

COMMISSION



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY COMMISSION
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

901 Commerce Street, Suite 550, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

DAVID PRINCE, Chairman
RUSSELL MOORE, President

As I think about the work of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission over the last year, I'm reminded of an anniversary that made headlines. In 2019, many news organizations marked the thirtieth anniversary of a pro-democracy protest in Beijing that culminated in the famous image of a young, unknown Chinese man standing—alone—against a row of tanks in Tiananmen Square.

What is most striking about this image is that he was not—in that moment—part of a mob or a riot or an army. It was just him: unarmed and unaccompanied. And yet, ironically enough, that's where the power was. The loneliness is what gives the image its force. And part of the reason the world paid such attention is because this action didn't seem to make sense. It looks so strange to see a person risk his life and his place in society without the means to fight back. And yet, courage, biblically defined, includes both of these elements—a redefinition of power and a reshaping of community. As this milestone passes us, those of us who belong to Christ should pause to reflect on how the courage that comes from the Spirit of God ought to prompt all of us to, when necessary, stand alone against the crowd.

That's one of the things that we as Christians have to be willing to do, and it's one of the things that your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission strives to do each day. Be willing to speak the truth as we see the Bible telling it.

One of the ways we have sought to do that is with a relentless focus on the issue which, for many around the world, defines the Southern Baptist Convention at this moment: church sex abuse. Over the last year, your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has devoted itself wholeheartedly to this issue in service to Southern Baptist churches around the country who want to do everything in their power to combat this wickedness in unity together, on behalf of the vulnerable, and for the sake of the gospel.

Over the last year, it has been a privilege to partner with our SBC President J. D. Greear, and with the President's Sexual Abuse Advisory Group. This work was made possible in part by the generosity of the Executive Committee, giving sacrificially in order to help fund research and resources that would equip our churches. Already hundreds of churches and thousands of Southern Baptists have taken the Caring Well Challenge or utilized resources connected to this issue of combatting church sex abuse. The ERLC devoted its national conference to this issue over the last year and welcomed the largest crowd in the event's history. In Texas, we worked to see legislation passed that would protect churches from civil liability if they informed another congregation of a potential staff member about whom there may be questions or allegations on this matter. Much has been done, and yet much more work remains to do. And those of us at the ERLC are both grateful to serve our churches, and determined to do so with unflinching commitment to Scripture and our Lord.

Over the last year, there have been a number of areas where we have focused efforts beyond the issue of abuse. At the forefront, though, is the issue of life and human dignity. We live in a society in which our federal government—to this very day—subsidizes the work of Planned Parenthood, an organization that preys upon women and profits on the backs of slaughtered children. We live in a society where multi-million dollar companies threaten state legislatures who would dare enact common-sense laws designed to protect women and children. We live in a world that thinks and speaks of unborn children made in the image of our God as problems to be solved.

But at the ERLC, we wake up every morning and we imagine what a post-Roe world would look like. We imagine that, and we work toward that future. In some cases, that takes the form of conferences and events. In other cases, it looks like advocacy for legislation. In yet other cases, it takes the form of our Psalm 139 Project, with which we provide ultrasound technology to centers around the country. In every case, though, this work means standing athwart a watching world that sees our care for the vulnerable as backwards. But the way of the cross is one that cares for the vulnerable. The way of the cross says that Jesus loves the little children—all the children of the world.

You see, the vulnerable matter to Jesus, and so matter to your ERLC. Sometimes this entails working across the country in state legislatures to help enact pro-life legislation. In other situations, it looks like working with the White House to ensure adoption agencies are not forced to choose whether they will violate their consciences or abandon needy children. And in other cases it's declaring—in a world that uses migrants, including children, as political punching bags—that the church of Jesus Christ must take our cues not from talking heads on television but from living words in Scripture. That's also why your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission will not back down one inch when it comes to standing for racial unity. We're proud to be partnering with LifeWay to produce curriculum for our churches on how we should apply the gospel to the issue of race. And we'll continue to provide resources that counter lies from many corners.

Beyond this issue, however, we also face assaults on religious liberty that would have seemed unthinkable just a matter of years ago. Over the last year, we've worked with the White House and Congress to prevent Bibles from getting caught up in trade disputes, and to keep government from taxing church parking lots. We've combatted well-intentioned legislation that would sacrifice religious liberty. And we've combatted egregious legislation that would threaten adoption agencies and healthcare providers from carrying out their callings to serve. We must be stewards of the inheritance of our Baptist forebears, and every day, that's exactly what your ERLC strives to be.

