

NSCBC Governance Changes

Hearing from the body

What is the congregation saying? You're invited to hear from others in the body and to add to the conversation. Are there statements you want to affirm? Is there something critically important to you which has not been heard yet?

 [Add your input](#)

Table of Contents

Quick Summary of InsightsPage 2

Full Comment Summary:Page 4

- What have you learned? ([Responses](#))
- What more do you want to know? ([Responses](#))
- What experiences have been meaningful to you? ([Responses](#))
- Where do you see the Spirit working in the life of our church? ([Responses](#))
- What is most important to you to have your church body hear? ([Responses](#))
- How do these two governance matters relate to our mission/vision? ([Responses](#))

Note: This is a Report of congregational input captured at the Sept 20th Governance Forum in breakout groups. It remains open for additions from all who call NSCBC their church home. Input will be added as it is shared via the Form or in Family Meetings in November. (Last update 10/10/25) For those interested in further reading, there is also a [Report](#) of the congregation's baseline views and experiences, which was published in the Spring. To remain up to date on the process, visit nscbc.org/governance.

Summary of Insights

What We Have Learned Together

Biblical Interpretation & Theological Growth

- Many reported growing in theological depth or learning about biblical interpretations with which they were not previously familiar, including the mutualist position.
- Many learned the importance of Genesis 1–3 for reading the rest of scripture and discovered the value of Acts 15 for shaping how the church engages in dialogue.
- Several noted the complexity of scripture and the value of studying it in community.
- Many reflected on how cultural context—ancient and modern—shapes interpretation.
- Some shared deeper integration between theology and life.

Church History & Identity

- Some were surprised to learn about NSCBC's 40+ year history regarding its governance model and the role of men and women in ministry.
- Some grew in appreciation for the congregation's role in the church and expressed appreciation for the transparency and inclusiveness of this process.

Unity, Conviction & Community

- Many expressed gratitude for a church willing to engage in difficult conversations with grace. Others found engaging in these conversations challenging.
- Many affirmed that, theologically speaking, these are secondary issues that should not divide us.
- There was a shared sense of being centered on Christ and scripture, even amid disagreement.

Personal Experience & Broader Perspective

- Stories of re-baptism, cross-tradition learning, and vocational and interpersonal pain highlighted the emotional and spiritual weight of these topics, and the need for healing.

Continued Curiosity

- Some desire greater focus on the function of elders -what they are meant to do- for considering who should serve, rather than remaining solely focused on what scripture says about gender.
- Some interest in understanding how candidates for baptism and membership are prepared.
- Some interest in more fully understanding NSCBC history of dialogue on governance matters.
- Some interest in better understanding the history of biblical interpretations and theological perspectives. Some said their view has not been fully presented in the process, and would like that to happen.

Where Our Church Reports See the Spirit Moving

- Some noted seeing the Spirit move through our leadership who have modeled humility, listening and service, not control.

- Some noted seeing the Spirit working through women's humble service and leadership at NSCBC.
- One noted the Spirit at work in our liturgy, confession, arts ministry.
- Many see the Spirit at work in our shared commitment to scripture, willingness to listen to one another, and desire for unity despite differences, including in those engaging despite discomfort.
- Some expressed increased trust in NSCBC through this journey.

What People Most Want Others to Hear

Baptism & Membership

- People affirmed the impact of our current model on those who desire membership, but do not desire re-baptism. Some truly experience this as a limitation.
- People affirmed our Baptist identity and appreciate our current baptism practice while desiring to extend grace.

Men & Women in Leadership

- There are women who desire to serve pastorally as elders and truly experience the limitation of our current model.
- If we do not include women as elders, some raised the necessity of finding another way to ensure women receive pastoral care.
- Some feel the current model places undue burden on men and limits flourishing.
- People shared stories of pain, highlighting the need for clarity, healing, and compassion.
- Some grieve past decisions made for unity at the cost of women's continued inclusion in the governing board of the church.

Scripture, Conviction & Integrity

- Any change must be grounded in scripture, not cultural pressure.
- People want fairness in how all views and texts are presented.

Identity, Belonging & Representation

- Some report not fitting into traditional roles and want to know how they belong.
- Boards that reflect the body are seen as more trustworthy and effective.

Unity, Fear & Witness

- There is both hope and fear—hope for mutualist collaboration, fear of disunity.
- People resonated with the call to stay together even amid disagreement.

