

Study shows North Carolina Baptists don't like the SBC but continue financial support_53104

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BUIES CREEK, N.C. (ABP)-The Southern Baptist Convention and its fundamentalist statement of faith are not viewed favorably among rank-and-file Baptists in North Carolina, even though most Baptist churches in the state still support the SBC financially, a university survey reveals.

By a 10-to-1 margin, church members in the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina prefer the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message statement to the version that replaced it in 2000.

A majority of churches in the state convention still support the SBC financially. Nonetheless, according to the survey, a minority of those

churches' members personally support the SBC.

The scientific survey, conducted by Baptist-affiliated Campbell University, showed 46.2 percent of North Carolina Baptists have a negative view of the Southern Baptist Convention. Meanwhile, 21.2 percent said they know about the SBC but don't support it financially, and 19.8 percent of individuals said they do give financial support.

While North Carolina is traditionally viewed as a moderate Baptist stronghold, conservative candidates have dominated statewide elections in recent years, leading moderates to fear they are losing influence. Some moderate Baptists have met to consider diverting contributions away from the state convention.

According to the survey, however, North Carolina Baptists have a much more positive view of their state convention—and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship—than of the SBC.

The survey showed 39.2 percent support the state convention financially, while 18 percent know about it but don't support it financially. And 27.2 percent view the North Carolina convention negatively.

About 20 percent of respondents were not aware of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an Atlanta-based moderate alternative to the SBC, but only 10.2 percent view it negatively. Another 39.3 percent support CBF financially, and 18.1 percent know about it but don't send support.

On the issue of the Baptist Faith & Message, a majority of North Carolina Baptists—52.8 percent—are unaware of the statement and its contents. Those who are familiar with the faith statement overwhelmingly prefer the 1963 version (29.5 percent) to the 2000 version (3.1 percent). But 10.7 percent said they don't think Baptists should have such statements at all.

The 2000 statement, drafted by a committee of leading SBC conservatives,

differs from the 1963 statement in that it does not recognize Jesus Christ as the criteria for interpreting Scripture, specifically disapproves of female pastors and calls for wives to submit to their husbands.

The study was based on surveys of 384 individuals from 31 randomly selected churches. About 60 percent of the respondents are more than 50 years of age, and most are active church members. The study was headed by Ed Johnson of Campbell University's mass communications department in collaboration with the state convention staff.

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