

Motion to bring WMU under SBC authority introduced_62705

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Motion to bring WMU under SBC authority introduced

By Marv Knox

Editor

NASHVILLE—The Southern Baptist Convention will consider bringing its women's auxiliary under its authority, thanks to a motion from the floor of the SBC annual meeting.

The convention received 24 motions during the opening day of its 2005 gathering. Of those motions, 13 were referred to convention agencies for study and possible action, and 11 were ruled out of order.

The request to invite Woman's Missionary Union to become an entity of the SBC was suggested by Leslie Stock, a messenger from Santa Fe Trail Baptist Church in Boonville, Mo.

Woman's Missionary Union is an auxiliary to the SBC. WMU was founded independently of the convention in 1881. Its primary objectives are to educate Southern Baptists about missions, collect two offerings that provide major funding for the convention's international and domestic

mission boards, and provide hands-on opportunities for missions.

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As an auxiliary, WMU raises its own funding and elects its own board and officers. The 12 SBC-owned entities receive their funding from the convention, and their boards all are elected by the convention.

Stock's motion proposed the SBC "extend an invitation" for WMU to "become an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention to join the other SBC entities ... in the work of missions and enjoy the benefits of being an entity of the SBC."

Some observers suggested the motion could be used to bring WMU into stricter alignment with the convention. At the Nashville meeting, messengers completed the process of naming the SBC as the "sole member" of all 12 convention entities' corporate organizations, making the SBC's selection of their trustees—and subsequent control of the organizations themselves—practically irrevocable.

While Southern Baptists consistently have affirmed WMU's zeal for missions, some leaders and others have claimed the women's group has not adequately embraced the "conservative resurgence" that turned the SBC sharply to the right during the past quarter century.

WMU Executive Director Wanda Lee said operating procedure calls for referring requests for corporate changes to the WMU executive board, the organization's governing body.

The motion was referred to the SBC Executive Committee for study.

Six motions referred to various SBC agencies asked the convention to:

— Expand ministry to single parents and their children, made by Gerald Dominy of Springfield First Baptist Church in Rogersville, Ala. "Single parents make up 10 percent of the (U.S.) adult population, and near 50 percent of children live in a single-parent home at some time during their formative years," he noted.

The convention referred Dominy's motion to 11 SBC agencies, exempting the Executive Committee, which does not have ministry program assignments.

- Create a liaison to "coordinate and enhance" the convention's ministry to homosexuals. Bob Stith, pastor of Carroll Baptist Church in Southlake made the motion. He presented a similar motion in 2001, which led to formation of an SBC task force on ministry to homosexuals. Referred to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, LifeWay Christian Resources and the North American Mission Board.
- Request LifeWay Christian Resources to "make available once again through any and all willing local, hometown Christian book stores" its undated materials, including Vacation Bible School curricula. Referred to LifeWay.
- Make Guidestone Financial Resources—formerly called the Annuity Board— the primary (health care insurance) provider" for employees of all SBC entities. Referred to Guidestone.
- Request the International Mission Board to report on its plans for "continuing support of theologically conservative Bible schools, theological colleges, theological seminaries and other institutions" and to explain and reaffirm its intent to "continue to require theological training in a Baptist seminary for all full-time mission personnel." Referred to the IMB.
- Study "whether or not a local church organized by the government as a 501(c)(3) state church is biblically correct." Such a designation makes churches and other nonprofit corporations tax-exempt, according to the Internal Revenue Code. Referred to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Six additional motions referred to the Executive Committee asked for:

- Each state Baptist convention to provide “a good-faith estimate” of when it plans to divide its Cooperative Program budget receipts evenly between itself and the SBC. Currently, the 7-year-old Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, which sends 53 percent of receipts to the SBC, is the only state convention to achieve the 50/50 ratio.
- Recognition of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship “as a formal evangelistic mission entity to Jewish people worldwide.”
- A moratorium on holding the SBC annual meeting on the week following Father’s Day.
- Permission to submit proposed resolutions up to the beginning of the afternoon session on the first day of the convention’s annual meeting. Current bylaws stipulate resolutions must be submitted at least 15 days in advance of the annual meeting.
- Placement of one woman on every SBC committee.
- Strengthening language in the bylaws to emphasize the possibility that messengers may immediately consider motions rather than refer them to SBC entities.

The 11 motions that were ruled out of order for various procedural reasons called for:

- Guidestone Financial Resources to justify its rates for health insurance.
- Designating a tithe of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission’s budget to the Center for Reclaiming America. This motion was presented twice, with slight modifications.
- Studying how the SBC evangelizes and ministers to single adults.
- Encouraging Southern Baptist churches to refrain from removing

“Southern Baptist” or “Baptist” from their church signs and bulletins.

- LifeWay to examine “America’s Heart and Soul,” a movie produced by Disney, “and if it is biblically sound, to consider making it available to all Southern Baptists.”
- All SBC entities to “respond with increasing openness” to a “Covenant with Southern Baptists,” a document that would “provide Southern Baptists with the most complete, thorough and accountable business plan (and) business ethics.”
- Publication of “line-item expenditures and receipts in all financial areas from all reporting entities,” including salaries, bonuses, benefits and travel expenses for all convention employees, listed by name and title.
- Directing WMU to amend its charter to make the SBC its sole member.
- Directing LifeWay to make its materials, including Vacation Bible School curricula, available to non-LifeWay stores. This motion was similar to a similar request that was referred to LifeWay, except this motion commanded, rather than requested, the action.
- The SBC president to send a letter to Disney, “telling them we will end our boycott of their corporation.”

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.