

Navigating the SBC

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION



You've probably heard this before: "We can do more together than we can do apart."

That statement epitomizes the heart and soul of the Southern Baptist Convention, especially since 1925 when M.E. Dodd introduced the Cooperative Program to 5,600 gathered messengers.

And here you are, representing your churches and continuing the legacy of those who journeyed before us. Like our predecessors, you are gathered in the unity of the Gospel and the common purpose of taking the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the nations.

The following pages are offered to help you understand more about how the SBC ecosystem works and its importance to our Kingdom focus. Your service matters, because together we really can do more than we can do apart.

Randy C. Davis, *president and executive director*
Tennessee Baptist Mission Board



I recommend that every pastor, leader, and member of our Baptist congregations read this manual, to educate ourselves regarding the work of our Southern Baptist Convention. It is a precise and objective manual with meaningful historical information regarding the missions work of our beloved denomination.

Magno Roblero, *pastor*
Iglesia Bautista Hispana Ríos de Agua Viva
Springfield, Tennessee



This is a simple and very good summary of how the Southern Baptist Convention is cooperating with churches and different entities to fulfill our mission—the Great Commission. It will give our pastors and church members a good understanding of how the Southern Baptist Convention is at work.

James Kang, *executive director*
Council of Korean Southern Baptist Churches in America



As a Southern Baptist pastor for less than a decade and as a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I have understood, embraced, and loved how God is using the SBC family to enrich my life and ministry. One such example is the orientation book crafted by Rev. Charles Grant. Please read it carefully, and never be afraid to reach out to your fellow Southern Baptist pastors. I have personally discovered these friends are indeed a “band of brothers” on the Lord’s journey with me.

Dewayne Rembert, *pastor*
Flatline Church at Chisholm
Montgomery, Alabama



I encourage you to invest the time to learn more about the Cooperative Program and the greatest missions movement I’ve ever known, the Southern Baptist Convention. This manual is a tremendous tool to help you understand the purpose, structure, function, and cooperation of more than 47,500 diverse congregations in 41 state conventions and approximately 1,100 local associations who serve together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere. As a pastor for more than 36 years in the SBC, I found a home in this mighty missions movement and so can you. Read, learn, and cooperate with us to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere.

Tim Cox, *pastor*
Liberty Baptist Church
Chelsea, Alabama



Navigating the SBC takes the complexity and incredibly broad work of the Southern Baptist Convention and makes it simple to understand for both the new comer to the Convention or seasoned veteran. A leader at every level can easily grasp what it means to be and how to get connected in the Southern Baptist family. This manual will accelerate and advance leader’s path to partnership and participation in the wonderful work of the Great Commission fulfillment we do together. Thanks for the great work!

Daryl Price, *executive director*
Noonday Baptist Association
Marietta, Georgia

Table of Contents

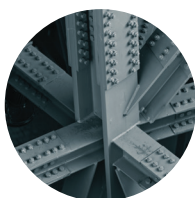
2 Endorsements

5 Introduction



6 Navigating Foundationally

- Foundational Definitions
- Foundational Convictions
- Foundational Scope



10 Navigating Structurally

- Assignments and Value of Entities
- Purpose and Value of State Conventions and Associations
- Relationship of Entities to the Local Church
- Participation & Influence



22 Navigating Cooperatively

- What is it?
- How does it work?
- Why should your church participate in the Cooperative Program (CP)?
- What resources are available to support CP promotion?



26 Navigating Beneficially

- Why should a church be in friendly cooperation with the SBC (join or affiliate)?



28 Navigating Practically

- Affiliation
- Activation

30 Conclusion

30 Appendix

31 Acknowledgments



Introduction

BY CHARLES GRANT

It was the late Reverend Tom Kelly, former director of African American Ministries of the California Southern Baptist Convention, who coined the phrase, “you have to learn to read the menu.” As I moved from church planter and pastor into denominational service, I encountered many African American (AA) pastors along the way who either knew, met, or heard about Rev. Kelly’s catchy slogan. It is vitally important for Southern Baptist churches, pastors, church planters, emerging leaders, and denominational servants to effectively navigate Southern Baptist Convention participation. In the words of Rev. Tom Kelly, effectively navigating the SBC means learning how to read and write the menu. Reading and writing the menu can be defined as understanding the SBC, how it operates, and then actively and effectively participating and having a constructive voice in the SBC. A constructive voice relates to knowing where and how to use your voice in a way that achieves greater participation, representation, articulation, and celebration of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue in our Convention. It is a way to elevate greater inclusion in all of SBC life. This is what effectively navigating the SBC means.

Regarding the next generation of SBC leaders, Jason Thomas, AA Mobilizer for the International Mission Board, further expounds on what reading and writing the menu means. “As we advocate for the full participation of our churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, we model to the next generation the importance of Great Commission cooperation. We owe a great debt to leaders that have come before us. Their investment has given our churches a considerable amount of trust and

access. This allows for the next generation to not only read and write the menu, but also curate new patterns of application to better navigate, participate, and build new systems of impact for the Great Commission.

Learning to effectively navigate the SBC, to read and write the menu, ensures Southern Baptist pastors are cared for financially when they retire, or when the Lord calls them home to glory. Learning to read and write the menu ensures Southern Baptist churches have the necessary discipleship and leadership training resources for maturing the saints. Learning to read and write the menu empowers Southern Baptist churches to equip members for Christian service in all aspects of church life—especially those related to evangelism, missions, and international missions.

The purpose of this Southern Baptist orientation manual is to equip churches to effectively navigate the SBC so they can adequately and productively express their voice for wholesome edification of all people groups in our Convention.

Southern Baptist churches, Great Commission Baptist churches, must also learn to effectively navigate the SBC so we can achieve greater participation, representation, articulation, and celebration from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue in our Convention. As a result, the SBC will realize a closer alignment to that perfect image in heaven—a people of every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9a). This is possible when we learn to effectively navigate the SBC in the following ways: foundationally, structurally, cooperatively, beneficially, and practically.



Navigating Foundationally

The foundation of any construction project is critical whether it be a home, a school, a commercial building, or high-rise building. An organization's strength is only as good as its foundation. This is especially true spiritually. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus concludes The Sermon on the Mount by admonishing his hearer to carefully consider the kind of foundation they build their lives on. Building their lives on obedience to the Word of God yields a firm and secure foundation. Building their lives on disobedience to the Word of God is like building a house on sand. When the storms of life come, it is like building a sandcastle for a house. Sandcastles are easily destroyed. Brothers and sisters in Christ should avoid building a sandcastle life at all costs. Just as there is a foundational way to engage building

a stable life, there is a foundational way to effectively navigate the SBC.

FOUNDATIONAL DEFINITIONS: WHAT IS THE SBC?

Organized in 1845 in Augusta, GA., the Southern Baptist Convention is a network of autonomous (self-governing, self-supporting) churches as well as an annual gathering of representatives (messengers) from cooperating churches who (1) have organized a specific set of cooperating ministries with a defined set of ministries assignments, (2) annually select trustees to govern those ministry entities, and (3) adopt a budget to help fund those entities through a cooperative giving model called the Cooperative Program.

IS IT A CONVENTION OR DENOMINATION?

