

Texas Baptists reject government coercion in religion

November 16, 2022

WACO—Without mentioning Christian nationalism by name, Texas Baptists approved a resolution rejecting any government attempt to coerce worship of Christ or favoring one religion over another.

At the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in Waco, messengers also approved resolutions calling for gracious cultural engagement and expressing gratitude for David Hardage, who retires at the end of next month as BGCT executive director.

The resolution on religious liberty affirmed the “God-ordained purpose” of government but asserted “God has not authorized government to coerce the worship of Christ.”

It acknowledged the presence of “state-sanctioned persecution of Christians and other religious groups across the world.” It also noted “Baptists historically have been committed to religious liberty and the separation of church and state.”

Consequently, Texas Baptists at the Waco meeting resolved to “affirm the historic tenets of religious liberty and will not seek to use government to coerce the worship of Christ.”

They further resolved to deny support to “any attempt by government to commandeer the church for political ends or any attempt by government to favor one religion over another.”

Engage culture with grace, truth, love

The resolution on cultural engagement acknowledged a prevalent tendency “to focus more on divisive, condemning rhetoric at the expense of the grace, truth and love that characterizes the gospel.”

So, Texas Baptists at the annual meeting resolved to “seek to follow the way of Jesus in how we engage with culture with God’s grace, truth and love.” They also resolved to “avoid cruel jokes, mockery and belittling language as we articulate our biblical convictions.”

The resolution regarding Hardage noted his service of more than four decades in ministry and more than a decade as BGCT executive director, pointing out his wife Kathleen served alongside him “prayerfully and faithfully.”

In addition to expressing appreciation to the Hardages, the resolution also affirmed his commitment to “the GC2 movement”—an emphasis on the Great Commission and Great Commandment of Christ.

A final resolution expressed appreciation to the host city, its churches and everyone involved in hosting the annual meeting.