

**Resolutions Approved by Delegates at the 2015 Conference of  
The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches (July 26, 2015)  
Prepared by the FGBC Social Concerns Committee**

**1. The U.S. Supreme Court's Decision on Same-Sex Marriage**

Inasmuch as:

- The Supreme Court of the United States has made same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states.
- The Solicitor General of the United States said in oral arguments before the Supreme Court that tax exemption for religious organizations that barred same-sex marriages would “certainly be an issue. I don’t deny that.”
- Chief Justice John Roberts, in his dissenting opinion, wrote, “Today’s decision... creates serious questions about religious liberty. Many good and decent people oppose same-sex marriage as a tenet of faith, and their freedom to exercise religious freedom is—unlike the right imagined by the majority—actually spelled out in the Constitution.”

We resolve:

- That same-sex marriage is contrary to the plan of God divinely revealed in Scripture. When Jesus taught on marriage (Mark 10:6-9) he said (1) “God made them male and female” (Genesis 1:27) and (2) “the two will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Thereby, a new bond is formed intended for a lifetime (Mark 7:8-9). Without the two realities of heterosexuality and covenant union, no true marriage bond has been created. Jesus spoke to oppose the easy divorce culture of his time. His words continue to be relevant to that and to same-sex marriage.
- That those who are in a same-sex marriage nonetheless are created in the image of God and thus deserve the dignity and freedom from spiteful treatment as is owed every human being.
- That Christian churches and couples work with renewed commitment to uphold and model strong marriages according to the Scriptures as an important witness to the brokenness of our world.
- That people of all religious faiths, especially Christians, stand for and work for the protection of genuine religious liberty. No church, religious organization, member of the clergy or layperson striving to live out his or her convictions in daily life should be denied the right to the free exercise of religion and should be free of governmental pressure, punishment or ridicule for living out convictions on the nature of marriage.

[A model policy for churches on same-sex marriage is available. Please send an email request to: [shoemaker@gracesealbeach.org](mailto:shoemaker@gracesealbeach.org).]

## **2. Law Enforcement—a Responsible Role Established by God**

Citizens, residents and guests in our society have the right to be safe and protected from crime. This protection is primarily accomplished through the efforts of the Civil Authority seen as law enforcement of various forms and levels throughout the United States. God Himself has established the authority of law enforcement and has made it His servant (Romans 13:1-4). Law enforcement has the responsibility to protect society from crime and those that desire to prey on it. God and our society have granted to law enforcement the power to respond as needed to deal with the criminal element, including the use of lethal force. Law enforcement has the responsibility to use this power in response to the forces and pressures around it properly and appropriately, utilizing principles from God Himself and from society.

Society, equally, has the responsibility to respond with respect due law enforcement (Romans 13:2), recognizing the difficult task required of law enforcement. Disrespect of law enforcement makes it very difficult for law enforcement to accomplish its assigned responsibility effectively with safety and security for both society and law enforcement. The failure to respect or to respond to the lawful directives of law enforcement place both society and law enforcement in perilous positions, often leading to a disruption of the safety and security enjoyed in a peaceful society. Citizens, residents and guests in our society must be encouraged to respect and honor law enforcement. This respect and honor must be modeled from the leaders in our society, both political and societal. Our children must be taught to respect law enforcement and learn that law enforcement is a necessary part of society for their protection and security.

We honor those who have dedicated their lives to the service of society in the area of civil authority, seen in local, state and federal law enforcement. This includes those who investigate crimes, provide security at our venues, maintain our jails and prisons, prosecute and defend those arrested and charged with crimes, as well as those who serve to enforce the law in other areas in our society.

Our prayer is for the security and safety of every law enforcement officer as well as for these same officers to wear the badge honorably and in compliance with the principles given by God Himself and our society.

## **3. The Persecuted Church around the World**

We grieve at the suffering of our brothers and sisters around the world who face constant threat to their lives and safety and well being because they bear the name of Christ. We covenant to pray for them regularly and to contribute to their needs as God supplies.

#### **4. Terrorism—Domestic and Foreign**

We call for and support all lawful measures necessary to protect the public and punish such violence, and we highly commend and honor those who put their lives at risk to protect innocent civilians. We call on government leaders at all levels and in every country to take the growing threat of terrorism most seriously.

Most of all, we challenge ourselves to intense prayer in the face of terrorism. We call on our Fellowship and Christians everywhere to pray, intercede and give thanks for “all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

#### **4. Religious Liberty**

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution was remarkable for its time in recognizing certain fundamental rights that should not be transgressed by the government. The “First Freedom” in the First Amendment is Freedom of Religion: “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In the United States, we look with alarm when the “free exercise of religion” is suppressed by social pressure to conform to secular values.

We express our deep concern over trends that challenge religious liberty:

- Legislation and court decisions that diluted the free exercise of religion.
- Defense of religious freedom in a general way but a refusal to defend it when it conflicts with the social goals of government or activist groups.
- Political words about “freedom of worship” or freedom for “houses of worship” when these phrases clearly abridge a broader understanding of religious freedom.
- Religious liberty affirmed for clergy but not extended to laypeople.

Religious liberty must extend beyond “the four walls of the church” to every aspect of our lives, for we acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all of life, not just of life within the church.

Religious liberty must apply to all believers as they strive to live out their convictions in their lives away from the church, especially in the workplace.

Religious liberty must extend beyond places of worship to ministries, charities, schools, hospitals and other social services that religious groups provide for society.

While disciples of Jesus understand that there can be a “price to pay” for living under his lordship, we also must understand that we are to “carry each other’s burdens” and thus “fulfill the Law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). This means coming to the aid of others in their hour of distress and ensuring that no believer has to experience severe financial loss for living the name of Christ.

We affirm that religious liberty is not just the privilege of Christians, but must be extended to all religions in our country. Challenges to the religious freedom of others should be a concern to Christians and may mean that Christian believers and communities will be next.

Finally, we affirm “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948) as a standard to be upheld by all nations of the world:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

## **5. Immigration Reform**

Recognizing that:

- a. All people are made in the Image of God,
- b. Respect for the rule of law is essential in a civil society,
- c. Secure borders are the right and need of every nation,
- d. Israel was frequently reminded by God that she should show mercy to the immigrant because she, too, was once an oppressed and exploited people,
- e. The prophets in Scripture demanded special compassion to the exploited and vulnerable, including the “alien in the land”,
- f. Our nation is populated by people from a multitude of cultures and lands, and
- g. The presence of undocumented immigrants in this country (and in our churches) is a fact and a complex issue not easily resolved,

(1) We call on our churches to give prayer, thought, discussion and action toward addressing the problem of the undocumented immigrant in a God-honoring way.

(2) We recognize the divisive and controversial nature of this debate and we encourage dialogue in the churches that is respectful, open-minded and solution-focused.

(3) We further call on our churches to be the “reconciling presence of Christ” in the midst of a broken system that creates rancor, resentment, racism, selfishness, fear, exploitation, danger and disregard for law.

(4) We call on our society and elected leaders to rise above political posturing and rancor to work toward a solution on immigration that is compassionate, realistic and just.

We recognize that meaningful solutions to this problem are not easily reached. We also recognize the solutions must come through a determined will to reach them. We deplore the present situation when our Federal Government is unable to resolve key immigration issues year after year.

## **6. Continuing Resolutions**

We reaffirm the Continuing Resolutions passed by previous conferences of the FGBC:

- a. Sanctity of Human Life (1982 and 1996)
- b. Religious Freedom (1987)
- c. Personal Commitment (1988)
- d. Homosexuality (2000)