

REPORT OF THE 2017 COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

Members: Ron Shiver, Chair, Darien Brooks, Philip Corbean,
Brad Ellington, Cody McNutt, Freddie Smith,

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION

Submitted by the 2017 Committee on Resolutions

WHEREAS, the 196th Annual Session of the Georgia Baptist Convention met at North Metro First Baptist Church, in Lawrenceville, Georgia on November 13 and 14, 2017, in which the messengers representing Georgia Baptist Churches were greeted with Christian grace and warm Southern hospitality; and

WHEREAS, the North Metro First Baptist 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 Gwinnett Metro 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 196th annual session of the Georgia Baptist Convention offer sincere appreciation to the leaders and members of North Metro First Baptist Church together with the churches of the Gwinnett Metro Baptist Association; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the 196th 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 196th 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. Kerri Hammond and family for their loving support of our president and this Convention over the past two years; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also express our sincere thanks and gratitude to God for 25 years of loyal service provided by our esteemed Executive Director, Dr. J. Robert White, and the faithful support of his beloved wife, Mrs. Janice White. We express appreciation to all those who serve on the Georgia Baptist Executive Committee, as well as all Georgia Baptist Mission Board 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. Ken Alford, 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, “*WIN Georgia*” as expressed in Matthew 9:37 “...*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few;*”

RESOLUTION ON CHURCH-PROVIDED PROTECTION BENEFITS

Submitted by: Dr. Jim Perdue, Messenger, Second Baptist Church, Warner Robins

WHEREAS, I Timothy 5:17 states leaders of the ministry are worthy of double honor; and

WHEREAS, the early church leaders encouraged the churches to take financial care of their leaders, (1 Cor. 9:14; I Thessalonians 5:12); and

WHEREAS, a looming financial crisis has developed for ministers and church staffs in their later years of ministry and retirement; and

WHEREAS, only 42 percent of Georgia Baptist Mission Board churches have a staff member in the Church Retirement Plan; and

WHEREAS, even if the staff member has a retirement account, the average account balance of a 65-year-old participant is only \$50,000; and

WHEREAS, the inadequate retirement funds are causing a growing number of staff members to retire at or near poverty levels; and

WHEREAS, a staff member needs to contribute a minimum of 15 percent of his salary and housing allowance to have sufficient funds to live near the same standard of living as today; and

WHEREAS, a staff member needs at least 10 times his compensation in life insurance to adequately protect his family from financial disaster; and

WHEREAS, the average first time applicant for relief funds from Mission:Dignity is a pastor’s widow at 77 years of age; and

WHEREAS, many churches do not provide adequate life insurance benefits for church staff members; and

WHEREAS, the Social Security system is wholly inadequate to provide sufficient retirement income and protection benefits;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that providing for God’s full-time staff members should not be the sole responsibility of the government, but also the responsibility of God’s church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, November 13-14, 2017, encourage churches to take the leadership role in providing protection benefits for their full-time staff members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage churches to offer a church-provided retirement benefit contribution of at least 10 percent of compensation package for each full-time staff member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage churches to offer a church-provided life insurance protection benefit of a minimum of four times total compensation for each full-time staff member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage churches to support annually the Mission:Dignity ministry to help retired church workers and their widows struggling with financial hardships; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the ministerial and financial leadership of member churches.

RESOLUTION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE MINISTRIES

Submitted by: John Yarborough, Messenger from Concord Baptist Church, Clermont, GA

WHEREAS, in the gospel we have received the "Spirit of adoption" whereby we are no longer spiritual orphans but are now beloved children of God and joint heirs with Christ ([John 14:18](#); [Romans 8:12-25](#); [Galatians 3:27-4:9](#); [Ephesians 1:5](#)); and

WHEREAS, the God we now know as our Father reveals himself as a "father of the fatherless" ([Psalm 68:5](#)) who grants mercy to orphans ([Deuteronomy 10:18](#); [Hosea 14:3](#)); and

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus welcomes the little ones ([Luke 18:15-17](#)), pleads for the lives of the innocent ([Psalm 72:12-14](#)), and shows us that we will be held accountable for our response to "the least of these brothers of mine" ([Matthew 25:40](#)); and

WHEREAS, the Scripture defines "pure and undefiled religion" as "to look after orphans and widows in their distress" ([James 1:27](#)); and

WHEREAS, we believe that marriage is both a covenant relationship and an institution established by God, not a human social construct, and that children are best reared in homes that follow the biblical model of one biological man and one biological woman united in holy matrimony (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5: 22-33); and

WHEREAS, same-sex couples have directed lawsuits against faith-based providers simply because they will not compromise their beliefs that foster children and adopted children should be placed with heterosexual married couples according to the biblical model; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), recognized different views on this subject of same-sex marriage and upheld the right of religious dissent in word and deed: "Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered. The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons." *Id.* at 2607; and

WHEREAS, some States disregard this clear guidance to protect the free exercise of religion by coercing religious citizens and their organizations to do what their faith forbids or

prevent them from doing what their faith requires, other States simply fail to provide legal clarity in state laws, thus making faith-based organizations vulnerable to law suits; and

