

This is what Baptists Today had to say

Shirley Taylor of Conroe, Texas, has a passion. It surfaced in the [Open Letter](#) she sent out recently urging Baptists to rethink the idea of women in church leadership.

Not knowing Shirley, I emailed her some questions. (Also, I did not know that Bob Allen of ABP was doing the same. Here is his [story](#).)

However, I will share the information Shirley — who retired from the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 2005 following a reorganization — offered to me.

I asked the following six questions:

1. How did the idea of "Baptist Women for Equality" come about?
2. Was the Jan. 15 "Open Letter" the first of an ongoing electronic newsletter? How frequent?
3. Who else is leading this effort? Do you have a board or committee?
4. What future projects are planned?
5. What do you hope to accomplish?
6. Why do you think the subject of women's equality among Baptists needs such attention at this time?

Here are Shirley's responses:

"First I am going to answer your questions very simply. Then I will go into further detail.

1. The idea of bWe-Baptist Women for Equality is to provoke women to question why they accept so readily that women cannot be deacons or pastors.
2. The January 15 Open Letter is the first. I don't know if there will be more. There will be more information put on the website. A feature called "Letters to My Pastor" which is a collection of letters that I have written to my pastor and other Baptist leaders will appear soon.
3. My husband is the only one who is helping me. He is an encourager, and helps in every way which makes it possible for me to do this. There is no board or committee. Just us.
4. We are still working on this project and do not anticipate any future projects. I don't plan to picket or boycott anybody. We started this two months ago.

5. What do I hope to accomplish? I hope that Southern Baptists can be brought into the 21st Century, stop this nonsense about women being submissive to men which is an old Middle Eastern idea, and allow women their equal place in our churches. I hope to see at least one church in my local association have a woman deacon.

6. The answer to the last question is that while my website is new, I have been writing letters to my pastor and Baptist leaders since 2000, promoting women as deacons and pastors."

[To expound:] "The Southern Baptist Convention met in June of 2008. What came out of their annual meeting was very disturbing to me. They love to keep up their animosity toward women.

"One of the proposals that will be addressed during this year and brought to the convention in June 2009 shows how narrow-minded and backward Southern Baptists have become since the conservative takeover in the 1980s.

"The following quote is from what I read in the Baptist Standard that upset me so much. The offensive motion is: Amend the SBC's constitution to disallow affiliation by 'churches which have female senior pastors.' This proposal would modify the SBC constitution, which regulates convention membership (affiliation). The convention's Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement asserts, 'the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.'

"They do not want any women pastors and cannot even accept the money from a church that has a woman pastor. It is as if women will taint the Baptist denomination. Their attitude is comparable to the Middle Eastern men who have denied women status and made the women themselves believe that God wills such.

"Two months ago I had no idea that I would doing this. For some time I had felt a real stirring in my soul that I needed to do something. Several ideas were discarded and there was no clear direction.

"Then I decided to visit the Director of Missions of our local Baptist association. I had worked there for 12 years while working for Baptist General Convention of Texas, but knew this Director of Missions only slightly. My express purpose was to go on record as being a woman in this association who thought it was time for women deacons.

"The DOM was very gracious and did not say or do anything that would lead me to believe he felt one way or the other. During that conversation, I realized that the sides were too well drawn and that the churches aligned with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention had actually signed an agreement saying that they would not have women deacons.

"I found that interesting because I had done an informal survey recently and found that some people sitting in those SBTC churches were in favor of women deacons. Either the pastors do not know how their people feel or have so convinced themselves that their congregation believes as they do, or they just don't care.

"I would like to ask those pastors the question you asked me 'What do you hope to accomplish?' by keeping women in the place they have decided we should be.

"We have devoted a huge amount of time and effort into this project. It has cost us money as we have developed a website, mailed out over 100 letters to churches and individuals. We have emailed many people, and faxed an abbreviated copy to many people.

"We have sent emails and faxes to Paige Patterson, Al Mohler, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Lifeway Book Stores, Baptist encampments and Baptist newspapers.

"How much does a snowflake weigh? Almost nothing, but one snowflake upon another can cause a tree limb to break. This is my snowflake. I add it to the weight of all those others who have come to realize that women should claim the equality that is already given them by Almighty God."

Two editorial observations:

1. There are other places in Baptist life where women are affirmed and other groups (such as Baptist Women in Ministry) where this concern is addressed.
2. However, I wouldn't underestimate the impact of one Texas grandmother's snowflake.

POSTED BY JOHN D. PIERCE AT 7:27 AM 