



RESOLUTION ON PASTORS, CULTURE, AND CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

Submitted by: Rusty Stewart, Messenger from Poplar Springs North Baptist Church, Dublin, GA

WHEREAS, Scripture directs Christ's followers, including spiritual leaders, to function as salt and light in the culture and to fulfill their civic responsibilities as Christian citizens (Matthew 5:13-16, 40-42; 17:24-27; 22:21; Romans 13:1-7); and

WHEREAS, the Old Testament contains many examples of spiritual leaders engaging culture and government, such as: Moses, who petitioned Pharaoh for the liberty of God's people (Exodus 5-12); Elijah, who confronted King Ahab for promoting idolatry and immorality (1 Kings 18); Isaiah, who condemned moral decay in the culture (Isaiah 1); Amos, who inveighed against injustice in society (Amos 5); and a host of other prophetic leaders; and

WHEREAS, the New Testament also contains examples of spiritual leaders engaging culture and government, such as: John the Baptist, who pointed out the adultery of a political ruler (Mark 6:17-18); the Lord Jesus, who encouraged the payment of taxes (Matthew 17:24-27; 22:21), but also challenged a government official (Luke 13:31-32); Peter, who faced off against the Jewish leadership restricting his freedom to preach (Acts 5:27-29); Paul, who insisted on justice from civil authorities (Acts 16:35-39); as well as others; and

WHEREAS, American history is replete with examples of spiritual leaders influencing culture and government, such as: Rev. Thomas Hooker, whose sermon served as the basis for the first constitution in America; Rev. Jonas Clarke, who wrote position papers on tyrannical British laws for the Massachusetts legislature and raised the militia that met the British army on Lexington Green behind his church; Rev. John Leland, the Baptist pastor who successfully lobbied James Madison to provide for freedom of religion in his proposed Bill of Rights; and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who valiantly fought for racial justice and civil rights and was martyred for his bold preaching and actions; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists have been blessed with many prophetic pastors in years past whose pulpits flamed with righteousness, such as W. A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, Jerry Falwell, and others; and

WHEREAS, Houston Mayor Annise Parker subpoenaed sermons that challenged Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, a legal measure that would have allowed transgender people to use public restrooms of the gender in which they identify themselves, and while public pressure convinced the Mayor to withdraw the subpoenas, her initial decision reflects a growing attempt to silence America's pulpits and classify sermons addressing certain Biblical subjects as hate speech; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Eric Walsh, who is also a lay minister in the Seventh-Day Adventist denomination, was hired as District Health Director by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) in 2014. Within days of being hired, the DPH requested that Dr. Walsh submit copies of his sermons, for which Dr. Walsh complied; and within one week of being hired, the DPH fired Dr. Walsh because of the content of his sermons. Subsequently Dr. Walsh's attorneys filed an official charge of discrimination. As a result of the complaint the Georgia Attorney General's office requested that Dr. Walsh submit his sermon notes and transcripts and all validations of his credentials as a minister; and

WHEREAS, the public outcry was so great, that the Attorney General's office has since withdrawn the request that Dr. Walsh submit his sermon notes and transcripts; and

WHEREAS, there is a great need for a new generation of pastors to take the lead in courageously confronting an American culture and government that is hurtling downward to new depths of moral decadence and for pastors to stand firm in the face of continued threats to the sanctity of human life, the sacredness of marriage between one man and one woman, to the Biblical identity of men and women as they were created by God and the fundamental freedom to express our faith in the public arena; now,



THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Savannah, GA, November 14-15, call on Gov. Nathan Deal's newly appointed Attorney General, Chris Carr, to not only withdraw his legal demands with Dr. Walsh, but also settle the case, and refrain from allowing any other such cases to happen in Georgia.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge our pastors to preach the whole counsel of God, not only passionately inviting people to Jesus, but also prophetically declaring biblical truth concerning the burning moral issues that are being debated in the culture and government without fear of government reprisals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage pastors to model and promote informed and active Christian citizenship among the membership of our churches; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we support our pastors as they lead their congregations to engage their communities, our culture, and our nation as salt and light, showing the way to the only hope for America and for the world, who is Jesus Christ.