

SECTION IV

REPORTS

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At this time, I would like to present my report to you as president of the Executive Board of the BRN. The Executive Board exists to serve the churches of the Baptist Resource Network. We do this primarily by ensuring oversight, accountability, and affirmation of the cooperative work that we have partnered together to do for the sake of the glory of Jesus Christ, under the authority of the Bible and within the parameters of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Working closely with Dr. Whitworth and the BRN staff, we seek to advance the Kingdom of God by accelerating Kingdom movements across Pennsylvania and South Jersey so that every church in our family is a healthy, multiplying church.

The last year in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention has been tumultuous, to say the least. Some have grown increasingly skeptical of our institutions, and they have also been shaken by the findings of the Guidepost report on the handling, or mishandling, of reports of sexual abuse by the SBC's Executive Committee, among other things. Some are concerned about their continued association with our convention of churches in light of all that has taken place. Indeed, a handful of churches have chosen to withdraw themselves from the BRN and the SBC over these concerns. Though the BRN is not the SBC, we recognize that the strife and shortcomings of our convention nationally may cause some to be wary and suspicious of our state convention.

With this in mind, the Executive Board of the BRN has worked diligently for years to be transparent, accountable, and Kingdom-minded in our ministry to you and in partnership with you. I'd like to highlight three ways that we have endeavored to do that, particularly in the last year.

Since the bombshell Houston Chronicle article several years ago which raised serious questions relating to the handling of sexual abuse allegations, the BRN has labored to be a community which operates with integrity and transparency, and where abuse is not tolerated. The BRN has adopted a clear statement concerning sex abuse, and over the last year, we have crafted and adopted a new Abuse Prevention policy following best practices which our staff has worked hard to implement. This has included updated clearances and background checks, as well as training for all BRN staff. We have created a step-by-step process for the hub staff to follow should an instance of abuse in the BRN or one of our churches be disclosed to us. The staff have also gathered a wealth of excellent resources to help our churches which Shannon Baker has created a page for on the BRN's website. brnunited.org/resources/abuse-prevention

Second, the Executive Board recognizes that one of the foundational pillars of our family of churches is the financial blessing that is the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program. You all, in good faith, give diligently to the Cooperative Program with the goal of seeing the Kingdom of God advanced through cooperative missions. The BRN greatly benefits from your CP giving in partnership with the North American Mission Board to serve our churches in Pennsylvania and South Jersey and to accomplish the Great Commission. For this reason, the BRN takes financial accountability seriously, because we are stewards of Kingdom resources. Every year the BRN undergoes an independent, financial audit to ensure that we are handling these resources with integrity. Also, The Executive Board's

Leadership team receives and reviews monthly financial reports, and the Board's Finance and Operation Committee reviews our operational budget at every Board meeting for the sake of accountability and transparency.

Third and finally, in the last six years that I have been a member of the Board, I am grateful to report to you that we have worked hard to create an environment where the Board itself has become an environment to provide helpful pushback, accountability, and transparency for the BRN. The Board's leadership team has met monthly all year long to provide helpful dialogue and critical feedback for the Executive Director as he oversees the daily operation of the BRN. I love and appreciate Barry Whitworth and our fantastic staff. He, with the Board's help, has moved toward more and more Board engagement, creating an atmosphere of open dialogue and accountability. Barry can tell you how many times in the last year he has brought an issue or idea to the Board's leadership team and received some healthy feedback and pushback; but also, he and the Board leadership team can tell you how often we have brought an issue or idea to the full board and they have pushed back, sending us back to the drawing board with some helpful wisdom and guidance.

The BRN is not a perfect institution. It is after all, a human institution; however, I hope that you all can have full confidence that your continued partnership with us is a worthwhile investment in Kingdom work. Character matters because the gospel matters. 2nd Corinthians 5:17-21 says:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: "Be reconciled to God." He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Notice in these verses that wicked, ruined people are redeemed through the death and resurrection of the sinless, Son of God. Everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ by faith can receive redemption and the forgiveness of their sins because of his loving, completed work. All those in Christ have a new, righteous character because of their union with him. Not only that, they are entrusted with a sacred mission. They are reconciled to God in order that they might be his ambassadors of reconciliation in the world. This is why we strive at the BRN to be humble, honest, Christ-exalting, Kingdom-advancing, Bible-preaching, church-planting, disciple-making, mission-minded, gospel people.

Let me take just a moment to highlight some additional work the Board has done this year. Many of these things I'm going to briefly mention will be things that Dr. Whitworth will share more about in the upcoming conference sessions:

1. Because this Board represents you, we've added more information about how you can see who your Board representatives are and communicate with the Board on the BRN's website. (brnunited.org/about/executive-board) To that end, we've also created a new form and process for you all to nominate candidates to serve on the BRN's Executive Board. Right now, you can go

to the website and see a wealth of information about the Board and nominate someone you know as a candidate to serve on the Board for next year's meeting.

2. We believe that healthy pastors lead healthy multiplying churches. To encourage and support our BRN pastors, the Board and the staff have created a Pastoral Wellness Initiative to provide recreation, restrengthening, reassurance, and respite care to our pastors.
3. Even in this current, tumultuous economy, the establishment of the LovePA/SJ fund last year has been a blessing and benefit to the BRN and the team has created an excellent Legacy giving guide, as well as a workshop to help encourage our churches and individuals in our churches to consider how they might use their resources to advance the Kingdom even after they have gone to be with the Lord.

In conclusion, brothers and sisters, the BRN does its best work when it is able to come alongside our churches. Our staff will tell you that they would love to talk to you about what's the next step you and your church can take to continue to grow, thrive, and have a greater gospel impact. We exist to accelerate Kingdom movement and we do that best not primarily in Nashville with the SBC's Executive Committee, NAMB, the IMB, or our Seminaries. We do that best here, locally, in close fellowship through the bonds that your church members have with one another, the bonds your church has with other, local churches, and our family of churches have together.

Bryan McClelland
BRN Executive Board President
Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Williamsport, PA

FINANCE & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The Finance & Operations Committee presented their report during the Business Session. The report can be viewed on pages 2-3 of the Business Session packet in Section II of the 2021 Annual. The 2022 budget was voted on and accepted by the messengers during the Business Session.