

REPORT OF THE 2016 COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

Members: Steve Foster, Chair; Dion Brown, Timothy (Andy) Brown,
Troy Dykes, Bill Gammon, Alfred Lands

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION

Submitted by the 2016 Committee on Resolutions

WHEREAS, the 195th Annual Session of the Georgia Baptist Convention met at Calvary Baptist Temple, in Savannah, Georgia on November 14 and 15, 2016, in which the messengers representing Georgia Baptist Churches were greeted with Christian grace and warm Southern hospitality; and

WHEREAS, the Calvary Temple church staff, membership and many volunteers have tirelessly served the needs of the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention, living out the truth of this verse: *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24 NKJV)*.

WHEREAS, the musicians, choirs and worship leaders have provided thrilling praise and uplifting celebration in every convention session; and

WHEREAS, the Savannah Baptist Association of churches have demonstrated second-mile cooperation, service and hospitality in preparation for and during the meeting;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers of the 195th session of the Georgia Baptist Convention offer sincere appreciation to the leaders and members of Calvary Baptist Temple together with the churches of the Savannah Baptist Association; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the 195th session of the Georgia Baptist Convention express our loving appreciation for and extend our heartfelt blessing to Rev. Thomas Hammond, president of the Georgia Baptist Convention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of this 195th session of the Georgia Baptist Convention extend honor and thanksgiving to the officers and platform leaders for their guidance and service throughout this meeting. We express gratitude to Mrs. Karen Hammond and family for their loving support of our president and this Convention over the past year; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also express our sincere thanks and gratitude to God for 24 years of loyal service provided by our esteemed Executive Director, Dr. J. Robert White. We express appreciation to all those who serve on the Georgia Baptist Executive Committee, as well as all Georgia Baptist Convention staff who loyally serve the causes of Christ here in Georgia and around the world; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we commend the Committee on Order of Business and Dr. Jerry Peele, Chairman, for the preparation of this inspirational program; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this Convention join our beloved President and Executive Director in continuing to emphasize and respond to the theme, *“Unite Georgia”* as expressed in Philippians 1:27, *“...striving together for the faith of the Gospel...”*

RESOLUTION ON A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Submitted by Brad Whitt, Messenger from Abilene Baptist Church, Martinez, GA

WHEREAS, the crisis of illegal immigration in the United States impacts tens of millions of people in many different ways; and

WHEREAS, Christians have responsibilities in two realms: as citizens of the nation (Romans 13:1; Matthew 22:21) and as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom (Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9); and

WHEREAS, as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom and members of local congregations of that Kingdom, we also have both Old and New Testament mandates to follow: do not mistreat the alien living among you (Leviticus 19:33); act compassionately toward those who are in need (Matthew 25:34-40); love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39); and do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matthew 7:12); and

WHEREAS, as citizens of the nation, Christians are under biblical mandate to respect the divine institution of government and its just laws, and Christians have a right to expect the government to fulfill its ordained mandate to enforce those laws (Romans 13:1-7); and

WHEREAS, the federal government's failure to fulfill its responsibility in the area of illegal immigration, during both Democratic and Republican administrations, has caused severe consternation among a sizable constituency of Americans and has led to the crisis we now face; and

WHEREAS, it is a violation of federal law to bring in, harbor, shield from detection, transport, employ or encourage an unauthorized immigrant to remain in these United States or to engage in any conspiracy to commit any of the preceding acts (8 U.S. Code § 1324); and

WHEREAS, the federal government has not only failed to control the borders but failed in its responsibility to enforce the current immigration laws; and

WHEREAS, there are reportedly 12 million illegal immigrants and counting who are living and working in America; and

WHEREAS, many of these illegal immigrants have been exploited by employers and by others in society, contrary to James 5:4; now,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Savannah, Georgia, urge the federal government to provide for the security of our nation by controlling and securing our borders, and efficiently and humanely enforcing our immigration and employment laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the United States Congress to address seriously and swiftly the question of how to deal realistically and compassionately with the illegal immigration crisis in a way that will restore trust among the citizenry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the federal and state government to enforce all existing immigration laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge citizen Christians to follow the biblical principle of caring for the foreigners among us (Deuteronomy 24:17-22) and the command of Christ to be a neighbor to those in need of assistance (Luke 10:30-37), regardless of their racial or ethnic background, country of origin, or legal status; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage Christian churches to act redemptively and reach out to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all immigrants and within the law, to offer English As a Second Language and Citizenship classes; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we encourage all Georgia Baptists to make the most of the tremendous opportunity for evangelism, ministry and discipleship and join our Master on His mission to seek and save those who are lost (Luke 19:10), no matter what their status.

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.