The Southern Baptist Church is a fellowship of autonomous churches. Each autonomous Protestant church is fully autonomous and is fully autonomous. Each church is a self-governing, voluntary association of local churches that cooperate with one another in a voluntary fellowship. The Southern Baptist Convention is not a church but an association of churches. It cannot and does not unite local congregations into a single “church” or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—local church, association, state convention, and auxiliary—retain their sovereignty and is fully autonomous.

These autonomous Baptist bodies work together in friendly cooperation to achieve common goals. Each autonomous Baptist church, association, ethnic fellowship, and state convention participates in SBC activities voluntarily. The SBC cannot and does not unite local congregations into a single “church” or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—local church, association, state convention, and auxiliary—retain their sovereignty and is fully autonomous.

The SBC is comprised of

- Local churches
- Associations (state and regional)
- Regional or national entities (e.g., the Southern Baptist Convention Board of Missions)
- Denominational councils or missionary initiatives (e.g., the North American Mission Board)
- State conventions
- The Southern Baptist Convention

The SBC’s Purpose

The SBC is a literary, theological, and denominational association designed to facilitate maximum impact for Kingdom missions and ministries, and serve the churches that cooperate with it. It provides a general organization for Baptists in the United States and neighboring countries.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is not a church but an association of churches. It cannot and does not unite local congregations into a single “church” or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—local church, association, state convention, and auxiliary—retain their sovereignty and is fully autonomous.

The SBC’s Purpose

The SBC’s purpose is to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad and any other purposes consistent with its mission, which may include, but are not limited to, Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

The Southern Baptist Convention provides no method for distinguishing personal and property rights, nor does it exercise any control over denominational or missionary initiatives. Each autonomous Baptist church is a self-governing, voluntary association of local churches that cooperate with one another in a voluntary fellowship. The Southern Baptist Convention does none of these, for it is neither a church nor has any authority over the churches. The SBC provides no method for distinguishing personal and property rights, nor does it exercise any control over denominational or missionary initiatives.

The SBC’s purpose is to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad and any other purposes consistent with its mission, which may include, but are not limited to, Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

The SBC’s Annual Meeting

Each June, representatives (called messengers) from churches that cooperate with and support the SBC convene for a two-day annual meeting. The Southern Baptist Convention’s Annual Meeting is an important event for Baptists. It provides a platform for discussing and making decisions on matters of importance to the SBC. The meeting is held in Nashville, Tennessee, and is broadcasted live. The meeting is open to all Southern Baptists who wish to attend.
Eleven Convention ministry entities and the SBC Executive Committee fulfill specific ministries assigned by the messengers to the Convention.

The Convention’s Entities, the Executive Committee, and Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), are as follows:

- **Gateways Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention**
- **Midwest Baptist Theological Seminary**
- **North American Mission Board**
- **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**
- **Office and Religious Liberty Commission**
- **Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention**
- **GuideStone Financial Resources**
- **International Mission Board**
- **Lifeway Christian Resources**
- **North American Mission Board**
- **Woman’s Missionary Union**

**Its Executive Committee**
In addition to the eleven ministry entities, messengers to the Convention elected seventy-nine individuals from across the nation to serve on the Executive Committee (EC). The EC’s president, the SBC recording secretary, and WMU president also serve on the Executive Committee, for a total of forty-two members. The president is charged to serve as the fiduciary, fiscal, and executive entity of the Convention in all its affairs not specifically assigned to another board or entity. The EC is comprised of messengers from thirty-four qualifying states or defined regions and includes about an equal number of pastors and church staff from many church types and sizes and representatives from a wide variety of perspectives.

These eighty-two individuals meet three times each year to prepare and approve the Convention budget, act on advisory capacity in all questions of cooperation among the entities of the Convention and among the SBC and the state conventions; conduct the general work of promotion and publicity of the overall Southern Baptist ministry; work with the entities in regard to their respective ministry statements; and myriad other duties as required in the Bylaws of the Convention.

**Its Funding**
The principal means by which Southern Baptist churches fund their respective convention ministries and the missions and ministries of the SBC is through the Cooperative Program. In 2015-2016, the Cooperative Program provided $4.0 billion, to support the general and special work of the Southern Baptist Convention.

**The Cooperative Program: Like a Mighty River**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Percent of Cooperative Program Gifts Received</th>
<th>Allocations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State and National Missions</td>
<td>50.41%</td>
<td>50.41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach (Lottie Moon Offering)</td>
<td>22.79%</td>
<td>22.79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership (International Offering)</td>
<td>10.65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Churches use a percentage for the Cooperative Program to their states: (giving goal = 4.0 billion)**

**States fund state missions and forward a portion of their gifts to the churches to the SBC (figures range from 35 to 45%):**

**SBC Allocation Budget**

**In addition to the funds made through the Cooperative Program, the Convention, in partnership with WMU, promotes two annual offerings for missions, both named after former missionaries—the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® for North American Missions. The Convention also reserves designated funds for Global Hunger Relief (GHR). All funds given to WMU’s GHR are distributed 80 percent to international hunger ministry and 20 percent to North American ministry.**
The Cooperative Program: Like a Mighty River

