

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED TO THE 2023 SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

1: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REVITALIZATION AND REPLANTING

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention exists for the purpose of “eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the denomination for the propagation of the gospel” (Preamble to Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention); and

WHEREAS, Many local Southern Baptist churches face significant challenges, including declining attendance, conflict, lack of discipleship, and lack of community impact; and

WHEREAS, Church revitalization and replanting are biblical and strategic approaches to address the decline and restore the spiritual health, vibrancy, and missional effectiveness of local congregations; and

WHEREAS, Scripture exhorts believers to persevere in their commitment to the local church, admonishing them to encourage one another, to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, and not to neglect meeting together (Hebrews 10:24-25); and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists acknowledge the diverse approaches and models of church revitalization and replanting and recognize that effective strategies may vary depending on the unique circumstances and the needs of individual congregations; and

WHEREAS, Local associations, state conventions, and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) have committed time, resources, and manpower to strengthening churches through revitalization and replant initiatives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13-14, 2023, affirm church revitalization and replanting as an important component of fulfilling the Great Commission and advancing the kingdom of God; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists encourage our churches to prayerfully consider the urgency and significance of church revitalization and replanting, prioritizing the spiritual health, discipleship, and missional engagement of their congregations, and ways their churches might engage in helping other churches in this work; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists are encouraged to continue providing robust resources, training opportunities, and support systems to assist churches in their revitalization and replanting efforts through NAMB and partnership with state conventions and local associations, including the development of relevant curriculum, conferences, mentorship programs, and partnerships with experienced practitioners in the field; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we fervently pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment in the work of church revitalization and replanting, that His transformative power may revive and restore countless congregations, enabling them to effectively fulfill their mission to reach their communities and the world with the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

2: ON NEEDED CARE AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

WHEREAS, Scripture describes the significant internal and external struggles of spiritual leaders as they faithfully fulfill their callings (Numbers 11:1-3; 1 Kings 19:1-8; Matthew 26:36-46; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7); and

WHEREAS, Faithful servants of God expressed their struggles to God and one another (Psalm 13:1-6, 56:8; Jonah 4:3; Romans 7:14-25); and

WHEREAS, Ministering to those who lead God's people honors the Lord (Philippians 2:25; Hebrews 13:17); and

WHEREAS, In recent years, pastors and other ministry leaders have encountered difficult, unique, and multifaceted challenges as they sought to fulfill their ministry callings and assignments; and

WHEREAS, The reality of internal struggles among spiritual leaders has reached a critical point, with current research¹ indicating that 42% of pastors are thinking of leaving the ministry in the next year, 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families, 75% of pastors have reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry, and 70% of pastors do not have someone they consider to be a close friend; and

WHEREAS, The spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional well-being of pastors and other ministry leaders helps them lead God's people faithfully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13-14, 2023, affirm the importance of godly relationships, counseling, rest, and recreation that contributes to the overall wellness of pastors and other ministry leaders; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend the kingdom work being done by local associations, state conventions, and denominational entities to provide care for pastors and other ministry leaders; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage pastors and other ministry leaders not to bear their burdens in isolation, but to seek help when needed—both for their own sakes and for the good of those to whom they are called to minister; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we exhort churches and ministries to encourage spiritual leaders in need of care to seek help, and neither ignore nor stigmatize the internal and external struggles of ministry leaders; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we commit to labor together to promote a culture of holistic flourishing among our pastors and other ministry leaders in our local churches, our local associations and state conventions, and our denominational entities.

¹ <https://pastoralcareinc.com/statistics>

3: ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

WHEREAS, All technology, including powerful tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), is created by human beings with the gifts and abilities that God has granted to us as the pinnacle of the created order (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7, 5:1-2) and can be harnessed for human flourishing as we seek to love God and neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31); and

WHEREAS, Although these tools are designed with distinct values and purposes in mind and shape us in subtle, yet meaningful ways—including our understanding of God, humanity, and the world around us—we alone, as distinct moral agents created by God, bear the moral responsibility for their development and use (Romans 12:1-2); and

WHEREAS, The Fall has adversely affected every aspect of creation, including the development and use of these powerful innovations; and

WHEREAS, AI raises deep, crucial questions that challenge society's false assumptions about what it means to be human which are often rooted merely in human capacities rather than in divinely granted ontological status; and

WHEREAS, AI and other emerging technologies afford us unprecedented opportunities for advancement across industries and throughout our societies, but may also have dangerous and dehumanizing outcomes if not utilized with godly wisdom and discernment; and

WHEREAS, Technologies are often developed and deployed merely to maximize profit, efficiency, and productivity, including at the grave cost of the dignity of our fellow image bearers; and

