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# SBC FAQs



# SBC FAQs A Ready Reference

Keith Harper *and* Amy Whitfield



ACADEMIC  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

*SBC FAQs*

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VP

Dedicated to Danny Akin,  
whose commitment to cooperation is  
an example for every Southern Baptist.





# CONTENTS

Preface	xiii
<b>Part 1: FAQs</b>	<b>1</b>
What is the Southern Baptist Convention?	3
How did the Southern Baptist Convention begin?	3
What is a convention, and how does it work?	5
Who are the messengers?	6
What determines if a church cooperates with the SBC?	7
What is the relationship between the Convention and the churches?	9
Who governs the Southern Baptist Convention?	11
What do the messengers do when they gather?	11
What does the Southern Baptist Convention president do?	13
What is the role of the other officers of the Southern Baptist Convention?	14
What does the Executive Committee do?	15
What is the difference between the SBC president and the Executive Committee president?	17
What is the Cooperative Program?	17
What is Great Commission Giving?	19
How are the categories of the Cooperative Program and Great Commission Giving reported?	21
How many Southern Baptist entities are there?	22

## *Contents*

What is the International Mission Board?	23
What is the North American Mission Board?	24
How does LifeWay Christian Resources relate to the SBC?	26
How does GuideStone Financial Resources relate to the SBC?	27
What are our seminaries, and why do we have six?	28
What is the role of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission?	30
What is the Woman's Missionary Union?	32
How are entities governed?	33
What are committees, and how do they function?	34
What is the role of journalism in Baptist life?	37
What is the relationship between the SBC and state conventions?	38
What is the relationship between the SBC and local associations?	40
What is the relationship between the SBC and other Baptist denominations?	40
In the SBC Annual Meeting, what are motions and resolutions?	41
Why do we have a business meeting every year?	43
How do states gain representation on boards and committees?	45
What was the Conservative Resurgence?	47
What was the Great Commission Resurgence?	48
Who is Lottie Moon?	49
Who is Annie Armstrong?	51
What is the Baptist Faith and Message?	52
<b>Part 2: Guiding SBC Documents</b>	<b>53</b>
Southern Baptist Convention Charter	55
Southern Baptist Convention Constitution	57

## CONTENTS

Southern Baptist Convention Bylaws	67
Business and Financial Plan of the Southern Baptist Convention	101
Baptist Faith and Message	117
Appendix A: Southern Baptist Convention Presidents	135
Appendix B: Cooperative Program Allocations by State	141
Appendix C: Report of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force	149
Notes	189



## PREFACE

**I**t was June 2006 when I (Amy) walked through a tunnel into the Greensboro Coliseum and first saw the Southern Baptist Convention in action. I watched in awe as a sea of paper ballots rose in the air time and again, and President Bobby Welch led 11,639 messengers through two days of actions that would affect the year to come. It was like watching a symphony. But as a new member of the orchestra, I often wondered what was happening and at times was unsure of what I was doing. I knew I had a great responsibility, and I wanted to approach it with the necessary deliberation.

After those two days, I determined to never stop learning about the processes of Southern Baptist cooperation. In the words of Aaron Sorkin (and perhaps Harry S. Truman), “Decisions are made by those who show up.” But “showing up” must mean more than our mere presence. We come together to make decisions about how we will work together for the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. It must involve more than raising our hands in the air. It must involve our minds and our hearts. When we act, we should seek to understand.

This work is a compilation of questions we have asked ourselves and have heard from others over the last several years.

## *Preface*

It is by no means exhaustive or final. New questions will arise as people continue to discover and learn. And as the Southern Baptist Convention works together in real time, answers may require adjustment or expansion. But as the conversation develops and the mission continues, this work will develop as well.

*SBC FAQs* is a ready reference for first-time messengers and longtime messengers, for students, and for church members in the pew. It is a project that began with a look in the mirror and a desire to answer the questions from over a decade ago of a young Southern Baptist who sought to understand. We truly can do more together than apart, and this is best accomplished by an informed commitment to participation. We hope our readers find answers to their questions. Even more, we hope our readers will be inspired to engage in the process of cooperation more deeply, so that together we may pursue the mission of Christ.

**PART 1**

**FAQs**





## **What is the Southern Baptist Convention?**

The Southern Baptist Convention is a body of people who are members of churches that have chosen to participate in cooperation with one another. The Convention's purpose is "to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad and any other objects such as Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

## **How did the Southern Baptist Convention begin?**

The Southern Baptist Convention began in Augusta, Georgia, on May 8, 1845. Its stated intent was to be "for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intention of our constituents by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the denomination for the propagation of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> On December 27, 1845, the General Assembly of the State of Georgia acted to incorporate the Southern Baptist Convention so that it could hold property, make its own bylaws, and participate in any business transactions. The act again stated that this was "for the purpose of eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians for the propagation of the Gospel."<sup>3</sup>

## *SBC FAQs*

The formation of the SBC was in response to the churches of the General Missionary Convention of the United States, who had struggled with the issue of slavery as the collective conscience of the nation was splitting into pieces on the eve of the Civil War. As the division between the North and the South was growing wider, the General Board faced the question of whether it was appropriate to appoint slave owners as missionaries. Pressure from both sides built until there was an unavoidable impasse. The churches of the South submitted James Reeves as a missionary candidate for consideration as a test case. They had already secured the funds for his salary from individuals in the South, so they only needed the board's approval. The General Board chose not to respond with any ruling, and in their silence there was no appointment. While they still did not articulate a direct ruling against slave owners, this nonaction spoke volumes to Southerners.<sup>4</sup>

The committee that met in Augusta insisted that this lack of approval was a deviation from the original intent of the General Missionary Convention, and that the requirements for missionary service were stricter than they had previously been. The Triennial Convention of the General Board had originally advocated for "the principle of a perfect equality of members, from the South and the North." Under its constitution, the standards for missionary service were full membership in a church of the denomination and full evidence of a Christian life. The committee believed that the General Board's decision (or lack thereof) amounted to a change in policy and thought that their only option was to leave the General Missionary Convention of the United States and form their own missionary-sending alliance of churches.<sup>5</sup>

## PART 1: FAQs

While the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have since expressed painful regret over the root circumstances,<sup>6</sup> they have also affirmed a commitment to the denomination's stated purpose, the Great Commission. Southern Baptists of the twenty-first century must necessarily acknowledge the reality of their beginnings, but they must also be ready to move forward in action with open eyes to the stated purpose for cooperation—the propagation of the Gospel.

### **What is a convention, and how does it work?**

A convention is one form of a deliberative assembly. It is a large group of individuals, typically serving as representatives of smaller groups, who come together at a certain appointed time to make specific decisions. It only exists at the time that it is officially called into session. *Robert's Rules of Order* defines a convention as “an assembly of delegates . . . chosen, normally for one session only, as representatives of constituent units or subdivisions of a much larger body of people in whose name the convention sits and acts.”<sup>7</sup> In this case, the Southern Baptist Convention is composed of what it calls *messengers*, who have been sent by cooperating churches. When the messengers convene, they act as a body.