Churches send annual mission offerings to the mission board through their state Baptist association for a virtual pipeline to a global mission

Alpharetta, Georgia (1845, 1997)

Nashville, Tennessee (1891)

Dallas, Texas (1918)

GuideStone Financial Resources

Dallas, Texas (1917)

MBTS.edu

Kansas City, Missouri (1957)

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

Mill Valley, California (1944)

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

Mill Valley, California (1944)

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Louisville, Kentucky (1859)

SBCnet/aboutus/convention/directory

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Nashville, Tennessee (1917)

Wheat, North Carolina (1951)

SBC Life

Evangelical Relations; and production and distribution of materials for the annual SBC pastor’s conference; fostering Global Missions; and stewardship promotion; SBC.net web pages and video resources. The SBC operating budget includes funding for the following: • Theological Education; • North American Missions; • Benevolence; • Religious Ethics & Religious Liberty; and • North American hunger ministry. All funds received through GHR are distributed 80 percent to international hunger ministry and 20 percent to the SBC Office of Personal and Church Ministries. Churches send a portion of their gifts from the Cooperative Program to the SBC Office of Personal and Church Ministries. The Cooperative Program: Like a Mighty River Churches use a percentage for the Cooperative Program to their state (goal of 47–57%)

States need to raise a portion of their gifts from the SBC chapters (from 47–57%)

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Eleven Convention ministry entities and the SBC Executive Committee fulfill specific ministries assigned by the messengers to the Convention.

The Convention's Entities, the Executive Committee, and Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) are as follows:

- Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Woman’s Missionary Union
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Office of Religious Liberty Commission
- International Mission Board
- LifeWay Christian Resources
- North American Mission Board
- Cooperative Program
- Women's Missionary Union
- SWBTS.edu
- SEBTS.edu
- IMB.org
- SBC.net
- LBSC.edu
- MBTS.edu
- SBC.Life.net
- WMU.com

The Executive Committee is charged to serve as the fiduciary, fiscal, and executive entity of the Convention in all its affairs not specifically assigned to another board or entity.

Through the Cooperative Program, the state conventions receive a percentage of the funds the SBC receives from state conventions, 97 percent of which is forwarded to the national Convention to fund a host of ministries within the states and across the nation, the Convention created the Cooperative Program and invited the state conventions to partner with it, which they gladly did and do. The vast majority of Southern Baptist churches maintain a historic relationship of what many call “three levels of cooperation.” On the local level, churches contribute to their local Cooperative Program budget, are as follows: Baptist churches—the “Judea” component of cooperative ministry (see Acts 1:8). On the state level, churches participate in common ministries, missions, and fellowship and report back to the Convention at the following annual meeting. The Convention assigns ministry statements and publicize of the overall Southern Baptist ministry; and myriad other duties as spelled out in SBC Bylaws and EC’s six ministry statements.

The Executive Committee includes in addition to the eleven ministry entities, messengers to the Convention elected seventy-nine individuals from across the nation to serve on the SBC Executive Committee (EC). The EC president, SBC recording secretary, and WMU president also serve on the Executive Committee, for a total of twelve members. The Executive Committee is charged to serve as the fiduciary, fiscal, and executive entity of the Convention in all its affairs not specifically assigned to another board or entity. The EC is comprised of laypersons from thirty-four qualifying states or defined regions and includes about an equal number of pastors and church staff from many church types and sizes and laity from a wide variety of professions.

These eighty-two individuals meet three times each year to prepare and review the Convention budget; act in an advisory capacity on all questions of cooperation among the entities of the Convention and among the SBC and the state conventions; conduct the general work of promotion and publicity of the overall Southern Baptist ministry; and work with the entities in regard to their respective ministry statements; and myriad other duties as spelled out in SBC Bylaws 18 and the EC’s six ministry statements.

Its Funding

The principal means by which Southern Baptist churches fund their respective convention and ministry entities is through the Cooperative Program and the SBC Executive Committee. In 2015–2016, the Cooperative Program allocated 50.41% of CP support for State Missions, 50.41% for Northern American Missions, 22.79% to Ethics and Religious Liberty; and 1.65% to North American Missions. Southern Baptists continue to be invited to join this movement through their gifts from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® for North American Missions. The Convention also receives designated funds for Global Hunger Relief (100%). The Cooperative Program is a virtual pipeline to regional and national level support for missions and ministries throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

Sources of Funding

Of the funds the SBC receives from state conventions, 97 percent of every dollar goes directly to national or international missions and ministry through the two mission boards, the convention seminaries, and the SBC’s ethics and religious liberty ministry. The allocation budget is as follows:

- 50.41% to International Missions;
- 1.65% to Northern American Missions;
- 22.79% to Theological Education;
- 1.65% to Ethics and Religious Liberty; and
- 22.79% to the SBC Operating Budget.

