

Mississippi Baptists convene 2021 annual meeting

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Editor

Lloyd Sweatt, pastor of Meadowood Church, Amory, was elected to his first term as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Oct. 26 by messengers attending the 185th Annual Meeting of the Convention at First Church, Jackson. He replaces Ken Hester, senior pastor of First Church, Pontotoc, who was term-limited after serving two one-year terms.

The official messenger count for the 2021 session, the first since 2019 due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, was 698.

Messengers approved a Mississippi Cooperative Program budget of \$30,231,786 for 2022 that reflects a six percent increase over the 2021 budget and contains a one percent increase in the amount sent to the Southern Baptist Convention.

A motion was turned down by messengers that would have created a task force to take up the issue of sexual abuse and recommend proactive measures that can be taken by MBC agencies and member churches.

MBC Officers

Sweatt was nominated by Bill Hurt, senior pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Columbus, and seconded by Jon Daniels, senior pastor of First Church, Flora. Greg Belser, senior pastor of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton, was nominated by Wade Stevens, senior pastor of Longview Point Church, Hernando, and seconded by Jimmy Stewart, senior pastor of First Church, Gulfport.



NEW OFFICERS – Mississippi Baptist Convention officers elected at the 135th Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 26-27 at First Church, Jackson, included (from left) Michael Weeks, recording secretary; Scott Thomas II, first vice-president; Lloyd Sweatt, president; Whit Lewis, second vice-president; and Terry Barnes, associate recording secretary. (Photo credit: Bart Lambright)

“It is a humbling experience to be nominated as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. It is even more humbling and overwhelming to be elected,” Sweatt said in a statement to The Baptist Record after the annual meeting. “I am deeply honored to serve our Lord and our state in this capacity. My desire is to allow His light to shine brightly so others may see our good works and glorify our Lord.

“All of this in an effort to continue to bring us closer to our Lord and to each other, while adding to His Kingdom. This is my desire and the goal I have set for myself as we together serve Jesus.”

Scott Thomas II, senior pastor of North Oxford Church, Oxford, was elected without opposition to serve as first vice-president. He was nominated by Dennis Ellingburg, senior pastor of Truitt Memorial Church, Pearl, and seconded by Dwayne Doyle, senior pastor of Emmanuel Church, Ocean Springs.

Whit Lewis, senior pastor of Longview Heights Church, Olive

Branch, was elected without opposition to serve as second vice-president. He was nominated by Scott Thomas II.

Recording Secretary Michael Weeks, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch, was reelected without opposition, as was Associate Recording Secretary Terry Barnes, associate pastor of North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

Motion, Resolutions

Eric Sherwood, lead pastor of Gore Springs Church, Gore Springs, introduced the motion for creation of a sexual abuse task force “for the purpose of developing and recommending a plan to the Mississippi Baptist Convention to facilitate ministries of [Mississippi Baptist Convention Board] churches and the MBCB entities.” The motion failed by vote of the messengers.

Resolutions approved by messengers were (by title, presenter, and summary):

– “A Resolution Concerning the Authority of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Actions of the Executive Committee,” presented by Carl White, retired pastor and member of Highland Church, Meridian, encouraging “all Mississippi Baptists to pray for the [Southern Baptist Convention] Executive Committee President and CEO Search Committee as well as new members who will be selected to serve on the SBC Executive Committee.”

– “Resolution of Welcome,” authored by the Resolutions Committee, welcoming Shawn Parker as executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and pledging to “pray for Dr. Parker as he seeks the Lord’s wisdom in his new role.” Parker has been MBCB executive director-treasurer since March 2020.

“While my first Annual Meeting was a long time in coming, it was worth the wait!” Parker said in a statement to The Baptist

Record after the annual meeting. "I've attended convention meetings in Mississippi as a pastor for the better part of the last twenty years, but this was indeed a different experience.

"I'm deeply thankful for everyone who offered encouragement and prayers leading up to and during the course of the meetings. Overall, it was a typical Mississippi Baptist Annual Meeting filled with rich worship, family-like fellowship, and grace in handling critical business decisions. I couldn't be more thankful to be a Mississippi Baptist!"

– "Resolution of Appreciation," authored by the Resolutions Committee, thanking First Church, Jackson for hosting the annual meeting; the speakers, singers, and instrumentalists; MBC President Ken Hester; and officers, committee members, and volunteers "who have served this convention faithfully."

Messages, Testimonies

Delivering messages at the annual meeting were Ken Hester, convention president and senior pastor of First Church, Pontotoc; Scott Hanberry (convention sermon), senior pastor of Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg; Shawn Parker; and Adam Greenway, president of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

Providing personal testimonies were Matt Powell, senior pastor of First Church, Tupelo; Dwayne Parker, director of discipleship/Sunday School at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; and Greg Herndon, pastor of Valley Grove Church, Pontotoc.

Jamie Dew, president of New Orleans Seminary, New Orleans, provided Bible Treasures devotionals for each session.

Worship

Worship leaders for the annual meeting were Wes Dykes, worship pastor at Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg, and Slater Murphy, director of worship ministries at the Mississippi Baptist

Convention Board. Choirs and praise groups performing at the annual meeting were:

– Combined Baptist Colleges Choir and Orchestra from Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, Greg Long, director; Mississippi College in Clinton, Damion Womack, director; and William Carey University in Hattiesburg, Wes Dykes and Brandon Hardin, directors.

– Mississippi Singing Churchmen, Milfred Valentine, director.

– Worship Ministry of Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg, Wes Dykes, director.

– Combined choirs of Fairview Church, Columbus, Ken Nuss, director; First Church, Columbus, Bobby Sanderson, director; First Church, Starkville, Tom Jenkins, director; First Church, Amory, Drew Warford, director; and First Church, West Point, Ginger Fowler, director.

– Worship Collective of Mississippi College, Will Bishop, director.

Other Business

William F. “Billy” Warren Jr., pastor of Jacob’s Well Church in Pass Christian, was recognized as the 2021 Mississippi Baptist Bivocational Pastor of the Year.

John Pace, MCB director of leadership development, said in presenting the award, “Dr. Warren is such a deserving recipient of this award and recognition for his amazing lifetime of faithful, excellent, and dedicated service as a bivocational pastor and minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as an international missionary, and for his Kingdom service as a professor and scholar of the highest order for 31 years at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as seven years at seminaries on the mission field.”

Warren is a member of the Society for Biblical Literature; the

Evangelical Theological Society; the International Greek New Testament Project; the Greek Paul Project; and the International SBC Working with Biblical Manuscripts Section.

He has been published in over 45 English or Spanish scholarly and ministry publications, and been invited to speak and present at over 75 academic and ministry events locally, nationally, and around the world, Pace said.

Jon Daniels, chairman of the Time, Place, and Preacher Committee, announced the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention will be conducted Nov. 1-2 at First Church, Jackson. Breck Ladd, senior pastor of First Church, Columbus, will deliver the convention sermon with Jimmy Stewart serving as alternate.