

CBF preamble restores reference to Jesus

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Leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship were expected to add a preamble to the organization's constitution, restoring explicit references to Jesus Christ and the Great Commission deleted in July.

The proposed preamble, approved by the CBF Coordinating Council's legal committee and advisory council, was to have been presented to the full council at its Oct. 13-14 meeting in Atlanta.

Leaders hoped the move would quiet critics both within the Fellowship and beyond who complained when references to Jesus were deleted from the earlier document.

The recommended preamble states: "As a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches, we celebrate our faith in the One Triune God. We gladly declare our allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and to his gospel as we seek to be the continuing presence of Christ in this world. Our passion is to obey the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40) and the Great Commission

(Matthew 28:19-20) of our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to uphold Baptist principles of faith and practice as we partner with one another and other Christians.”

At its June 30-July 1 general assembly in Grapevine, the Fellowship voted to approve revisions to its governing documents, but not before several participants objected that the revised constitution and bylaws omitted explicit references to Jesus and his Great Commission—the command to share the gospel and make disciples.

The approved constitution says the Fellowship's purpose is “to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission. The Fellowship shall fulfill its purpose in keeping with its commitments to the historic Baptist principles of soul freedom, Bible freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom; to biblically based global missions; to a resource model for serving churches; to justice and reconciliation; to lifelong learning and ministry; to trustworthiness; and to effectiveness.”

Previously, the purpose statement mentioned bringing together Baptists and calling out God's gifts in individuals “in order that the gospel of Jesus Christ will be spread throughout the world in glad obedience to the Great Commission.”

The general assembly defeated two motions to send the purpose statement back to the Coordinating Council so members could consider restoring references to Christ and the Great Commission after CBF leaders insisted those commitments were implied.

Almost immediately after the vote, some Southern Baptist Convention leaders criticized the action. They pointed out many moderate Baptists previously had critiqued the SBC for removing a reference in the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message to Jesus Christ as the criterion for biblical

interpretation. They also cited it as evidence of alleged liberalism and lack of commitment to evangelism within the CBF.

Jack Glasgow, pastor of Zebulon Baptist Church in Zebulon, N.C., and a member of the Coordinating Council, contacted CBF Moderator Joy Yee to recommend a preamble that declared the Fellowship's theological and biblical reason for being.

Yee and CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal declined comment before the Coordinating Council acted. Glasgow was not available for comment.

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