

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION AND SEND NETWORK CHURCH AFFILIATIONS

A Field Leader's simple guide for navigating conversations about SBC affiliations

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As a Field Leader, you're likely coming to this guide with varying levels of experience about the workings of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). While we hope you read this short, simple document in its entirety, it's structured in a way where you can skip around to the sections most pertinent to you.

WHY WE PRODUCED THIS GUIDE

Picture this likely familiar scene: you sit down with a pastor or church planter — perhaps in your office, over coffee or virtually — and they ask you why they should consider joining the SBC and Send Network. You spend the next few seconds sifting through the mountain of complexity surrounding how, why and what it means to be affiliated with the SBC. You need to give an answer that's clear, concise and helpful, but where do you start?

There are a lot of good things you could offer, but this guide will help you know the *best* and most important things to say. It provides Field Leaders with a simple way to navigate conversations about SBC affiliations, why pastors should consider partnering with the SBC and Send Network, the ways they can partner and common questions you'll be asked. In short, this guide makes your job a little bit easier.

SECTION I

Things to consider before having the conversation

UNDERSTANDING THE CONVERSATION

Before you sit down with a prospective pastor, it's important to know the road you're about to walk. Every conversation will inevitably take different turns and pivots along the way, depending on the pastor with whom you're speaking.

Prepare for the conversation by identifying where the pastor is and what he already knows about the SBC and Send Network. Here are some helpful questions to consider about the pastor:

- Is there already a clear desire to affiliate?
- Why do they want to affiliate?
- Are they skeptical? Do you know what they're skeptical about?
- Is there familiarity with SBC, North American Mission Board (NAMB)/Send Network and the Cooperative Program (CP)?
- Do they have any misconceptions about the SBC?

Additionally, it's important for Field Leaders, Send City Missionaries (SCMs) and Church Planting Catalysts (CPCs) to have a general understanding of how their state conventions and local associations work.

IDENTIFYING CHURCHES TO CONSIDER FOR AFFILIATION

In your ministry context, there are likely pastors of independent or non-denominational churches who have a background with the SBC and even some who appreciate NAMB, Send Network and the SBC as a whole. However, they may be unclear about the process and benefits of affiliation. Building the Send Network family

in your ministry context should include clarifying just how simple it is to join the family, what's expected of those who join and what benefits are available.

Some churches simply need a nudge and basic directional knowledge or leadership (low-hanging fruit). Other churches may have an aversion to SBC (high-hanging fruit).

Exercise: Identifying Non-Send Network churches

CPCs, SMC and lead pastor partners, take a minute and identify five independent or non-denominational — but like-minded — churches in your area and answer these questions:

- Why hasn't _____ church partnered with Send Network?
- Have I ever explained the benefits to them and explicitly invited them to participate?
- What are the issues, questions or reasons preventing them from doing so?
- Is this church low-hanging or high-hanging fruit?

SECTION II

Why the SBC and Send Network?

Why should a prospective pastor consider affiliating with the SBC and Send Network? And perhaps an equally relevant, but often neglected, question — what are the costs of doing so? What would make them consider affiliating?

The benefits of partnering with the SBC and NAMB/Send Network are:

- **The far-reaching kingdom impact of the SBC through the entities**

The SBC has ministry entities tasked with [specific ministry assignments](#):

1. The North American Mission Board
2. The International Mission Board (IMB)
3. Six seminaries: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Note: Affiliation with the SBC includes a 50% reduction in tuition to all six of the SBC seminaries.
4. The Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission
5. Lifeway Christian Resources
6. GuideStone Financial Resources

Why have a convention of churches? [Listen here](#) for a compelling, three-minute response from David Platt.

- **The far-reaching kingdom impact of Send Network**

We believe the Great Commission is a call to plant new churches.

NAMB's church planting arm — Send Network — is a family of churches across North America, planting churches everywhere for everyone. We want to see a healthy, multiplying church in every community across North America.

Send Network is a family of planters, church plants, prayerful and participating churches and advocates who recognize the need for gospel-centered, evangelistic churches to transform lives and communities, especially in [Send Cities](#).

Send Network has identified the following focus areas with great kingdom potential:

1. Major cities with high population density and diversity
2. College communities filled with students preparing to disperse throughout the world
3. Military communities where the culture is unique and congregations are transient

Partnership with Send Network gives churches access to the very best assessment, orientation, training, coaching, care and resourcing for church planters in North America.

