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By Brian Blackwell

Louisiana Baptist Message

NASHVILLE—Jimmy Draper admits he's no action hero. But Draper, who is scheduled to retire in February from his post as president of LifeWay Christian Resources, said the past 14 years has been a great adventure indeed.

"In fact, many times over these years it seems as if I've been holding on while God has led us into a great adventure," Draper said during LifeWay's report to Southern Baptist Convention messengers in Nashville. "I've tried to walk by faith, knowing that he's the one who ultimately writes our scripts."

His video presentation featured LifeWay highlights during his 14 years as president, including the True Love Waits abstinence program, which has resulted in a reduced rate of AIDS cases in Uganda; the release of the

Holman Christian Standard Bible, which has grown in popularity; and his efforts to include younger leaders in denominational life.

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During last year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis, Draper noted the lack young ministers' denominational involvement. Since then, Draper has met with more than 500 younger ministers to seek their input about what he calls a "crisis" in the denomination.

Furthermore, he said, four newly elected members of LifeWay's board of trustees are under 40-years-old, including an individual who is 27-years-old.

"We'll continue our dialogue with younger leaders by involving them in well-planned listening sessions that lead to partnership and involvement opportunities," Draper explained.

"They asked for a seat at the table and LifeWay is pulling up the chairs," he continued. "And I would (recommend that) every church and entity of the SBC do the same."

Though Draper will retire Feb. 1, he said he does not intend to "back away from getting in there and mixing it up. We as LifeWay and we as Southern Baptists must pursue the ministry opportunities that God has placed before us."

Draper closed his report with three prayer requests.

"Pray for LifeWay's trustees as they seek God's man to be the next president," he asked.

"Pray for our denomination that we will humble ourselves before God and

focus our energy on fulfilling the Great Commission.

“And pray that there will be a whole bunch of chairs pulled up to the table and all generations of Southern Baptists will join together to aggressively seek to reach the world for Christ.”

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