



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY COMMISSION
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION



2022

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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REPORT**

Contents

Letter from the President 2

Life & Human Dignity..... 4

Religious Liberty10

Marriage & Family14

Biblical Justice 18

Research.....22

Internship Recap..... 24

Financial Overview..... 26



Letter from the President

LATELY, I HAVE DETECTED a common thread in conversations: fear.

Outside the walls of our churches, it is rampant. It often comes out as fear of the unknown, fear of the results of an election, fear of what “they” may do to us.

And it’s causing people, for the most part, to respond in one of two ways: by either being despondent and pulling back from the world or deploying the language of warfare or conquest. This kind of thinking is so prevalent, it may even be seeping into our churches.

Because what is most surprising is, the conversations I’ve sensed this in, have mainly been with pastors and ministers. I truly can empathize with this. After all, we live in a challenging and confusing moment.

But if you or a fellow believer you know is just responding to the myriad crises unfolding all around us at a given moment, allow me to offer a gentle reminder of Paul’s words to Timothy that should reassure us as well, brothers and sisters:

“We do not have a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.”

These are qualities that stand in complete opposition to the times we find ourselves in.

And they are qualities we should exude at all times whether we are going on the field internationally, planting a church in a new context, or as we enter a chaotic public square.

And that last forum is where we, the team serving at your Ethics and Religious Commission, operate on a daily basis. Many don’t realize it but this institution, the ERLC, has been doing so for well over a century.

Whether you open a newspaper or watch the evening news, it should be readily apparent there is work to be done—urgent work. Work that is not for the timid or for the fearful.

Instead, it is work that can be accomplished through Baptist cooperation. That spirit is central to our mission at the ERLC.

Because as we come alongside to assist you, your church, and your convention, it allows us to speak more adeptly from our churches into the public square—a chaotic, messy, noisy public square that is in desperate need of the hope and peace that can only come from hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As you read this Annual Report,* I hope you can see how we have sought to speak from our churches this past year. It is an honor to serve our churches. May these pages show you just how much of a privilege it has been for our team to serve you in 2022.

Joyfully in Christ,



F. BRENT LEATHERWOOD
ERLC PRESIDENT

**The 2022 Annual Report is a summation of the report given to trustees at our 2022 meeting in September. Some information will be from October-December 2021.*



Life and Human Dignity

Protecting and advocating for life was the top priority for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission these past 12 months. When our trustees met in September 2021, the *Dobbs* case was on the horizon as we looked to the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court session. We celebrated the court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in June of this year, capping off decades of work by this Commission, as well as countless other pro-life organizations. But our work

is not done. This past year our organization worked tirelessly in the life space as we sought to demonstrate the true value of every life.

The Psalm 139 Project and Life Convenings

The ERLC placed its [first ever international ultrasound machine](#) in Northern Ireland last October. A few members of our team traveled there to hand deliver the machine and take part in the dedication service. While there, VP of Life Initiatives

Elizabeth Graham was able to discuss with local pro-life organizations about ways we can equip the church in Northern Ireland to advocate for the dignity of the preborn.

In November, we dedicated our 24th life-saving ultrasound machine at a ceremony with Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee. Our goal was to reach 50 ultrasound machines by the 50th anniversary of the disastrous *Roe v. Wade* decision in January 2023. We were almost half way to our goal in November of 2021, which was a

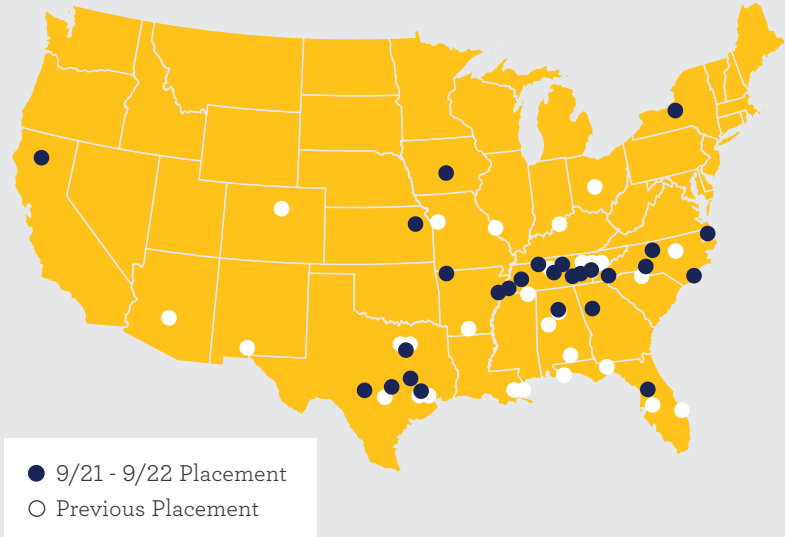
◀ *Pro-life advocates gathered on the steps of the Supreme Court during oral arguments for the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization case in December 2021.*

truly remarkable feat and one that can only be attributed to God’s work and the commitment of Southern Baptists to stand up for life. Even more so, during the ERLC report in Anaheim, California, we announced that **we have already reached our goal of 50 machines**. By the time of this printing, we expect to have even more machines in the pipeline for placement. And we equally rejoice that there will be no 50th anniversary of *Roe*, leading to thousands of lives being saved.

We could not have reached our goal of placing 50 ultrasound machines by the 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, without remarkable partnerships. We were honored to partner with several state conventions, including the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, to place multiple machines. The graphic on the right shows where each machine was placed since September of 2021.

