

SBC presidential nominees share views on variety of topics

*By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Baptist Paper*

The six announced nominees for president of the Southern Baptist Convention spent almost 90 minutes late last night (June 10) in front of roughly 2,000 Baptists answering questions about recent SBC concerns.

The presidential forum was hosted by The Baptist Review, which describes itself as “a curated platform devoted to Convention conversation.”

A recently formed digital platform, “The Baptist Review exists for Southern Baptists to engage in good faith discussion about the issues, current events and questions that matter in our Convention,” according to thebaptistreview.com.

David Sons, host of The Baptist Review podcast, and Rob Collingsworth, who leads the editorial efforts of The Baptist Review, co-moderated the forum held at the Indiana Convention Center at the conclusion of the day’s other main events. Watch the forum and see a full transcript of the nominees’ answers [here](#).

Addressing issues

The presidential nominees are David Allen, Bruce Frank, Mike Keahbone, Jared Moore, Clint Pressley and Dan Spencer (read more about the nominees [here](#)).

Questions ranged from who supports the Law Amendment to how the SBC is doing with sexual abuse reform and from presidential responsibilities to when they last shared the

gospel. (Find more on the Law Amendment from its author Mike Law here and from an opposing view here.)

All presidential nominees said they had shared the gospel within the past few weeks, some within the past week, and all agreed the most important official role of the SBC president is the responsibility of committee appointments.

Sexual abuse reform

When asked if SBC leadership has done enough to help churches regarding sexual abuse prevention and overall reform, Frank and Keahbone presented the most passionate responses about more needing to be done.

“It is costly, but it doesn’t cost anywhere near what it cost the survivors,” Frank said. “We have come a long way, mainly at the associational level and the state level. We still have a long way to go.”

Keahbone, who currently serves on the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force, shared his pain of not being able to deliver the assignments given the task force. “We were given an impossible task to be honest,” he said. “We have to let it go and put it back in the hands of the messengers.”

Law Amendment response

Regarding the Law Amendment, those supporting it are Allen, Moore and Pressley with Moore noting a fear of where it could leave if the amendment isn’t approved.

He added, “The Bible is clear ... concerning male-only pastors. ... I don’t understand why it would be an issue to put it in the (SBC) constitution.”

Pressley said the amendment provides clarity and “makes sense.”

Allen suggested churches could avoid potential challenges to

their standing in the convention by merely changing the nomenclature of staff positions with "pastor" in the title if held by women.

Those opposed to the Law Amendment are Frank, Keahbone and Spencer, all noting the current system for handling potential concerns about churches who allow women to serve in pastoral roles is sufficient.

"I think we already have clarity," Keahbone said. "I don't know why we need more clarity than the Scripture. ... We have other problems to fix. This is not one of them."

Spencer agreed. "I'm afraid it might have unintended consequences down the road ... like overburdening the Credentials Committee."

Frank added, "The Law Amendment raises more questions than it actually answers."

Cooperative Program giving

Throughout the evening, the concepts of unity, cooperative spirit, "keeping the main thing the main thing," building relationships and igniting a renewed passion for leading people to Jesus surfaced among the six.

Another aspect of cooperation – giving – allowed Spencer an opportunity to share his heart related to the Cooperative Program.

Collingsworth explained that of the six nominees, Spencer's church (FBC Sevierville, Tennessee) gives the most. While the percentages were not mentioned during the forum, Spencer shared in a previous interview with The Baptist Review that the church gives 9% through the CP and gave \$700,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering on top of that.

During the forum, he was asked how important CP giving is or should be in a presidential election.

“The president of the SBC in many ways leads by example,” Spencer said. “I think Southern Baptists deserve to have a president who ... leads his church to give in that way. It’s up to our messengers to decide what they are comfortable with in the giving level of a church. I’m proud to be part of a church that takes that seriously and who loves to give cooperatively. ... [The CP] has done some unbelievable work.”

Great Commission giving

Regarding the Great Commission giving option, an alternative to the CP for those cooperating with the SBC, Pressley affirms the upcoming recommendation to do away with it.

“It never really caught on,” he said. “It sounded good, but nobody’s picking it up.”

Trusted source

The nominees also were asked who they would call first if a difficult situation tied to the presidential role (assuming they were elected) arose. Their answers:

Allen – Barry McCarty, parliamentarian for the SBC Executive Committee and previous SBC parliamentarian

Frank – The men on his accountability team

Keahbone – Bart Barber, outgoing SBC president

Moore – Jon Whitehead, founding attorney of the Law Offices of Jonathan R. Whitehead LLC, located in Missouri

Pressley – Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky

Spencer – Randy Davis, executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board

Time to vote

The election for SBC president takes place June 11 at 7:05 p.m. According to Bylaw 10.B of the SBC governing documents, "If an officer does not receive a majority of votes cast on the first ballot, subsequent ballots shall carry the names of those who are included in the top 50 percent of the total votes cast in the previous ballot."

It is anticipated a run-off vote will be needed, and it will most likely take place before the evening's closing prayer.