

Report of the Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force June 2024 - Indianapolis, Indiana

In June 2023 the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana passed the following motion from Randy Chestnut of Woodland Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, OH:

“I move that the messengers of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention direct the newly elected President of this convention to appoint a task force to study and bring a report to the 2024 Annual Meeting in Indianapolis on the impact that the adopted recommendations of the 2009 Great Commission Resurgence Report has had on, number one, the effectiveness of our North American gospel mission effort and #2, the impact on the relationships between SBC ministry partners. This task force should represent all SBC partners serving from all regions of North America. This task force report would also include any recommendations that would enhance and unify our cooperative mission’s effort to penetrate darkness in North America.”

Our Task:

Bart Barber, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, named the following individuals to this Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force: Jay Adkins (Chair), Robin Foster, Adam Groza, Luke Holmes, Chris Shaffer and Jeremy Westbrook.

The committee was composed of members who have extensive experience with doctoral level research and includes two Pastors, two Seminary Professors, an Associational Missions Strategist, and a State Convention Executive Director.

Upon selection, President Barber asked the Chair to write a white paper on his philosophy moving forward and a proposed methodology in order to prepare a robust and thorough report. That direction was affirmed, and the following is a short description of the process followed.

Our Methodology:

We understood the purpose of the GCR Evaluation Task Force was to examine all pertinent material regarding the 2010 Great Commission Resurgence Report and to execute an analysis of the implementation and impact of the adopted recommendations on our cooperative effort.

The methodology employed initiated an evaluation of the seven components and subsequent recommendations of the report with both quantitative and qualitative assessments made, as applicable, for the purpose of presenting a thorough report to the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, along with a brief list of recommendations, if necessary.

Content Review: To execute this effort the Task Force intended to proceed with a content review in the following areas:

- (1) A close reading of the original GCRTF Report and each of the subsequent recommendations.
- (2) A full viewing of the GCR proceedings from the 2010 Annual Meeting made available from the on-line archives of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA).
- (3) Limited and confidential access, as may be needed, to the 57 audio CD's (labeled AR 913 at the SBHLA) of recorded minutes from the proceedings of the original GCR Task Force meetings.¹
- (4) A thorough reading of any pertinent peripheral material, including Baptist Press articles, committee update reports, publications or external articles from leading Southern Baptists, and other significant pre and post-implementation assessments within the scope of our work.
- (5) Conduct any necessary formal and informal interviews which may be required for fact finding and clarification.

Some of the material reviewed included:

1. The Final Report of the GCR Task Force dated June 16th, 2010. (located at <http://www.baptist2baptist.net/PDF/PenetratingTheLostness.pdf> and included in this document)
2. All Baptist Press reporting regarding the actions of the GCRTF. Nearly 150 articles, updates, commentaries and counterpoints were filed on the Baptist Press website over the intervening year. An aggregate repository of these publications may be found at <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/gcr-task-force-collection/>.
3. Numerous published and unpublished materials, including but not limited to all the open material in the Hunt Presidential Papers at the SBHLA (which held dozens of email correspondence between members of the original Task Force and other southern Baptists expressing their opinions and suggestions, and various assembled collections of material and articles), the initial paper calling for a "great commission resurgence" by Dr. Thom Ranier, 2 books from Dr. Chuck Kelley, a published transcript of an address presented by Dr. Danny Akin, a transcript of an address on behalf of State Convention Executive Directors from Dr. David Hankins, articles from Dr. Morris Chapman, an article from Dr. Ed Stetzer, a TF requested report from the North American Mission Board, articles from SBC Life magazine and dozens of other primary material pertinent to the proceedings of the Great Commission Resurgence report and intended implementation.
4. Significant social media engagement regarding the GCR activities.

Formal and Informal Interviews:

The Task Force conducted 12 formal interviews via a mixture of Zoom and In-Person formats with Southern Baptist leaders of that time including state convention leaders, entity heads, entity

¹ The Task Force Chairman made one informal and two formal requests for limited access to this sealed material in case such access would be necessary for clarification. Ultimately our Task Force was denied access to that material being advised, "there is no provision in the donor file for access to the recordings before the open date." The two formal requests and subsequent responses are included in the appendix on pages 27-31.

employees, entity trustees and a selection of 2010 GCRTF members. The formal interviews were conducted with the following guests with their roles at the time of the GCR adoption noted below:

1. Chuck Kelley, President of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
2. Morris Chapman, President of the Executive Committee
3. Ed Stetzer, Director of Lifeway Research
4. Ronnie Floyd, Chair of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force
5. Tim Patterson, Trustee for NAMB 10 years under three different leaders
6. Thomas Hammond, Senior Director of Church Evangelism at NAMB 1997-2012
7. Kevin Ezell, incoming President of the North American Mission Board
8. Randy Adams, Executive Director/Treasurer at Northwest Baptist Convention
9. Paul Chitwood, Chairman of the Board of the International Mission Board
10. Danny Akin, President of SEBTS and member of original GCRTF
11. Al Mohler, President of SBTS and member of original GCRTF
12. JD Greear, Pastor Summit Church and member of original GCRTF

Members of the Task Force also conducted an untallied number of individual informal interviews with various Baptists from across our cooperative work and from varying roles of convention life.