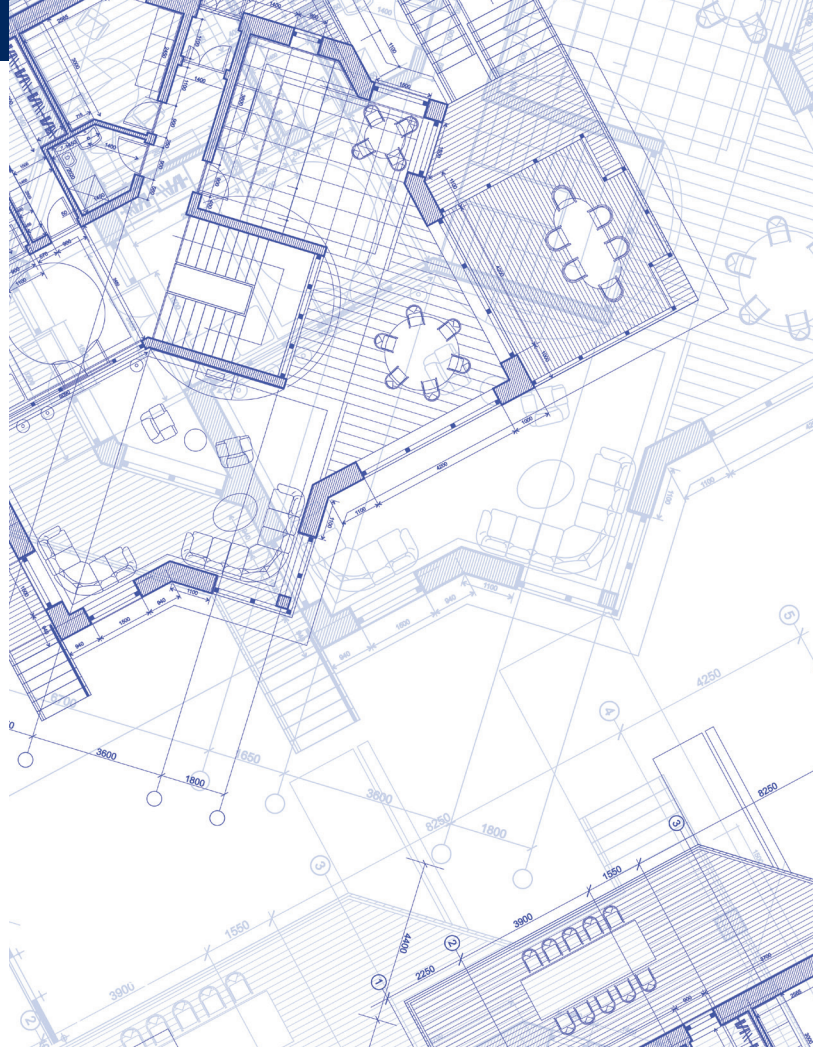
The term “Southern Baptist Convention” refers to both its annual meeting and denomination. There is a distinction that should be made between the words, “convention and denomination.” The annual meetings consist of messengers from every eligible Southern Baptist church. It can be seen as an alliance of churches working in friendly cooperation under the heading “Southern Baptist.” A Southern Baptist church is about as independent as you can get and still be counted as part of a denomination.

Why a denomination? Rev. Chris McNary offers this summary. “Some people feel that denominations are constrictive, and that when you identify with other churches, you suffer compromise. Southern Baptists are sympathetic to these concerns and so firmly hold to the principle of church autonomy and self-rule. The Southern Baptist Convention does not ordain ministers, assign staff to churches, levy contributions to denominational causes, dictate literature and calendar, or assign persons to churches according to place of residence. These are local church matters.

The Southern Baptist Convention gives churches a way to collectively express their convictions and realize their vision. Denominations allow churches to be a part of a larger enterprise, pooling their resources to establish and advance Great Commission work. A denomination can have an impact larger than the sum of the impacts of the individual churches.

The Bible pictures financial and operational cooperation among New Testament churches and virtually all churches cooperate with other churches in some fashion or other. Southern Baptists have merely formalized that spiritually natural phenomenon, and God has blessed their blend of freedom and cooperation.”

Within the Body of Christ, there is a great diversity of gifts, temperament, taste, and experience. Churches benefit from this range of qualities within their own fellowship and across



the Convention. Churches learn from and complement each other. This is not a matter of moral or doctrinal compromise. You cannot believe and do just anything and remain a part of the Southern Baptist fellowship. All Baptist bodies have limits. But within those limits, there is room for significant cooperative diversity.

FOUNDATIONAL CONVICTIONS

The core convictions are the SBC’s purpose, vision, and beliefs. The purpose of the SBC is to “elicit, combine, and direct the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, . . . for the propagation of the Gospel.” The missional vision of the SBC is “to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.”

Southern Baptists believe that the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to mankind, with His ultimate revelation being the Gospel message of

redemption through Jesus Christ. For that reason, Southern Baptists have summarized their biblical convictions in a statement of faith called The Baptist Faith and Message. Southern Baptists are not a creedal people, requiring churches or individuals to embrace a standardized set of beliefs; but we are a confessional people. The BF&M represents the confessional consensus of “certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified.” You can obtain an online copy of the Baptist Faith and Message at bfm.sbc.net.

FOUNDATIONAL SCOPE

While the SBC has more than 50,000 congregations, only about two hundred of them could be counted as “mega-churches.” Many Southern Baptist churches run less than two hundred in weekly worship. No two churches are alike; but there are certain commonalities that bind Southern Baptists together, regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, size, or location. Only when viewed together can one grasp the diversity that is the Southern Baptist Convention. Southern Baptist churches represent a broad range in . . .

- **Size**—very small to very large
- **Culture**—Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and every subculture within each region
- **Age**—youthful church plants to historical organizations
- **Ministry setting**—inner-city, storefront, suburban, small town, open countryside, cowboy, motorcycle
- **Race and ethnicity**—Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Native American, Russian, and numerous other ethnic groups
- **Language**—The Lord is worshipped in more than one hundred languages each Sunday in churches scattered across the United States
- **Worship style**—traditional, contemporary, and everything in between
- **Theological perspective**—all within the framework of historic biblical orthodoxy.

“

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The Southern Baptist Convention has grown to more than 14 million members who worship in more than 50,000 churches and congregations in the United States (2020 reports). Southern Baptists have more than 2,200 domestic missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam, and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring almost 4,000 international missionaries and 247 people groups and urban centers engaged around the world. Working through 1,100+ local associations, 41 state conventions, and the Canadian convention, as well as 11 entities, Southern Baptists share a common bond of basic Biblical beliefs

and a commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

Effectively navigating the SBC means engaging foundationally—understanding its foundational definitions, convictions, and scope. As we participate, it must be built on this foundation, an essential for healthy participation, intentional representation, godly articulation, and unified celebration from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue in our Convention.

There is a second way our SBC family can learn to effectively navigate the SBC. Churches must learn to navigate structurally.



Navigating Structurally



The majority of Southern Baptist ministries are supported by churches with financial contributions given through the Cooperative Program.



The Convention assigns and conducts its work through eleven ministry entities—two mission boards, six seminaries, an ethics and religious liberty commission, a publishing ministry, and a financial resources services ministry—and its Executive Committee. It also works closely with an auxiliary organization, Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU).

While some of these ministries are self-sustaining, the majority are supported by churches with financial contributions through the Cooperative Program. Of the contributions received from churches, 73.2 percent funds missions and church planting and another 22 percent provides ministerial training through our seminaries. Each of these ministry entities exists for the express purpose of assisting churches in the goal of advancing the Gospel.

ASSIGNMENTS AND VALUE OF ENTITIES

The ministry assignments of missions, evangelism, and church planting are facilitated through the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board.



International Mission Board

As the SBC endeavors to accentuate and celebrate the racial and ethnic diversity family, we praise God for partnership with the IMB as we work together to reach the nations. In 2020, IMB recorded 422 new missionaries, 247 new people groups and places engaged, 769,494 persons heard the Gospel, 144, 322 persons became new believers, and 18,380 new churches were planted (Annual Statistical Report 2020 Data-Year (IMB)).

