

How did it begin?

Beginning in 1979, a concerted effort was undertaken to bring about a drastic change in the leadership and direction of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This effort was accomplished through a well-organized political process that involved electing a convention president who would make appointments that eventually resulted in placing persons on boards of trustees of agencies and institutions who would carry out the desired changes. Control of boards of trustees was accomplished in about twelve years, along with replacing the administrations, and eventually, most employees of the agencies and institutions. Great attention was given to altering the character and culture of the seminaries and mission boards. Those who supported these changes labeled this process, "The Conservative Resurgence." Those who opposed these changes referred to the process as, "The Fundamentalist Takeover." Regardless of one's approval or disapproval of the changes, all agreed that by 1991, the SBC had undergone a major transformation.

That year, a group gathered in Atlanta representing active Southern Baptists who were displeased with the new direction of the SBC. This group formed a new body, which was incorporated under Georgia law as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The focus in those early days was to provide a place of fellowship for people who felt disenfranchised from the SBC and a funding channel for missionaries and new theological schools that were beginning to be birthed.

Today, CBF has grown far beyond its humble beginnings. Though many of the churches and individuals who partner together through CBF still have a connection to the SBC, CBF is recognized as a separate body, as evidenced by its recent admission as a member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), an organization of over two hundred international Baptist bodies.

CBFNC began in 1993 as North Carolinians desired more frequent fellowship and service opportunities.

Although CBF was birthed through much pain, we do not identify ourselves primarily by our initial struggle but by our current vitality and vision.

Is our church a CBF church?

CBF, at both the state and national levels, is not a member organization, but a fellowship of churches and individuals who voluntarily cooperate to do together what we could never accomplish alone, for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Please attend one of our Assemblies, participate in one of our ministries, or call on one of our staff members or volunteer leaders for information or assistance. If you embrace our mission, vision and values, and desire to share in our ministries, you are welcome in our fellowship. Of course, your financial gifts are most welcome, too. May God bless and guide us as we seek to be the presence of Christ in the world, together.

For more information, visit www.cbfnc.org.



AN INTRODUCTION TO Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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Who's in it?

What do they do?

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How do they relate to our church?

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina

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What is it?

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) is a Christian Network that helps people put their faith to practice through ministry efforts, global missions and a broad community of support. In addition to CBF, which has its offices in Decatur, Georgia, there are eighteen autonomous state and regional CBF-related bodies. These bodies work very closely with CBF but are not franchises or field offices.

A strong partner of CBF is Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina (CBFNC). Although the two organizations are autonomous entities with separate budgets, policies and staff, they are united in their mission to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission. The mission statement for CBFNC is, "Bringing Baptists of North Carolina together for Christ-centered ministry."

Who's in it?

Over 350 North Carolina churches identify themselves as CBF/CBFNC partners. Partner churches contribute regularly to CBF/CBFNC through their budgets or special offerings. They join with other CBF friends in the annual General Assembly and join with other churches in the frequent retreats, conferences, workshops and choir festivals. Often, there are regional gatherings which might include worship, workshops or mission service.

What do they do?

CBF is best known for its mission efforts to minister to persons who have the greatest needs and the least resources. CBF Global Missions mobilizes 125 field personnel working in over 30 countries and regions. These individuals serve among the most marginalized and least evangelized people around the world through holistic, sustainable, and transformational mission and ministry in collaboration with churches, individuals, and partners. CBF also offers opportunities for short-term mission work and resources that encourage churches to see their own local communities as mission fields.

CBFNC is best known for the support it offers North Carolinian churches in the areas of Faith Formation, Leadership Development, and Missions. There is a Ministry Council for each of these emphases.

With a focus primarily on laity, the Faith Formation Ministry Council sees that CBFNC provides resources and experiences that nurture an inward formation that leads to outward demonstrations of personal and community transformation.

Through the Leadership Development Council, CBFNC strengthens congregations and ministers by providing resources and pastoral guidance for churches in leadership transition and ministers in transition. CBFNC also provides resources for women and men discovering their call, student training to fulfill their call, and to ministers currently following their call.

The Missions Council looks for ways to engage with churches, mission partners, and others to transform our lives, churches, and culture to love as Christ loved. Partnering together accomplishes more.

Other specialized ministries include collegiate engagement; wealth and poverty; racial reconciliation; evangelism; Hispanic network; and new church starts.

What do they believe?

CBF has a Biblically-based Global mission. This includes belief in the Triune God (Father Son and Holy Spirit); the sinfulness of all humankind; Christ as Savior and Redeemer for all peoples; the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and empower believers; the responsibility of every believer and church to share the Gospel; and the need to cooperate with others in mission to the world.

Our Christian faith as Baptists is uniquely demonstrated as we live in and defend these "four fragile freedoms":

Soul Freedom: We believe in the priesthood of all believers and the equality of every church member.

Bible Freedom: We believe in the authority of Scripture under the Lordship of Christ without the imposition of creedal statements.

Church Freedom: We believe in the autonomy of every local church and affirm every church's right to determine its faith, practice and leadership without outside interference.

Religious Freedom: We believe in full religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

How do they relate to our church?

A Paradigm Shift: From Convention to Partnership

Most lifelong Southern Baptist adults were nurtured in a "convention culture" in which congregations, district associations, state conventions and the national convention were closely connected through money (flowing from congregations to associations and state conventions to the national convention) and programs (flowing from the national convention to state conventions and associations to congregations). Theoretically, we exercised autonomy at every level, but in practice, we functioned as an organizational pyramid with congregations forming the base and the national convention sitting at the apex.

Alternatively, CBF promotes a "partnership paradigm" in which congregations are at the center of Baptist life. Congregations are encouraged to determine their unique, God-given mission and then choose partners to assist them in accomplishing that mission. CBF does not demand exclusive loyalty, but humbly asks to be one (hopefully a significant one) of a congregation's many missional partners.

CBFNC partners include seven Baptist colleges/universities, four divinity schools, three social service agencies, and numerous identity partners.