

Texas Baptists denounce racism and sexual harassment

November 15, 2017

WACO—Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting adopted resolutions that denounce racism as “a scheme of the devil” and affirm victims of sexual harassment and assault.

They also approved resolutions expressing support for families who adopt children, grief over the shooting at a church in Sutherland Springs, alarm about international religious persecution and concern about lack of civility in public discourse.

Racial reconciliation

The resolution on racial reconciliation asserted “there is no place in God’s kingdom or domain for racial prejudice or any type of bias based on race or religion.” It acknowledged “the news of our day carries stories of a nation and a world divided by racial prejudice, unrest and hatred.”

The resolution affirmed all people as created in God’s image and emphasized Christians’ responsibility to love their neighbors, putting the messengers to the BGCT annual meeting on record as decrying “every form of racism as a contradiction to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“Be it further resolved that we denounce and repudiate every form of racial and ethnic hatred as a scheme of the devil intended to bring suffering and division to the church and our society,” the resolution stated.

The resolution encouraged churches and individual Christians to “build relationships, listen to others, provide education and promote

understanding in order to bridge the racial divides in the church and in our culture.”

Sexual harassment and assault

Another resolution noted “our nation has been rocked recently by numerous reports of sexual harassment and assault.”

Although the resolution did not name anyone, messengers approved it the day after a fifth woman accused Senate candidate [Roy Moore](#), former Alabama Supreme Court judge, of sexual misconduct.

It also followed recent accusations of sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct involving Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actor Kevin Spacey, journalist Mark Halperin and comedian Louis C.K., among other celebrities.

Last year, an investigation into Baylor University’s response to sexual assault reports led to the departure of Ken Starr as president, Art Briles as head football coach and Ian McCaw as athletic director at the Waco university. Just last month, an accrediting agency committee confirmed Baylor had [implemented all 105 recommendations](#) from attorneys formerly with Pepper Hamilton, the firm regents hired to conduct the investigation.

The resolution acknowledged that “many of the sexual harassment and assault allegations are centered on the behavior of men in the workplace” and “all people in positions of power or authority have a special responsibility to foster a safe and supportive environment out of respect for all people.”

The resolution called on Texas Baptists “to affirm and support persons victimized by sexual harassment and assault” and stressed “the importance of preaching and teaching about proper behavior in order to help church

members clearly understand appropriate and inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature.”

It also noted the value of [MinistrySafe training](#), which focuses particularly on preventing the abuse of children and underage teens, and urged congregations to receive the training.

Adoption

A resolution on adoption asserted “in order to protect vulnerable and orphaned children, government should create policies that assist and incentivize the adoption of orphaned children.”

The resolution affirmed the federal adoption tax credit to help families who adopt children, noting “adoption serves as an alternative to abortion, thus saving the lives of children.”

Although the resolution did not specifically mention it, the tax-reform proposal initially presented by leaders of the U.S. House of Representatives eliminated the [adoption tax credit](#), but the House Ways and Means Committee voted to restore it.

The resolution also applauded Buckner International and Children at Heart Ministries for efforts to help find adoptive families for children who need homes.

Sutherland Springs

A resolution regarding the [shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs](#) called the massacre an “act of unimaginable violence” and offered prayerful support to the congregation and community.

It also pledged Texas Baptists “will pray for our nation and the broader

world because of the widespread prevalence of violence that is the outworking of the sin with which humankind is beset.”

Religious persecution

A resolution on international religious persecution mentioned Christian communities in Nigeria, North Korea, Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, Russia and “more than 60 other countries” who face persecution, prison and the threat of death.

The resolution affirmed the historic Baptist commitment “to religious liberty for all people of faith” and urged Texas Baptists to pray for victims of religious persecution around the world.

Civil discourse

Another resolution noted a decline in civility in American public discourse and said Texas Baptists “recognize the negative effects that such behavior by Christians has on our public witness.”

Messengers also approved resolutions of appreciation to the hosts of the annual meeting and to convention officers and BGCT Executive Board staff.