

SBC Executive Committee elects Slade as its first African American chair

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) – The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) elected its first African American chair June 16 in a special called meeting via teleconference.

Rolland Slade, senior pastor since 2004 at Meridian Church, El Cajon, Calif., was unopposed as EC chair and unanimously elected by ballot vote.

Outgoing chair Mike Stone said he called for a ballot vote to mark the historic moment.

“I think we all realize by what is going on in this country as well as in our convention, this timing is in many ways the providence of our Lord,” said Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Church in Blackshear, Ga.

“I don’t think there was ever a plan for me to be in this position,” Slade told Baptist Press (BP). “I think it’s what God has done... I believe God loves diversity. He created us and we are all diverse.

“I think for us to not embrace it is saying that, ‘We’ve got a better idea than You [God].’”

Slade, a native of San Diego, Calif., served the last two years as EC vice chair. As EC chair, Slade leads the SBC fiduciary, fiscal, and executive arm.

“We praise God together and let’s pray together and let’s stay together, because I’ve learned that a family that prays together, stays together,” he said.

SBC President J.D. Greear, lead pastor of multi-campus The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area, has lamented during his two terms as president that SBC leadership does not reflect current SBC diversity. He called Slade's election an exciting day for the convention.

"Rolland Slade's election demonstrates we are moving in the right direction," Greear told BP. "During my two years as SBC president, I have worked alongside Rolland and seen his leadership and character to lead this body at this time.

Marshal Ausberry, SBC first vice president, said Slade's election shows how far the SBC has come and also shows the "mighty hand of God at work."

"His election shows the positive transformation that is occurring in the Convention," said Ausberry, president of the National African American Fellowship of the SBC and pastor of Antioch Church, Fairfax Station, Va.

"When you think of the founding of the SBC in 1845, largely over the issue concerning the ownership of enslaved persons by missionaries, to the election of Rolland Slade in the 175th year [of the SBC], this is a seminal moment for the Convention and all Southern Baptists."

Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church, New Orleans, served as the convention's first and only African-American president from 2012-2014. He praised God for Slade's election, especially in the midst of nationwide racial tension.

"Rolland is certainly deserving of this historical honor not just because of the color of his skin but because of his knowledge, skills, and leadership as a member of the Executive Committee through the years," Luter said.

"I am proud of Rolland and proud of the men and women of this committee for making this such a historic moment in the Southern Baptist Convention. To God be the glory for the

things He has done.”

Dan Lanier, senior pastor of Northcrest Church, Meridian, and a member of the SBC EC, said, “The election of Brother Rolland Slade as the chairman of the EC was an exciting day for Southern Baptists. It was historic and I was honored to represent Mississippi Baptists in casting my vote for him to be chairman of the EC.

SBC EC member Rose Strahan, a member of First Church, Cleveland, said, “It has been a pleasure to serve on the EC with Roland Slade. I am absolutely delighted that he has been chosen to be the next Chair of the EC. He is a very dedicated Christian and works tirelessly to spread the Gospel and to glorify God.

“Roland has worked in ministry at the local, regional, and national levels. He is a very gifted leader who has demonstrated his ability to work with all people. I look forward to seeing what God will do through the leadership of Roland Slade.”

The SBC Executive Committee was chartered in 1917 and has been headquartered in Nashville since 1927.