

# IMB taps Paul Chitwood as presidential candidate

November 6, 2018

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The International Mission Board trustees' presidential search committee announced it will recommend Paul Chitwood, 48, to be elected as the 173-year-old entity's 13th president.

The vote to elect Chitwood is scheduled for the Nov. 15 plenary session during the IMB board meeting in Richmond.



Paul Chitwood

A former chairman of IMB's board of trustees, Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, where he has served since 2011.

For 18 years, Chitwood was pastor of Kentucky churches of varying sizes—First Baptist in Mount Washington (2003-11), where he is a member; First Baptist in Somerset (1999-2003); First Baptist Church in Owenton (1995-99); and South Fork Baptist Church in Owenton (1993-95). As a

pastor, his churches averaged giving 18.5 percent through the Cooperative Program unified budget.

He was chairman of the IMB trustees from 2008-10, and he served on the board of trustees from 2002 to 2010. His overseas short-term mission involvement includes work in Brazil, Peru, India, China, South Africa, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya, England, Spain, Germany and Haiti.

“A decade ago, I had the privilege of working with IMB President Jerry Rankin, Clyde Meador, Tom Elliff, and David Steverson to pen the IMB’s vision statement,” Chitwood said.

“While the wording was and is important, it simply captures the vision God has graciously given us in his word. It’s his vision, and the culmination of the work that he has been doing through his church and, since 1845, through Southern Baptists. Our vision is unchanged: a multitude from every language, people, tribe and nation knowing and worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **‘We need him’**

Rick Dunbar of Madison, Miss., chair of the IMB board of trustees and a member of the search committee, said it is obvious God has been preparing Chitwood for a leadership role at the IMB.

“Examine his work history, denominational experience, trustee background, educational history, leadership and team-building history; hear his heart for missions and the Lord, to be shared with the entire world; listen to his wife as she eagerly anticipates this role—and I think you will agree: We need him,” Dunbar said.

The more the search committee talked, prayed and thought about Chitwood, “the more the entire committee has come together united in

knowing he is God's choice for our next president," Dunbar continued. "He has the biblical foundation, a heart for missions and a proven track record of leading a big organization."

Chuck Pourciau, chair of the presidential search committee and senior pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., echoed Dunbar's endorsement.

"Little did the presidential search committee anticipate the meandering path that would be this search," Pourciau said. "There were many twists and turns, but our commitment remained singular. It didn't matter what path we took as long as we ended up in the right place. The right place is to locate and recommend to the trustees the person God had already chosen as the next leader of the International Mission Board.

"We are unanimously agreed that we have done just that in recommending to the IMB trustees Dr. Paul Chitwood as our next president. Dr. Chitwood is uniquely qualified to lead us into the next era of Southern Baptists reaching the nations. His missions heart and leadership acumen will serve us well in the years to come. I am eager to watch God work through him as he leads our international missions efforts."

## **Led Kentucky Baptists to give more to international missions**

As executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Chitwood led the organization to a greater focus on strengthening local churches, planting new congregations, evangelizing the unchurched, and shifting more funding to international missions, the search committee noted.

Chitwood identified the need to move more Cooperative Program funds from state mission budgets to the Southern Baptist Convention budget and,

ultimately, to the IMB budget. Last year, the convention reported more churches planted and growth in the number of Kentucky Baptists involved in volunteer mission work in Kentucky and around the world.

In consideration of leading the IMB, Chitwood has stated he is committed to the organization's next executive vice president being someone with significant mission-field experience.



Paul Chitwood and other short-term missionaries in South Africa pray for a terminally ill AIDS patient in 2015. The trip was conducted through a partnership between the Kentucky Baptist Convention and Baptist Global Response, a primary ministry partner of the IMB. (Kentucky Baptist Convention photo)

Chitwood has traveled extensively overseas in support of the IMB and worked alongside IMB missionaries, Dunbar said, which gives him a view into the missionary life and task but also makes him realize how much he will depend on men and women who have long-term overseas experience.

Duane Ostem, an IMB field leader from Asia who served on the committee

to provide a field-based perspective, said he is “very happy to join with the rest of the presidential search committee in recommending that Dr. Paul Chitwood be approved as our next IMB president.”

“Dr. Chitwood is passionate about missions,” Ostem said. “He understands the workings of the IMB. He loves missionaries. His humble but strong leadership style will enable him to work well with our Richmond personnel, our field missionaries, and our Southern Baptist churches. His vision for the future will inspire and guide the IMB as we seek to make disciples of all nations.”

At Chitwood’s request, pending trustee approval, Clyde Meador will remain in the president’s office as interim executive vice president during the transition. Meador has served as IMB interim president since Sept. 27.

“I have known Paul for 16 years and have consistently been impressed by and thankful for his commitment to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, as well as his excellent leadership skills,” Meador said. “When Paul was serving as chairman of IMB trustees, he became an integral part of the leadership team, even to the point of having a significant part in crafting our vision statement that continues as a guide even today.

“Paul’s keen insight, leadership strength, commitment to the Great Commission, humility, and understanding of the lost world that lies before us, as well as unusual knowledge of the SBC, all combine to make him the ideal next president of IMB.”

## **Track record of leadership**

August Boto, interim president of the SBC Executive Committee, noted, “The first thing I did upon hearing the news was smile. I can think of no subset of Southern Baptists that should not be pleased to hear of Dr. Chitwood’s nomination. ...

“Paul loves missions. He has led out in support of the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches. His wide range of experiences has equipped him to see the value of every facet of Southern Baptist ministry and missions, from local church, through the association, and on to the state and national levels. I believe he can be confident of his convention’s support and continual prayer, for we can certainly be confident of his for us.”

Chitwood was Kentucky Baptist Convention president in 2005-06; first vice president in 2003-04; and president of the state pastors’ conference in 2002. He was chairman of the SBC Committee on Nominations in 2015-16. He also has served on several other state mission committees and in associational leadership committees. He has served as a trustee of Crossings Ministries, Sunrise Children’s Services, Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Oneida Baptist Institute, Baptist Haiti Mission and Bridges to Nigeria.

He is an adjunct professor of leadership at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously has been an assistant professor of missions and evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, University of the Cumberlands and Boyce College.

A native of Jellico, Tenn., Chitwood is a 1992 graduate of Cumberland College (now University of the Cumberlands), where he has served as a trustee. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995 and a doctorate from the seminary in 2001. He currently is pursuing a master’s degree in nonprofit administration from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame.

Chitwood and his wife Michelle have been married 25 years. Their family includes son Daniel, 22, and daughter-in-law Derrika; daughter Anna, 20; daughter Cai, 12; and a foster daughter, age 6, who they hope will soon join the family through adoption.