This past spring, following the leaked draft of the *Dobbs* opinion, we hosted an online workshop for Baptist state executives and ethics leaders to help them know how to respond to and communicate about the *Dobbs* decision. **Chelsea Sobolik**, from our D.C. office, organized the event. A panel of experts were featured and Sobolik intentionally created space for our state leaders to ask questions specifically about their own state, as abortion policy varies across the

PSALM 139 PLACEMENTS
SEPTEMBER 2021-SEPTEMBER 2022



1 ATHENS, TN <i>September 2021</i>	10 ROGERS, AR <i>December 2021</i>	19 WILMINGTON, NC <i>June 2022</i>
2 DUNLAP, TN <i>September 2021</i>	11 FRANKLIN, NC <i>January 2022</i>	20 LEBANON, TN <i>June 2022</i>
3 MARYVILLE, TN <i>September 2021</i>	12 DES MOINES, IA <i>February 2022</i>	21 MILLINGTON, TN <i>June 2022</i>
4 JACKSON, TN <i>September 2021</i>	13 REDDING, CA <i>April 2022</i>	22 BIRMINGHAM, AL <i>June 2022</i>
5 INVERNESS, FL <i>October 2021</i>	14 NEWMAN, GA <i>April 2022</i>	23 CYPRESS, TX <i>July 2022</i>
6 CONCORD, NC <i>October 2021</i>	15 ELIZABETH CITY, NC <i>May 2022</i>	24 AUSTIN, TX <i>July 2022</i>
7 COLLEGE STATION, TX <i>November 2021</i>	16 CLARKSVILLE, TN <i>May 2022</i>	25 KERRVILLE, TX <i>July 2022</i>
8 MURFREESBORO, TN <i>December 2021</i>	17 SYRACUSE, NY <i>June 2022</i>	26 GREENSBORO, NC <i>August 2022</i>
9 TOPEKA, KS <i>December 2021</i>	18 WEST MEMPHIS, AR <i>June 2022</i>	27 WAXAHACHIE, TX <i>August 2022</i>

nation. Several participants told us they were thankful for how well it equipped them.

In another effort to serve and equip our Baptist state leaders, our Life team hosted five Stand for Life Church Convenings with pastors and ministry leaders around the country to help them prepare for a potential post-Roe world. We discussed our research findings, shared real life stories of women in crisis, discussed

question, what does it mean to be human? The curriculum is scheduled for publication in January 2023. The curriculum was piloted by a church in Texas this last year, giving us vital feedback.

The Stand for Life curriculum for churches in the U.S. will lead participants through the biblical foundations for a pro-life ethos. It will also equip them with the tools they need to stand for life and how

that former NFL star and pro-life advocate, Benjamin Watson, is our primary communicator for the curriculum.

In a significant moment for our national advocacy, at the invitation of Senator Marco Rubio's chief of staff, Acting President **Brent Leatherwood** participated in a roundtable discussion with Sen. Rubio about possible policy solutions to protect the family in a post-Roe world this May.

“I was struck, in the midst of that meeting, by something Sen. Rubio shared. He said he only wanted to have this conversation with the few organizations he personally knows are not motivated by politics, but instead are operating from the basis of deeply held principles. I thought that was a fitting description of our entity and how we have sought to conduct ourselves in the midst of a deeply polarized public square. It was encouraging to see one of our nation’s highest leaders notice this,” said Leatherwood.

On Monday evening of the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting this June, we hosted an event about the *Dobbs* case, its anticipated ruling, and what it meant for the future of the pro-life movement. The event featured a keynote address on human dignity from **ERLC Trustee Kevin Smith**, who serves as teaching pastor of Family Church Village in Florida, and a panel discussion with a diverse group of pro-life leaders focused on preparing churches and state leaders for the *Dobbs* case.

Before the official ERLC report at the Annual Meeting, **Elizabeth Graham** was asked to address the messengers [about the future of the pro-life movement](#) and the January 2023 conference, Stand For Life,

“Only when we all see life holistically with inherent value will there be widespread change. A post-Roe world is good, but a post-abortion world is what we continue to fervently work to achieve by reaching these women where they are in their time of need.”

—*Elizabeth Graham*

the legal landscape, and introduced a church engagement plan. At each meeting we also worked through a strategy session with these leaders to help them serve the vulnerable in their churches and communities.

National Pro-Life Efforts

In our efforts to serve churches and to influence culture, a new curriculum has been written by our Life team. The first study of our Stand for Life curriculum will focus on “The Image of God,” answering the

they can live out that ethos in their own communities. The curriculum includes three different studies: one for adults, one for teens, and one for children, all supplemented with video content. Each level includes its own leader guide, and the children’s curriculum includes parent connection sheets. The three are designed to go hand-in-hand so that churches and families can learn the same material at the same time, yet on age-appropriate levels. We are excited



◀ ERLC President Brent Leatherwood, Governor of Tennessee Bill Lee and Founder and CEO of Birth Choice Brent Lambert

renamed from Roe50 in light of the then possibility of *Roe* being overturned. She shared a moving story about a woman who chose life instead of abortion and now has a baby who is ready to be adopted. Her account painted a picture of the work of pro-life organizations to support women and save preborn lives.

“Only when we all see life holistically with inherent value will there be widespread change,” said Graham. “A post-*Roe* world is good, but a post-abortion world is what we continue to fervently work to achieve by reaching these women where they are in their time of need.”

For almost 50 years our country sat under the dark shadow of *Roe v. Wade*, but praise God, that time has passed. In January 2023, in Washington D.C., a new light will pour forth as the Stand For Life Conference will join together hundreds of people, not known only for what we believe, but by what we do.

Together we will worship, pray, and be equipped to engage with a world

that is looking for hope. Speakers will include Benjamin Watson, Nick Vujicic, Lecrae, Shane & Shane, Amy Ford, Lauren McAfee, Jamie Ivey, and more. This event will culminate years of work from our Life team and others, and we hope you will join us.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization and Other Legislation

June 24, 2022, proved to be the most consequential day in the modern pro-life movement as the Supreme Court handed down their decision in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* case. This 6-3 ruling held that the Constitution does not guarantee a right to abortion and sent the issue back to the states. This ruling is a culmination of nearly 50 years of focused work by the pro-life movement to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and protect the unborn.

