



Keystone BAPTIST

Official Paper of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches



Religious Liberty and the Supreme Court's Decision on Marriage

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Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Obergefell v. Hodges case and declared that same sex marriage is to be the law of the land. In doing so

they . . .

1. Disregarded the First Amendment of the Constitution that states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."
2. Mandated a new law that is not the role of the court but of the legislature.
3. Overturned the religious and civil precedents of centuries to rewrite the social structure of society at the expense of marriage which is the bedrock of our social order and was God's first institution given to man after the creation.

It has been clear that the liberal media and social activists have been pushing to rewrite the social order of society by not just demanding that society "tolerate" this perversion of marriage, but accept this unnatural union and endorse it as beneficial to society.

This decision sets the courts, government, and the social activists on a direct collision course with Bible Christianity. Unfortunately, like many of the issues in the past, (evolution, abortion, the place of God in public discourse, etc.) many liberals, and evangelicals are already voicing that they will embrace the new law as if it is not a violation of God's law. For true Bible Believers, this is not something we will be able to avoid or to be silent about. The LGBT community is very aggressive and will seek to make sure that this new order becomes the norm.

Churches have already been sued for refusing to perform a marriage for a homosexual couple. The writing of this opinion in law by the Supreme Court will increase such suits and pressures.

What can we expect in the future? It is difficult to predict the future, but it seems clear that pressure to accept the philosophies of the social activists is going to increase. Since alternate life styles and marriage has been advocated and taught in our government schools for more than a decade, many of our young people are readily accepting of this philosophy.

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Comfort, Security & Blessing

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mt 18:20) "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." (Act 2:44.)

God has been so good to us. Since our salvation and marriage, Judy and I have always been able to find a good, sound, fundamental, independent, Baptist church to worship, fellowship and serve the Lord. Whether in the congregation or in the pastorate there is a sense of comfort, security & blessing knowing we are where the Lord wants us, and we are desirous of staying in His will and having His peace.

We have been members of First Baptist Church, St. Clair Shores, Michigan, with Pastor Hubert Keiffer (where I was ordained) and then Hampton Park Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina, with Pastor David Yearick (where I was youth pastor); Blue Water Baptist Church, Port Huron, Michigan, (pastor); First Baptist Church, Marysville, Michigan, with Pastor Cedric Whitcomb (members), Marsh Creek Fellowship Baptist Church, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania (pastor for twenty years) and now Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, Pennsylvania with Pastor Allen Harris (our "home" church where we are members, and we serve the PARBC). In each of these six churches there was/is a comfort, security & blessing.

Why a comfort, security & blessing? There is a comfort in gathering to worship the Lord with dear friends. There is a security in being in God's will in doing so. There is a blessing in lifting our hearts in song and being fed the Word and being ministered to by the Holy Spirit. Well, there are several other things that contribute too:

- The Word of God and its truth is the center focus in the pulpit & Sunday School,
- The burden & vision of the church is to see souls find Christ as Savior.
- Missions Program that is significant and involving good sound missionaries and mission boards.
- Music is conservative and uplifting with

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From the Parsonage Window



OLIVER



Even though this is technically the fall edition of the Keystone, we are actually producing it in December, and I'm definitely thinking about Christmas. I have a favorite Christmas story that I'd like to share

with you. It's a sweet story about a little boy named Oliver. His parents were musical, his brother played an instrument and his mother was a choir director. But Oliver, bless his heart, couldn't hold a tune. Try as he might, he was a complete monotone. To add to that, he was small for his age of eight and often was given his brother's hand-me-downs which never fit his too-short, too-small frame no matter how much he grew.

Every year, his mother's choir, went Christmas Caroling and he, his dad and brother went with them. Oliver, though, was warned not to try to sing with them but to simply mouth the words. He endured the ordeal as best he could on this particularly cold and snowy night. His ill-fitting brother's hand-me-down boots slipped and sloshed in the snow and his over-sized coat, padded with two sweaters, made him feel like the Michelin man. At some point, he became distracted, which was one of the things he often was scolded for and lost track of his mother's carolers by staying too long to watch the lights at a certain house. But, he heard them down the street and quickly sloshed toward them. When he got to them, though, he realized these weren't his mother's group. But their music was incredible and instead of telling him to mouth the words, they handed him a copy of their beautifully bound music book. The lead singer pointed to the page they were on. In the upper left-hand corner, was a large letter "O" which contained a sketch of a man and woman with a sweet baby. Even though he wasn't familiar with the song, as long as he focused his attention on the "O," especially the baby, he could sing. After following them to several houses, he heard his frantic mother calling him, "Where have you been?" He could tell she was frantic. "We've looked everywhere for you." "I...."

