17; 24:10–12); and

WHEREAS, article XV of *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000* says that “We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick”; and

WHEREAS, abuse can be defined as any act or conscious failure to act resulting in imminent risk, serious injury, death, physical or emotional or sexual harm, or exploitation of another person; and

WHEREAS, current cultural trends have opened the door for victims to voice courageously their plight and seek justice; and

WHEREAS, we regret and deplore failures to protect the abused, failures that have occurred in evangelical churches and ministries, including such failures within our own denomination; and

WHEREAS, God has designed marriage, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article XVIII says “to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship”; and

WHEREAS, biblical headship blesses, honors, and protects wives and children and does not require them to submit to sin or to abuse (Ephesians 5:25–29; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:7; 5:3); and

WHEREAS, the biblical teaching on relationships between men and women neither supports nor fosters, but rather prevents and condemns, abuse (Mark 12:31; Romans 13:10; Ephesians 4:32); and

WHEREAS, God ordains civil government as His servant to us for good (Romans 13:4) and intends for us “to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God” (*The Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, Article XVII); and

WHEREAS, abuse is not only a sin but is also a destructive evil that distorts and disrupts the marriage covenant and the entire family and is a hallmark of the devil which must not be tolerated in the Christian community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12–13, 2018, condemn all forms of abuse and repudiate with a unified voice all abusive behavior as unquestionably sinful and under the just condemnation of our Holy God; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we acknowledge that spousal abuse dishonors the marriage covenant and fundamentally blasphemes the relationship between Christ and the church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we strongly urge abuse victims to contact civil authorities, remove themselves from danger, and seek shelter from their abusers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we extend compassion and support to all persons encountering the injustice of abuse, being careful to remind the abused that such injustice is undeserved and not a result of personal guilt or fault; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we call on all persons perpetrating and enabling abuse to repent and to confess their sin to Jesus Christ and to church authorities and to confess their crimes to civil authorities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we implore all persons to act decisively on matters of abuse, to intervene on behalf of the abused, to ensure their safety, to report allegations of abuse to civil authorities according to the laws of their state, and to pursue church discipline against impenitent abusers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we encourage leaders in our churches and entities to be faithful examples, through their words and actions, and to speak against the sin of all forms of abuse; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we call on pastors and ministry leaders to foster safe environments in which abused persons may both recognize the reprehensible nature of the abuse they suffered and reveal such abuse to pastors and ministry leaders in safety and expectation of being heard and helped; and be it further

RESOLVED, that church and ministry leaders have an obligation to implement policies and practices that protect against and confront any form of abuse; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we uphold the dignity of all human beings as image-bearers of God and the responsibility of all Christians to seek the welfare of the abused.

Resolution 6: On Posture of Christians Toward Refugees

WHEREAS, the essence of our mission as the church, as defined by the Great Commission, is to spread the gospel and make disciples among all nations (Matthew 28:18-21; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, our fundamental and eternal citizenship is the kingdom of heaven (Philippians 3:20); and

WHEREAS, Scripture affirms that persons of all races are created in the image and likeness of God with equal dignity and value (Genesis 9:5-6); and

WHEREAS, a refugee is defined under the laws of the United States as “any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality,

is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion”; and

WHEREAS, the laws of the United States prescribe a process of determining the validity of claims of refugee status, which typically progresses while individuals reside within the United States; and

WHEREAS, those claiming refugee status have often suffered religious persecution or governmental oppression in their nations of origin, and as a result are in many cases disillusioned by their religious beliefs and open to the message of love, mercy, and grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, express our appreciation for government officials and public servants who labor to enforce the laws of the United States faithfully, justly, and compassionately; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we acknowledge inadequacies in our refugee system and affirm good-faith efforts to resolve those inadequacies; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we repudiate any and all assaults on the dignity and humanity of God’s image-bearers, regardless of refugee status; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we commit ourselves to spread the gospel among those claiming refugee status throughout whatever time they reside in our communities during their legal adjudication process.

Resolution 7: On the History and Trajectory of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

WHEREAS, Twenty years ago, in 1998, 120 churches formed the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention; and,

WHEREAS, our fellowship now numbers 2,700; and,

WHEREAS, since the founding of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Jim Richards has served as our executive director; and,

WHEREAS, for 20 years Jim Richards has championed the core values of theological agreement, missiological focus, and a shared methodological approach as the strands that define the distinctive cooperative nature of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention; and,

WHEREAS, regarding theological agreement, the churches partnering with one another through the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention have, in forming a confessional fellowship of churches, all affirmed their agreement with *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000*; and

WHEREAS, regarding missiological focus, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention has built a lean

convention structure prioritizing missions and evangelism, deliberately choosing not to allow the support of institutions or the pursuit of secondary ministries to sap away funds, attention, time, or zeal away from the primary place of the missiological task; and,

WHEREAS, the need for a focus upon missions and evangelism in this age of declining numbers of baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention is self-evident; and,

WHEREAS, regarding methodological approach, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention has championed the convention method of missionary funding in general and the Cooperative Program in particular as a shared funding methodology capable of propelling Southern Baptist missionary efforts into the coming decades with strength; and,

WHEREAS, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention incrementally worked toward, eventually achieved, and has steadily maintained a state Cooperative Program budget that forwards 55 percent of Cooperative Program receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee for national and international causes, retaining only 45 percent of those gifts to fund ministry within the state; and,

WHEREAS, even while giving so generously to national and international causes, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention has launched, supported, or assisted healthy ministries addressing the diverse needs of Texas across every generation, gender, ethnicity, and regional grouping of churches, serving churches with needs as diverse as a search for a new pastor or recovery after a natural disaster; and,

WHEREAS, the core values that have served the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention are increasingly guiding other state conventions within the Southern Baptist family; and,

WHEREAS, the Southern Baptist Convention has amended its own constitution, now requiring that churches are only in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention if they have “a faith and practice which closely identifies with the [Southern Baptist] Convention’s adopted statement of faith,” thereby bringing within the Southern Baptist Convention’s governing documents the idea of a confessional fellowship of churches united by theological agreement; and,

WHEREAS, many other state conventions within the Southern Baptist family have in recent years reorganized their own ministries and have increased the percentage of the Cooperative Program receipts that they forward to national and international causes, bringing them closer to the level of Cooperative Program stewardship practiced by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, give thanks to God for the protection, guidance, growth, and blessing that He has given to the churches of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we reaffirm and commend to future generations of this fellowship of churches the core values of theological agreement, missiological focus, and shared methodological approach; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we humbly testify to sister state conventions, as we all navigate together a changing future for our family of churches, that these core values have served us well and that by them God has won for us a hopeful future.

Resolution 8: On Appreciation to Second Baptist Church of Houston

WHEREAS, the messengers to the 2018 meeting of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention have enjoyed a refreshing time of worship, encouragement, and fellowship; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge God's providence for all of these blessings; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the kind hospitality and assistance of the staff and leadership of Second Baptist Church of Houston to host this convention; and

WHEREAS, we gratefully acknowledge the generosity, extensive labor, and excellent leadership of the pastor, Ed Young, and the campus pastor, Mark Terry, and the church staff; and

WHEREAS, we gratefully acknowledge that area churches have also extended hospitality and provided volunteer assistance; and

WHEREAS, we also acknowledge the Lord's work in enabling our officers, committees, convention speakers, musicians, convention staff, volunteers, and messengers to conduct the affairs of this convention with dignity and a Christ-like spirit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, meeting in Houston, Texas, November 12-13, 2018, hereby express our profound gratitude to the Lord, and to all those He used to bring about a meeting characterized by evangelism, worship, and true Christian fellowship.