Nearly a year prior to the ruling, in July 2021, the ERLC, alongside other pro-life organizations, including the

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Association of Evangelicals and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, filed an amicus brief in this case requesting the Supreme Court overturn the *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) decisions. The ERLC’s brief asserted that “the Constitution does not create a right to an abortion of an unborn child before viability or at any other stage of pregnancy. An asserted right to abortion has no basis in constitutional text or in American history and tradition.”

In March of 2022, we released and promoted what we call the [Dobbs Resource Page](#) on erlc.com, which was designed with pastors, leaders, and other curious individuals in mind. We hope this will be a one-stop-shop for all things related to this once-in-a-generation Supreme Court case. This page has been continually updated as the content team produced more articles in the wake of the ruling, as well as developed an [interactive state map](#), which allows visitors to click on their state and learn more about local abortion laws, as well as PRCs and foster care options near them. Since we launched the *Dobbs* Resource Page, over 5,500 people have visited the page and well over 130,000 people have viewed the articles and videos affiliated with it.

The ERLC team was expectant on the morning of June 24 and ready to respond with several resources. Our team immediately released [a video](#) highlighting why the ruling was so important and what it means for churches moving forward as they seek to serve mothers and vulnerable children. In just one day, our team produced several articles, emailed



⬆️ **Top:** VP of Life Initiatives Elizabeth Graham talks to messengers in June at the SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim about Stand For Life. **Bottom:** Hannah Daniel, Elizabeth Graham, and Brent Leatherwood in December 2021 on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court for the Dobbs v. Jackson oral arguments.



pastors with a statement to equip them to discuss the *Dobbs* ruling with their own church, and were quoted in multiple national media outlets and Baptist papers. In addition, several members of our team fielded off-the-record questions from pastors and other leaders about the ruling.

What's Next?

As a result of the historic *Dobbs* decision, some politicians are pushing for radical legislation that would codify abortion protections. In July 2022, the Women's Health Protection Act of 2022 passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 219-210, but did not receive a vote in the Senate. This bill would allow for abortion up to the point of birth. Additionally, this bill removes all pro-life protections at the federal and state levels and eliminates a state's ability to legislate on abortion. This bill also fails to protect the consciences of American taxpayers by utilizing taxpayer dollars to pay for abortions. This bill is the most pro-abortion bill to ever pass the House. The ERLC and the pro-life community strongly opposed this bill. The ERLC sent several letters to Congress voicing our opposition.

Again, in July 2022, the Ensuring Access to Abortion Act of 2022, which requires states to allow the purchase and mailing of abortion pills from across state lines, passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 223-205. The Senate has not yet voted. Not only would the bill curb state authority to restrict access to the abortion pill, but it would also prevent states from restricting or impeding interstate travel for the purpose of obtaining an abortion.

Some lawmakers and advocacy groups have proposed laws that would prevent people from traveling out of state to obtain abortions or open out-of-state providers to civil liabilities. This bill would ban such efforts nationwide. The ERLC has strongly [opposed](#) this bill, as it would enshrine interstate access to the dangerous abortion pill into federal law and would promote abortion tourism nationwide. The ERLC will continue

taxpayers who do not want financial responsibility for a practice that millions of Americans find to be a grave moral wrong.

Because the Hyde Amendment is attached as a "rider" to the appropriations bill, it is only applicable for the money appropriated that year and therefore must be attached to appropriations bills each year to be effective. During last year's appropriations process, House

“Sen. Rubio said he only wanted to have a conversation about a post-Roe world with the few organizations he personally knows are not motivated by politics, but instead are operating from the basis of deeply held principles.”

—*Brent Leatherwood*

to urge the Senate to vote down this destructive piece of legislation.

In addition, each summer, Congress embarks on the appropriations process, writing and debating a set of bills that funds the federal government for the following fiscal year. Central to the ERLC's engagement in this process is our advocacy for the inclusion of critical pro-life riders to prevent federal taxpayer dollars from going to the abortion industry. The Hyde Amendment prevents federally funded Medicaid dollars from covering the cost of abortion. This policy protects the consciences of

Democrats regrettably struck the Hyde Amendment from the Labor-HHS appropriations bill for the first time since 1976. The ERLC actively engaged with pro-life senators to include the Hyde Amendment and other life-saving provisions in the final appropriations bill, and thankfully, the Senate forced their inclusion and eventual passage. The Hyde Amendment saves approximately 60,000 lives per year, and the ERLC is committed to fighting for the inclusion of this critical pro-life provision in this year's, and every year's, appropriations bill. ★

Religious Liberty

Religious liberty is a Baptist distinctive, despite recent controversies regarding its legitimacy. We believe religious liberty is essential for all people because true faith cannot be coerced, nor should it be outlawed. When freedom to live according to one's deeply held beliefs is not recognized by the state, human flourishing is suppressed. As ambassadors of Christ, then, we should seek not to coerce or strong arm consciences, or permit the state to do so, but to advocate for their freedom and, by God's grace, make our appeal to those free consciences to be reconciled to their Lord.

The ERLC will always prioritize the protection of religious liberty, as was strongly communicated in the [2022 Public Policy Agenda](#). This annual asset is an essential part of our advocacy efforts in our nation's capital. This publicly available, 16-page document charts a path forward for our D.C. team each year, and this year's response was far more than what we were expecting. In addition to hearing from policy makers and advocacy partners,

multiple pastors and many fellow Southern Baptists reached out to affirm the ways we are engaging our nation's elected leaders.