WHEREAS, in at least three States (Illinois, Massachusetts, and California) and Washington, D.C., faith-based child-placing agencies have shut down rather than comply with State policies that required them to compromise their sincerely held religious beliefs regarding the biblical view of the family; and

WHEREAS, such official hostility to religious organizations is contrary to their ability to "uniquely contribute to the pluralism of American society by their religious activities." *Walz v. Tax Commission of City of New York*, 397 U.S. 664, 689 (1970); and

WHEREAS, the free exercise of religion "implicates more than just freedom of belief. It means, too, the right to express those beliefs and to establish one's religious (or nonreligious) self-definition in the political, civic, and economic life of our larger community." *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, 134 S. Ct. 2751, 2785 (2014) (Kennedy, J., concurring). It also includes the right to abstain from speech and participation in that which offends one's faith as upheld in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); and

WHEREAS, faith-based child-placing agencies have the right to free exercise of religion under the U. S. Constitution and under well-settled principles of constitutional law, this right includes the freedom to abstain from conduct that conflicts with an agency's sincerely held religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, the Office of the Attorney General, in its October 6, 2017 Memorandum wrote, "In the United States, the free exercise of religion is not a mere policy preference to be traded against other policy preferences. It is a fundamental right," and the letter noted, "The Free Exercise Clause protects against 'indirect coercion or penalties on the free exercise of religion' just as surely as it protects against 'outright prohibitions' on religious exercise. *Trinity Lutheran*, 582 U.S. at ___ (slip op. at 11);" and

WHEREAS, Georgia Baptists are extremely concerned that the State of Georgia is one of those States that is leaving faith-based organizations, as well as individuals, vulnerable to law suits by failing to provide specific statutory clarity protecting the religious liberty; and

WHEREAS, faith-based child placing agencies should be able to continue to provide adoption and foster care services according to their long-standing mission statements which have proven to be of great benefit to children and families over the years;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, November 13-14, 2017, will not compromise its faithful adherence to God's design for marriage and the family even if the State should fail to honor the unique role of faith-based child-placing agencies or fail to protect their religious free exercise rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Georgia Baptists appreciate the efforts recently made by the Georgia Senate Judiciary Committee that adopted Sen. William Ligon's amendment to HB 159. This even-handed amendment would allow faith-based agencies, as well as secular mission-based agencies, to continue operating according to their mission statements, thus our free exercise of religion and freedom of association rights would be protected; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Georgia Baptists are disappointed that such a comprehensive bill that deals with the needs of the vulnerable children in Georgia originally had no protections whatsoever for faith-based organizations, and still does not specifically protect religious liberty, and that such an omission should be corrected with affirmative language which honors the free exercise of religion and freedom of association of all faith-based child placement agencies; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that our Executive Director, Dr. J. Robert White, send a copy of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Georgia, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House and the sitting state senators and representatives who represent the people of Georgia.

RESOLUTION ON THE MORAL, SOCIAL, AND PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS CREATED BY PORNOGRAPHY

Submitted by: Tanya Ditty, Messenger from Roswell Street Baptist Church, Marietta, GA

WHEREAS, God calls people to holiness and Christ has specifically summoned His followers to sexual purity (Matthew 5:27–28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5; 1 Corinthians 6:18); and

WHEREAS, sexual sin violates God’s Holy standards and is grievous to the soul (Romans 1:24-25); and

WHEREAS, pornography has devastated many of our families and churches, leaving countless divorces and broken homes in its wake; and

WHEREAS, increasing numbers of men and women confess pornography addiction and enslavement in multiple forms; and

WHEREAS, due to advances in technology and the universal availability of the Internet, young children are exposed to pornography at an alarming rate, with 27 percent of older millennials reporting that they first viewed pornography before puberty, and this exposure leads to low self-esteem, eating disorders, an increase in problematic sexual activity at younger ages, and an increased desire to engage in risky sexual behavior as young adolescents; and

WHEREAS, pornography is contributing to the hyper-sexualization of teens, and even children, in our society; and

WHEREAS, children and youth are exposed to pornography that often distorts their sexual understanding and reshapes their sexual patterns, and teaches them that women and girls are to be used as objects and commodities; and

WHEREAS, pornography normalizes violence and abuse of women and children, depicting rape and other abuses as acceptable; and

WHEREAS, the sex industry is exploitative in its very nature, equating violence toward women and children with sex, which increases the demand for sex trafficking, prostitution, and child sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, pornography is creating a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, the detrimental effects of pornography on the user include emotional, mental, and medical illnesses; deviant sexual attraction; difficulty forming or maintaining intimate relationships; abnormal brain development and functioning; problematic or harmful sexual behaviors; and addiction;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, November 13-14, 2017, express our deep grief over the widespread devastation inflicted by the pornography industry in our churches and communities; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we commit ourselves as disciples of Christ to lives of purity in thought, word, and deed; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we call on Georgia Baptist churches to continue to expand efforts to teach the whole counsel of God regarding sexual purity, human dignity, biblical gender roles, and the dangers of pornography; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we recognize the moral, social, and public health crises created by pornography and acknowledge the need for education, prevention, research, and policy change at the community and societal level to address the epidemic that is harming the people of our state; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we call on government authorities to enact and enforce laws that restrict all forms of pornography, particularly those that include and exploit women and minors; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage Christian families to exercise deliberate care and concern for instructing our children how to wisely use online resources for good and to show appropriate discernment in protecting our children from harmful influences; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we commend the good news that Christ is fully able to deliver and restore those who have fallen into sexual sin who look to Him in faith and repentance, and call our churches to foster a culture of grace, mercy, and restoration.

