

2024 RESOLUTIONS REPORT

The 2024 Committee on Resolutions has received several communications. We acknowledge each proposal and convey our thanks and appreciation to those who have exercised their right of free and open communication by presenting their views to this convention. The committee has taken each of these proposed resolutions under prayerful consideration and has been unanimous in its deliberations. Sam Thomas, chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, presented the report.

Resolution of Appreciation

Submitted By: The 2024 Committee on Resolutions

Members: Sam Thomas, Sabrina Thiery, Buck Kinney, Shane Roberson, Slade Johnson

WHEREAS, the 202nd Annual Session of the Georgia Baptist Convention met at First Baptist Church Statesboro, Georgia on November 11-12, 2024 in which the messengers representing Georgia Baptist Churches were greeted with Christian grace and warm Southern hospitality; and

WHEREAS, the pastors of FBC Statesboro, the church staff, church members and many volunteers have tirelessly served the needs of every messenger to the Georgia Baptist Convention in fellowship of the Lord: *“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14 CSB);* and

WHEREAS, the musicians, choirs and worship leaders have provided thrilling praise and uplifting celebration in every convention session; and

WHEREAS, Jeff Parmer and the Ogeechee River Baptist Association, has demonstrated second-mile cooperation, service, and hospitality in preparation for and during the meeting; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of the 202nd session of the Georgia Baptist Convention, offer sincere appreciation to the leaders and members of FBC Statesboro for their hospitality and service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of this session of the Georgia Baptist Convention, express our loving appreciation for and extend our heartfelt gratitude to Josh Saefkow, president of our beloved Convention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of this session of the Georgia Baptist Convention, extend honor and thanksgiving to the officers and platform leaders for their guidance and service throughout this meeting; and we express gratitude to Mrs. Kelsie Saefkow and family for their loving support of our president and Convention during this past year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to God for those who serve on the Georgia Baptist Executive Committee, as well as Georgia Baptist Mission Board staff who faithfully serve the causes of Christ here in Georgia and around the world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commend the Committee on Order of Business and Lee Brewer, Chairman, for the preparation of this inspirational program; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we, the messengers of this Convention, join our President Josh Saefkow and Executive Director, Thomas Hammond, in continuing to emphasize and practice the challenging theme, ANSWER THE CALL Isaiah 6:8, *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us? Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”*”

Resolution on Passing a Religious Freedom Restoration Act in Georgia
Submitted by Brad Hughes, Messenger from First Baptist Church, Blakely, GA

WHEREAS, this bill is extremely important because it provides people of faith the same protections from state and local government actions that they now have from federal government actions; and

WHEREAS, it merely provides that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) protections from federal law will also apply to religious-liberty questions arising under Georgia law; and

WHEREAS, under current federal RFRA law, a claim brought under the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment is treated as a full constitutional right which must be analyzed using the “strict scrutiny” legal standard; and

WHEREAS, “strict scrutiny” means that the government may not substantially impact a citizen’s free exercise of their religious faith unless it demonstrates a truly “compelling interest” and that in doing so the government agency uses the “least restrictive means” to achieve its compelling interest; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of RFRA will bring Georgia into line with 37 other states that have taken action to restore a full level of legal protection for people of faith; and

WHEREAS, while many opposing this legislation accuse the RFRA of being discriminatory, that is simply not true, because this legislation is not about causing any discrimination. It protects people of faith from government intrusion and being forced to violate their First Amendment right of conscience: and

WHEREAS, it restores the original intent of what the First Amendment in the US Constitution is all about and this original intent is an encouragement for churches to press on for evangelism and missions; and

WHEREAS, our standing for religious freedom is a part of our responsibility as American citizens to keep promoting the gospel to be shared in word and deeds in the public square; and

WHEREAS, religious freedom is not an abstract idea—it plays out in real-world scenarios where the ability to live out faith and religious practices comes into direct conflict with government regulations or legal mandates; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Statesboro, November 11-12, pledge to defend the God-given and constitutionally guaranteed right of every American citizen to worship God freely in thought, word, and action, according to the dictates of his or her conscience, and to support the passage of legislation such as RFRA or other laws protecting religious liberty in our state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we must defend religious freedom now and in the future for the sake of advancing the gospel and protection for the next generation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Georgia Baptists contact their Georgia House and Senate members to let them know that they support their voting in favor of a Religious Freedom Restoration Act; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Georgia's Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House and the sitting state senators and representatives who represent the people of Georgia.

