

[Messengers were manipulated in Nashville but that's business as usual for SBCAM...](#)

by [William Thornton](#)



...sayeth this old SBC codger who has attended these grand SBC annual meetings in five different decades, maybe thirty total.

I voted for the sex abuse motion in Nashville but after all the Executive Committee wranglings in September I'm not sure I would have if everything known now was presented prior to the vote in June. There may be a solely positive outcome of the motion, that's my hope anyway, but no one knows at this stage.

If "manipulated" is too strong of a word for some of our more sensitive readers, I'd answer that it is the way things get done at these largest-in-the-world purely democratic business meetings. It's the old saw about churches that pastors like to trot out and complain about: "we've always done it that way, preacher."

In Nashville, we had pre-arranged wording that involved insiders and lawyers and had specific targets. Those who eat and sleep SBC politics probably knew this. The beloved pastor of Podunk Crossroads Baptist Church and his lovely wife, voting messengers, probably didn't have a thought about exactly what was going on other than the makers of the motion, along with the sex abuse victim standing with them, were out to do some unadulterated good for us all. I hope that is how it ends up.

Messengers didn't hear from much of anyone who could have raised questions about the

motion. Bame that on an unusually passive SBC Executive Committee CEO. I assume he believe he could work out the details in a venue not filled with indignant messengers with the press looking on. All water under the bridge at this point.

My first convention was 1982. I didn't know diddly about SBC politics and parliamentary stuff but I knew enough to take my voting cues from people I had confidence in and respected. At the time, and for all of the white hot Conservative Resurgence years, Adrian Rogers and a few others spoke to controversial nominations and motions. I'd go with Adrian.

Moderates had some self-appointed bell cows. Ken Chafin and the Shermans are the ones I recall. Problem was, they almost always hit the wrong notes and uninformed messengers fled to the party opposite. Compare the public demeanor and appeal of Rogers with Chafin or the Shermans and it's not hard to see how close outcomes were positively influenced by the former and negatively influenced by the latter.

SBC messengers aren't unintelligent, they just stay busy trying to hack it in their local church - preaching, baptizing, serving, ministering - and not spending parts of every day dealing with SBC politics. When the annual meeting comes, it is part vacation and part duty, at considerable expense to their church. Small wonder that activist insiders spend a lot of time trying to influence all those waving ballots. We owe the CR to the fact that uninformed voters were influenced year-after-year-after-year.

Which brings me to 2021 and the years ahead. We've got a takeover group. Will they be able to influence sufficient messengers to move trustee boards more in their direction?

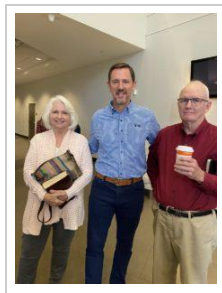
Maybe.

Mike Stone lost by only a few votes. I'd speculate that he would have won if Ed Litton's sermon-borrowing were known to the messengers or if he didn't have that unfortunate and confusing incident with an abuse victim prior to the election. I voted for Litton. Would do so again, but there is a dearth of SBC leaders of Rogers' stature these days.

The Conservative Baptist Network has some people I like. There are some who are outstanding preachers (the only time I heard Stone preach he preached the single best sermon I'd heard in quite a while) but I don't know of any CBN people who have great stature, frankly. The named spokesperson gave the worst nomination speech I'd ever heard a few years ago. Maybe he had a bad day. It's a great strategic move that all CBN statements on Twitter are anonymous. Who knows who writes them?

The SBC is inherently political, at every level - church, association, state convention, national. Always has been. Always will be. Let the brethren and sistren try and influence

the voting SBC public as they may. But, let's not pretend messengers as a whole are highly informed voters. They never have been. Never will be.



As for me, I'm a happy guy in retirement. I don't plan to grind my teeth over SBC politics for however many years I have left. I'll make a generous gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this year, same as every year, squawk about this and that as I feel led, worship in my local church and be fulfilled in doing so. Here's me and my lovely wife with the SBC's most important executive:

I'm not planning to be in Anaheim unless I strike oil or find gold on my five-acre wooded lot. I can't justify the expense. You guys have fun. I hear Disney is offering a deep discount to CBNers who go to Fantasyland. Maybe they have a Cinderella candidate in mind for 2022.

Stray addendum: It's true that voting patterns would change if we ever had remote SBCAM locations or remote voting. If we ever went down that road, and I've often written against it, the convention would be even more political than it is now.

Biggest bass I ever caught was on a warm December day. I might devote some energy to that. It's always profitable.

[William Thornton](#) | December 3, 2021 at 9:19 am | Categories: [SBC Issues](#) |

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