

# GuideStone will do business with Global Methodists

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DALLAS (RNS)—Southern Baptists do not believe women can be pastors or churches should baptize infants. But that won't stop them from doing business with non-Baptist churches that disagree.

The Global Methodist Church, a relatively new denomination made up mostly of former United Methodists, announced this week Dallas-based GuideStone Financial Resources “will administer its retirement, health insurance, and ancillary benefit programs” for the denomination starting in July.



GuideStone, which provides insurance and retirement plans to pastors, is an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, which last summer passed a constitutional

amendment that bars member churches from having women in any pastoral role. That amendment, first proposed by Mike Law, an SBC pastor from Virginia, must be confirmed in 2024 to take effect.

Saddleback Church in Southern California, one of the nation's largest congregations, and Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., were expelled from the SBC in 2023 for having women pastors.

The SBC's statement of faith previously also limited the role of pastor to men, but there had been disagreement over whether that limit applied only to the role of senior pastor or to any pastor on a church staff.

The Global Methodist Church, by contrast, affirms women pastors.

“As part of its decision to have GuideStone administer its benefits programs, the Global Methodist Church has communicated to GuideStone that it is unequivocally committed to the ordination and deployment of women in any and all leadership positions in the Global Methodist Church and its regional conferences and local churches,” Keith Boyette, transitional connectional officer for the Global Methodist Church, told Religion News Service.

When it was founded in 2022, leaders of the Global Methodist Church had named Wespeth, which manages benefits for the United Methodist Church, to administer denominational benefits, but they have since decided to make a change.

Denominational rules require Global Methodist Church congregations to work with the church’s plan administrator—in this case, GuideStone.

Julie Capozzi, managing director for communications at Wespeth, said the agency could still provide services to Global Methodist Church congregations that wanted them.

“We are positioned to serve an individual GMC church for their employee retirement services if they choose to remain with us,” she said.

The new denomination currently has 4,290 congregations and 4,400 clergy—most of them formerly United Methodists. More than 7,600 congregations have left the United Methodist Church since 2019, including more than 5,000 in 2023, in a schism mainly over LGBTQ affirmation and ordination.

Boyette said he did not have statistics on how many of the Global Methodist Church’s clergy are women. The denomination’s Transitional Leadership Council includes two women pastors, according to the Global Methodist Church website.

# GuideStone has history of serving non-SBC churches



Hance Dilbeck

GuideStone has worked with non-Southern Baptist churches since 2004 after getting permission from the denomination's annual meeting to do so, GuideStone President Hance Dilbeck Jr. said. Those denominations may disagree with the SBC over pastoral roles but agree on other core beliefs, he said.

"While we may disagree on some beliefs and practice, we share far more in common with these brothers and sisters than we have differences and are able to serve them effectively in their benefit needs," he said. "All have affirmed that they share historic biblical convictions regarding Scripture, Christology, Gospel proclamation and marriage."

Dilbeck said the constitutional amendment applies to SBC churches and not to churches that GuideStone serves outside the SBC.

"We trust Southern Baptists to make a final decision and respect the will of the convention," Dilbeck said.

GuideStone only will work with SBC churches that are in good standing with the denomination or one of its state conventions. That would rule out churches that have been expelled from the denomination, even if they previously did business with GuideStone.

Law told RNS the Bible, not the amendment he backs, bars women from the pastorate. However, he did not see the amendment affecting GuideStone's work.

"God limits the pastorate to men in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, not an amendment," said Law, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Arlington, Va. "The proposed constitutional amendment addresses which churches may send messengers to the SBC's annual meeting. It does not address who GuideStone serves; that decision is left to the trustees of GuideStone."

Boyette said the Global Methodist Church is confident in its choice of GuideStone.

"The Global Methodist Church has been assured by the leadership of GuideStone that decisions made by the Southern Baptist Convention on issues such as the ordination of women or women serving in any clergy role do not and will not impact the services that GuideStone provides to the Global Methodist Church."