

# Texas Baptist Forum

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### **New Baptist Covenant**

I read with extreme interest regarding the convocation for the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant, designed to unite North American Baptists next year ([Jan. 22](#)).

If the best “laymen” that could be found to accomplish this task are Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, then the convocation is doomed before it ever meets.

• [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

Letters are welcomed. Send them to [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com); 250 words maximum.



*"I believe in the culture war. And you know what? If I have to take a side in the culture war, I'll take their side. Because if you give me the choice of Paris Hilton or Jesus, I'll take Jesus."*

**Alexandra Pelosi**

Filmmaker, discussing her new film, Friends of God, about evangelical Christians (New York Times/RNS)

*"I think about God a lot more than ever, though I used to ask him, 'Help me make a good jump.'"*

**Evel Knievel**

Retired stuntman (USA Today/RNS)

*"I don't see how we can justify the death of one more American soldier in the cause of a 'democracy' such as the one on display at the execution of Saddam Hussein. Let's bring the troops home."*

**David Gushee**

Professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. (ABP)

*"Forgo anger, tobacco, intoxication and gluttony in favor of exercise, humility, charity, prayer and patience."*

**Nicholas Kao Se-tsean**

At 110 years old, one of the world's oldest priests, on his secrets for long life (Ecumenical News International/RNS)

If Clinton is a Baptist, then I am a former president. Carter may be a Baptist, but his extreme leftist politics make him an odd choice to lead this distinguished group of 80 leaders. It is noted that his Baptist church recently ordained his wife, Rosalynn, as a deacon, in direct violation of New Testament teachings on this subject.

Seems to me that if Baptists really want this thing to work, then they need to select better leaders, not “lightning rods,” for goodness’ sake.

Neal Murphy

San Augustine

Much excitement and anticipation make it hard for me to contain my emotions regarding the convocation for the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant to take place in early 2008.

The time is far spent for “traditional Baptists” of sound theology and upright intentions to stand together as a single unit. The real voices of Baptists throughout our hemisphere have continued to demonstrate care and compassion for the spiritual and social ills that plague our country and our world.

One must admit, the message of our Lord’s love and compassion has been “hijacked” by those whose agenda has bent the ears of our critics, who have pointed the finger of ridicule, and who have claimed the “fundamentalist banner” of exclusion and ecclesiastical control.

The gathering of Baptists of all ethnic hues with a single focus makes the cause of the convocation meritorious and courageous. As I read about this meeting, I thought: “Finally, we are taking a step in the direction of reclaiming our autonomy. That’s the Baptist way!”

Michael Evans

Mansfield

It's interesting the response from Baptist leaders to this effort to unite Baptists led by Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

Remember this—everything Clinton does and says has a political agenda. He is all about politics and enhancing his own legacy. Carter may seem to be this great statesman who travels the world on behalf of humanity, but like Clinton, he has a political agenda as well.

The damage these two men did to our country with their liberal, anti-family judicial appointments should cause all Christians to strongly analyze anything they do or say.

Is it a coincidence that this initiative to unite Baptists will be occurring in a year when Hillary Clinton will be running for president and they realize the necessity of winning the conservative and evangelical vote? I think not.

Don't be taken in by these guys. What they say may seem noble, but their ulterior motivation is to advance the cause of the Democratic Party.

Steve Kent

Dallas

The goal of the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta is “to demonstrate Baptist harmony, based around the themes Jesus preached on in his inaugural sermon, recorded in the fourth chapter of Luke’s Gospel. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said: ‘The Spirit of the Lord ... has

anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.'"

To those of us profoundly grieved by the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979 and its ensuing divisiveness, it comes as no surprise that SBC leaders are declining, regrettably, to participate in the celebration. Their widely publicized goal, as opposed to the celebration goal, is to "go for the jugular." May they weep and repent when they read Luke 9:54-56.

Peace, please.

Jim Brokenbek

Amarillo

### **Executive Board**

I've waited since November for someone to clarify what actually happened at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting concerning the [controversial out-of-order ruling](#) of a motion made from the floor.

Prior to the annual meeting, the BGCT Executive Board voted to (1) initiate action to recover funds lost in the church starting scandal and (2) proceed with legal action against the wrong doers if to do so was cost-effective. This decision was to be made by the president of the convention, chairman of the Executive Board, executive director and BGCT lawyers.

The motion from the floor during the convention was basically to do the same and would have been duplicating. The issue already had been addressed by the Executive Board. I wish this had been explained at the time.

The passion of the moment and the need for the embarrassing personal attack to stop had a great influence on the ruling. The BGCT annual meeting in session always has top priority to conduct convention business. The Executive Board is composed of servants, elected by the convention, to represent Texas Baptists when the convention is not in session.

This explanation may be simplified, but it certainly is between the bar ditches.

Dan Griffith

Haskell

As a layperson who attended the BGCT annual meeting in Dallas, I am interested in fair reporting of the event. Much has been said about how to handle the investigation into the use of Valley church starting funds. It is a sensitive issue, and problems on our border are some of the gravest concerns our nation faces now. We must continue our Christian ministries in the Rio Grande Valley.

