

Pastoral Leadership Guidance for Our Planters

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) serves the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and seeks to fulfill its mission in fidelity to the statement of faith adopted by the Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Our desire is to endorse and fund church planters who have a faith and practice consistent with the Convention's adopted statement of faith and who seek to honor our Southern Baptist partners.

Our ministry assignment is to serve our brothers and sisters across the Convention in autonomous SBC churches. We recognize there are differing views on how best to interpret and apply Article VI of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, which affirms the truth that "both men and women are gifted for service in the church" and that "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." We will continue to partner with and assist any cooperating churches. We believe it best, however, to reserve endorsement and funding for planters who are willing to reflect the practice of most Southern Baptists in this issue.

Over the years, NAMB has sometimes required church planters to adopt certain guidelines as a way of fostering a strong relationship with the majority of Southern Baptist churches in belief and practice. For this reason, planters endorsed by NAMB agree to abstain from alcohol in their personal practice as well as in church-sponsored events.

NAMB also requires that endorsed planters align with the practice of the majority of Southern Baptist churches—that only qualified men will hold the office or title of "pastor/elder/bishop/overseer" and, as such, serve as the communicator for teaching and preaching in their main gatherings or worship services. Since culture, practice and methodology in the early years of a church plant set a foundation for future ministry, all endorsed Send Network planters will agree to abide by this guideline for the duration of their endorsement period.