At the same time, one of the jobs of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission is to be a Paul Revere of sorts for our churches—running out ahead and alerting our churches of dangers that are coming and questions that need to be considered. Here, one area where we've spent a great deal of energy is on the issue of artificial intelligence and social media. We've put together resources, events, and content that examine questions that the families of tomorrow will face that seem nearly possible to imagine today. In a world in which social media has been characterized by falsehoods, toxicity, and cruelty, the ERLC has tried to highlight larger problems of a society increasingly isolated and rootless—and provide resources and solutions can help churches see the way forward. After all, biblical courage often means being willing to stand alone, against a crowd. But biblical unity means those who are in Christ should never be forced to stand alone, or against, those who bear the name of Christ.

Returning to Tiananmen Square, though, it's worth pointing out that this "tank man" was bravely alone, but, in his loneliness, he inspired people all over the world to stand for freedom over tyranny. As we remember him, let's remember how much more so we as Christians are called to stand—sometimes in community and sometimes in solitude—for the truth that is dependent on the cross, not dependent on the crowd. That's what your ERLC is here to do, and to equip our churches to do as well. We're grateful for the opportunity to do so by the sacrificial, cooperative giving of our churches for the sake of the Great Commission and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the Gospel,
Russell Moore

Ministry Goals and Accomplishments

(All SBC entities present informative ministry reports to the Executive Committee each February in compliance with the provisions of SBC Bylaw 18 E (12). The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has requested that the content of this report be taken from its 2020 Ministry Report, previously tendered to the Executive Committee.)

I. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.

Every day, the team at the ERLC seeks to answer one fundamental question: How can we serve Christians and churches with content that will help them answer questions and engage the culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Over the last year, we've sought to do that daily, particularly at the ERLC website—which publishes new content directly related to the issues of human dignity, family stability, civil society, and religious liberty in a variety of formats. Additionally, the ERLC strives to respond to events in the news important to Southern Baptists so as to help train churches and assist Southern Baptists in thinking through the issues. Beyond this, the ERLC has been intentional in launching events—ranging from area pastor lunches, leadership summits, and large-scale annual conferences, designed to equip men and women to think through these issues from a kingdom-focused, gospel framework. This last year, as the SBC seeks to address sexual abuse at every level of our denomination, the ERLC centered its national conference around the theme of combatting sexual abuse—how to care well for survivors and how to protect churches against predators. In partnership with LifeWay and others, these events are often uploaded online after the fact so that all Southern Baptists, not just those who were able to attend our national events, are able to benefit from the conference content.

As a few examples of church-minded resources created, the ERLC has produced bulletin inserts for SBC churches for each of the respective emphasis Sundays for pastors and church leaders. The ERLC has provided numerous resources free of charge to SBC churches and state conventions around the country for various events. Beyond that, the ERLC has continued to devote energy to this issue of racial reconciliation and is thankful for the opportunity to partner with LifeWay for a six-lesson Bible study titled, *The Church and the Racial Divide*.

The ERLC continued to innovate along several different multimedia initiatives, launching a YouTube channel designed to reach the up and coming generation with answers to complex questions with a focus on the gospel. The ERLC also continued to develop its policy-focused podcast, in which the DC-based ERLC staff offer insight and analysis from a Christian perspective on developments in our nation's capital and what we as a Commission are doing to drive conversations there. Additionally, video has received a great deal of attention over the last year. As an organization we have published hundreds of hours of interviews,

discussions, and video productions on a variety of issues. This has been a common request from pastors and churches, particularly for use in their weekly services and for small group training. In the same vein, the ERLC is continuing to ask what issues Christians aren't yet thinking about but will need to be thinking about in the near future. That's exactly the intention with one major document released earlier this year—Artificial Intelligence: An Evangelical Statement of Principles. The goal of this document is to help churches prepare for all the ways AI will make inroads into one's community and daily life, how Christians ought to think about AI, and what the benefits and dangers consist of. This project was developed by the ERLC Research Institute, signed by over 70 top evangelical leaders from across disciplines, and received a great deal of attention in press across the country. Our hope is that it will help to provide an ethical and moral framework for the church and society as we begin to think about this issue more and more in the years ahead.

II. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.

As the SBC entity charged not only to serve as a moral and ethical voice to Southern Baptist churches, but also to be a gospel witness in the public square, the ERLC engaged the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government on multiple fronts, from meeting with lawmakers and advocacy partners to issuing public comments to the Administration to filing amicus briefs in the Supreme Court.

