



# SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION 101

*AN INFORMATIONAL GUIDE*

PRODUCED BY THE CONSERVATIVE BAPTIST NETWORK

## THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE (2000)

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BF&M 2000) is the confession of faith adopted by Southern Baptists. The statement of faith was revised in the year 2000 to address specific challenges and issues faced by the current generation. The Baptist Faith and Message describes with scriptural references doctrines held in common by Southern Baptists.

The Baptist Faith and Message is available online at: [www.sbc.net/bfm](http://www.sbc.net/bfm).

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## CHALLENGES FACING THE SBC

Southern Baptists have expressed concern regarding an apparent departure from the doctrine of Scripture as inerrant and sufficient within portions of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). In some instances, Baptists have embraced unbiblical ideologies such as Critical Race Theory through the adoption of Resolution Nine at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the SBC. In other instances, women have begun serving in preaching and pastoral leadership roles, a practice not in keeping with Scripture or long-standing Baptist distinctives. Concerns have also been expressed about curriculum taught at SBC seminaries and the cooperation and representation of Southern Baptists by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and the North American Mission Board.

### COURSE CORRECTION

With these and many other challenges facing the Convention, Southern Baptists now seek a course correction not unlike the one sought during the Conservative Resurgence of the late 20th century. Today, rather than a resurgence, conservative Baptist leaders urge the need of conservative reengagement. The solution is for conservative Southern Baptists to engage and become involved in the work of the SBC. Attending the annual meeting, voting according to biblical convictions, supporting conservative candidates for the SBC presidency, and partnering together through the Conservative Baptist Network are important aspects in reengaging to preserve the Southern Baptist Convention.

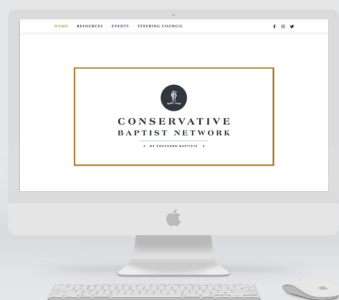
## CREATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE BAPTIST NETWORK

In February 2020, a significant number of pastors and laymen, motivated by a passionate desire to keep the Southern Baptist Convention anchored to the inerrancy and sufficiency of God's Word, formed the Conservative Baptist Network. The Network is the product of a grassroots movement that developed organically in the hearts and minds of devoted Southern Baptists who have become concerned about the current direction and perceived future of the Convention.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Conservative Baptist Network is a partnership of Southern Baptists where all generations are encouraged, equipped, and empowered to bring positive, biblical solutions that strengthen the SBC in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission and influence culture.

LEARN MORE



*Find more information about the Network & register to join at*

**CONSERVATIVEBAPTISTNETWORK.COM**



# THE OPERATION OF THE SBC AND WHY BEING A MESSENGER MATTERS

## HOW DO SOUTHERN BAPTISTS WORK TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH THE GREAT COMMISSION?

Every Southern Baptist church is autonomous. Each individual church governs itself and is not controlled by the Convention. Local churches govern the Convention rather than the Convention governing the churches. The highest authority in the Southern Baptist Convention is the messengers sent to represent local churches. This polity differs from every other mainline denomination.

In 1845, like-minded churches concerned about mission efforts came together to pool their resources to fund mission work to the nations. This collaboration became what we now know as the Southern Baptist Convention – a missional organization that enables a convention of churches to push back lostness in the world. This network of churches unites around common beliefs (The Baptist Faith and Message) and cooperatively pools resources to fulfill the Great Commission (a process now known as the Cooperative Program).

## WHAT IS THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM (CP)?

The SBC encourages churches to cooperate by sending a percentage of a church's overall budget to the SBC. This “cooperation” is the Cooperative Program – local church contributions given to the SBC for the collective work of the SBC. A “minimum” amount to give in order to be a cooperating church is not specified. Since 1925, most SBC churches have worked together by contributing through the Cooperative Program as their principal way of supporting SBC work.

The Convention also emphasizes seasonal missions offerings for international missions (in December, the Lottie Moon Christmas offering) and North American missions (at Easter, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering).

## WHAT ARE THE ENTITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE SBC?

- SBC Executive Committee
- The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
- The International Mission Board
- The North American Mission Board
- Guidestone Financial Resources (*does not receive CP funding*)
- Lifeway Christian Resources (*does not receive CP funding*)
- Six theological seminaries
  - Gateway Seminary
  - Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
  - New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
  - Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
  - The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
  - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

## HOW IS THE SBC ORGANIZED?

The elected officers of the SBC include the president, the first and second vice presidents, the recording secretary, and the registration secretary. The president appoints key leaders including the members of the Committee on Committees. The Committee on Committees makes nominations for the Committee on Nominations, and messengers to the Convention elect people to that committee during the Annual Meeting. The Committee on Nominations then nominates people to fill other committees and trustee boards throughout the Convention—positions which collectively chart the direction for all SBC entities and institutions. Therefore, the president influences the direction of the SBC as a whole for many years after his service as an officer.

