



# THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

June 29, 2023

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John 3:16

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## EDITORIAL: Hallowed be thy name

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM)  
– The 10 Commandments may  
be viewed from several perspec-  
tives:

-- Some believers see them  
simply as a list of dos and  
don'ts.

-- Others consider them in  
the context of  
their origins: As  
the first formal  
instruction to  
the Hebrew  
nation after  
escaping from  
Egypt, these  
were something  
of a primer for  
Israel to transi-  
tion from being  
a people of  
Pharaoh for 400



**WILL HALL**  
Executive editor  
Louisiana Baptist  
Message

years to becoming the people of  
the one true God in perpetuity.

-- More, still, look at these  
basic tenets in terms of how  
they are grouped (the first four  
address a relationship with  
God; the fifth involves family  
relationships; and the last five  
broadly describe relationships  
with everyone else). Together,  
these commandments reveal  
a hierarchy of relationships  
within the relational world God  
created for us as relational be-  
ings. In other words, God tells  
us to make Him the priority in  
our relationships, then family  
(and by inference, marriage)  
and, finally, yet importantly,  
our neighbors.

Regardless, in all three  
perspectives, the stricture in  
the third commandment is the

See NAME, page 13



Baptist Press photo

The 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in New Orleans featured votes on election of officers and key issues, reports from entities, messages and music. There were 12,737 messengers representing 4,423 churches and more than 18,901 total attendees.

## MESSENGERS ADDRESS KEY ISSUES AT SBC23

**By Brian Blackwell**

Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Mes-  
sengers to the 2023 Southern Bap-  
tist Convention Annual Meeting  
enjoyed fellowship and inspiring  
worship, but also conducted a lot  
of important business, June 13-14,  
in New Orleans.

### CHURCHES PURGED

Messengers voted to disfel-  
lowship three churches who were  
found to be “not in friendly coop-  
eration” with the Southern Baptist

Convention.

Representatives from Saddle-  
back Church, Lake Forest, Califor-  
nia (three ordained women pas-  
tors), Fern Creek Baptist Church,  
Louisville, Kentucky (female se-  
nior pastor), and Freedom Church,  
Vero Beach, Florida (mishandling  
of sex abuse allegation), made  
appeals regarding their respective  
cases. After each of these speakers,  
a representative of the Convention  
responded. Messengers then cast a  
ballot vote.

The results were overwhelm-  
ing to sustain the expulsions: Fern  
Creek, 9,700 (91.85 percent) “for”

and 806 (7.63 percent) “against”;  
Freedom Church, 9,984 (96.46 per-  
cent) “for” and 343 (3.31 percent)  
“against”; and Saddleback Church,  
9,432 (88.46 percent) “for” and  
1,212 (11.36 percent) “against.”

In his appeal for his former  
congregation, Saddleback Church,  
Rick Warren claimed there were  
“1,928 churches with women on  
pastoral staff” in the SBC.

### TASK FORCE REAUTHORIZED

A year after voting to form a

See KEY ISSUES, page 4

## Crossover, Serve Tour yield 336 decisions

**By Brian Blackwell**

Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Despite  
falling short of a goal to see 2,023 people  
come to Christ through a pair of evangelis-  
tic efforts preceding the Southern Baptist

Convention Annual Meeting, Louisiana  
Baptists and others from across the coun-  
try witnessed the salvations of 336 new  
believers, June 9-10.

“I want to thank everyone who prayed

See DECISIONS, page 7



# LBC seeks resolutions, nominees for committees, boards

## By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) — Louisiana Baptists are invited to recommend candidates to serve on state convention boards and committees, and are asked to submit resolutions for possible consideration by messengers during the 2023 Louisiana Baptist Convention.

## COMMITTEES

The Louisiana Baptist

Committee on Committees is beginning its work to fill 18 openings on five state convention committees: Credentials; Moral and Social Concerns; Nominations; Order of Business; and Resolutions. Nominations should be sent no later than Aug. 11 to Joel Williams, pastor, First Baptist Church, Franciscville, who is the committee chair, via email, joel@fbc-sfla.com, or the U.S. Mail, Dr. Joel Williams, P. O. Box 1339, St. Francisville, LA 70775.

## BOARDS

The Louisiana Baptist Committee on Nominations also is beginning its work to fill 20 vacancies on the LBC Executive Board as well as the trustee bodies of the Louisiana Christian University, Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries, *Baptist Message*, and Baptist Foundation.

Nominations should be sent no later than Aug. 11 to Leo Miller, pastor, First Baptist Church, Denham Springs, who is the committee chair,

via email, leo.miller@first-denham.com, or the U.S. Mail, Dr. Leo Miller, 27735 La. Highway 16, Denham Springs, LA 70726.

## BOTH

Please submit the candidate's name and identify the committee or board for which you are nominating him or her and include information about the nominee's church membership and current employment.

No more than the pastor and two members from any church may serve on all boards and committees, combined, at any one time. Likewise, no more than one member of the same church may serve on the same board or committee at any one time.

## RESOLUTIONS

The first Committee on Resolutions meeting is scheduled for Sept. 21 and submissions are requested to be sent as early as possible for consideration. Resolutions may be submitted for review and consideration no more than 90 days and no fewer than 15 days prior to the LBC annual meeting, Nov. 14, providing a

window of opportunity from Aug. 16 through Oct. 30.

All statements should be typewritten, titled, and dated, and accompanied by a letter — from a church qualified to send a messenger to the annual meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention — certifying that the person submitting the resolution is a member in good standing. The letter should include complete contact information for both the person submitting it and his or her church.

No person may submit more than three resolutions per year.

Tom Harrison, executive pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, is the Committee on Resolutions chair. You may send proposed resolutions to the committee via fax, 318.449.4287, email, Hello@LouisianaBaptists.org, or U.S. Mail, ATTN: Resolutions Committee, c/o Communications Team, Louisiana Baptist Convention, P. O. Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309.