The ERLC labored in the public square on a range of issues, from religious liberty to the sanctity of human life to marriage to human trafficking to racial reconciliation and many areas in between, seeking to apply the gospel to public policy for the sake of religious liberty and human flourishing. Among the many specific policies engaged, the ERLC worked to secure religious liberty protections and worked tirelessly to be a voice of reason and persuasiveness on issues of concern to Southern Baptists.

Throughout the last ministry year, the ERLC focused its legislative attention on issues of life, family, and religious liberty, about which Southern Baptists have been insistent and consistent for decades. A summary of the ERLC's public policy activities is below, but the ERLC's policy team also secured a number of key victories this year, some of which are highlighted here:

- ***Removal of Tax on Church Parking Lots:*** The ERLC completed a successful push—one that required nearly two years to see to completion along with extensive work with the Executive Branch and both houses of Congress—which repealed a provision of the 2017 tax reform legislation that would have had serious consequences for churches. Included in the 2017 tax reform package was a provision that created a new 21% tax on the value of some nonprofit employees' benefits. Because of the change, tax-exempt organizations that provide parking or transit benefits to their employees were subject to unrelated business income tax on the cost of the parking provided. This income tax on churches would have been the first in the history of the United States.
- ***Securing Religious Liberty Protections for Child Welfare Providers:*** After working closely with the Administration for several months, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed a new regulation in November 2019 that would help ensure faith-based organizations can continue serving vulnerable children and families through foster care and adoption services. This rule will reverse an Obama-era provision that functionally required adoption agencies to abandon their deeply held religious beliefs in order to continue receiving federal funding for their services. This new provision will

bring these regulations back in line with other federal nondiscrimination law and allow these agencies to resume their work serving needy children.

- ***Advocacy on the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act:*** The ERLC's work on the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act is a good example of the ERLC's capabilities to lead in the midst of a cultural flash point—the passage of the sweeping abortion legislation in New York and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's comments on Virginia's abortion legislation. We translated this cultural moment into public policy advocacy, but more broadly, an argument about the logical conclusion of the arguments of the abortion lobby and abortion industry.
- ***Advocacy on Tariffs on Bibles:*** In June 2019, the U.S. Trade Representative announced a new round of tariffs on products produced in China as a part of USTR's Section 301 investigation into Chinese trade practices. This new round of tariffs included a proposed 25% tariff on Bibles and other publishing products produced in China. The ERLC partnered with LifeWay to raise this issue with the Administration, submitting formal comments and written testimony to USTR and making contact with a range of Administration officials. In August 2019, USTR released a revised list of products subject to the new tariffs, and Bibles were removed from this list.
- ***FIRST STEP Act:*** The ERLC played a key role in the passage of the FIRST STEP Act, a bipartisan criminal justice reform package passed in December 2018. The ERLC has been involved in the bipartisan effort to reform the federal criminal justice system for many years, and the passage of the FIRST STEP Act was a significant milestone.
- ***Protecting the Hyde Amendment:*** Since 2016, pro-life advocates have been on notice that the abortion lobby was preparing to fight to eliminate the Hyde Amendment and thereby expand federal funding for abortion. The ERLC has been working with House and Senate leadership as well as the Administration to ensure that the Hyde Amendment remains in all final spending bills passed each year. The ERLC has, at the same time, been working to highlight the extremism of the abortion lobby in order to maintain and build support for the Hyde Amendment moving forward.

Beyond these victories, the ERLC continued its advocacy work on a wide range of issues of importance to Southern Baptists. Below is a list of some of just a few of the key pieces of legislation the ERLC advanced, included to highlight the range of issues the Commission engages on behalf of Southern Baptists:

- ***Protecting the Hyde Amendment:*** For over forty years, the Hyde Amendment has been passed each Congress to protect American consciences. However, the abortion industry is working to remove any Hyde protection during the appropriations process. In 2016, the Democratic platform declared that “they would continue to oppose, and seek to overturn, federal and state laws and policies that impede a woman's access to abortion, including by repealing the Hyde Amendment.” The ERLC is working with the Senate Appropriations Committee and the White House to protect the Hyde Amendment. This work is ongoing, and the ERLC will continue to advocate for the protection of the Hyde Amendment.
- ***The Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act:*** The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution affirms that “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” Even the majority in *Roe v. Wade* admit a right to life for “persons” in the United States, although they rejected that a fetus is a person under the 14th Amendment. This Act would establish criminal penalties

for failing to provide adequate care to born-alive babies that have survived a failed abortion. In such moments, children deserve all the medical care possible. President Bush signed into law the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002.