Advocacy for the Uyghurs

A significant legislative victory occurred for our team in December 2021. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act was signed into law after some furious back-and-forth negotiating to rescue the package on Capitol Hill. This bill was the focus of a private, in-person meeting with the State Department on Nov. 30, 2021, in Washington, D.C., where we communicated the importance of this bill—and the need to continue confronting China—based on the SBC's 2021 resolution.

The timing of the passage of the bill was consequential as the 2022 Winter Olympics were held in Beijing, China. While the eyes of the world always turn to the Olympics, these games were being watched even more closely due to [China's repeated human rights violations](#) and the [ongoing genocide against the Uyghurs](#). On Feb. 1, we hosted





an online event titled, “Oppression and the Olympics,” which brought together multiple experts to talk about China’s heinous treatment of religious minorities.

Supreme Court Religious Liberty Rulings

The Supreme Court took up a number of a significant religious liberty cases this term, and in every case, provided rulings that affirmed and undergirded the importance of religious liberty in our nation.

On March 24, in a 8-1 [decision](#), the Supreme Court ruled in *Ramirez v. Collier* that John Ramirez should be allowed to have his Southern Baptist pastor pray aloud and lay hands on him as he is executed. The ERLC filed an [amicus brief](#) prior to the ruling, asking the Supreme Court to protect Ramirez’s religious freedom rights. Our brief asserted that the state has failed to meet its burden, under Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act,

of demonstrating that refusing an inmate audible prayers and laying on of hands during his execution serves a compelling interest and does so by the least restrictive means.

The *Ramirez* case was a significant win for religious liberty. This ruling helps protect the centuries-old practice of providing spiritual counsel and comfort to prisoners. As **Brent Leatherwood** said at the time of the ruling, “The Supreme Court affirmed that religious freedom does not end at the execution chamber door.”

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled May 2 in *Shurtleff v. Boston* that the city of Boston violated the First Amendment rights of petitioners Harold Shurtleff and his organization, Camp Constitution, by refusing to allow the group to fly the Christian flag in front of City Hall. The ERLC had joined an [amicus brief](#) asking the Supreme Court to rule in favor of Camp Constitution. Our brief argued that the City of Boston violated the Free Exercise

Clause and Establishment Clause and wrongly discriminated against the speech of an organization.

This case provided another victory in free speech jurisprudence, affirming the First Amendment rights of all organizations, including religious organizations, and clarifying the understanding of the Establishment Clause, with implications for religious speech at other limited public forums such as schools, city halls, and public libraries.

The ERLC believes our First Amendment rights travel together. A weakening of one is a weakening of all of the foundational rights contained in the First Amendment. The Supreme Court has taken a robust view of these foundational rights, and we are grateful that the justices once again ruled in favor of freedom of speech in the public square.

The 6-3 decision in *Carson v. Makin*, released by the court on June 21, ruled that Maine’s “nonsectarian” requirement for otherwise generally available tuition assistance payments violated the Free Exercise Clause. The ERLC signed amicus briefs both [at the petition for certiorari stage](#) and when the case was before the Supreme Court [on the merits](#). The brief the ERLC joined on the merits argued that Maine’s public education system did not merely *exclude* religious schools—it discriminated against them.

This case is an important win for religious liberty. *Carson v. Makin* further enshrines the religious protections articulated in the *Trinity Lutheran* and *Espinoza* decisions that determined that states cannot exclude organizations and schools from receiving public benefits simply because they are religious.



ERLC Acting President Brent Leatherwood discusses the Uyghur crisis with panelists Nury Turkel, Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; Rushan Abbas, Founder and Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs; and Michael Sobolik, Fellow in Indo-Pacific Studies, American Foreign Policy Council during our online event “Oppression and the Olympics.”

This decision also closed a loophole the First Circuit opened when upholding Maine’s exclusion of “sectarian” schools from its tuition assistance program.

In an affirmation of religious expression, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in *Kennedy v. Bremerton* on June 27 that “the Free Exercise and Free

review and repudiation of the Ninth Circuit in the case, but the justices declined to grant the cert request at the time. The case returned to federal court and successfully worked its way back through the judicial system.

The Supreme Court found that Kennedy’s private prayers after football games were “private speech, not

working in the public education sector. As Christians, Scripture calls us to do “all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). This decision bolsters believers’ ability to do this in the public square without fear of repercussion.

Global Magnitsky Sanctions

The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act passed Congress in 2016, authorizing the executive branch to ban visas and issue sanctions against any foreign person or entity responsible for gross violations of human rights. These sanctions can pressure foreign government leaders and entities to change their behavior. Chinese government officials have received Global Magnitsky sanctions because of their grave religious liberty and human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region. These sanctions are positive improvements on the status quo, as they place much-needed pressure on the Chinese government for the persecution of Uyghurs and other religious minorities. This year, the Senate unanimously extended this piece of legislation beyond its original expiration date of December 2022.

The ERLC has committed to working with nongovernmental organizations to direct both U.S. and international pressure toward alleviating the persecution of religious minorities in China. The ERLC continues to support the Global Magnitsky sanctions because they are a powerful tool for the U.S. government to address the Chinese government’s persecution of religious minorities. ★

The ERLC believes our First Amendment rights travel together. A weakening of one is a weakening of all of the foundational rights contained in the First Amendment.

Speech Clauses of the First Amendment protect an individual engaging in a personal religious observance from government reprisal.” The ERLC was involved with briefs at the [petition for certiorari stage](#) and before the Supreme Court [on the merits](#).

Joseph Kennedy, a high school football coach in Washington state, lost his job after refusing to stop offering personal prayers at midfield after games. Occasionally, students would join him and also pray. In the wake of public controversy, Coach Kennedy was fired. The “District Court found that the ‘sole reason’ for the District’s decision to suspend Mr. Kennedy was its perceived ‘risk of constitutional liability’ under the Establishment Clause for his ‘religious conduct’ after three games.”

