

What's going on at the SBC? A recap, pt. 3 — Wednesday: New President - Conservative Baptist Network

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The big story from the first day of the Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention is the election of Texas pastor Bart Barber as president after a run-off vote, defeating Tom Ascol: 3,401 – 2,172. Since the views of a candidate are well known, the election of a new president is the simplest barometer for the direction of the SBC regarding key controversies.

(Skip to the end for the TL;DR version.)

Who was running?

Four candidates ran for SBC president but none received more than 50 percent of the vote required to win. In the run-off, Ascol lost 160 net votes and Barber picked up 143 net votes to win with 60 percent of the votes.

- Barber, who campaigned for president on the platform that the SBC is generally moving in the right direction, is widely seen as the establishment candidate and as a vote of confidence in the current health of the SBC.
- Ascol, who campaigned on the platform that the SBC is lacking the fear of God, is widely seen as the candidate who wants to “change the direction” of the SBC and as a vote of no confidence in its current health.

Context: Frank Cox (a pastor in Georgia) entered the race just hours before the election took place. The question then became whether Cox would take more votes away from Ascol or from Barber.

TL;DR: What does it mean?

- Barber's election is a significant affirmation by the SBC that it needs no change of direction: that it is basically healthy. The key controversies in the SBC can be summed up between those who believe the SBC's current direction is healthy or not.
- Some of the key controversies are:
 - Whether the Bible permits women pastors
 - Whether Critical Race Theory is a helpful analytical tool

- Whether the SBC can be guided by a third-party company that celebrates sexual sin or if such a company's embrace of anti-Christian worldview affects its judgment to offer sound advice to the SBC
- Whether plagiarizing sermons is wrong

But perhaps the simplest and most incisive dividing line is represented in who messengers choose as their president: establishment versus non-establishment, or status quo versus change.

Other points of interest from Tuesday:

- Messengers debated the question “What is a pastor?” Seminary presidents Al Mohler (Southern) and Adam Greenway (Southwestern) spoke from the floor at odds on the recommendation. *(More in-depth coverage of this to come – Stay tuned.)*
- Nathan Finn, provost at North Greenville University, was elected recording secretary—a mainly administrative role—defeating Javier Chavez and David Roach by garnering 51 percent of the vote. Roach received 13 percent of the vote, and Chavez received 34 percent.
- Messengers adopted amended recommendations from the Sex Abuse Task Force to set up an Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force and a “ministry check” website. One messenger was unsuccessful in seeking to strengthen due process provisions.