However, this law did not include criminal penalties for doctors that withhold care to a born-alive infant. The Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act would amend the federal criminal code to require a healthcare practitioner that is present when a child is born alive following an abortion or attempted abortion to, first, exercise the same degree of care as reasonably provided to any other child born alive at the same gestational age, and, second, ensure the child is immediately admitted to a hospital. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives in January 2018 but failed to pass the Senate.

- **Conscience Protection Measures:** No healthcare professional should be compelled to compromise his or her deeply-held beliefs in order to provide medical care, such as being forced to perform abortions or other medical procedures that conflict with an individual’s religiously-informed conscience. In 2018, the ERLC was very pleased to see the establishment of a new Conscience and Religious Freedom Division in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Civil Rights. This new division was announced for the first time at the ERLC’s 2018 Religious Liberty Summit. HHS also created new regulations to strengthen the conscience rights of healthcare workers, and the ERLC submitted comments in support of those regulations. At the end of last year, HHS published two rules that provide conscience protections for Americans with religious or moral objections to health insurance that covers contraception methods. These rules will help curb the conscience abuses healthcare professionals face across the country. In addition, the ERLC continues to advocate for the Conscience Protection Act—federal legislation that seeks to amend the Public Health Service Act in order to protect healthcare providers who chose not to perform an abortion—as well as working to permanently codifying the Hyde and Weldon Amendments into law. Last year, the Conscience Protection Act was passed by the House of Representatives and was part of the final negotiations on the spending bills last year. While it did not pass, Congress has voted several times on the measure and there is strong consensus about the language. Also included in the ERLC’s advocacy is our opposition to the Medicare for All Act of 2019. Among its many provisions, the Act would eliminate medical professionals’ ability to object to performing abortions based upon conscience, thereby creating a dangerous government precedent. As Dr. Moore has previously argued, “A government that can pave over the consciences of some can steamroll over dissent everywhere.”
- **Defund Planned Parenthood:** The ERLC is committed to seeing the nation’s largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, deprived of federal taxpayer dollars. There have been several efforts to defund Planned Parenthood over the last two years, including through the healthcare reform package and through House appropriations bills.

However, unless Congress uses the Budget Reconciliation Act, any effort to defund Planned Parenthood is unlikely to succeed, as this measure will not receive 60 votes in the Senate. Last year, the ERLC advocated for changes to HHS grant rules and spending levels that defund Planned Parenthood. These new rules were proposed, and spending levels have dramatically increased. The ERLC will continue to look for opportunities to defund Planned Parenthood, and ensure that the American taxpayer dollars aren’t going towards Planned Parenthood.

- ***Higher Education Reauthorization Act:*** Public universities ought to be places where diversity is encouraged, not stifled. The rights of free religious exercise and assembly of students on public college campuses are in need of clear federal protections. Specifically, college administrators ought to respect the rights of students to freedom of association and stop requiring religious student groups to accept as members or select as leaders those who do not share their core religiously informed beliefs. The Higher Education Reauthorization Act included language specifically protecting religious liberty of students to select leaders based on religious criteria. The bill also included language that would have protected the accreditation of faith-based higher education institutions. The ERLC continues to support efforts to include this language in the Senate companion bill and calls on Congress to protect students from religious discrimination.
- ***Protect Religious Freedom for Military Chaplains & Medical Professionals:*** As the country grapples with the ever-expanding implications of the sexual revolution, religious liberty conflicts develop for those who hold to God’s design for human sexuality. The normalization of same-sex marriage and transgenderism are creating conflicts in virtually every sphere of society, including the military and the medical practice. The ERLC monitors the climate in these spheres and advocates for the freedoms of religion and conscience of service members, chaplains, and medical professionals to serve their country in a manner consistent with their deeply held religious beliefs. This includes advocating on behalf of Southern Baptist chaplains publicly and through back channels as well as public policy provisions to protect the religious freedom of chaplains and other service members.
- ***Opposition to the Equality Act:*** H.R. 5, the Equality Act, would redefine the Civil Rights Act of 1964’s use of the word “sex” to also include “sexual orientation and gender identity” and make them federally protected classes. While the proposed intention of H.R. 5 is to protect individuals who identify as LGBT, the bill would instead steamroll the consciences of millions of people. H.R. 5 threatens the efforts of faith-based adoption and foster care agencies, hinders the work of healthcare professionals and faith-based hospitals, and undermines decades of civil rights protections for women and girls. These proposed changes to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would bring a dramatic shift in civil rights law, religious liberty, and the foundations of civic pluralism. The ERLC opposes this bill, as it represents one of the most alarming threats to religious liberty ever proposed in the United States Congress.
- ***Responding to the Opioid Crisis:*** Two-thirds of drug related deaths are due to opioid usage, and the drivers for the epidemic are complex. Last year, the ERLC engaged with House leadership and the Department of Health and Human Services on a range of responses including poverty and welfare programs, engagement and training for the faith community, and drug prescription practices and regulation. The ERLC also supports initiatives that engage churches and other local organizations to call for awareness and advocacy approached with a pro-life ethic.
- ***Legislative Solution for DACA Recipients:*** In September 2017, the Trump Administration rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Enacted in 2012 by President Obama, DACA sought to protect undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as minors—known as Dreamers—from deportation. Notwithstanding debate over the problematic elements of the DACA program, the ERLC believes Dreamers who came forward in good faith should not be punished with deportation for an act that was no fault of their own. Now young adults, these Dreamers—many of whom have families of their

