

On Saturday, June 10th, I came home from a wedding and grabbed my duffel bag. As I began to pack for the annual SBC Convention, I had several things on my mind. For this Convention, I knew there would be some heavy decisions and business to attend. Just a couple of days earlier, I met with some of the pastors in our Association and went over the times that important business would take place.

One of the questions I was asked was, “Why aren’t the resolutions already available before the convention?” Explaining some of our SBC Polity, I encouraged our pastors to be ready when the Bulletin gets sent out on Tuesday morning. As we drove to New Orleans on Sunday after church, we had great conversations in the car about what was going on in the Southern Baptist Convention. Some of those conversations carried over into meetings with old friends in between the Pastor’s Conference Speakers.

On Tuesday morning, I was expecting some resolutions spouted off based on Twitter fights that I had witnessed days before the Convention. But when I opened up the morning bulletin and saw page 5, entitled, “Resolutions Presented to the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention,” I was deeply humbled. It reminded me of our Convention’s unified gospel mission, as I began reading over [Resolution #1: “On the Importance of Revitalization and Replanting.”](#)

## When 12,000 Speak

While we know that not all of our listeners and readers are SBC, the vast majority are and could resolve with us that it was greatly encouraging to affirm this emphasis on helping churches. But even if you’re not a part of that affiliation, the intent of this resolution can be agreed on by all.

Written by [Luke Holmes](#), the Resolution that passed during the first day of the annual SBC was meant to highlight the important and necessary work of helping declining churches renew their efforts towards renewed vitality. I’m not sure exactly how many yellow ballots went up when we finally voted on Resolution 1, but I know that a sea of yellow flew up when it was time to vote.

So, to highlight the importance of revitalizing and replanting work, here are a few takeaways from the resolution that was so well written, and what Southern Baptists should do to affirm its sentiment.

## The Reality of Needed Church Renewal

Paragraph II of the Resolution states, “Whereas: Many local Southern Baptist churches face significant challenges, including declining attendance, conflict, lack of discipleship, and lack of community impact...”

This reality is shared by churches all across America, regardless of denomination. [According to Lifeway Research](#), the rate of church closures are outpacing the rate of churches planted each year in the U.S. Lifeway Research reports: “In 2019, approximately 3,000 Protestant churches

were started in the U.S., but 4,500 Protestant churches closed.” The study included reports from over 34 denominations. One positive note is that most denominations, over the past decade, have given increased attention to the work of Revitalization, because there is a real, growing need for helping hurting churches.

In a [2022 Report](#), the North American Mission Board said, “In an average year, hundreds of churches disappear from the SBC database. Many of those churches are closing their doors forever. Because of this, we have also prioritized our efforts to help existing churches become healthier, mission-focused and more evangelistic.” This is the reason that resources like [Church Replanting](#) exists through the NAMB Initiative.

## Diverse Approaches, Cohesive Efforts

Paragraphs 5 and 6 say this:

“WHEREAS, Southern Baptists acknowledge the diverse approaches and models of church revitalization and replanting and recognize that effective strategies may vary depending on the unique circumstances and the needs of individual congregations;

and WHEREAS, Local associations, state conventions, and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) have committed time, resources, and manpower to strengthening churches through revitalization and replant initiatives...”

If you were to look for any “Church Renewal” resources over the past twenty years, you would be overwhelmed by the options, strategies, and plans for Church Revitalization. I was confused and a bit overloaded with information when I started as an Associational Mission Strategist. The more I began to read, study, and practice, the more I found some plans that worked the best for our churches in our context.

Revitalization styles will vary depending on location, leadership, and cultural surroundings. But the beauty of the Southern Baptist Convention is that we believe in partnership around the gospel. We believe that we truly are better together, and that we have one joint effort towards the mission. So while styles vary, we still join in the effort of church renewal together.

I can testify that serving at the Association, on the State Board of Missions for the Florida Baptist Convention, and serving with the Replant Bootcamp, I have seen how churches are working together through various entities and organizations, all for the purpose of helping churches become healthy again.

## More Work to be Done

Paragraphs 8-10 speak of the urgent need for SBC Churches to do all they can to help in the cooperative effort of Church Revitalization. Paragraph 9 says, “RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists are encouraged to continue providing robust resources, training opportunities, and support systems to assist churches in their revitalization and replanting efforts through NAMB and partnership with state conventions and local associations, including the development of relevant curriculum, conferences, mentorship programs, and partnerships with experienced practitioners in the field...”

As a reminder, almost [12,000 messengers](#) were represented at the NOLA SBC this year. When this resolution was voted through, we affirmed as a collective body of almost 47,000 churches, that our desire was to help encourage, promote, and advance God’s kingdom mission through our work with local churches. As we recognized this effort, reality settled in for many of our churches to ask the question: what can we do to join in with the effort of Church Renewal?

If you want to get involved with NAMB’s Replant Initiative, visit [this website](#) and look through their resources. Even as a healthy church or supporting church, you can [visit here](#) to find ways to partner. Please reach out to our team at the [Replant Bootcamp](#) and we can help you connect through the right avenues to find ways to help. And if your church is in danger of closing, take this [church health assessment](#). This self-assessment is meant to help assist you in determining the current state of your local church. Another way to get started is by taking an [introductory course](#) that will help anyone understand what church replanting is and how it provides hope for dying churches.