The case actually came before the Supreme Court once prior. In 2018, [ERLC joined eight other groups](#) in a brief that called for Supreme Court

government speech,” and teachers and students need not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

ERLC’s **Brent Leatherwood** said, “As any Christian knows, our faith is deeply personal and rightly shapes every aspect of our lives. We live out our faith in any number of ways, both privately and publicly. Today’s case centered on the latter and the Supreme Court rightly determined that an individual employed by a school does not forfeit his or her constitutional right to free expression simply by entering ‘the schoolhouse gate’ or, as it were in this case, the field of play.”

This case is another victory in a long line of jurisprudence that further expands Americans’ robust rights of religious expression. Across our convention of churches, faithful Southern Baptists can be found



Marriage and Family

Marriage and the family unit were established by God at the very beginning of creation as the first institutions. Genesis 1 and 2 shows us how God fashioned man and woman in his image, brought them together as one flesh, and gave them the charge to be fruitful and multiply, or bear children. God works in many ways, but it's through marriage and family that some of his greatest blessings abound to the world and bring about flourishing.

Because of the importance of these God-ordained institutions in preserving and prospering our society, the ERLC will continue to advocate for policies that maintain and protect these essential aspects of life together. God's ways are for our good, whether or not our culture recognizes this to be true. While marriage and family will not be perfect in the midst of a fallen world, it's our responsibility as Christians to continue to champion God's

design and see it upheld for the good of our neighbor.

Sexual Ethics Event

Our Commission devoted significant attention to the topic of sexual ethics this year, as our secular culture continues in its mission to promote its definitions of what is good and true. We addressed sexual ethics specifically in the month of June because of its unavoidable cultural designation as "Pride Month."

ERLC's **Jason Thacker** hosted an online event called, "[Discipling Your Church For a World in Sexual Crisis](#)," which featured Andrew T. Walker, Dean Inserra, and Katie McCoy to equip churches and individuals to understand this current cultural moment and be equipped to engage in these important discussions. In addition to this event, we featured much-needed online resources on the topic of sexual ethics including:

- ["What is a man?"](#)
- ["What is a woman?"](#)

- [“5 things to remember when a transgender student visits your church.”](#) and
- [“Why biological sex matters for athletics.”](#)

House Passage of the Adoptee Citizenship Act

Prior to the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, the administrative steps required of families adopting internationally were unnecessarily burdensome. The process

immediate citizenship to these children already adopted by U.S. citizens yet left out of the previous bill.

The ERLC has supported the Adoptee Citizenship Act for years. We have engaged with a broad coalition invested in child welfare to urge members of Congress to swiftly pass this bill and secure permanent citizenship for the thousands of impacted adoptees. In March of 2021, the ERLC wrote

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included applying for and moving through a lengthy naturalization process for their children, in addition to the lengthy and costly adoption process. The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 granted automatic citizenship to all foreign-born children brought to the United States who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. Unfortunately, that act only applied to adoptees under the age of 18 when the bill was enacted, leaving an entire population of adopted children without full U.S. citizenship. The Adoptee Citizenship Act closes the loophole to provide

a coalition letter to the House of Representatives urging them to swiftly pass this vital piece of legislation.

In February of 2022, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1953, the Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2021. An amended version of the bill passed the Senate, but the House disagreed with the Senate’s amendments and left the bill in limbo. The House’s bipartisan action on this bill is a promising first step, but we urge members of both houses of Congress to agree on legislative language and pass this crucial bill.

The Equality Act

In February 2021, the House passed The Equality Act (H.R. 5)—a bill that would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to add sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as protected classes under federal civil rights law. The bill would curtail religious freedom protections, hinder the work of healthcare professionals and faith-based hospitals, undermine civil rights protections for women and girls, and ultimately steamroll the consciences of millions of Americans.

The Equality Act would also gut the 1993 [Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#) (RFRA). The removal of this act would force faith-based child welfare organizations to abandon their deeply held religious beliefs or be shut down by the state. The Equality Act would also force healthcare workers and pro-life healthcare providers to participate in and provide abortions.

The ERLC has worked tirelessly to defeat this bill. We have partnered with a broad coalition of more than 85 faith-based nonprofits, religious entities, and institutions of higher education to highlight the dangers of H.R. 5. We have raised these concerns with members of Congress and the administration through coalition letters and countless meetings with members, administration officials, and their staff. We have also engaged in public advocacy against the bill by producing a suite of [resources available](#) on our website to inform Christians and the broader public about the pernicious threat of H.R. 5. We will continue to lead efforts to oppose the Equality Act and any similar legislation

introduced this Congress. As we do so, we will advocate for a public square solution that protects and upholds the dignity of all people and their rights, while ensuring that religiously motivated individuals and institutions are free to live and act according to their deeply held convictions.

Advocacy Against SOGI Provisions

The ERLC has spoken out against the Department of Education’s proposed changes to Title IX, which would expand the definition of “sex” to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” These dangerous federal guidances would allow biological men to participate in collegiate women’s sports and would penalize institutions that fail to expand the definition of sex to include SOGI. The ERLC submitted public comments urging the department to alter this proposed rule.

The ERLC has also spoken out against the Department of Health and Human Services’ addition of sexual orientation and gender identity language to multiple nondiscrimination provisions of the Affordable Care Act. This rule would mandate gender-affirming care and would impede the work of healthcare professionals and faith-based hospitals. The ERLC submitted [public comments](#) to the HHS urging them to alter this proposed rule. ★



Biblical Justice

S eeking justice and righteousness, especially for those who are most vulnerable, is fundamental to our faith and an essential part of Christian living. God directly commanded us to seek justice through the prophet Micah, “He has told you, O man, what is

good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8 ESV).

