



Georgia Baptist Convention  
6405 Sugarloaf Parkway  
Duluth, GA 30097

## Georgia Baptist Convention Defends Religious Liberty, Calls on Atlanta Mayor to Reverse Discipline of Atlanta Fire Chief

**DULUTH, Dec. 15, 2014** — The [Georgia Baptist Convention](#) (GBC) is calling on the Christian community to “stand up for biblical principles and fellow believers who are punished or marginalized for their faith.”

The Duluth agency, which represents 1.4-million members statewide, felt called to respond to the recent 30-day suspension of Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran by Mayor Kasim Reed. The statement was issued by the GBC’s Public Affairs Committee on Dec. 9.

Cochran, on his own time and reflecting his personal religious convictions, penned a small self-published book for members of his church titled “Who Told You That You Were Naked?” The paperback drew the attention of the LGBT community for its stand on traditional marriage and sexual immorality.

Reed responded to the book’s statement, and the concern of the LGBT community, by suspending Cochran without pay, requiring him to attend sensitivity training, and prohibiting the distribution of the book on city property. His reprimand was released on [Facebook](#) where he immediately distanced himself from the Fire Chief’s book.

“I want to be clear that the material in Chief Cochran’s book is not representative of my personal beliefs, and is inconsistent with the Administration’s work to make Atlanta a more welcoming city for all of her citizens – regardless of their... religious beliefs,” according to the site.

No mention is made that Cochran’s statements are taken from Galatians 5:19-21 and includes definitions of, and warnings about promiscuity, idolatry, jealousy, hatred, strife, envy, dissensions, heresies, murder and drunkenness; among others.

Cochran wrote the faith-based book for men in his church as part of an ongoing Bible study that focused on sin and redemption through Jesus Christ. His opening acknowledgement states, “...my life is a testimony of the struggle with condemnation and how a man can grow from strength to strength, through diligent pursuit of fulfilling God’s purpose for his life through the Word of God.” He is a member of Elizabeth Baptist Church, which is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Upon learning of the punishment placed upon Cochran, the GBC's committee responded by issuing its own statement defending the Fire Chief and calling on Reed to:

- Acknowledge Chief Cochran's First Amendment Rights,
- Make a public apology for the suspension and grief it has caused the Chief and his family, and
- Restore Chief Cochran's pay and reputation as an honorable Fire Chief.

"It is time for believers to stand up for their religious beliefs, biblical principles and fellow Christians who are punished or marginalized for their faith," said Dr. J. Robert White, executive director, Georgia Baptist Convention. "GBC's Public Affairs Committee's statement is a call to action for all fellow believers to take a stand."

The statement further calls upon Christians and people of faith across Georgia to sign the related [petition](#) on the Georgia Baptist Convention website, support Chief Cochran by purchasing his book on [Amazon](#), and enlist as many churches and believers as possible to contact Mayor Reed to request that he reverse his decisions.

The Mayor can be contacted by email at [mkreed@atlantaga.gov](mailto:mkreed@atlantaga.gov), by phone at (404) 330-6100, or by mail at 55 Trinity Ave. Suite 2500, Atlanta, GA 30303.

## About Georgia Baptist Convention

The Georgia Baptist Convention is made up of autonomous, cooperating churches that partner together through the [Cooperative Program](#), special mission offerings and [mission efforts](#) to share Jesus Christ across Georgia, throughout North America, and around the world. Churches give through the [Cooperative Program](#) and the [State Missions Offering](#) to support the missionaries and ministries of the Georgia Baptist Convention. In turn, Georgia state missionaries provide assistance, training, encouragement, and support for the ministries of Georgia Baptist churches and associations. Churches are affiliated with the [Southern Baptist Convention](#) through their affiliation with the Georgia Baptist Convention. [www.gabaptist.org](http://www.gabaptist.org)

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