A convention only exists for a fixed amount of days, which constitute a session. In accordance with its bylaws, the Southern Baptist Convention lasts two days, currently opening on Tuesday morning and adjourning on Wednesday evening. The Committee on Order of Business will present an agenda for consideration and approval by the messengers. The agenda must include certain elements that strike a balance of inspiration

## *SBC FAQs*

and motivation to Southern Baptists with accountability and the opportunity for democratic process: a Convention sermon, the President's message, Committee reports, resolutions, and the introduction of motions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Who are the messengers?**

Messengers are those individuals who actually compose the Southern Baptist Convention at each respective meeting. The term was first used to describe delegates to associational meetings of General Baptists in England as far back as the eighteenth century,<sup>9</sup> and continued throughout the history of Baptists even as they formed different groups in different locations. Today, they are not delegates in the traditional sense because no authority is *delegated* to them by anyone. James L. Sullivan described them as “two way” messengers: “They go as voices of interest and concern from the churches *to* a Southern Baptist Convention. Once that Convention is over, they then become voices of communication *for* the Convention to the membership of the churches which have sent them.”<sup>10</sup>

There are very specific parameters for who serves as a messenger to the Southern Baptist Convention. The calculation method and corresponding number of messengers has varied throughout the years, but the current practice is straightforward.

Each cooperating church may send a minimum of two messengers from their membership. Beyond those two, cooperating churches may send additional messengers according to a formula that allows for two options. One option is that for every full percent of a church's undesignated receipts in the preceding fiscal

## PART 1: FAQs

year contributed through the Cooperative Program, through the Convention's Executive Committee for Convention causes, and/or to any Convention entity, a church may send one messenger. The other option is that for every \$6,000 contributed through the above channels, a church may send one messenger. Using either option, a church can send up to ten of these additional messengers, allowing for a maximum total of twelve.<sup>11</sup>

Messengers must provide proper credentials in one of three forms. A church can register a messenger electronically before the meeting and receive an official Southern Baptist Convention registration document. A church can provide a letter signed by the pastor, clerk, or moderator of the church that certifies the messenger's election. A messenger can also provide verification through fax, email, or some other document (electronic or physical) from their church that is deemed reliable by the Credentials Committee.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever form is used, it must demonstrate that a local church that meets the standards for cooperation has clearly selected the messenger.

### **What determines if a church cooperates with the SBC?**

Autonomy of the local church means that a church chooses to voluntarily cooperate with other churches as a part of the Southern Baptist Convention. There is no requirement to attend the annual meeting, and failure to do so does not change the status of a church. There are, however, three standards of cooperation that a church must meet in order to seat messengers.

**A church in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention:**

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1. Has a faith and practice that closely identifies with the Convention's adopted statement of faith.
2. Has formally approved its intention to cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention.
3. 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.

1. A cooperating church has a faith and practice that closely identifies with the Baptist Faith and Message. While this phrase may seem open to interpretation, the SBC Constitution gives only one specific example. It clearly states that churches who affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior would be deemed not in cooperation with the Convention.
2. A church desiring to cooperate must declare its intention to do so in some formal way. The Convention requests an annual report, and the Constitution names this as an appropriate example of this official declaration.
3. All cooperating churches must contribute financially in some way. They can do this through the Cooperative Program (which goes through their respective state conventions), through the Executive Committee to be used for Convention causes, or through a direct contribution to any entity. There is no minimum threshold for cooperation.

## PART 1: FAQs

### Ways to Give:

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1. Through the Cooperative Program
2. Directly through the Executive Committee to be used for Convention causes
3. To any entity

In the event that a church does not meet the first standard, the Convention or the Executive Committee must act to formally deem a church not in cooperation. Standards 2 and 3 are dependent on individual churches acting to declare their intentions and to contribute financially each year.<sup>13</sup>

### What is the relationship between the Convention and the churches?

The Southern Baptist Convention is not a hierarchical religious denomination. It is a Convention of churches that choose to cooperate with one another. This is in keeping with the Baptist distinctive of local church autonomy, and stated clearly in Article IV of the SBC Constitution: “While independent and sovereign in its own sphere, the Convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, associations, or Convention.”<sup>14</sup>

Autonomous churches have complete control over their own affairs. No entity outside of those local believers has influence over that church and what it does. Hierarchy would imply that someone has authority over a congregation without being

## *SBC FAQs*

a member. The ultimate authority in a body of believers is the congregation itself.

Cooperation means that a church chooses to be in friendly relationship and to be sympathetic with the purposes and work of the Convention. It chooses to stand with all the other churches and contribute resources together toward common values and goals. Churches in friendly cooperation are those who have a faith and practice that closely identifies with the Convention's statement of faith, who have formally approved the intention to cooperate, and who have made undesignated financial contributions.

It is more appropriate to say that the relationship between the Convention and the churches is actually the relationship of the churches to the Convention. The churches support the Convention, which is composed of messengers. This means that the Convention answers to the churches, not the churches to the Convention. The autonomy of the local church is upheld in this model of the Convention carrying out the corporate wishes of the churches.

It is possible for a church to fall out of cooperating status with the Convention if it does not meet the prescribed standards. However, this does not mean that the Convention has any authority over the affairs of the local congregation. It simply means that the church no longer has a share of authority in the affairs of the Convention.

The priority of local church autonomy also means that churches are free to choose their level of participation in Convention affairs. They can send no messengers or they can send a full slate. They can engage in the cooperative process minimally by simply sending funds or more fully by their members



## PART 1: FAQs

serving on boards or committees. But it should be understood that the level of engagement determines the level to which a church has a voice in what use is made of their resources.

### **Who governs the Southern Baptist Convention?**

When the Convention gathers to do its business, no single messenger carries more authority or privilege than another. Every vote carries the same weight, everyone sits under the same rules, and every individual has the opportunity to use his or her voice. There are messengers who serve in specific capacities, but those roles can still be traced back to the deliberative body as a whole, either by messengers directly electing an individual to serve or by the Convention affirming a set of nominations.

The Southern Baptist Convention does not rule from the top down. Rather, it is a cooperative effort of the churches that does its business from the bottom up. The most important person in the Southern Baptist Convention is the individual messenger, and when the deliberative assembly gathers, the denomination is doing its most important work: the work that determines the future of its cooperative ministries.

### **What do the messengers do when they gather?**

The messengers work collectively to exercise the will of the body as a whole. However, it would be difficult for the messengers to direct every individual decision for every entity. A representative system must be employed to oversee the distribution

## *SBC FAQs*

of resources and daily operations of denominational work on behalf of the churches. This representative system happens in multiple ways.

First, the messengers elect officers—a president, a first and a second vice president, a recording secretary, and a registration secretary. There are no specific qualifications for these roles. They may be held by vocational ministers or by laypeople, by young or old, by men or women. These roles have traditionally been held by pastors, but also by state convention leaders and occasionally denominational entity leaders. Therefore, the officers are typically those who have had significant experience in vocational ministry. This demographic tendency is not dictated by any rules in the constitution or bylaws, but rather by the will of the people.