If you desire assistance with wording or formatting, please contact LBC Public Policy Director Will Hall by phone, 318.448.3402, or email, Policy@LouisianaBaptists.org.

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# NOBTS' Fred Luter Jr. Student Center dedicated

**By Marilyn Stewart**  
NOBTS Communications

NEW ORLEANS (NOBTS communications) – More than 4,000 friends and dignitaries gathered in front of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College June 14 to celebrate the dedication of the Fred Luter Jr. Student Center, and to hear the presentation of a state resolution accompanied by local proclamations honoring “the pastor of New Orleans.”

Meanwhile, the air of festivity was enhanced by the smell of New Orleans' signature char-grilled oysters cooking onsite combined with the sound of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church choir's singing.

## DOUBLE HONOR

Jamie Dew, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College president, turned to the guest of

honor, Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, during the ceremony and asked him to survey the large crowd.

“Do you see them?” Dew asked. “Do you see the people you’ve had an impact on? Do you see the people throughout our Convention that you have had an impact on?”

“You have been faithful. You have been diligent. You have labored hard, and God, through your humble obedience to Jesus Christ, has used you profoundly,” Dew continued. “We celebrate you tonight, my friend.”

The Fred Luter Jr. Student Center faces the busy Gentilly Blvd. that runs in front of the seminary. The building once housed a well-known clothing department store. Now the renewed facility is a central feature of the NOBTS

See LUTER, page 9



Madelynn Duke photo

(Left) Tara Dew, Elizabeth Luter, Fred Luter, NOBTS President Jamie Dew and Waylon Bailey celebrate the opening of the Fred Luter Jr. Student Center at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Wednesday, June 14. More than 4,000 friends and dignitaries attended the ceremony.



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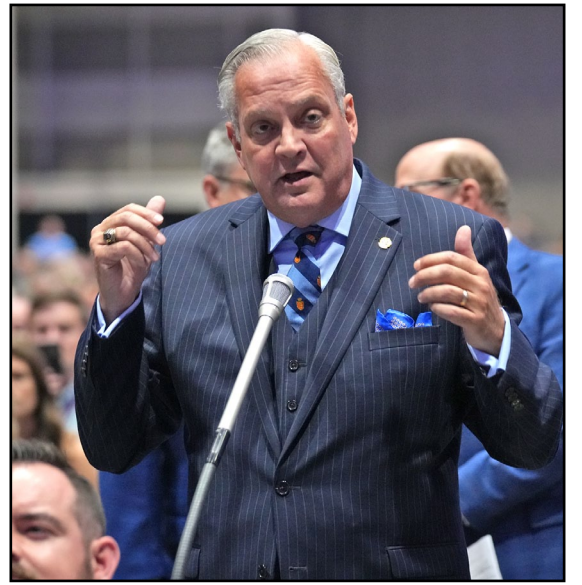
# Key Issues from page one

task force to investigate sexual abuse allegations in Southern Baptist churches, messengers to the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting, June 14, extended the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force another year.

Meanwhile, the task force announced that a prototype website, [sbcabuseprevention.com](http://sbcabuseprevention.com), was live. For the time being, searches for potential predators will produce only

placeholder information. However, when fully operational, it will allow churches to identify those who have:

- confessed an abuse in a nonprivileged setting;
- been convicted of abuse in a court of law;
- had a civil judgment rendered against them for committing abuse; or
- been "credibly accused" according to the preponderance of evidence, as exam-



Van Payne photo

In his appeal for his former congregation, Saddleback Church, Rick Warren (left) claimed there were "1,928 churches with women on pastoral staff" in the SBC. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, replied that Saddleback Church has the right to have women pastors on staff, but they cannot do that and be Southern Baptist.

ined by an independent third party.

However, the website also provides a "Ministry Toolkit" that offers congregations key resources to train, screen, protect, report and care. The online materials include sample forms and references to ministries who can assist with each of these five areas.

## MISSIONARY REPORTS

International Mission Board President Paul Chitwood, in his report, said that last year SBC missionaries working with in-country partners recorded 178,000 salvation decisions, baptized 102,000 new believers and started 21,000 new churches. Chitwood pleaded with messengers to support the

"home team" that is the IMB, acknowledging that 1,200 missionary candidates currently are in the application process. After the report, the IMB held a commissioning service for 79 missionaries entering the field.

The IMB's inputs to the 2023 SBC Book of Reports noted the overseas force had declined by 71 from 2021, ending 2022 with 3,521 missionaries on the field. Additionally, the entity's website showed the count had dropped to 3,486 (including 123 unpaid volunteers) as of May 31, 2023.

Meanwhile, North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell, in his report, said 10,000 new churches have been planted since 2010. He noted that these church

plants have a four-year survival rate of 86.2 percent, make up nearly 25 percent of all SBC congregations in the non-South and are responsible for nearly one-fourth of all baptisms in the non-South.

NAMB's data in the 2023 SBC Book of Reports indicated 639 new churches were planted in 2022, the highest number since 2018 when 691 congregations were started; but below the 1,364 church plants in 2009, the year prior to a major shakeup resulting from recommendations by the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force.

## ELECTIONS

Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church, Farmersville, Texas, was re-elected SBC president, winning against Georgia Pastor Mike Stone by a margin of 7,531 votes (68.38 percent) to 3,458 votes (31.40 percent).

In other elections, messengers elected Jay Adkins (pastor, First Baptist Church, Westwego,) first vice-president; Kason Branch (pastor, Creekstone Church, Richland Hills, Texas) second vice-president; Don Currence (administrative pastor, First Baptist Church, Ozark, Missouri), registration secretary; and Nathan Finn (provost, North Greenville University, South Carolina) recording secretary.

Two Louisiana Baptists also ran but were unsuccessful. Gevan Spinney (pastor, First Baptist Church, Haughton) received 587 votes to Adkins's 2,393 in the election for first vice-president and Shane Terrebonne (pastor,

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# Key Issues from page 4

Gulf Coast Baptist Church, Golden Meadow) received 2,098 to Branch's 2,502 votes in the election for second vice-president.