What is something that you have learned since this process began?

Scripture & Theology

- One person said that they were previously familiar with the complementarian interpretation of 1 Timothy, but had not been familiar with other interpretations.
- One person coming from an egalitarian background has appreciated learning about the complementarian position, and had been previously unfamiliar with the details.
- One person who grew up complementarian has enjoyed growing in fluency of articulating both sides. Has found conversation even when there's been disagreement to be healthy.
- One person appreciated their Exploring Scripture group and how it showed that seemingly straightforward scriptures have nuance and complexity. Another person similarly shared they have learned there are not two but many different views on men's and women's roles in church life. Another pointed to observing differences in how church members are interpreting scripture.
- One person said that before this year, they were not familiar with the mutualist position in particular, which upholds the differences between men and women as good; while affirming their shared responsibility to steward creation. In this context, one person added that the mutualist view seems like a third way, theologically, and has helped them to make sense of what they are seeing in our church as much good comes out of men and women collaborating.
- One person said this year they learned the importance of Genesis 1-3 as a framework for interpreting the rest of scripture. Another person said that they have benefitted from our recent slow series working through Genesis and its broad impact on how Christians then interpret the rest of scripture.
- One person said that previous to this year, they had felt a discontinuity between their experience in ministry and their theology; but now have more theology that is helping them make greater sense of their experience in the world.
- A number of people said that as they engaged with the topics, they have concluded they are secondary issues, meaning they do not rise to the level of core doctrine that unites Christians; therefore they hope that people can remain connected across differences.
- One person appreciated Jason's Greek language insight in 1 Timothy 2 that Paul used a present tense that could mean at this present time.
- One person felt that Paul was more conservative than Jesus across his approach to many topics.
- A number of people shared about the importance of understanding cultural context – both first century Roman culture and our own cultural contexts that we bring to the text – in order to interpret scripture well.

- One person reflected on the “wise friends” panel statements about women, indicating that the many passages about women serving in the early church were encouraging while questioning whether women really are more likely to join churches now due to marginalization.
- One person learned the need for a larger community to work together to understand scripture. Reflected on the journey, illumination of the Holy Spirit, and opportunities for the church collectively to be an example for the larger community.

About ourselves

- One person said they learned we all have convictions that are more strongly held than we might think. Having time to process strongly held convictions has been helpful.
- One person enjoyed learning that males and females are different but both needed; neither is better - they're different and both needed to come together to make a whole.
- One person shared that the process was humbling; this person learned more about the complexity of scripture and how our own biases can get in the way of our understanding. Relying on the Holy Spirit and prayer is essential for discernment.

About our church

- One person appreciated what was shared from Acts 15; they learned about the autonomy the church had to make this difficult decision.
- One person realized that we could have the same center focussed on Christ and maintain unity, but have different conclusions on parts of scripture.
- One person learned that despite people coming from different perspectives, everyone is heavily centered on Christ and "what the Bible says" - beautiful to see everyone going together in that way, loving and serving the same God. Another person learned the focus and commitment our pastor and other leaders have to allowing scripture to guide our church.
- People expressed gratitude to be part of a church willing to have difficult conversations and bear that risk, especially given the polarized nature of conversations in the broader culture.
- One person expressed initially wanting leaders with more credentials to make decisions like these, but in time appreciating the necessity of the congregation's participation. This person had attended churches where pastors wielded authority poorly, and now sees an important role for the congregation.
- One person greatly appreciated learning our own church history and discovering that [question of men and women's roles] has been a conversation for over 30 years. Appreciates that our church has had a history of asking tough questions together.

- One person appreciated the transparency and desire for everyone to have a voice in the discernment process. Values that every voice can be heard and people feel appreciated and valued through hardships.

What more do you feel you would like to know?

Baptism & Membership

- One person asked about how the church prepares people for baptism, and what, if any, formal education is being offered to candidates for baptism.

Men & Women in Ministry

- One person shared they were not aware that women had previously served on the governing board of NSCBC and indicated they wanted to know more about the circumstances around previous deliberations around these topics.
- A few people expressed a desire to hear a more positively formulated expression of complementarianism, sharing that while the resources and process have been helpful, they have not seen a complementarian view fully represented. Some with egalitarian convictions said neither view has been fully expressed within the process.
- Multiple people thought it would be helpful to know more about interpretive approaches, recognizing potential dangers in projecting the story onto the particulars, and of using particulars out of context.
- One person shared that they see the question of men and women serving as elders resting as much on what the bible says elders/pastors and laypeople should be doing as on what the bible says men and women can/can't do, and that was not explored as deeply yet in the process.

