

# **Letter: Baylor Rejection of LGBTQ+ Grant**

July 14, 2025

Two readers respond to Baylor's rejection of a grant to the Diana Garland School of Social Work from the John and Eula Mae Baugh Foundation.

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## **Voices: When the ones you love get it wrong**

July 14, 2025

Chris Seay offers a view of Baylor's decision to rescind a grant, urging a return to compassion, courage, and Christ-like love.

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## **Voices: God's love is with us in the floods**

July 14, 2025

Ruth Cook responds to the heartbreak of the Texas Hill Country floods with pastoral care.

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# Editorial: Worship when you feel helpless

July 14, 2025

Some think Christian worship is merely a crutch, but our worship is far more than a painkiller.

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## Voices: Pastor, please don't endorse a candidate

July 14, 2025

The [IRS is reversing its decades-old position](#) prohibiting pastors from endorsing candidates from the pulpit. On one hand, I celebrate the fact the government is removing itself from what clergy may and may not say. That's a good thing, in my mind.

That being said, I think the IRS rule change is going to create a massive mess for clergy and churches. I see just a few issues on the horizon.

### 1. Political Action Committees

I imagine churches and pastors will become the targets of Political Action Committees and political donors, particularly in tight elections.

Think about this: Elections in battleground states are razor thin. Politicians raise enormous amounts of money in order to flood the airwaves and social media with ads. If pastors now can endorse candidates, I imagine PACs will approach pastors and churches and offer significant “donations” to the church if the pastor will officially endorse a candidate from the pulpit.

Will those donations come with other stipulations? Will churches become dependent upon PAC donations? Will future donations be tied to the support of questionable policies?

Do we really want the influence of secular political PACs on the pulpits of churches across America? This will not open politicians to religious influence. It opens congregations and pastors to political influence. We need pastors—not influencers—in our pulpits, and this will push pastors even further towards being an influencer.

## **2. Taxing churches**

This change likely will be used to lobby for the taxation of churches—and you really don’t want that.

I know many of my atheist and nonreligious friends initially will disagree, but hear me out. If churches can be taxed, then they can be lobbied on the basis of having taxes raised and lowered. That creates a nihilistic political reality that benefits no one and makes absolute terrible bedfellows of politicians and churches.

Beyond that, most churches are very small and likely would be forced to close if they had to pay taxes, and the government has no plan on how to replace the community services most churches provide. I am convinced taxing churches would be a net negative.

### **3. Dividing the church**

Endorsing candidates from the pulpit will serve only to divide local churches.

I can speak intelligently only about the churches I have pastored, but none of those churches were politically homogenous.

The most recent church I pastored was in Houston and certainly contained members across the political spectrum. To have endorsed a candidate officially from the pulpit would have divided the church and many members would have left.

I learned this firsthand many years ago. I invited a local politician to the congregation to share his faith story. He went off script and started spouting talking points. I got all sorts of emails ... and all sorts of families left the church.

Bottom line: Churches are one of the few remaining spaces where people of different ideologies come together in voluntary community, and making the church an explicitly political zone will push out those who have different political perspectives.

### **4. Regretting later**

Endorsing a candidate may seem like a good idea ... until it suddenly doesn't.

How long before the candidate you endorse does something in opposition to the commands of Jesus? Given the state of modern politics, I'd guess less than a week. When that happens, we confuse those who trust clergy to hear from God.

## **5. Added pressure on pastors**

Pastors don't need the added pressure of being asked to endorse a candidate. I know this to be the case, because I faced such pressure prior to this change by the IRS.

It will be problematic enough with PACs potentially bringing outside influence on churches through donations, but if pastors have significant members on opposing sides of the political divide pressuring them to endorse different candidates, there is not a winning scenario for the pastor.

Trust me, pastoring is stressful enough as it is without pressuring clergy to choose which candidate to endorse, much less choosing between church members.

## **6. Christians in both major parties**

Despite what you may have heard, there are faithful Christians in both major political parties.

I know, I know. You've heard this message from me before. But I think it's important to say it again.

I'm seeing folks on the right saying Democrats are "godless secularists" and folks on the left saying Republicans are "religious hypocrites." Good times.

Yes, I'm sure there are enough godless secularists and religious hypocrites to go around. But I know faithful believers in both parties.

My Democratic friends are Democrats because they care deeply about things like care for the poor, and they believe Jesus commanded his followers to care about those things.

