

Report from The Southern Baptist Convention, 2022 Anaheim, CA

History

- Clayton Baptist Church Constituted in 1819.
- The Southern Baptist Convention Formed in 1845, out of a need for churches to cooperate together for the purpose of missions.
- When did CBC join the SBC?
 - Sometime between 1852 – 1909
 - Cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention, in Georgia, tended to follow when a local association joined the Georgia Baptist Convention.
 - In Rabun County, the Mountain (United) Baptist Association was locked in controversy regarding whether or not they would join the Georgia Baptist Convention. The controversy centered over the association's differing view on missions, from that of the state convention.
 - The association was briefly in cooperation with the State Convention during the 1830's, prior to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. But, due to an anti-mission sentiment they repudiated cooperation shortly afterward.
 - In 1906, Clayton Baptist Church led an effort to leave the Mountain Baptist Association, in order to establish the Rabun County Missionary Baptist Association. This new association immediately joined the State Convention, thereby joining the Southern Baptist Convention.
 - From this, we can conclude, at the very latest, Clayton Baptist Church has been in cooperation with the SBC for 116 years.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention?

- The SBC is not a denomination. It is an association of cooperating autonomous churches. The Southern Baptist Convention holds no authority over the local autonomous churches.
- The Convention primarily exists for the purpose of missions and Theological Education.

Key Issues from 2022

- **Female Pastors in SBC Churches**
 - **Background**
 - At the 2021 Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN, messenger Shadd Tibbs made the following motion: “[I move that] we the Southern Baptist Convention, of June 2021, break fellowship with Saddleback Church, as they have ordained three ladies as pastors...at the very least, I am asking that the validity of this matter be looked into and report given at the 2022 Convention...”
 - Saddleback Church is a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church plant in Anaheim, CA. The church has been pastored, until recently by Rick Warren.
 - Saddleback has openly ordained 3 female pastors. In defense of this, Saddleback is making a distinction between the *office* of a pastor and the *title* of a Pastor.
 - Ordination of females to the pastorate comes in opposition to the clear statement in The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, Article VI.
 - More importantly this is in opposition to the clear statements in 1 Timothy 3, on the qualifications for elders and overseers.
 - **What Happened**
 - The Credentials Committee (CC) made the following statement: “We are not yet prepared to make a recommendation regarding Saddleback Church. Recognizing

there are differing opinions regarding the intent of the office of pastor as stated in the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000. Therefore, we are coming today, asking for a study committee regarding this matter. We feel it is very important for you to know that it is the unanimous opinion of the CC that the majority of Southern Baptists hold to the belief that the function of lead pastor, elder, bishop, overseer is limited to men as qualified by scripture, and this was the intended definition of office of pastor as stated in article VI in the BFM 2000. However, the CC has found little information evidencing the Convention's belief regarding the use of the title of Pastor for staff positions with differing responsibilities and authority than that of lead pastor. For this reason the CC moves that the following recommendation be adopted. [Form a study committee to provide clarity regarding the office of pastor]

- *The CC was asking for direction on how they should understand a church that uses the title "pastor" but does not consider that person to have the authority of the office of pastor/elder. An example would be a female Director of Missions being given the title "Missions Pastor".*
- *The CC did not ask the Messengers for a debate on whether or not a female can be ordained to the office of pastor/elder.*
- There was much debate on the floor and audible frustration from the Messengers with the recommendation.
- Al Mohler, as a messenger, made the following comments: "If we eventually have to form a study committee over every word in our confession of faith then we are doomed, and we are no longer a confessional people... We are a confessional denomination, we say what we believe in specific words that are the Baptist Faith and Message. The moment we start to, of necessity, start to have study committees to decide what the words mean... the words mean what Southern Baptist said in the year 2000, at that time the word pastor was used by the committee and was adopted by the convention because we were told that is the most easily understood word among southern Baptists, for pastoral teaching leadership. I have to hope we still have that much clarity, and churches that use the term pastor, mean it."
- Rick Warren was given over 6 minutes at the microphone, while others only have three, to read "A love letter to the SBC". In this letter, he gives a list of the accomplishments he made at Saddleback church without giving credit to anyone else, and without making a single mention of God.
 - Warren received a standing ovation from the majority of the room. I take this as a bad sign regarding the state of the convention. If numbers and a list of accomplishments are more important than faithfulness to God's Word, humility, and giving glory to God in all things, we can conclude the spiritual state of the convention is in a bad place.
 - You can watch the video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/MBsT1zFmC3E>
- **The Convention's Response**
 - The Messengers defeated the recommendation of the Credentials Committee to form a study committee regarding the term "Pastor" in the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000. This effectively upholds the language of Article VI, for now.
- **Our Stance**
 - As Clayton Baptist Church we believe the Scripture as inspired by God carries the authority of God. Where the Bible speaks, God speaks. Any disobedience to scripture equates to disobedience to God. Therefore, we have the conviction, pursuant to 1 Timothy 3, that women should not be ordained to the Pastorate.