We thank the Lord for the abundant harvest of our international missionaries. As we thank the Lord, we also want to encourage all Southern Baptist churches to further engage in international missions.

What value adds does the IMB provide?

- IMB's pray, give, and go strategy provides a menu of resources to assist your church in developing an international missions culture (imb.org). Pray for missions. The "pray" tab of the imb.org website features a daily list of missionaries and places your church can pray for.
- A church praying for international missionaries sets the stage for a mission's culture in your church. Give to missions. When your church gives to international missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas program, it joins other churches in the slogan, "Together, we transform lives."

- A third step in developing an international mission's culture is going. Go on mission. There are short-term, midterm, and long-term options available for your church.
- A final step in developing an international missions culture is sending. For those interested in long-term service, there's a seven-step process that equips the local church to prepare the candidate in cooperation with IMB. Send on mission.

For more information on the process, visit: imb.org/go/process.



North American Mission Board

In May of 2021, NAMB reported a total of 857 new congregations were added to the SBC in 2020. Of the plants, 60 percent were non-Anglo. The North American Mission Board can add value to any church desiring to plant a new church or develop missional leaders.

What value adds does NAMB provide?

- For those sensing a call to church planting, the church planter pathway provides clarity, strategy, contextualization, coaching and care through a one to three years development process (namb.net/send-network/church-planting/planter-pathway).
- For planters needing ongoing support and churches who want to develop missional leaders, there are articles and events, podcasts, the online multiplication pipeline training (namb.net/send-network/pipeline), and promotional assets.



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- For churches desiring to mobilize members to support a planter or pray about becoming a multiplying church, Send Network provides a very strategic and useful process—pray, participate, plant, and multiply. All of these helpful benefits can be located at namb.net.



GuideStone®

GuideStone Financial Resources

The ministry assignment of GuideStone Financial Resources exists 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. Additionally, GuideStone administers Mission:Dignity, an assistance ministry for retired ministers and their families. Of note, GuideStone receives no Cooperative Program funding.

Christ's followers should desire to be good stewards of the resources the gracious Lord has given them. We should also prepare for the time when we are no longer here. GuideStone focuses on the financial welfare of the messenger of God.

What value adds does Guidestone provide?

- GuideStone's Church Retirement Plan document titled, *Why the Church Retirement Plan Is Right for You*, states the following: "If you receive W-2 taxable income from a church, church-related school, or association affiliated with a Baptist state convention, you're eligible for the 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan for Southern Baptist Churches. Whether you're a full-time, part-time, or bivocational minister, or a full-time or part-time non-ministerial employee, you can participate in the plan." There are additional financial bene

fits provided for those in the plan and participate in the Cooperative Program. These include:

- **Disability income benefit**
- **Survivor's protection benefit**
- **Discretionary benefits** (based on each state convention; this is additional funds added to your retirement account).

The Church Retirement Plan also provides several tax benefits. One of those is housing allowance. Even in retirement, Guidestone specializes in providing this benefit. Eligible ministers for tax purposes can designate up to 100 percent of their retirement benefits as a tax-free housing allowance. For more on The Church Retirement Plan tax benefits, go to Guidestone.org/taxguide. You can enroll in Guidestone's Church Retirement Plan online: EAP.Guidestone.org

Lifeway

Lifeway Christian Resources

The ministry assignment of Lifeway Christian Resources is to honor God and serve churches by designing trustworthy experiences that fuel ministry.

What value adds does Lifeway provide?

- A broad range related to Bibles, Bible studies, books, and digital media
- Ministries to pastors, men, and women as well as age-specific ministries
- Camps and events
- Church resources related to curriculum, VBS, supplies and services.

Lifeway's goal is to disciple everyone. From babies to senior adults, their passion is to place every person in your church on the lifelong path of discipleship. Similar to Guidestone, this entity receives no Cooperative Program funding.



The Six Seminaries

The six Southern Baptist theological seminaries exist 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. This is achieved through Gateway, Midwestern, New Orleans, Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries.

What value adds do the Six Seminaries provide?

- SBC Student Discount; SBC students pay half the rate!
- Every professor wholeheartedly agrees to teach in accordance with *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.
- All seminaries are ATS (Associated Theological Schools) accredited, and all six of them rank among the top 10 within ATS.



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY COMMISSION
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is dedicated to engaging the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and speaking to issues in the public square for the protection of religious liberty and human flourishing. This entity's vision can be summed up in three words: kingdom, culture, and mission. Since its beginnings, the ERLC has been defined around a holistic vision of the kingdom of God, leading the culture to change within the church itself and then as the church addresses the world.

What value does the ERLC provide?

- Relevant articles on contemporary issues related to marriage, parenting, substance abuse, ministry, etc.
- Insightful and impactful podcasts and videos on today's culture
- A board range of initiatives from the Psalm 139 Project, Caring Well Initiative, Global Hunger Relief, and many others.



SBC Executive Committee

The SBC Executive Committee exists to minister to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by acting for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for in a manner that encourages the cooperation and confidence of the churches, associations, and state conventions and facilitates maximum support for worldwide missions and ministries.

It currently has a historic distinction in ratifying its first African-American interim president and CEO in Dr. Willie McLaurin, on February 21, 2022. Since September of 2021, to compliment the three largest ethnic groups in the Convention, the SBC Executive Committee staff has three executive directors of relations and mobilization, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic. Through the Great Commissions Relations and Mobilization Team, the directors are assigned the task of lengthening, strengthening, and deepening relationships in order to mobilize Southern Baptist churches in all of SBC life. They seek to partner, elevate, and accelerate the work of local associations, state conventions, entities, and SBC ethnic fellowships for the purpose of advancing the Great Commission.

What value adds does the SBC EC Provide?

- Partnership with associations, state conventions, entities, and ethnic fellowship networks for elevating and accelerating evangelism, discipleship, ministry, and missions.
- Cooperative Program education, resources, and presentations
- Free stewardship and personal finance discipleship resources
- SBC orientation presentations and resources
- Local church visits for contextualized consultations
- Convention news and podcasts



Woman’s Missionary Union

The Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) is the sole auxiliary of the SBC. It cooperates very closely with the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board to encourage churches to give generously to support missions with contributions through the Cooperative Program and two annual mission offerings. WMU’s website describes their assignment as follows: WMU’s unwavering focus is making disciples of Jesus who live on mission. They carry out this mission by:

- Providing missions discipleship resources for churches and individuals,
- Offering opportunities to engage with compassion ministries, and
- Equipping people through leadership development experiences

PURPOSE AND VALUE OF STATE CONVENTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Recall there are 41 state conventions and roughly 1,100 local associations in the Southern Baptist Convention. Associations and state conventions exist to fulfill the Great Commission by assisting local churches in evangelism, discipleship, missions, and other church related specialty ministries. In all these functions, they work in cooperation with our national entities.

The benefit of a local church affiliating with its local SBC association and state convention are:

- 1) **Associations**—local fellowship, ministry resources, and contextualized attention to ministry;
- 2) **State Conventions**—expanded and additional ministry resources, messenger eligibility for state and national conventions, advancing the convention by serving as trustees of state entities and serving on committees. The SBC encourages financial



Some think the Southern Baptist Convention is a top-down organization. However, each local church is fully autonomous and retains its full authority.

giving to support ministry and missions at your local association and state convention. Recall that some of your financial benefits from GuideStone are only available through your participation in the Cooperative Program at the state convention level.