own with children who are U.S. citizens—are workers, students, and positive contributors to their communities. The ERLC continues to work closely with Congress and the White House to deliver a permanent legislative solution for Dreamers.

- **North Korea IRF Initiative:** It is undeniable that the right to freedom of religion is not respected in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The Pyongyang regime persecutes Christians and other religious minorities in a particularly brutal fashion. Prayer, worship, congregating, and possessing sacred texts are severely penalized by torture and imprisonment. The ERLC is working with a broad, multi-faith coalition of organizations through the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process to urge North Korea to cease all restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and ensure that the right to manifest one's religious convictions in private or in public is fully protected and realized. The ERLC continues to urge the international community to prioritize the opposition of the egregious religious freedom violations carried out by the DPRK. Additionally, the ERLC produced a short film, produced on the ground in South Korea, giving voice to the stories of North Korean defectors and refugees who now live and worship in South Korea. The ERLC was also the only organization to host an event on religious freedom and human dignity violations in the DPRK at the 2019 Department of State's Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, demonstrating the ERLC's leadership in and commitment to religious freedom.
- **China IRF Initiative:** Over the past year, the Chinese government has severely escalated its persecution of religious minorities, including Christians, by destroying religious symbols on houses of worship, burning Bibles, confiscating religious materials, closing houses of worship, and detaining individuals holding divergent views. The Chinese people are facing threats to manifesting their religious beliefs in public, private, and in community. China has, for many years, been involved in controversial uses of technology and artificial intelligence that infringe on the basic human rights of Chinese citizens as well as political and religious dissidents. The ERLC has grave concerns about the trajectory of China's approach to Christians and other religious minorities and is committed to working with other nongovernmental organizations to direct both U.S. and international pressure towards alleviating their persecution.
- **Fighting global anti-Semitism:** There is an alarming rise of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe and anti-Semitic speech around the world, particularly in the Middle East. But with the rise of the so-called Alt-Right movement in the United States, anti-Semitism is on the rise here as well. Through collaborative action with like-minded organizations, the ERLC has worked against such action at the United Nations, and it will continue its work defending victims of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe and anti-Semitic speech wherever it happens. Earlier this year, Travis Wussow, spoke at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference on the need for increased freedoms for our brothers and sisters in Israel as well as the SBC's efforts to help displaced Christians and other minorities.

As usual, one of the other means by which the ERLC engaged the public square was through one-on-one meetings and other communication with elected officials and their staff. Through regular interaction with congressional offices, the ERLC sought to ensure that social issues and religious liberty issues were neither steamrolled nor relegated to backburner status. A second means by which the ERLC engaged the public square was through coalition work. ERLC staff participated in numerous coalitions, both formal and informal, among religious, life, family, and other public policy groups on issues of common agreement in an effort to find unified approaches to advance sound policy in the public square. In every instance, the

ERLC brought a decidedly Baptist and gospel-focused perspective to the issue at hand. In many cases, the ERLC helped to reshape thinking and action among coalition partners by consistently voicing its positions through the lens of the gospel.