The cautious but stern recommendations made by the Executive Board offered a humane, thoughtful and judicious plan for pursuing this ongoing investigation. It was clear that a huge majority of our convention messengers did trust their wise and cautious approach. Appreciation and prayers are offered for our Executive Board members and Executive Director Charles Wade, who serve in humility, trustworthiness and wisdom. Thanks to each of them for their service in a difficult matter that involves far more than money.

Having been involved in volunteer mission trips to the Valley during the last four years, I have learned that plans made in advance for work to be done there will likely change by the time we get there. Gifts given for one

thing may be more desperately needed for something else. Needs arise daily. Among the poor living in the Valley, there is some fear and distrust of authority figures. An investigation will be most difficult.

The battle is the Lord's. May we "be still and know" him as we seek guidance at this time.

Harriet Carrell

Waterwood

### **To drink or not to drink?**

I believe there is more pertinent information to be considered for the cause of "preaching total abstinence" and practicing it ([Jan. 8](#)).

Underage drinking was only briefly touched on. Here is a fact that rocked my world less than a year ago. Over 1,000 metropolitan, suburban and small communities across the county were surveyed on the major cause of death among our youth. The response was 100 percent: "More of our young people are killed by alcohol and alcohol-related occurrences than all other illegal and legal drugs combined."

So, wake up, Baptists. This is a problem, and it's not going away. If "preaching total abstinence" can save just one child's life, then please, by all means, let us all not just preach total abstinence, but let us practice what we preach.

"Preaching total abstinence" from alcohol in the context of example rather than legalism is the way to go. But our example must always be Jesus when applicable, rather than any patriarch profile of the Old or New Testament.

The context in Jesus is that of a worthy sacrifice, when we understand that

sacrifice means giving up something of value for something of greater value, as Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Larry Judd

Dickinson

Jesus and his apostles drank real wine, as did others then and since, to avoid illness from bad water. Paul (1 Timothy 5:23) prescribed wine in place of water to prevent illness.

Wine was the safe sacramental drink for 1,869 years. Then, Thomas Welch learned to preserve grape juice by pasteurization to prevent it from going bad. Welch, an anti-alcohol Methodist, promoted his safe grape juice to replace communion wine for both religious and business reasons. Welch instigated the safe alcohol-free Lord's Supper.

Harold Flynn

Houston

### **Embryonic stem cells**

One of the ironies of the argument about stem cell sources turns on the fact parents with a brain-dead child who has no possibility of life are honored for allowing organs to be donated so that others can have a chance to live.

However, many more parents find themselves with frozen embryos who have no chance at life, and they can only have them washed down a drain.

I suppose that it is a "slippery slope" issue, but the two cases seem similar.



Bennett Willis

Lake Jackson

## **Abstaining**

I, too, had an “up tight” Baptist upbringing, and all through high school maintained an anti- or condemnation, even judgmental, attitude of all the ills considered sinful—drinking, smoking, dipping, bad language.

ONLINE  
ONLY

Once in the collegiate world, I found I was not prepared to handle social pressure of these vices and fell prey to the temptation to test their path. The next three years changed the course of my life and the people in my life.

While I believe [abstaining](#) from these vices and living for the Lord is the only way to pursue life, we as Christians cannot forget that to God sin is sin at any level. James 4:17 says, “To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.” That’s a pretty basic definition of sin.

While we are in the world, we must realize our place in God’s plan is to live the abundant life, but be careful not to fall into a judgmental attitude, remembering the people around us struggling with the more noticeable or overt sin, and those who do not know Jesus are the target of our ministry.

John S. H. Ryker

Bixby, Okla.

Regarding Edward Clark’s letter ([Jan. 22](#)), what kind of true Christian

“detests” anyone, for any reason? According to my dictionary, “detest” means to loathe or hate. This word probably shouldn’t even be in a Christian’s vocabulary.

ONLINE  
ONLY

Didn’t Jesus tell us, over and over again, that the second-greatest commandment is “to love our neighbor as ourselves”?

In my opinion, this exemplifies one of the biggest problems in the Baptist church (and many other churches) today: We do not walk our talk. We are hypocrites and Pharisees, professing to love all sinners (as Jesus did) but we do not possess the desire to actually do it, nor do we actually practice it.

What a sad state of affairs!

Debra Matlock

Quinlan

### **The Carter-Clinton Covenant**

I am abashed at [your position](#) to stand with the likes of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

ONLINE  
ONLY

Have you read any of their books? Do you know where they stand on issues? They are both committed to creating big government and eroding the rights the people. They think that getting religious groups, such as Texas Baptists and the Southern Baptist Convention, to back them will contribute to their own power. They are loud voices who want to be heard for their much speaking.

Empty words for itching ears. Beware!!!!

Les Bailey

Killeen

Does the Baptist General Convention of Texas really need to be involved with the North American Baptist Fellowship and all the groups that are tossed into that group? Will this involvement really make the BGCT a better servant of Jesus?

A small rectangular logo with a black border. Inside, the words "ONLINE" and "ONLY" are stacked vertically in a yellow, sans-serif font.

After reading the statements of different pastors (Jan. 22) that the North American Baptist Fellowship does not want to be politically involved, why were President Carter and President Clinton chosen to be spokesmen for the Celebration of the New Baptist Covenant? The group is already politically involved.

Joan Petri

San Antonio