RESOLUTION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING*

Submitted By: Frank Cox, Messenger from North Metro Baptist Church, Lawrenceville, GA.

WHEREAS, human trafficking is criminal activity in which human beings are treated as possessions to be controlled and exploited through the use of force, threats of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of involuntary subjection to labor or commercial sex acts (see Trafficking Victims Protection Acts of 2000 and 2013); and

WHEREAS, the form of slavery known as human trafficking knows no borders and preys on victims of any age, race, gender, or nationality, involving as many as an estimated 800,000 persons being transported from place to place each year into some form of forced labor, including about 17,500 persons who are trafficked into the United States each year; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that as many as 45,000,000 persons worldwide are now being held in some form of slavery, including commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, child labor, and forced organ harvesting, producing annual profits of over \$32 billion; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking preys on the poor and the most vulnerable members of a society, especially women and children, the overwhelming majority of whom are younger than 24 years old, and many who are young children; and

WHEREAS, about 1.2 million children are trafficked every year, with two children being sold into slavery every minute; and

WHEREAS, in Metro Atlanta, approximately 7,000 men pay for sex with 350-400 adolescent females each month, many of whom are generally first trapped in the sex marketplace at an average age of 12-14 years old, and who are typically purchased in the suburbs rather than in the inner city or near the airport; and

WHEREAS the average sex trafficker in the Atlanta area earns an average of \$33,000 per week exploiting vulnerable females, both adult and underage, and both Georgia and Metro Atlanta are universally considered to have some of the worst sex trafficking problems in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The irresponsible use of obscene explicit sexual material through various media is promoted in cultures around the world, thus perpetuating demand for selfish sexual gratification, reducing the stigma of commercial sex, and creating a demand for sexual slavery; and

WHEREAS, The Bible describes each individual as being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), affirms the sanctity and dignity of all human life (Psalm 8:4–5), and calls on believers to speak up for those who cannot defend themselves (Proverbs 31:8–9); now,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, November 13-14, 2017, commit to pray for and aid the victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge all Georgia Baptists to educate themselves and others about the various expressions of modern-day slavery, how to prevent it, and how to minister to those who have been victimized by it; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we commend the Georgia Baptist Children's Home, Georgia Baptist churches and individuals who are already bringing healing and restoration to victims of trafficking in the name of Jesus Christ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage Georgia Baptists to support agencies like the Georgia Baptist Children's Home and other ministries that help rescue and rehabilitate victims of trafficking; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Georgia Baptists to support public policies at the local, state, national, and international level which combat human trafficking; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage tougher penalties for those who sell and those who solicit in the sex trafficking industry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we affirm the important work of persons in law enforcement, education, medicine, counseling, and other professions who address human trafficking through their assigned responsibilities, pledging our prayerful support.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we affirm the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate hope of truly changing the lives of the people who are participating in this victimization and helping the lives of those victims who have been exploited.

*Estimated numbers are resourced from ERLC of the SBC, and Operation Liberate.

RESOLUTION ON EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

Submitted by: Josh Saefkow, Messenger from Flat Creek Baptist Church, Fayetteville, GA

WHEREAS, the Bible affirms the personhood, sanctity, dignity and value of every human being from the moment of conception, as evidenced by the fact that we are created in the Image of God and our being known by God while being formed in the womb (Genesis 1:26-27, James 3:9, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:13-15,35,36); and

WHEREAS, all innocent human life must be respected and protected regardless of race, sex, age or condition of dependency and regardless of manner of conception, and are persons of equal and immeasurable worth and dignity (2 Kings 24: 3,4, Psalms 106:37-39, 1 Corinthians 10:20); and

WHEREAS, Georgia Baptists have historically affirmed biblical teaching regarding the sanctity of human life; and

WHEREAS, a growing "quality of life" ethic has led to increasing acceptance of euthanasia and assisted suicide in the United States;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention, meeting in Lawrenceville, Georgia, November 13-14, 2017 affirm the biblical prohibition against the taking of innocent human life by another person, or oneself, through euthanasia or assisted suicide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in light of the fact that the end of life may be painful, we urge scientists and physicians to continue their research into more effective pain management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage hospitals, nursing care facilities, and hospices to increase their efforts to keep dying persons as comfortable as possible and call on Christians to help provide companionship and appropriate physical and spiritual ministry to persons who are dying; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we oppose efforts to designate food and water as "extraordinary treatment," and urge that nutrition and hydration continue to be viewed as compassionate and ordinary medical care and humane treatment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we reject as appropriate any action which, of itself or by intention, causes a person's death; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we call upon federal, state, and local governments to prosecute under the law physicians or others who practice euthanasia or assist patients to commit suicide.