

New NAMB church-starting guidelines won't impact BGCT, officials maintain_101804

October 15, 2004

Posted: 10/15/04

New NAMB church-starting guidelines won't impact BGCT, officials maintain

DALLAS—Guidelines adopted by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board that require members of new churches to affirm biblical inerrancy and male-only deacons will not impact church-starting efforts funded through the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Executive Director Charles Wade insists.

“Texas Baptists have their eyes firmly set on a path that leads to hundreds of new churches in coming years,” Wade said. “Our church starters will continue to help open congregation doors under the same standards and requirements that we have used for years.”

Mission board trustees voted Oct. 6 to approve a 34-page document titled “Ecclesiological Guidelines to Inform Southern Baptist Church Planters.”

"Our church starters will continue to help open congregation doors under the same standards and requirements that we have used for years."

**—BGCT
Executive
Director
Charles Wade**

As a detailed interpretation of Scripture and Baptist church polity, it adds a new layer of requirements beyond the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message statement.

"Church-planting strategies and endeavors must be conducted in such a way that they are obedient and submitted to the New Testament for faith and practice as well as committed to Baptist ecclesiology as stated in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000," the guidelines state.

The guidelines indicate new congregations should have a covenant that members can agree upon as a condition for membership.

"Covenants are based upon and must reflect biblical principles," the guidelines state. "Although they may state the various beliefs and convictions of the congregation, the covenant of a Baptist church must

minimally affirm three things—the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the church and its members; the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible; and the membership of the church consisting only of regenerate persons who have professed their faith in believer's baptism by immersion.”

Written by Stan Norman, associate professor of theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the document was affirmed by the deans of the SBC's six seminaries and by two seminary presidents, Paige Patterson of Southwestern and Phil Roberts of Midwestern Baptist Theological seminaries.

Ken Hall, president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, criticized the new guidelines.

“This act saddens me and further breaks my heart that Southern Baptist agencies and institutions are continuing to move away from historic Baptist positions,” said Hall, president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences in Dallas.

“I am thrilled that the BGCT and other free Baptists are focused on reaching a lost world and strengthening the work of local churches.”

The BGCT will not require adherence to the mission board's guidelines, Wade said.

“It is important to remember that churches start churches—not agencies or conventions. The BGCT works with established Bible-believing churches that maintain theological standards for the new churches they plant. We are committed to kingdom enterprises that will spread the good news of salvation through Christ to everyone.”

Each state Baptist convention requests funding from NAMB for church-starting projects. The BGCT will not request funds from NAMB that require church planters to compromise their convictions by affirming the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message, said E.B. Brooks, coordinator of the BGCT's

church missions and evangelism section.

Compiled from reports by Associated Baptist Press and Texas Baptist Communications

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.