

BGCT OPPOSITION TO ABORTION

The Baptist General Convention of Texas has spoken on numerous occasions against abortion. Seven times since 1980, the BGCT in annual session has addressed abortion with statements that are amazingly consistent:

- **1980** – “Be It Therefore Resolved that the Texas Baptist Convention . . . reaffirm the view of the scripture of the sacredness and dignity of all human life, both born and unborn, and . . . Be It Further Resolved that we favor appropriate legislation prohibiting abortion except to save the life of the mother or in cases of incest or rape.”
- **1982** – “Be It Further Resolved that we favor appropriate legislation prohibiting abortion except to save the life of the mother or in cases of incest or rape, and that we also support and will work for legislation which will prohibit the practice of infanticide.”
- **1986** – “Be It Resolved that we encourage all Texas Baptist institutions, cooperating churches, and members to work diligently to support counseling, housing, adoption placement services, and appropriate health care for women in crisis pregnancy, emphasizing a reconciled relationship with Jesus Christ.”
- **1991** – “. . . the messengers of this Convention urge Texas Baptists to oppose the practice of elective abortion; and . . . that we urge Texas Baptist individuals and members to communicate effectively the Biblical instructions concerning sexual responsibility and sanctity of life.”
- **1996** – “Whereas abortion as a means of birth control violates the sacredness of human life; and . . . Whereas more recently the procedure of partial birth abortion and the development of new drugs that will induce spontaneous abortions compound the tragedy of abortion as a means of birth control; Therefore, Be It Resolved that we strongly urge this Convention and Texas Baptists to continue to publicly oppose any type of abortion as a means of birth control.”
- **1997 (motion)** – The 1997 Convention in Austin approved a motion to “condemn partial-birth abortion.”
- **1998** – “Whereas under current Texas law . . . abortions can be performed on children without their parents’ knowledge . . . Be it therefore resolved that the Baptist General Convention of Texas . . . express support for legislation which would require parental consent 48 hours before any abortion could be performed on a minor child; and . . . Be it finally resolved that Baptists teach our children the values and biblical mandate of chastity before marriage, the sanctity of life, and the tragedy and sin of elective abortion.”

The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission also takes a firm stand against abortion. Statements by the CLC are not official policy of the convention. The CLC speaks *to* the Convention about moral issues, not *for* the Convention. Its “Abortion and the Christian Life” document, while not a statement officially adopted by the

BGCT, states that biblical teachings:

“ . . . convey a deep reverence for life and particularly for the most vulnerable lives among us. In the context of thinking about abortion, the biblical narratives teach us to reverence every life involved in a crisis pregnancy: the unborn, the mother, the father, the extended family, the whole of society.

“Reverence for life of the unborn means that we as the body of Christ are to nurture developing life. It should be a major concern to the Christian community that most of the 1.5 million abortions performed annually are performed for reasons more related to birth control than urgent medical therapy. Abortion as birth control is not compatible with the gospel’s call to reverence life.

“Just as Jesus welcomed children to his side, we should welcome children into our midst and certainly those resulting from crisis pregnancies. In so doing, we follow the example of the early Christians who provided refuge for ‘unwanted’ children and their needy parents in direct contrast to a culture which routinely practiced abortion and child abandonment.”

Through both word and deed, the BGCT and its related institutions affirm the sanctity of human life. Thus, abortion is considered evil. Even when exceptions are mentioned, such as abortion to save the life of a mother, the abortion is viewed as a lesser of evils, not as a good thing to be done.

The BGCT not only speaks against abortion, but also encourages and assists ministries that make possible alternatives to abortion:

- *The State Missions Commission (SMC)* provides start-up funds to help churches throughout the state launch crisis pregnancy centers. These centers provide Christ-centered pregnancy testing, prenatal care, and counseling in areas of finance, adoption, and abortion alternatives, making referrals to residential crisis pregnancy and birthing centers where available. The SMC also helps churches with local ministries to assist families who choose alternatives to abortion, as well as ministries that lead to healing for women who endure emotional trauma following abortion. True Love Waits calls on young people to commit themselves to sexual abstinence outside of marriage.
- *Hospital systems* related to the BGCT have a deep commitment to the principle of the sanctity of life. They are in the very business of preserving, sustaining, and promoting life. Therefore, abortion on demand is forbidden by the policies of all Texas Baptist hospitals. Pastoral care departments of these institutions, believing that the lives of both the baby and the mother are important, make available counseling and other forms of assistance.
- *Children’s homes* provide counseling for pregnant women.

In both policy and practice, the BGCT maintains a firm stand affirming reverence for human life and opposing abortion.