

SBC Credentials Committee Submission Form

Thank you for contacting the Credentials Committee. This committee was formed by the Southern Baptist Convention to provide individuals an opportunity to address concerns about whether a church that is currently identified as a cooperating church with the Southern Baptist Convention continues to have a faith and practice which closely identifies with the Convention's adopted statement of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message*. The statement of faith lifts up "certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified."

In addition to *The Baptist Faith and Message*, numerous resolutions adopted by messengers at the SBC annual meetings reflect the collective opinion of Southern Baptists on a given topic at the time each resolution was adopted. These resolutions also lift up values and ideals embraced by Southern Baptists on a variety of doctrinal, moral, and ethical matters not specifically addressed or fully developed in *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

Included in this submission packet you will find the following:

- The Credentials Committee Statement of Assignment
 - A Statement of Relationship between the Southern Baptist Convention and other Baptist Bodies, including local churches
 - Steps to Take if You Want to Report Instances of Sexual or Other Forms of Abuse in a Church or SBC Ministry Setting; Instances of Racial Discrimination Affirmed or Supported by a Church that Cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention; or Other Concerns about a Cooperating Church's Relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention
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Please choose which best describes your submission:

I wish to report an issue concerning a church's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention that addresses discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity.

I wish to report an issue concerning a church's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention that addresses sexual or other forms of abuse in a church setting.

I wish to report an issue concerning a church's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention that addresses any other matter of faith or practice.

The Southern Baptist Convention's Credentials Committee is working with a mental health center to provide a support phone call to those who have submitted a report to the Credentials Committee. This call will be from an individual trained to assist victims of sexual or other forms of abuse and will include a) information about the abuse recovery process and b) identification of resources in your local area.

If you would like to receive a call from an individual trained to assist victims of sexual or other forms of abuse, please select the following YES option. Please note that your selection will have no impact on the Credential Committee inquiry.

YES

I would like to receive a phone call from an individual trained to assist victims of sexual or other forms of abuse.

NO

I do not want to receive a phone call from an individual trained to assist victims of sexual or other forms of abuse.

SBC Credentials Committee Submission Form

To use the online form please [CLICK HERE](#) or complete the PDF form below and email or mail to credentials@sbc.net or SBC Credentials Committee, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, TN 37203

This form should be used to submit a church to the SBC Credentials Committee for consideration regarding its relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention. Under SBC Constitution Article IV, neither The Southern Baptist Convention, its Executive Committee, nor the SBC Credentials Committee has any authority over any other Baptist body.

Under SBC Bylaw 8, the Credentials Committee has no authority to sever ties with any Southern Baptist church. The Credentials Committee may make a recommendation to the SBC Executive Committee to disassociate with a church if the Credentials Committee deems a church to no longer be in friendly cooperation with the Convention.

The Credentials Committee may submit a recommendation to the Executive Committee that a church be removed from its cooperative standing with the Southern Baptist Convention at the Executive Committee's mid-September, mid-February, or June meeting just prior to the SBC annual meeting.

Once a submission has been received by the Credentials Committee, the Committee will communicate in a timely manner with (a) the submitter of any concern and (b) the church about which a concern has been raised. It will not release comments or updates regarding submissions through the media or by other means unless or until a recommendation is submitted to the Executive Committee for withdrawal of fellowship from a church.

Submitter Information

Please provide your information below as the submitter.
The Committee cannot consider anonymous submissions against a church.

First and Last Name:

Phone:

Email:

Church Membership (If you are a member of a church qualified to seat messengers at the SBC, please indicate below):

Church City:

Church State:

Information about Church Submitted for Consideration

The Credentials Committee may only consider Southern Baptist churches that are currently recognized to be in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention as described in SBC Constitution Article III.

Church Name:

Church City:

Church State:

Details Why the Church Is Submitted for Consideration

Information provided in this section may be shared with other Baptist bodies (such as a local Baptist association or state Baptist convention) with which the church may also identify.

To your knowledge, has a law been violated?

Yes. I have personal knowledge that a law has been violated and I plan to, or have already, reported it to law enforcement.

No. I have no personal knowledge that a law has been violated or whether a report has been previously made to law enforcement.

Details Why the Church Is Submitted for Consideration

(continued)

Information provided in this section may be shared with other Baptist bodies (such as a local Baptist association or state Baptist convention) with which the church may also identify.

Please explain briefly why you believe the church is not in friendly cooperation with the SBC.

Provide additional details about the events that are the basis for this report.

When did this issue begin and has the church acted to address or resolve this issue? Explain.

Has a local Baptist association and a state Baptist convention addressed this issue? Explain.

Please submit a completed copy of this form to SBC Credentials Committee by mail to 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37203, or by email to credentials@sbc.net. If you have additional information or questions, please contact the SBC Credentials Committee at credentials@sbc.net. For more information visit www.sbc.net/credentials.

Statement of Assignment

The Southern Baptist Convention's Credentials Committee is tasked to consider questions that arise concerning whether a church is in "friendly cooperation" with the Convention as described in the SBC Constitution, Article III. The Credentials Committee may make inquiries of a church, but may not exercise any authority over a church through an investigation or other process that would violate Article IV of the SBC Constitution.

