

Texas Baptist Forum

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No 'baggage' carried

Although I was not a voting member of the Baptist General Convention of Texas executive director search committee, I was part of the process to recommend Randel Everett to the Executive Board.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them
to
marvknox@baptiststandard.com;
250 words maximum.



"I don't give a rip about the IRS. I don't believe in the separation of church and state, and I believe the IRS should stay out of church business."

Wiley Drake

Former Southern Baptist Convention vice president, on possible IRS censure for his endorsement of presidential candidate Mike Huckabee (ABP)
"Trying to turn God into some sort of heavenly hit man is repugnant. There is more than a whiff of the Taliban in this action."

Barry Lynn

Executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church & State, responding to Drake, who told supporters to pray for God to curse Americans United staffers after they asked the IRS to investigate him for allegedly improper politicking (RNS)
"This problem can no longer be a back-burner issue for evangelicals. ... It is time to spend our energies helping create a better national health-care system."

Christianity Today

An editorial in the evangelical publication (RNS)

When I read the letter written to the Standard by Joe Worley about connections to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ([Feb. 18](#)), I had to respond to his assumptions about the committee members.

At no time did I hear any member of the search committee promote the CBF, oppose the Southern Baptist Convention, or any other group. They were deeply concerned about finding the person that God was leading to fit the profile that was developed with the input of all Texas Baptists who cared enough to attend listening sessions or submit opinions. In fact, I sensed a great caution in the effort to find someone without a lot of “denominational baggage” who would truly represent Texas Baptists and be a bridge to other groups.

I personally long for the day when we are so focused on our missions opportunities that we do not care with which group you are connected.

Jerry T. Bradley, president

Children at Heart Ministries

Round Rock

Evangelism missing

For some time, I have been aware of a significant disconnect between the ideology and theology of the leadership of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and many of its member churches. However, after reading the Feb. 18 edition of the *Baptist Standard*, my worst suspicions have been confirmed.

Bewildering was the nagging question of whether or not the powers that be at the *Standard* and the BGCT really believe that [Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Tony Campolo and Marian Wright Edelman](#) are the people who

speak for Texas Baptists.

No Baptist I know would disagree with the need for treating people with kindness, generosity and justice. Growing up in Mississippi, I observed firsthand the effects of the sin of racial prejudice. These are all worthy topics of discussion for Baptists. The real disconnect as I read the issue is the central message of the gospel. Man's greatest need is for salvation made possible by the atoning death of Jesus Christ. As I scoured the pages of the report, I found no reference to evangelism or the need of personal repentance. What I did find was a naïve minimizing of significant theological differences.

The end result for the BGCT and the *Baptist Standard's* participation in the event is an even greater disconnect from the members of BGCT churches and pastors. This will likely manifest itself in further decreases in funding and the continuation of the exodus of churches from the state convention.

Keith Sanders

Keller

Unite around calling

I feel compelled to respond to Samuel Rodriguez's comments ([Feb. 4](#)). Many fine, genuine Christian people agree with the political views of Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity. This does not mean these Christians have replaced Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with Limbaugh and Hannity. Neither does it mean their faith is inferior to that of those who have different political views.

I can't help but wonder what the reaction would have been if a white speaker had made such a comment about Latinos or another minority

group.

Such arrogance and hostility should have no place in the church, much less in positions of church leadership. Interestingly, it is this same toxic mentality that ruined the Southern Baptist Convention. Rodriguez may advocate different views than those of the SBC hierarchy, but the underlying contempt for dissenting opinions is the same.

To be sure, the gospel transcends any political agenda. While Christians are certainly free to have and advance their political views, this should never replace or be confused with the primacy of the gospel.

What is important is that evangelicals be united by their love of the gospel, personal piety and joint mission. This is what the New Testament talks about, not politics.

We ought to be able to disagree over matters of public policy and yet be united around our common calling as the church.

David Rodgers

Texarkana

Lenten testimony

“No thanks, I gave that up for Lent,” some people say this time of year. Some deny themselves chocolate, television and even carbon. These sacrifices can improve health, time management skills and the environment. Yet I wonder if fasting for Lent helps us focus on the meaning of Easter.

What is the purpose of Lent? Easter marks the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lent provides the opportunity for Christ-followers to reflect on

the passion of Christ. In doing this, we assess life, confess sins and repent. Fasting provides an opportunity to develop our dependence on God.

Yet I rarely hear this explained in discussions about Lent. People openly share about their fast yet hesitate to tell why they fast. This approach reminds me more of the Pharisees Jesus rebuked (Matthew 6) than the disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4). No wonder the world stands unimpressed and unchanged by Easter.

Ever wonder what God would do if we kept our fast to ourselves and instead spoke openly about the death and resurrection of Christ? (Acts 4:12)

Stephanie Dean

Dallas

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.