There are term limits for the office of president only, with the stipulation that the president may serve only two years consecutively. It is permissible for a former president to return to office after at least one year has passed, although this is not typical in the modern era.<sup>15</sup>

Messengers also approve bylaw changes and the annual operating budget, elect entity trustees as recommended by the Committee on Nominations, and any special business that arises. Trustees guide and govern entities on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Executive Committee represents the greater body throughout the year. But the task to approve those board and committee members maintains the active role of the messengers in the Convention's governance. They trust their representatives with leadership of entities, but they do not have to do so blindly. When they raise their ballots, they are approving of the men and women who will manage their resources according to their prescribed assignments.

## PART 1: FAQs

### **What does the Southern Baptist Convention president do?**

The messengers of the Convention elect a president every year to perform assigned tasks and to lead within a system of checks and balances. First, the president appoints a number of groups to serve at the annual meeting: a Committee on Committees,<sup>16</sup> a Committee on Resolutions,<sup>17</sup> a Credentials Committee to review and rule upon any questions that may arise in registration,<sup>18</sup> a group of tellers to tabulate votes for all elections,<sup>19</sup> and a team of Convention parliamentarians to assist with procedural questions.<sup>20</sup> Each of these groups plays a specific role in the two-day meeting, and each must be appointed every year. The president does not need Convention approval for these appointments—the approval of the Convention is given in advance when they elect the president.

Second, the president presides over the meeting itself, working with the Committee on Order of Business and the parliamentarians to ensure that all business is carried out. Leadership of the meeting is done in service to the messengers to help them carry out their will in the allotted time for each annual session. The president also would preside over any special called meetings, although that is a rare occurrence.

Third, the president serves on a number of boards and committees by virtue of the position, including entity trustee boards, the Executive Committee,<sup>21</sup> and the Committee on Order of Business.<sup>22</sup> The president of the Southern Baptist Convention also typically serves throughout the year to inspire and cast vision for the churches, as well as to represent the Southern Baptist Convention in the public eye. This often includes preaching at

## *SBC FAQs*

churches across the nation, speaking at state convention meetings and other events, meeting with government officials, and speaking to the media on behalf of the denomination. The president also serves as a fraternal messenger to the National Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches USA.<sup>23</sup>

### **What is the role of the other officers of the Southern Baptist Convention?**

The SBC has a first vice president and a second vice president. Vice presidents serve to assist the president in various ways. They consult with the president on appointments to the Committee on Committees, the Credentials Committee, and the Committee on Resolutions, as well as Convention parliamentarians. In the event that the president cannot serve a full term, the first vice president would take over those responsibilities, and the second vice president would take the position of first vice president. Often during the annual meeting, one or both vice presidents may preside during a session to assist the president.

The recording secretary maintains the records of the actions of the Southern Baptist Convention, which can be viewed in the *Book of Reports* and the *SBC Annual*. This person also serves on the SBC Executive Committee, and is the one who officially notifies all committee and board members of their appointments. This job is important because of the need for precise records for both legal and historical purposes.

The registration secretary supervises the Credentials Committee in reviewing any questions concerning messenger credentials, reports to the Convention the number of registered

## PART 1: FAQs

messengers, supervises tellers in the tabulation of votes, and announces election and voting results to the Convention. This role is important for ensuring integrity in all decision-making processes.

The president of the Executive Committee serves as treasurer of the Convention. This is not a position that is elected each year.

### **What does the Executive Committee do?**

The Executive Committee handles the administration of fiduciary decisions and governance of assets on behalf of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. It is a committee that essentially represents and speaks for the Convention when it is not in session.

When matters arise that an entity or agency is not already addressing, the Executive Committee acts for the Southern Baptist Convention. For example, it acts on behalf of the Convention in a legal sense with respect to transfers of property or assets. It receives all funds from the churches through the state conventions, and disburses those funds to the appropriate agencies through the Cooperative Program. It also handles all planning for the SBC Annual Meeting, recommending times and locations, making changes as necessary, and handling any contracts with cities and properties that will host the meeting.

The Executive Committee advises on questions of cooperation among entities, as well as between state conventions and national entities. It maintains the organization manual, which defines each entity's responsibilities, both to clarify duties and to protect against overlapping assignments. It also publicizes the

## *SBC FAQs*

Southern Baptist Convention and its entities through traditional marketing avenues, as well as its news service, Baptist Press, “to interpret and publicize the overall Southern Baptist ministry.”<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this is to tell the story of the entire picture of the Convention while supporting the work of every entity and ministry.

There is not a hierarchical relationship with any boards. The Executive Committee communicates with the trustees of entities and makes recommendations to them (as well as to the Convention as a whole), but does not have authority to control or direct any actions of those entities. Its role of communicating and recommending is important because of its perspective. Trustees of entities see the intricate details of their respective organizations. Members of the Executive Committee see the bigger picture and how all organizations are working together, and can counsel from that point of view. Ultimately, both the trustees and the Executive Committee members are accountable to the Convention as a whole. The Executive Committee maintains a regular exchange of meeting minutes with SBC entities, which helps keep this open flow of communication.

The Executive Committee proposes the operating budget of the Southern Baptist Convention and presents it to the messengers for approval each year. It also sets the format for the entities to report on their ministry plans, their financial data, and their accomplishments each year. These reports are vital for the churches to know what happens with their shared resources. Continuity in reporting is vital, and this process ensures that consistency across all agencies.<sup>25</sup>

## PART 1: FAQs

### **What is the difference between the SBC president and the Executive Committee president?**

The president of the Southern Baptist Convention is elected by the messengers for a one-year term, with the responsibility to appoint committees and preside over deliberations when the Convention is in session. This is a voluntary position, and its duties are performed in addition to the president's daily responsibilities. The president of the Southern Baptist Convention is often a pastor, but that is not required. Entity employees have occasionally filled this role, the most recent instance being 2000–2001, when Dr. Paige Patterson served two terms as SBC president while also serving as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. While it is rare, messengers could even elect a layperson as president.

The Executive Committee president is elected specifically by the Executive Committee for an indefinite period of time to serve in an administrative role. This individual serves as convention treasurer, manages the resources of the Convention, oversees the Cooperative Program, and maintains an office to execute daily responsibilities on behalf of the Convention. It is a full-time, salaried position, and the president manages a small staff to assist in administration.<sup>26</sup>

### **What is the Cooperative Program?**

The Cooperative Program is the Southern Baptist Convention's giving plan. An individual, a church, or a state convention may

## *SBC FAQs*

designate funds to a specific entity or effort at any time,<sup>27</sup> but the Cooperative Program is a way of distributing undesignated funds among the ministries of the SBC.

In the early years, the entities of the Southern Baptist Convention were each responsible for raising their own support in a societal approach to missions. Agencies campaigned for funds from the same constituencies. Overlapping financial requests led to budget deficits, which taxed the churches and the system as a whole.

After decades of this system, in 1919 the SBC launched the 75 Million Campaign to raise money for all Southern Baptist causes in one undesignated fund-raising campaign. It included all missions and ministries at both state and national levels, and received pledges from individuals and churches. The campaign did not ultimately reach its goal, leaving SBC entities in debt as pledges went unfulfilled. But in spite of the financial setback, this campaign laid the foundation for broader cooperation, and the Convention officially launched the Cooperative Program in 1925.

The Cooperative Program begins with individuals and ends with ministries. Church members give financial resources to their local congregations. Churches then forward a portion of their budget to their state convention. State conventions designate a percentage of total monies received to pass on to the Southern Baptist Convention. The messengers of each state convention decide what their respective percentages will be. Money that stays within the state is disbursed among state and local ministries.