Any report concerning an alleged abuser should first be made to law enforcement for criminal investigation. When recommended by law enforcement, it is also appropriate to make a report to the local church where the individual is a member for the local church to exercise church discipline according to the church's adopted practice. Please remember that reporting to a church is not a substitute for reporting to law enforcement.

A submission to the Credentials Committee may be made over any matter deemed appropriate by the submitter. It is important to know, however, that the Credentials Committee will not be able to consider anonymous submissions about a church. Recently, the Convention has heightened scrutiny in two significant areas of concern— discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity and sexual abuse.

Neither the Convention nor its Credentials Committee has authority to declare an individual not in good standing with a local church. Church membership is solely under the guidance and governance of each local church. However, the Credentials Committee may base decisions regarding a church's cooperation with the SBC on who that church puts in a leadership role as either an employee or volunteer.

The Convention has no authority over any local church, however, it retains its sovereign right to determine whether it deems a church to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention. If a church is deemed not to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention's adopted statement of faith and practice, the Convention has the autonomous authority to declare it will no longer recognize the church as a cooperating church with the Convention and to sever its relationship with the church.

Upon receipt of a submission, the Credentials Committee may inform the church of the concerns raised against it. If necessary to adequately garner the information necessary to fully vet the concern, the identity of the individual or individuals making the allegations may be shared with the church. The Credentials Committee will seek to protect the identity of individuals who make a submission, or a church submitted for inquiry status unless and until it determines the church should be declared not in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention.

If the Credentials Committee forms an opinion that the church is not in friendly cooperation, the Credentials Committee will notify the SBC Executive Committee in accordance with its assignment in SBC Bylaw 8. After this assessment is made the following steps would ensue. The Executive Committee, upon the next scheduled meeting, will consider the recommendation of the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee will issue statements concerning a church's relationship with the Convention as follows: a recommendation to ask the Executive Committee to declare a church not in friendly cooperation with the SBC will be incorporated into the Executive Committee agenda which is distributed to Executive Committee members, Baptist media, and other elected Southern Baptist leaders prior to each of its scheduled meetings.

Statement of Relationship of the Southern Baptist Convention to Its Cooperating Churches

We want to help you understand how the churches in the SBC relate to one another and to the Convention in order to better understand the Credentials Committee's role in processing your concern. That is what we attempt to clarify on this page.

The Southern Baptist Convention is an organization of a specific set of ministries supported by a network of cooperating churches that meet certain criteria spelled out in its Constitution and organized by representatives from those churches. These representatives, called messengers, convene annually to hear reports from the ministry leaders, elect trustees to govern the ministries, and approve a distribution plan for funds contributed by cooperating churches to help underwrite the administrative and program costs of the ministries.

The Convention also elects three standing committees to assist the Convention for a number of practical matters which arise between the Convention's annual meetings—an **Executive Committee** to act for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise assigned; a **Committee on Order of Business** to plan the program of the annual meeting; and a **Credentials Committee** to receive concerns regarding whether a specific church continues to closely identify with the Convention's adopted statement of faith and practice (*The Baptist Faith and Message*) or whether it should be deemed not in "friendly cooperation" with the Convention as defined by the SBC Constitution, Article III.

An amendment to Article III was approved upon the first of two required votes during the 2019 SBC annual meeting, adding numbers 4 and 5 below. If approved on a second vote in June 2020, the amended article will read as follows:

Article III. Composition: The Convention shall consist of messengers who are members of Baptist churches in cooperation with the Convention. The following subparagraphs describe the Convention's current standards and method of determining the maximum number of messengers the Convention will recognize from each cooperating church to attend the Convention's annual meeting.

1. The Convention will only deem a church to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention, and sympathetic with its purposes and work (i.e., a "cooperating" church as that term is used in the Convention's governing documents) which:
 - (1) Has a faith and practice which closely identifies with the Convention's adopted statement of faith. (By way of example, churches which act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior would be deemed not to be in cooperation with the Convention.)
 - (2) Has formally approved its intention to cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention. (By way of example, the regular filing of the annual report requested by the Convention would be one indication of such cooperation.)
 - (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.
 - (4) Does not act in a manner inconsistent with the Convention's beliefs regarding sexual abuse.
 - (5) Does not act to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity.

Churches which qualify to send messengers to the Convention's annual meeting voluntarily and cooperatively agree with a faith and practice that "closely identifies" with the Convention's confessional statement. They also determine for themselves the amount of contributions they forward to help underwrite the ministries of the Convention.

Again, the Convention has no authority over any local church, however, it retains its sovereign right to determine whether it deems a church to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention. If a church is deemed not to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention's adopted statement of faith and practice, the Convention has the autonomous authority to declare it will no longer recognize the church as a cooperating church with the Convention and to sever its relationship with the church.

Likewise, each church is fully autonomous, operating under the governance of its own membership and free to pursue its own interests with or without a relationship to the Convention. This autonomy extends to every matter of church life: its doctrine, its practice, how it receives and dismisses members, its hiring of staff and enlistment of volunteers, setting its budget, receiving of contributions, its internal operations, and other matters. Exercising its autonomy, any church may determine at any time to end its relationship with the Convention at the church's own discretion.