WHEREAS, These emerging technologies will increasingly perform tasks once reserved for humanity and even surpass human ability in particular ways; and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message states that "[a]ll Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society" and that we "should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love" (Article XV); and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Evangelical Statement of Principles on AI, led by our own Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, states that Christians are "called to engage the world around us with the unchanging gospel message of hope and reconciliation" and that "[t]he church has a unique role in proclaiming human dignity for all and calling for the humane use of AI in all aspects of society"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13-14, 2023, acknowledge the powerful nature of AI and other emerging technologies, desiring to engage them from a place of eschatological hope rather than uncritical embrace or fearful rejection; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm that God's unchanging Word is more than sufficient for whatever ethical challenges, questions, and opportunities we may face today or in the future as these technologies continue to be developed and deployed in our communities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we state unequivocally that our intrinsic value is as image bearers—not rooted in what we do or contribute to society—and that human dignity must be central to any ethical principles, guidelines, or regulations for any and all uses of these powerful emerging technologies; and be it further

RESOLVED, We must proactively engage and shape these emerging technologies rather than simply respond to the challenges of AI and other emerging technologies after they have already affected our churches and communities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon civic, industry, and government leaders to develop, maintain, regulate, and use these technologies with the utmost care and discernment, upholding the unique nature of humanity as the crowning achievement of God's creation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage all who employ these tools to do so in honest, transparent, and Christlike ways that focus on loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves, never seeking to willfully deceive others or take advantage of them for unjust gain or the accumulation of power; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we confess that God alone has the power to create life, that "God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end" (Baptist Faith and Message, Article X), and that no innovation or emerging technology will ever be able to usurp the sovereignty and power of God.

4: ON WISELY ENGAGING IMMIGRATION

WHEREAS, By creating them in His own image, God bestowed upon every human inherent value and dignity no matter their background, race, ethnicity, national origin, or language; and

WHEREAS, For the ordering of civil society, God has ordained human government to both restrain evil and promote the good of its people in the distinct roles entrusted to government by God (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14); and

WHEREAS, Flowing from these God-given responsibilities, governments should promote peace and order, including strong borders and clear immigration policies as well as care for migrants—not sacrificing one for the other or capitulating to the ever-shifting cultural and political values of the day; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists are deeply grateful for the men and women who continue to serve our nation and protect its people by patrolling and protecting the border and seeking the good of our neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Christians, including Southern Baptists, have long sought to care for the vulnerable, to promote the dignity and unity of the family, and to provide for those who come to this nation seeking safety, freedom, and opportunity; and

(resolutions continue on next page)

WHEREAS, In the 2018 resolution “On Immigration,” Southern Baptists declared our “desire to see immigration reform include an emphasis on securing our borders and providing a pathway to legal status with appropriate restitutionary measures, maintaining the priority of family unity, resulting in an efficient immigration system that honors the value and dignity of those seeking a better life for themselves and their families”; and

WHEREAS, In the same resolution, we rightly proclaimed that “any form of nativism, mistreatment, or exploitation is inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ”; and

WHEREAS, God commands us to take the gospel to all people (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8), and here, the nations of the world are coming to our neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Our churches continue to strive to reflect the kingdom of heaven which includes people from every tribe, nation, and tongue—including immigrants—who seek to love God and love their neighbor as themselves as they serve our communities in faithfulness and are part of God’s work in revitalizing our churches (Matthew 22:37-39); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13-14, 2023, affirm the inherent dignity and value of immigrants and refugees, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, culture, national origin, or legal status; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we ask our government leaders to provide clear guidance for immigrants and asylum seekers regarding border policies, legal entry into this country, and work opportunities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we implore our government leaders to maintain robust avenues for valid asylum claimants seeking refuge and to create legal pathways to permanent status for immigrants who are in our communities by no fault of their own, prioritizing the unity of families; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage elected officials to prioritize measures that secure our borders and to provide adequate resources to border patrol and those working in our immigration system; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge our government to take swift and bold action to protect and prevent the exploitation of unaccompanied immigrant children arriving to the United States; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on federal and state governments to work together in the common pursuit of securing our border, upholding the dignity of immigrants, and protecting our communities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend the good work of Southern Baptists among immigrants and refugees and encourage pastors and their congregations to continue sharing the gospel and providing Christlike care for the countless men, women, and children in harm’s way; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we ensure that the language and manner in which we discuss immigration policies and practices recognize and promote the dignity and value of all human beings, including those in our society with differing views and those who seek to come to this nation as migrants; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That as we recognize how the Lord is at work among us, we will continue to strive toward a just and flourishing society, evidenced by love of God and neighbor.

5: ON THE LEGACY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF WOMEN FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

WHEREAS, Both men and women are created in the image of God, sharing equal value, dignity, and worth, and are commissioned by God (Genesis 1:26-28); and

WHEREAS, Scripture calls women to obey Christ’s Great Commission and demonstrates women are crucial and indispensable to His mission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:17-18); and

WHEREAS, Shiphrah and Puah protected the children of God (Exodus 1:15-20), Miriam proclaimed the glory of God (Exodus 15:20-21), Rahab saved her family from certain death (Joshua 6:22-25), Deborah judged God’s people (Judges 4:4-9), Jael delivered Israel (Judges 4:17-22), Hannah prayed for and dedicated her child to God (1 Samuel 1:10-11), Huldah prophesied God’s judgment and mercy (2 Chronicles 34:22-28), Ruth and Naomi exemplified loyalty to God (Ruth 1:16), and Esther risked her life for the sake of the people of Israel (Esther 4:16); and

