

Mississippi Baptists help serve, lead during Southern Baptist Convention

By Tanner Cade

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In the midst of the crowded hallways and lines, Mississippi Baptists were actively present to serve the different functions of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) annual meeting.

Over 14,000 registered messengers and guests attended the meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana. Each year the annual meeting takes place in some of the largest convention centers in North America. This year's meeting was held in the Indianapolis Convention Center, boasting a square footage of 566,000. One of the largest rooms held the Main sessions, which included nearly 15,000 chairs ready to seat Pastors' Conference attendees and messengers to the five business sessions. Other larger venues housed the Exhibit Hall, NAMB luncheon, IMB Dinner, and other big events. Many smaller rooms were regularly used throughout the building for organizational meetings and temporary offices.

The massive space and extraordinary array of



stVolunteers serve at registration during the 2024 Southern of Baptist Convention in Indianapolis. (Photo credit: Tanner eV Cade).

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After attending the convention for many years, John Cofer, Pastor at Liberty Church, Flowood, decided to serve at the registration booth for the annual meeting in New Orleans last year and has now finished serving for a second year in a row.

“I took the opportunity that the Lord provided to serve,” said Cofer. “I was able to help frustrated and discouraged messengers complete the process and be able to participate in and enjoy the convention. It was rewarding to run into these individuals during our meeting and be told “thank you” with a big smile.”

Volunteer opportunities vary across many jobs from messenger assistance to things like technical IT help, but there are

also important opportunities to serve in the business of the Convention.

Adam Wyatt, Pastor of Bethel Church, Monticello, has served for a handful of years on the SBC's Executive Committee. At present he serves as the Chair of the Stewardship and Finance Team and stepped onto the stage to fulfill a role presenting budget proposals for the convention.

"It is important to serve within SBC life because the SBC is built upon cooperation," said Wyatt. "So, without serving, cooperation would always struggle. I want to be able to serve wherever I can.



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Adam Wyatt, pastor of Bethel Church, Monticello, and Chair^C of the Stewardship and Finance Team of the Executiveⁱs Committee, presents the proposed budget during the annual^{im} meeting.

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“I love convention both on the state and the national level. I think it’s so important, as we as cooperating Southern Baptist, we get involved in the convention,” expressed Brandon Lynch, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Bogue Chitto.

During the annual meeting, Lynch completed time serving on the 2024 Committee on Committees.

“Our task this year was to nominate people for the committee of nominations. And so that’s a very important committee,” said Lynch. “Of course you guys know what they do as they appoint trustees and different individuals to some very important tasks.”

Zach Kilpatrick, pastor of Mt. Zion Church, Brookhaven, also shared his thoughts on serving on a committee this upcoming year.

“I agreed and am honored to serve on the Committee on Nominations in part because of the great positive impact Southern Baptists have had in my life,” said Kilpatrick. “I heard the Gospel from and have been disciplined, loved, trained, and equipped by amazing Southern Baptist men, women, and churches over the last 25+ years.”

Serving on a committee or engaging from the floor of a business session is a key part in the function of the convention as we move forward together in ministry. You can serve on a committee, which can help facilitate decisions outside of the two days of the Convention, or you can be a messenger in the Convention during the annual meeting.

“The fact that it doesn’t matter what size church you are in, everyone gets a voice and can be heard,” mentioned Lynch. “I’ve always respected that and appreciated that from Southern

Baptists.”

Being involved in Convention life allows participants to experience how the structure of a large group of people can work together to make a global ministry impact.

“The more you actively engage with others in the convention at the Annual Meeting, the more you realize that we truly are a large tent of churches,” said Wyatt. “I had many conversations this past week with people that voted differently, think differently, and see the SBC differently, but by having meaningful conversations, we end up being encouraged that we all have far more in common than we do different. This is always a comfort to me when I come!”

The annual meeting is the largest gathering throughout the yearly calendar for SBC life, and Mississippi Baptists’ involvement is making a difference.

“I recognize the importance of committees like the Committee on Nominations and the impact they have on the work of the SBC as they ensure we have healthy leadership, oversight, and support in place at many levels of denominational leadership,” expressed Kilpatrick. “I’m excited about the opportunity to play a part in that process and to serve a convention that has served me so well for so long.”