

SBC President Greear announces 2021 Annual Meeting theme

DURHAM, N.C. (BP) – Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear announced Sept. 14 that the theme for the 2021 annual meeting will be “We Are Great Commission Baptists.”



Greear

Greear said the theme is designed to encourage Southern Baptists to show how we should treat each other and what we should be known for.

The theme connects to a current movement around the SBC to use the unofficial name, which was approved by SBC messengers in 2012. Greear also said the church he pastors, The Summit in the Raleigh-Durham area, will begin to use the descriptor, “Great Commission Baptists.”

“Our leadership affirms the decision made by messengers in 2012,” Greear said. “We believe now is a good time to use it due to the fact that the primary reason we are part of the convention is for the Great Commission.” Greear, who is serving for a third year as president because of the cancellation of the 2020 annual meeting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, chose as the theme for the 2019 and 2020 annual meetings, “Gospel Above All.”

Pastor Marshall Blalock of First Church, Charleston, S.C. –

the oldest Baptist church in the South – served on the task force in 2012 and was one of the first pastors to speak publicly about using the name Great Commission Baptists. He said in a 2012 article that the name was considered and eventually approved for three main reasons: for the sake of mission, to break down barriers, and to describe our purpose. “The real key to our future is not in the programs we vote for or the names we choose,” Blalock wrote. “The real key is whether indeed we are Great Commission Baptists.” Greear echoed Blalock’s thoughts, as well as Blalock’s announcement in August that he was “opting to identify more with our mission than our past: We are Great Commission Baptists.”

“This is significant because of its history as the earliest Baptist church in the South. Since then, we have seen that many prominent South Carolina pastors are doing it as well,” Greear said. “In the last month we started receiving e-mails from around the country with pastors and leaders asking about using the name. By making this our annual meeting theme and encouraging the use of the alternate name, we do not in any way want to minimize the significance of our past, either its accomplishments or its failures.

“Our past sins, as well as God’s forgiveness and restoration, are an important part of our history. We not only preach the grace of God, we are ourselves a story of it. We owe it to those whom we sinned against to not minimize our injustice against them or their suffering in it. At the same time, we are also grateful for many of the great achievements of God’s grace in our past. For 175 years we have gathered for one purpose: mission. The landscape of our nation, and the world, is different because of Southern Baptist commitment to make the Gospel known in word and deed.

“Utilizing ‘Great Commission Baptists’ is simply one more step to make clear we serve a risen Savior who died for all peoples, whose mission is not limited to one people living in one time at one place. Every week we gather to worship a

Savior who died for the whole world, not one part of it. What we call ourselves should make that clear.”

The 2021 Annual Meeting will be held June 15-16 in Nashville. More information can be found at SBCAnnualMeeting.net.

The full text of the action taken by messengers to the 2012 Annual Meeting: The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention recommends to the Southern Baptist Convention that those churches, entities and organizations in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention which may desire to utilize a descriptor other than the term “Southern Baptists” to indicate their relationship with each other and their involvement in the Southern Baptist Convention and its ministries, consider using the descriptor “Great Commission Baptists,” a phrase commended as one fully in keeping with our Southern Baptist Convention identity.