

EDITORIAL: Appropriately conservative & liberal

November 21, 2009

Once again, the Baptist General Convention of Texas has confirmed its conservative stance on sexuality. With few, if any, dissenting votes, messengers to the annual meeting in Houston declared Texas Baptists “maintain the consistent position of past convention statements and actions which affirm the biblical sexual ethic of fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, and ... the biblical image of marriage as the union before God between a man and a woman.”

The resolution specifically cited similar BGCT votes from 1982, 1992, 1996 and 2005 that said homosexuality, as well as any sexual activity outside of marriage, is contrary to God’s plan and sinful. So, Texas Baptists have stated our position clearly: Homosexual activity is (a) outside the will of God and (b) sinful.

Editor Marv Knox

In a simple world, that might settle this issue. Still, questions remain: How should churches relate to homosexuals? And how should the convention relate to churches with various responses to homosexuals?

The latter question prompted the biggest story leading up to the annual meeting. This summer, the Southern Baptist Convention [removed Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth](#) because of its perceived toleration of homosexual members, even though the church has not violated the national convention’s constitution by voting to endorse homosexuality. Subsequently, Baptists wondered if the BGCT would take similar action. At least one motion regarding whether to seat Broadway’s messengers was bound to come up in Houston. But the church decided to register its

representatives as visitors, not messengers. That decision provided a grace-gift to the convention, since it avoided a contentious debate.

However, it did not settle the issue. Even if Broadway never returns, it is not the only church with homosexual members. While no BGCT church has endorsed homosexual activity, homosexuals are members of many Baptist churches—even very conservative ones, and even Southern Baptist ones. Will we start “outing” churches every time someone from outside a congregation identifies a member as gay or lesbian?

Let’s be clear: Texas Baptists have called homosexual activity sin, and that has been affirmed on this page before. But is homosexuality the only sin or the unpardonable sin?

If Texas Baptists are to be consistent, either we must offer some grace to congregations with which the majority of our convention does not agree (remembering the congregations themselves are not of one mind on this issue), or we must start removing congregations that are home to known sinners.

If we take that route, let’s begin with churches whose pastors blog about Texas Baptists—gossiping and sowing discord. They harm the BGCT far worse than has Broadway. Then, maybe we should remove churches with adulterous deacons, followed by churches with fornicating teens. And if we have any congregations left, why don’t we turn the dinner tables and deal with gluttony? Maybe gossip and gluttony don’t seem as heinous as homosexual sex, but will we blink at heterosexual sex outside of marriage?

Of course, the unspoken theme is fear of what others think. Over and over, we kept hearing worry about how churches from a competing convention would react if the BGCT seated Broadway’s messengers. But decision-making based on fear is unsound and unworthy of Texas Baptists’ consideration. We must be propelled by principle rather than pragmatism.

We now face an opportunity to demonstrate how a convention can maintain its Bible-based beliefs about sexuality while also cooperating to expand the cause of Christ, even as we disagree about some aspects of church practice. We can't afford to lose fine churches like Broadway. Texas Baptists have reiterated our conservative theology; let us now demonstrate we are liberal in love, grace and cooperation.

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