

Barber elected SBC president; sex abuse reform approved

June 15, 2022

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention elected Texas pastor Bart Barber as president, voted to create an Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force, and authorized development of a Ministry Check website of individuals credibly accused of sexual abuse.

Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmersville, was elected from among a field of four candidates during the 2022 SBC annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif.



SBC President Ed Litton announces voting results, with Bart Barber as the president-elect, during the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif., on Tuesday, June 14. (Photo by Justin L. Stewart/Religion News Service)

Other nominees were Tom Ascol, senior pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Fla., and president of Founders Ministries; Robin Hadaway,

missions professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and former missionary; and Frank Cox, senior pastor of North Metro Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Ga.

In the initial balloting, messengers cast 3,258 votes for Barber, who chaired the resolutions committee at the annual meeting. Ascol received 2,332 votes, Cox received 887 votes, and Hadaway received 340 votes.

In a runoff election, Barber received 3,401 votes, while Ascol received 2,172 votes.

Ascol was endorsed by the Conservative Baptist Network, and two days before the vote, former SBC President Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, released an [video on Twitter](#) endorsing Ascol.

Barber was elected one day after another North Texas pastor, Jered Wellman from Tate Springs Baptist Church in Arlington, was elected chair of the SBC Executive Committee.

Both Barber and Wellman are pastors of churches uniquely aligned with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. That group broke away from the Baptist General Convention of Texas because they considered Texas Baptists not supportive of the self-identified “conservative resurgence” in the SBC.

However, both Barber and Wellman defeated candidates supported by the Conservative Baptist Network—a group that does not consider the SBC conservative enough.

Other officers elected at the annual meeting were Victor Chayasirisobhon, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Anaheim, Calif., as first vice president; Alex Sands, senior pastor and planter of Kingdom Life Church in Simpsonville, S.C., as second vice president; Nathan Finn, provost at North Greenville University, as recording secretary; and Don Currence,

administrative pastor at First Baptist Church in Ozark, Mo., as registration secretary.

SBC creates database of abusers

Messengers overwhelmingly approved recommendations from the SBC Sexual Abuse Task Force after an impassioned appeal by Chair Bruce Frank, pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Arden, N.C., who called it a “*Kairos* moment” for Southern Baptists.

“Today, we will choose between humility and hubris,” Frank said. “We will choose between genuine repentance and being passive in our approach to sexual abuse within the SBC. ... The time for action has come.”



North Carolina pastor Bruce Frank, chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force, told messengers to the 2022 SBC annual meeting that June 14 was a day for Southern Baptists to “choose between humility or hubris.” (BP Photo by Sonya Singh)

One messenger suggested the report by the task force was “polluted” by Guidepost Solutions, the group that conducted the independent investigation of how the SBC handled sexual abuse over two decades.

Guidepost recently posted on Twitter a pro-LGBTQ message for Pride Month.

Frank insisted “the issue is not what Guidepost thinks about LGBTQ” but what “Southern Baptists think of sexual abuse.”

Messengers approved the creation of an Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force—to be appointed by newly elected president Barber—that will develop systems to address abuse and care for survivors.



New SBC officers include (left to right) Recording Secretary Nathan Finn, Second Vice President Alex Sands, President Bart Barber, First Vice President Victor Chayasirisobhon and Registration Secretary Don Currence. (BP photo by Adam Covington)

The Sexual Abuse Task Force recommended—and messengers approved—creating a Ministry Check website with a searchable database of “properly vetted information” on pastors, church employees and volunteers who have been “credibly accused” of sexual abuse, along with those who have been convicted or “had a civil judgement rendered against them.”

The website will be maintained by an independent contractor that will

“review all submissions to ensure they meet the proper evidentiary standard,” Frank said. The task force will oversee it and report back to the SBC on its “feasibility, effectiveness and costs.”

The 2022 annual meeting drew 8,133 messengers, 2,856 registered guests and 1,554 registered exhibitors for a total attendance of 12,543.

Todd Unzicker, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, was affirmed as the 2023 SBC annual meeting convention speaker with Jim Shaddix, professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., as alternate. The 2023 SBC annual meeting is scheduled for June 13-14 in New Orleans, La.

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