

An Open Letter to Our Southern Baptist Family

We, the undersigned, are Southern Baptist pastors and leaders who love our family of churches and who are grateful for the hard-won complementarian commitments expressed in the Baptist Faith & Message (BF&M).

A recent decision by the SBC Credentials Committee makes it clear that the committee needs stronger and clearer guidance in making decisions about which churches closely identify with the SBC and our confession of faith, particularly regarding churches with women serving with the title and office of “pastor.”

At the 2024 annual meeting in Indianapolis, a proposed amendment fell just short of the supermajority required to amend the SBC Constitution. That amendment would have clarified that the Convention will only deem a church to be in friendly cooperation which “Affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.” It is apparent that the Credentials Committee needs the clarification that this Amendment would have provided.

For that reason, we are supporting a renewed effort to amend the SBC Constitution. We are not offering new language but are supporting an effort to adopt the same language that a majority of the last two conventions wanted to be passed. Because we have already debated this language at the last two conventions, we do not believe that we need to spend another year waiting for the Executive Committee to decide whether to put the amendment before the convention for a vote.

So we are asking messengers to the 2025 SBC in Dallas to suspend the standing rule that would put the amendment in the hands of the Executive Committee, which may or may not report out the amendment the following year. It only takes a simple majority to suspend that rule. Then we are asking messengers to vote in favor of a motion to amend the SBC Constitution with the exact same language approved by 80% of messengers in New Orleans and by 61% of messengers in Indianapolis. After a supermajority approves the amendment in Dallas, we will come together as a supermajority for final passage at the 2026 annual meeting in Orlando.

Here is a summary of the process:

2025 in Dallas: Vote to suspend standing rule 6 (a simple majority)

2025 in Dallas: Vote to adopt the Amendment (66% supermajority)

2026 in Orlando: Vote for final passage of the Amendment (66% supermajority)

We are deciding right now what kind of convention we are going to be. We want to be a convention in friendly cooperation with churches that closely identify with our confession of faith, including our clearly stated beliefs about biblical qualifications for pastoral office. We believe this honors the Lord as we ask him to bless our efforts to reach the world for Christ. Please join us in this effort.

In Christ and for His Fame,

Nate Akin, Executive Director, Pillar Network (Raleigh, NC)

HB Charles, Pastor-Teacher, Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church (Jacksonville, FL)

Jed Coppenger, Lead Pastor, First Baptist Church (Cumming, GA)

Aaron Harvie, Senior Pastor, Highview Baptist Church (Louisville, KY)

Brian Payne, Pastor, Lakeview Baptist Church (Auburn, AL)

Juan Sanchez, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church (Austin, TX)

Clay Smith, Senior Pastor, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church (Marietta, GA)