

POLICY FOR MINISTRY RELATIONSHIPS

Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

Rationale for Ministry Relationships

Biblical Rationale

Various times in the New Testament churches cooperated with one another to accomplish a common goal, (2 Corinthians 8, 9; Philippians 4; 3 John). While no formal association of churches existed, such as state conventions, the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance is found throughout scripture (Ecclesiastes 4, Luke 9).

The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention ("The Convention" or "The SBTC") is committed to carrying out the Great Commission tasks of evangelism and discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20). The Convention may at times consider ministry relationships with institutions or organizations that can assist in accomplishing these divine mandates.

Theological Rationale

The Convention holds a core value of theological agreement. Recognizing the church as autonomous, the Convention claims autonomy as well. The SBTC has chosen to set theological parameters for affiliation among the churches. Therefore the SBTC would enter into a ministry relationship with those institutions or organizations that meet those parameters.

Missiological Rationale

The SBTC desires to work with Great Commission entities. Without creating needless bureaucracy, the SBTC seeks to provide mission and ministry tools for the affiliated churches. In order to do so, the SBTC is willing to enter ministry relationships.

Foremost for the SBTC is evangelism and missions that result in new church starts. Other missions and ministry efforts must fit within the context of the Great Commission. Priority in funding will be directed to missions and evangelism. New church starts will continue to receive the largest emphasis.

Practical Aspects

Coordination of mission/evangelism and ministry activities is being done with a limited staff, paid consultants and volunteers. There is no desire on the part of the SBTC to form new organizations or duplicate ministries that are already in existence and are willing to enter into a ministry relationship.

Related entities under this policy may be eligible to receive funding from the Convention. Any funding shall be administered according to the Business and Financial Plan. Pursuant to the Convention's bylaws, the Executive Board may enter into, modify, and terminate an affiliation with any entity. Any funding allocation from a budget line item exclusively named and used for support of an entity related under this policy shall be recommended by the Executive Board to the Convention and established by the messengers. However, pursuant to the Convention's bylaws, the Executive Board may eliminate allocations determined by the messengers for the entity at any time.

Spiritual Understanding

The work undertaken in these ministries is the work of God for the benefit of His Kingdom. Each relationship shall be entered into with the understanding that no legal contract, partnership, joint venture, or agency is being created. No ministry relationship shall be undertaken with an entity which does not hold an exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

1. Each ministry relationship is founded upon a voluntary understanding between the SBTC and another entity to cooperate together in the task of missions and ministry.
2. The SBTC and the other entity shall each remain independent and autonomous organizations.

3. Neither the SBTC nor the other entity will seek to abridge or control the other.
4. Each will select, employ, retain, and supervise its employees, volunteers, members, officers, directors and agents without any participation by the other in those matters.
5. Each shall remain free to enter into other similar relationships with other institutions or organizations.
6. Each is expected to comply with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
7. Either may terminate the relationship at any time without cause and without the necessity of any prior notice to the other.

Method for entering into a Ministry Relationship:

1. Any entity desiring a Ministry Relationship with the SBTC will petition the Ministry Relationships Department of the SBTC, indicating a desire for such relationship.
2. The Ministry Relationships Department, in consultation with the Executive Director, will advise the Ministry Relationships Committee of all requests, make a recommendation as to whether to approve or decline each request, and, if appropriate, recommend the type of relationship to be considered. The Ministry Relationships Committee will determine the appropriate response to each request.
3. Prior to recommending the approval of a requested relationship, the Ministry Relationships Department will provide each entity a copy of this Policy on Ministry Relationships and will confirm that the entity wishes to proceed pursuant to the policy.
4. All relationships approved by the Ministry Relationships Committee will be presented by the committee to the SBTC's Executive Board for approval.
5. Relationships approved by the Executive Board will be confirmed by the signing of a letter by both parties. The letter will contain a statement confirming that the relationship is being undertaken under this policy and will reference a review period for each relationship. In the case of Cooperative Ministry Relationships, the letter may reference potential SBTC funding and the SBTC's ability to identify individuals willing to serve on the entities' board of trustees.
6. Any approval of a ministry relationship adopted by the Board shall be reported as information to the messengers at the next Annual Meeting.

Types of Ministry Relationships

I. Cooperative Ministry Relationships

- A. This type of relationship is intended for educational or family support institutions that enhance the ministries of SBTC churches. It is not appropriate for fellowships or other types of ministry resource providers.
- B. Only an entity which comports with the following shall be considered for a Cooperative Ministry Relationship.

- i. The entity affirms its agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and the principles of the Cooperative Program.
- ii. The entity engages an independent CPA to perform year-end audit of its books and records and will provide a copy of its audited financial statements, and any accompanying audit reports and management letters, to the Convention on an annual basis for informational purposes. (The SBTC will recommend that the entity become a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and adhere to the standards of conduct required to remain a member in good standing.)
- iii. The entity will not solicit funding from SBTC cooperating churches.
- iv. The entity will permit the SBTC to identify and communicate to the entity the names of individuals willing to serve on the entity's board of directors, if nominated and elected to do so by the entity, and will permit the Executive Director of the SBTC or his designee to serve as a non-voting member of its board of directors and of any committee which is authorized to exercise the power of the board of directors.

II. Fraternal Ministry Relationships

- A. This type of relationship is intended for fellowships and organizations that have risen out of Texas Baptist life and is not intended for institutions, or commercial, sole proprietors or ministry resource providers under the primary control and direction of an individual.
- B. Only an entity which comports with the following shall be considered for a Fraternal Ministry Relationship.
 - i. The entity must hold a high view of Scripture. A high view of Scripture would include but not be limited to the position that the Bible is factual in character and historicity in such matters as: 1) the supernatural character of the biblical miracles which occurred as factual events in time and space, 2) the historical accuracy of biblical narratives which occurred precisely as the text of Scripture indicates, and 3) the actual authorship of biblical writings as attributed by scripture itself.
 - ii. The entity must be in basic agreement with Southern Baptist distinctives. Southern Baptist distinctives would include but not be limited to 1) salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone [inclusive of security of the believer] 2) baptism by immersion of believers only, and 3) the Bible is the final rule of faith and practice.