



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY COMMISSION
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 1, 2018

The Executive Committee
of the Southern Baptist Convention
901 Commerce Street
Suite 600
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Dear Member of the Executive Committee:

Faithfulness to God's inerrant Word is of paramount importance in Christian ministry, and you all, as members of the Executive Committee, are stewards of our denomination's commitment to truthfulness of Scripture and the priority of the gospel. That being the case, I hope you'll allow me this moment to say thank you for your service to our Southern Baptist churches. Beyond that, however, know that I am honored to have the opportunity to bring you a report on behalf of your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Looking back over this last year, few things loom larger in the evangelical world than the loss of Billy Graham. After these many months since his death, I am increasingly grateful to God for his life and gospel witness. I believe Billy Graham was the greatest evangelist since the Apostle Paul. He was also the most revered Southern Baptist in at least a generation. Dr. Graham was never ashamed to confront a brave new world with the old-time gospel. And your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission strives to do the very same thing.

When the watching world says to us what they said to Billy Graham—"You need to change. Modern people can't accept your gospel"—we do the same thing Billy Graham did. We point them to an old, old story. One that continues to speak truth to the issues of today, but does so by speaking of bloody crosses and empty tombs and the power of God to save.

Over the course of the last year, we've had people approach us time and again saying, "Don't you realize that modern people just don't accept your sexual ethic? If you want to reach them, you must change." But to change our message about what Jesus says about marriage is to preach another gospel. To tell people that you need not repent of what Jesus calls sin is not only lying, but it sends people straight to Hell. And we won't do it. This truth led us over the last year to spearhead a statement, the Nashville Statement, that lays out what the Bible says about gender, about being created as male and female. In the middle of a confused culture, the ERLC is striving to speak words of truth to the watching world.

Also in the last year—in the halls of Congress and in the highest Courts of the land—we’ve been active filing briefs, raising awareness, and speaking with the media and elected officials on behalf of Southern Baptists. I’m thankful to report that we have seen some significant victories this year, including two major Supreme Court decisions that have affirmed freedom of conscience. Not only that, but we’ve been unflinching in our advocacy for life at all its stages, for justice that Scripture demands, for issues important to the stability of the family, and for the ever-important issue of religious liberty.

We’ve been working in the pews of our churches, too, aiming to equip Christians and congregations to think through issues of critical importance. We recognize that in many ways it has never been more challenging for parents as they deal with questions of technology, pornography, school, aging parents, and countless other challenges. That’s why we’ve centered our national conference this last year on the theme of the cross-shaped family in order to provide quality content and biblical instruction on these issues.

We’ve also continued to further the SBC’s focus on racial unity. As part of that emphasis, we hosted a conference in Memphis on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. and raised \$1.5 million in college scholarships for Memphis-area minority students. We’ve also redoubled our efforts also on behalf of the cause of life, on behalf of the defenseless unborn who are created in the image of God. Through Evangelicals for Life, we march for the unborn, petition our lawmakers, and speak on behalf of those the world wishes to silence. In the midst of this event this last year, and through our Psalm 139 ministry, we generated enough support this year alone to place ultrasound machines at nine crisis pregnancy centers across the country.

In all, my hope is that we as a Commission and all of us as Southern Baptists are faithful to the same thing Billy Graham was: we must be the people who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture so much that we do what it says. We must be the people who sing, “Jesus Loves Me,” and who work to protect all of those he loves. And as Billy Graham did we must continue to be the people who bring the gospel to the world with clarity and conviction and compassion.

For the Kingdom,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Russell" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Moore".

Russell Moore
President