

SBC presidential nominees at a glance

May 20, 2024

With the current count standing at six nominees for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, here is a bullet-point guide to where the nominees stand on some key issues.

Information is compiled from Baptist Press interviews and [articles](#), *Baptist Standard* articles about the nominees—[Clint Pressley](#), [Mike Keahbone](#), [Jared Moore](#), [David Allen](#), [Bruce Frank](#), and [Dan Spencer](#)—and a brief email interview with one of the later nominees.

Nominations may continue up to the vote, but no new nominations have been put forward since April. Nominees are listed in order of announcement.



Clint Pressley (Screen capture image via BP)

[Clint Pressley](#)— Pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. (2,632 average attendance). Met his wife at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, but moved to New Orleans Baptist Theological

Seminary to complete his Master of Divinity degree.

- For the Law Amendment.
- Against funding the Abuse Reform Commission—admitted it made him “a little nervous” that entity heads “were slow to get behind” the group—Send Relief announced its original financial gifts to sexual abuse reforms [would not be going](#) to the Abuse Reform Commission—“We want to support what is good. We’re just not convinced yet that that’s the right thing to do,” Pressley said.
- For increased financial transparency, but trust the trustees.
- Said there was a “fog” around the issue of sex abuse in the SBC initially, but “with that fog clearing up a little bit, we are seeing this is not a system-wide crisis. It is a crisis, but it’s not showing up in every church. However, every church needs to be prepared. Every church needs to react.”
- Using the influence of the office, he would “love to pull down or cool off some of the rhetoric” heard in the SBC. As president, he’d like to remind SBC members that even though they do have some housekeeping to do, they’ve got a great house.



Mike Keahbone (Screen capture image via BP)

[Mike Keahbone](#)—Pastor of First Baptist Church in Lawton, Okla. (Average

weekly attendance of 623). Native American of Cherokee, Comanche and Kiowa descent. No published Texas connection. Served on the Sexual Abuse Task Force and as vice chair of the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force.

- Against the Law Amendment—though devoted to complementarianism and the role of pastor being reserved for men, he believes the SBC’s current system for removing churches with women pastors has proven itself adequate.
- For funding the Abuse Reform Commission—strongly supports the commission as “a great step” for how the SBC needs to continue its sexual abuse response. Various SBC leaders told the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force necessary steps to fulfill messengers’ recommendations could not be taken within the convention. Keahbone is among the commission’s incorporators.
- For increased financial transparency, form 990-type reporting.
- Does believe sexual abuse is a crisis among SBC churches—questioned a reluctance to call sexual abuse in the SBC a crisis, while being willing to label the issue of women pastors a crisis.
- Would appoint committee members “to make sure that every voice is represented and try to make every voice represented equally.”



Jared Moore (Screen capture image via BP)

Jared Moore—Pastor of Homesteads Baptist Church in Crossville, Tenn. (150-170 average attendance). No published Texas connections.

- “100 percent for the Law Amendment.”
- Against the Abuse Reform Commission, but supports a sexual abuse convictions database overseen by the SBC Executive Committee in cooperation with state conventions and local associations.
- For IRS form 990-type institutional financial transparency.
- Regarding sexual abuse: “It’s a heinous sin. ... but no, the short answer is there is not a sex abuse crisis in the SBC.”
- Moore sees appointment of Committee on Committees members as a key function of the SBC president and has a list of standards for those appointed, including believing only men can be pastors and rejecting all forms of critical race theory.



David Allen (Screen capture image via BP)

David Allen—Professor and dean at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Cordova, Tenn. Studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was a charter member and first staff person hired at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano. Pastored churches in Texas and taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for almost 20 years.

- For the Law Amendment—churches need women but not as

- pastors, and the constitution of the SBC needs to clarify so.
- Against funding the Abuse Reform Commission: “I’m concerned, since this group is independent and not under any accountability control of the SBC ... of any money going to that group,” he said.
 - For increased financial transparency—wants to know why the trustees of SBC institutions don’t trust SBC members to know how funds are spent.
 - Does not believe sex abuse can “legitimately be described as a crisis in SBC churches.” It is important to address but mostly handled at the local church level.
 - As president, he’d deal with issues, but he said they’ve become distractions for some. He wants to focus on the main thing: The main thing is missions, evangelism, preaching and church planting.



Bruce Frank (Courtesy Photo)

Bruce Frank— pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C. (7,331 members across eight multisite locations). Served as chair of the Sexual Abuse Task force in 2021-22, overseeing the independent investigation of the SBC Executive Committee’s handling of abuse reports.

Holds a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University and an M.Div. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Previously pastored in Texas.

Frank's responses came from an email. He did not participate in an online forum with some other candidates, as it took place before his nomination, and he had no individual interview published in Baptist Press at the time of writing.

- Against the Law Amendment—Less than 1 percent of SBC churches have a female pastor of any kind, so that is considered “statistically insignificant” and not a “crisis,” he said. “I am in favor of providing clarity to our complementarian theology, but not the Law Amendment, as it raises more questions than it answers and will lead to extrabiblical action.”
- Abuse Reform Commission—“I do believe we need a ministry check database to safeguard our churches from the vast majority of abusers who wouldn't show up on a simple background check. If that is outside SBC, then funding would probably come from outside—if inside SBC, then come from inside.”
- On financial transparency—“Where trust is missing, more transparency and information are needed. I have no problem on the messengers voting in a 990-type form [requirement].”
- Regarding sexual abuse: “There is a sex abuse crisis in our culture, and that doesn't stop at the doors of a church. Some good progress has been made in the SBC in the last 5 years, but much work remains to be done in this important area.”
- Would focus on the [Great Commission](#) and sexual abuse reform as his first two priorities as president of the SBC.



Dan Spencer (Screen capture image via BP)

Dan Spencer—pastor of First Baptist Church, Sevierville, Tenn. (Church website reports membership of over 4,000 and Sunday small group attendance of 1,200). The church is a leader in baptisms and CP giving. Spencer is the great-great nephew of M.E. Dodd, the “father of the Cooperative Program.” No published connection to Texas.

- Noncommittal on the Law Amendment—He has no issue with its theology but thinks the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message is sufficient. Yet, it “wouldn’t break his heart” if messengers pass it.
- Abuse Reform Commission—unclear if for or against, but said “the way the SBC messengers have responded to the SATF and ARITF shows that as a Convention, we want to do everything we can to help churches with prevention.”
- Against form 990-type disclosures. “We have a system in place that provides transparency to the trustees of our entities, and I trust that system. ...as long as trustees are getting the information they need from our entity administrators, I’m content.”
- “Sexual abuse is an unthinkable evil no matter the age or gender of the victim. My heart breaks for individuals and families who have suffered. I can get behind anything that makes our churches safer, especially for children.”

- About his view of making committee appointments as president, he said, “I would want to seek input from grassroots Southern Baptist associational leaders, state convention staff and find those people who have demonstrated commitment to Southern Baptist causes, to Great Commission work, who are involved in Cooperative Program giving and then Southern Baptists who understand our polity and who are committed to our cooperative mission.”