Have you had an experience with pastoral leadership or baptism that is meaningful to you and has influenced what you think about these matters?

Baptism & Membership

- One person who felt forced to be rebaptized in college at a Baptist church has appreciated that our church is realizing how complicated and hard that is for someone.
- A second person struggled with being rebaptized and with family members having to get rebaptized - in the case of a son led to a messy situation that was hurtful.
- One person was baptized twice on profession of faith, because convinced the first time that they hadn't fully grasped the meaning of it.
- One person shared that she was baptized as a baby and then re-baptized as an adult as "an act of extending grace to the church since it was important to

them.” She encouraged us to extend grace and not discourage anyone who has a hard time with being re-baptized.

- One person shared a meaningful experience with infant baptism and a personal conviction/discernment that getting re-baptized would not be necessary or as meaningful.
- One person reflected on how NSCBC’s practice of baptizing people in the front of the church is different from past churches she had attended, and a beautiful thing to witness.

Men & Women in Ministry

- One person who grew up in the Methodist church reflected that their experience of seeing women in leadership there was negative. The Bible was not seen as the word of God in that church.
- One person with experience of missions work has witnessed a broad spectrum of what baptism looks like across traditions. This person appreciates how our conversation promotes open-mindedness.
- One person with personal experience as part of NSCBC’s former Leadership Council governance model cautioned against returning to that model as it was not a good experience for him.
- A female participant shared her personal experience as a woman with unrecognized gifts, skills, and education in a male-dominated career.

Where do you see the Spirit working in the life of our church? How might that be part of our discernment?

In our leadership

- Several people said that hearing more from the elders this year was encouraging, as they demonstrated a spirit of humility and service, not wielding authority over the church.
- Some said that they also recognize the Spirit bearing fruit through women preaching, teaching, and leading ministries in our congregation, leading them to the conclusion that it’s appropriate for women to serve as elders.
- One person saw the Spirit’s work in the humility of church leadership. This is very distinctive to how the world disagrees, seeking to yell the loudest. Appreciates the listening approach and thinks that is a sign of the Spirit. Another, similarly celebrated that NSCBC is not stuck on polarizing issues but that our focus is to reveal to the world and our community who Jesus is. To do this, we need everyone using their spiritual gifts.

In church life

- One person said they saw the Spirit at work in our liturgy, our confession, our worship, and our growing arts ministry. They value a Baptist church that cares about aesthetic, story, and liturgy.

In other members of the congregation

- One person saw the Spirit at work through the universal commitment to do right by scripture in our church. Several similarly highlighted the focus on unity and scripture, despite differing interpretations.
- One person with significant ministry experience shared that his biggest interest was in how NSCBC would go through this process, rather than the outcomes of either topic. The process has increased his trust in NSCBC.
- One person saw the Spirit at work in people who found these topics difficult to engage in, yet were stepping into the topic with humility and patience.
- One person shared they see the Spirit over time at work growing NSCBC, as this process has gone better than last time and appreciates the spirit of unity and generosity this time.

As you think about these potential governance model changes, what is most important to you to have our church body hear?

Baptism & Membership

- One person noted that it is important to separate Membership from Baptism, as Membership to Jesus' church is based on a public profession of faith and commitment to following Christ while baptism may happen at a different time.
- One person voiced a conviction that believer's baptism by immersion is an important part of our identity and witness, and should remain a requirement for membership in a Baptist church.
- One person thought the church should hear how many people in our church right now our baptism change would impact, as this person was surprised there are so many.
- Several people wanted the body to hear that both of the limitations we are considering lifting are felt as real limitations to some people and inhibit our functioning as a church.

Men & Women in Ministry

- A female participant shared that having worked abroad in missions, she experienced the "blessed alliance" in a new way and found freedom to lead ministry. There was fear in returning to the US where the institutional church might shut those doors.
- A female participant shared a painful experience of being a teacher who was broadly affirmed for her ministry and built up in the qualities of a church minister and invited to begin on a path of ordination, only to later learn women were categorically ineligible.

