

Commentary: Let's be Baptists—together

November 14, 2016

New Light Baptist Church in Abilene, a predominantly African-American congregation, and First Baptist Church in Abilene, a predominantly white congregation, had a joint worship service on Sunday morning, Nov. 13. It was an amazing experience as our choirs sang together, as we prayed together, as we “amen-ed” together for New Light Pastor Eddie Jordan, who preached a stirring message on Ezekiel 37.

Pastor Jordan called us to be joined together with new life, like those bones in the prophet’s day. Then, led by First Baptist Pastor Phil Christopher, we all had communion together. We shared bread and cup together, but we also “comm-unioned” together as one people.

Body of Christ

No one asked who was a Republican or who was a Democrat. No one asked who was liberal or who was conservative. No one asked who was happy and who was sad. No one asked who was straight or who was gay. We just praised God with lifted arms and lifted voices together. We were the Body of Christ.

We were one.

I loved it.

Everyone loved it.

The BGCT—one

In this season of Texas Baptists’ annual meeting, I want the Baptist General

Convention of Texas to be one, just like our worship on Sunday. I want us to fellowship with one another, praise God together, dream together, work together. I want us to continue our great spirit of cooperation. And we can, because we are sisters and brothers in Christ. We profess faith in him; we love God even more than our doctrines; and we love others just as much as we love ourselves and our personal values and agendas.

I do not want to be part of a Baptist convention that draws lines in the sand to separate one group from another. I don't want to be part of a BGCT that dis-fellowships churches for something other than what is essential—our profession of faith in Christ and love for God and others.

I know that there are many very important and very emotional issues for us to talk about, debate over and struggle with, but we must not divide over issues that devout Baptists, especially those in churches that have been mainstays of the BGCT for decades, may honestly differ over.

Our children are watching

We may be sure that our children are watching how we cooperate together. And we may be sure that most of the millennials and the “nones” we care so much about will have no time for a denomination that fights and divides when there is the possibility of being united.

Let's be a convention of Baptists who live up to the best of our Baptist heritage as a people who value freedom of conscience and freedom to cooperate.

Let's be a BGCT that lives up to Jesus' high priestly prayer for us—that we be one.

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