Though injustice and tragedy run rampant in our fallen world, God’s people are to work for the good of our neighbors to push back the darkness

and lift up the vulnerable. In our advocacy for fair and impartial judgment and equitable treatment of the unfairly marginalized, we bear witness to a God who is the ultimate just Judge, who deeply cares for the oppressed, and who proclaims a gospel that saves all who believe without partiality.



🔴 Bri Stensrud from Women of Welcome, Matthew Sorens from the Evangelical Immigration Table, Brent Leatherwood, and Bryant Wright of Send Relief wrap up the online event, “How Christians Can Serve Refugees.”

Welcoming Refugees

We were able to celebrate President Biden’s announcement in March 2022 that America would welcome up to 100,000 refugees from the war-torn nation of Ukraine. We have directly advocated for this action from the White House, an effort which was described in an [ERLC article](#) about our concerns. In April, we hosted an [online event](#) titled “[How Christians Can Serve Refugees](#)” which came at a time when millions of people have fled Ukraine, Afghanistan, and other countries as a result of wars and political instability. While many Ukrainians and Afghans have left their homes in recent months for nearby countries, some are seeking resettlement in the United States, providing American Christians

unique opportunities to serve in a time of crisis and share the gospel of Jesus to individuals from around the world. Bryant Wright, president of Send Relief; Bri Stensrud, director of Women of Welcome; and Matthew Sorens, U.S. director of church mobilization for World Relief; provided invaluable insight into the life of a refugee, as well as practical and pastoral instructions for us all.

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) systematically subjects Uyghurs to forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and throughout China. The Uyghur people are forced to produce goods that are then sold around the

world, including in the United States, and the CCP is financially profiting from this reprehensible practice. Many brand-sourcing apparel, textiles, yarn or cotton from XUAR have almost certainly profited from forced Uyghur labor.

As mentioned, earlier, President Biden signed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in December 2022. This bill prohibits goods made with forced labor in the XUAR or by entities using Uyghur labor forcibly transferred from the XUAR from entering the U.S. market. This legislation also instructs the U.S. government to impose sanctions against any foreign person who knowingly engages in the forced labor of Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups in the XUAR.

The ERLC has consistently advocated on behalf of the Uyghurs and condemned the CCP's unconscionable human rights abuses against them and other ethnic minorities. In December 2021, **Brent Leatherwood** sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, urging the government to take swift action in countering China morally. The ERLC also sent a [letter](#) to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, urging them to drop their opposition to the bill.

Although the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act successfully passed Congress, there have been some issues with its implementation. On June 6th 2022, President Biden issued an executive order

President Biden expressing his concerns and urging the President to close this loophole. His letter urged Biden to consider the cost of his executive order, saying, "While we affirm the need for reliable energy sources and responsible stewardship of the earth's resources, this cannot be done at the expense of human rights."

Advocacy for Priority 2 Refugee Status for Uyghurs and Hong Kongers

The Uyghur people and Hong Kong political dissenters face daily persecution at the hands of the CCP. The Chinese government has targeted the predominantly Muslim

While circumstances are constantly changing, one thing is certain: the United States should swiftly offer refuge to those fleeing persecution. Offering Priority 2 (P-2) refugee status would provide a lifeline to vulnerable Uyghur Muslims and Hong Kong dissenters. This status would grant Uyghurs and Hong Kongers direct access to the U.S. refugee system, expediting their ability to apply for asylum or long-term residency.

Congress is currently working to finalize the Bipartisan Innovation Act, an economic competitiveness package meant to bolster American technology and keep pace with China. Versions of this bill passed the Senate and House of Representatives with significant differences, and now, members of both parties from both chambers—known as conferees—are negotiating to reconcile a final package. P-2 refugee status for Uyghurs and Hong Kongers was included in the House-passed version of this legislation but was previously excluded from the Senate-passed version. The ERLC sent a [letter](#) to congressional leadership and conferees advocating for the inclusion of P-2 status for Uyghurs and Hong Kongers to be included in the final bill.

If the United States wants to be serious in its efforts to counter China through this package, legislators must prioritize efforts to counter China morally. By offering P-2 refugee status to Uyghurs and Hong Kongers fleeing persecution, America can demonstrate that this country is a safe haven for the persecuted and a vanguard against nations that abuse human rights and violate religious liberties.

While circumstances are constantly changing, one thing is certain: the United States should swiftly offer refuge to those fleeing persecution. Offering P-2 refugee status would provide a lifeline to vulnerable Uyghur Muslims and Hong Kong dissenters.

that would permit solar panels and modules to be imported from South-east Asian countries in order to address climate change. However, studies show that a large portion of solar panels from those regions have been made by Uyghur forced labor. Leatherwood wrote a letter to

Uyghur ethnic group for illegitimate detention and abusive "pacification" under the guise of national security. In Hong Kong, authorities have arrested dozens of pro-democracy leaders, a number of whom are Christian, and restricted freedoms of speech and the press.

Advocacy for Payday Lending Rule

In ongoing cooperation with the Faith for Just Lending Coalition, the ERLC was instrumental in advancing the repeal of the harmful “True Lender” rule last year and will continue to work for the regulation of an industry that has resulted in a devastatingly endless cycle of debt and despair for millions of Americans. The ERLC has continued to be involved with the Faith for Just Lending coalition, seeking an end to payday loans, which are predatory towards the poor.

Advocacy for a Pathway to Citizenship for DACA Recipients

The ERLC has continued to advocate for a permanent solution for young immigrants who were brought to the United States by their parents. These immigrants broke no law, and yet they remain without permanent legal status. Now young adults, these “Dreamers”—many of whom have families of their own with children who are U.S. citizens—are workers, students, and positive contributors to their communities. On the 10-year anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), the ERLC joined a letter with other Evangelical Immigration Table leaders urging Congress to continue working on a legislative solution for DACA recipients and other Dreamers.