In addition to the Committee on Committees, the president appoints the members of the Committee on Resolutions and the Registration Committee, and he serves on the Committee on Order of Business alongside six other members. The Credentials Committee consists of the registration secretary, the chair of the Executive Committee, three members nominated by the Executive Committee, and four members nominated by the Committee on Nominations. Messengers vote on recommendations made by committees during the Annual Meeting of the SBC in a process that constitutes the largest known deliberative gathering.

## *COMMITTEES AT-A-GLANCE*

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES | COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS | COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE | REGISTRATION COMMITTEE



## **WHY DOES BEING A MESSENGER TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SBC MATTER?**

Local churches control the direction of the SBC through the representative votes of the messengers they send. The messengers elect the officers who make important appointments. If a theologically conservative man is elected president, then it follows that the appointments from that administration should be in line with conservative Baptist beliefs. Likewise, less conservative presidents hold the same influence and can similarly steer the direction of the Convention, albeit in a different direction.

Messengers can also influence Cooperative Program allocations and spending, giving Baptists an avenue to direct funding sacrificially given by local churches.

A well-governed Southern Baptist Convention necessitates that cooperating churches send messengers to the national and state conventions, that messengers become educated about the SBC and potential issues, and that messengers vote according to biblical convictions.



## HOW TO BECOME A MESSENGER TO THE SBC ANNUAL MEETING

From the SBC website:

*The SBC Bylaws state that a church must have indicated it is in “friendly cooperation with the Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work” and have made financial contributions to Convention work in the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting in June in order to seat messengers. The fiscal year ends on September 30 each year.*

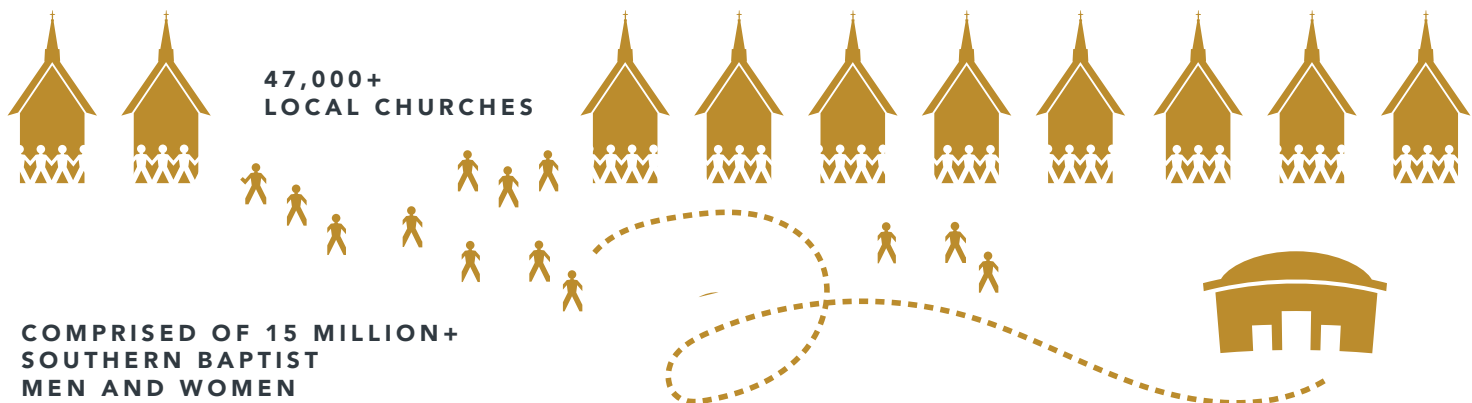
*Each qualifying church automatically receives two messengers and can qualify for up to ten additional messengers based on the level of financial support the church has given to Convention causes (see SBC Constitution, Article III, for greater detail.)*

*Churches can pre-register their messengers at [SBCAnnualMeeting.net](http://SBCAnnualMeeting.net) beginning in April each year by using the seven-digit SBC ID number assigned when the church became identified as a cooperating church with the Convention.*

*If a church is recognized by a cooperating state or regional Baptist convention as a cooperating church and makes CP contributions through the state convention, the church’s name is forwarded to the SBC through the state’s Annual Church Profile report as a church in friendly cooperation with the Convention.*

Each church’s bylaws will state how that church selects and sends messengers to the SBC. Usually, the church’s secretary will know this information in addition to the church’s SBC ID number. If the number is unknown, a church can look it up through the SBC website: [www.SBC.net](http://www.SBC.net).

# *GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION*



## **SEND MESSENGERS TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION**



Messengers vote to elect officers of the Convention including the president who in turn makes appointments to various committees including the Committee on Resolutions and the Committee on Committees. The Committee on Committees nominates people to the Committee on Nominations, and messengers vote to elect the members of that committee. The Committee on Nominations then nominates people for various committees and boards of trustees of SBC entities and institutions. Boards of trustees elect presidents for the entities, and within the seminaries, they elect faculty and affect academic curriculum decisions.