## LOUISIANA PASTOR ELECTED EC CHAIR

SBC Executive Committee members elected Philip Robertson, pastor of Phila-

delphia Baptist Church, Deville, as the next chairman.

After two votes (36-35 in favor of Russ Barksdale and 35-35) did not produce a winner by the needed majority, Barksdale of Arlington, Texas, withdrew his name.

Robertson said several individuals approached him

about submitting his name for the position. After much prayer he agreed, but only when David Sons, pastor of Lake Murray Baptist Church, Lexington, South Carolina, decided not to serve in that role again. Sons has served since April, after then EC Chairman Jared Wellman resigned to be considered for CEO and president of the Executive Committee but failed to be elected to that capacity.

study: IMB (3), Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (2), ERLC and Executive Committee, jointly (1), and EC (12). Eleven other motions were ruled out of order. Another asked that Southern Baptists pray for peace in Jerusalem and was affirmed by common consent.

## RESOLUTIONS

Messengers approved nine resolutions:

- On the importance of revitalization and replanting;
- On needed care and support for pastors and ministry leaders;
- On artificial intelligence and emerging technologies;
- On wisely engaging immigration;
- On the legacy and responsibility of women fulfilling the Great Commission;
- On Southern Baptist confessional heritage of the office of bishop/elder/pastor;
- On Christ's sole Lordship over every human conscience;
- On opposing gender transitions; and

## MOTIONS

Messengers considered more than 30 motions, and in the end approved three:

- a change to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 that emphasizes only men may serve as pastor;
- appointment of a task force to study the impact of the Great Commission Resurgence and recommendations that were adopted in 2010; and
- creation of a task force to study what it means to be "in friendly cooperation" with the Convention.

Other motions were referred to entities for further

-- On appreciation to the City of New Orleans for hosting the SBC Annual Meeting.

## MESSANGER COUNT

This year's SBC Annual Meeting drew 12,737 messengers, including 1,286 from Louisiana (second only to Texas, which registered 1,291).

Messenger counts for other recent SBC annual meetings:

- 2022 (Anaheim, California) — 8,133
- 2021 (Nashville, Tennessee) — 15,726
- 2020 pandemic (no annual meeting)
- 2019 (Birmingham, Alabama) — 8,183
- 2018 (Dallas, Texas) — 9,632

## SEE YOU IN INDY

Now that the 2023 Annual Meeting has concluded, messengers will prepare for next year's gathering of Southern Baptists. The 2024 Annual Meeting is scheduled June 11-12 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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# Decisions from page one

for this God-sized goal," Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn told the *Baptist Message*. "Louisiana Baptists showed up for training and we showed up to serve. In fact, Louisiana Baptists had the second highest messenger count of any state.

"As we work toward establishing a culture of evangelism, we're going to continue to ask God for big things and we are going to celebrate every decision," he continued. "I rejoice that 336 people got off the road to Hell and on the road to Heaven and will continue to pray God will bless the seeds that were scattered and watered. I believe this is a small glimpse of the incredible potential when we cooperate together for evangelism.

"I was blessed to see faithful pastors and people from across the country doing hard work in hard places," he said. "That's the real SBC."

## BACKGROUND

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Professor Preston Nix first suggested setting a combined goal of 2,023 people to accept Christ through "Serve Tour" and "Crossover." Then, in his report to the LBC Executive Board in September and at the LBC Annual Meeting in November, Horn stated his support, and committed to pray that 2,023 people be saved during the two evangelistic efforts.

## COOPERATIVE EFFORT

During the North American Mission Board report, June 13, SBC messengers were told that 84 Crossover and Serve Tour events across Houma, New Orleans and the Northshore had 1,300 volunteers from 21 states. Furthermore, the events drew 12,180 individuals and resulted in 3,487 Gospel conversations.

Throughout the weekend, efforts included block parties, door-to-door witnessing, prayer walks, compassion projects and more evangelistic events.

"Serve Tour helped remind me of what God is able to do in our churches and communities when we work

together in unity," Serve Tour Coordinator Alex Brian said. "This event drew thousands of Southern Baptists into both the complexity of needs in our cities and, at the same time, the ability of our God to meet those needs and change lives through his people. God saved people, he strengthened local churches, and he moved powerfully in our community, bringing us further in and further up along his way."

Jacob Crawford, Crossover coordinator, echoed the thought.

"Crossover provided a wonderful opportunity for the evangelistic mobilization of the local churches across the New Orleans and Houma areas," he said. "The NAMB, LBC and associational leaders were a tremendous asset to our outreach efforts. I thank God for their leadership and the cooperation that took place between so many groups! It's my prayer that Crossover serves as a catalyst for an evangelistic movement that sweeps across our state. It was amazing to see so many volunteers from across the United States come to our areas to share Jesus! We have and continue to pray for more laborers because the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. We thank God for the 336 professions of faith! May the Lord multiply those

disciples."

NOBTS and Leavell College students and several faculty members and students from other SBC seminaries joined Crossover to share the Gospel around the city.

Jeff Farmer, NOBTS professor of church ministry and evangelism, led Crossover teams in the community of Christ Baptist Church, Gretna, where he serves also as pastor. Farmer noted it was a blessing to serve together with other seminaries.

"We have one purpose and that's to make disciples. We love each other. We have a sweet worship time in learning and equipping, and we're out to share the gospel," Farmer said. "And, that's the SBC."

First Baptist Church, Covington, hosted an appreciation lunch for first responders after members saw two individuals come to Christ when they canvassed their community with the Gospel.

"We just wanted to offer a time for our first responders in our area and their families to come and have a day of decompression," Ministry Co-Coordinator Stephen Babin said. "We wanted to show how much we love them and what they do for us to keep us safe every day and show them the love of Jesus."

