

Annual Meetings 2023

November 18–21 • San Antonio, Texas



Dear SBL Member,

Our Annual Meeting this year is scheduled to take place in San Antonio, Texas. We know that some of our members are understandably concerned about the politics and policies of the State of Texas and may wonder whether we will move the SBL Annual Meeting to a different location. We are writing to let you know that while we are acutely aware of and concerned about issues that impact the rights of all of our members, Council cannot change venues for this year's Annual Meeting.

Venues for the Annual Meeting are contracted years in advance, and the contracts for San Antonio have been signed since 2015. This is a critical part of keeping the cost of the meetings, and their associated registration and hotel rates, as low and affordable as possible. While we exercise great care to select safe sites that can accommodate the size and scale of our Annual Meetings and to include appropriate protection in these contracts for various unforeseeable circumstances, changes in local politics are not amongst those variables. If we were to cancel our contracts with San Antonio, SBL would face financial penalties of over one million dollars, which is equivalent to nearly one-third of SBL's annual operating budget. Additionally, we would have to sign new contracts in a different city at today's inflation-bloated rates. The higher cost would result in higher registration rates, with hotel room rates in particular rising in the range of an additional \$100–\$150 per night.

While Council does have the fiduciary duty to ensure that SBL will continue to exist to pursue its mission of fostering biblical scholarship across disciplinary and geographical boundaries, it is important to emphasize that our consideration on this matter is not singularly financial. Not only are there a limited number of states in the United States of America where we would not face similar issues in this increasingly polarized political climate, but political landscapes also change suddenly and drastically. Moreover, SBL members of different political persuasions both live and work in San Antonio and other parts of Texas. Instead of wanting SBL to stay away from their city and their state, we have heard from a variety of members who would like our Annual Meeting to take place as planned, so more people can engage the issues and provide support as they continue to work for the well-being of San Antonio and of Texas.

As a society, SBL aspires to engage critically and respectfully different kinds of academic and religious discourse. We respect your decision if you think it is best for you to skip the San Antonio meeting, so you will not be spending money in Texas. We also know that members with health and safety concerns, especially pregnancy-related concerns because of Dobbs, have to exercise caution to make sure that they will not put themselves at risk. While we do not

have the answers for—and some of our international members may not be well acquainted with—Texas politics, we hope that this Annual Meeting will provide opportunities to promote a more inclusive future within different environments, including those inhospitable to our Society’s values. We hope, as your conscience and circumstances allow, that you will make the decision to join us.

Sincerely,

Christian Brady
Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder
Alice Yafeh-Deigh
Kristin DeTroyer
Musa Dube, President
Tamara Eskenazi, Vice President
Joseph Lam
Laura Nasrallah
Hugh Rowland Page, Jr., Chair
Jeremy Punt
Dalit Rom-Shiloni
Tammi Schneider, Secretary
Leong Seow
Juan Manuel Tebes
Tat-siong Benny Liew, *ex officio*