RELATIONSHIP OF ENTITIES TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

Is the structure of the SBC a top-down organization? Some think the Southern Baptist Convention is a top-down organization. They may think messengers gather annually with the Executive Committee and entities’ presidents along with the Woman’s Missionary Union to instruct and direct state conventions, associations, networks, and the local churches.

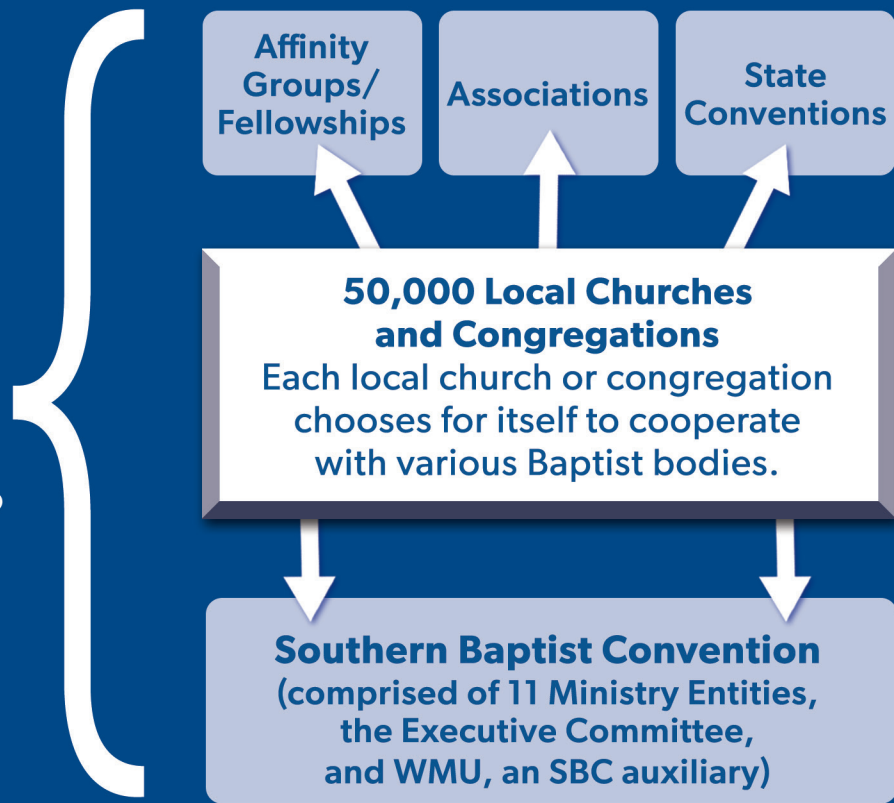
However, each local church is fully autonomous and retains its full authority. Churches choose to cooperate with the various Baptist bodies when they elect up to 12 messengers to attend the annual meeting, elect a president, elect trustees and committee members, and adopt the budget.

Additionally, local churches may decide to participate in cooperative ministries with other cooperating autonomous Baptist bodies. The following diagrams shows this cooperative relationship between local churches and other cooperating autonomous Baptist bodies.

What Really Is

Note that all arrows radiate out from the local church. Local churches retain their autonomy with no outside authority over them except the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

(See *The Baptist Faith & Message*, Article VI)



This diagram shows the true structure of the SBC. It is not top down. It is often said that the headquarters of the Southern Baptist Convention is the local church.

STRUCTURAL LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PRESIDENTS

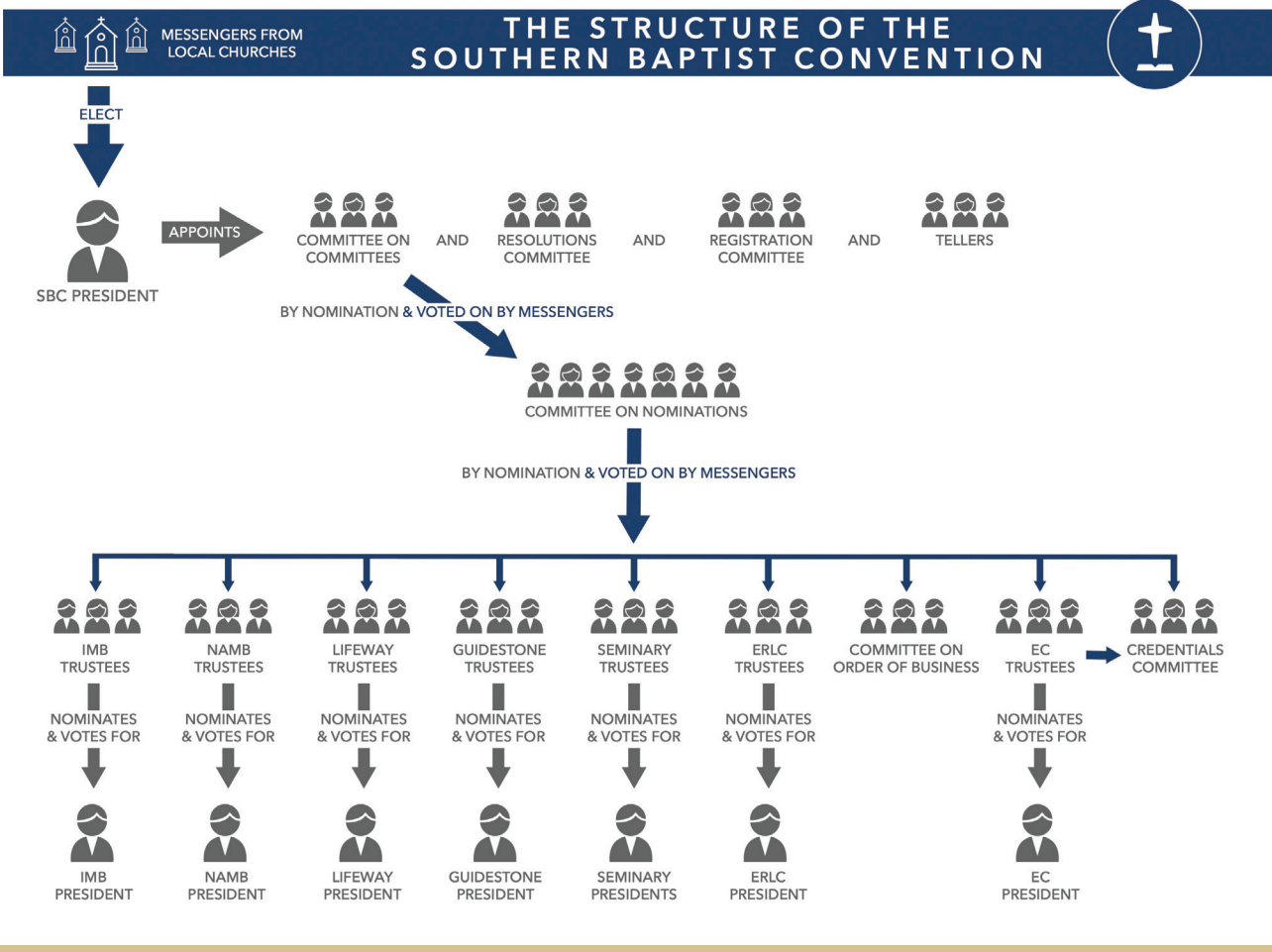
What is the role of the SBC president and the Executive Committee president? The realization about the true structure of the SBC has implications for the SBC President and the president and CEO Executive Committee. But first, what's the difference between the two?

In their book, *SBC FAQs: A Ready Reference*, Keith Harper and Amy Whitfield have given an excellent summary of their distinction. 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.

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 (Harper & Whitfield, pg. 17).