Wayne Ivey, a member of New Zion Baptist Church, Covington, along with his wife, Dianne, and church member Brenden Spears,

who recently accepted Christ, led a young woman named Gina to Christ during an in-home visit near the church. Members of New Zion Baptist saw three in all come to Christ during in-home visits.

"My wife and Brenden both commented, independent of each other, how excited they were to see someone say, 'Yes,' to Jesus and that in turn encouraged me," Ivey said. "I was elated they took a bold step to share Jesus and now they want to make that part of their lifestyle."

For their part, the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries,

See DECISIONS, page 8

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# Decisions from page 7

Baptist Friendship House and Gentilly Baptist Church, New Orleans, distributed more than 14,000 ready-to-cook meals over a two-day period at parks near Gentilly Baptist. LBCHFM President and CEO Perry Hancock said he was thankful they helped to meet physical needs and share the Gospel with hundreds of families and children in need of Christ.

"The event opened the

door for Gospel conversations, prayer and invitations to church," Hancock said. "We were blessed to be a part of the Serve Tour this year. Seeing people respond to Christian love and an invitation to accept Christ as Savior was an incredible experience."

At First Baptist Church, New Orleans, more than 700 Southern Baptist volunteers from Missouri, Oklahoma, North and South Carolina

and Virginia gathered for an encouraging devotional from Horn before venturing out into the community for service projects. The day before, 20 volunteers from FBC New Orleans welcomed nearly 500 people, collectively, from Phillis Wheatley Community School and the community for a night of thrill rides and games at City Park amusement park.

"We wanted to bless Phillis Wheatley Community School and tell them that we love you and that God does too," FBNO Executive Pastor of Discipleship Gary Myers said. "Our members were really excited to have this opportunity to meet many of the students for the first time. We hope this was an evening where they enjoyed a free night at the amusement park but also got to know us better."

At Celebration Church's Lower St. Bernard campus, Violet, 17 people took part in baptism during a block party. Additionally, 19 children came forward at the block party and will be contacted for follow up.

"We knew God was a part of this and He just blew our mind," Pastor Trevor Truitt said. "Our church is very



Will Hall photo

Herman Wright, a new resident in Gretna, Louisiana, listens as Preston Nix, professor of evangelism and evangelistic preaching, prays after a Gospel conversation in the doorway of Wright's home, June 9. Nix was the coordinator for a week-long door-to-door evangelism effort as part of "Crossover New Orleans," which was held ahead of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

evangelistically driven and understands what it means to be a fan of Jesus but not a follower. Because of that, we understand the need to win others for Jesus and help them grow deeper in the faith."

In Bayou Baptist Association, mission teams completed "handyman" projects for senior adults in Gibson and participated in a shrimp boil and block party at Grand Cailou Baptist Church, Houma.

Volunteers also provided 150 meals to Louisiana State Highway Patrol officers and their families in Houma and gave them 160 hygiene kits for the troopers to deliver to homeless individuals they encounter.

Bayou Baptist Association Director of Missions Joe Arnold said he was encouraged by how the churches "worked together to reach outside their walls."

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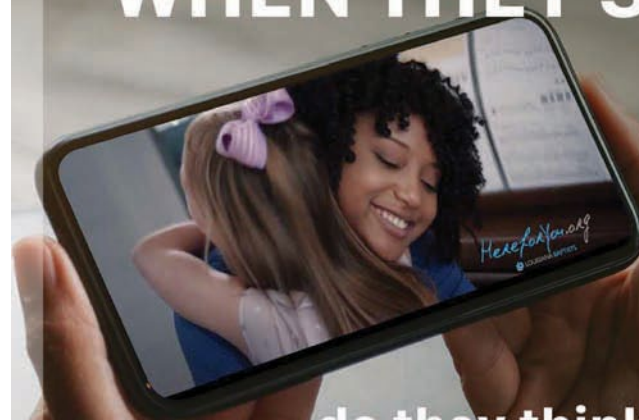
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## Luter from page 3

campus as a home for NOBTS and Leavell College offices, classrooms, study rooms, the North American Mission Board Church Planting Center, and the Global Mission Center in partnership with the International Mission Board.

Elizabeth Luter, wife of the honoree, was herself celebrated in a surprise announcement that drew shouts and cheering from the crowd. Dew announced that the newly renovated study rooms, also referred to as carrels, inside the Fred Luter Jr. Student Center were named in her honor.

"He calls you his 'prime rib' so we thought it was fitting that something inside would be named after you," Dew said.

Tony Evans, LifeWay author, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and president of the Urban Alternative, sent video congratulations to his "good friend," praising Luter for his impact and investment in the SBC.

"Most important of all is your commitment to our great God and His Word, your faithful proclamation and dedication and illustration

of kingdom commitment," Evans said. "I am proud to be your friend. I am proud as an African American to join you in this first-in-a-lifetime opportunity and recognition. I hope generations to come will come to know and appreciate the life and legacy of Pastor Fred Luter."

Gary Shows, chairman of the NOBTS and Leavell College 2022 board of trustees that unanimously voted to name the center in Luter's honor, said Luter is known widely as "the pastor of New Orleans" for his leadership and for the "special place he holds in the hearts of NOBTS and the city."

Waylon Bailey, chairman of the NOBTS board of trustees and pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, Louisiana, praised Luter's impactful ministry and told of the first time he heard Luter's name decades earlier. Bailey recounted hearing that Luter was "the new pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and is reaching men for Christ." He also pointed to the significance of Luter's election as the first African American SBC president and the thrill of being



A big crowd turned out for the dedication of what students have already dubbed "The Fred," the newly renovated student center on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

backstage at the Convention when the election results were announced to overwhelming joy.

Other Southern Baptist Convention leaders also were present: Bart Barber, SBC president; Willie McLaurin, interim president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee; Paul Chitwood, president, International Mission Board; Jason Allen, president, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Jonathan Howe, vice president for communications, SBC Executive committee; Ben Mandrell, president and CEO, Lifeway Christian Resources; and former SBC presidents Ed Litton and Jim Henry were among many oth-

ers who represented the SBC Executive Committee and the NOBTS trustee board.