The SBC Executive Committee is required to prepare and review the Convention budget; act in an advisory capacity on all questions of cooperation among the entities of the Convention and among the SBC and the state conventions; conduct the general work of promotion and publicity of the overall Southern Baptist ministry; and work with the entities in regard to their respective ministry statements; and myriad other duties as spelled out in SBC Bylaws 18 and the EC’s six ministry statements.
The Southern Baptist Family

Southern Baptists are not hierarchical, with a top-down organizational structure. In fact, Southern Baptists can only be called “denominations” in the most general of senses. What the Southern Baptist Convention, as first organized in 1845, used the term in this general way in the preamble to its Constitution and bylaws was that the SBC cannot and does not unite local churches into a single “church” or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—local church, association, state convention, and auxiliary— retains its sovereignty and is fully autonomous. These autonomous Baptist bodies work together in friendly cooperation to achieve common kingdom objectives and purposes. Each autonomous Baptist church, association, ethnic fellowship, and state convention participates in SBC causes voluntarily.

State Conventions and Local Associations

The SBC maintains a fraternal, cooperative relationship with forty-one state and regional Baptist conventions in the United States and its territories. These state conventions provide multiple services for and among the cooperating churches in their respective states or regions. Some of these services include ministry to at-risk children through residential and foster care, or regions. Some of these services include ministries for pastors and other church workers, and the Southern Baptist Convention’s confession of faith clearly states, “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a matter of moral or doctrinal compulsion. 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 diversity and freedom of action within the limits of the faith and fellowship of the Gospel.”

The Southern Baptist Convention is a missionary organization designed to facilitate maximum spiritual growth and prayer support. To update. Since the SBC is not a religious corporation, SBC ministers are not subject to state or federal laws concerning religious freedom, theological education, and the like. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity and freedom of action within the limits of the faith and fellowship of the Gospel.

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The Southern Baptist Family

Southern Baptists are not denominational, with a top-down, organizational structure. In fact, Southern Baptists can only be called “denominational” in the world’s most general meaning of that term. When the Southern Baptist Convention was first convened in 1845, it used the term in this general way in the preamble to its Constitution. By doctrine and polity, the SBC cannot and does not unite local congregations in the same way that a denomination does. The Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, it used the term in this general way in the preamble to its Constitution. By doctrine and polity, the SBC cannot and does not unite local congregations in the same way that a denomination does. The SBC has historically looked to local associations to determine the “denominational” identity of churches deciding to align with the Convention in its cooperative endeavors. Though a church may be part of the Southern Baptist family without participating with a cooperating state convention or local Baptist association, more than 99 percent of all cooperative churches have historically participated in both state and national ministries. To learn more about the work of Southern Baptists in your area, locate your state on the map posted at SBC.net/stateconventionsearch. Contact information for the state conventions and local associations is listed.

A Church typically aligns with the Southern Baptist Convention by formally declaring that it is a Baptist church. “Heavily cooperative” and “cooperating” are terms used to describe the relationship between churches that cooperate with and support the SBC convention. Each June, representatives (called “messengers”) from the larger family convene for the SBC’s Annual Meeting. The Southern Baptist Convention is a mission organization designed to facilitate maximum impact for Kingdom missions and ministries, designed and sustained by a network of autonomous churches working in cooperation with one another. Such cooperation requires trust; it is natural and biblical that churches would take the opportunity to identify with other like-minded bodies. This allows churches to be a part of a larger enterprise, pooling their resources to establish and advance Great Commission work. A church typically aligns with the Southern Baptist Convention through cooperative relationships with other churches. Churches learn from and complement one another. This is not a matter of moral or doctrinal comparison. You cannot believe and do just anything and remain a part of the Southern Baptist fellowship. All Baptist bodies have limits. Within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. Though many Baptists work closely with other Christian groups on matters of social justice, berieviality, and evangelism in their local communities, the Southern Baptist Convention does not enter into formal relationships with denominational councils or ministry initiatives. The beauty of how Southern Baptists work together for the Kingdom purposes is that each church, association, state convention, and even cooperative diversity. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. Though many Baptists work closely with other Christian groups on matters of social justice, berieviality, and evangelism in their local communities, the Southern Baptist Convention does not enter into formal relationships with denominational councils or ministry initiatives. The beauty of how Southern Baptists work together for the Kingdom purposes is that each church, association, state convention, and even cooperative diversity. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. Though many Baptists work closely with other Christian groups on matters of social justice, berieviality, and evangelism in their local communities, the Southern Baptist Convention does not enter into formal relationships with denominational councils or ministry initiatives. The beauty of how Southern Baptists work together for the Kingdom purposes is that each church, association, state convention, and even cooperative diversity. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. Though many Baptists work closely with other Christian groups on matters of social justice, berieviality, and evangelism in their local communities, the Southern Baptist Convention does not enter into formal relationships with denominational councils or ministry initiatives. The beauty of how Southern Baptists work together for the Kingdom purposes is that each church, association, state convention, and even cooperative diversity. But within those limits, there is room for significant diversity. Though many Baptists work closely with other Christian groups on matters of social justice, berieviality, and evangelism in their local communities, the Southern Baptist Convention does not enter into formal relationships with denominational councils or ministry initiatives.