## MESSENGERS ELECT OFFICERS

PRESIDENT FIRST VICE PRESIDENT SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

RECORDING SECRETARY REGISTRATION SECRETARY

COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS

MESSENGERS ELECT TRUSTEES NOMINATED BY THE  
COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS TO THESE SBC OWNED ENTITIES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ERLC IMB NAMB GUIDESTONE

MBTS NOBTS SEBTS SBTS GS SWBTS LIFEWAY

MESSENGERS VOTE ON RESOLUTIONS AND MOTIONS



*Resolutions and motions -  
What is the difference?*

**A resolution is a statement of position or opinion** expressed by messengers at any one annual meeting, meant to be generally representative of the majority of messengers present. **A motion is a call for action.**

## NEXT STEPS

- Identify individuals in your church who are willing to serve as messengers to state and national SBC meetings.
- Join the Conservative Baptist Network by signing up at [www.conservativebaptistnetwork.com](http://www.conservativebaptistnetwork.com).
- Pray for the SBC and the Conservative Baptist Network by using the 31-day prayer calendar.
- Plan to attend the SBC annual meeting as a messenger to vote according to conservative, biblical beliefs.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

The following links provide further research and may be helpful in preparing you to talk with others about the Southern Baptist Convention.

- Organizational Manual for the SBC:  
[www.sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/organization-manual/](http://www.sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/organization-manual/)
- Constitution of the SBC:  
[www.sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/constitution/](http://www.sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/constitution/)
- In partnership with the Conservative Baptist Network, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary produced an academic resource detailing the sufficiency of Scripture. Those White Papers are available online here:  
[www.mabts.edu/sufficiency](http://www.mabts.edu/sufficiency)

# *SBC POLITY AND AVENUES FOR CONSERVATIVE REENGAGEMENT*

- *As of 2021, the SBC is made up of 51,147 churches who combine finances to send missionaries throughout the world, plant new churches, evangelize the lost, and disciple believers.*
- *Cooperating SBC churches can send between two and 12 messengers to each annual meeting of the SBC.*
- *A “cooperating” church is a church that has made undesignated financial contribution(s) through the Cooperative Program, and/or through the Convention’s Executive Committee for Convention causes, and/or to any Convention entity during the fiscal year preceding.*
- *The number of messengers a local church can send depends on the contribution amounts of the church.*
- *The local church nominates members in good standing and registers these individuals with the SBC Registration Committee prior to the annual meeting.*
- *Once messengers arrive at the annual meeting, they provide identification and pick up their registration material which usually includes a schedule of events, voting schedule, and ballots.*
- *The messengers to the annual meeting elect the president, first and second vice presidents, recording secretary, and registration secretary.*
- *Whoever is elected president, appoints members to the Resolutions Committee, the Registration Committee, and the Committee on Committees. The president generally appoints men and women who share his theological beliefs.*
- *The Committee on Committees nominates and messengers elect people to serve on the Committee on Nominations and the Committee on Order of Business.*
- *All of these committees work together to produce recommendations to the messengers of the Convention. Recommendations include resolutions, restructuring, budgeting, and proposed trustees for the entities of the SBC.*
- *The trustees of the SBC entities install the leadership of each entity. For example, a president of a seminary selected by its trustees will chart the theological direction of the seminary as he hires faculty and guides curriculum.*
- *SBC seminaries produce the next generation of pastors, church planters, and missionaries. The other SBC entities direct SBC work in charting the direction and funding allocation for missions, cultural engagement, and church support.*
- *In summary, an SBC president has dramatic influence in the direction of all SBC entities. He selects the critically important committee members who believe as he does. These committee members nominate those who will nominate the trustees for the SBC entities and seminaries who believe as they do. These trustees will hire seminary and entity presidents who agree with their theology and ideologies. These presidents use their influence to guide SBC ministry endeavors and the theological education of the next generation of SBC leadership. To keep the SBC committed to conservative theology and practices, messengers must reengage and renew an intentional focus in filling leadership positions with biblically conservative Baptists.*

**“CHRIST’S PEOPLE SHOULD, AS OCCASION  
REQUIRES, ORGANIZE SUCH ASSOCIATIONS AND  
CONVENTIONS AS MAY BEST SECURE COOPERATION  
FOR THE GREAT OBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF  
GOD. SUCH ORGANIZATIONS HAVE NO AUTHORITY  
OVER ONE ANOTHER OR OVER THE CHURCHES.  
THEY ARE VOLUNTARY AND ADVISORY BODIES  
DESIGNED TO ELICIT, COMBINE, AND DIRECT THE  
ENERGIES OF OUR PEOPLE IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE  
MANNER. MEMBERS OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES  
SHOULD COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN  
CARRYING FORWARD THE MISSIONARY,  
EDUCATIONAL, AND BENEVOLENT MINISTRIES FOR  
THE EXTENSION OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM.”**

*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*





*JOIN THE NETWORK ONLINE*

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*info@conservativebaptistnetwork.com*

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