

King's Son Set to Lead Group

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Atlanta — After months of speculation, Martin Luther King III has emerged as the most likely candidate to take over as the head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Several SCLC board members yesterday confirmed a report that King, the son of the group's co-founder Martin Luther King Jr., is the heir apparent.

The SCLC's board of directors is expected to meet this week to vote on the appointment of the group's new leader. But the final decision will be made by SCLC delegates, who will meet here Saturday.

One board member, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said the SCLC's search committee has recommended King as the top pick among finalists, but the decision isn't final.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported in yes-

terday's editions that King would succeed the Rev. Joseph Lowery, who has headed the civil rights organization for the past 20 years. Lowery told the AP he could neither confirm nor deny the report. King did not return telephone messages seeking comment.

Lowery announced this summer that he would be stepping down as the head of the group founded 40 years ago by the Rev. Ralph Abernathy Jr., Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders.

Martin Luther King Jr. served as SCLC president from 1957 until his assassination in 1968. He was followed by Abernathy until 1977, then Lowery.

King, 40, served as a Fulton County commissioner from 1986 until an unsuccessful race for commission chairman in 1994. Since then, he has been lecturing on human rights and community activism.