

## **Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee Report - 2011**

### **Introduction**

The Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee (Committee) is a special committee of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Board of Directors (Board) appointed by the president of the board. The Committee has been charged with completing the study set forth by action of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (Convention) during its 2010 annual meeting at the request of Reverend Phil Addison, messenger from Stony Point Baptist Church in Stony Point, North Carolina. The motion approved by the messengers is as follows: *“The Convention direct the Board of Directors to study and come with recommendations concerning the adoption of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as the doctrinal statement for the NC Baptist State Convention and bring such recommendation to the 2011 NC Baptist State Convention Annual Meeting”*

### **Background**

As the Committee worked to complete its assigned task, careful consideration has been given to the following:

- 1) Historic doctrinal positions of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) giving special attention to the content of the three editions of the Baptist Faith and Message (1925, 1963, 2000). The Committee realized that the Baptist Faith and Message is a living document that may be further revised by the SBC in the future and has made special note of this fact. The Committee takes no exception with the content of any edition of the Baptist Faith and Message. The Committee is aware that some Baptists have, in years past, taken liberties with certain statements within a particular version of the Baptist Faith and Message. However, the Committee has weighed the merit of each version of the Baptist Faith and Message based upon what the text says rather than its interpretation by individuals.
- 2) The only doctrinal statement currently found within the BSCNC governing documents is found within article VI of the articles of incorporation titled: “Members – Composition”. This specific article focuses on Convention membership and outlines that those congregations in “friendly cooperation” with the Convention are those that do not hold doctrinal positions that “affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support, or bless homosexual behavior”. As such, this doctrinal statement is one that limits membership in the BSCNC. The Committee does not wish to bring potential confusion into the BSCNC governing documents with the addition of any other doctrinal statement(s) that could be misinterpreted as establishing conditions for membership in the Convention.
- 3) The placement of the Baptist Faith and Message, and/or any other doctrinal statement, within the bylaws and/or other governing documents of the SBC is worthy of note. The SBC does not include any reference to the Baptist Faith and Message in the SBC charter, the SBC bylaws, or the SBC manual of operations. Note: Messengers at the 2011 SBC approved a significantly revised Ministry Assignment for the North American Mission Board and in that statement is no reference to the Baptist Faith and Message. Furthermore the only doctrinal statement within the SBC governing documents is found in a single sentence within the SBC constitution related to the mission boards. That statement is,

“Article IX. Missionaries’ Qualifications: All missionaries appointed by the Convention’s boards must, previous to their appointment, furnish evidence of piety, zeal for the Master’s kingdom, conviction of truth as held by Baptists, and talents for missionary service.”

- 4) The purpose of the BSCNC and the places where the necessity of a clearly articulated doctrinal statement are needed. The BSCNC governing documents have historically outlined two clear purposes for the Convention. The first purpose has been to support and facilitate theological education for ministers. The second purpose has been to assist churches in the fulfillment of their mission. Therefore, the Committee believes that it is within the stated purposes of the Convention that a doctrinal statement is appropriate. In those places and through those efforts where theological education is offered and service to churches is provided, a clear doctrinal position should be expected. Currently, the BSCNC provides theological education through the ministry of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute and service to churches is provided through its employed staff.

### **Conclusions**

The Committee has reached the following conclusions and reports them to the Board of Directors regarding the assigned task:

- 1) Concerning the governing documents (articles of incorporation and bylaws) of the BSCNC: The Committee concluded that the BSCNC governing documents remain without the addition of a separate article on “Doctrine” and without the addition of a specific doctrinal statement in an existing article. The Committee appreciated the messengers of the 2010 annual meeting of the BSCNC approving the request for this doctrinal study as three areas have been identified by the Committee as appropriate for a clearly articulated doctrinal statement.
- 2) The Committee identified three places where clear affirmations of doctrinal positions are needed in BSCNC life and in each instance the Committee concluded that the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 be identified as that doctrinal position:
  - a. In keeping with the Convention’s historic purpose of providing theological education, Fruitland Baptist Bible institute, a ministry owned and operated by the BSCNC, should clearly articulate its doctrinal position. The Committee affirms that the Board of Directors of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute has adopted the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as its doctrinal statement.
  - b. In keeping with the Convention’s cooperative agreement with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to partner in the facilitation of planting new churches, the Committee concluded that those congregations receiving church planting funds originating from NAMB, BSCNC Cooperative Program allocations, and/or BSCNC North Carolina Missions Offering allocations, are to be led by pastors who affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
  - c. In keeping with the Convention’s historic purpose of “assisting churches in their divinely appointed mission” that the Executive Director-Treasurer continue to lead the BSCNC staff to conduct ministries, consultations, conferences, etc. that fulfill this

purpose in a manner that supports the doctrinal positions espoused by the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

- 3) The Committee affirms that the Executive Committee is supporting the Executive Director-Treasurer in his task of directing and developing Convention programs and ministries in a manner that is consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. The Executive Committee operates as the BSCNC's personnel committee. The Executive Director-Treasurer, as outlined in the BSCNC bylaws, has the responsibilities associated with employment, supervision, and development of the BSCNC staff.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee recommends the adoption of a resolution that affirms the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. If approved by the Board, the Committee recommends that the content of this resolution be included in the written report of the Board of Directors to the annual meeting of the BSCNC in November 2011. The Committee presents the following resolution for consideration by the Board:

#### *In support of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000*

Whereas since 1925, Southern Baptists have historically agreed to a broad doctrinal statement known as the Baptist Faith and Message and,

Whereas the Holy Scriptures remain the definitive theological and doctrinal statement for Southern Baptists, and,

Whereas the autonomy of the local church and the autonomy of each denominational entity established for service to the local church, remains a cherished Baptist principle and,

Whereas the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is directly involved in the theological preparation of ministers and missionaries through the ministry of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute and,

Whereas the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is cooperatively involved in the facilitation of church planting efforts with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and,

Whereas the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina employs individuals for the purpose of assisting churches in the fulfillment of their "divinely appointed mission" therefore,

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors respectfully affirms the Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute Board of Directors as it has formally and officially adopted the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as its doctrinal position statement and,

Be it further resolved that the Board of Directors affirms the ongoing cooperative efforts between the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the North American Mission Board to facilitate the support of church planting efforts where those efforts are led by pastors who affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and,

Be it finally resolved that the Board of Directors affirms the Executive Director-Treasurer as he continues to lead the Convention staff in conferencing, coaching, and consulting in a manner that supports the doctrinal positions set forth in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.