III. Assist churches in their moral witness in local communities.

The primary front of the advance of the kingdom of God is the local church, faithfully proclaiming the gospel, training disciples, and reaching the community around it with the gospel. The ERLC never wants to lose sight of the primacy of the local church and the needs of the communities they serve. That being the case, over the course of the ministry year the ERLC has offered resources designed to assist churches in their moral witness in local churches. The ERLC provides new resources daily—from books, to blog posts, articles, essays, podcasts, videos, bulletin inserts, and sermon outlines—for Christians and churches to help think through moral and ethical issues. Additionally, the ERLC continues its rapid response strategy for news-related items that churches may want to address.

Throughout the year, ERLC staff and leadership traveled the country speaking at churches and church events throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, in addition to our Southern Baptist seminaries. This ranged from state convention gatherings to Sunday morning worship to church-sponsored events and forums designed to address key cultural issues.

In the midst of our emphasis to stand for the unborn, the Psalm 139 Project of the ERLC continued to place ultrasound machines in crisis pregnancy centers around the country. There are few things more important to the ERLC than standing for vulnerable children at risk from death at the hands of a predatory abortion industry. This ministry has been one concrete way the ERLC has been able to equip local centers, often working closely with local churches, to have resources for women in crisis and be a gospel witness at the same time.

In tandem with our denominational calendar, the ERLC produced bulletin inserts, videos, and content designed to address areas of denominational emphasis within the life of local churches, including sanctity of human life, racial reconciliation, and important social issues. Throughout the year, the ERLC also partnered with individual churches, associations, and state conventions via videoconference to help answer questions and equip churches on the issues alive in their respective congregations.

IV. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.

No issue in the public square has been so foundational for Southern Baptists as has the priority of religious liberty and the right of liberty of conscience. As such, beyond the concrete legislative efforts listed in sections above, ERLC staff regularly published articles in Baptist Press, on ERLC properties, and at prominent outlets around the country. From the latest developments pertaining to religious liberty and persecution around the world, as well as many other important topics including adoption, marriage, human trafficking, race, and others, the ERLC addressed concerns of many different kinds. On our website, entire channels are devoted specifically to these important issues. These pages feature brief explanations of the various topics, informational videos, links to news stories, and applicable Scripture references.

Additionally, our public policy page includes information designed for legislators, staff, and thought leaders on issues of concern to Southern Baptists. We regularly meet with and attempt to drive the conversation regarding bills important for the sake of religious liberty, and our in-person presence wed with timely and well-supported information are key facets of legislative success.

Beyond this, the ERLC labored to promote religious freedom with like-minded groups and organizations and continued the work of its international office—designed to promote religious liberty for Southern Baptists around the globe, particularly calling attention to persecution of Christian minorities in North Korea, China, and the Middle East.

The ERLC also named leaders for their distinguished service awards on the basis of their contribution to the cause of promoting religious liberty—with Senator James Lankford (R–Okla.), being awarded the John Leland Religious Liberty Award for his faithful commitment to the issue of religious liberty in the United States Senate. Additionally, Rachael Denhollander was named the Distinguished Service Award for her work in combatting sex abuse and her particular service in consultation with the President’s Sexual Abuse Advisory Group.

Beyond these areas, the ERLC continued to participate in a number of regular gatherings with religious leaders and groups on issues of domestic and international religious liberty, along with other issues important to Southern Baptists. The ERLC also worked to continue to cultivate relationships with members of Congress and their staff by speaking at Capitol Hill events and meetings.

Based on the listed Ministry Assignment, what opportunities or challenges do you see on the horizon from 2020 and beyond that would necessitate changes, or new directions, in how you are accomplishing the above Ministry Assignment?

I. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.

Each new year brings new challenges and questions in our culture that affect the lives of Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist churches. Part of the ERLC’s role is being attentive to those questions and applying the gospel to them for the benefit of our churches. Perhaps the most important way we will continue to do this in the 2020 ministry year is through helping to serve the denomination alongside the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group and Caring Well initiatives. The world is watching how the denomination handles this problem, and for the sake of our witness as well as for the benefit of local churches throughout our denomination, the ERLC wants to do everything possible to make sure that this study provides the best possible resources for pastors and churches. By no means is this the only issue, far from it in fact. But it is one that is front of mind and focus both for the Southern Baptist Convention and the ERLC.

II. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.

