

IVF resolution is SBC's 'first step' in reproductive technology discussion

INDIANAPOLIS (BP) – SBC messengers spoke to in vitro fertilization (IVF) for the first time June 12, adopting a resolution on the topic after a sometimes-emotional floor discussion that featured messengers sharing their personal experiences with reproductive technologies.

Over a series of Resolutions Committee reports spanning two days at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis, messengers also adopted resolutions on the conflict between Israel and Hamas, religious liberty, parental rights, just war theory and integrity in SBC leadership among other topics. Twenty-seven resolutions were submitted to the Resolutions Committee, which produced 10 for messenger consideration. Eight of those were adopted before the time allotted for resolutions expired.

The two resolutions not considered by messengers dealt with “the pro-life ethic in a post-Roe society” and “the danger of abusing non-disclosure and non-disparagement agreements.”

IVF

A resolution “On the ethical realities of reproductive technologies and the dignity of the human embryo” called on Southern Baptists “to reaffirm the unconditional value and right to life of every human being, including those in an embryonic stage, and to only utilize reproductive technologies consistent with that affirmation especially in the number of embryos generated in the IVF process.”

IVF (a technology that combines an egg and sperm in a laboratory then implants the resulting embryo in a woman's

womb) “routinely generates more embryos than can be safely implanted,” “most often participates in the destruction of embryonic human life” and has generated 1-1.5 million unborn children currently stored in cryogenic freezers in the U.S., “with most unquestionably destined for eventual destruction,” according to the resolution.

Resolutions Committee chair Kristen Ferguson said IVF is a complex issue on which Southern Baptists need to say more in the future. This year’s resolution merely opens the conversation.

“This is the first step for us to be able to speak to” IVF, said Ferguson, vice president of student services and enrollment at Gateway Seminary. The resolution “reiterates our long-held belief of the sanctity of human life. It’s the committee’s belief that Southern Baptists will continue to apply their long-held theology of the sanctity of human life as they continue to have the conversation.”

During debate on the resolution, one messenger told how his godson was born via IVF. Another told how she adopted two frozen embryos and had them implanted in her womb. Both died before birth. A third messenger said he has one son via IVF, and his wife is 20 weeks pregnant through a second IVF procedure.

Among the resolution’s other calls to action, it:

- asked Southern Baptists to “advocate for the government to restrain actions inconsistent with the dignity and value of every human being, which necessarily includes frozen embryonic human beings”;
- encouraged couples “to consider adopting frozen embryos”;
- urged couples struggling with infertility “to consider the ethical implications of assisted reproductive technologies as they look to God for hope”;

- commended “couples who at great cost have earnestly sought to only utilize infertility treatments and reproductive technologies in ways consistent with the dignity of the human embryo as well as those who have adopted frozen embryos.”

Integrity in SBC leadership

In the resolution “On integrity in SBC leadership,” the Convention said that “the legacy of faithful leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention has been tarnished by public failures of leadership that have exposed private sin, indifference to abuse, financial impropriety, sexual scandals, deceptive practices, and abuse of power.”

Messengers affirmed “righteous and godly leaders within this Convention” and “call[ed] to repentance leaders who have engaged in public or private sin.” They also “implore[d] leaders who are in disqualifying sin to examine themselves, call upon the Lord in repentance, and voluntarily remove themselves from their position.”

Two amendments to the resolution were proposed by messengers. They adopted by unanimous consent a paragraph stating leaders should “biblically acknowledge imperfections” through confession of pride, trusting God and “proclaiming God’s strength even as we are weak.” The other failed.

Religious liberty

A resolution titled “On Defending Religious Liberty” affirmed that “God has endowed every human with religious liberty,” citing Scripture and the Baptist Faith and Message in support of religious liberty. Messengers advocated “robust Christian engagement in the public square” and opposed “any effort to establish a state religion of any nation.”

Two efforts to amend the resolution failed.

Just war

Messengers affirmed “the historic, Christian principles of the just war tradition” in the resolution “On Just War and the Pursuit of Peace.” Just war theory is an ideology that claims waging war is morally legitimate under certain conditions.

Among the resolution’s affirmations were that “war must be fought for a just cause,” war “must be fought” by “a duly constituted sovereign government,” “war must be fought with right intention and love for our enemies” and “war, so far as possible, must be waged only as a last resort.”

Two proposed amendments were voted down by messengers.

October 7 attack on Israel

The Convention “condemn[ed] Hamas’ terrorist attacks of October 7, commit[ted] to standing with the Jewish people and those suffering in the [Middle East] region, and oppose[d] all forms of antisemitism.” Messengers said they “deny assertions of moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas.” They also addressed protests on college campuses, stating they were “appalled by anti-Israel and pro-Hamas activities on university campuses.”

Palestinians also drew an expression of messengers’ care. The resolution “recognize[d] the dignity and personhood of all people living in the Middle East and affirm[ed] God’s love and offer of salvation to them through Jesus Christ, honoring the difficult ministry of Jewish and Palestinian believers who labor for the gospel.”

Messengers accepted by unanimous consent an amendment stating that they oppose “calls for the nation of Israel to lay down its arms.” The original language of the resolution opposed “those calling” for a ceasefire by Israel. The amendment also clarified that the Convention repudiated “calls for a permanent ceasefire that do not also result in the immediate

release of all hostages.” The original language did not include the word “permanent.”

Parents’ rights and responsibilities

The resolution “On the God-given Rights and Responsibilities of Parents” lamented that “it is becoming increasingly common for some in the medical, educational, business, and legal sectors to encroach upon and attempt to supersede” the “God-given rights and responsibilities of parents.” In response to that trend, messengers “affirm[ed] that parents are the primary stewards of and decision-makers for their children.”

The resolution also expressed a desire for culture to embrace the biblical model of family and encouraged legislation “that protects and upholds parental rights.”

Evangelism and the Great Commission

Messengers underscored their commitment to Gospel propagation in a resolution titled “On Evangelism and the Great Commission.” The Convention “commit[ted] to make every effort as a witness to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ.”

The resolution expressed support for the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board. It also called “churches to evangelistic cooperation through all means possible,” including “joint mission trips,” “the sharing of church buildings,” “Vacation Bible School” and “sports evangelism.” The resolution urged Southern Baptists to encourage believers called to vocational evangelistic ministry.

Appreciation of Indianapolis

Messengers expressed their “deepest appreciation to the city of Indianapolis for hosting the 2024 Annual Meeting and Pastors’ Conference.”