

SBC 2024 preview: How to navigate this year's annual meeting in Indy

By The Baptist Paper

If you're a Southern Baptist who loves the business session of meetings, then buckle up for this year's SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, June 11–12. This year's meeting will feature an extra Tuesday evening business session that SBC president Bart Barber approved.

Going into his last SBC meeting as president, Barber said he didn't really have a choice. "It had to be done," Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church Farmersville, Texas, said in an annual meeting promotional video released by the SBC Executive Committee.

"We were already compressing the annual meeting to as much business as we could put into the sessions that we had. Something had to give."

The newly added business session will be loaded with two reports and a field of six candidates running for SBC president. Among the reports in this session will be The Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force and The Cooperation Group.

Great Commission Resurgence evaluation

The Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force released its final report May 13. Last year, messengers approved the formation of a group to study the success of the GCR Task Force, which presented seven recommendations in 2010. Related

to the evaluation report, recommendations will be released no later than a week before the SBC annual meeting. SBC messengers will then vote on those recommendations in Indianapolis.

The overall consensus in the report is that the GCRTF did not accomplish its goal of reversing the decline in baptisms in the SBC. "The answer is a clear and decisive, No," the evaluation report noted. The answer to who is responsible, though, is more complicated. The full report is available at tbponline.org/GCRreport.

Cooperation Group recommendations

The Cooperation Group, named to study what "friendly cooperation of faith and practice" means for Southern Baptist churches, released its initial report May 1 with four recommendations to be considered by messengers during the annual meeting.

Barber named the group to study this issue after messengers approved a motion in New Orleans to form the group.

Law Amendment

Another item that is expected by some to draw significant discussion is a proposed amendment to the SBC Constitution.

Mike Law, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Virginia, proposed the amendment and won the first round of voting during last year's meeting. It requires a second two-thirds majority vote to be enacted.

The proposed amendment addresses the issue of whether a woman can be given the title of pastor and whether that position is perceived to have pastoral authority.

The exact wording of the amendment, which would help define

whether a church is in “friendly cooperation” with the SBC includes the following: “Does not affirm, appoint or employ a woman as a pastor of any kind.” *Read more on the amendment and Law’s explanations on TBP later this afternoon.*

Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force

The Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force will also share a report with messengers in Indianapolis. The task force met with state leaders in Dallas on April 9 to preview their report. One of the big questions that remains unanswered, according to the task force, involves “finding a permanent home for abuse reform.”

In February, the ARITF announced plans to launch a “new independent nonprofit organization to help Southern Baptist churches and entities prevent and respond to sexual abuse.”

ARITF chair Josh Wester said the creation of an independent organization would have “more credibility with survivors, more flexibility to help our churches and more success in accomplishing the mandate given to us by the messengers.” But funding for the nonprofit remains a big question mark.

During the Dallas meeting, the task force reportedly noted it was working to provide “definitive answers” to that question in June.

SBC presidential election

As of last count, this year’s SBC presidential election will feature six candidates: David Allen, Bruce Frank, Mike Keahbone, Jared Moore, Clint Pressley and Dan Spencer.

David Allen

Allen, a prominent academic leader, preaching coach, speaker

and author, announced Feb. 29 he plans to be nominated by Texas pastor Danny Forshee, pastor of Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin. After serving in various leadership roles for more than a decade at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen now leads the Adrian Rogers Center for Biblical Preaching at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis. ***To read Allen's Q&A, click here.***

Bruce Frank

Frank announced April 2 his plans to be nominated by Tennessee pastor John Mark Harrison, pastor of First Baptist Concord in Knoxville. Frank is pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina. He led the SBC's initial Sexual Abuse Task Force during the recent independent investigation into the Executive Committee's previous handling of sexual abuse allegations. ***To read Frank's Q&A, click here.***

Mike Keahbone

Keahbone announced Jan. 30 his plans to be nominated by Victor Chayasirisobhon, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church Anaheim and director of missions for the Orange County Southern Baptist Association. Keahbone is pastor of FBC Lawton, Oklahoma, and has served as a member of the SBC Executive Committee since 2021 and is vice chair of the SBC's Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force. He formerly was a member of the Sexual Abuse Task Force. ***To read Keahbone's Q&A, click here.***