Each new year brings new opportunities for the ERLC to continue to make inroads in building coalitions, driving conversations, and being a voice of influence on Capitol Hill to represent Southern Baptists and their concerns well. A sampling of some of the areas and legislation on which the ERLC will focus include:

- Defunding Planned Parenthood
- Promoting pro-life judicial nominees
- No Taxpayer for Abortion Act
- Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act
- Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act
- Conscience Protection Act
- Restoration of Russell Amendment protections
- First Amendment Defense Act

- Opposition to women in combat and in the draft
- Reviving obscenity prosecution

A continued focus in the 2020 ministry year will be Capitol Conversations, regular ERLC meetings with coalition partners, elected officials, and influencers to keep close contact and influence with those crucial to defending America's first freedom of religious liberty. Beyond this, additional work done over the last year, along with key strategic partnerships we have developed, has poised the ERLC to grow its media presence, and our fully-equipped television studio in the Southern Baptist Convention building in Nashville adds to that potential.

III. Assist churches in their moral witness in local communities.

As mentioned last year, in the year ahead, we have unique opportunities to use enhanced digital platforms, ERLC events, and other platforms to leverage strategic relationships with churches and invest in local communities. Being the smallest SBC entity, it is an organizational challenge to be as involved in all of our states and associations as we would aspire to be, but through digital platforms, events, podcasting, and video conferencing, the ERLC has the ability to extend its reach in unique and strategic ways even further into the life of local churches.

IV. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.

With new cultural flashpoints around every turn, increased attention to the issue of religious liberty provides the ERLC a unique opportunity to be a prophetic voice in the public square. Additionally, a continuing investment in events provides the ERLC with the ability to speak to a broad audience on issues of concern to Southern Baptists. This year, several of our key events and publications will focus on what faithful Christian families should look like in the midst of an ever-changing and ever-challenging cultural landscape in which religious liberty is increasingly imperilled. As we equip Christian families, at the same time we hope to use the opportunity to model to the watching world a vision of religious freedom and Christian witness—with faithful men and women serving others, loving others, and welcoming them to hear the gospel message. Beyond that, through the work of the Research Institute, the ERLC has an arsenal of strategically-gifted and committed Southern Baptist thinkers that can help drive the conversation in the public square on issues of importance to Southern Baptists.

Matters Referred by the Convention

During the Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham, Alabama, June 11–12, 2019, the Convention referred the following items to The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission for consideration, action, and report.

1. SBC Referral: To request each SBC entity to provide an update on addressing abuse (Items 15 and 60, Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 11-12, 2019, SBC Annual, p. 57, 63)

Motion: Phillip Bethancourt, Tennessee

“That the Southern Baptist Convention request each of the entities of the Southern Baptist Convention provide an update related to their efforts to address abuse and report back to the 2020 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida, covering three subjects: what is their entity doing to foster effective abuse awareness, prevention, and care; what additional steps has their entity taken to address abuse since the 2018 SBC annual meeting in Dallas, Texas; and how is their entity partnering with the efforts of the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group to address abuse?”

Response: The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has, arguably, devoted more energy to addressing the issue of sexual abuse as it has any single issue over the last year. Following the 2018 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, J. D. Greear formed a Sexual Abuse Advisory Group to work in partnership with the ERLC. As part of that work, the ERLC labored alongside this group over the last year as it moved through three phases: the first phase, a listening phase, pursued a goal of listening to and learning from hundreds of survivors, advocates, outside experts, and pastors. Many of the findings from this phase were conveyed verbally at the SBC annual meeting during the President’s Sexual Abuse Advisory Group report. At the same time, even more detail was released in a written report titled, “Caring Well: A Report from the SBC Sexual Abuse Advisory Group.” In the second phase, a development phase, the ERLC helped produce and house resources and recommendations to equip SBC churches to care for survivors and to prevent abuse. These resources have included a number of articles at erlc.com and caringwell.com; the new, free video-based curriculum, *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*; and the Caring Well Challenge, an eight-step, twelve-month process to help churches know they are doing everything they can on the issue. The third phase, an implementation phase, continued through 2019. In this phase, the ERLC focused much of its effort in serving churches as they walk through the first round of the Caring Well Challenge.

Beyond serving the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group, though, the ERLC has focused much additional time and energy on this issue. As merely a few examples, throughout 2019, the ERLC hosted several gatherings and events on this important topic. The ERLC also devoted its largest event of the year, the ERLC National Conference, to focus on this issue. The Caring Well Conference was held October 3–5, 2019 in Grapevine, Texas, and was the largest National Conference to-date in the history of the Commission. Beyond this event, the ERLC will continue to work throughout the upcoming years to keep a denomination-wide focus on this issue to combat the evil of sexual abuse.