WHEREAS, Anna proclaimed the arrival of the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38), and many women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome, followed Jesus and financially supported His earthly ministry (Mark 15:40-41), remained with Him through His crucifixion (Matthew 27:55-56), and were commissioned as the original witnesses to and proclaimers of his resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10); and

WHEREAS, Lois and Eunice cultivated a biblical legacy in the family (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15), Phoebe served the church and contributed to its mission (Romans 16:1-2), Lydia and Priscilla provided their homes for the churches’ gathering (Acts 16:14-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 16:19), Priscilla supported the apostles and clarified Christian doctrine (Acts 18:18, 26), Euodia and Syntyche were gospel co-laborers (Philippians 4:2-3), Philip’s daughters prophesied (Acts 21:9), and God commanded women to pass their faith through the generations (Titus 2:3-5); and

WHEREAS, Baptist women like Ann Judson, Henrietta Hall Shuck, and Charlotte H. White were among the earliest missionaries commissioned by the Triennial Convention, and Southern Baptist women like Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, and many others spent their lives propagating the gospel for future generations; and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message states that “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture” (Article VI), and that “It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations [and] to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness” (Article XI); and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention affirmed the gifts, ministries, and value of women in the kingdom of God in our 2021 resolution “On The Dignity And Worth Of Women”; and

(resolutions continue on next page)

WHEREAS, Women today serve courageously, sacrificially, and selflessly in our Southern Baptist churches and entities, and in a multitude of contexts around the world, through praying, giving, and obeying the Great Commission of our only Lord Jesus Christ; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13–14, 2023, praise God for His authoritative call to all Christian women to fulfill His Great Commission, for His providential guidance of the multitudes of women who have faithfully served our Lord Jesus throughout history, and for the Holy Spirit's continuing call to women to edify His church in a plenitude of unique, critical, and indispensable ways; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm God sovereignly granted to women their intrinsic worth, gifting, and dignity for the purpose of His own mission and glory, and that we express our gratitude to the countless women who serve among us as missionaries, writers, apologists, teachers, mentors, and leaders, both volunteer or professional, and that we celebrate their absolutely vital and too often unrecognized contributions to the expansion of His kingdom; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we as Southern Baptists see and honor the works that women today are doing in homes, churches, communities, workplaces, and on the global mission field to further the kingdom of God, and most importantly, we affirm that the God who sees will reward for eternity the beautiful works women do by his grace, in His name, and for His glory; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage pastors to equip women in their congregations “for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we exhort all Southern Baptists to work together to commission, train, and support women to go and make disciples while serving courageously, giving sacrificially, and praying continuously, in order to effectively impart the faith to the next generation; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to cultivating an environment within the Southern Baptist Convention where women are fully respected, valued, and mobilized as co-laborers for the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission and the glory of the Triune God.

6: ON THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE OF THE OFFICE OF BISHOP/ELDER/PASTOR

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message that was adopted by the Southern Baptist

Convention in 1925 was identified in its preamble as the “New Hampshire Confession of Faith, revised at certain points, and with some additional articles growing out of present needs,” with the preamble further stating that our confessions “constitute a consensus of opinion” and that “we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility”; and

WHEREAS, The revision of the Baptist Faith and Message in 1963 was led by a committee who declared that it “sought to build upon the structure of the 1925 Statement” while “in no case [seeking] to delete from or to add to the basic contents of the 1925 Statement”; and

WHEREAS, The committee that revised the Baptist Faith and Message that was adopted in 2000 stated in its preamble that it “respects and celebrates the heritage of the Baptist Faith and Message, and affirms the decision of the Convention in 1925 to adopt the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, ‘revised at certain points and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs . . .’” and further affirmed their respect for “the important contributions of the 1925 and 1963 editions of the Baptist Faith and Message”; and

WHEREAS, The New Hampshire Confession states that in a gospel church the “only scriptural officers are bishops or pastors, and deacons” (Article XIII); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message 1925 states that a church’s “Scriptural officers are bishops, or elders, and deacons” (Article XII); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message 1963 substitutes the word “pastors” for the words “bishops, or elders,” so that it says that a church’s “Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons” (Article VI); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 retains the exact language found in the 1963 version when it states that a church’s “scriptural officers are pastors and deacons” (Article VI); and

WHEREAS, The New Testament uses all three titles that the Baptist Faith and Message has used to describe the one office of bishop/overseer (episkopos, Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7), elder (presbuteros, Acts 14:23, 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19), and pastor (poimen, Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1–5), thus demonstrating that from its first expression in 1925 through its revisions in 1963 and 2000, the Baptist Faith and Message has affirmed that, along with deacon, the only other office in a New Testament church is that of bishop/elder/pastor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13–14, 2023, affirm that the only officers of a local church that the New Testament recognizes are that of deacon and of bishop/elder/pastor; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we reaffirm our confessional heritage, grounded in Scripture, and recognize that, ~~while autonomous churches may differ in their uses and categories regarding titles for staff members,~~ these are the only two offices appointed by Christ to serve along with all the members of a New Testament church, and we encourage our churches to uphold all the biblical qualifications that the New Testament requires for all those who would hold either office of bishop/elder/pastor or deacon.