When the Southern Baptist Convention receives funds from state conventions across the country, it immediately disburses



## PART 1: FAQs

them to SBC entities according to an established formula. Currently, that formula is:

- International Mission Board—50.41 percent
- North American Mission Board—22.79 percent
- Southern Baptist seminaries (distributed according to a formula based on full-time enrollment of Southern Baptist students)—21.92 percent
- SBC Operating Budget (managed by the Executive Committee)—2.99 percent
- Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission—1.65 percent
- Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives—0.24 percent<sup>28</sup>

The Executive Committee has provided an electronic tool (<http://cpcalc.sbc.net/calc/>) that allows Southern Baptist churches to calculate the disbursement of their Cooperative Program donations and see how their funds will be distributed. This calculator allows anyone to choose their respective convention, enter a gift amount, and immediately see a breakdown of allocations to their state's ministries as well as to national entities.

### **What is Great Commission Giving?**

Great Commission Giving is a category that includes Cooperative Program contributions plus any designated funds given to Southern Baptist causes outside of the Cooperative Program. Examples of outside causes would be the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, state missions offering, associational giving, or a designated gift

## *SBC FAQs*

to a seminary. In past years, churches reported their giving in the Annual Church Profile submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention through their respective state conventions. When a church reported only Cooperative Program giving, but had actually donated much more through designated avenues, they were unable to communicate the full extent of their giving and support for Southern Baptist missions and ministries. The call to a “Great Commission Resurgence” in 2009 and 2010 ultimately led to the establishment of this category.

While the Cooperative Program remains the primary vehicle for churches to support the SBC agencies, the category of Great Commission Giving provides a fuller way for churches to report the total amount that they give, and for the Southern Baptist Convention to honor those gifts. The Great Commission Resurgence (GCR) Task Force addressed this balance in their presentation to the 2010 Southern Baptist Convention. They affirmed the Cooperative Program and called upon Southern Baptists at every level to support it. They called on the churches to increase their giving. They called on state conventions to increase the percentage of funds they passed on to the SBC. They called upon every SBC entity to maximize their resources for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. They called on all Southern Baptists to increase their giving in every way possible—to reevaluate their budgets, to steward their wealth more, and to support the Cooperative Program like never before. But even as they spoke of increases, they also encouraged the celebration of every dollar given, including designated gifts to Southern Baptist causes.

When the task force presented its recommendations, there was discussion on the floor about how to officially prioritize the

## PART 1: FAQs

two categories. The committee worked with the messengers to amend their official recommendation, which in its final form requested the Executive Committee “to consider recommending to the Southern Baptist Convention the adoption of the language and structure of Great Commission Giving as described in this report in order to enhance and celebrate the Cooperative Program and the generous support of Southern Baptists channeled through their churches and to continue to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our outreach.”<sup>29</sup>

### **How are the categories of the Cooperative Program and Great Commission Giving reported?**

When churches report statistics (e.g., attendance, membership, baptisms, giving) to their local associations or state conventions, all of this data goes to the Southern Baptist Convention via LifeWay Research to compile the Annual Church Profile.

After the GCR Task Force report passed in 2010, the question remained concerning precisely how churches should prioritize their giving and then report that data.

In 2011, the Executive Committee recommended, and the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, adopted that:

- The Convention respectfully request all Southern Baptist churches to make or retain the Cooperative Program as the principal component of their missions-giving strategy, and

## *SBC FAQs*

- The Convention respectfully request all Southern Baptist churches strive to meet a goal of increasing their Cooperative Program gifts by 2.5 percent of undesignated gifts by the end of the 2013 calendar year, and
- The Convention respectfully request LifeWay to retain the current category and definition of “Total Mission Expenditures” in its Annual Church Profile (intended as a comprehensive category), and add a new ACP category called “Great Commission Giving,” which category should only include contributions to any Baptist association, Baptist state convention, and causes and entities of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>30</sup>

### **How many Southern Baptist entities are there?**

There are currently eleven entities. The Southern Baptist Convention originally had two entities, the Foreign Mission Board and the Board of Domestic Missions. Over time, the Convention established boards and agencies for theological education, church resources, and public engagement. At the present time, the Southern Baptist entities are:

- International Mission Board
- North American Mission Board
- LifeWay Christian Resources
- GuideStone Financial Resources
- Southern Baptist seminaries:
  - The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
  - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

## PART 1: FAQs

- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

### **What is the International Mission Board?**

Founded in 1845, the International Mission Board (IMB) exists to help the churches reach the world for Christ. The SBC established it under the name Foreign Mission Board with the purpose of cooperation—“one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel.” The IMB’s stated mission is “to assist the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to be on mission with God in penetrating the unevangelized world outside the United States and Canada with the Gospel and making Christ known among all people.”<sup>31</sup>

While all missions and ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention are important to the churches, the International Mission Board receives the majority of funds collected through the national portion of the Cooperative Program. Christ’s mandate to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth continues to be the driving force behind the support of the International Mission Board.

The IMB has four ministry assignments:

1. Assist churches by evangelizing persons, planting Baptist churches, and nurturing church planting movements among all people groups outside the United States and Canada; and, provide specialized, defined,

## *SBC FAQs*

and agreed upon assistance to the North American Mission Board in assisting churches to reach unreached and underserved people groups within the United States and Canada.

2. Assist churches in sending and supporting Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers by enlisting, equipping, and enabling them to fulfill their calling.
3. Assist churches and partners to mobilize Southern Baptists to be involved in international missions through praying, giving, and going.
4. Assist churches in fulfilling their international missions task by developing global strategies, including human needs-based ministries and providing leadership, administrative support, and financial accountability for implementation of these strategies.<sup>32</sup>

The International Mission Board is located in Richmond, Virginia. There are currently over 3,600 IMB missionaries stationed around the world.

## **What is the North American Mission Board?**

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) works with local associations and state conventions to reach North America with the Gospel of Christ. The organization has existed in some form since the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC established the Board of Domestic Missions in 1845. In 1874, it became known as the Home Mission Board. In 1997, the Home Mission Board merged with the Radio and Television

## PART 1: FAQs

Commission and the Brotherhood Commission to become the North American Mission Board.

The stated mission of the North American Mission Board is: “to work with churches, associations and state conventions in mobilizing Southern Baptists as a missional force to impact North America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism and church planting.”<sup>33</sup>

NAMB has six ministry assignments:

1. Assisting churches in planting healthy, multiplying, evangelistic Southern Baptist churches in the United States and Canada; and providing specialized, defined, and agreed upon assistance to the International Mission Board in assisting churches to plant churches for specific groups outside the United States and Canada.
2. Assisting churches in the ministries of evangelism and making disciples.
3. Assisting churches by appointing, supporting, and assuring accountability for missionaries serving in the United States and Canada.
4. Assisting churches by providing missions education and coordinating volunteer missions opportunities for church members.
5. Assisting churches by providing leadership development.
6. Assisting churches in relief ministries to victims of disaster and other people in need.<sup>34</sup>

Current major initiatives include the Send Network, a church-planting strategy with five focus regions and thirty-two Send cities; Replant, a strategy for church revitalization; God’s Plan for Sharing (GPS), an evangelism initiative that aims to see

## *SBC FAQs*

“Every Believer Sharing, Every Person Hearing” by 2020; and Send Relief, a compassion ministry to reach people “with practical help and the hope of the Gospel.”<sup>35</sup>

The North American Mission Board is located in Alpharetta, Georgia.

