

NAMB will endorse and support only male church planters

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The Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board issued a statement making clear it will limit endorsement and funding exclusively to church plants with male pastors.

"Only qualified men" will "serve as the communicator for teaching and preaching" in the main worship services of church starts that receive NAMB financial support, according to the [Oct. 14 statement](#).

NAMB cites "fidelity" to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message as its rationale for limiting endorsement and funding to "church planters who have a faith and practice consistent with our convention's adopted statement of faith and who seek to honor our Southern Baptist partners."

"Our ministry assignment is to serve our brothers and sisters across the convention in autonomous SBC churches," the NAMB statement says. "We recognize there are differing views on how best to interpret and apply Article VI of The Baptist Faith and Message, which affirms the truth that 'both men and women are gifted for service in the church' and that 'the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.'"

'Reflect the practice of most Southern Baptists'

The statement continues: "We will continue to partner with and assist any cooperating churches. We believe it best, however, to reserve endorsement and funding for planters who are willing to reflect the practice of most Southern Baptists in this issue."

NAMB “has sometimes required church planters to adopt certain guidelines as a way of fostering a strong relationship with the majority of Southern Baptist churches in belief and practice,” the statement noted.

The agency compared its position restricting support only to churches with male pastors to its requirement that NAMB-endorsed church planters abstain from alcoholic beverages.

Consequently, NAMB requires its church planters to line up with the practice of “the majority of Southern Baptist churches” that believe only “qualified men” can hold the title of “pastor/bishop/elder/overseer,” the statement says.

“Since culture, practice and methodology in the early years of a church plant set a foundation for future ministry, all endorsed Send Network planters will agree to abide by this guideline for the duration of their endorsement period,” the statement concludes.

Ezell: ‘Complementarian by conviction’

NAMB President [Keith Ezell told Baptist Press](#): “We are always walking with planters through the challenges of their missionary work and clarifying our guidance as they seek to serve God as he has called them. NAMB reaffirmed again this week that we always have and always will only endorse biblically qualified men as pastors, fulfilling those responsibilities unique to that of a pastor.

“We are committed to the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 and are complementarian by conviction. There should be no doubt about our expectations.”



Tom Buck

Tom Buck, pastor of First Baptist Church in Lindale, had been vocal in calling for NAMB to abide by the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message statement that limits the office of pastor to men.

Buck [tweeted](#): “I am thankful for @kevinezell taking a stand on this. For the record, whether approved or not, multiple NAMB plants had women preaching and some with the title of pastor. This policy on prohibition of women pastors/preaching in corporate worship of NAMB church plants is new & needed.”

In a [later tweet](#), he added: “I wish NAMB would have said, ‘While we have always held this commitment, we needed to be clear in our policy because some church plants chose to veer from our commitment. And we want the SBC to know we’re doing everything possible to assure this does not happen in the future.’”

Baptist Press reported NAMB issued a statement in February saying out of 1,200 endorsed church planters at that time, six churches listed a woman with the title of pastor or in a staff role.

“Those have been addressed,” NAMB stated. “We individually and appropriately address these situations as they come to our attention.”