Dew recognized several politicians and city dignitaries in the crowd and welcomed them to speak.

State Senator Joseph Bouie Jr. read from Louisiana Senate Resolution No. 167 that commended Luter for being "an exemplary leader, devoted servant, and unwavering advocate for the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Bouie, along with State Representatives Jason Hughes and Matthew Willard, authored and sponsored the resolution.

The resolution reads that the occasion marks "one of the first buildings named for an African American on a Southern Baptist Convention seminary campus"; notes Luter's service as the first African American president of the SBC; praises Luter's commitment to the New Orleans community with

service marked by "compassion, vision, and dedication to empowering others to live transformed lives in Christ"; and commends Luter for his "selfless service, exemplary leadership, and transformative impact on the lives of countless individuals."

Further recognition came from the city of New Orleans:

-- Mayor LaToya Cantrell noted the importance of the faith community to the city and praised Luter for his legacy.

-- City Councilman Eugene J. Green Jr. presented a city proclamation honoring Luter's lifelong ministry in New Orleans that is "exemplary and greatly appreciated."

-- City Councilman Oliver Thomas presented a proclamation that included Luke 14:11 and praised Luter and his "devoted" wife Elizabeth Luter and reads, "Your warm demeanor and your passion to share the gospel continues to edify the Body of Christ."

Dew recounted that as a new Christian he listened to Luter's sermons on cassette tape and admired him as a "hero of the faith." Dew said his admiration for Luter did not change after meeting Luter four years ago when he came to NOBTS as president.

"Southern Baptists, I know you know him. I know you love him. I know that you esteem him ... but I can tell you having lived four years in this city, and seeing the impact ... God has made through him, that this man is exactly who we always thought he was."

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# SBC annual meeting helped mobilize a new generation of Southern Baptists

By Joe Luna

Director of SLU BCM

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) -- Equipping students to be mature followers of Jesus who impact the campus and become catalysts for advancing the Gospel globally is at the heart of the mission of Baptist Collegiate Ministries across Louisiana, according to Mark Robinson.

He is the director of

Baptist Collegiate Ministries for Louisiana Baptists.

Louisiana BCMs accomplish these growth objectives by training students in evangelism and mission outreach as well as preparing them through church life and leadership experiences, Robinson said. Moreover, he was enthusiastic about the extraordinary opportunity the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting

provided in giving insights to these young men and women about the size and scope of the work Southern Baptists do worldwide, while giving these students the opportunity to serve and grow as leaders.

As Louisiana Baptist BCM student ambassadors, these volunteers helped register, greet, and be the face of Louisiana Baptists to the more than 12,000 messengers who came to New Orleans this year.

"The ambassador program is a reimagining of the state council from the past, expanding it to involve more leaders," Robinson said.

Moving forward, Robinson said the benefit (for BCMs and Louisiana Baptists as a whole) is that these students will be "more invested students, involved in a process that will help them grow in their discipleship and make them stronger church leaders in the future."

It was this opportunity to inform students and involve them in the process of Southern Baptist life, as well as provide networking opportunities, spiritual



Baptist Press photo

Troy Fulkerson (seated), director of information technology with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, gave final instructions to volunteers at the annual meeting before registration opened June 11 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. More than 30 Louisiana college students from across the state volunteered to serve as ambassadors. Louisiana Christian University BCM Director Brad Gill stands to the right of Fulkerson.

growth, and leadership skills, that was the goal for the ambassador program, he said.

According to participants, the "arrow hit the mark."

"I'd never heard of the SBC before," Audie Owens, a McNeese State University elementary education student, said. But her BCM Director Blake Grundy suggested she serve.

"When he told me, I was like 'ABSOLUTELY!'" Owens stated. "I was excited to talk with people I've never met and learn more about discipleship."

Austin Grooms, Northwestern State University senior, indicated he was glad to be able to fill an

essential supporting role with the Convention and loved being part of the "grease that holds the machine together."

Others echoed his sentiments.

"I love seeing everyone coming together and uniting," Carter Manning, University of Louisiana Lafayette said. "Even though we're in the same denomination we still disagree on issues, but everyone is still so passionate about Christ, the church, and reaching the lost."

Manning, who just finished her freshman year in nursing, also said the annual meeting was an

See MOBILIZE, page 15

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Please send resume to: Susan Nolan at [snolan@lbch.org](mailto:snolan@lbch.org) or LBCH, PO Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.

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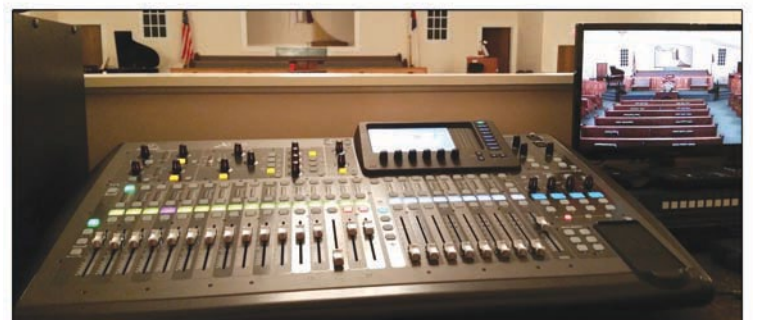
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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Do you have a Revival, Homecoming, a new pastor, a community outreach or a concert? The Baptist Message would love to share your church news with the rest of the state. It is very easy to do, just send in your information (who, what, where and when) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. To get your event in the paper, please submit your information three weeks prior to the event.*

ON THE MOVE

- **Larry Anderson** retires as music minister at First Baptist Church, Bastrop.
- **Seth Forque** is the new youth minister at Highland Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- **Thomas Hodge** is the new youth minister at First Baptist Church, Swartz.
- **Freddie Williford** resigned from Ford Park Baptist Church to take the pastorate at Beulah Baptist Church, Mansfield.
- **Dan Lay**, business administer has retired from Trinity Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- **Grant, wife Kara, Rose** takes the pastorate at Springs of Grace Baptist Church, Shreveport from Denton, Texas.
- **Josh, wife Teresa, Jacobs** resigns from Potsboro, Texas to become youth minister at Woodridge Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- **Logan, wife Lyndsy, Brock** is the new pastor at Trinity Baptist Church, Natchitoches.
- **Philip Caples** is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, Coushatta.

