

# **SBC messengers re-elect Page president; select Richards, Redmond as vice presidents**

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**By Lonnie Wilkey**

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SAN ANTONIO—South Carolina pastor Frank Page was elected unopposed June 12 for a second one-year term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Messengers also elected Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, as first vice president, and African American pastor Eric Redmond of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Temple Hills, Md., as second vice president.

Page's re-election ended speculation that he would encounter opposition for a second term. Page's election as president last year over Ronnie Floyd of Arkansas and Jerry Sutton of Tennessee was considered an upset in most SBC circles because he was not the consensus choice of key SBC leaders.

Page's election last year was considered a victory for supporters of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified plan of giving.

Page, pastor of First Baptist Church, Taylors, S.C., has been a leading advocate of the Cooperative Program as he has spoken at gatherings nationwide during his first year as president. His church gave \$629,505 or 12.5 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program in 2006, according to the latest annual church profile.

Dale Morell, pastor of Maine Street Baptist Church, Brunswick, Maine, nominated Page for his second term.

He reminded messengers that just a year ago, many people didn't really know Frank Page. "As you reflect on this year, you have seen his heart and spirit and how he responds. He has a passion for souls and for the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is one of a kind," Morell observed.

Page thanked messengers following his re-election.

"I will serve for yet another year so that somehow I might bring glory to our Lord, to lift high his name, to continue to attempt to bring us together for the task of world missions and evangelization," Page told messengers.

"I will not back up, back down, or back away from that which God has called and that in which we must be involved."

During a press conference after his election, Page said he tried to hold true to his pledge last year to be more inclusive, while at the same time holding to his conservative beliefs.

"I said last year that I am a conservative and that I am in no way trying to undo what some have called the conservative resurgence," Page said. "However, I have tried to be irenic and to be kind, and I will continue to do that.

“I have said many times that I believe the Bible, I’m just not angry about it. I stand by that; though there have been some who don’t appreciate that comment, so be it.”

Page said he does not lead by opinion polls. “I hope everybody would like what I do, but I know that is not going to happen, but I try to do the best I can as God leads.”

In response to a question as to whether his election unopposed was a sign of acceptance by SBC leaders who opposed him last year or an affirmation that he did a good job, Page acknowledged there were some who have liked for someone to run against him.

He noted, however, that it is a tradition that the incumbent stay for a second year, those who wanted to oppose him probably saw that effort as unwinnable.

“While I wish it (his re-election) was because I had just done a good job or they all loved me now, the truth is there was a calculated analysis and in that calculation it was decided best not to do that (oppose his election) this year,” Page said.

During his responses to questions posed during the press conference, Page reiterated stands he has taken this past year. Among them:

- An SBC database on sexual predators. “One instance of sexual abuse in a church is too much. We must be willing to do anything we can to inform and educate our churches on how to protect our precious children.” He stressed that having a database would not guarantee protection. “Any system can be abused.
- Baptist Faith & Message. Page was asked if the statement of faith is silent on a subject should an entity take action, as trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary did recently when they established a policy

on private prayer language. Page said that while he respects the trustee system he urges them to “not make doctrinal statements that go beyond the Baptist Faith & Message.”

- Baptisms. “We won’t increase baptisms until we are right with God,” Page said. “I am calling on people to beg God for spiritual renewal and revival.” He called on Baptists to not let distractions (speaking in tongues) to keep them from their primary task of “winning the world to Christ.”

Richards was elected as first vice president over Southern Baptist missionary David Rogers, son of former SBC president Adrian Rogers. Richards received 2,177 (68.7 percent) votes to 966 (30.5 percent) for Rogers.

In nominating Richards, Mac Brunson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., described him as a “builder of pastors, churches, and a state convention.”

Brunson noted that Richards has led the breakaway convention from 120 churches to 1,895 churches and also has led the convention to give 54 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program. He is a member of First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, which gave \$134,964 or 12.3 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program in 2006.

Rogers was nominated by David Dykes, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas. Dykes stressed he was nominating Rogers, not because of his father, but because of his own qualifications—one who is dedicated his life to missions.

For the past 13 years, Rogers has served as a church planter and mobilization coordinator for the International Mission Board in Madrid Spain. Rogers was not at the convention due to the graduation of his son from high school in Spain, but Dykes said the family would be on stateside

assignment for the next year, and Rogers could fulfill his responsibilities as first vice president if elected.

Rogers would have been the first missionary to hold an SBC office had he been elected. Rogers' home church, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., gave \$338,947 or 1.3 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program in 2006.

Redmond was elected second vice president over evangelist Bill Britt of Gallatin, Tenn. Redmond received 1,765 votes (61.69 percent) to 1,077 votes (37.64 percent) for Britt.

Redmond's church gave \$100,000 or 13.3 percent of its undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program in 2006 while College Heights Baptist Church, Gallatin, Tenn., where Britt is a member, gave \$48,631 or 3.4 percent through the Cooperative Program.

Two other officers were re-elected without opposition—John Yeats, interim pastor of Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe, La., as recording secretary, and Jim Wells, director of missions for Tri-County Baptist Association in southwest Missouri, as registration secretary.

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