What all this means is neither the president of the SBC nor the president of the SBC Executive Committee has the authority to direct or tell any entity, convention, or association what to do. They may advise or suggest but they cannot



dictate. Furthermore, during the SBC Annual Meeting, both may lead by encouraging messengers to adopt their initiatives by their vote. To be clear, the messengers have the power through their vote to amend, adopt, or reject the proposals of either president.

PARTICIPATION & INFLUENCE

How can messengers have a voice in the SBC structure? A person does not have to be a messenger to attend the SBC Annual Meeting, but it is the messengers who can vote on business matters including electing the president of the Convention. In reality, the Southern Baptist Convention only exists for two (2) days each year. However, during those two days, messengers elect Convention officers, the Committee on Nominations, and members to fill the vacancies of its entity boards and its standing committees, which greatly impact the work of the Convention.

Understanding the “Structure of the Southern Baptist Convention” may help Southern Baptists better understand their opportunities for influence and participation. Using the “Structure of the Southern Baptist Convention” chart along with the following information may help one understand where they can vote and how they can influence the direction of the Convention.

1. Officers of the Convention are elected by messengers

- SBC Recording Secretary
- SBC Registration Secretary
- SBC 2nd Vice President
- SBC 1st Vice President
- SBC President

2. The SBC President appoints the following:

- Tellers (SBC Bylaw 10D)
- Registration Committee (SBC Bylaw 8B)

- Resolutions Committee (SBC Bylaw 20)
- Committee on Committees (SBC Bylaw 19)

3. The Committee on Committees nominates members of the Committee on Nominations (SBC Bylaw 15) for election by messengers.

4. The Committee on Nominations nominates members to fill vacancies on SBC boards and standing committees* (SBC Bylaw 15 & 16). A list of members of each board and standing committee are listed in Part 5 of the *SBC Annual* or can be found on www.sbc.net under Resources.

- **The Entities of the Convention (SBC Bylaw 14 & 18)**
 - GuideStone Financial Resources
 - Lifeway Christian Resources
 - International Mission Board
 - North American Mission Board
 - Gateway Seminary
 - Southwestern Seminary
 - New Orleans Seminary
 - Southeastern Seminary
 - Midwestern Seminary
 - Southern Seminary
 - The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
 - Executive Committee
- **The Standing Committees of the Convention**
 - Committee on Order of Business (SBC Bylaw 21)
 - *Credentials Committee (SBC Bylaw 8C; partially filled by the SBC Executive Committee)

5. The various boards of the Convention each elect a president who reports directly to their board (SBC Constitution Article VII) with those boards representing the Convention who elects them (SBC Bylaw 26C). The work of each entity is determined by the ministry assignments adopted by the messengers for that entity and can be found in the *SBC Organizational Manual*.

MAXIMIZE YOUR VOICE

I. SBC Annual Meeting (2 days in June)

The Southern Baptist Convention exists only two days out of each year when messengers gather at the SBC Annual Meeting. It is the largest denominational business meeting of its kind, and the business that happens in those two days sets the stage for the work accomplished through Southern Baptist entities for the remaining 363 days of the year. During those two days messengers have an opportunity to be heard and to make decisions that provide direction.

However, you must be in the room to be heard and to be a part of the decision making. Ways to be heard during those two days each June:

- **Make Motions:** There are typically two motion making opportunities during the Annual Meeting: the first is on Tuesday morning and the second is on Tuesday afternoon.
- **Vote on and/or Amend Resolutions:** Resolutions provide a way for messengers to express their opinion as a body on a given issue or topic as to make a joint statement.
- **Elect Convention Officers:** Elections are held annually for Convention officers (president, 1st vice president, 2nd vice president, registration secretary, and recording secretary).
- **Elect SBC Committees and Trustee Boards:** Messengers vote to place members on boards and committees that have vacancies (Committee on Nominations, Committee on Order of Business, Credentials Committee, six seminary boards, two mission boards, GuideStone, Lifeway, ERLC, and the Executive Committee).
- **Entity Reports:** Each entity brings a report to the Convention and at least one third of their report time is reserved to allow messengers an opportunity for discussion.



II. The Rest of the Year (363 days)

During the 363 days leading up to the SBC Annual Meeting each June the various Baptist bodies of the Convention work to carry out their assignments and the decisions made at the prior Convention: entities consider the motions that were referred to them; the president works to appoint committees as assigned; the elected boards meet and prepare the report of their work to the next Convention. It might seem that there is nothing you can do during those 363 days, but that is not the case. There are three specific ways to be involved and to maximize your voice:

- **Serve on a board or committee**
- **Nominate someone to serve on a board or committee**
- **Share ideas and express concerns**

The chart on the following page outlines how to be involved during this 363-day time frame between Annual Meetings and provides the answers to the who, what, when, and how that is necessary to understand in order to maximize your voice.



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HOW TO STAY INVOLVED:

What Committee/ Board	Who to Contact	When to Nominate Someone	How to Know the Need	Eligibility For Service
Committee on Committees	Contact the SBC President	The President begins considering nominees in the Fall and announces appointments in early Spring.	Two people from each qualified state/territory (68 people) are appointed by the president as outlined in SBC Bylaw 19.	Be a member of a cooperating church in the state/territory for at least the past 3 years (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII; SBC Bylaw 15A) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C).
Committee on Resolutions	Contact the SBC President	The President begins considering nominees in the Fall and announces appointments in early Spring.	10 people are appointed as outlined in SBC Bylaw 20.	Be a member of a cooperating church in the state/territory for at least the past 3 years (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII; SBC Bylaw 15A) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C).
Registration Committee	Contact the SBC President	The President begins considering nominees in the Fall and announces appointments late May.	Typically, 20-30 people are appointed. See SBC Bylaw 8B.	Be a member of a cooperating church (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C).
Tellers	Contact the SBC President	The President begins considering nominees in the Fall and announces appointments late May.	Typically, 20-30 people are appointed. See SBC Bylaw 10D.	Be a member of a cooperating church.
Committee on Order of Business	Contact the two Committee on Nominations members from your state/territory. CON members are listed in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> .	The CON begins its work each Fall and completes most of its work by mid-March.	The list of COB members with an expiring term can be found in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> and SBC Bylaw 21 outlines the composition of the committee.	Be a member of a cooperating church (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C).
Committee on Nominations	Contact the two Committee on Committees members from your state/territory. COC members are appointed by the SBC President and announced in <i>Baptist Press</i> each Spring.	The COC typically begins its work in early Spring and completes its work by late April.	The CON members serve a one-year term which means 2 people from each qualified state/territory are nominated every year. See SBC Bylaw 15 and 19.	Be a member of a cooperating church in the state/territory for at least the past 3 years (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII; SBC Bylaw 15A) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C). At least one from each state/territory must be a lay person.
Credentials Committee	Contact the Committee on Nominations chair or the two CON members from your state/territory and/or the SBC Executive Committee chair or members from your state. Members of the CON and EC are listed in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> .	The CON begins its work each Fall and completes most of its work by mid-March. The Executive Committee scheduled meetings are in February, June, and September.	The list of Credentials Committee members with an expiring term can be found in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> and SBC Bylaw 8C outlines the composition of the committee.	Be a member of a cooperating church (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII).
* Trustee Boards	Contact the two Committee on Nominations members from your state/territory. CON Members are listed in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> .	The CON begins its work each Fall and completes most of its work by mid-March.	For each entity, the list of board members with an expiring term can be found in Part 5 of the SBC <i>Annual</i> . See SBC Bylaw 15.	Be a member of a cooperating church in the state/territory for at least the past 3 years (SBC Constitution Article III & Article VIII; SBC Bylaw 15A) and not currently serving (or have a spouse serving) on an SBC board (SBC Bylaw 15C). Other requirements listed in SBC Bylaw 15 and in individual entity charters.