HOMECOMING

- First Baptist Church, Jackson: **Homecoming**, June 25, 11 a.m. Following worship services there will be dinner-on-the-grounds. Pastor: Joe Nesom.

REVIVAL

- Pisgah Baptist Church, Florien: **Revival**, July 9-12, 6:30 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Worship: **Buster Jordan** will lead the music. Pastor: CM Kelly.
- Martin Baptist Church, Coushatta: **Red River Crusade & Concert**. July 16-19, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: **Tommy Eason**. Worship: **The Jason Lovins Band**. The crusade will be held at Red River Senior High School. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for free concessions and seating. This four-day event if full of positive people, uplifting music, great food and an amazing message that will inspire all. Cost: Free for all ages.
- Beauregard Memorial Baptist Church, Longville: **Youth Revival**, July 26-27, 6 p.m. There will be music, testimony, sermons, dramas, prayer followed by a wet and wild celebration July 28, 6 p.m. at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. This is open for all youth and parents. Pastor: Walter Edwards.

LAGNIAPPE

- Reeves Baptist Church, Reeves: **Va-**

- cation Bible School**, June 25-28, 5-8 p.m. Pastor: Charlie Carroll.
- Open Door Baptist Church, Ragley: **Vacation Bible School**, June 25-29, 5:30-8 p.m. Pastor: Sonny Simpson.
- New Life Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Vacation Bible School**, June 25-29, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Keith Manuel.
- LoneStar Baptist Church, Pitkin: **Vacation Bible School**, June 25-30, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: John Elliott.
- First Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-29, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Pastor: Steve Graves.
- Singer Baptist Church, Singer: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-29 5-8 p.m. Pastor: Jimmy Clark.
- Unity Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-30, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Mike Burkes.
- Hopewell Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-30, 6-8:15 p.m. Pastor: Greg Gill.
- Lakeshore Baptist Church, Monroe: **Vacation Bible School**, June 25-29, 5:30-8 p.m. Pastor: William Smith.
- First Baptist Church, Bastrop: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-28, 6-8 p.m. Pastor: Richard Gambill.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Bastrop: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26-30, 9-11:30 a.m. Pastor: Tim Post.
- First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **Vacation Bible School**, June 26 - 30. Pastor: Brian McAllister
- Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Vacation Bible School - Twists & Turns**, June 26-30, 5:30- 8 p.m. To register go to <https://fb.me/e/2mTsgsQfd>. Pastor: Drew Mills.
- Wild Horse Ministries, Trout: **Gospel Singspiration**, July 1, 6:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Wild Horse Ministries Multi-purpose building on 149 Appleby Road, Trout, La and will featur **Jamie Coulter, Kings Messengers, Graceway Quartet, The River Trio**. For more information, call Paul Daily at 318.992.4667 or 318.312.0388. Pastor: Paul Daily.
- Alto Baptist Church, Alto: **Celebrate God & Country Day**, July 2, 10:30 AM. Worship: Brothers In Christ. Guest Speaker: **Lt. Col. Susan Johnston**. A barbeque dinner will follow the service. Music Minister: Jay Ellerman. Pastor: Alan Miller.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria: **Celebrate Freedom** 2023: July 2, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Todd Strain.
- Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: **Cypress Freedom Celebration and Car Show**: July 2, 7-10 p.m. This free community event will include food, fun and fireworks. Contact [Holly@cypressbaptist.org](mailto:Holly@cypressbaptist.org) to register for the car show. Pastor: John Fream
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Fireworks and fellowship**: July 2, 7 p.m. Outdoor family games, inflatables, complimentary hot dogs, chips, and drinks, additional food for purchase and a cornhole tournament will be part of this event. The night will end with a fireworks show at 9 p.m. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
- Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Fireworks and Fun at The Family**

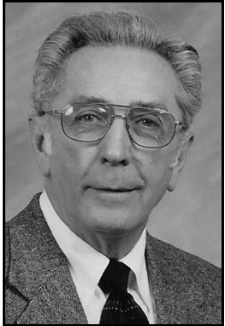
- Place**, July 3, 5:30 p.m. Remember to bring lawn chairs, blankets, umbrellas, snacks, and cooling towels. There will be bounce houses, live music, food trucks (Hi-Licious Street Kitchen, Gary's Grub Hub, Paul's Rib Shack Barbecue, Lulu's Specialty Snocones, Bahama Buck's, and more), a preschool play area with games, and, of course, at sundown, we will light up the skies with a fireworks display (9:15 p.m.). Pastor: Steve James.
- First Baptist Church, Covington: **YOUNG AT HEART ADULTS 55+, Come enjoy the music of The Victory Trio and Vocalist from the National WWII Museum**, July 11, 10:30 a.m. in the worship center. Online registration is REQUIRED at [www.fbccov.org/adults-55](http://www.fbccov.org/adults-55). Cost: \$15, payable at the door, which includes lunch at noon. Deadline to register is noon on July 7. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.
- First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Vacation Bible School - Twists & Turns**, July 10-14, 9 a.m.-noon daily. VBS is for Pre-K through completed 6th grade (must be 5 years old by Sept. 30, 2023). To register: <https://onrealm.org/FirstBaptistNew/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=YJA1NjE2ZmQtZDI2MC00ODhhLWEyNjktYWZlMjAxNGEwMjQ5>. Pastor: Chad Gilbert.
- Highland Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Vacation Bible School**, July 10-14, 8 a.m. - noon. Pastor: Larry Linson.
- First Baptist Church, Jackson: **Victory in Jesus - VBS**, July 10-14, 5:30-8 p.m. Children 4 years old through adult are welcomed. Register online at [FB-COJ.com](http://FB-COJ.com) or contact the church office at 225.634.7148. Pastor: Joe Nesom.
- Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Vacation Bible School**, July 16-20 66-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Chad Ballard.

