

Letters: More responses to the BGCT annual meeting

November 21, 2016

Overly focused

I sometimes wonder if we have not allowed ourselves to be overly focused on the sexual orientation and same-sex marriage issues. Do we really want to spend our time and energies squabbling over these issues and in the process threatening our unity in and ministry for Christ?

Let's practice our belief in the priesthood of the believer and respect the spiritual discernment of our brothers and sisters in Christ and our congregations in these particular matters. We can respectfully acknowledge our differing beliefs and agree to disagree. We can then turn our energies and cooperative efforts toward focusing on far more meaningful areas of affirmation.

Here are a few affirmation suggestions for starters. Let's affirm:

- God's sovereignty over our lives.
- Our love of God and love for our neighbors.
- The sacredness of every person—every human life. Let's live out that affirmation by treating everyone with respect, seeking to listen to and understand their stories and struggles, and participating in their lives in ways that engender human flourishing, spiritual growth and opportunities to reach one's God-given potential.
- The sacramental nature of all relationships for every relationship has the potential to be a portal of God's grace in and to our lives.

- Fidelity and commitment in marital, covenantal relationships.
- Our children and our families by offering support, encouragement and guidance to parents as they nurture and guide their children.
- Our intent to follow Christ and be his body and presence in and to the world.

I believe the Baptist General Convention of Texas and local congregations can be both welcoming and affirming. I believe this as I recall the first Scripture verse I ever committed to memory: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Brenda McWilliams

Tyler

Complete fraud

I left being a Southern Baptist, or Baptist, eight years ago. But a few decades before that, I knew the "autonomy of the local church" Baptist belief was a complete fraud. If you varied in any way with a tenet of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, you were labeled as being un-biblical and not worthy as a Christian to be associated with.

This is nothing new. For years, I had to look over my shoulder and be careful who I shared my beliefs with for fear of being fired from my missionary position, which I later resigned from.

One of the huge breaking points for me was when I heard a Southern Baptist Convention leader state that Scripture, the Bible, had authority over Jesus. Sad to hear of this struggle, but I pray for [Cheryl Kimble and her church](#) and others that as they journey forward they will find like-minded Jesus followers and ecumenical partners to fellowship with and serve the community as Jesus calls us to.

Steve Hughes

Kalama, Wash.

What am I missing?

A few days ago, an overwhelming majority of “evangelicals” provided the push to get Donald Trump elected president. These evangelical voters were following the leadership of right wing “prophets,” such as Robert Jeffress and others.

During the campaign, voters learned Trump had engaged in false witness for five years as he disputed the citizenship of the current president. He lied almost daily about his opponent.

Bigotry, fear and hate were constantly on the agenda. He swindled countless Americans by refusing to pay their wages and with his multiple bankruptcies and said he is “brilliant” because he avoided paying taxes for more than a decade and has bragged about assaulting women. He and his two close confidants (Gingrich and Giuliani) have been married nine times total.

Since the election, he has named Sen. Jeff Sessions (R, Ala.) as his new attorney general and Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn as his national security adviser. Sessions was denied confirmation as a judge in 1986 because he is one of the best-known racists in the nation, and Flynn was forced to retire from the army because of his irresponsible statements.

Against this backdrop, the Baptist General Convention of Texas is considering ending “cooperation” with two churches because they welcome those who were born with a different sexual orientation but who may be compassionate, patriotic, tax-paying citizens who love God.

If they are concerned about biblical teachings, maybe the BGCT should

consider cutting ties with churches that harbor “prophets” who backed Trump.

Carl Hess

Ozark, Ala.

BGCT: Big-tent people

I am honored to be a Texas Baptist. I confess I am tired of being called homophobic and told that my interpretation of Scripture is discrimination against homosexuals. I believe the Scriptures do discriminate against sinful behaviors, and this is one of those sinful behaviors.

I love local-church autonomy and want us to be a big tent people, and we are. I don't, however, want to compromise Scripture for a big tent. I appreciate the autonomy of the BGCT as well and the priesthood of all believers, and the priesthood has spoken.

If Westboro Baptist Church were a member of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, I suspect some who are arguing for local-church autonomy would be the first to make a motion to remove fellowship, and I would gladly second such a motion.

I believe these two churches do not desire to be harmonious, but rather desire to push a cultural agenda, using the media and our polity to bully us into accepting a position outside of Scripture.

In my opinion they are letting culture not Scripture dictate their theology. I appreciate my friend [Howard Batson's guest editorial](#) on the issue and hope you will read his compelling comments.

Daniel Downey

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