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biblical truth – with no applause after special music (it is not entertainment).

- ☐ The pastor and leadership are “people friendly”
- ☐ There is strong recognition of the power of prayer and is exercised publicly and privately.
- ☐ It is a noticeable balance in the makeup of the congregation with children, young people, adults and senior saints.
- ☐ Members have a respect and love for each other eager to do things to help and assist each other.
- ☐ A good, sound church is going to have a warm atmosphere for members and visitors alike.
- ☐ People will arrive early for the services just to pray and fellowship and there is a good number staying after church just to visit with friends.
- ☐ The physicality’s are going to be clean, cheerful and safe to enter & exit.

We have a lot to be thankful for as the Lord has particularly directed us to each church to be edified and to serve Him. It has always blessed our hearts to see souls saved and baptized and added unto the church. And other believers recognize the Lord’s leading and step forward to join and become members, too, making the commitment to identify with a group of believers. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Heb 10:25

I trust there is a comfort, security & blessing for our churches in the PARBC. As we stand together in this day of terrible increasing compromise and persecution, there is strength in numbers or a definite vulnerability by ourselves. Our fellowship has several points of value and the following are mentioned in one of our published pamphlets:

- Voluntary fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches which hold a clear doctrinal stand on Scripture and separation
 - Respects and protects the autonomy and sovereignty of every church in governing its own affairs.
 - Have as a group, under the blanket provision of the 501 (3) (c) exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service.
 - A PARBC State Representative who is available for pulpit supply, counsel on questions and church difficulties, assisting pulpit committees and prayer support.
 - An electronic newsletter, The Keystone Baptist, published quarterly.
 - Annually distributing a Directory of Churches of the PARBC.
 - Organize and promote special statewide teen activities
 - Overseeing the Pennsylvania Baptists for Life and Families, Inc.
 - Provides websites for vital information: www.parbc.org, www.pabflf.org & www.actionlineforlife.org
 - Encouraging the churches to maintain a uniformity of faith in sound doctrine and practice as fundamental, separated, independent Baptists churches through its preaching, fellowships and stand.
 - Establishes the cooperative means to help and assist fellowshiping churches much as is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, and to plant new churches.
 - Develop a unified voice for concerns against our faith and convictions in Harrisburg and Washington D.C. with letters and resolutions.

These are just some of the reasons we should have a comfort, security & blessing in the churches of the PARBC.

2015-16 PARBC Calendar

If the Lord Tarries



Pastors & Wives Retreat

February 1-2, 2016

Best Western Country Cupboard Inn,
Lewisburg

Speakers: Dr. Rand Hummel,
Dir. Wilds of New England and
Mrs Anita Fordyce,
Hope Baptist Church, Hanover

Youth Retreat & Talents for Christ

April 22-23, 2016

Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg
Hosts: Pastor Timothy Smith & Congregation
Speaker: Evangelist Randy Merrill

Spring Conference – April 4-5, 2016

Calvary Baptist Church, New Stanton
Hosts: Pastor Richard Sementilli and
Congregation
Speaker: Rev. Larry Hufhand

Fall Conference – September 12-14, 2016

Bible Baptist Church, Shickshinny
Hosts: Pastor Donald Thomas, Jr. and
Congregation

Churches Searching for a Pastor

Faith Baptist Church, Bradford ▼ First Baptist Church, Corry

First Baptist Church, Grove City ▼ First Baptist Church, Hallstead

Sharon Baptist Church, Hermitage ▼ First Baptist Church, Limestone

Mountain Top Baptist, Mountain Top ▼ Chestnut Street Baptist Church, Port Allegany

Carmel Baptist Church, Saegertown ▼ Bible Baptist Church Southampton

Calvary Baptist Church, Union City ▼ Waterford Baptist Church, Waterford

Planting Reestablishing Churches

Restoration Baptist Church, Pittsburgh

Marsh Creek Fellowship Baptist Church, Wellsboro

Religious Liberty–Continued, page five

What can we expect in the future? I will try to give a few things that we can expect from the government and the social activists.