### **How does LifeWay Christian Resources relate to the SBC?**

LifeWay Christian Resources began in 1891 as the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The original charter gave it the ministry assignment of publishing Sunday school literature. LifeWay Christian Resources does not receive funds from the Cooperative Program, but does contribute financially to SBC ministries. It does, however, function as a full SBC entity. Today, its mission is: “to assist churches and believers to evangelize the world to Christ, develop believers, and grow churches by being the best provider of relevant, high quality, high value Christian products and services.”<sup>36</sup>

LifeWay has ten ministry assignments:

1. Assist churches in the development of church ministries.
2. Assist churches in ministries to college and university students.
3. Assist churches with Christian schools and homeschool ministries.
4. Assist churches in ministries to men and women.
5. Assist churches through the operation of conference centers and camps.



## PART 1: FAQs

6. Assist churches through the publication of books and Bibles.
7. Assist churches through the operation of LifeWay Christian Stores.
8. Assist churches through church architecture consultation and services.
9. Assist churches in capital fund-raising.
10. Assist churches by conducting research and compiling statistics.<sup>37</sup>

LifeWay Christian Resources is located in Nashville, Tennessee.

### **How does GuideStone Financial Resources relate to the SBC?**

GuideStone's stated mission from the Southern Baptist Convention is: "to assist the churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available retirement plan services, life and health coverage, risk management programs, and personal and institutional investment programs."<sup>38</sup>

GuideStone has five ministry assignments:

1. Assist churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available retirement plan programs for their ministers and employees.
2. Assist churches, denominational entities, other evangelical ministry organizations, and like-minded individuals

## *SBC FAQs*

by making available life and health coverage and risk management programs.

3. Assist churches and denominational entities through relief to Southern Baptist ministers and Southern Baptist denominational employees.
4. Assist churches, denominational entities, other evangelical ministry organizations, and like-minded investors by making available a personal investment program to their ministers and employees and their spouses, and to like-minded investors.
5. Assist churches and denominational entities by making available institutional investment services through cooperative agreements with state Baptist foundations (or state Baptist conventions where no foundation exists) and the Southern Baptist Foundation. Assist other evangelical ministry organizations by making available institutional investment services.<sup>39</sup>

GuideStone Financial Resources is located in Dallas, Texas.

### **What are our seminaries, and why do we have six?**

There are six Southern Baptist seminaries. Originally, education was not a mission of the Convention, but soon after its establishment, many Southern Baptists wanted to provide a training option for their members in preparation for ministry. In 1859, the religion department at Furman University took steps to form The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The four professors who formed the first faculty—James P. Boyce, John A.

## PART 1: FAQs

Broadus, William Williams, and Basil Manly Jr.—appealed to the Southern Baptist Convention to recognize them and provide support, as well as a governing board of trustees.<sup>40</sup> This began the SBC’s provision of theological education.

Southern Baptists acquired or established five more seminaries over the next century—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1908; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1917; Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention (GS) in Mill Valley, California, in 1944; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, North Carolina, in 1950; and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS) in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1956. In 2016, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary relocated to Ontario, California, and the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention approved changing its name to Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention (GS).

Originally, these schools largely served their respective geographic regions. Today, students select an institution for a variety of reasons, and there are signs of institutional health among all six. According to 2015–2016 data from the Association of Theological Schools, half of the top ten largest seminaries in the United States are Southern Baptist institutions.<sup>41</sup>

The mission for theological education in the Southern Baptist Convention is: “to prepare God-called men and women for vocational service in Baptist churches and in other Christian ministries throughout the world through programs of spiritual development, theological studies, and practical preparation in ministry.”<sup>42</sup>

## *SBC FAQs*

The seminaries share five ministry assignments:

1. Assist churches by programs of prebaccalaureate and baccalaureate theological education for ministers.
2. Assist churches by programs of master's level theological education for ministers.
3. Assist churches by programs of professional doctoral education for ministers.
4. Assist churches by programs of research doctoral education for ministers and theological educators.
5. Assist churches through the administration of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.<sup>43</sup>

Together, the leaders of all six institutions serve as the Council of Seminary Presidents, which oversees the ministries of Seminary Extension and the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

## **What is the role of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission?**

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission is the smallest entity of the SBC, in terms of both staff and budget.

The stated mission of the ERLC is: “to assist the churches by helping them understand the moral demands of the Gospel, to apply Christian principles to moral and social problems and questions of public policy, and to promote religious liberty in cooperation with the churches and other Southern Baptist entities.”<sup>44</sup>

## PART 1: FAQs

Formal attempts to engage in public policy began in earnest at the denominational level near the turn of the twentieth century. For decades, Southern Baptists worked through resolutions and appointed committees and unpaid commissions to carry out the work of both equipping and sometimes representing the churches on issues of social and civic concern.

In 1947, among the Executive Committee recommendations at the annual meeting in St. Louis was the allocation of operating budget funds for what was known at that time as the Social Service Commission.<sup>45</sup> In 1953, the name was changed to the Christian Life Commission.<sup>46</sup>

In 1997, the Executive Committee recommended that the Southern Baptist Convention change the name of the Christian Life Commission to the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), with an expanded assignment that included the promotion of religious liberty.<sup>47</sup>

The ERLC has four ministry assignments:

1. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.
2. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.
3. Assist churches in their moral witness in local communities.
4. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.<sup>48</sup>

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission has its headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, with additional offices in Washington, DC.

## **What is the Woman's Missionary Union?**

The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) is an auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention, not an entity. This means that it serves as a support to the SBC, but the SBC does not govern it.

Southern Baptist women founded the WMU in 1888 to educate and support the efforts of the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board.

The WMU does not receive stated mission or ministry assignments from the SBC. However, it does set its own program statement: "Woman's Missionary Union assists churches in developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy of missions in order that a church can fulfill its total mission in the world. Woman's Missionary Union challenges Christian believers to understand and be radically involved in the mission of God."<sup>49</sup>

The self-designated ministries of the WMU are:

1. Assist churches in the development of Woman's Missionary Union organizations.
2. Assist churches in Christian development for women in missions.
3. Assist churches through the publication and distribution of magazines and products.<sup>50</sup>

The WMU also promotes a mission-style statement: "We believe in missional living. Pray for missions. Engage in mission action and witnessing. Learn about missions. Support missions. Develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle. Participate in the work of the church and denomination."<sup>51</sup>

The WMU has its headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama.

## PART 1: FAQs

### How are entities governed?

A board of trustees governs every Southern Baptist board, institution, or commission. The trustees establish bylaws, elect officers, transact business, and directly oversee the executive heads of their respective entities.

Boards have the full authority to direct the entity they are serving. The messengers gathered at the annual meeting can make requests of boards, but they cannot collectively overrule any actions taken. The Executive Committee manages ministry assignments and assists as boards work with each other in cross-agency matters, but cannot interfere in the internal affairs of a specific entity.

