

# Voices: Correcting misunderstanding about BGCT/NAMB agreement

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It has become obvious in recent years that clarity is our friend in the church. A lack of clarity inevitably leads to a misunderstanding and miscommunication among the people of God, which unnecessarily fractures our unity.

## Responding to Toby Druin

In a recent [opinion piece for the \*Baptist Standard\*](#), Editor Emeritus Toby Druin made some comments regarding the recent church planting agreement between Texas Baptists and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In the opinion article, Druin surmised the vote by the BGCT Executive Board to enter into the agreement with NAMB “nullified the convention action” from the BGCT’s 2024 annual meeting, during which the messengers voted down a motion to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message.

Unfortunately, Druin's opinion is based on misunderstood and/or misconstrued facts about the agreement. Therefore, he has painted the action of the board in a very negative light and misinformed Texas Baptists regarding the revised relationship between the two conventions. The facts need to be clarified.

# Clarifying the facts

## **‘Closely identifies’**

First, Dr. Druin stated: “The Southern Baptist Convention requires any church considered a ‘fully cooperating’ SBC church must adopt the 2000 BFM. It has become the SBC creed.”

I understand Dr. Druin’s is an opinion piece, and the last statement clearly is his opinion. However, the first part of that statement is unequivocally untrue.

The [SBC constitution](#) states: “The Convention will only deem a church to be in friendly cooperation with the Convention ... which: 1. Has a faith and practice which closely identifies with the Convention’s adopted statement of faith” (Article III.1.1).

This is the only qualification within the SBC constitution that establishes any guideline for a church’s statement of faith, or which defines if any particular statement must be adopted. There also is no additional “fully cooperating” category listed anywhere else in the document.

In [a 2023 article](#), Jay Adkins, a Louisiana pastor who has served various local, state and national Baptist entities, including serving as first vice president at the 2024 SBC annual meeting, wrote: “It is a fact that our confessional statement has never been a litmus test for entrance into the SBC. There is no requirement to adopt a particular statement of faith to join us in our work ... not even the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) in any of its forms.”

So, let’s be clear: The SBC does not, and never has, required a church to adopt the 2000 BFM—or any other statement of faith—in order to be a fully cooperating church.

## **Grant isn't new**

Second, Druin writes: "What came out of the meetings, according to the *Standard*, was a plan, subsequently endorsed by NAMB, to provide a \$300,000 grant to the BGCT for planting churches ..."

He seems to imply—at least, it's my interpretation—the \$300,000 is something new. However, this is not the case. The \$300,000 grant from NAMB to Texas Baptists has been in place for almost 15 years, in the same way it has been with many southern state conventions.

In fact, the new agreement states: "NAMB will *continue* to relate to BGCT as a grant state convention at the *same rate* of \$300,000 a year ..." (emphasis added). Nothing has changed regarding the amount.

## **Statement of faith**

Third, Druin states the agreement requires church plants "have to approve the 2000 BFM to obtain start-up money from the North American Mission Board."

This is true. However, it's not new. This was the agreement ever since the grant began. And doesn't it just make sense? It is common sense to expect an organization with a statement of faith/beliefs/values to ensure its money is only used to fund initiatives that match its adopted system of beliefs.

Yes, I believe a church could plant a biblical Baptist church that has as its statement of faith the 1963 or 1925 BFM, or even the New Hampshire Confession or some other orthodox statement of faith.

But it is not the SBC's responsibility to open wide their church-planting coffers to anyone and everyone, and then have to vet every nuanced belief statement that comes their way. Having the convention voted-on and approved statement of belief be the standard to receive SBC church planting funds simply makes sense.

## **An unfortunate detail**

Finally, I do want to note an unfortunate piece in the agreement that I believe lacks clarity, and which Druin correctly identifies.

He states the grant is for “planting churches in good standing in the SBC, that is, which sign the 2000 BFM, and the new churches also will be expected to sign the 2000 statement.”

Through the discussion process leading up to this agreement, it was stated repeatedly that the planting church *would not* have to be a 2000 BFM-affirming church, but simply had to *plant* a 2000 BFM-affirming church. Somehow, this was not reflected in the final agreement, or at best, the language lacks clarity. Whether that will change officially or unofficially remains to be seen.

Even so, why would we reject the partnership between Texas Baptists and NAMB simply because they have this stipulation tied to the grant?

## **More planting funds available**

As Druin notes himself, according to BGCT Executive Director Julio Guarneri, the \$300,000 grant only accounts for 10 percent of the BGCT’s church planting funding. In other words, 90 percent of the church-planting budget is available to any church within the BGCT to plant a church.

Let the many 2000 BFM-affirming BGCT churches pull first from the grant, while the remaining budget is still wide open for all BGCT churches, regardless of BFM version or their affiliation with the SBC. There’s plenty of money available.

In fact, at the end of 2024, there was \$300,000 left in the BGCT church-planting budget. In 2023, there was around \$700,000 remaining. I would suggest the real issue here is not the source or “restrictions” of the church-planting funds, but the need to plant more churches collectively.

# Opens more resources

This matter between Texas Baptists and NAMB has been raised, discussed, worked out and approved. It doesn't encroach on any BGCT church's autonomy or opportunity for church planting. And, in addition to the funding, it provides a wide array of church-planting resources and guidance that are open to the entire BGCT family of churches.

The agreement and the \$300,000 it continues to provide are not bait. It's not the traitor's lure, as has been uncharitably suggested. It's a partnership. It's cooperation, and cooperation is *not* coercion. To suggest otherwise suggests less than honorable motives.

Paul encouraged Titus, the young church planter in Crete, to "avoid foolish debates, ... quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless" (Titus 3:9).

Isn't it time we who call either—or both—the BGCT and SBC home agreed with Paul?

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