



District of Columbia Baptist Convention

One Faith. Many Cultures. Endless Possibilities.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement to the Executive Committee of the SBC-General

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On January 18, 2018, Mr. D. August Boto wrote to welcome representatives from the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC) to attend the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to be held on February 19-20. Meetings of three committees were to address “The continued relationship between the DCBC and Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC and how that relationship may disaffect having a continued relationship between the DCBC and the Southern Baptist Convention.” Mr. Boto informed DCBC that their “... opportunity to speak to the matter, though likely, is not certain, and would be up to the chairpersons of the various subsets of the Executive Committee.” The matter was to be considered by the Bylaws Workgroup, the Administrative Committee and the Executive Committee in plenary session.”

Two representatives from the District of Columbia Baptist Convention attended the session as welcomed. These are Dr. Robert D. Cochran, Executive Director/Minister of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and Dr. Joseph W. Lyles, pastor of the Fort Foote Baptist Church, Fort Washington, MD.

Dr. Cochran prepared statements for the varied work groups and committees involved in discussion. In the plenary session of the **Executive Committee** he did not speak, following the customary practices of that Committee in plenary session. He was prepared to give the following statement:

“... The facts are important to any discussion regarding the position of Calvary Baptist Church. We know that Calvary Baptist Church stated publicly through official action in 2012 that they are not a part of the Southern Baptist Convention. They also communicated such directly to the Southern Baptist Convention. If they were a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, they clearly could be deemed not “in friendly cooperation” with the Southern Baptist Convention. They are, however, connected in no way with the Southern Baptist Convention.

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A second fact is that Calvary Baptist Church has chosen to be part of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and continues to be so connected, even though they are not part of the Southern Baptist Convention. This reflects the long-standing practice of D.C. Baptists, granting choice of affiliation to member churches after 1845 when the two national denominational groups parted ways.

Thirdly, Calvary's actions do not reflect on the D.C. Baptist Convention or any other convention in any way. 'By doctrine and polity the SBC cannot and does not unite local congregations into a single *church* or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—local church, association, state convention and auxiliary—retains its sovereignty and is fully autonomous.'¹

Another facet is clear and definite. The District of Columbia Baptist Convention has not affirmed, approved or endorsed homosexual behavior in any way at any time. Stated otherwise, the District of Columbia Baptist Convention respects the official statements on the subject of homosexuality by its national partners, both the American Baptist Churches, USA and the Southern Baptist Convention, although we have taken no official action upon them. This is a practice on many issues within any denominational body in which the D.C. Baptist Convention participates and mirrors similar practices on the part of the Southern Baptist Convention. These statements of the national Baptist bodies, neither of which affirm, approve or endorse homosexuality, harmonize with one another.

Finally, in our context for ministry the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and its members do minister to homosexual persons with whom they come into contact with the intent of the redemption of these humans, a redemptive process which proceeds according to the relationship between each one and the Lord. We seek to understand these people from a Biblical perspective pray for both their salvation and discipleship and encourage other Baptists to do the same. There is some inherent risk in every ministry of mission, and this risk is apparent in this situation we currently discuss."

These things I have written already to Mr. August Boto who is here among us. I believe that he has shared these with you in writing, but I repeat them for all to hear.

I have shared with two of your committees, the purpose and process of the D.C. Baptist Convention in our handling of this situation through biblical, Christian conduct. These include Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 12:29-31, II Corinthians 5:16-21 and Revelation 2. To these I add now Romans 1:23 which clearly teaches that the idolatry of human society is responsible for the blurring of every bright line between a permissive moral society and Christian conduct. Our prayer should be to open our eyes so that we might perceive the idolatry in which we with our society are mired.

It cannot escape us that this is a third time in seventeen years that actions of the D.C. Baptist Convention led to consternation of the SBC or one of its agencies. In 2001, after the Research Division of the North American Mission Board commended the DCBC as the second most effective state convention in Church Starting in 1998 and the most effective in Evangelism that

¹"The Southern Baptist Convention: A Closer Look," (sbc.nt/about us).

year,² the North American Mission Board voted strangely to end their partnership with us, defunding those efforts. At Houston, TX in the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2013, the Executive Committee brought a motion to combine into one territory Washington, D.C., Maryland and Delaware in contradiction to the Constitution³ of the SBC (from 1845). We now know the results of both these two decisions. Now, in this instance some are seeking to sever permanently the relationship between D.C. Baptists and the Southern Baptist Convention, a relationship which began in 1845,⁴ a relationship which saved the Foreign Mission Board from bankruptcy in 1862⁵ and one which led to the Resolution on Racial Reconciliation in 1995, to name only a few of our common positive experiences.

Clearly, this is not my first “rodeo,” nor is it that of D.C. Baptists. I can only infer that some spirit, some person or some group of persons, is seeking to break our partnership and relationship together. If such is a spirit, since it is a divisive spirit, I am certain it is not the Spirit of God (I Cor. 14:33).⁶ If the source of this action is either a person or a group, may I warn you, since you seek the Kingdom of God through the means of religious politics? D.C. Baptists know politics all too well; we observe it up close, day in, day out. To seek the Kingdom of God through human, political machinations is deadly and will result in suffocation. Examples of such past maneuvering occurred over slavery, temperance, Religious Liberty and Civil Rights—all which we have experienced together, often creating past tensions between the SBC and DC Baptists.

Rather, I commend to you the spirit which DC Baptists attempted to convey to you today, the spirit of both redemption and reconciliation as demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ. DC Baptists look hopefully to your response. We pray our actions are expressions of maintaining the glorious line between a permissive moral culture and biblical Christian conduct while continuing to express the Great Commission—the purpose which we both share.⁷

²Richie Stanley, “Research Report: Comparison of Changes in Population, Southern Baptist Churches, and Resident Members by Region and State, 1990-2000” (Atlanta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2002), pp. 38, 52 and 63.

³Annual of the 2013 Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville, TN: Executive Committee, SBC, 2013), p. 9. Article XIII.

⁴“The Southern Baptist Convention,” Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), p. 1244.

⁵William R. Estep, The Whole Gospel for the Whole World (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), pp. 94-99, 106 and Loyd Allen, You Are a Great People (Franklin, TN: Providence, 2000), pp. 111-112.

⁶Albrecht Oepke, “ἀκαταστασία,” Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 446.

⁷“About Us,” SBC.net. The SBC’s singular focus is “. . . for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the Gospel.”