

# Great Reasons Abound to Feel Baptist Pride

Baptists have been my spiritual tribe as I walked my faith journey.

From running through the halls of exciting Eastwood Baptist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and attending Baptist summer camps to being trained by Baptist seminaries and employed by Baptist congregations and organizations, I have felt my Baptist pride swell with each passing year.

Over the last week, that swelling pride has burst forth into an almost sinful smugness.

Before arriving at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship meeting in Dallas, interesting news came from the Southern Baptist Convention that had gathered a few blocks away from where the CBF was gathering.

I have grown accustomed to hearing news from the SBC's annual meetings for which I wholeheartedly disagree from time to time.

There were still a few of those moments - especially having Vice President Mike Pence deliver what amounted to a campaign speech - but I was pleasantly surprised at the stand many Southern Baptists took in regard to the treatment of women in their domination.

Maybe the tide is turning for Southern Baptists when it comes to gender equality?

Walking into the Hyatt Regency where the general assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was taking place, joy filled my heart as I saw familiar faces and laughed with good friends.

While the place I call my spiritual home is not perfect - there is no such a place this side of heaven - CBF has come to be an environment where I can collaborate

and debate with colleagues without feeling judged or ostracized.

We may not always agree - what family ever does? - but it's my dysfunctional family whom I happen to love.

My pride swelled even more as I attended the historic first meeting of the Affirming Network.

Created from the response to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Illumination Project report, almost 150 leaders within Baptist life gathered to listen to the testimonies of gay and lesbian Baptist ministers.

They spoke boldly of what it has been like to feel the sting of discrimination and rejection from the faith community.

Yet, they also spoke with powerful voices dreaming of the day when they would be fully welcomed and affirmed.

It was, indeed, a beautiful moment to behold, as the arc of history kept bending toward justice.

While CBF was drawing to a close, my other close Baptist relatives spoke out against a new immigration policy initiated by the Trump administration.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions discussed a zero-tolerance policy separating children from their undocumented parents.

Lee Spitzer, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches, USA; Jeffrey Haggray, chief executive officer of American Baptist Home Mission Societies; Suzii Paynter, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; and other leaders condemned Sessions for his use of Scripture as he argued for the separation of children from their parents.

It was inspiring to hear from so many faithful Baptist leaders on an issue of human rights and decency.

Finally, the first six months as EthicsDaily.com's executive director have been challenging and rewarding.

We have addressed issues ranging from LGBTQ inclusion to immigration. Our board of directors met in San Antonio, Texas, in the spring and adopted the E3 Initiative: Educate, Engage and Empower.

As this week comes to a close, EthicsDaily.com is excited to announce that beginning Monday, June 25, we will launch a redesigned website.

The new site will provide a more user-friendly and mobile-friendly experience while maintaining the excellent content that has been delivered over the last two decades.

In addition to the new site, we are eager to announce that all of our resources will now be free to individuals, churches and organizations.

There is no better time to be a Baptist these days, and there is no better time to be a part of EthicsDaily.com.

If you are not already, we would like to invite you to be a contributing partner as we work to promote and advocate for Christian ethics and social justice.

On the new site, we are launching our new Social Justice Network and would be honored for you to be on the ground floor of this exciting new venture.

If you are interested in becoming a contributing partner, a member of the Social Justice Network or making a donation, please feel free to contact us.

A new era in Baptist life is emerging, and we can be proud to work together to further the common good for all people.