



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 29, 2018

Southern Baptists Cut Ties With D.C. Baptists Over Homosexuality

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation's largest evangelical denomination, has severed ties with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC), after the Washington, D.C. church group refused to discipline a church under its jurisdiction that had hired a pair of lesbian co-pastors.

In February the SBC's Executive Committee issued the DCBC a 90-day ultimatum to remove all congregations in its fellowship that "practice affirming, approving, or endorsing homosexual behavior," according to [Baptist Press News](#) (BP News). The action came after one of the DCBC's member congregations, Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., voted in January 2017 to call a "married" lesbian couple co-pastors.

Calvary, a 155-year-old congregation founded by abolitionists, had disassociated from the SBC in 2012, but was still part of the DCBC. But when the church called lesbian partners Maria Swearingen and Sally Sarratt co-pastors in 2017, the SBC's Executive Committee charged that by failing to discipline the congregation, the DCBC had tacitly approved of the unbiblical actions of Calvary.

After the DCBC failed to comply with the SBC's warning as of May 21, the SBC severed its relationship with the group. "The formal relationship between the SBC and the DCBC has come to an end," said D. August Boto, the SBC's Executive Committee president, in a prepared statement. Boto told BP News that he had received a letter from DCBC executive director Robert Cochran "indicating that the DCBC has not taken action the Executive Committee hoped it would when it issued its Feb. 20 decision. In his letter, Cochran divulged that he anticipated an end to our relationship."

Boto recounted that upon receiving Cochran's response, he "issued a letter to the DCBC on behalf of the [SBC Executive Committee].... I will soon send another letter to each of eight churches we know of in DC that are supporting SBC work through financial gifts directed through the DCBC. The letters will inform each group that the formal relationship between the SBC and the DCBC has come to an end and that ... the SBC no longer recognizes the District of Columbia Baptist Convention as a Baptist body authorized to receive and disburse Cooperative Program and other SBC contributions."

Boto said that the SBC's Executive Committee had "expressed deep regret over the need to take this action, but felt compelled to affirm biblical truth over organizational relationships." He added that the committee embraced a "willingness to consider resuming its relationship with the DCBC in the future," should the group act to remove Calvary Baptist from its fellowship.

However, while Cochran had earlier emphasized that the DCBC "has not affirmed, approved, or endorsed homosexual behavior in any way at any time," and that it "respects the official statements" on





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homosexuality by the SBC, he made it clear that his group had “no plans to disassociate” with Calvary Baptist Church, and had not discussed “the issue of homosexuality” with Calvary Baptist leadership.



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