- As a confessional people the words we use have meaning. If we are to use the term “pastor”, that means something; the title ought to be assigned to the man holding the office.
- At this point there has not been an official statement nor recommendation from the Credentials Committee on Saddleback Church. For now, we will have to wait to see what the Convention decides. This is definitely an issue to watch in 2023.
- **Sexual Abuse**
 - **Background**
 - At the 2021 Convention, Messengers called for a third party investigation into the Executive Committee’s (EC) handling of sexual abuse and allegations within the Convention.
 - The EC hired a third party organization (Guidepost Solutions), not affiliated with the SBC, to conduct an investigation as to whether or not the EC handled Sexual Abuse correctly, and submit a report.
 - On May 15, 2022 the report was completed and went public, revealing the EC mishandled information regarding Sexual Abuse within SBC churches and took measures to cover-up and hide evidence of Sexual Abuse.
 - **What Happened**
 - The Sexual Abuse Task Force brought two recommendations before the messengers
 - The first recommendation was to form an Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) to be appointed by the newly elected SBC President. This task force would study and present the best practices regarding policies, procedures, etc. to be adopted and implemented by the convention at the 2023 Annual Meeting. The ARITF would also serve as a resource in “*abuse prevention, crisis response, and survivor care to Baptist bodies who voluntarily seek assistance.*” In addition, the ARITF would assist the CC with complaints of noncooperation from churches regarding sexual abuse.
 - The second recommendation was to establish a “ministry check” website that would list names of sexual abusers who have been convicted and or *credibly* accused, allowing cooperating churches to communicate regarding this matter.
 - A *credibly* accused person is described as a “*pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer ... who has confessed to sexual abuse in a non-privileged setting, who has been convicted in a court of law, or who has had a civil judgment rendered against them.*” In addition, an “*independent third party commissioned by a local church or other Baptist body may determine, by preponderance of the evidence following an inquiry, that a person is credibly accused.*”
 - Funds for the above recommendations have been allocated by SEND Relief equating to \$3 million in 2022. These are separate funds from Cooperative Program dollars.
 - **The Convention’s Response**
 - The Messengers overwhelmingly passed the recommendations, with an amendment to recommendation one to remove the language which bound the Task Force to Guidepost’s recommendations.
 - **Our Stance**
 - The statistics point to the reality that up to 97% of sexual abusers never get caught. Sexual abuse is a reality in this fallen world and as Bruce Frank said, the reality does not change when you place a steeple on the building.

- It is our responsibility, as under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ, to protect, defend, and feed the flock of God.
- Therefore, we have taken measures to research and implement best practices regarding policies and procedures, background checks, application processes, and even design and layout of our children's area.
- Our current revision the Child Protection Policy from June 2019, is available on our website: <https://www.claytonbaptistchurch.com/children>
- We need to be diligent to know why these policies and procedures are in place, and we need to be diligent to ensure we are following the policies and procedures we have set in place.
- We all need to take steps to know our policies and procedures, educate ourselves on the warning signs of sexual abuse, and if you see or suspect something, know who to tell.

What's Next?

- **Get Involved Nationally**
 - We need to get more involved with the Southern Baptist Convention.
 - We need to see this as a mission, and max out our Messengers, we can take 12.
 - We need to know the issues, know the facts, and voice what God has clearly revealed on these issues.
 - We need to be active as agents of change in the convention.
- **Get Involved Locally**
 - Since we are concerned with what is happening in the Southern Baptist Convention, we need to get involved locally.
 - We need to be more involved in the Rabun County Baptist Association.
 - We need to be involved in the State Convention.
- **Consider**
 - We are in no hurry to change our cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention. Thanks to SBC polity, we remain an autonomous church in voluntary cooperation with the SBC, and the SBC holds no authority over Clayton Baptist Church.
 - We all need to take time to consider this from a godly, biblical perspective.
 - At what point did God abandon His disobedient children? We have multiple examples of God disciplining His children, but He never abandons them. So who are we to abandon our sister churches in the SBC, due to some who are disobedient?
 - Should we not be like the reformers in the Church of England, who became such a thorn in the side of the polity they were eventually ejected and persecuted for their unwavering stance on the Word of God?
 - If we are to leave the SBC, it should be because we are disfellowshipped for our unwavering resolve to be obedient to God's Word and our resolve to call our sister churches into accountability and obedience.

Submitted for Christ and His Church,

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