

# Baptist Briefs: Fired Atlanta fire chief sues city

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Former Atlanta fire chief Kelvin Cochran filed a federal lawsuit against the city claiming he was fired because of his religious beliefs. Cochran, a member and deacon at [Elizabeth Baptist Church](#), a congregation affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, was fired Jan. 6 after a month-long suspension to investigate concerns about a devotional book he wrote for Christian men that included passages condemning homosexuality. Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed said views expressed in the book and comments he made to church groups during his suspension raised questions about the chief's ability to lead a diverse fire department workforce. Cochran's lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Atlanta by attorneys with the national conservative advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom, claims Cochran followed proper procedure in notifying his superiors about his plans to write a book on his free time about ideas developed after leading a men's Bible study at his church. The lawsuit accuses Atlanta officials of violating Cochran's First Amendment rights to free speech, free exercise of religion and freedom of association, along with the 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection under the law. It seeks his reinstatement, plus monetary compensation for "lost wages, costs associated with Cochran finding new employment, and humiliation, emotional distress, inconvenience and loss of reputation."

**LifeWay letter of intent narrows potential buyers.** [LifeWay Christian Resources](#), continuing to move toward selling its 14.5-acre downtown Nashville complex, signed a letter of intent Feb. 23 with a firm that represents a group of local and national developers. Marty King, director of corporate communications for LifeWay, noted talks are ongoing, "so it would be premature for us to discuss any elements of the negotiations or

the businesses and individuals involved.” LifeWay, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, has analyzed more than a dozen offers to purchase its property and eliminated several of the offers during the week of Feb. 17, King said. LifeWay anticipates a final decision in a few weeks, he added. LifeWay’s downtown Nashville campus includes nine buildings with more than 1 million square feet of office, warehouse and parking space.

**Baptist college reinstates fired VP.** [Brewton-Parker College](#) Interim President Charlie Bass reinstated a vice president fired Feb. 2 after refusing to sign a nondisclosure agreement about Ergun Caner’s Jan. 20 resignation. C.B. Scott was reinstated as vice president of alumni, advancement and church relations at the Baptist-affiliated school in Mount Vernon, Ga. In his first comments to faculty and staff, Bass, who returned to campus as interim president 18 months after resigning as vice president of student services, acknowledged the school’s image has been “tarnished” by events of recent years, including nearly losing accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, but he still believes God has “big plans” for the school.

**SBC to vote on NAMB ministry amendment.** Chaplain-led ministry near overseas military bases someday may become part of the [North American Mission Board’s](#) church-planting outreach if a proposed ministry amendment is approved during the June 16-17 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC Executive Committee approved a recommendation to be presented to messengers in Columbus, Ohio, to enable NAMB to “provide specialized, defined and agreed-upon assistance to the International Mission Board in assisting churches to plant churches for specific groups outside the United States and Canada.” Executive Committee leaders cited the possibility of military chaplains facing religious liberty constraints as a key factor for the recommendation, although the wording allows for other contingencies that may prompt

NAMB-IMB overseas. “There might come a day to where our chaplains can’t really preach the gospel,” Executive Committee Chair Mike Routt said. “How are you going to minister to these military bases overseas, to these military personnel if you can’t preach? So these chaplains, on their own, not paid by the government but on their own, would plant a church close to that base so that they could have a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church that our soldiers and their families could go to.”