Send Network Accomplishments:

- Currently, NAMB/Send Network is involved in more than 500 church starts in the U.S. and Canada annually.
- For 20 years, not a single SBC church was planted in the San Juan metro area; but since 2016, Send Network has helped start 16 new congregations.
 - Nearly 50% of all SBC churches in Puerto Rico were either planted or revitalized with NAMB and Send Network's help since 2010.
 - These churches account for 40% of the island's 2019 baptisms.
 - In 2020, that number increased to 67% of all baptisms on the island.
- 51.7% of churches in Canada have been planted since 2010.
- 33.76% of 2018 baptisms in New England come from churches planted since 2010.
- We have also made all of our training and assessment materials available to state conventions free of charge to use in their churches' planting efforts. Many South and many non-South conventions currently use Send Network's assessment and training, ensuring their churches and planters have access to resources and tools for sustainable, healthy ministry.

- **Send Network's commitment to helping raise up holistically healthy church planters and church plants**

Send Network values family, multiplication and restoration. We believe church planters aren't called to their mission alone, and we come alongside them as a family of churches. As a family, we seek to multiply while praying we will see a healthy, multiplying church in every community across North America. This is easier said than done. We recognize there is holistic brokenness (spiritual, emotional, social and economic) in every community, and we believe restoration is the recovery and pursuit of God's design for holistic health. At Send Network, restoration is our value, and [Send Relief](#) (the compassion ministry of NAMB/IMB) is the mechanism.

Send Network is committed to:

1. Funding Send Network-assessed church planters
2. Seeing more [residencies](#) established
3. Resourcing planters, their families and teams with ongoing support (e.g. events, podcasts, articles, resource library, etc.)
4. Planting churches together
5. Helping every church take their next step from prayer to participation to planting
6. Pursuing wholistic health and restoration in communities through [Send Relief](#)

- **Collaboration among local, state and national levels**

- **Financial Contribution — Cooperative Program**

Churches in partnership with the SBC are asked to give a self-determined amount to the CP. This fund supports the ministries and entities of the SBC (listed above).

NAMB is funded through three main sources:

- The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO): Makes up 50% of budget
- The Cooperative Program: Makes up 35% of budget
- Other donations: Make up 15% of budget

The AAEO is the primary way we support mission efforts in North America. One hundred percent of gifts given to AAEO are used to support Southern Baptist missionaries serving across the United States and Canada.

- **Leveraging engagement of skills, competencies, experiences**

Affiliations are the path for many gifted and competent leaders to have a seat at the table and help CPCs, SCMs and state conventions.

SECTION III

How to affiliate

Refer the interested pastor to explore more about affiliation with SBC by encouraging him to visit sbc.net/join, or share with him the following information.

Your church must:

- Have a faith and practice which closely identifies with the SBC's current statement of faith, [Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#).
- Affirm SBC's mission and method of cooperation.
- Invest/support SBC missions and ministries (at the SBC national convention level) and submit initial Cooperative Program contribution.

You can affiliate at the state/regional level or at the national level.

State level: To begin the process of affiliating your church through a state or regional convention which serves your area, [find your state convention here](#). The state convention staff team will be happy to assist you in this process. Joining at the state level also affiliates you on the national level with no additional process needed.

National level: To complete the SBC affiliation process, at the national level, please complete the [online form](#) on the SBC site. Joining on the national level does not affiliate you with your state convention, but the state convention will be notified of your national affiliation.

SECTION IV

Pathways to partnering with the SBC

THE LOCAL LEVEL

Local Baptist associations exist in most states and help nearby churches work together to reach their communities for Christ. You can [find a directory of local associations here](#). In [major cities across North America](#), you will also find Send Network "City Teams." Each is made up of pastors, church planters and volunteers working together to multiply churches in the city. The local networking and fellowship that happens among pastors and ministry leaders is often the most meaningful and helpful part of partnership with the Send Network family. Local associations exist to facilitate cooperation between churches (specifically for mission).

THE STATE LEVEL

State conventions play an important role in the coordination of initiatives on a state and regional level. These entities often have the resources to employ staff to organize efforts and facilitate coordinated movement.

It is common for state conventions to have evangelism and church planting directors and to have teams with expertise in succession, pastoral transition, church health, church finance and a variety of other topics relevant to local churches.

Structurally speaking, state conventions elect pastors to serve in leadership positions and much like various administrations in state government, those leaders often bring new insights and fresh perspectives to coordinated missiological efforts statewide.

THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A church can [get involved](#) at the national level by supporting the work of convention entities and ministries by giving through the Cooperative Program. In addition, each SBC church is allowed to elect messengers who will participate in the annual meeting, ensuring the church has not only a voice but also a vote in convention matters and direction.