

Credentialing Committee Report

Committee Members: Glenn LaRue, Allen Suit, Greg Birdwell, Tom Leach, Mark Snowden

Since CABA's last association meeting on October 3, 2022, the Administrative Leadership Team (ALT) appointed a sub-group to serve as a credentialing committee to consider some important questions with regard to church membership in our association. This committee met on January 4 and February 6, 2023, and has agreed upon several points of clarity to recommend to the association.

We felt the need to have these meetings for the following reasons:

1. To provide clarity about our doctrinal standard. Some sister Baptist associations include churches with various levels of agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BFM).
2. To provide clarity concerning involvement criteria. Some CABA churches have not been involved through giving financially or submitting an Annual Church Profile (ACP) for a number of years.
3. To provide clarity about an SBC affiliation requirement. Some sister Baptist associations have member churches that are not SBC affiliated.
4. To provide clarity about sexual misconduct reporting expectations.
5. To provide clarity about the status of church plants, re-plants, multi-site churches, college campus church, and military gatherings.
6. To provide clarity for how credentialing criteria are to be investigated and enforced.
7. To provide a credentialing review questionnaire as a tool for understanding where any given church stands.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. A CABA church should be in full agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

Rationale: The BFM is intended to cover both primary doctrines of orthodoxy and secondary doctrines of cooperation. Should any church not agree with the BFM on any point, their disagreement will be on one of these two levels, both of which are barriers for ministry unity. If we were to make exceptions, it is hard to imagine what the justification would be for them and where the concessions would end.

2. A CABA church should participate both through annual financial support and annual ACP submission.

Rationale: We believe that these two criteria represent a bare minimum of church involvement because they are essential for CABA's functionality. If we do not require these two basic things, the legitimacy of being associated together is brought into question.

3. A CABA church should be an SBC church with an SBC ID#.

Rationale: We are an association of Southern Baptist churches. We believe that CABA should be a local expression of the same doctrine and principles that bind SBC churches on a larger scale. It is relatively simple for a church to be an SBC church, so this is not an unreasonable burden for CABA to expect of its churches.

4. A CABA church should be expected to report criminal convictions of sexual abuse or misconduct by church staff or members to the association.

Rationale: As a matter of protecting our churches from known sexual offenders, CABA should be informed of any incidents that occur in one of its churches, so that a record for inquiry is available to other churches.

5. A CABA church should be any participating gathering that has its own SBC ID# and will carry the full benefits and expectations of CABA involvement.

Rationale: The simplest way for our association to distinguish a new individual local church from a ministry that is still underneath the umbrella of an established local church is by virtue of an SBC ID#. Once a ministry has reached the point of SBC recognition, its national status should correspond with its local status.

6. CABA should investigate a church's membership for any of the following reasons:

- A. If questions were raised about a church's fidelity to the BFM.
- B. If a church has not given financially to CABA for two years in a row.
- C. If a church has not submitted an ACP for two years in a row.
- D. If questions were raised about a church's reporting of sexual misconduct.

The first step of investigation should be a phone call and/or meeting to alert the church to the concern and seek understanding of the matter. Should it be found that a church is not compliant with CABA requirements, the church should receive a formal letter notifying them that they are not in good standing and inviting them to renew participation under full doctrinal agreement.

Rationale: Churches should be given the opportunity to correct mistakes regarding cooperation. The goal is not separation but cooperation. Communication with a church in question gives the opportunity to set things in order. If a church is eager to be in good standing, we should be happy to allow that church to change course and continue in CABA. If not, then this process gives appropriate notice of removal.

7. CABA should require churches applying for membership to complete a "Credentialing Checklist" (see below) and should require all of its member churches to complete a "Credentialing Checkup" every five years (see below).

Rationale: Any new churches applying for membership in CABA should be carefully considered. The "Credentialing Checklist" provides a basis for examination. Also, it should not be assumed that just because a church was appropriately credentialed when it joined CABA, that a church will always stay that way. Therefore, the "Credentialing Checkup" provides a basis for periodic review to protect the integrity of our cooperation. The initiation of these reviews should be staggered over the first five years so that one-fifth of our churches will participate every year.

CREDENTIALING CHECKLIST For Churches Seeking to Join CABA

INTEREST IN CABA

- Why does your church desire to affiliate with CABA?
- What has been the decision process for your church to seek membership in CABA?

DOCTRINE

- Is your church's doctrinal statement in full agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BFM)? If not, please explain.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

- When did your church start?
- When did you finalize your constitution and by-laws? (A copy of the constitution and by-laws needs to be submitted with your request for CABA membership.)
- How do people become members of your church?

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- How does your church intend to financially support CABA? Annual percentage? Fixed amount? (We recommend 3% from undesignated giving.) Special offering? (Ann Dunn/Joanne Hopkins Associational Missions Offering)
- How does your church intend to financially support the Southern Baptist Convention? Cooperative program? Designated gifts? Special offerings? (Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, Ray Roberts Offering for State Missions)

RECORD-KEEPING

- Will your church commit to completing the Annual Church Profile for the SBC every year?
- While we pray that there will never be an instance of sexual abuse or misconduct in your church, should it happen will your church commit to reporting to CABA any criminal convictions or member confessions of this nature?

MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

- To what degree is your congregation informed of the mission and ministries of CABA and the SBC?
- How does your church plan to promote the mission and ministries of CABA and the SBC?

FELLOWSHIP

- Are you aware of any issues that would prevent the people of your congregation from being in right fellowship with other CABA churches?
- Do you plan to participate in association meetings and other ministry/fellowship activities of CABA?

CREDENTIALING CHECKUP
For CABA Churches to Complete Every Five Years

INTEREST IN CABA

- Does your church wish to continue as a member of CABA? Please explain.

DOCTRINE

- Is your doctrinal statement still in full agreement with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000? If not, please explain.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Please review our record of your church's giving to CABA for the last five years. Is this record correct?
- Do you plan to financially support CABA moving forward? If not, please explain.
- Is your church in good standing with the SBC?
- Are you committed to continued cooperation with the SBC? If not, please explain.

RECORD-KEEPING

- Please review our record of your church's submission of an ACP for the last five years. Is this record correct?
- Do you plan to annually submit an ACP moving forward? If not, please explain.
- Has your church had any criminal convictions or member confessions of sexual abuse or misconduct in the last five years?
- Did you report these instances when they occurred? If not, please explain.

FELLOWSHIP

- Please review our record of your church's messenger attendance at associational meetings. Is this record correct?
- Do you plan to participate in association meetings moving forward and other ministry/fellowship activities of CABA? If not, please explain.
- Are you aware of any other issues that would prevent your congregation from continuing in right fellowship with other CABA churches?