

Church deemed too Calvinist for Kentucky Baptist association

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OWENSBORO, Ky. (ABP) - A Kentucky Baptist association denied membership to a church after a credentials committee found its confessional statement too Calvinistic, according to a report in the *Western Recorder*.

Daviess-McLean Baptist Association voted 104-9 to deny membership to Pleasant Valley Community Church in Owensboro during its annual meeting held Oct. 17-18, the Kentucky Baptist Convention news journal [reported](#) in its Oct. 25 issue.

Jamus Edwards

“Our concern in the initial stages of our investigation revolved around the fact that Pleasant Valley Community Church’s confessional statement is one that (is) Calvinistic in nature,” the newspaper quoted from a recommendation by the association’s credentials committee. “It affirms the doctrine of election and grace.”

“While we know the doctrine is not heresy, we do recognize that it is vastly different than the majority of churches within the DMBA,” the statement noted.

Pleasant Valley Community Church’s 60-page confession of faith affirms: “From before the foundation of the world, in order to display His glory, God freely and unchangeably ordained all things that would come to pass. From the casting of the lot, to the bird falling from the sky, to the activities of the nations, to the plans of politicians, to the secret acts of individuals, to what

will happen to us tomorrow, to scheduling the very day that we will die, God has written our stories and the stories of the entire universe."

That includes "the results of His plan of salvation as set forth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"We believe that God's election is unconditional — from Old Testament Israel to individual sinners," the statement says. "That is, from before the foundation of the world, God chose in His grace to save for Himself an elect people through Jesus Christ. God's choice of His elect was in no way affected, or conditioned by, some merit or deed that He foresaw these individuals would possess. Neither (as many argue) did God make His choice based upon those whom He foresaw 'would' have chosen Him of their own will and accord."

Frank Page, head of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, recently [identified](#) the growing influence of Calvinism — also called Reformed Theology or the Doctrines of Grace — as one of the biggest challenges facing the nation's second-largest faith group.

According to a 2007 study by LifeWay Research, about one in 10 Southern Baptist pastors considered themselves to be five-point Calvinists. Among recent seminary graduates the rate nearly tripled, to 29 percent. Page, a former SBC president elected as the Executive Committee's CEO last year, said he hears often from churches struggling with the divide between Calvinist and non-Calvinist — also known as Arminian -- theology.

Those competing views over predestination versus free will have always been around. For generations Southern Baptists functioned with a modified Calvinist consensus that affirmed the doctrine of once-saved-always-saved while softening other teachings like double-predestination -- that God elects both the saved and the damned -- that are affirmed by other groups like Primitive Baptists but largely rejected by Southern Baptists in favor of

a sawdust-trail evangelism of whosoever will may come.

That has begun to change in recent decades, with the rise of a [New Calvinism](#) influenced by leaders including Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Albert Mohler, Pastor John Piper of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis and lighting-rod preacher Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle that some Southern Baptists view as a return to the denomination's theological roots.

Jamus Edwards, a Southern Seminary graduate and now pastor of preaching and vision at Pleasant Valley Community Church, told the *Western Recorder* that the church does not self-identify as Calvinist because it is not "helpful in most contexts" but rather "distracting and largely misunderstood, precisely like it was in this situation with the DMBA."

Greg Faulls, the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro, who recommended Edwards' church for membership in May, said he thought the church's teachings fell within parameters of the SBC's Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement, "but apparently the association didn't agree."

Faulls said he was disappointed by the credentials committee report but didn't challenge it because he felt the group had "a pretty good pulse" of the association.

"It just wouldn't be worth having a disharmonious discussion when the chances of that being voted on affirmatively were so slim," he said. "It was obvious that the issue of more reformed thinking in this church was an issue of concern."

In August Daviess-McLean Baptist Association convened a special session to withdraw fellowship from another church that allowed a local chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays to use its building for

meetings.

Messengers at that meeting [voted](#) 242-24 to withdraw fellowship from the Journey Fellowship, formerly named Seven Hills Baptist Church in Owensboro, deeming the church's refusal to ask PFLAG to meet elsewhere as implied acceptance of homosexuality, which the majority of the association's churches view as a sin.

-Bob Allen is managing editor of Associated Baptist Press.