

National Baptists choose Boise Kimber as president

September 6, 2024

BALTIMORE (RNS)—After an [unusual election](#) that gave voters the choice on the ballot of a name or a “no,” members of the National Baptist Convention, USA, lined up behind a new president, Pastor Boise Kimber of First Calvary Baptist Church in New Haven, Conn.

Kimber, who ran unopposed but needed the approval of the historically Black denomination’s delegates, received 1,774 “yes” votes, or 69 percent of the votes cast, on Sept. 5, while 79 votes, or 31 percent, were cast as “no” votes.

“Oh, how marvelous God is,” said Kimber, after outgoing convention President Jerry Young invited him to greet those attending the final session of the annual meeting. “My brothers and sisters in Christ, I greet you in the name of him who orders our steps. What God has done no persons can put asunder.”

In the months ahead of the convention’s annual session, which concluded shortly after the election results were announced, officials determined Kimber had received the necessary 100 endorsements from member churches and other National Baptist entities to qualify to run for president.

Four other men who had hoped to be on the ballot were told they did not qualify: Pastor Tellis Chapman of Detroit, Pastor Claybon Lea of the San Francisco area, Pastor Alvin Love of the Chicago area and Pastor James B. Sampson of Florida.

Pastor Thomas Morris Sr., chairman of the convention’s election supervisory commission, said in an earlier interview many of the other

candidates' endorsements were voided, because they came from churches that have been unable to afford their required annual registration with the denomination due to lack of funds, consolidation or closure.

Disqualified candidates critiqued the election process

In May, the disqualified challengers released a video in which they urged supporters to help them “fight for the soul of our convention.” They hoped sufficient “no” votes would cause the election process to restart.

In August, Sampson wrote about his continuing concerns in a Facebook post that said, in part, “There is no way that any candidate selected under these circumstances can legitimately govern this august body.”

But shortly after the election results were announced, the latest posting on Sampson’s Facebook account seemed to offer a different tone: “God have spoken, let the National Baptist Convention USA inc, Constituency say Amen. Lord Bless and keep ‘President Boise Kimber.’”



Pastor Dwight McKissic of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington preaches during worship services on June 7, 2020. (AP File

Photo/LM Otero)

Pastor Dwight McKissic of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, whose congregation has been dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention, was a newly appointed officer along with Kimber in 2020.

The day before the election, McKissic expressed his support for a “no” voting, saying in a Facebook post that cited lyrics from the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”: “A ‘No’ vote immediately fuses ‘strength for today’ and ‘bright hope for tomorrow’ into the fabric and fellowship of our great convention.”

McKissic, who declined further comment, told RNS after the election that he sent Kimber a text with his congratulations.

“You prayed and worked hard for this,” he told Kimber. “God granted it to you. May God crown your time in office with phenomenal & Kingdom success. Blessings on you, and the National Baptist Convention.”

Support framed as generational change

On the day before the election, some attendees at the gathering voiced support for Kimber as a generational change.

Dwight and Derik Jones, senior pastor and pastor, respectively, of First Baptist Church of South Richmond, Va., expressed concern about how the convention will draw in more members of younger generations.

“We’re hopeful that this election will kind of be the dawn of a new day for the convention in terms of it being serious about meeting the needs of the church in 2024,” the younger pastor said.

“The church, particularly the post-pandemic church, is going through so many gyrations and changes that it needs a leadership that is able to adapt and to lead the convention,” added his father, who said he planned to vote for Kimber. “Many churches are dying, and if the church is dying, the convention can’t live.”

Both Young, the outgoing denominational president, and Pastor Breonus Mitchell Sr., board chair, said the denomination’s election processes need to be changed in the future.

Mitchell said the current bylaws contain “so much ambiguity,” pointing to one church that had joined and paid for its registration in 2023 but was not able to have voting delegates at the session.

Young, [in his final address](#), acknowledged the “unusual” election but said its strangeness did not mean anyone had done wrong.

“There is absolutely no question that there are some problems with the process,” he said. “But hear me: You can’t get in the middle of the process and then decide it ought to change.”

After Thomas announced the election results on behalf of the elections commission, Young said the decision was final.

“Their report here tonight says clearly that the body has spoken,” he said, drawing some applause. “And when the body speaks, that settles the matter. Within the context of Baptist polity, there is no appellate system.”

Shortly before calling the meeting to a close, Young noted he hopes to achieve the transfer of authority over the denomination in less than the 30-day maximum stated in the convention’s constitution.

He also contrasted his plans for a “smooth transition” with the last national U.S. election.

“I can promise you this: There will be no insurrection on our part,” Young said, drawing some laughter and applause. “And you can bet on this: We’re not going to storm the headquarters.”