

# Miss. church deemed 'not in friendly cooperation' with SBC

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) – The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee affirmed a recommendation from the Credentials Committee Feb. 21 to remove Calvary Church, Jackson, from affiliation with the convention.

The Executive Committee also removed five other churches, including one of the largest and best-known in the convention: multi-campus Saddleback Church headquartered in Lake Forest, Calif.

One church – Freedom Church in Vero Beach, Fla., – was dropped for what the Credentials Committee described as a failure to cooperate with a committee inquiry regarding a sexual abuse allegation. The other churches were removed for standing by their decisions to appoint female pastors to senior positions.

In addition to Calvary and Saddleback, the churches with female pastors that were removed are New Faith Mission Ministry in Griffin, Ga.; St. Timothy's Christian Church in Baltimore, Md.; and Fern Creek Church in Louisville, Ky.



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Smith was appointed by the SBC's International Mission Board and served in Hong Kong from 1991-98, according to the church website, which also listed her as a graduate of Baptist-affiliated William Carey University in Hattiesburg and Southern Baptists' Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Smith provided a written statement to The Baptist Record after the Executive Committee's decision. "Calvary has been a part of the Southern Baptist Convention for 122 years. The church has been on Capitol Street since 1929. We made a decision in the late 1980s to stay on Capitol Street and in the 1990s to minister in our community.

"We believe in the autonomy of the local church to decide on leadership. The church and I felt God leading me to become the pastor in 2013. We are wholeheartedly trying to share the Good News of Jesus with our community.

"Our community is hurting without Jesus right in the middle of Mississippi. This is our only mission."

Calvary Church reported an average attendance of 110 in 2020, and a Cooperative Program contribution of \$1,400 in 2021.

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“These churches have been valued, cooperating churches for many years, and this decision was not made lightly. However, we remain committed to upholding the theological convictions of the SBC and maintaining unity among its cooperating churches.”

The Baptist Faith and Message also states in Article VI that, “...while both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

The belief that men and women have separate but important roles in Kingdom work that complement each other is known as complementarianism.



SBC Bylaw Eight provides an appeal process at the SBC annual meeting for churches ruled to not be in friendly cooperation. The 2023 annual meeting will be held June 13-14 in New Orleans.

Fern Creek Church is the only church thus far that has indicated it will appeal the Executive Committee action.