Sexual Abuse Task Force

The ERLC has prioritized discussion of the problem of church sexual abuse and care for survivors for many years now, and 2022 saw significant

turning points in the Southern Baptist Convention’s efforts to address this topic.

The Caring Well Challenge, a joint initiative led by the ERLC and SBC’s Sexual Abuse Advisory Group, was formed in June 2019

the task force to better understand how to address the problem of abuse in their churches.

The tragic reality of those who have been abused, marginalized, and stonewalled by many in the Southern Baptist Convention, as revealed

Though injustice and tragedy run rampant in our fallen world, God’s people are to work for the good of our neighbors to push back the darkness and lift up the vulnerable.

as a unified call to action designed to confront church sexual abuse. Since its inception, more than 1,000 churches have participated in the Caring Well Challenge by committing to work through steps outlined on caringwell.com. In August of 2020, we released a [free hiring guide](#) as a part of the Caring Well Challenge to equip churches in hiring staff or selecting volunteers that will prevent church sexual abuse and protect the vulnerable. We continue to provide this resource, equip and support churches, and lead in efforts to make our churches safe from abuse and safe for survivors.

As a trusted partner in this work, the ERLC hosted a private meeting in collaboration with the Sexual Abuse Task Force for more than 70 people in April 2022, anticipating the upcoming report. Leaders from each state gathered to share their own needs and also ask questions of

by the [Sexual Abuse Task Force report](#), is cause for deep lament and grief. In the midst of this dark moment, our first response was to cry out to the Lord. We felt deep gratitude and heaviness when the SATF report was released. We are grateful that our trustees have consistently stood behind our Caring Well initiatives and provided the support we need to continue leading in these efforts to make churches safe for survivors and safe from abuse, including the future assessment of the convention, as approved by SBC messengers. ★



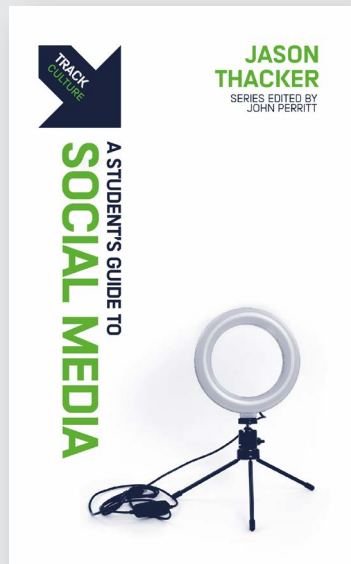
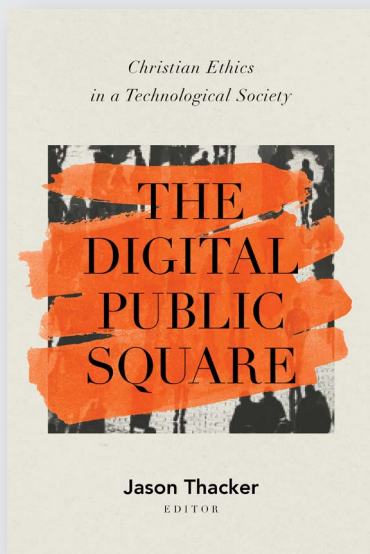
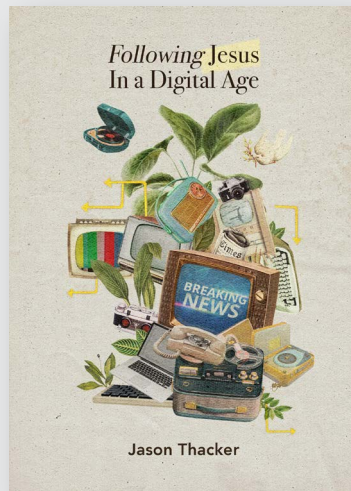
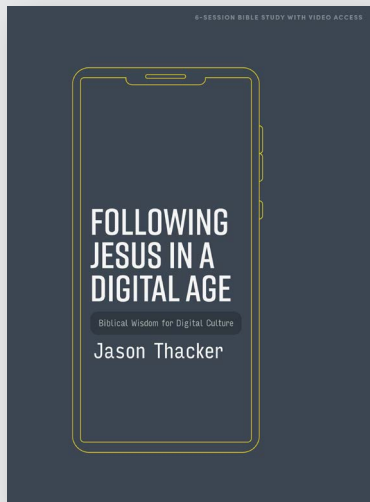
Research

In the spring 2022, our Chair of Research in Technology Ethics, **Jason Thacker**, focused the work of ERLC Research on three main themes: religious liberty, human dignity, and technology ethics. We hosted three Research Institute lectures as part of our spring series with Eric Smith on John Leland, Klion Kitchen on digital authoritarianism and national security, and John Kilner on the image of God and human dignity. The fall series will commence in September with lectures on fall research themes.

Thacker spoke at multiple local churches on technology and Christian ethics during the past year. He was also invited to be a keynote speaker at the Salvation Army National Training Seminar, Google's Christian employees group, and at universities such as Azusa Pacific University and Tennessee Tech. He also became an associate fellow at the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge. In addition, Thacker published articles at *Liberty Magazine*, *The Gospel Coalition*, *Journal*

of Christian Legal Thought, and *Christian Business Review*.

We hosted a group of our research fellows for the annual ERLC Research Institute breakfast during the SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California, providing a time for in-person connection and fellowship for these individuals who are normally scattered across the country. In a similar fashion, the ERLC hosted a two-day convening of Baptist state directors and state ethics leaders in December 2021. This is the first time that this group has been convened by



the ERLC since 2014, and we had 21 attendees, representing a significant portion of such leaders. As we have prioritized such in-person gatherings again, we are able to reflect our heart for Kingdom-building cooperative work across the Southern Baptist Convention and will continue to do so.