TO SHARE AN IDEA OR EXPRESS A CONCERN:

What Committee/Board	Who to Contact
Committee on Order of Business	Contact the COB chair found in Part 5 of the <i>SBC Annual</i> , or contact the EC staff SBC Committee Relations Manager who assists the committee (cpeters@sbc.net; 615-782-8622).
Committee on Nominations	Contact the CON chair found in Part 5 of the <i>SBC Annual</i> , or contact the EC staff Director of Convention and Corporate Relations who assists the committee (athompson@sbc.net; 615-782-8604).
Credentials Committee	Visit the committee’s webpage at www.sbc.net/credentials or contact the EC staff SBC Committee Relations Manager who assists the committee (cpeters@sbc.net; 615-782-8622).
* Trustee Boards	To express concerns or ideas regarding any of the SBC Entity leaders, contact the entity board chair listed in Part 5 of the <i>SBC Annual</i> . Entity presidents report directly to the trustee boards elected by the Convention.
SBC President & Officers	Contact information for the SBC Officers can be found at the beginning of Part 5 of the <i>SBC Annual</i> . For concerns or ideas regarding the SBC President or Convention Officers, contact them directly. They answer directly to the messengers of the Convention who elected them.

*Trustees are elected by messengers to the following boards of the Convention entities: International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, GuideStone Financial Resources, Lifeway Christian Resources, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Gateway Seminary, SBC Executive Committee.

There is a third way our SBC family can learn to effectively navigate the SBC, and that is through the Cooperative Program.



Navigating Cooperatively

WHAT IT IS?

The Cooperative Program is the financial fuel for reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation. The program was formulated in 1925 as a unified giving plan for Southern Baptists, designed to be the financial fuel that funds the advancement of the Gospel regionally, statewide, nationally, and globally. It allows churches everywhere to participate in a collective mission.

The Cooperative Program is the financial fuel for reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Churches support the Cooperative Program by submitting contributions through a network of state and regional Baptist conventions. Those conventions use a portion of these funds to fuel the ministry and mission goals established by their churches. Each state Baptist convention then forwards a percentage of those funds to the Southern Baptist Convention, providing financial support for Convention entities to send missionaries, train pastors and ministry leaders, plant churches and address ethical and religious liberty concerns related to our faith. Cooperative Program funds forwarded from the states also provide support for the SBC operating budget.

The following diagrams illustrate the Cooperative Program giving process and CP percentage distribution to entities.



Church Members

Church members give back to God a percentage of their income. This is traditionally called a tithe and represents 10 percent of what God has provided.



Local Churches

Churches receive tithes and offerings from church members and commit a percentage of undesignated receipts for missions and ministries beyond the church walls.



State Missions and Ministries

Messengers from local congregations vote to retain a specific percentage for state missions and ministries and forward the balance to the SBC. State missions and ministries can include evangelism, church planting, children's homes, Christian higher education, compassion ministries, disaster relief, church health, age group ministries, and missions education.



Southern Baptist Missions and Ministries

The SBC compiles the gifts forwarded from state conventions for missions and ministries across the United States and around the world. Southern Baptist missions and ministries include North American and international missions, theological education, ethics and religious liberty, and general operating expenses.

CP COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Allocation

73.20%
World Missions Ministries
International Mission Board (50.41%)
North American Mission Board (22.79%)

2.99%
Executive Committee and SBC Operating Budget

22.16%
Theological Education Ministries
Seminaries (21.92%)
Library and Archives (.24%)

1.65%
Christian Ethics and Religious Liberty Ministries
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission



WHY SHOULD YOUR CHURCH PARTICIPATE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM?

1. CP allows your church to cooperate with like-minded churches to advance the Great Commission.
2. CP makes every church member a missionary. While the Lord hasn't called all church members overseas, he called us all to pray for and financially support those who are full-time missionaries.
3. CP enables every church, no matter the size, to support Southern Baptist missionaries. Even the largest church can't support all the missionaries on their own.
4. Your church's CP supports state, national, and international missions.
5. CP increases your church's awareness of mission causes.
6. CP blesses your church. A host of free or low-cost resources comes to your church because of its CP giving: access to statewide evangelism and discipleship and other

ministry training; for eligible pastors whose church gives to CP and they participate in GuideStone's retirement program, there are exclusive protection benefits: disability income up to age 65 and survivor's protection benefits.

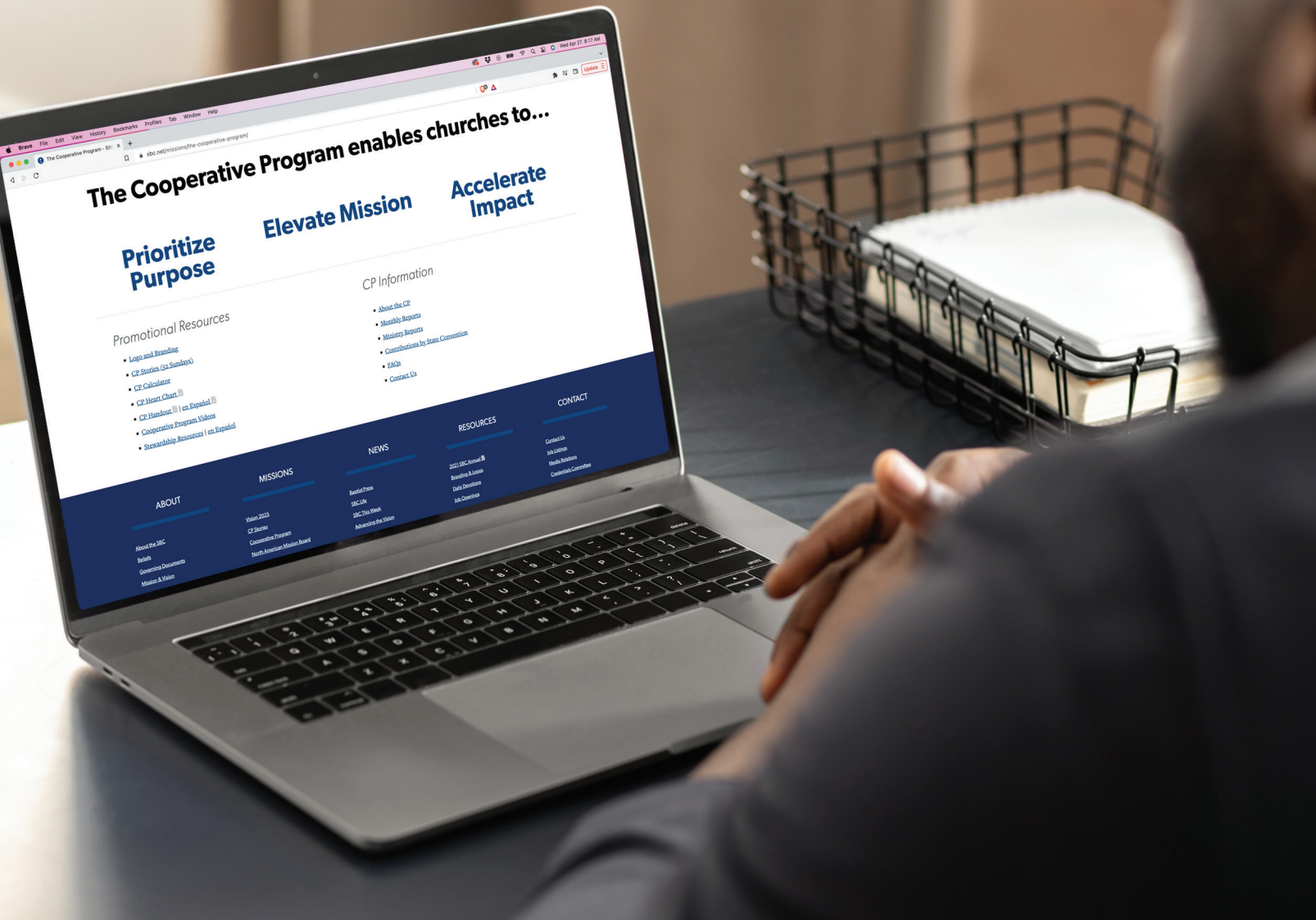
WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT CP PROMOTION?

