



Meet SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a body of like-minded local churches cooperating together to reach the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. There are currently more than fifty thousand Southern Baptist cooperating churches and church-type missions. Though as many as two hundred could be counted as “mega-churches,” the vast majority 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.

Southern Baptists are as varied and diverse as the cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural communities where they live. Each Southern Baptist church is autonomous and unique; 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.

What Southern Baptists *Believe*



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."

The entire *Baptist Faith and Message* is available online at <http://bfm.sbc.net>.

What Southern Baptists *Do*

Evangelism and Missions

At the heart of our mission is the compelling urgency to proclaim the Gospel to everyone. *The Baptist Faith and Message* summarizes the biblical expectation this way:

"It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has

commanded the preaching of the Gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the Gospel of Christ."

Church Planting

Southern Baptists are committed to starting new churches to reach the growing populations of our country and the world. The SBC's North American Mission Board (NAMB) equips churches for church planting and also provides assessment, training, coaching, and planter care support for church planting missionaries.



In addition, through the International Mission Board, Southern Baptists fully support more than 3,500 overseas missionaries and church planters.

Demonstrating the Gospel through Compassion

Southern Baptists take seriously the Lord's example of compassion and His command to love and care for the needy (John 3:16; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46). The BF&M summarizes the biblical expectation this way:

"Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. . . . We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick."

Local Ministry

From a food pantry and clothing closet in rural Arkansas, to a soup kitchen in Lower Manhattan, to a ministry in Atlanta rescuing girls and young women held hostage to sexual slavery, cooperating churches across the nation demonstrate God's compassion to the needy in their communities as part of their ongoing ministry.

The width and breadth of these and similar local ministries are as expansive as the United States itself, for Southern Baptists minister in every part of this nation.

Cooperative Ministry

Cooperating churches across the nation minister in their own neighborhoods to reach their local communities with the Gospel; but they don't stop there. The strength of Southern Baptist work is found in their voluntary cooperation to work together to advance an aggressive global vision while maintaining a strong home base of ministry fruitfulness.

Cooperation is not a new idea. The Apostle Paul applauded churches in the New Testament that pooled their resources for Kingdom purposes (1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, 16-24; 11:8). The BF&M summarizes the biblical pattern of cooperation this way:

"Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom."

The Cooperative Program—Fueling the Great Commission

The Cooperative 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.

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 Convention— Working Together for the Gospel

Messengers from cooperating churches meet once a year to transact the business of the Convention, which includes: adopting the Cooperative Program allocation budget, electing officers as well as trustees to oversee SBC ministries, receiving reports from entities, passing resolutions, and voting on recommendations for Convention action.

Why Southern Baptists Do What They Do

Southern Baptist Entities— Assisting Churches in the Advance of the Gospel

The Convention assigns and conducts its work through eleven ministry entities—two mission boards, six seminaries, an ethics and religious liberty commission, a publishing and retail ministry, and a financial resources services ministry—and its Executive Committee. It also works closely with an auxiliary organization called Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). Each of these ministries exists for the express purpose of assisting churches in the ultimate goal of advancing the Gospel.

- The International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board
- Gateway, Midwestern, New Orleans, Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries
- The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
- LifeWay Christian Resources
- GuideStone Financial Resources
- The SBC Executive Committee
- The Woman's Missionary Union

Southern Baptists proclaim and minister the Gospel because the love of Christ compels us to do so. God's call to us is to present the Gospel of Jesus to every person and to make disciples in every town, every city, every state, and every nation.

The SBC is committed to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the whole world.