- One person wanted people to know that there are women who truly desire to serve the church as elders; who want to pastorally care for the congregation through serving on the elder board.
- One person shared that when the current constitution was adopted, they agreed in theory to unify the elder and governance functions, but found it personally painful to vote to remove women from the governing board of the church. They had voted that way to preserve the unity of the church against their own convictions.
- One person indicated that they can feel a shift in the church toward men and women serving together in all areas, but as someone who previously studied scripture and concluded that scripture does not allow it, they are wondering how they will fit. While they love having women serve in every other area, having a male-only elder board that oversees all teaching preserves a principle that is important to this person.
- A group member shared about how these topics trigger significant anxiety due to prior experiences witnessing and experiencing the objectification of women in complementarian contexts; and appreciated that this has not been present in our church.
- A group member who feels convicted that scripture does not allow women to serve as elders expressed sorrow over the church's historical failures and said those failures have made it challenging to share their convictions. Still, they did not want to compromise their convictions around scripture because of historical failures.
- One person noted that our Constitution currently says we will have 7 elders; which we have almost never maintained. They noted the weight that is placed on male members to serve as elders even if they would rather serve as deacons or in other ministries and grieve the disproportionate responsibility men carry.
- One person noted that in their lifetime, they have observed increased polarization and hardening around the issue of women's participation in the church and in society. The person felt some concern and apprehension around the future and saw the mutualist vision of collaboration as a counter-cultural witness.
- One person shared that it is very challenging for any board in any context to provide good governance when they do not fully reflect the body.
- One person wanted the congregation to hear that her experience as an unmarried woman has led her to feel un-valued in church contexts where there are strong distinctions between men's and women's roles.
- Multiple people shared that while they acknowledged differences between men and women, they felt they did not fit the stereotypical roles for women or men and wanted to hear the church articulate how they still fit within the church.

Convictions and Unity

- Two people talked about perceiving a spirit of fear among others who felt a change on women in leadership was “opening Pandora’s box” for other changes.
- One person would like the church to know that a complementarian view also emphasizes equality in areas like service, prophesy, evangelism but not serving as elders.
- One person shared that there is a significant need for women in the congregation to have other women in church leadership to talk to and receive pastoral care from. If we don’t move in the direction of having women as elders, we need to consider another way to address this need beyond the small number of women staff members we currently have.
- A number of people indicated what they most wanted the congregation to hear was what Nate shared at the Forum, encouraging people to remain together even if they study and land in a different place than others. One added that any time people leave, whether over matters of governance or for other reasons, those left are impacted.
- One person said that if we change our practice on this, they want to see that we are doing it because we are convinced from the scriptures. They reflected on the difficulty of presenting all of the interpretations of all the relevant texts in a way that is fair to everyone in our congregation.
- One person shared that they felt the more foundational issue for us to consider is the priesthood of all believers, a biblical principle that is important to Baptist churches. They indicated a concern that an elder-led model is not congregational enough.
- Some people shared that unity among ourselves, despite differences of opinion, is important to show those around us what God is like.

Our church governance model exists to support our mission and vision. We have a vision to see the gospel go deep in us and extend out wide to every part of this world through all of God's people. As you are considering these potential changes, what hopes and fears do you have?

Hopes

- Several people said they were hopeful these changes might remove stumbling blocks for people and would support our mission and ability to make disciples of all people.
- A few people reflected on previous deliberations on our church model, comparing that less inclusive process to this more inclusive process and their

sense that “we’re going to be fine,” appreciating tension and sturdy relationships as a good thing to model to the world.

- One person counseled against fear of change because Jesus shook up the world with “radical ideas,” and the Holy Spirit continues to move and engage a changing world.

Fears

- Several people expressed fear over the potential of disunity resulting from discussing these topics. Those who raised this concern highlighted the impact of any change and the potential of people leaving the church having an impact on friendships. These comments recognized that this was possible regardless of the outcome, and possible if the topics were never raised.
- Several concerned about unity noted the importance of building bridges of relationship for the Lord’s sake, and emphasized a desire that our church stay strong in relationships, extend grace to one another when there is a difference of opinion on secondary issues, respect one another, and allow everyone to manifest their gifts through serving God in this church and our community.
- One person shared that while they believe that women and men should lead together, they are afraid of what female leadership might look like because they have witnessed bad examples of it. They recognized they had also seen bad examples of male leadership.