The messengers are, however, directly involved in the selection of all individual board members through the nomination process. When the Committee on Nominations presents its full slate of nominees, the messengers are free to debate, make amendments (substituting eligible nominees one name at a time), and register their approval through a vote. In some cases, the Convention gathered may approve or reject the removal of a trustee if requested to do so by that board (this is dependent upon the processes laid out in individual entity charters).

This maintains a system of checks and balances. The Convention cannot possibly direct the daily workings of an entity when it meets only two days a year, with thousands of messengers participating in decisions. Boards represent the messengers, and the messengers entrust the boards with management of the entities that come from the Convention's cooperation.

While the Convention cannot direct the daily actions of the trustees, it decides who can be a trustee, and it gives the power to the trustees.<sup>52</sup>

## **What are committees, and how do they function?**

The Southern Baptist Convention does its primary direct work through committees. The committees are intended to reflect the will of the messengers and to expediently carry out the business of the Convention. In addition to the Executive Committee, there are five other primary committees: the Committee on Committees, the Committee on Nominations, the Committee on Resolutions, the Committee on Order of Business, and the Credentials Committee.

The Committee on Committees meets before the annual meeting begins. This committee nominates the Committee on Nominations and any special committees that are authorized during sessions of the Convention. This committee presents its nomination report to the messengers for approval. The SBC president directly appoints the Committee on Committees, and members serve only one time.<sup>53</sup>

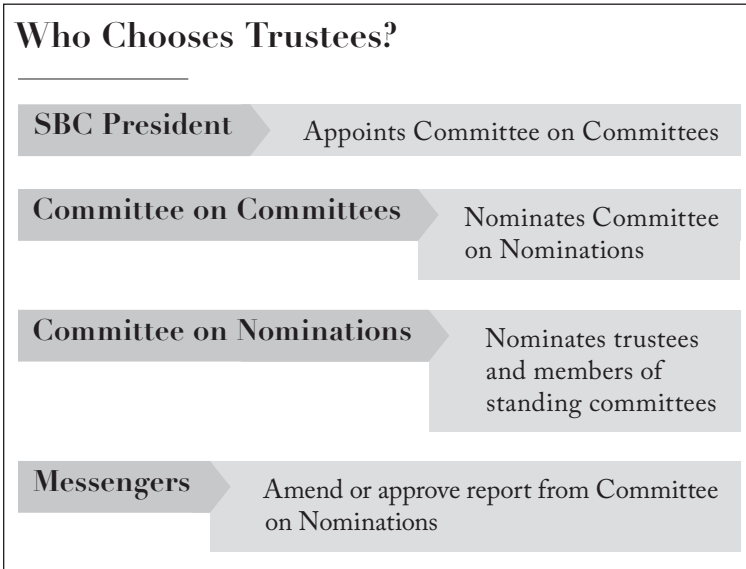
The Committee on Nominations works throughout the year to prepare its nomination report for the annual meeting. This committee is made up of two people from each qualifying state according to SBC Bylaw 30, with one of each pair being a layperson. It plays an important role, nominating the following:

1. Members of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention
2. Directors and trustees of the boards of the Convention
3. Trustees of the institutions of the Convention
4. Trustees of the commissions of the Convention
5. Members of any standing committees (e.g., the Committee on Order of Business)



## PART 1: FAQs

### Who Chooses Trustees?



Every member of the Committee on Nominations must have been a resident of his or her respective state (or affiliated with that convention) for at least three years. This is to ensure that committee members will have an informed knowledge of the people in their state for recommendation. This committee brings their report to the messengers for amendment or approval.<sup>54</sup>

The Committee on Resolutions proposes resolutions for consideration by the messengers. Resolutions must go through this committee in order to be processed. The committee has ten members, three of whom are members of the Executive Committee, and two of whom have served on the Committee on Resolutions the previous year. The committee receives resolutions for consideration until fifteen days before the annual meeting. They will meet immediately before the meeting to

## *SBC FAQs*

consider all submitted resolutions, and potentially to generate resolutions from within. During the annual meeting, at a pre-appointed time, the Committee on Resolutions will present its recommended resolutions to the messengers for debate and consideration. The president directly appoints this committee.<sup>55</sup>

The Credentials Committee serves during the annual meeting to review and rule on any questions that may arise during registration concerning the credentials of messengers. This committee serves an important role: to affirm that a church is in friendly cooperation with the Convention, and to ensure the legality of all seated messengers. The president directly appoints the Credentials Committee, which works most closely with the registration secretary.<sup>56</sup>

The Committee on Order of Business is a standing committee made up of the president of the Convention and six other members. The Committee on Nominations nominates it for approval by the messengers. This committee, while often unseen, plays a crucial role in the management of the two-day Convention. It prepares the agenda for the meeting, making sure that all required business is completed. Messengers vote on the proposed order of business at the beginning of each annual meeting. Once the order has been approved and the meeting begins, the Committee on Order of Business maintains the schedule, ensuring that the Convention stays on track. In the event that business takes a longer time than anticipated, the committee decides whether to recommend extending time for further debate, schedule more discussion for another session, or end the conversation. They administer the electronic microphone system that allows messengers to speak in order and ensure fairness within the rules of debate. They process all motions for

## PART 1: FAQs

disposal, advise the president on whether to schedule debate on the floor for a particular motion, refer a motion to an entity's board of trustees or the Executive Committee, or rule a motion out of order. This committee also recommends the Convention preacher for the subsequent year, as well as the Convention music director. While this committee plays a somewhat technical role, they are vital to the two days when the meeting is in session, and the messengers depend on this small group of people to make certain that the business of the Convention is accomplished. Committee members are elected for three-year terms for continuity. The Committee on Nominations brings nominees for any vacancies on the Committee on Order of Business to the messengers for their approval.<sup>57</sup>

### **What is the role of journalism in Baptist life?**

The story of Southern Baptists circulates through a number of avenues in our technological age. Originally, this took place through a network of independently owned newspapers. Many of the Baptist papers we still read today began before the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention (*Baptist and Reflector*, *Christian Index*, *Biblical Recorder*, *Western Recorder*, etc.). For decades, they functioned as independent organizations, dedicated to communicating their messages to Baptists. Today, in most cases, the state conventions support and offer a degree of oversight to the remaining papers.

The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention funds and manages Baptist Press, the official news service of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Sunday

## *SBC FAQs*

School Board started the Southern Baptist Press Association in 1946 at the request of state convention newspaper editors. The Executive Committee then assumed responsibility for Baptist Press and in 1947 elected C. E. Bryant as director of publicity. News releases came out sporadically in the early days of Baptist Press, and then eventually they were sent out in packets with five to six stories. Today, the news service functions through a website that is updated on a continual basis. State papers reprint articles and opinion pieces as editors choose what fits their readership.

Baptist Press and the state newspapers work together to relate news about events, activities, institutions, and people. They inform Southern Baptists of trends and ongoing conversations. In addition, their archives provide researchers and historians a valuable source for information and identification. While journalists are under the oversight of the Southern Baptist Convention or respective state conventions, they continue to pursue the goal of telling stories of Baptists to Baptists in a fair and straightforward manner.<sup>58</sup>

### **What is the relationship between the SBC and state conventions?**

State conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention maintain an ongoing relationship that is based on mutual support, but without either entity having authority over the other. State conventions exist to serve the churches in their particular state or territory, and they are linked to the SBC through ministry partnerships (e.g., church planting and revitalization efforts, disaster relief, etc.).