The *Digital Public Square* podcast celebrated its 100th episode in August 2022. Thacker hosts guests such as Karen Swallow Prior, Jonathan Rauch, Paul D. Miller, Alan Noble, Ray Ortlund, Bethany Allen-Ebrahman, and Olivia Enos,

for conversations on theology, ethics, and philosophy.

In early spring 2023, Thacker's new booklet *A Student's Guide to Social Media* will be released with Christian Focus, helping teenagers and youth workers think wisely about social media and how to navigate the unique challenges facing the next generation in our digital society.

Beginning in Fall 2023, a new eight-volume series will begin to be released with B&H Academic entitled *Essentials in Christian Ethics*. This series is co-edited by C. Ben Mitchell

◀ Four of the new resources coming in 2022 and 2023 from Jason Thacker as part of the *Digital Public Square* research project.

and Jason Thacker. The series is made up of eight short, introductory volumes spanning topics like metaethics (JP Moreland and David Horner), biblical ethics (Jacob Shatzer), natural law ethics (David VanDrunen), virtue ethics, moral apologetics (Jamie Dew), political philosophy (Bryan Baise), bioethics (C. Ben Mitchell), and just war (Paul D. Miller).

Digital Public Square Research Project

Jason Thacker also recently released his new book, *Following Jesus in a Digital Age* with B&H Publishing. This book guides readers to consider what technology actually is and how it is discipling us. It focuses on how technology alters our understanding of truth, responsibility, and our identity. Releasing in December 2022 is a six-session Bible study version of the book that includes supporting videos, as well.

In February 2023, *The Digital Public Square: Christian Ethics in a Technological Society* volume edited by Jason Thacker is due to be released. This book will feature 13 different contributors addressing issues such as free speech, religious freedom, technology policy, hate speech and violence, pornography, misinformation, and digital authoritarianism.

We are continuing our policy and advocacy work with major social media companies, government, and like-minded organizations to see Christian ethics promoted and protected in the digital realm. ★

ERLC 2022 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Each summer the ERLC hosts interns in our Nashville and Washington, D.C., offices for an intensive six weeks in public policy, ethics and worldview training, professional development, and spiritual formation. This year's class of interns is the first to join in person since the outbreak of the pandemic, as well as the first under our reformulated structure.

This year's intern class included college students and recent graduates. As a group, they came from public universities (Auburn University and the University of Memphis), as well as private Christian colleges and universities (Notre Dame, Samford University, William Carey University, and Liberty University). They included students

majoring in pre-law, finance, public policy, and Christian ministry. All expressed a desire to grow in their walk with Christ and to use the skills they learned at the ERLC as they go back to their campuses, out into the workforce, or to seminary for further study.

The ERLC's summer internship program is structured around discipling the next generation of Christian leaders to take the moral demands of the gospel into the public square as ambassadors for Christ. To that end, interns complete not only assignments meant to give them practical skills and experience, but also an intensive course of study for worldview development. Led by members of the staff, they spend time each week reading, discussing, and working through ethical scenarios and forming a decidedly Baptist and evangelical approach to culture. Topics for this summer included:

- *What is a Christian worldview?*
- *What is a man/woman?*
- *Why do Baptists care about religious liberty for all?*
- *What does it mean to be pro-life?*
- *How is technology shaping and forming our worldview?*
- *What does it mean to pursue justice in America?*

📍 *Our D.C. interns visiting the U.S. Capitol.*



Further, they meet members of the staff and external organizations to grow in their awareness of what ministry looks like, broadly understood. This summer that included meetings with Christians serving in the Tennessee Governor's Office, the editor of a Christian news organization, and a panel session on how to succeed in graduate school, seminary, law school, or as a young professional. Most importantly the interns gather each week for spiritual formation, which this summer was structured around the theme of the Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew. It is our goal that interns leave having not only learned more about the workforce or ethical debates, but that they are encouraged in their walk with Christ.

This summer's intern class not only completed their worldview study, but also served at a time of organizational transition, making them an even more vital part of the team than usual. Our D.C. interns completed a myriad number of tasks from research to writing to internal memos on public policy positions. Similarly, the Nashville interns worked with our Communications team to edit articles, draft responses to constituents, and gather information from Baptist state conventions for a foster care resource to be used in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision. The work of the intern class this summer on all of the ERLC's resources related to *Dobbs* was invaluable. The entire staff, and especially

The entire staff, and especially our D.C. team, benefitted from the dedication and enthusiasm with which our interns met each task we gave to them.

our D.C. team, benefitted from the dedication and enthusiasm with which our interns met each task we gave to them.

Some examples of the work that they completed include:

- Daniel Hostetter's [article](#) on the pro-life advocacy and disinformation,
- Cooper Shull's [article](#) on the International Religious Freedom Summit,
- Kadin Christian's [article](#) on how college students should talk about politics on campus,
- Lizzy Davis' work with social media and the trustee notebook,
- Contributions to SCOTUS articles on [Carson](#), [Kennedy](#), and [Dobbs](#),
- Research on House Appropriations bills and concerns for the ERLC and Southern Baptists,
- Tracking and research of pro-family policies proposed at the state level after the *Dobbs* decision, and
- A guide of all the SBC's resolutions categorized by emphases and changes over time. ★

2022-2023 Budget

Budget Expense	2021-2022 Budget	2022-2023 Budget
Staff Salary & Benefits	2,631,115	2,638,493
Travel & Business	275,655	235,610
Executive Office	101,000	85,100
External Affairs	294,121	299,896
Event Hosting	354,487	152,362
Business & Finance	185,902	199,011
Public Policy & Research	69,920	77,920
Total Budget Expenses	3,912,200	3,688,392

2022

**ANNUAL
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