Jared Moore

Moore announced Feb. 28 he plans to be nominated by Oklahoma pastor and senator Dusty Deever. Moore is pastor of Homesteads Baptist Church in Crossville, Tennessee. He served the SBC as second vice president in 2014. ***To read Moore's Q&A, click here.***

Clint Pressley

Pressley announced Jan. 22 he will be nominated by Chris Justice, senior pastor of Lee Park Baptist Church in Monroe, North Carolina. Pressley is pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Pressley served as vice president of the SBC Pastors Conference in 2013. He also served as first vice president of the SBC 2014–2015. In 2015, he served as a trustee – which included time as trustee chair – for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also has served on the board of directors for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. ***To read Pressley's Q&A, click here.***

Dan Spencer

Spencer announced April 17 he will be nominated by Chris Kendall, pastor of Oak City Baptist Church in Seymour, Tennessee. Spencer is pastor of First Baptist Church Sevierville. He preached during the 2001 SBC Pastors Conference and was a member of the SBC Committee on Committees in 2005. He served as Georgia Baptist Convention president 2009–2011. He also served 2015–2019 as a director of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board. ***To read Spencer's Q&A, click here.***

Candidates for other roles

Michael Clary

Clary will be nominated for first vice president by Jared Moore, pastor of Homesteads Baptist Church in Crossville, Tennessee. Clary is founding pastor of Christ the King Church, Cincinnati.

David Crowther

Crowther will be nominated for first vice president by Steve Dighton, pastor emeritus of Lenexa Baptist Church in Lenexa, Kansas. Crowther is pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita. He currently serves as first vice president of the

Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.

Michael Pardue

Pardue will be nominated for second vice president by J. Allen Murry, pastor at Centerville Baptist Church in Kelly, North Carolina. Pardue is pastor of First Baptist Church Icard, Connelly Springs. He has served as president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (2020–2022) and in a variety of other leadership roles on the state level.

Wesley Russell

Russell will be nominated for second vice president by Michael Clary, pastor of Christ the King Church in Cincinnati. Russell is pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Pikeville, Kentucky.

Don Currence

Current SBC registration secretary Don Currence will be nominated to serve again as registration secretary by Dale Lingenfelter, associate executive director and chief financial officer of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Currence is the administrative pastor at First Baptist Church Ozark and also serves as mayor of Ozark.

Nathan Finn

Current SBC recording secretary Nathan Finn, executive director of the Institute for Transformational Leadership and professor for North Greenville University, will be renominated as recording secretary by Tony Wolfe, executive director-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Pastors Conference

D.J. Horton

Horton, pastor of Church at The Mill in Moore, South Carolina, will be nominated for president of the SBC Pastors Conference

by Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans. Horton served as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 2014. He also served in state leadership roles.

Brad Whitt

Whitt, pastor of Abilene Baptist Church in Martinez, Georgia, will be nominated for president of the SBC Pastors Conference by Dean Inserra, pastor of City Church in Tallahassee, Florida. Whitt served in 2010 as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention's Pastors Conference. He also has served on various boards and committees on the national level.

The opening session of the Pastors Conference begins Sunday, June 9 at 6 p.m. Sessions continue throughout the day Monday, June 10. For more information, visit sbcpc.net.

Resolutions and Motions

Messengers approved changes to Bylaw 20 at last year's meeting, which moved the timeline for submitting resolutions and working on resolutions and publishing a preliminary report.

This year, messengers were able to submit resolutions as early as April 1 and no less than 20 days prior (May 22) to this year's meeting. The committee is mandated to submit a preliminary report 10 days before the convention. For more information, go to sbc.net/resolutions.

Motions do not have to be submitted ahead of the annual meeting. They are made by messengers and request specific action by the SBC or one or more of its entities, according to sbcannualmeeting.net.