## PART 1: FAQs

In 1925, the Cooperative Program established a financial link between the two, as the most customary way to contribute to the CP is for churches to give to their state conventions. State conventions then forward a certain percentage of those funds to the Southern Baptist Convention for distribution among agencies and entities. The state conventions decide the percentages, which range from 15 to 55 percent depending on the state or territory. Most of the state conventions giving at lower percentages are outside of the Bible Belt, with small budgets and large areas to serve, in some sense having large mission fields in themselves. In recent years, there has been a movement across many state conventions to increase the percentage that goes to the SBC, but in every case, the decision is ultimately individual to each state convention.

There are forty-two Baptist conventions throughout the United States. Some territories encompass more than one state, such as the Northwest Baptist Convention or the Baptist Convention of New England. Two states, Texas and Virginia, are home to two Baptist conventions, all four of which contribute at some level to the Cooperative Program, although the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia maintain a closer relationship to the SBC than the Baptist General Convention of Texas or the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

State conventions play a role in establishing regional representation on standing committees and agency boards, according to the total number of members in their churches. (Some entities also make provisions in their bylaws for local trustees, in addition to those designated through this regional representation system.)

## *SBC FAQs*

The Southern Baptist Convention and the state Baptist conventions do not rule one another, but they depend on one another as they both serve their member churches and fuel cooperation for missions.

### **What is the relationship between the SBC and local associations?**

There is no formal relationship between the Southern Baptist Convention and local associations. Many churches are members of both the SBC and their local association, but this is not a necessity. Local associations exist for cooperation among churches in a specific region to serve and minister to the community around them. They often employ directors of missions (also known as associational leaders) to facilitate that work. The Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders often meets during the SBC Annual Meeting, and the North American Mission Board enters into partnerships with many local associations to provide resources and reach local areas.

### **What is the relationship between the SBC and other Baptist denominations?**

While many existing Baptist denominations may trace similar origins, the Southern Baptist Convention possesses no formal working relationship with them. The SBC president represents Southern Baptists at the American Baptist Churches USA and National Baptist Convention annual meetings as a fraternal messenger. If he cannot attend, he may send another officer in

## PART 1: FAQs

his place. In addition, the Convention has the ability to elect fraternal messengers to any other Baptist or religious body.<sup>59</sup>

### **In the SBC Annual Meeting, what are motions and resolutions?**

According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, "A motion is a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action. The proposed action may be of a substantive nature, or it may express a certain view or direct that a particular investigation be conducted and the findings be reported to the assembly for possible further action, or the like."<sup>60</sup>

Regular motions may be made at the designated time in the order of business. Any registered messenger can make a motion. Messengers go one at a time in the order they are recognized and may only introduce a second motion if all others have finished and no one else is seeking the floor who has not made a motion during that session.

Motions must be in order, meaning that as worded they do not conflict with the charter, constitution, or bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention. Motions that deal with the internal operations of an entity are referred to the board of that entity, in keeping with the structure of governance, to dispense with during the year. Depending on the nature of the motion, they may be automatically referred, or the Committee on Order of Business may recommend referral to the boards, to report back the following year with their responses to motions. An automatic referral would be for an issue that legally can only be handled by the trustees of an entity.

## *SBC FAQs*

The Committee on Order of Business may choose to schedule a particular motion (necessarily excluding those that are out of order or must be automatically referred) for debate at a later time during the meeting, or the Convention may instruct the committee to do so by way of a two-thirds vote.

### **Four things can happen to a motion:**

1. Declared out of order
2. Automatic referral to agency
3. Committee recommends referral to agency
4. Discussion and vote by the messengers on the floor

A resolution is a specific type of motion. It is in the structure of a formal statement, typically one that is more complex than a standard motion. For this reason, resolutions must go through a lengthier process than that of simply offering a motion. Messengers submit resolutions in advance, and the Committee on Resolutions makes the official motions in their report. The Convention debates and then either approves or rejects each resolution during the precise time specified in the approved order of business. If a messenger properly submits a resolution that the Committee does not choose to recommend, the Convention may still consider it by a two-thirds vote if time has not expired in the time allowed for the committee's report. Each year, the Convention typically approves ten to twelve resolutions.

Resolutions only reflect the will of a particular Convention in a particular year. They do not speak for all of the churches of



## PART 1: FAQs

### **Resolution Order:**

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**Messengers submit**

**Committee deliberates and makes recommendations**

**Convention amends, approves, or rejects**

the Southern Baptist Convention, but rather for the majority of the messengers gathered on those two days. They are not binding on any church, association, or organization. However, these statements often have lasting public impact.

### **Why do we have a business meeting every year?**

When the SBC was founded in 1845, they adopted the schedule that had been followed by the Triennial Convention, meeting every three years. They only followed this for the first cycle, switching to a biennial meeting in the years leading up to the Civil War. After the Civil War, the SBC began to meet annually, a custom that continues to the present day.<sup>61</sup>

Article XI of the Constitution states that “the Convention shall hold its meetings annually at such time and place as it may choose.” While there has been some question about the need to meet annually, most Southern Baptists have come to depend on its regularity. In 2011, the Executive Committee responded to a motion regarding the feasibility of returning to the practice of biennial meetings:

## *SBC FAQs*

The Executive Committee reports to the Southern Baptist Convention that in its continuing efforts to be economically efficient in fulfilling its duty to “have oversight of the arrangements for the meetings of the Convention” (SBC Bylaw 18E (4)), has closely studied the fiscal implications of the possibility of returning to a pre-1866 [biennial] meeting schedule, but declines to do so for the following reasons:

- Southern Baptists are not a hierarchical group and therefore need to meet annually to discern the will of the messengers through God’s leading to effectively and efficiently facilitate our cooperative mission endeavors to reach a lost and dying world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- The SBC Bylaws and Business and Financial Plan require the publication and presentation of annual ministry, financial, and budgetary reports.
- Southern Baptists have always been a relational people.
- The current annual meeting schedule of the Convention enables messengers the opportunity to facilitate timely consideration and discussion of the interests of the Convention.<sup>62</sup>

In 2013, they responded to a similar motion:

The Executive Committee reports to the Southern Baptist Convention that it has closely studied the implications of the possibility of holding a biannual meeting and declines the recommendation in favor of our current practice of holding an annual meeting to inform

## PART 1: FAQs

Southern Baptists about their missions and ministries, encourage them to reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and conduct the business necessary to facilitate Southern Baptist missions and ministries.<sup>63</sup>

The only exception made for canceling a regular meeting is “in the case of a grave emergency,” which must be decided by the Convention officers, the Executive Committee, and the executive heads of the Convention’s boards and institutions acting in a body. One example of this can be seen in 1943, during the Second World War, when the Executive Committee decided to cancel the upcoming Convention. This was to cooperate with the federal government’s appeal that citizens should conserve travel and transportation resources in support of the war effort.<sup>64</sup>

### **How do states gain representation on boards and committees?**

Representation on boards and committees is related to the number of members of Southern Baptist churches within each state or defined territory. According to particular thresholds, they may file an application for representation at several levels.

