

Q&A: Mike Law addresses proposed amendment to SBC Constitution

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mike Law, senior pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Virginia, introduced an amendment to the SBC Constitution that was approved on first vote at the SBC annual meeting last year in New Orleans. It must pass by a two-thirds majority at the SBC annual meeting this year in Indianapolis in order to go into effect. The amendment has divided many Southern Baptists. The Baptist and Reflector asked Mike Law to respond to a series of questions which he agreed to on the condition we run his responses unedited. They agreed to do so.*

To read two first-person opposing viewpoints on the Law Amendment, click [here](#) and [here](#). Also, check out this year's SBC preview.

Q: *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 provides a clear biblical definition of what a pastor is. Why is the Law Amendment to the SBC Constitution imperative?*

Mike Law: In 2022, the Credentials Committee requested clarification on who may serve in the pastoral office. The context of that request was at the intersection of the Baptist Faith & Message and the SBC Constitution. The Credentials Committee request should be answered, which is what the constitutional amendment does. It affirms that the practice of seating Messengers at our Convention should be in line with the Bible and the Baptist Faith & Message.

Q: *Under the Law Amendment, would a church who had women in*

positions like SS director or VBS director and recruited and directed men in those roles be seen as not being in friendly cooperation with the SBC?

Mike Law: No, the Amendment pertains to the office of pastor.

Q: Would a church who had paid women staff members (ministers) such as preschool, youth, children and who had titles such as Preschool pastor, children's pastor be considered as not being in friendly cooperation with the SBC in accordance with the Law Amendment?

Mike Law: Remember, the amendment is not self-enforcing. It simply provides clarification and guidance to the Credentials Committee, the Executive Committee, and Messengers. These are the three groups responsible for determining which churches are in friendly cooperation. If there is an appeal, the decision ultimately rests with the messengers as it always has. Your question starts with the category of minister, but then shifts to the category of pastor. The amendment addresses the office of pastor, and in the Bible only men are pastors (1 Timothy 3:1–7). So, any kind of pastor (Senior, Associate, Assistant, Preschool, Children's, Worship, Counseling, etc.) must be a biblically qualified man. The Bible reserves both the office and the Biblical titles applied to the office only to men. We should follow the Bible's use of the titles for the office.

Q: And if that is the case, are you suggesting that for that church to stay in friendly cooperation they must remove the title pastor from those ministerial positions?

Mike Law: In alignment with the Bible, the Amendment makes clear that a church is in friendly cooperation with the Convention who has only men serving as pastors. For the glory of God and in obedience to Scripture (not merely for the sake of cooperation), a church should align its titles with Biblical usage. Again, the amendment isn't self-enforcing, nor

does it dictate how a church must respond if they have female pastors. It merely clarifies for the Credentials Committee and for messengers the requirements for friendly cooperation. The Credentials Committee, the EC, and the Messengers ultimately decide whether a church is in friendly cooperation.

Q: When you refer to “any kind of pastor, senior associate, or otherwise”, are you including women who may hold the title of minister of youth, children, preschool, etc? Also, if a church employs a woman as minister of children, would that church be in danger of being disfellowshipped from the SBC?

Mike Law: The answer to both questions is no. The amendment addresses the office of pastor as it is defined by the Bible (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9) and the Baptist Faith & Message (Article 6). The amendment provides clarity to the Credentials Committee, that we’re not talking about a youth, children’s, or preschool “minister.” It has a pastor/elder/overseer in view, and not a “minister.” Given the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9), a “minister” could be any member of the congregation as every member is a minister or servant of Christ (John 12:26), but as the Baptist Faith & Message says, “the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”