

Florida pastor Willy Rice nominee for SBC president

November 3, 2025

CLEARWATER, Fla. (BP)—Florida pastor Willy Rice announced his intentions to be nominated for Southern Baptist Convention president at the 2026 SBC annual meeting in Orlando.

In a video released Oct. 31, Rice said he is allowing the nomination based on his hope for renewal in the SBC.

Rice, 62, has served 21 years as senior pastor at Calvary Church in Clearwater.

“Can you honestly look back over the last few years and conclude we are more united and more on mission? Or do you feel like I do? And like so many I hear from that there are real concerns that call for serious reflection, humble correction and a new day of renewal,” Rice said in the video.

He said his focus would be on renewing the message and the mission of the convention.

“In this hour of apostasy and idolatry, we need to reaffirm and restate our convictions. Such a time calls not for fuzzy lines in a mushy middle, it calls for clarity and courage. We don’t need to look for something new. We need to stand on what we know is true,” he said.

In 2022, now-SBC President Clint Pressley announced he would nominate Rice for president at that year’s annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif., but Rice later decided not to seek the nomination.

Emphasis on the Great Commission

In the Oct. 31 video, Rice talked about the 2,000th anniversary of the Great Commission, which he said will occur “somewhere around May of 2033.”

“What if as we approach that once-in-a-lifetime moment, Southern Baptists were to unite as never before to make sure every person in our nation heard the message of Jesus and was urged to respond in repentance and faith, and imagine Southern Baptists embracing a historic generational goal to get the gospel into every tongue, every nation and every tribe across the globe,” he said.

More than any other generation of Christians, “we have all we need” for the mission, Rice said.

“What we have lacked is the resolve, the vision, the unity, the focus and the commitment to see it through. We have allowed other pursuits to distract us and tainted ideologies to divide us,” he said.

Rice plans to hold “conversations” with Southern Baptists over the coming months to work through potential differences.

“I pray those conversations will be without unnecessary acrimony, that they will glorify our Savior and edify the church,” he said in the video.

“Regardless of your views, I hope you’ll join me in praying for a Baptist renewal in our time and praying specifically that our gathering next summer can be a time of reaffirming our convictions and recommitting to our shared mission.”

Giving record and denominational

involvement

According to its 2025 Annual Church Profile statistics and the church's financial office, Calvary Church gave \$343,549 through the Cooperative Program, approximately 3 percent of its undesignated contributions; \$52,222 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering giving; and \$76,351 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Calvary Church reported 409 baptisms in 2024 and 3,055 people in average worship attendance.

Rice previously pastored churches in Florida and Alabama. He is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., and has a Master of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife Cheryl have three children and six grandchildren.

Rice served as president of the Florida Baptist Convention from 2006 to 2008, and he served as president of the SBC Pastors' Conference in 2015.

He has also served as chairman of the SBC Committee on Committees in 2010, chair of the SBC Committee on Nominations in 2016 and president of the Florida Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference in 2004, along with other local, state and national positions.

Rice also served as a trustee for the North American Mission Board from 2018 to 2022, including stints as second and first vice chairman.