



**The North American Mission Board Affirms
Strong Relationship with Maryland-Delaware Baptists
March 24, 2016**

Because of a recent series of blog posts and letters by the former Maryland-Delaware state Baptist convention executive director, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) wishes again to affirm its strong commitment to working with Maryland-Delaware Baptists and their state convention. This relationship is stronger than ever.

Since Kevin Ezell became NAMB president in September, 2010, NAMB has shifted much of its attention and resources to states and cities outside the South. These are areas where the number of Southern Baptist churches have fallen far behind population growth. Baltimore is one of 32 cities in which we have placed greater resources, helped deploy more church planters, and recruited outside churches to help start more and more Southern Baptist congregations in the city.

This strategy is working. Since 2012 we have increased church planting funds to the Maryland-Delaware Convention by 113 percent. In 2012, 20 new Southern Baptist churches were started there. In 2015, that number more than doubled, to 41 churches. In addition, five other existing churches affiliated with Maryland-Delaware Southern Baptists, bringing a total of 46 new churches into the state convention last year alone. That remarkable growth could not have happened without a strong working relationship between NAMB and Maryland-Delaware Baptists.

Although we work closely with the Maryland-Delaware convention and each of the other 41 state Baptist conventions, those conventions are separate, independent entities with their own leaders and governing bodies. No officer of any Southern Baptist entity has the power to remove a state convention officer. In that regard, last June the Maryland-Delaware Baptist Convention executive leader resigned after a process led by those to whom he reported at the state convention.

No one at NAMB forced or orchestrated the events leading up to that executive's decision to resign. And, with regard to any attempt to call into question the integrity of our president, Kevin Ezell, our trustee officers strongly stated their support for and belief in Kevin's character in their Feb. 5, 2016 statement regarding this matter.

Our heart's cry is to reach people for Christ and help Southern Baptists start more churches for the residents of Maryland and Delaware. To that end, our prayer is that this matter will cease to be a focus of attention so we can all return to that great and high calling of our Lord.