

SBC Removes Saddleback Church Affiliation over Female Pastor

The executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention removed Saddleback Church from SBC affiliation on Feb. 21 over the church's decision to hire a female pastor. Saddleback, which was started by Rick Warren and his wife, Kay, is one of the biggest churches in the convention with plants in California and internationally.

The decision concluded that the church was in violation of a core tenet of the SBC's values. After Warren retired, Andy Wood and his wife, Stacie, took over with Andy as the lead pastor. However, because of Stacie's role as a "teaching pastor," the church was found to be "not in friendly cooperation" with the necessary credentials for ministry under the Southern Baptist Convention, according to Baptist Press.

Section six of the SBC's Baptism and Faith Message discusses the role of the church, which reads: "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

This is not the first time that Saddleback has found themselves in the hot seat with the SBC as Warren himself ordained other females to become pastors back in 2021, as reported by Charisma News. It was Warren himself who had the idea to ordain three female pastors after months of discussion with Saddleback's elders.

The rocky relationship between Saddleback Church and the SBC continued when Andy and Stacie first took over as leaders of the church, with no intention of Stacie having a small role.

"The church should be a place where both men and women can

exercise those spiritual gifts,” Wood said. “My wife has the spiritual gift of teaching and she is really good. People often tell me she’s better than me when it comes to preaching, and I’m really glad to hear that.”

As the AP noted, Saddleback’s elders released a statement which read: “We love and have always valued our relationship with the SBC and its faithful churches. We will engage and respond through the proper channels at the appropriate time in hopes to serve other like-minded Bible believing SBC churches. Meanwhile, we remain focused on following God’s leadership to love and serve our church family and the communities around our campuses.”

Warren took to social media to give a quick update to his followers.

“Friends worldwide,” Warren wrote on Facebook, “I’m so touched by your love! Kay & I love you back! We’ll respond to #SBC in OUR time & way thru direct channels.”

During his final message as lead pastor of Saddleback Church, Warren encouraged his congregation about the coming changes.

“Whatever project you’re starting, begin with the end in mind. That’s called being purpose driven. You know your purpose in advance. And we knew from the very beginning what kind of church this was going to be,” Warren said.

It is currently unclear if Saddleback will make an appeal to the SBC about their decision. Four other churches were also found to be uncooperative for having female pastors in Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi and Kentucky.

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