

PSBA Leadership Conference 2026

Ron Shepard, presenter

“Growing in God’s Grace”

Listen to God regarding God, and listen to God regarding you. Let the Lord reveal how He strengthens leaders.

Schedule

- **2:30 pm** Fellowship, drinks, and snacks
- **3:00 pm** Session One: Women in Ministry, PSBA Name Discussion, Umbrella Organization Oversight
- **4:00 pm** Fellowship
- **4:30 pm** Session Two: Executive Director Transition Plan, Impact Leaders, Partnerships
- **5:30 pm** Dinner

Session One (3:00 pm)

1. Women in Ministry

Understanding the meaning and implications of the SBC women-in-ministry constitutional amendment, which faces its second vote in June 2027. Our discussion will draw on the SBC Executive Committee’s (EC) September 21–22 meeting and the newly formed Rice Commission.

At the June 2026 SBC annual meeting, Dr. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), moved to amend the SBC Constitution to make clear that a church in friendly cooperation “does not act to affirm, appoint, or endorse a woman serving in the office or function of a pastor/elder/overseer, specifically preaching to the assembled congregation.”

- **Vote count:** The *Baptist Courier* reported that the measure passed with nearly 75% of the vote (6,028 in favor, 2,026 against), exceeding the required two-thirds threshold.
- **Role of the EC:** The motion came from the floor rather than through an EC recommendation. If ratified in June 2027, the EC will implement it. At the EC’s September 21–22 meeting, SBC President Willy Rice and EC President Jeff Iorg both addressed the amendment.
- **Watch for yourself:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAdZFspugKc>. President Rice speaks at about 52:00; Jeff Iorg at about 1:28:00.
- **The Rice Commission:** President Rice established the Rice Commission to study the issue and address the primary questions being raised. Its first meeting is October 7, and it is important that the commission hear from pastors and churches. The intent is for “the commission to bring clarity to this issue that will address the major questions being asked about how the proposed amendment would be enacted, what it would mean, and how it would be implemented ... a needed instructional guide for churches and entities ... in good faith.” President Rice is also asking that an article addressing marriage and gender be added to the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M).

- **How cooperation will be determined:** Jeff Iorg explained that for a church considered not in friendly cooperation, the Credentials Committee makes a recommendation, the EC votes, and the decision is reported to the convention, subject to appeal by the church. The EC needs to understand the amendment's qualifications and how they apply, and churches need the same clarity to decide how to respond.
- **What the amendment says:** Dr. Mohler stated at the June meeting: "This amendment speaks directly, and we know what we are talking about. We're talking about the pastors of churches and we are talking about the preaching of the word of God. When it comes to the office, comprehensive; when it comes to the function, specified." Under the amendment as written:
 - o A church with a woman whose office or title is pastor or elder would not be in friendly cooperation.
 - o A church that allows a woman to preach in its primary worship services, regardless of her office or title, would not be in friendly cooperation.
- **Looking ahead:** Given the strength of the 2026 vote, we can anticipate passage on the second vote in 2027. Churches that want to remain in friendly cooperation should consider whether their position titles or functions need to change to align with the amendment. Churches choosing not to make changes should be prepared for the possibility of voluntarily withdrawing from the national SBC.
- **Implications for the PSBA:** The PSBA has historically relied only on the BF&M for identification and membership, which makes our member churches Southern Baptist at the local level. We will need to sort this out going forward, likely in 2027.
- **Key question:** Given our biblical freedom in Christ, often expressed through local church autonomy, when do governing documents beyond the BF&M determine identity and membership? **A church not in friendly cooperation with the SBC is still a member of the PSBA.**
- **Our approach:** Rather than speculate, we will follow Jeff Iorg's counsel to the EC and wait for the Rice Commission to complete its work, which could expand or redirect everything communicated so far.

2. PSBA Name Discussion

In keeping with our churches and mission, we will begin discussing a possible new public name for the PSBA, added as a DBA ("doing business as").

- This is the beginning of the discussion; it has not yet been formally taken up by the Executive Board Council. The Admin Team favors a name change.
- One working idea: *Puget Sound Church Network*.

3. Umbrella Organization Oversight

IRS requirements for umbrella organizations: what you may not know but need to.

- IRS Form 8940 (Rev. 12-2025), Schedule Q, Line 7 (501(c)(3) umbrella): **"Check this box to attest that each subordinate organization is affiliated with you and subject to your general supervision or control."**
- The SBC EC is working through its own umbrella questions with the IRS. The PSBA may wait for that national outcome before engaging our attorney regarding a PSBA umbrella.

- **Key question:** Are subordinate organizations under an umbrella required to abide by the umbrella organization's constitution and bylaws? We have heard differing opinions and want to avoid speculation.

Session Two (4:30 pm)

4. Executive Director Transition Plan, Process, and Timeline

Since 2024, I have worked with the Admin Team and Executive Board Council toward my retirement in January 2029. Here are the details from the Council's March and August 2026 meetings:

- **Retirement:** January 2029. If the new Executive Director desires, I am open to working 15 hours per week for two years. We anticipate remaining in Puget Sound.
- **2026:** Finalize PSBA ministry paradigms with the Admin Team, drawing on Sacrificial Leadership and the Impact Leaders; elect the Search Workgroup on October 6; adjust the job description in December.
- **2027:** Open applications in January; adjust PSBA documents in March; elect the new Executive Director in June or October.
- **2028:** New Executive Director on the field and working alongside me by the end of March.
- **Candidate profile (by consensus):** A next-generation, current PSBA pastor with 10+ years' experience in one church; locally self-supporting; with a proven love for and ability to work with other pastors; proven in overseeing and managing major funds; and experienced in serving contextually and cross-culturally.
- **Recommendation process:** About 25 engaged and aligned PSBA pastors will participate in recommending the new Executive Director.
- **Search Workgroup members:** Andrew Fouché, Walt Kelcy, Daniel Englehart, Zack Dunckley, Carlos Rodriguez, Bob Lowe, and Ron Shepard (ex officio).

5. Impact Leaders, Groups, and Church Gifts

- Three new Impact Leaders begin in January 2027: Matthew Park, John Bell, and Evan Rose, with two additional candidates. Their focus is facilitating new Impact Groups.
- We are expanding and implementing scripture-based training in Impact Groups through conferencing and church strengthening with Daniel Englehart and Mike Lee.
- This will lead to increased gifts and investments in churches, focused on helping each church take the next step toward its mission statement. We currently have 20 annual funding commitments and anticipate 40 by mid-2028.

6. Out-of-State Partnerships: 2027 Pipeline

- God has opened a new door to national connections through the Sacrificial Leadership project and the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL).
- Engaged PSBA pastors will be invited to join presentations to associations, with the goal of pastors taking over connection and partnership development based on Sacrificial Leadership, highlighting spiritual formation and pastoral theology.