My Republican friends are Republicans because they care deeply about things like reducing abortions and standing for traditional sexual ethics, and they believe Jesus commanded his followers to care about such things.

Oddly enough, I think they both are right, and I think Christians would do well to realize Republicans should care more about the poor and Democrats should care more about ethics surrounding sexuality.

If you think your political party is *always* right on every issue, then you either are woefully misinformed or (sadly) a willful partisan hack.

## 7. Citizens of a different kingdom

Churches are members of a different kingdom and should behave as such.

Are politics important? Absolutely. Should Christians be involved? Yes. But let's maintain the prophetic voice of the church by talking about specific issues from a Christian perspective, not by selling out to a candidate or party.

Our best tools are preaching the truth of Scripture over against the issues of the time, rather than promoting a candidate.

It's far more effective to promote the way of Jesus. And let's be honest, if endorsements are allowed, if pastors speak prophetically on a topic, then it likely will be construed as an endorsement of whatever party or candidate supports that particular stance—even if it never was meant to do so.

*Steve Bezner, after years as a pastor, is associate professor of pastoral ministry and theology at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary. He is the author of [Your Jesus Is Too American: Calling the Church to Reclaim Kingdom Values over the American Dream](#) and publishes on [Substack](#), [where this article first appeared](#) and is adapted and republished by permission. The views expressed in this opinion article are*

*those of the author.*

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## **Commentary: One body, many members: God's guidelines for diverse ministry**

July 14, 2025

What is a Christian response to diversity? Historical theology professor David Wilhite explores this topic in a three-part series.

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## **Voices: Sabbath: Rest in a day or rest in Jesus**

July 14, 2025

Cristian Cervantes examines differing views on Sabbath observance.

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# **Voices: The star who outshone Hiawatha**

July 14, 2025

Johnny Teague reflects on how his longtime friend's wife made a lasting impact on her community through time as a crossing guard.

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## **Editorial: 'Independence Day:' Why did the pastor leave?**

July 14, 2025

Pastors leave for lots of reasons—some positive and some not. Churches have a role in the good and bad and should take their role seriously.

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## **Letter: Letters: Editorial on SBC attendance**

July 14, 2025



## **RE: Letters: Editorial on SBC attendance**

I just read the letter to the editor responding to [Editorial: Tiny fraction of Baptists deciding for the whole](#).

Just to add to the numbers, I would note the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting held in Dallas, Texas, June 11-13, 1985, had more than 45,000 messengers gathered, and I was there. Probably the highest percentage representation, as well, but too many people and therefore too unwieldy a meeting.

*David Appleby*

*Port Neches, Texas*

**For many years, those in church leadership have discussed—bemoaned—the number of people who participate in local church, associational and convention decision-making. Not many people do, and it’s been that way just about everywhere for a long time.**

**As I’ve interacted with people in person, by email and via social media since publishing [my editorial response](#) to the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas, some of us have discussed reasons for the low involvement.**

**In one Facebook comment thread, I asked “why don’t more of those [Southern Baptists] who disagree [with positions being pushed during SBC annual meetings] come to the conventions as messengers and make their position known as clearly as those [with whom they disagree].”**

**The commenter responded, “Because most people work ...” I heard this as a former pastor used to people thinking pastors only work on Sundays, and only about 30 minutes at that.**

**But the commenter continued: “Because most people work, have other things to do, or just go on about their life, don’t feel that the convention affects their church directly, ... because a lot of people feel it’s not that big of a deal or don’t realize the long-term impact.”**

**To David Appleby’s and Dustin Slaton’s point, if all possible messengers showed up at an SBC annual meeting *and voted*, the SBC would need a different way of counting votes other than a visual “Yeah, that looks like a majority to me” count of raised ballots.**

**And to what I take to be the Facebook commenter’s point—and one of the points I’ve made many times over many years, what reason do more potential messengers have to make the sacrifice or investment to attend meetings and to vote? The majority are telling us by their absence they don’t have a good enough reason to go to the meetings.**

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**Commentary:     Babel     and  
Pentecost: God’s love for a**

# **diverse world**

July 14, 2025

What is a Christian response to diversity? Historical theology professor David Wilhite explores this topic in a three-part series.

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## **Voices: Rural people care when you die**

July 14, 2025

Many rural people hold funerals in high regard, going out of their way to show their respect. Stacy Conner has stories to tell.