

My Thoughts on the SBC Annual Meeting 2025

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I'm not a scholar, theologian, SBC leader, or an employee of any of the SBC entities. I'm a small Church Pastor who is blessed to serve as a messenger to the annual meetings.

I have been a Southern Baptist since before I was born, but I've remained a Southern Baptist because I align with our doctrinal beliefs and the 2000 BF&M. I am super thankful that the current Church I serve has supported and sent my wife and I to serve as messengers to three straight annual meetings.

The last three years have been full of important votes and issues discussed. Before attending an SBC annual meeting, I had no idea the contention that can quickly creep in a space. Even in such a large room with over 10,000 people. While much of this discussion is healthy and very much needed, I wonder if each person present were to translate the passion and energy exerted during the annual meeting to our communities and local Churches. We've been told for years that attendance, baptisms, and missions giving have been declining dramatically in our convention. I get it. But maybe, just maybe, we're partially responsible? This includes me! Maybe we worry about the political moves that are made too much. Maybe we worry about who is spending what, too much. Or what the Church down the road or in a nearby state, too much. Don't get me wrong, the issues we discuss and vote on at the annual meetings are SO important. But they should never take precedence over the 58 missionaries we commissioned, and the celebration we had of 100 years of the Cooperative Program. What I'm saying is that the headlines shouldn't be what I'm reading.

Maybe that's why our communities aren't filling the pews. They read the news. They hear about the SBC. They know.

While I can't speak for every SBC Pastor and wouldn't attempt to, in my own context, God is moving. While those in my community are aware of the SBC, they aren't consumed with the business. But they are enamored with God working through the IMB, NAMB, and other SBC entities. Just last year we sent out a couple through the IMB, to the mission field.

My point, don't believe that everything you read defines the health of every SBC Church. Where I Pastor and have for nearly 5 years, God has moved mightily. 200+ membership additions with 61% of those being baptisms. Cooperative program giving has increased by 100%. Small groups added, ministry strengthened and overall missions giving, doubled. And we've launched a building campaign to combat a growing Church and growing community. Yes, we have issues in the SBC and we should work to align those with the Bible, but do so lovingly

and respectfully. We've got an entire world watching. They watch the clips, they see the videos, and they read the articles. As many of us go back to our own Church, let's remember to carry the Gospel with us, and labor hard.

As one of my beloved deacons and close friends has said many times, 'How is your conduct?'. How we represent our convention does matter. And it's not just while at the SBC but in our communities.

