

**MEMPHIS DECLARATION**  
**MAY 3, 2006**

We, as men and women who share a heritage of Southern Baptist identity, declare that we stand together and confess Jesus Christ as the one Lord to whom we must reckon an account for our words and motivations in this gathering. We further acknowledge that the Word of God is the sole basis of our confession and cooperation, and we are confident that God has sufficiently revealed in it all that is needed to direct Southern Baptists in fruitful cooperation toward Kingdom ends that bring glory to Jesus Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation.

We publicly declare before all Southern Baptists that we believe the unity, mission, and witness of our denomination is seriously threatened by the introduction of the narrowing of cooperation through exclusionary theological and political agendas that corrupt the healthy and mutual fellowship we enjoy as Kingdom servants. We believe that the parameters of Baptist cooperation in missions and evangelism must be consistent with our rich theological heritage, and that all attempts to impose excessively restrictive criteria on participation in Southern Baptist missionary work are counterproductive to the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because we desire to be and to remain faithful to our confession of Jesus Christ and his Word, we do not keep silent, nor shall we, since we believe that we have a common message to speak in this time of great need for unity and Kingdom focus in our convention. In view of this shared conviction, we declare the following:

1. We publicly repent of triumphalism about Southern Baptist causes and narcissism about Southern Baptist ministries which have corrupted our integrity in assessing our denomination bureaucracy, our churches, and our personal witness in light of the sobering exhortations of Scripture.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to a renewed pledge to integrity demonstrated by accountability in our denomination, both before God and each other, lest in preaching the meekness of our Lord to others we ourselves will be found guilty of wicked, sinful pride.

2. We publicly repent of an arrogant spirit that has infected our partnership with fellow Christians in the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, without the hearing of which men are incapable of conversion.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to a renewed pledge to partner with Great Commission Christians for the glory of Jesus Christ, who is proclaimed with power when his disciples are at peace with one another.

3. We publicly repent of having condemned those without Christ before we have loved them, and that we have acted as judge of those for whom Christ died by failing to live with a redemptive spirit toward them.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to engage culture actively at every level by living redemptively as the Body of Christ in the world.

4. We publicly repent of having forsaken opportunities to reason together with those who share our commitment to gospel proclamation yet differ with us on articles of the faith that are not essential to Christian orthodoxy.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to building bridges where there have been none, in listening more and talking less, and in extending the hand of fellowship to all who share our confession of Christ and our commitment to extend His Kingdom.

5. We publicly repent of having turned a blind eye to wickedness in our convention, especially when that evil has taken the form of slanderous, unsubstantiated accusations and malicious character assassination against our Christian brothers.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to confront lovingly any person in our denomination, regardless of the office or title that person holds, who disparages the name of our Lord by appropriating venomous epithets against our brothers and sisters in Christ, and thus divides our fellowship by careless and unchaste speech.

6. We publicly repent of having misplaced our priorities on the building and sustaining of institutions of secondary and far inferior importance than the local church.

Therefore, we renew our pledge to the local church as the primary focus of our ministry and service to advance the Kingdom of God and bring glory to his Son.

7. We publicly repent of having disrespected the sovereign grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by falsely presuming that our strength as a people of God is found in uniformity rather than unity within the parameters of Scriptural authority.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to honor our identity as people of one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, whose affirmation of biblical authority does not necessitate absolute uniformity on all matters of doctrine or practice.

8. We publicly repent of our inattentiveness to convention governance by not seeking to hold trustees accountable to the body which elects them to preserve our sacred trust and direct our entities with the guidance, counsel, and correction necessary to maintain the integrity of those entities.

Therefore, we covenant with one another to assist in the preservation of our convention's sacred trust and fulfill our biblical responsibility to hold those trustees elected to serve our entities accountable, and to pray for them as they seek to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities.

Finally, we believe the conversations that have begun in these days express our desire to preserve the Southern Baptist Convention should God, in his providence, so choose to sustain our witness and strengthen our commitment to these ends. We pledge, therefore, to one another that we will continue this dialogue by inviting others in our respective spheres of influence to participate with us by seeking to renew our commitment to denominational accountability, institutional openness, moral and ethical integrity, and properly prioritized Kingdom efforts.

Signees:

[Each person is signing/has signed for himself/herself, and not their church or even Sr. Pastor.]

Steven P. Hardy, NC  
Ginny Brant, SC  
Pamela Walker Blume, NC  
Ken McLemore, VA  
Ben Carr, OK  
Martin S. Duren, GA  
Arthur T. Rogers, KY  
Benjamin S. Cole, TX  
Thomas Ascol, FL  
Jason Helmbacher, OK  
Alden Stephens, FL  
Wiley Drake, CA  
Jason Sampler, LA  
C.B. Scott, AL  
Roy Hargrave, FL  
Wade Burleson, OK  
Wyman Dobbs, West Africa  
Rick Thompson, OK  
Phil Newton, TN

[Don Hinkle, MO, was there as a media representative, but to remain an impartial observer, did not sign.]