

# Alabama pastor Ed Litton elected new president of the Southern Baptist Convention

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) – Ed Litton, senior pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, Ala., was elected the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) June 15 at the convention's 2021 Annual Meeting in Nashville, defeating Mike Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Church in Blackshear, Ga.

Litton was nominated by Fred Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans. Luter served as the first African American president of the SBC from 2012-2014.



Luter

Litton received 6,834 votes (52.04%) to Stone's 6,278 (47.81%) in the runoff. In the initial round of balloting, Stone received the most votes (5,216, or 37.48%) in a four-way contest that included Litton, Southern Seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr., and Randy Adams, executive director-treasurer of Northwest Baptist Convention in Vancouver, Wa.

Litton received 4,630 votes (32.38 percent) in the first round, while 3,764 ballots (26.32%) were cast for Mohler and 673 votes (4.71%) for Adams.

Litton succeeds J.D. Greear, senior pastor of multi-campus The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area. Greear was term limited to two years, but agreed to serve an extra year when the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic led to the cancellation of the 2020 SBC Annual Meeting in Orlando.

SBC registration secretary Don Currence reported there were 15,691 messengers registered for the Nashville meeting, with 13,131 casting ballots in the presidential election. The largest crowd for an annual meeting in a quarter-century occupied every seat with standing space stretching the length of a city block, often at several rows deep. Numerous messengers sat on the floor.

In the press conference following his election as the 46<sup>th</sup> SBC president, Litton spoke of family, healing, and conversations to come not only on subjects such as racial reconciliation and sexual abuse, but a convention still divided over how to approach those issues.

“We are a family, and at times we may seem dysfunctional,” said Litton, a reference to tensions that roiled the SBC in the months leading up to this year’s annual meeting, “but we love each other...

“This is a family, and sometimes families argue in a way that the neighbors get to see it, and that’s kind of what you [the news media] have been witnessing, but the reality is we’re going to leave this place focused. We’ll leave this place with a direction, and I believe a better direction, for the future.”

Litton, who has been pastor of the Saraland church outside Mobile for 27 years, shared the story of how a Southern Baptist pastor in Virginia, Charlie Jones, kept witnessing to his alcoholic father until one day everything in his father’s life unraveled “like a cheap sweater.”

“My dad cried out to God as this pastor led him in a prayer to trust Christ as his Savior,” Litton testified, “and we watched in my house as a miracle took place.”

Litton becomes president as the SBC is growing more diverse and, as such, when more voices are speaking out on Gospel issues. The beginning point for such conversations, he said, is humility. “We’re to humble ourselves, to listen, to ask God for grace, and listen to what people are actually saying, to seek agreement... even if we don’t see eye to eye.”

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*Ed Litton, SBC President*

Earlier in the evening, messengers voted overwhelmingly to pass a resolution, “On the Sufficiency of Scripture for Race and Racial Reconciliation.”

Asked how the SBC should move forward on allegations of mishandling sexual abuse claims, Litton advocated for an independent investigation of the allegations recently made against the SBC Executive Committee by former SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Russell Moore.

“We need to look at it thoroughly and report back in a timely way to the people of the Convention to understand what has actually happened. I think we also need to be pastoral in how we handle victims – how we hear them, how we empathize and sympathize with them. We want to ring all this out and expose it to the light,” Litton said.

To view live sessions of the 2021 SBC annual meeting, visit <https://sbcannualmeeting.net/live/>.