- Cherry Ridge Baptist Church, Bastrop: **Vacation Baptist Church**, July 13-16 5:30-8 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, Pastor: Dennis Hackler.
- First Baptist Church, Winnsboro: **Vacation Bible School - Christmas in July**, July 10-13, 6-8 p.m. This is for children Kindergarten through age 12. Pre-register online at [fbcwinnsboro.com](http://fbcwinnsboro.com). Pastor: Craig Beeman.
- Lakeside Baptist Church, Converse: **Special live Gospel music**, July 14, 7 p.m. Music: **Signed Sealed & Delivered** will have a special performance. A love offering will be accepted.
- First Baptist Church, Chatham: **Vacation Bible School**, July 17 - 20, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. Pastor: Tim Atkins
- Grace Baptist Church, Monroe: **Vacation Bible School**, July 17-21, 6-8 p.m. Pastor: Ricky Baker.
- Ashland Baptist Church, Ashland: **Seed Sowers from Frankfort, KY, in concert**, July 23, 6 p.m. Pastor: Danny Slack.
- Cloverdale Baptist Church, Alexandria: **The Southern Plainsmen**, July 23, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Dennis Snoddy.
- First Baptist Church, Mangham: **Vacation Bible School**, July 24-28, 4:30-6 p.m. Pastor: Rick Aultman.
- East Winnfield Baptist Church, Winnfield: **Vacation Bible School**, July 24 - 28, 6 - 8:30 p.m. Pastor: Jeff Shows.
- First Baptist Church, Chatham: **Vacation Bible School**, July 24-27. Pastor: Tim Atkins.
- East Winnfield Baptist Church, Winnfield: **Vacation Bible School**, July 24-28, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Jeff Shows.
- Lakeside Baptist Church, Converse: **Vacation Bible School**, July 28 - 30 , Friday-Saturday, 5- 7:30 pm, Sunday,

TBA. Pastor: None.

REMEMBERANCE

PONTOTOC- Albert Lee Gaspard, 87, passed away Wednesday, May 31, 2023, at Sanctuary Hospice House in Tupelo. He was born June 2, 1935, in Gueydan, Louisiana to the late Azile Gaspard and Eve Richard Gaspard. Gaspard pastored for 65 years in Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, July 8, 2023, at First Baptist Church Houston with son-in-law, Jay Johnston, son, Johnny Wade Gaspard, Wayne S q u y r e s and Jimmy Robertson officiating. Memorial Funeral Home of Houston is in charge of the arrangements. He is survived by his wife, Lottie Jean Coleman Gaspard of Pontotoc; a son, Johnny Wade Gaspard (Mandy) of Pontotoc; a daughter, Jerilyn Johnston (Jay) of Baton Rouge; five grandchildren, John Grady Johnston (Annie), Jody Garrett Johnston (Olivia), Allie Mack Gaspard, Ella Jo Gaspard, Maggie Rose Gaspard; four great grandchildren, Chaucer, Xander, Davy and Remy; one sister, Laura Mae Breaux; one brother, John Gaspard. He was preceded in death by his parents; Azile Gaspard and Eve Richard Gaspard; three sisters, Mary Lou Simon, Lydia G. Monceaux, Virgie G. Plaisance; one brother, Howard Raymond Gaspard.



Al Gaspard

Scripture Crypto

The Scripture Crypto is a Bible verse in which one letter has been substituted for another, thus encoding the verse. To find out what the verse is, you must determine what each letter is a substitute for. An "a," for example, may stand for a "t" in this week's issue of the ScriptureCrypto. Next week, "a" could stand for a "d." Each week, each letter is different. Solve by trial and error. The answer will be given next week. Note: All numerals, such as those in the scripture reference after the verse, are spelled out.

WXR NH CNZUU CZQ, G ZE TD SKDSNHR, G ZE Z

NXCWZTOEZT: YDK EZT RZXVNR EH RD FHHS PZRRUH YKDE

EQ QDXRN.

IHPNZKGZN RNGKRHHT: YGBH

Clues:  
K = R; H = E

Answer to May 25, Scripture Crypto:  
Matthew twenty-six: sixty-nine







# Name

from page one

same: Do not use God's name in vain.

It is a key to obedience. It is an essential element of how we set ourselves apart as His people. It is part and parcel of making God the top relationship in our lives.

Moreover, throughout the Word the third commandment is reinforced with instructions not to profane God's name by invoking it in oaths (Mt. 5:34-35), using it to falsely imply His will or authority in a matter (Mk. 7:6-9), or casually offering it in a flippant comment or remark (Mt. 12:36).

Indeed, God warns us that our words reveal the condition of our hearts (Mt. 12:34).

In that context, I grieve about what might appear to some to be a "smallish" incident that took place during our recent SBC Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

What caused my hurt?

During a seemingly minor moment of tension during a discussion from the floor, a glib comment was made from the platform that even Jesus would have had to stand in line to wait His turn to speak at a microphone.

In context, the speaker clarified that he had heard someone else make the comment. Still, he shared the remark for effect, nonetheless.

And my soul cringed.

It might look "nitpicky" or read like a "potshot" or "gotcha" attempt to complain about this incident in an editorial.

But my spirit truly was in pain – not just because "WE" had failed to revere "the name above every name"

at that moment. Instead, I also was convicted about how many times "I" might have loosely invoked Jesus' name, perhaps to be glib, when I could have employed His words or His example to have an even better effect.

