

Welcome to A Word Fitly Spoken, a podcast about Jesus, His Word, and our joy in following Him. I'm Michelle Lesley.

And today, we've got a special bonus episode of A Word Fitly Spoken for you. As many of you listeners know, the Southern Baptist Convention is coming up in a few short weeks. Last year, we had the opportunity to interview Pastor Tom Ascol who was one of the candidates for president of the SBC.

This year's candidate for SBC president is my friend, Pastor Mike Stone. Some of you may remember him from when he was the nominee for president two years ago.

Recently, Mike visited my church to speak to us about the issues facing the Southern Baptist Convention and how he would handle them if elected. But before he did, I was blessed to be able to sit down with him for an interview to discuss some of the challenges the SBC is contending with right now.

Here is my interview with Pastor Mike Stone.

Welcome, Mike. I'm sure many of our listeners know you were nominated for SBC president just two years ago in 2021, and that came with quite a few challenges. But for our listeners who aren't familiar with you, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and why you decided to agree to be nominated for president of the SBC again?

Your banner statement for the presidential election is "Unsustainable is unacceptable". Could you explain to us what that means by highlighting the key points of your platform?

One of the main themes at the convention this year is going to be women pastors, and that's going to flesh itself out in at least two ways that we know of: Rick Warren's challenge of the Executive Committee's decision to disfellowship Saddleback, and Mike Law's proposed amendment to article 3 of the constitution.

Let's tackle the Saddleback question first. Saddleback was founded by Rick Warren over 40 years ago. After he retired as the senior pastor in 2021, he appointed a husband and wife as co-pastors to replace him.

Back in February of this year, the Executive Committee made the decision to disfellowship - or break ties with - Saddleback church and four other SBC churches for having women pastors. Rick - who, Saddleback's website says, "currently serves as Founding Pastor and Executive Director of Finishing the Task." - along with one of the other four disfellowshipped churches, has publicly stated that he will challenge that decision at the annual meeting in June.

What are your thoughts about that and how should SBC messengers respond to that situation?

The second item dealing with the issue of women pastors is an amendment to the SBC constitution proposed by Pastor Mike Law of Arlington Baptist Church in Arlington, VA. Article 3 of the constitution, if I can just simplify it a bit, defines which churches may and may not be considered to be in friendly cooperation with the SBC, or a "member" of the SBC, if you will.

There are currently 5 stipulations spelled out, including that SBC churches may not affirm or support homosexuality, sexual abuse, or discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Mike Law's proposed amendment would add women pastors to that list of specifications, and it reads, "Does not affirm, appoint, or employ a woman as a pastor of any kind."

Do you support Law's amendment, and what else do you think our listeners should know about it?

Touching back just a bit to the requirements for friendly cooperation in article 3 of the SBC constitution, number 1 says that a cooperating SBC church must have "a faith and practice which closely identifies with the Convention's adopted statement of faith. (By way of example, churches which act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior would be deemed not to be in cooperation with the Convention.)"

Sadly, there are a number of SBC churches that are at least flirting with violating this tenet, if not outright defying it. The one that has probably received the most publicity is First Baptist Orlando. Justin Peters has produced several videos exposing photographic, text, and first person eyewitness testimony evidence that FBCO is baptizing unrepentant, currently practicing homosexuals, has homosexuals in various positions of leadership in the church -at least one of whom is "married" to his partner- and that FBCO has said and done multiple other things which affirm or approve of homosexual behavior.

What are your thoughts on that, and your thoughts on disfellowshipping churches that operate in such a manner?

You recently gave an excellent interview with Tom Buck in which you were so clear and thorough on the sexual abuse issue, and we're going to link that up in the show notes if our listeners would like to hear more, but can you tell us maybe the top two or three most important things you'd like us to know about the sexual abuse issue in the SBC?

Is there anything else you think our listeners should know about regarding the SBC, this year's annual meeting, or anything else?

How can our listeners learn more about you, your plans if elected, and current issues in the SBC? And how can the average Southern Baptist get involved in bringing about biblical change in the SBC?

Listeners be sure to check the show notes for lots of helpful links on the things we've talked about today and more. Thank you so much for joining us today, Mike, it's been a pleasure.