1. The government will force all government and legal secular entities to perform homosexual marriages.
2. The government will force all businesses that are not strictly religious to insure and treat homosexual marriages as they do all other marriages.
3. Social activists and judges will scrutinize all complaints made by the LGBT community with a sensitivity that will make one prove that they are not guilty instead of being presumed innocent until proven guilty.
4. Initially, the government and courts will try to work out ways for the LGBT community to get married rather than confront the rights of churches to continue to exercise their Biblical faith, (There is some evidence that there is already a backlash against the action of forcing churches to deny their long held beliefs). However, this will not be done for a long period of time. The social activists are so intent upon their goals that they will be seeking a test case that can be used against Bible Believers and force religious entities to change their beliefs or lose their tax exemption.
5. I believe that persecution will follow shortly after this.
6. The climate in society will make speaking for the Biblical truth of marriage and against homosexuality a culturally unacceptable position. They will seek to intimidate Christians into silence. Then they will force Christians to accept their philosophies or lose their promotions, jobs, or positions. The four dissenting judges, Chief Justice John Roberts, Justice Antonin Scalia, Justice Clarence Thomas, and Justice Samuel Alito all wrote dissenting opinions and rebuked the social activism of the majority and warned of dangers to come.

Justice Roberts wrote in part, “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 religion is – unlike the right imagined by the majority – actually spelled out in the Constitution. Amdt.1”

Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, “A system of government that makes the People subordinate to a committee of nine unelected lawyers does not deserve to be called a democracy. . .”

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote, “The majority’s decisions threatens the religious liberty our Nation has long sought to protect. It appears all but inevitable that the two will come into conflict, particularly as individuals and churches are confronted with demands to participate in and endorse civil marriages between same-sex couples.

The majority appears unmoved by that inevitability. It makes only a weak gesture toward religious liberty in a single paragraph. And even that gesture indicates a misunderstanding of religious liberty in our Nation’s tradition. Religious liberty is about more than just the protection for “religious organizations and persons . . . as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths.” Religious liberty is about freedom of action in matters of religion generally, and the scope of that liberty is directly correlated to the civil restraints placed upon religious practice.”

Justice Samuel Alito said, “I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools.” So what do we do? A true believer will first look to the Lord and pray for wisdom, courage, and the guidance of God. We cannot change what God has established without giving up the very nature and essence of our God.

1. Make sure that your statement of faith and church constitution have articles in them that spell out your position on all these issues, and that they have been passed by the congregation and are anchored in Scripture.
2. Have clear policies regarding the people for whom you will perform marriages and for individuals and groups who are permitted to use your facilities.
3. Teach your people about the issues and show them on how to stand and the manner in which to present their beliefs.
4. Be alert and work with other pastors and church fellowships to stand for truth. We have the tendency to be isolated and fail to work together. This will make it easier for individuals and churches to be attacked.
5. Work with a First Amendment attorney to be prepared before these attacks come.

When darkness rules in the society, there is no way to guarantee justice or righteous judgment. Our trust is in the Lord not civil government. There have been many Christians down through the centuries who have stood for God against the ungodly practices of the age and paid a heavy price. If God tarries, this may be our lot. Our reward is the “Well done” from our Heavenly Father.

The Scriptures remind us in Proverbs 29:2, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: But when the

There is LIFE After Death (Living in Widowhood)

By Marlene Burling

How do you go on living when the love of your life is taken from you and you wish you could have died, too? It doesn't matter if you were expecting this to happen because of a long term illness or if it was very sudden. The outcome is still the same. It's a shock, and as we quickly find out...nothing is the same, and it never will be. That's reality. That's life! We know there is life after death; eternal life. But there is also LIFE in the "here and now" for the one left behind and that's what I want us to think about.



When I lost my husband, Autry, my pastor told me, "Grieve as much as you need to for as long as you need to." There are some people who think that because you are a Christian you shouldn't grieve... after all, "They are better off now; they are in heaven with Jesus...you should rejoice." Yes, of course, we are thankful in that fact, and we do rejoice because we know we will see them again; they ARE better off, but that doesn't change the fact that we are still down here; we are human. One of the reasons God gave us tears is to help in the grieving process. So, yes, we grieve, but there is a verse in the Bible that gives us hope to go on. John 10:10b says, "I am come that they may have life; and that they may have it more abundantly." It can be so easy just to stay in bed, sit in the house, curl up in a chair and forget the rest of the world. We can drown in our own grief. I did say there's nothing wrong with grieving and we NEED to grieve, but at the same time, we CAN live.

