

Ala. governor says only Christians are his `brothers and sisters'

by [David White](#)

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. (RNS) Newly sworn-in Gov. Robert Bentley said he plans to be the governor of all Alabamians and be color-blind, but also said that people who aren't "saved" Christians aren't his brothers and sisters.

Bentley told a large crowd on Monday (Jan. 17) at Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church that he believed it was important for Alabamians "that we love and care for each other."

"I was elected as a Republican candidate. But once I became governor ... I became the governor of all the people. I intend to live up to that. I am color-blind," Bentley said in a short speech given about an hour after he took the oath of office as governor.

Then Bentley, who for years has been a deacon at First Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, gave what sounded like an altar call.

"There may be some people here today who do not have living within them the Holy Spirit," Bentley said. "But if you have been adopted in God's family like I have, and like you have if you're a Christian and if you're saved, and the Holy Spirit lives within you just like the Holy Spirit lives within me, then you know what that makes? It makes you and me brothers. And it makes you and me brother and sister."

Bentley added, "Now I will have to say that, if we don't have the same daddy, we're not brothers and sisters. So anybody here today who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior, I'm telling you, you're not my brother and you're not my sister, and I want to be your brother."

Asked later if he meant to be insulting to people of other faiths, Bentley replied, "We're not trying to insult anybody."

Asked about Bentley's comments, the governor's communications director, Rebekah Caldwell Mason, said, "He is the governor of all the people, Christians, non-Christians alike."

In his speech marking observances of the Rev. Martin Luther King's birthday in the church where King was once pastor, Bentley also told the crowd, "I think that Dr. Martin Luther King was one of the greatest men that has ever lived."

"I appreciate what he has done for not only the African-American community but for the white community, because he helped everything to change, even though he had to give his life for it," Bentley said.