

Team formed to seek SBC Executive Committee president

February 23, 2022

NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee created a search team to begin the entity's search for the new president and CEO.

Search team members include Mollie Duddleston of Springdale, Ark.; Mike Keahbone of Lawton, Okla.; Jeremy Morton of Woodstock, Ga.; Philip Robertson of Pineville, La.; Adron Robinson of Country Club Hills, Ill.; and David Sons of Lexington, S.C.

Executive Committee trustees nominated fellow trustees to serve on the team. In total, 23 trustees were nominated for consideration. Following the nominations, trustees selected their top six candidates in a secret ballot vote.

The first five candidates were elected outright, while Keahbone was elected after a runoff that included fellow nominees Rolland Slade of El Cajon, Calif., and John Yeats of Jefferson City, Mo.

Three candidates tied for the sixth spot, leading to the runoff. During a second runoff vote, Keahbone and Slade tied again, and Slade, who is current chairman of the full Executive Committee, removed his name from consideration to avoid another runoff.

Not only practical, but also prayerful

Slade told Baptist Press he hopes the strategy of the search team will not just be practical, but also prayerful.

“I’m going to encourage the search team to approach their work with a prayerful attitude from the beginning, and God will lead them to the person that he’s going to elevate,” Slade said. “I think it’s going to be clear, and we should not try to politicize it or pick a certain ‘group,’ but who is it that God is bringing forward for this hour.”

Executive Committee bylaws require the chairman to be an ex-officio member of the team. Slade will serve on the search team until both his chairmanship and his Executive Committee term expire in June. The new chair then will take the spot.

The search team members will meet soon to elect a chair and set the framework for their process.

Slade offered a few suggestions and strategies for the search team.

“We’re the cheerleaders. We’re the encouragers. We’re the folks who are really supposed to be out there sharing about the Cooperative Program,” Slade said.

“One of our strategies will be to listen and to familiarize ourselves with the relationships the candidate has. I believe the person is going to have to be a relational person, and that’s going to be really important in doing this.”

Implement recommendations from task force

Regarding the ongoing sexual abuse investigation, Slade said implementing the suggestions and recommendations from the Sexual Abuse Task Force in response to its upcoming report will be one of the first major responsibilities of the new president and CEO.

“We’re going to hear loud and clear about these things in May, and it’s

going to be the first thing to come up in terms of how are we going to respond," Slade said.

"They (the new president/CEO) have to be able to listen and then relationally be able to respond to that. Our response needs to be a biblical and relational response, not a sort of cardboard response. We've really got to say: 'We've really got to uncover this. Here's where we've seen some things that we need to work on together.'"

In terms of a timetable for the selection of the candidate, Slade said "to me, it needs to be as long as it takes."

Slade asked Southern Baptists to pray for the search team.

"Pray for protection of our hearts," Slade said. "The best thing people can do is pray for that team."