One thing I knew was that it would be very easy to become depressed. The first thing I knew I had to do was to be in church even that first Sunday after Autry's home going. I knew it would be hard, but I also knew that was where I needed to be and where I would receive much of my support, and I did. But most of my support and comfort came from God Himself. Isa. 26:3,4 tell us, "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee. Trust in the Lord forever for in

he stammered and tried to explain about getting separated from them and how he'd been singing with this group and about the book and the picture and how he could sing and . . . His exasperated and relieved mother could only hug him. And, then he showed her the book and let her hear him sing.

There is more to the story and what I've shared is my recollection of it and not verbatim, but when I think about this story, I think about the Savior who came as a baby and how anyone who has ever encountered Him is changed forever. And, anyone who meets the Savior, whose picture Oliver saw, and who accepts Him for Who He is has a song in their heart for all eternity.

The story says that Oliver took the book home and it held a prominent place on Mom's piano. Everytime Oliver looked at the picture he could sing and sing he did. As he matured, he also developed a fairly decent voice. He never became as accomplished as his mother or his brother but he was at least able to go with the family every year for the Caroling. He never forgot that night when he encountered that special group who showed him that everyone has potential. And, as we celebrate Christmas, we must remember not only why He came but also the potential for salvation He brought to not only us, but everyone, and we need to be sure the glorious message or better yet, show them from God's Word that message. One genuine look at it is life changing. I'm sure there are many, many Oliver's out there who need that song that only salvation produced.



Jehovah is everlasting peace.” I knew I had to keep my mind fixed on the Lord. I had always had my devotions, but my time with the Lord became more and more precious as I committed my days to Him. The more we know about God...who He is, what He is like, the more we love Him and all the more we can trust Him and His promises. Satan may fill us with fears and questions but when we take God at His word, we can send Satan “down the road!” For every lie Satan says we have God’s truth. Phil. 4:8 says, “Whatsoever things are TRUE...think on these things.” So when Satan says:

- God doesn’t love you...how could He? He took your husband from you.
- God left you all alone.
- You’re not going to make it.

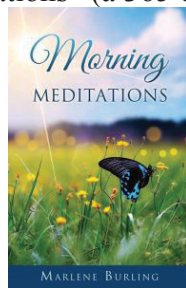
Ask yourself: “Are these things true?” Absolutely not! And then claim a verse that counters the lie. I also found by putting my name (instead of reading you or we) in a verse of scripture that it brought me closer to God and made me feel like God was speaking more directly to me and my needs.

I also prayed that God would open a ministry for me. Within months of Autry’s home going, God placed on my heart a burden to start a ministry with the widows in our church. “The King’s Daughter’s was formed and we have been meeting once a month, averaging 12 to 15 ladies at each get together. I also began writing mini devotions five days a week and posting them on face book. This became my source for writing a 365 day devotional which is now published (information at the end of article). My pastor’s wife also challenged me to put together a workshop for widows which I have also just completed. God used these avenues for my own healing process down my road of grief. As God has helped and blessed me, I am asking Him to use both of these to be a blessing and a help to others.

God gives everyone choices every day of their lives and in all situations, but as widows, we can choose to have a deep dependence on God or live a life of despair and loneliness if we rely on our own resources. The emptiness we feel can be filled with self-pity and problems or filled with God’s presence. We can give up, pull the covers over our heads, or press on as Phil. 3:13b 14 say, “...and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Keep pressing on one day at a time; there is nothing more important.

I have also learned not to grieve according to anyone else’s expectations or time schedule. Everyone is different. It never will be the same; accept that, but remember...there IS life after death...so LIVE!

My book, “Morning Meditations” (a 365 day devotional) is available at:



www.Amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

in e-Book

OR:

Order directly from me:

a-mburling@juno.com

(My price is \$15 plus \$3.25 shipping) (Gift Idea)

I am also available for a ladies workshop on “Living in Widowhood” (emphasis on LIVING!)

Cell # 716-946-0680 Or e-mail address above.