Because the Cooperative Program is all about prioritizing and elevating each church's missional impact around the world, there are several promotional resources available.

- *CP Stories* is a missions resource showing the local, national, and global impact of the Cooperative Program. It's a weekly journal and prayer guide for churches, which tells of missions work of the International Mission Board (IMB), the North American Mission Board (NAMB), and state conventions. Visit www.sbc.net/cpstories for more info.
- Promotional videos to accommodate visual learning and engagement (sbc.net/cp). These videos accommodate all ethnic groups.



When the saints of God believe God owns it all, they are better equipped to manage the resources of time, talents, and treasures entrusted to them. Resources managed wisely means finances are available to adequately care for God's kingdom and our personal welfare.



- Contextualized CP promotional videos for Hispanic, Asian, and African American churches at their designated websites. Those websites are located at sbc.net/about (click on the appropriate tab).
- State convention CP representatives are available to assist your church in understanding and participating in the financial fuel to reach every person for Jesus Christ and support state and entities ministries and mission.
- Free print and digital stewardship resources are available sbc.net/stewardship. When the

saints of God believe God owns it all, they are better equipped to manage the resources of time, talents, and treasures entrusted to them. Resources managed wisely means finances are available to adequately care for God's kingdom and our personal welfare. As the scripture says in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you."

There is a fourth way Southern Baptist pastors, churches, and leaders can learn to effectively navigate—read and write the menu. Churches must learn to navigate beneficially.



Navigating Beneficially

WHY SHOULD A CHURCH BE IN FRIENDLY COOPERATION WITH THE SBC (JOIN OR AFFILIATE)?

Another way of stating the above question is, what are the benefits of actively participating in the SBC?

As a young adult, I used to work for a health and beauty aids company as a district sales manager. One year, we were trained in a sales technique called F.A.B., features, advantages, and benefits. **Features** tell facts or characteristics about your business, products, and services. **Advantages** explain why the features matter or how they help solve a problem. **Benefits** are the results of the advantages. Benefits evoke the positive and perceived emotional satisfaction the prospective customer gets from the features and advantages.

I see the elements of the F.A.B. technique in Exodus 14:31. “And when the Israelites saw the

mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses his servant.”

Feature: The great power of the Lord. **Advantages:** The Lord’s power is great enough to defeat the mightiest of enemies. The Lord’s great power caused His people to revere Him and put their trust in Him. **Benefits:** Deliverance from Egyptian threats, no more fear of Egyptians slavery, and a song of praise about the mighty power of God (Exodus 15).

WHAT DO FEATURES, ADVANTAGES, AND BENEFITS HAVE TO DO WITH NAVIGATING BENEFICIALLY?

In this section, I’d like to list some of the personal feedback I’ve received from pastors regarding why they are affiliated with the SBC. Surely, there are many other benefits, but I wish to highlight a few. The reasons these pastors gave can be classified as features. I would like to expound on those features and seek to show the advantages and benefits of each. Remember, in the F.A.B. sales technique, benefits are the prospective customers’ positive and perceived emotional satisfaction of the features and advantages. I will seek to share what I sense are some benefits based on the reasons (features) the pastors provided. Please recognize the discerned benefits of these features can vary from pastor to pastor. The chart on the following page illustrates some features, advantages, and benefits of being Southern Baptist.

There are many other reasons (features), advantages, benefits which answer the question, why should I be in friendly cooperation with the SBC? Again, these are the reasons I’ve heard most frequently in my conversations with pastors. Regardless of each entity’s features (products and ministry services), they all have their unique advantages and even more unique benefits as perceived by the recipient.

There’s a fifth and final way our SBC family can learn to effectively navigate—read and write the menu. Churches must learn to navigate practically.

Features	Advantages	Benefits
<p>GuideStone Financial Resources Retirement program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific medical and insurance plans to meet the needs of pastors, ministers, and staff members. • Financial benefits including disability income benefit and survivor's protection benefits are available to churches participating in the Cooperative Giving Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace of mind about financial stability as you approach the retirement years. • Protection and security for loved ones.
<p>Lifeway Research Research-driven data for disciple making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps a pastor stay current on ministry trends and cultural shifts so they can consider their potential impact on the local church. • It saves significant time so pastors can spend more time finding solutions pertaining to the impact those trends have on their church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative, customized, and contextualized discipleship and ministry solutions.
<p>Lifeway Christian Resources Christian education curriculum that supports biblical functions of the church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum that is theologically and doctrinally sound (based on the <i>Baptist Faith and Message</i>). • A curriculum option that provides a study plan based on eight signposts of spiritual maturity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral leadership, confidence, and comfort about what members are learning. • Participants are receiving intentional and comprehensive spiritual development.
<p>North American and International Mission Board Programs Strategies and resources for churches to engage in evangelism, church planting, and short or long-term international missions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists churches in establishing a sending and missions culture, assists in creating pipelines for accelerated missions involvement, and competency on how to train and develop missional leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlimited potential to reach the lost, expand the reach of the church, and the joy of doing and fulfilling God's will.
<p>Six Seminaries ATS accredited and affordable seminary education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly training from all six seminaries that are ranked in the top 10 among ATS accredited seminaries. • Tuition cost is far lower than would otherwise be—50% less for students from Southern Baptist churches. Cooperative Program funding allows all six seminaries to provide a premium theological education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharpens skills in areas like preaching, biblical exegesis, and missional practices. • Broadens the local church's sending capacity of trained and qualified leaders for the mission field.
<p>Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDP) Third largest disaster relief organization in the U.S. behind Red Cross and the Salvation Army</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Baptist Disaster Relief units are owned and operated by state conventions, local associations, and churches, and are coordinated nationally by the North American Mission Board (NAMB). • Works alongside federal agencies like FEMA, yet does not receive federal funding or reimbursement since most funding comes through state conventions and CP giving. • Visit the SBDP Facebook page to stay current on SBDP activities https://www.facebook.com/sbdpnet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated and highly organized response time to disasters; increased confidence in the skill-level and assistance of volunteers due to data-driven results (2015 last recorded). • Elevating confidence in your preparedness for a natural disaster by offering numerous ways to help you and your church through NAMB's website.
<p>Multi-ethnic/Racial Diversity 22.3% of the Southern Baptist Convention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to collaborate in a new spiritual environment of diversity. • Occasions to demonstrate empathy and forgiveness (Eph. 4:32). • Opportunities to exercise courageous leadership through bridge building in race relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being salt and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-14). • Showing unity and celebrating diversity in the body of Christ. • Participating in a foretaste and ultimate reality of a multi-ethnic/racial gathering in heaven (Rev. 7:9).



Navigating Practically

AFFILIATION

How does a church affiliate with the SBC?

After learning to effectively navigate the SBC—foundationally, structurally, cooperatively, and beneficially, a church that’s considering joining or affiliating needs a thoughtful, orderly, and edifying process to mobilize the members.