2. SBC Referral: To request the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission study the effects of birth control methods (Items 19 and 60, Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 11-12, 2019, *SBC Annual*, p. 58, 63)

Motion: David Haynes, Alabama

“That the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission study the effects of birth control pills, IUD’s, and other contraceptive devices and methods to see if ‘at any time and any way’ there is the possibility of these taking the life of a conceived child, that the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission give a report of their findings to the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Florida, in 2020, and that the compilation of studies in Randy Alcorn’s book *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?* be used as one of the resources for studying this issue.”

Response: The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission takes very seriously the concerns raised about the possibility of certain contraceptive methods causing abortions (also known as abortifacients). As an organization tasked with monitoring trends and movements impacting pro-life witness, we are familiar with ongoing debates surrounding various contraceptive devices’ connection with abortion. As an unapologetically pro-life organization committed to advocating for the dignity of unborn children, we are vigilant about providing information on any technology or medical device that would cause an abortion. We are committed to providing resources and equipping individuals and churches to develop a whole-life approach to pro-life advocacy, which includes concerns over methods of contraception that may cause an abortion. At the ERLC website, readers can find numerous resources discussing the concerns associated with unquestioned use of contraception, in addition to resources

discussing whether certain forms of contraception can induce abortion. In Washington, the ERLC team spent several years opposing the Obama Administration's contraceptive mandate, standing with GuideStone and several other Baptist institutions who filed suit to challenge the mandate. Additionally, through event productions and coalition partnerships, the ERLC continues its commitment to awareness on the issue of abortifacient contraceptives. The ERLC is committed to providing further resources equipping Christians to think critically about the impact of contraception on unborn life.

3. SBC Referral: To equip local churches on issues of marriage and sexuality (Items 47 and 79, Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 11-12, 2019, *SBC Annual*, p. 61, 80)

Motion: Dau Ayub, Texas

“That, due to the major assault on marriage and family by the normalization and desensitizing of the body of believers towards sexual immorality, common law union and same sex partnerships, and the continuous onslaught on Christian family values, including adoption by the unwed or same sex partnerships, the Southern Baptist Convention increase its efforts to equip the local church in order to minister to these groups, to love them well in Jesus's name calling sin a sin, to lead them to a godly understanding of marriage and family, and to equip the local church to anticipate attacks on the pulpit, to stand with Christ's definition of marriage and family, and to defend proper membership to the churches.”

Response: The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission wholeheartedly shares the conviction expressed in this motion concerning the importance of teaching the biblical view of marriage and sexuality to a world that is increasingly confused. In marriage, we see a picture of the very mystery that defines the existence of the people of God—the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the same time, allegiance to Christ must include obedience to his commands—including what Scripture says about a biblical sexual ethic. In light of this reality, the ERLC happily devotes significant resources to this matter as one of our primary issues of concern. This ranges from dozens of articles, podcasts, and interviews each year, to covering these issues at conferences, speaking on these issues at churches, events, and interviews with national and international print and television outlets. The Sexual Revolution cannot deliver on its promises, and the ERLC wants to do everything in its power to equip churches to remain faithful to the gospel while at the same time embodying and articulating a biblical vision of marriage to the world around us.

4. SBC Referral: To ask the Executive Committee and Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission to facilitate a healing process for abuse survivors (Items 49 and 79, Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 11-12, 2019, *SBC Annual*, p. 61, 80)

Motion: Rebecca Krueger, Alabama

“That, in light of the already active movement to fight for the vulnerable, the Executive Committee and Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission implement for those who have been, are being, and will be abused (all ages-including sexually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually) a process and clear path to receive training to counsel, that wisdom outside the walls of the convention be sought as to the psychological effects of abuse, and that professional recommendations be returned to the convention with biblical, clear, focused, actionable steps toward healing for those fighting for healing from horrific abuse so that we can move forward to minister to others affected.”

Response: The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission recognizes that the psychological effects of abuse are severe, long-term, and in many cases requires care and treatment from trained professionals. Over the last year, the ERLC has served the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group, which has involved a range of professionals—including psychologists and counselors with experience working with trauma—to develop resources for churches, state and national entities, and seminaries. This work has included the curriculum titled *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*, which will be used and implemented widely among Southern Baptist churches and cooperative entities. This group of experts continues to provide advice to the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group moving forward.

The Sexual Abuse Advisory Group continues to explore strategies to ensure that care and healing is available to all survivors of abuse and that those who will be providing biblical counseling and care are trained and equipped for the task. This includes providing training and resources for existing counselors and professionals, providing resources to those entities tasked with training new counselors, and exploring models for providing counseling to survivors through national, state, and local entities.