

Original Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention

Augusta, Georgia 1845

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PREAMBLE AND CONSTITUTION
OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

We, the delegates from Missionary Societies, Churches, and other religious bodies of the Baptist Denomination, in various parts of the United States, met in Convention, in the city of Augusta, Georgia, for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of our constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel, agree to the following rules, or fundamental principles:

ARTICLE I. This body shall be styled the Southern Baptist Convention.

ART. II. It shall be the design of this Convention to promote Foreign and Domestic Missions, and other important objects connected with the Redeemer's kingdom, and to combine for this purpose, such portions of the Baptist denomination in the United States, as may desire a general organization for Christian benevolence, which shall fully respect the independence and equal rights of the Churches.

ART. III. A Triennial Convention shall consist of members who contribute funds, or are delegated by religious bodies contributing funds, and the system of representation and terms of membership shall be as follows, viz: An annual contribution of one hundred dollars for three years next preceding the meeting, or the contribution of three hundred dollars at any time within said three years, shall entitle the contributor to one representative; an annual contribution of two hundred dollars, as aforesaid, shall entitle the contributor to two representatives; and so, for each additional one hundred dollars, an additional representative shall be allowed. Provided, however, that when application shall be made for the first time by bodies, or individuals, to be admitted

into the Convention, one delegate shall be allowed for each one hundred dollars. And provided, also, that in case of great collateral Societies, composed of representatives, receiving contributions from different parts of the country, the ratio of representation shall be one delegate for every thousand dollars, annually contributed for three years, as aforesaid; but the number of representatives shall never exceed five.

ART. IV. The officers of this Convention shall be a President, four Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, and two Secretaries, who shall be elected at each triennial meeting and hold their offices until a new election; and the officers of the Convention shall be, *each by virtue of his office*, members of the several Boards.

ART. V. The Convention shall elect at each triennial meeting as many Boards of Managers, as in its judgment will be necessary for carrying out the benevolent objects it may determine to promote, all which Boards shall continue in office until a new election. Each Board shall consist of a President, Vice Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurer, Auditor, and fifteen other members, seven of whom, including one or more of the officers, shall form a quorum for the transaction of business. To each Board shall be committed, during the recess of the Convention, the entire management of all the affairs relating to the object with whose interest it shall be charged, all which management shall be in strict accordance with the constitutional provisions adopted by this Convention, and such other instructions as may be given from time to time. Each Board shall have power to make such compensation to its Secretaries and Treasurer, as it may think right; fill the vacancies occurring in its own body; enact its own bye-laws; have an annual meeting at any place it may appoint, and other meetings at such times and places as it may think best; keep a record of its proceedings and present a report of them to the Convention at each triennial meeting.

ART. VI. The Treasurer of each Board shall faithfully account for all monies received by him, keep a regular entry of all receipts and disbursements, and make report of them to the Convention, whenever it shall be in session, and to his Board as often as required. He shall also, on entering upon the duties of his office, give competent security to the President of his Board, for all the stock and funds committed to his care. His books shall be open at all times, to the inspection of any member of the Convention and of his Board. No monies shall be paid out of any of the Treasuries of the Boards, but by an order from that Board, from whose Treasury the money is to be drawn, which order shall be signed by its presiding officer.

ART. VII. The Corresponding Secretaries of the several Boards shall maintain intercourse by letter, with such individuals or public bodies, as the interests of their respective bodies may require. Copies of all such communications, with their answers, if any, shall be kept by them on file.

ART VIII. The Recording Secretaries of the several Boards, shall keep a fair record of their proceedings, and of such other documents as may be committed to them for the purpose.

ART.IX. All the Officers, Boards, Missionaries and Agents, appointed by the Convention, or by any of its Boards, shall be members of some regular Church, in union with the Churches composing this Convention.

ART. X. Missionaries appointed by any of the Boards of this Convention, must, previous to their appointment, furnish evidence of genuine piety, fervent zeal in their Master's cause, and talents which fit them for the service for which they offer themselves.

ART XI. The bodies and individuals, composing this Convention, shall have the right to specify the object, or objects, to which their contributions shall be applied. But when no such specification is made, the Convention will make the appropriation at its own discretion.

ART. XII. The Convention shall hold its meetings triennially, but extra meetings may be called by the President, with the approbation of any one of the Boards of Managers. A majority of the attending delegates, shall form a quorum for the transaction of business.

ART. XIII. Any alternations which experience shall dictate, may be made in these articles, by a vote of tow-thirds of the members present, at any triennial meeting of the Convention.

RULES OF ORDER

1. The meetings of the Convention shall be opened and closed with prayer.
2. No motion shall claim the attention of the President, unless it is seconded, nor shall it be open for discussion, until formally announced by him.
3. When a motion has been made and regularly announced by the chair, no other motion shall be received, except to amend, to substitute, to lay upon the table, to postpone indefinitely, or to postpone to a certain time. But a motion for adjournment shall always be in order, except when a member is engaged in speaking, or the body engaged in voting.
4. When a member wishes to speak on any question, he shall rise in his place and address the chair. If two or more shall rise at the same time, the President shall determine who has the floor, and no member shall speak more than twice on the same question, without the permission of the body.
5. All questions of order shall be determined by the chair, subject to an appeal to the body.
6. All motions offered for the adoption of the meetings, shall be submitted in writing, if required.