We recognize that some congregations may start without any denominational affiliation, or they may have been previously/currently affiliated with another convention. We want to clearly emphasize that we do not solicit any church group to leave their present denomination, convention, etc. We do want to create such a fellowship atmosphere that any qualifying Baptist church will feel free to affiliate with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

As a church seeks God’s will and determines that they might want to affiliate with associational,

state, and national entities of the Southern Baptist Convention; we would suggest the following:

1. Pray before and during consideration of SBC affiliation.
2. Seek out as much information on SBC life (local, state, and national) as possible. It is important to recognize that there can be substantial differences depending on what association and state convention your church is considering.
3. Share the information/findings with the congregation’s leadership. Pray and reach a consensus through the church’s polity and organizational procedures. It is recognized that SBC life is not for every church, and should the church group decide after consideration to not pursue affiliation, it is not a bad thing.
4. Lead the church to vote according to its by-laws. Send an official letter from the church requesting affiliation with the local SBC association. Know that there may be as many different associational affiliation processes as there are associations. Generally, each association has a credentials committee empowered to act on the request or present it to the association for an accepting vote.
5. Invite representatives from the various SBC conventional concerns to share in various settings with the church body. This helps to connect the church to the entities and the leaders of the entities to the church.
6. Participate in financially supporting the local association, state convention, and the Cooperative Program of the SBC at a level that represents the church well. There is no voice in SBC life for those that don’t participate financially.
7. Practice the theology of presence. There is no substitute for having church representation in

various meetings at all levels: local, state, and national. At the minimum a presence can change dynamics. Participation benefits all concerned as every local church “brings something to the table” for the Kingdom’s sake.”

ACTIVATION

So, I’m Southern Baptist, Now What?

1. Maintain and lead your church to hold to a sound doctrinal position (BFM 2000).
2. Accept the Acts 1:8 challenge for empowering Kingdom growth.
3. Contribute regularly and generously to Kingdom causes by praying, giving, and going. While there is no set amount for local churches to contribute; there is no reason for any Southern Baptist church to have “\$0” contributions in any report. Giving reports are usually published in association and state newspapers.

Regular giving by a church has to be defined by the local church; however, for balancing budget issues churches are encouraged to give monthly or even weekly. We can understand this in as much as we challenge members to bring their tithes to the church on a regular or even weekly basis. For instance, a Southern Baptist church deciding to annually contribute \$1200 to the association and \$2400 to the Cooperative Program could send \$100 per month to the association and \$200 per month to the state convention.
4. Participate and assume responsibility of positions and leadership on association, state convention, and national committees and boards.
5. Complete an Annual Church Profile (ACP) for the Convention each year. The only way to know the collective effectiveness of these cooperating churches is if they share their statistical stories with the Convention. Many fast facts (sbc.net/fast-facts) on our churches, associations, state conventions, and entities are the results of

cooperation being demonstrated by completing the Annual Church Profile.

Former vice president of Convention advancement, Ken Weathersby, once said, “We may lament that our baptisms are down in a given year; but if only 36,000 churches report their baptism numbers, we have no way of really knowing the actual numbers.”

The ACP is not an attempt to pry into the church’s business, but it is an attempt to gather the information necessary to gauge what progress has been made in reaching the lost for Christ. The ACP can be used to substantiate the church’s activities should the church need it for government or legal reasons.

The SBC will provide the forms and/or the electronic means whereby the church can submit the information usually in late summer. If your church affiliated with your state convention, ACPs are distributed by your state convention in June or July each year. If your church affiliation is solely at the national level, your church will receive its ACP from the national office in Nashville, Tenn. An ACP flier can assist you in the promotion of completing your ACP (see the back cover).

6. Participate in training and promotional activities. You will find many ways that the training and events will help not only you but your church. The goal is to make better churches.
7. Elect and send messengers to represent the church in the association, state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention according to your church’s protocol and according to the by-laws of the SBC denominational entities.
8. Educate and position members of your church to serve on entity boards and committees. When you educate your church members on how to read the menu of the SBC, give through the Cooperative Program, and practice the theology of presence at the association, state, and national level, you are positioning them to serve on boards and committees.

Conclusion

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we all are a work in progress. For this denomination to become what Jesus intends, every brother and sister in Christ must intentionally look into the mirror of Christ image daily so we can be transformed more and more into His image. Furthermore, for the Convention to close the gap truly representing that future reality in Revelations 7:9, the saints of Christ must become more like Christ.

You can effectively navigate the SBC when you do so foundationally, structurally, cooperatively, beneficially, and practically. These are the ways (along with Christlikeness), to achieve healthy participation, intentional representation, godly articulation, and unified celebration from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue in our Convention.

“

We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:18

Appendix

REFERENCES

sbc.net

imb.org

namb.net

lifeway.com

guidestone.org

erlc.com

wmu.com

SBC FAQs: A Ready Reference,
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RESOURCES

Baptist Faith and Message 2000

bfm.sbc.net

Annual Church Profile

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The work of this orientation guide would not have been achieved without the sincere labor of love and support I have received from so many brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to thank **Chris McNairy**, currently pastor of Decision Point Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia, and facilitator of the Urban Fusion Network Incorporated for the permission granted to use segments in this manual from orientation documents, booklets, and his self-published manuscript in 2014. Pastor McNairy has served at all levels of the Southern Baptist Convention, including NAMB strategy coordinator in the western United States.

I would also like to thank former vice president of Convention advancement of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, **Ken Weathersby**, and members of the Convention Advancement Advisory Council for the 2018 release of *The Many Faces of the Southern Baptist Convention*. *The Many Faces of the SBC* enlightened my approach to this current manual. Additionally, Dr. Weathersby has provided much needed council and assistance through his previous presentations on Navigating the SBC. I also give thanks to the Lord for **Jarman Leatherwood**, *pastor*, House of Hope and Restoration, Huntsville, Alabama; **Kevin Smith**, *pastor*, Family Church Village in West Palm Beach, Florida; and **Dennis Mitchell**, *executive director*, National African American Fellowship. They have provided excellent supplementary

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Charles Grant, Jr., *associate vice president of Convention advancement and relations*, SBC Executive Committee, *Compiler*

COMPLETE YOUR ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE

Know well the condition of your flock, and pay attention to your herds.

Proverbs 27:23 (CSB)

BENEFITS EQUAL

PAST

Completing your ACP gives insights about the history and lessons of the past.
(Joshua 4:1–7)

After the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, God told the Israelites to place standing stones to mark that occasion as a memorial to teach the generations.

PRESENT

Completing your ACP gives church leaders insight about the present.
(Matthew 18:12–14)

Just as the shepherd knows the number of sheep and what action to take in the present, church leaders have the same responsibility.

FUTURE

Completing your ACP gives church leaders insights for planning the future.

New and existing leaders need to see the trend-lines of activity, hardships, and blessings your church has experienced to better lead you into the future.

COOPERATION YIELDS

ENCOURAGEMENT

Through cooperation, local associations, state conventions, and national entities can encourage your church. Some examples are devotional thoughts, exhortations, and good news about kingdom work.

ELEVATION

One of Satan's strategies is to make us feel isolated and alone. Cooperation makes resources and training available to elevate the effectiveness of your church's ministries.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities in missions often start with cooperation in local, state, and national partnership. The ACP can help us think through how to stay connected in missions partnerships.

COMPLETE YOUR ACP

Go to www.sbcworkspace.com.

If you forgot your user name and password, contact your state convention office and ask for it.
Or, you may complete the mailed ACP form.

