

Hundreds of SBC Pastors Sign Letter Calling for Ban on Female Pastors “Of Any Kind”

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Problems continue for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

From having the Department of Justice conduct an investigation of the organization for its response to sexual abuse within the denomination to financial problems at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary that is nearing a crisis level, the SBC leadership has too many fires and not enough extinguishers.

Now, over 700 pastors across the SBC network have signed a letter penned by pastor Mike Law entitled “A Call to Keep Our Unity,” calling for the ban on women holding any office with the title of pastor.

Explaining his position on writing the open letter, Law explained:

“Personally, I felt the need to offer this amendment because five Southern Baptist churches, roughly within a five-mile radius of my own congregation, are employing women as pastors of various kinds, including women serving as ‘Sr. Pastor,’” Law wrote. “Many others have found that a number of Southern Baptist churches appoint, affirm, or employ women as pastors in their areas, too.

“This matter has long been settled by Southern Baptists,” Law explained.

Law believes that if the SBC were to abandon its current position and begin to appoint female pastors, then they may very well go down the same path that ended up splitting the United Methodist and Presbyterian denominations.

“Devaluing our doctrine will not lead to faithfulness or fruitfulness. Rather, if we learn anything from history, embracing empty doctrines will soon empty our Convention too. Consider the exodus among the liberal and mainline denominations. They abided with women as pastors for a time, then they embraced the practice—thereby abandoning sound doctrine—and so began their rapid decline.”

This has been a simmering issue for the SBC that only grew hotter as Saddleback Church ordained three female pastors in 2021.

Saddleback’s bucking of the SBC stance that only men can hold the title of pastor continued as the incoming lead pastor Andy Wood, who was taking over for retiring founder and lead pastor Rick Warren, identified his wife Stacie as a “teaching pastor.”

While no committee within the SBC has disaffiliated Saddleback for its breaking of the denomination’s laws, calls are growing, both for and against, the removal of the megachurch.

Denny Burk, a professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College, and president of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, called the SBC to disassociate with Saddleback.

“Southern Baptists have a choice to make,” Burk tweeted. “We can either do what Saddleback wants and declare that female pastors are consistent with SBC cooperation, or we can take the Bible and our own statement of faith seriously and part ways with Saddleback.”

This sentiment was echoed by theology professor Owen Strachan of Grace Bible Theological Seminary when Saddleback Church first appointed its first three female pastors:

“Now is the time to leave and find a sound congregation. Do not delay. There is no spirit of competition in what I write

here; what Saddleback is doing grieves me, and I have no doubt grieves many in the congregation,” Strachan posted. “Churches that affirm women pastors are opposing the Word of God, and opposing the Word of God means opposing God himself,” citing 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

Law also cited these verses in justification of his open letter.

One thing is for certain, leadership on both sides of this debate must use wisdom and discernment moving forward. As the situation currently sits, there is a collision likely between the SBC and churches like Saddleback that committee meetings simply cannot solve.

Thankfully, the love of Jesus Christ and adherence to the Word of God can heal all rifts, including the one trying to form within the SBC. {eo}

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