In a recent episode of the television series, Jeopardy, the three contestants were challenged with a clue from the Model Prayer: "Matthew 6:9 says, 'Our Father which art in Heaven,' THIS 'be thy name.'"

Not one of them buzzed in, and the hostess had to tell them the answer, "What is 'hallowed.'"

Since then, there has been a cascade of criticisms on social media about this game

show incident and what it says about the participants and perhaps something even larger about the state of our culture.

However, for me it serves as an important lesson, and a matter for personal reflection, not to forget that God's name is holy.

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**SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH OR FULLTIME YOUTH/CHILDREN MINISTER**  
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Résumés may be e-mailed to **crbapt@gmail.com** or mailed to **Cherry Ridge Baptist Church, 1005 Cherry Ridge Rd, Bastrop LA 71200.**

**SEEKING PART TIME, EXPERIENCED PRESCHOOL TEACHERS**  
Emmanuel Baptist Dayschool in Alexandria, LA is seeking part time, experienced preschool teachers. The preschool calendar we follow runs very closely to the Rapides Parish school calendar. Interested applicants should contact Gayle at **318.442.7775** or send for more information to **dayschool@emmanuelalexandria.org.**

**FULL-TIME PASTOR NEEDED**  
Full-time Pastor is needed at First Baptist Church, Ringgold, LA.  
Send your résumés to **gthomp63@outlook.com** or to First Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee  
P.O. Box 566, Ringgold, LA 71068.





# SBC amendment on male pastors passes first vote

**By Brian Blackwell**  
Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Messengers to the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting voted by a two-thirds majority to adopt an amendment to the SBC Constitution that specifies the role of pastor

is limited to a man. Article III, Section 1, currently lists five requirements for congregations to be SBC members. If the proposed amendment receives a second favorable two-thirds vote during the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, a sixth requirement will specify that a church

in friendly cooperation with the SBC “affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.” The vote resulted from a motion made during the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting by Mike Law, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Virginia. However, Law’s proposal, which was referred to the SBC Executive Committee last year, was amended this year by a motion offered by Juan Sanchez, pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. The change did not alter the intent of the amendment, but states “only men” are qualified to serve as pastors rather than the original wording that “a woman” is disqualified from that role. If amended next year, the SBC Constitution Article III will parallel



Baptist Press photo

Virginia pastor Mike Law spoke June 14, 2023, to a motion he put forward at the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting against women serving as pastors.

Article VI of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, the consensus statement of doctrinal beliefs for Southern Baptists, which states, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited


to men as qualified by Scripture.” In New Orleans, the SBC Executive Committee recommended not to amend the Constitution on the basis that it would unnecessarily restate the BF&M 2000.



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# LBC pastor elected SBC EC chairman

**By Brian Blackwell**  
Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee members, during a June 12 meeting, elected Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville, with a second campus in Alexandria, as the next chairman.

“Just to have this opportunity is very, very humbling,” Robertson said during a news conference after the vote, before answering several questions about the EC and its work within the SBC.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Robertson said the Executive Committee needed to be “reliable again.”

“We have been entrusted by the messengers of the Convention to serve an

important role. I think our Convention is looking for an Executive Committee that is reliable and ready to do what it’s commissioned to do.”

## ENTITY TRANSPARENCY

Robertson noted he has served on the SBC EC Committee on Finance and Stewardship and has been deeply engaged with the “financial details” of SBC entities.

“I am absolutely confident that our committee has all the access to the numbers, the audits, the transparency that we need,” he said.

However, he said the SBC EC is charged to review the audits of the other entities, “not ... to oversee” [the other entities].

“I would just encourage the trustee members of those other entities to make sure that they are doing their

fiduciary responsibilities.”

## SEXUAL ABUSE TASK FORCE

“We have to address the issue and I’m grateful that we have,” he said. “We can disagree on how maybe that will happen, and possibly moving forward we have some work to do. I’m very grateful for the work that the [Abuse Reform Implementation] Task Force is doing and the direction we are heading. I just very strongly feel like we need to continue that work to make sure every person in every church in the SBC is protected and safe in every reasonable way.”

## MOVING FORWARD

Robertson said that despite apparent divisions within the EC, he believes there is hope for moving for-



Baptist Press photo

Newly elected SBC Executive Committee Chairman Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville, with a second campus in Alexandria, was elected during the entity’s Monday morning plenary session, June 12, in New Orleans. Robertson has served on the SBC EC since 2018.

ward in a positive way.

“We are brothers and sisters in Christ,” he said, adding that Southern Baptists share the “same Holy Spirit.”

“Our ultimate objectives are the same,” Robertson offered. “I think there is far more that we agree on than we would ever disagree on.”

Robertson conceded that the “disagreements are

real.” But he explained, “We have to work through those things.”

“But my desire has been and continues to be that we can do that in a collegial manner, loving one another in Christ, respecting one another even if we have different opinions. I really do feel like that is the prevailing climate with the EC now.”



Baptist Press photo

Newly-elected Southern Baptist Convention officers for 2023-2024 are (left) Recording Secretary Nathan Finn, Second Vice-President Kason Branch, President Bart Barber, First Vice-President Jay Adkins, and Registration Secretary Don Currence.

## Mobilize from page 10

eye-opening experience.

“I don’t think I realized before how many behind the scenes people it takes to run a meeting like this,” Manning said, “but now that I’ve seen it, I have a new appreciation for it.”

Robinson said the 41 students from the 13 Louisiana BCMs gleaned a valuable insider view into the inner workings of the Convention, and seemed to deepen in their appreciation of the rich heritage they are a part of as Southern Baptists.

“When these students

make it back to their campuses, they will spread the word,” he said. “This will help many others in their generation to get a better understanding and catch the passion to be God’s hands and feet as part of the SBC.”

**Joe Luna is the director of the Southeastern Louisiana University Baptist Collegiate Ministry in Hammond. He is a veteran reporter, having served with the Daily Star, Hammond, St. Tammany News, Covington, and WGSO radio, Slidell.**

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