

# **SBC president urges ‘unity of spirit’**

April 25, 2018

DALLAS (BP)—Going into this year’s Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, President Steve Gaines acknowledged Southern Baptists face some critical decisions in the days and months ahead.

“Obviously, we face the challenge of seeking new leaders to fill two of our most important leadership roles—the president of the International Mission Board and the CEO of the SBC Executive Committee,” Gaines said.

“We must have godly, Spirit-filled leaders in those positions,” Gaines said. “We all know that everything rises and falls on leadership. We need to pray that the Lord will place the exact people he wants in these two vital positions.”

## **Messengers will elect SBC president**

Among those key leadership decisions, messengers will elect a new SBC president during the June 12-13 meeting at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas. Gaines, pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., will finish his second and final one-year term as president.



J.D. Greear

In January, Florida pastor Ken Whitten announced J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area, will be nominated for SBC president.

During the 16 years Greear has led The Summit, the multi-site church has seen worship attendance grow from 610 in 2002 to just under 10,000, according to statistics available through the SBC's Annual Church Profile. Total baptisms increased from 19 in 2002 to 631 in 2017 at the church's nine campuses.

The Summit has planted 248 churches to date, including 208 outside the United States, with a goal of starting 1,000 churches in 50 years, according to North Carolina's *Biblical Recorder* newsjournal.



Ken Hemphill

In February, a coalition of Southern Baptists announced Ken Hemphill also will be nominated for SBC president. Hemphill was president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1994 to 2003 and national strategist from 2003-11 for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth emphasis.

In 2011, Hemphill became founding director of North Greenville University's Center for Church Planting and Revitalization. He now serves the university as special assistant to the president for denominational relations.

Hemphill also has served churches in Kentucky and Virginia as pastor and led the Home Mission Board—now the North American Mission Board—Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth in the early 1990s.

## **Emphasis on evangelism and missions**

The Tuesday evening session of the SBC annual meeting will focus on a time of prayer and worship with special guest and Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias. This year, Gaines also will challenge Southern Baptists to fulfill

the theme, “Testify! Go. Stand. Speak,” based on Acts 5:20. The annual meeting also will feature a “Sending Celebration” for missionaries Tuesday night.

“Pray that during our meetings we will discuss issues in a united, civil, Spirit-filled way,” Gaines urged. “Pray that when we leave Dallas, we will do so with a genuine unity of spirit and purpose’—to reach lost people throughout the world with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.”

For the second consecutive year, Crossover evangelism efforts will feature a Harvest Crusade led by California pastor Greg Laurie. Crusade organizers will work with volunteers to help local churches conduct door-to-door visitation in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. They will engage residents in gospel conversations and extend personal invitations to attend the Sunday evening event, June 10.

The North American Mission Board, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Baptist General Convention of Texas and local Baptist associations will help congregations connect with personal evangelism opportunities in the area as part of the Crossover outreach before the annual meeting.

Seminary students also will spend a week assisting churches with home visits and personal evangelism as part of Crossover events. Last year’s Crossover event evangelism emphasis and the tandem Harvest America crusade yielded more than 3,500 professions of faith in Christ.

## **Social media and online info**

Annual meeting attendees once again can stay updated by using the “SBC Annual Meetings” mobile app, which will include a listing of speakers along with as the daily program schedule, daily events, exhibitor listing, convention center maps, interactive map of the exhibit hall and 2018 Book

of Reports. Download the app on a mobile device by accessing the App Store, Google Play or by visiting [app.core-apps.com/sbc\\_am2018](http://app.core-apps.com/sbc_am2018).

Southern Baptists also can follow annual meeting updates on Twitter @SBCMeeting, @BaptistPress, @SBCLife, @sbccp and @SBCPastorsConf. Many social media users will employ the hashtag #sbcam18 in their posts about the annual meeting.

To register online, visit [sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc18](http://sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc18) under the Messengers/Guests tab. Messengers, exhibitors and guests need to be registered and properly badged for entrance into the general sessions June 12-13.

After completing online registration, each individual will receive an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting's express registration lane. There, the registration code can be entered into a computer and a nametag will be printed.