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE SUPPORT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

WHEREAS currently in our country, due to many different causes, both at the national and local levels, there is social unrest taking place in many parts of our nation, and

WHEREAS many traditional and judicial social restraints have seemingly been removed, allowing for a growing “freedom” for uprising against governmental placed authorities, and

WHEREAS this is horribly being played out in the “open season” against law enforcement, with repeated shootings and deaths of police officers being reported all throughout our nation, and

WHEREAS while on one hand, many appear mute and inactive on the awfulness of these circumstances, while others are calling for a “stepped-up” attack on law enforcements due to perceived past wrongs and injustices,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we the messengers of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting in Dexter Baptist Church, Wellsboro, PA, on September 14-16, 2015, do “in one accord” voice an encouragement and whole-hearted support for law enforcement, at all levels of government,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we will be subject to the God-placed higher authorities (Rom. 13:1), that we understand to resist those that the Lord placed over us means that we resist Him, and as a result, can expect His fierce holy judgment (Rom. 13:2),

WE FURTHER RESOLVE, that we believe that the Lord placed Law Enforcement over us for our good (culturally and spiritually), and titled them as His Ministers, “to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:3, 4; I Peter 2:14).

WE FURTHER RESOLVE, that we will joyfully meet every Biblical obligation toward our God-placed law enforcement over us, through humbly submitting to them (Rom. 13); through obeying of all local ordinances; through supporting their endeavors by the willing paying of taxes; through praying for them (I Tim. 2:1, 2); through always remembering that they are placed in their positions as ministers of God; and through, should the opportunity be possible, electing those into office that best mirrors the Word of God, and

Therefore, we encourage our fellowshiping churches of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches in the following ways: let our local law enforcement know and be aware of our whole-hearted support, let police officers know that we are praying for them, and look for opportunities to acknowledge local police officials and officers personally in our local churches (Romans 13:6).

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE SUPREME COURT RULING ON MARRIAGE

WHEREAS on June 26, 2015 the United States Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that all 50 states must allow gay lesbian couples to marry, which sparked the greatest civil rights debate of the 21st century, and

WHEREAS gay and lesbian couples already are allowed to marry in 36 states including the District of Columbia, but the Supreme Court held that the 14th Amendment requires all states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples regardless of prior beliefs and bans, and that all the other 14 states are to stop enforcing their bans,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we the messengers of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting at Dexter Baptist Church, Wellsboro, PA, on September 14-16, 2015 do hereby commit and reaffirm ourselves to God's Word as the sole authority in faith and in practice regarding any issue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we believe that the civil government is a divine appointment for the interests and order of human society; that the government should have no intervention into the affairs of the church and also that, prayers should be offered for the leaders of that government, and that the laws obeyed unless they violate the laws of God (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29).

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that we believe the ruling of the Supreme Court violates the clear teaching of the Bible that marriage is the joining of one man and woman and that sexual intimacy is to be expressed only within the bounds of a Biblically defined marriage; and believing that any other form of marriage or sexual intimacy is immoral and is a perversion of God's will (Genesis 2:18, 22-25; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:22-33).

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that we believe that the Bible does not condemn sex. It is God's desire that great enjoyment come from sex within the proper context of a Biblical marriage. God intended the marriage bed to be holy and pure and right and a great blessing for a man and his wife. We believe the Bible condemns immoral sex, that is, sex which is outside of marriage between one man and one woman. The world may condone, allow and encourage sexual perversion, but God condemns it and God will judge those who practice it (Proverbs 5:18-19; Hebrews 13:4).

WE FURTHER RESOLVE that we believe that it is the mission of the local church to witness by life and by word the truths of the Holy Scriptures and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to all people, regardless of race, color, beliefs, or sexual persuasion (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-13; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

We exhort every believer not to hate those who do not believe as we do but that we are to earnestly pray for them, seeking to win them to Christ (John 5:24; Romans 1:14-32).



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

We want to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. It is always so special to end the year celebrating with family the birth of our Savior and then the beginning of a New Year. To all of you who are our extended family we wish the Lords's special blessing upon each of you. Your prayers, support, special help and valued friendship has made 2015 a blessing to us. May we be found faithful as we serve the Lord together in 2016 antisipating the soon coming Rapture!

In Christ's love and grace;

Paul and Judy Connor



PRAYER NEEDS FOR THE PABFL&F

- Pray for souls to be saved
- Pray for mothers contemplating an abortion today and each day averaging 90+ abortions statewide
 - Pray for the needed volunteers
- Pray for the transition to a more prominent internet ministry for the PABFL&F
- Pray for the Executive Board in the decisions needed to be made to lead this ministry to future success in reaching and saving souls.