

Southern Baptists Elect New President

Atlanta-area pastor Bryant White was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention Tuesday during the denomination's annual meeting being held this week in Orlando, Fla.

The pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., defeated pastor Ted Traylor of Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., in a runoff election, earning 55 percent of the vote. He succeeds the Rev. Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock in suburban Atlanta.

As the nation's largest Protestant denomination focuses on increasing its membership amid declines in recent years, Wright is described as a pastor with a demonstrated commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission.

"While we've been talking about the Great Commission, Bryant's been quietly leading his church to do it," said pastor David Uth of First Baptist Church of Orlando, according to Baptist Press.

In a nomination speech, Uth said the church Wright planted 28 years ago baptized 478 people last year, started seven churches in Cobb County, Ga., and gave more than \$2.7 million to missions last year. Baptist Press reported earlier this year that Johnson Ferry reduced its missions giving in response to the recession.

Wright's election comes on the heels of a vote Tuesday to shift resources from Southern regions to parts of the U.S. and the world where the denomination may be able to bolster membership, which has remained at roughly 16 million for the last decade.

Among the recommendations made by the Great Commission

Resurgence Task Force were to plant Southern Baptist churches in cities where none currently exist, such as Seattle, Chicago and Boston, and to focus on evangelizing foreign-born Hispanics and Haitians in states such as Florida, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

The annual Southern Baptist Convention, which drew more than 10,000 delegates, ends Wednesday.