

# Seminary hosts kickoff for the 2025 SBC annual meeting

August 23, 2024

FORT WORTH (BP)—Dozens of key Baptist leaders—including Julio Guarneri, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas—gathered for a kickoff to begin preparations for the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

Leaders met at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Aug. 22 to launch plans for the June 2025 event, which will feature a 100th anniversary celebration of the Cooperative Program and President Clint Pressley presiding over his first SBC annual meeting.

Pressley said during this year as president, he wants to remind Southern Baptists they are united around the Baptist Faith and Message and the Cooperative Program.

“We agree on those two things,” he said.

“I want us to hold fast to the confession that tells us who Christ is and why we’re on mission and our cooperating together to actually be on a mission,” said Pressley, senior pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

The annual meeting’s theme will be “Hold Fast,” based on Hebrews 10:23-24.

“We hold fast to the confession. We hold fast to stirring up one another to love ... and to good works,” Pressley said. “That is the mission.”

# Significant volunteer involvement

Around 700 volunteers are needed annually to ensure messengers and guests are served well at the annual meeting.

George Schroeder, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fairfield, is leading the coordination of the volunteers who will serve as greeters, ushers, tellers and more.

“This is Texas and we got to do this thing right. Right?” he asked the more than 200 guests.

“We get to tell people about barbecue, Dr Pepper, football and George Strait, and I suggest we do that,” said Schroeder, a former editor of Baptist Press who also worked for a time in the BGCT communications office.

“But we get to tell them about Jesus. We get to show them who we are.”

Between the two “strong state conventions” in Texas—the BGCT and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention—Baptists in the state will be able to make a favorable impression on Southern Baptists, he said.

South Carolina pastor D.J. Horton, president of next year’s pastors’ conference and senior pastor of Church at The Mill in Spartanburg, S.C., told the group the 2025 theme will be “Worth Following,” and conference preachers will focus on 2 Timothy.

“Every pastor will be assigned an exposition in 2 Timothy, and if you attend all of it, you’ll hear 10 consecutive sermons laid through verse by verse of the book of 2 Timothy,” Horton said.

“One of the themes in 2 Timothy is that Paul says it’s not about being an innovator, a cultural specialist or social media kingdom,” Horton said. “It’s about following ... the doctrines that have been given to us following the

pattern of sound teaching.”

Horton said he also wants to model Paul’s intentional mentorship of Timothy and create a way for all willing pastors to be connected with a mentor. He said more details will be released closer to the meeting.

## **Emphasis on Cooperative Program centennial**

The 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program will be a prominent theme of the 2025 meeting.

Bruno Molina, Hispanic Baptist Network executive director, and Nathan Lorick, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention executive director, joined SBC Executive Committee President Jeff Iorg, Pressley and Guarneri for a panel discussion on the Cooperative Program.

The group gave firsthand accounts of the many ways funds given through the Cooperative Program have been a part of their ministries—from supplementing their seminary educations, to providing a way for their local churches to be involved in national and international missions to supporting state conventions and national entities.

“We’re celebrating what God has done for each one of us to make it possible for us to be not only supporters of but recipients from the Cooperative Program and what it’s meant in our lives,” said Iorg.

## **Crossover outreach events slated**

Ryan Jespersen, Dallas Baptist Association executive director, will be at the helm of Crossover, a citywide outreach initiative, that will take place in the days leading up to the 2025 meeting. Hundreds of Southern Baptists joined

together in Indianapolis this past June to carry out dozens of events across the city.

Jespersen believes the impact in Texas will be felt across all of the local associations that touch the Dallas area as efforts will be to mobilize churches in each association to lead in what he called harvest events.

“This year, the North American Mission Board has said we are going to do events that focus on church evangelism,” Jespersen said.

After the meeting, Jespersen told Baptist Press, “These Harvest events could be backyard Bible clubs, block parties, neighborhood canvassing, park outreaches, harvest Sundays with the availability of preachers from all over the country, or anything that the church feels led to do that will directly reach people with the gospel.”

He said “limited grants will be available for churches in Dallas, Denton, Collin, Tarrant, Kauf-Van, Southwest Metroplex, Ellis, and Hunt” Baptist associations.

Jespersen encourages Southern Baptists from across the country “to come and share the gospel with people in the greater DFW area.”

Kickoff participants spent time praying that God would not only lead during the gathering next June but prepare the way for Southern Baptists as they plan to impact Dallas with the gospel.

The prayer time was led by Ray Gentry, president of the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders; Eddie Lopez, SBC second vice president; and Marcus Hayes, pastor of Crossroads Baptist in The Woodlands.

Texas-based SBC leaders David Dockery and Hance Dilbeck shared their excitement for welcoming Southern Baptists to the “Big D” next summer.

Dockery is president of Southwestern Seminary, and Dilbeck is president of GuideStone Financial Resources.

“Being in Dallas, where GuideStone is located, we will have the opportunity to deploy financial educators and advisors to the annual meeting to serve pastors in a great way,” Dilbeck said.

Dockery prayed for the work of the convention: “God, thank you for the privilege to work together in the cause of advancing the gospel. We pray that your hand of favor blessing might rest upon Southern Baptists this day and in days to come.”