Resolution on Publicly Displaying the Ten Commandments in Georgia
Submitted by Tom Rush, Messenger from Bethlehem Baptist Church, Fairburn, GA

WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments have been foundational to the development of the moral and legal code of western civilization; and

WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments have made a critical contribution to the development of the principles upon which the American society, and our legal and judicial institutions in particular, were established; and

WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments, which is the foundational moral code for our nation states:

- I. I am the LORD thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
- III. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.
- IV. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- V. Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
- VI. Thou shalt not kill.
- VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- VIII. Thou shalt not steal.
- IX. Thou shalt not commit false witness against thy neighbor.
- X. Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's; and

WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments have been publicly displayed in our American halls of justice and other public places for generations; and

WHEREAS, the Ten Commandments are part of the nine documents of the Foundations of American law and Government Display, that was passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 2006, and;

WHEREAS, HB 941, passed in 2006, states: "The Ten Commandments have profoundly influenced the formation of Western legal thought and the formation of our country. That influence is clearly seen in the Declaration of Independence, which declared that 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness'." and;

WHEREAS, in 2022 the United States Supreme Court overturned the 1971 decision *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, and therefore a return to an historical approach to the Establishment Clause is necessary; and

WHEREAS, the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment requires only that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," and does not prohibit public acknowledgments of God; and

WHEREAS, there is current litigation concerning the lawfulness of the passage of a bill in 2024 in Louisiana that requires for the first time a copy of the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting the display of documents of historical significance which are religious in nature or which contain expressions of a religious nature, solely based on their religious content, is clearly discrimination against religious expression; and

WHEREAS, every state constitution, including Georgia's, acknowledges God; and

WHEREAS, Romans 13:1 says: "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (NASB); and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention, meeting in Statesboro, Georgia, November 11-12, 2024, declare that the public display, including public schools, government offices and courthouses, of the Ten Commandments should be permitted; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Georgia's Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House and the sitting state senators and representatives who represent the people of Georgia.

Resolution on Reproductive Technologies and the Sanctity of Human Life

Submitted by Dawn Parker, Messenger from 1025 Church, Monroe, GA

WHEREAS, every human being is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27-28) and is thus to be respected and protected from the moment of fertilization until natural death, without regard to developmental stage or location; and

WHEREAS, human beings possess an inherent right to life and the opportunity to reach their full developmental maturity (Exodus 20:13); and

WHEREAS, governments are ordained by God to safeguard human dignity and promote human flourishing at all stages of life (Genesis 9:5-6; Romans 13:1-7); and

WHEREAS, Biblical creation order portrays the embodied union of husband and wife as the singular normative expression for procreation (Genesis 1:27-28); and

WHEREAS, infertility affects many married couples who have the good and godly desire to bring children into the world; and

WHEREAS, couples who experience the searing pain of infertility can turn to God, look to Scripture for numerous examples of infertility, and know that their lament is heard by the Lord, who offers compassion and grace to those deeply afflicted by such realities (Genesis 16:1-16, 25:21; Judges 13:2; 1 Samuel 1:11; Luke 1:5-13); and

WHEREAS, all children are a gift from the Lord regardless of the circumstances of their conception (Psalm 127:3); and

WHEREAS, though all children are to be fully respected and protected, it cannot be assumed that all technological means of assisting human reproduction are equally God-honoring or morally justified; and

WHEREAS, Georgia Baptists historically affirmed the value of every human life (*Resolution of Personhood and the Sanctity of Life, 2014; Resolution on the Church in the Post-Roe Era, 2022*) therefore the right and the responsibility of all parents to choose the most pro-life technology that does not disregard the sanctity of human life; and

WHEREAS, the In Vitro Fertilization process routinely generates more embryos than can be safely implanted, thus resulting in the continued freezing, stockpiling, and ultimate destruction of human embryos, some of whom may also be subjected to medical experimentation; and

WHEREAS, In Vitro Fertilization most often participates in the destruction of embryonic human life and increasingly engages in dehumanizing methods for determining suitability for life and genetic sorting, based on notions of genetic fitness and parental preferences; and

WHEREAS, estimates¹ suggest that between 1 million and 1.5 million human beings are currently stored in cryogenic freezers in an embryonic state throughout the United States, with most unquestionably destined for eventual destruction; and

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0015028222000012#sec2>

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Statesboro, Georgia, November 11-12, 2024, call on Georgia Baptists to reaffirm the unconditional value and right to life of every human being, including those in an embryonic stage, and to only utilize reproductive technology facilities that are willing to always protect all embryos generated in the IVF process; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we affirm all children, no matter the circumstances of their conception, are gifts from God and loved by him; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we call on Georgia Baptists to love all of their neighbors in accordance with their God-given dignity as image bearers and to advocate for the government to restrain actions inconsistent with the dignity and value of every human being, which necessarily includes frozen embryonic human beings; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that Georgia Baptists should provide and encourage the use of educational content for pastors, young adult, and family ministries regarding reproductive technologies (IVF) that is consistent with the sanctity of human life.

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage Georgia Baptists to continue to promote adoption as one way God may call upon couples to grow their families and to consider adopting frozen embryos in order to rescue those who are eventually to be destroyed (Proverbs 24:11-12); and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we grieve alongside couples who have been diagnosed with infertility or are currently struggling to conceive, affirm their godly desire for children, and encourage them to consider the ethical implications of assisted reproductive technologies as they look to God for hope, grace, and wisdom amid suffering; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we commend couples who at great cost have earnestly sought to only utilize infertility treatments and reproductive technologies in ways consistent with the dignity of the human embryo as well as those who have adopted frozen embryos; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that we commit to pray to our God who hears, sees, and remembers on behalf of those couples struggling with infertility (1 Samuel 1:11-20).

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Georgia's Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House and the sitting state senators and representatives who represent the people of Georgia.