When a state or defined territory reaches 15,000 total members in cooperating Southern Baptist churches, an initial application may be filed for representation on the Executive Committee. Each qualified and cooperating state or defined territory automatically has a representing member of the Executive Committee. Greater representation on the Executive

## *SBC FAQs*

Committee is in proportion to the number of total church members. This is calculated according to the following formula in SBC Bylaw 18:

- Any such qualified area: One (1) Executive Committee member
- 250,000 church members: Two (2) Executive Committee members
- 500,000 church members: Three (3) Executive Committee members
- 750,000 church members: Four (4) Executive Committee members
- 1,000,000 or more church members: Five (5) Executive Committee members

Representation of one Executive Committee member is also granted to any areas that do not meet this threshold, “solely for the purpose of providing representation on the Convention’s fiduciary for cooperating areas which are not yet qualified as provided above.” Currently these areas are identified as the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Montana.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, a state that reaches 15,000 total members of cooperating Southern Baptist churches may apply for representation on the Committee on Committees, and the Committee on Nominations. Once they reach 20,000 total members, they can add representation on the International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, and LifeWay. At a total of 25,000 members, they are eligible for representation on GuideStone Financial Resources, the commissions, institutions (seminaries), and standing committees.

## PART 1: FAQs

The applications must be filed with the Executive Committee through the respective state convention president. The Executive Committee considers such requests at their February meeting and prepares them for recommendation to the Southern Baptist Convention at the annual meeting in June.<sup>66</sup>

### **What was the Conservative Resurgence?**

The Conservative Resurgence was a movement in the late twentieth century in the Southern Baptist Convention, which resulted in a shift from institutional theological progressivism to a denomination fully recommitted to a bibliocentric approach to the Christian faith.

This movement employed a grassroots political strategy whereby messengers attended the annual meeting in large numbers, actively participated in the deliberative process, and successfully elected a president who held to biblical inerrancy and committed to make appointments based on that standard. The goal was to restore committees and boards to full conservative membership, with the ultimate intention of hiring only inerrantists as entity heads. This was particularly important in Southern Baptist seminaries, where some had begun to embrace moderate and even liberal theology.

In 1989, when the majority of boards had changed and the conservatives' candidate prevailed in the eleventh consecutive presidential election, it was clear that the resurgence had been successful. The 1990s focused primarily on the changes in Southern Baptist agencies, and the movement culminated in the revision of the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000.

## **What was the Great Commission Resurgence?**

In the spring 2005 issue of the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, Thom Rainer presented the thesis “that the conservative resurgence that began in 1979 in the Southern Baptist Convention has *not* resulted in a greater evangelistic effectiveness in the denomination.”<sup>67</sup>

Two years later, Dr. Rainer contributed a guest column to the *Christian Post* entitled “A Plea for More Civil Discourse.” In that article, he stated: “My prayer is that the conservative resurgence will now grow into a Great Commission resurgence.”<sup>68</sup>

Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, expanded on this idea by presenting a chapel sermon entitled “Axioms of a Great Commission Resurgence.”<sup>69</sup> This sermon called Southern Baptists to pursue denominational health, and sparked a broader conversation among churches and leaders about tangible steps the Convention could take for the future.

At the 2009 SBC Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, messengers authorized the Convention president to appoint a task force to prepare a report and recommendations “concerning how Southern Baptists can work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission.”<sup>70</sup> This task force brought its report to the 2010 annual meeting, and the final report as amended and adopted by the messengers included seven recommendations: the adoption of a mission statement, the adoption of core values for cooperation, requesting the Executive Committee to adopt the category of Great Commission Giving, requesting the Executive Committee

## PART 1: FAQs

to reconsider the ministry assignment of the North American Mission Board, requesting the Executive Committee to reconsider the ministry assignment of the International Mission Board, requesting the Executive Committee to work with the state conventions to develop Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education, and requesting the Executive Committee to consider recommending an SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget that would increase the IMB allocation to 51 percent and decrease the Executive Committee allocation by 1 percent.

In the years since the Great Commission Resurgence Report was adopted, the SBC has fulfilled many of the recommendations, but the charge to a Great Commission Resurgence is still ongoing as Southern Baptists focus their efforts on taking the Gospel to the nations.

### Who is Lottie Moon?

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is well-known among Southern Baptists, as churches promote this annual opportunity to support IMB missionaries around the world. Charlotte Digges Moon, known to most as Lottie, served as a missionary to China. The Foreign Mission Board sent her in 1873 to the province of Shantung. She quickly became well-known throughout the Convention because she was devoted in her correspondence in support of mission work.

In 1887, she began urging Southern Baptist women to create an organization devoted to supporting the work of the mission boards, sparking the creation of the Woman's Missionary Union. That same year, she also suggested a special offering at

## *SBC FAQs*

Christmas specifically for missionaries, above and beyond existing support. Southern Baptist women responded, and that offering continues today, with every dollar going directly to support the work of missionaries on the field. In 1918, the leaders of the WMU decided to call it the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. It is collected in addition to the Cooperative Program, and 100 percent of monies received goes to support overseas work.



*Lottie Moon*

Lottie Moon was passionate in her devotion to the Chinese people and in her call to missions. Her story continues to captivate Southern Baptists today, and serves as an inspiration for the call to take the Gospel to the nations.



## PART 1: FAQs

### Who is Annie Armstrong?

Southern Baptists are familiar with the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering that supports the North American Mission Board, but many do not know the woman for whom it is named. Annie Walker Armstrong was the first corresponding secretary for the Woman's Missionary Union, serving from 1888 to 1906. She took seriously the role of the auxiliary organization to promote missions among Southern Baptists and to advance the work of the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board. During her tenure, she was devoted to the Southern Baptist Convention and worked tirelessly to build networks among denominational entities.



*Annie Armstrong*

Armstrong stepped down from her position in 1906, but continued serving her local church. In 1934, WMU officials

## *SBC FAQs*

named the annual offering for home missions after her, and her legacy continues each spring as Southern Baptists give of themselves to support missions at home. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is a supplement to the Cooperative Program allocation, and 100 percent of monies received goes to support church planters and missionaries in North America.

### **What is the Baptist Faith and Message?**

The Baptist Faith and Message is the confessional statement for the Southern Baptist Convention. It is not required for a denomination to adopt a confessional statement, and in fact the SBC did not have one for the first eighty years of its existence. Entities had confessional statements, but not the organization as a whole.

The Convention drafted and adopted the Baptist Faith and Message in 1925 as a statement of belief in the wake of the growing influence of modernism in America. Subsequently, the statement was revised in 1963, amended in 1998, and fully revised again in 2000.

Messengers to the Convention do not have to sign the Baptist Faith and Message, and churches do not have to formally adopt it as a term of cooperation. Denominational employees are often asked to agree to it as a condition of employment, because they have been entrusted to minister on behalf of the SBC.

While the Baptist Faith and Message is not a formal standard for cooperation, it is a clear statement of position and a way that Southern Baptists communicate their core beliefs. The SBC does its work under the umbrella of that confessional statement as adopted in 2000.