



AP Images  
Rick Warren

## Rick Warren's Saddleback Church Expelled From Southern Baptist Convention

The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has approved a recommendation from the SBC's Credentials Committee to place Saddleback Church of California as "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC, according to the Christian Post. Andy Wood recently took over as pastor of the congregation, but the church was founded in 1980 and pastored by Rick Warren for 42 years.

The reason given for the expulsion was the church's decision in 2021 to ordain women in the church as pastors, in direct defiance of the denomination's explicit stance regarding this. The Baptist Faith and Message, the denomination's statement of beliefs, holds that the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. Wood's wife, Stacie, is listed as one of the church's pastors. She was a "teaching pastor" at the couple's previous church, Echo Church.

While each congregation within the SBC, the nation's largest "Protestant" denomination, conducts its own affairs, including the selection of officers, these congregations are affiliated with the SBC in order to carry out certain ministries, such as the selection and funding of missionaries around the world. The annual meeting of the SBC is made up of "messengers" from member churches, and at the 2021 meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, a resolution was offered to the Credentials Committee to break fellowship with Saddleback over the issue. The Credentials Committee, after studying the church's action in light of the Baptist Faith and Message, voted to recommend expulsion to the Executive Committee.

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Saddleback Church can appeal the Executive Committee's decision at the 2023 convention, to be held in New Orleans. It is considered unlikely that the Executive Committee's decision will be overturned, though, were Saddleback to do so. While each church is able to rule itself, the churches that make up the SBC are also free to decide which other congregations they will affiliate with. If Saddleback does not agree with the doctrinal stances of the SBC, then it is appropriate that they not continue their church's membership in the denomination.

While other denominations may hold differing views on the issue of ordaining women and other doctrinal questions, Rick Warren has a long history of challenging conservative orthodoxy, both in religious matters and in politics. In an article in *Time* magazine in 2008, Warren was described as one of the preachers who was "leading and riding" a "wave of change in the Evangelical community." While evangelicals have been mostly associated with more conservative political philosophy and activity, Warren has been a vocal advocate of causes considered much more liberal or progressive.

The *Time* article, by David Van Biema, added that Warren is "leading ... an expansion beyond social conservatism to causes such as battling poverty, opposing torture and combating global warming. The movement has loosened the hold of religious right leaders on ordinary Evangelicals and created an opportunity for Warren."

According to *Time*, Warren has shifted away from issues like abortion and gay marriage, and is now "more interested in" things like climate change.

Warren is a fourth-generation Southern Baptist pastor, but he told *Time* that he led a march on a courthouse with the 1960s radical group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS was a "New Left" organization founded as a branch of the League for Industrial Democracy, which itself was descended from the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, founded by Upton Sinclair, Walter Lippmann, Clarence Darrow, and Jack London.

Since that time, Warren has been an active member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an organization of advocates for world government. He was featured, along with President Bill Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, as part of a New York Meetings Program hosted by the CFR, in which a "series of discussions" focused on "the nexus of religion and foreign policy." He has also spoken to the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Considering that evangelical Christians are perhaps the major voting bloc opposing the progressive agenda, it is not surprising that the progressive media would pump Rick Warren and others like him as role models for evangelical Christians to follow. After all, Warren's expressions of concern about global warming (or, as it has more recently been dubbed, "climate change," so that all sorts of weather events can be chalked up to being "man-made" through industrialization) fit in nicely with the Left's support for more government control over the economy to combat that supposed problem.

The support of the "Religious Left" for the progressive agenda is pretty much old hat by now, and the only ones who really care what progressive preachers and seminary professors have to say are progressive members of progressive denominations. As such, success in changing evangelicals into political progressives — or at least in neutralizing them — lies in using preachers in more conservative denominations, such as the Southern Baptists.

Hopefully, the expulsion of Warren's church will cause many of the evangelicals who may have been taken in by him to see his statements on public policy issues for what they are: the views of an SDS radical who remains to this day in an organization that calls for world government — the Council on Foreign Relations.