*Resolution – “Freedom of Religion”*

GARBC Annual Conference, June 23–27, 2014, St. Petersburg, Fla.

The messengers of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting together in regular conference, June 23–27, 2014, in St. Petersburg, Fla.,

**Believing** that the church and state have their rightful places in God’s economy (Matt. 22:21) and that neither should infringe on the God-given responsibilities of the other,

**Understanding** that believers hold dual citizenship as citizens of our earthly nation and citizens of Heaven (Acts 22:28; Phil. 3:20),

**Knowing** that believers have a responsibility insofar as it is possible to obey the civil authorities, since God has ordained each authority (Rom. 13:1–7) and that we are to “live peaceably with all men” to the best of our ability (Rom. 12:18),

**Recognizing,** however, that there are times when a hostile and anti-Biblical civil requirement cannot be reconciled with a Christian’s duty to obey the Savior (Acts 5:29),

**Discerning** that an increasingly ungodly and unscriptural burden has been placed on individual believers by governmental agencies in the United States over sexual orientation and transgender issues, including (1) state requirements that business owners perform services contrary to Biblical convictions (Elane Photography in New Mexico, Arlene’s Flowers in Washington State, Sweet Cakes in Oregon, Masterpiece Cakeshop in Colorado, and Hands on Originals in Kentucky) and (2) state laws and policies that have normalized gender confusion by forcing children (and their parents) to accept transgenderism in the bathrooms and dressing rooms of public schools (California, Washington, Massachusetts, and Colorado),

**Perceiving** that ordinances have already been crafted in an attempt to hold local churches to the same kinds of standards (2012 proposed Hutchinson, Kansas, city ordinance “Proposed Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protections”), we

**Remind** our civil leaders of the safeguards for religious freedom and the constraints placed upon civil government built into the First Amendment of the United States Constitution,

**Express concern** that some in civil government are seeking to blur the Constitutional and Scriptural lines between church and state with the result that believers and churches are being forced to choose between obedience to the Word of God and government edicts,

**Appeal** to our civil leaders at all levels of government to stand with us in defense of freedom of religion,

**Reassert** our joyful acceptance of God’s plan for monogamous, heterosexual marriage (Gen. 2:21–25; Matt. 19:4–6; Rom. 1:26, 27; Eph. 5:22–33), for God-given gender identity (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4), and for the freedom of religion that Christians and Americans have always held dear (Matt. 22:21),

**Encourage** a faithful, principled stand by Regular Baptist people and churches on these issues based upon the Word of God and our responsibilities as citizens in both the civil and heavenly arenas,

**Urge** our Regular Baptist churches to update local church doctrinal statements, constitutions, and policies, clearly noting the Biblical instruction and resulting policy positions on marriage and gender identity issues (links to examples are below), and

**Call** upon all believers to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) with careful, thoughtful, and gracious responses to increasing government intrusion in the area of religious liberty and to pray for all governing authorities, knowing they are ministers of God (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

Links to sample doctrinal/policy/by-law language for churches.

1. The GARBC adopted new language under “Section V. Creation”during the 2013 GARBC Conference. That language can be found at http://www.garbc.org/?page\_id=31.

2. The Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal team working to defend religious freedom, has a number of resources. They can be found at the following web links:

http://www.speakupmovement.org/church/content/userfiles/Resources/ThreePoliciesAllChurchesShouldHave.pdf

http://www.speakupmovement.org/Church/Content/userfiles/Resources/church\_seven\_bylaws.pdf

http://www.speakupmovement.org/church/content/userfiles/Church\_suggestedByLaw\_Language-v2.pdf