These interviews were extremely informative and paired with the thousands of pages of data and hours of videos we have digested over the previous 10 months, our Task Force believes we have done our due diligence, to the best of our ability, in research, data collection, assimilation, and report preparation to the glory of God and prayerfully, for the good of our convention.

We would be remiss if we did not offer an expression of our sincere appreciation to Dr. Taffey Hall, Director of the SBHLA and to all her staff for their unflagging help and sacrificial assistance which made our task far easier than it would have been otherwise. The entire staff at the SBHLA are a treasure to the SBC and the SBHLA is itself a treasured repository of everything about who we are as Southern Baptists. This ministry ought to be wholeheartedly supported by Southern Baptists through robust encouragement and significant funding in order to continue the important work of collecting and collating our history. We know who we are by remembering who we've been, and the SBHLA is the organization tasked with holding that knowledge in trust.

Brief Introductory Commentary:

Even a cursory reference to the work of the original Great Commission Resurgence Task Force and its adopted recommendations engenders a wide spectrum of emotions and opinions from across the Southern Baptist Convention. Various groups of Baptists supported the effort for a multiplicity of reasons and others were opposed to the effort for their own array of objections.

What will likely be the key takeaway from this report and a surprise for many is that only 2 of the 7 Great Commission Resurgence recommendations which were passed in 2010, were ever fully implemented.

The North American Mission Board appears to have received the lion's share of attention in the intervening years, however, NAMB was only a part of the larger set of components. In fact, NAMB

was the focus of only one of the seven ultimate recommendations and shared time with the IMB in one other component. These two components were the 2 of 7 which were ultimately implemented.

In many ways our task was a difficult one, not only due to the plethora of opinions, perspectives and positions represented but because there are no counterfactuals to assess what might have been had different directions been chosen.

From the very outset our hope was that this report would be a sort of healing "balm" and not a hurtful "bomb" to our cooperative work moving forward. However, as we navigated this process, we did discover a few "live ordnances" and we share them here in hopes of diffusion and resolution.

We intended to function with integrity and to be dispassionate in our approach, while seeking factual, and as much as possible, objectively verifiable data for our analysis. We resolved to refrain from blaming, finger pointing or charging anyone, any church, any state convention, or any entity for the negative statistical data of which we have all been made aware.

Regarding the simple question of whether or not the implementation of the work of the GCR Task Force reversed the decline of baptisms in the SBC, the answer is a clear and decisive, No.

To be sure, there is more than enough blame to go around for this continued downward trend. Ultimately, if the SBC has not realized a reverse in the decline in Baptisms, all the folks who make up the SBC are, in some way, culpable. Every Southern Baptist Christ-follower can and should, in the end, take responsibility for the current state of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Women's Missionary Union Executive Director, Sandy Wisdom-Martin may have best articulated how we ought to understand our role in this when, in an informal interview, she wrote:

"The Great Commission cannot be parceled and assigned to our boards. While the efforts of our boards are critical, it is incumbent on every Christ follower to proclaim the gospel. This responsibility cannot be abdicated. We have church members who get married in the church and get buried in the church and live their entire life without once sharing their faith. This is the greatest tragedy of our generation, that we would not personally take responsibility for the sacred task entrusted to each of us. It really doesn't matter what strategy we put into place if we don't change the culture of our community of faith. This has to be the foundation."

We agree with Mrs. Sandy Wisdom-Martin's prophetic words and we encourage all our Southern Baptist brothers and sisters in Christ to take inventory of ourselves and be challenged by this encouragement.

Postscript: Our Task Force has been asked to offer recommendations based on our findings. Those recommendations will be published no later than a week before the Annual Meeting convenes.

Component One: Getting the Mission Right

Component One Original Recommendation:

*“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, adopt the following as the mission statement of the Southern Baptist Convention:
As a convention of churches, our missional vision is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.”*

Evaluation of Component One’s Implementation

An evaluation of the implementation of Component One included a survey of a selection of the SBC Annuals starting in 2011 as well as several formal and informal interviews.

There were no discernable references to the new “Missional Vision” statement presented and adopted through the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendation from 2010 in the surveyed annuals.

Although it is possible there might have been some extant material published with this new mission statement, we were unable to locate any samples. Interviews, both formal and informal, presented a narrative in which there was no significant emphasis placed on platforming the new mission statement.

Observations on Component One’s Implementation

Component One’s “Getting the Mission Right” was well-meaning in its desire. Clearly, the emphasis of the text of the proposed mission statement was Gospel centered.

Unfortunately, and not unlike several GCR recommendations ratified in 2010, Component One appears to not have been implemented in any significant way. We spoke with numerous individuals involved with the Task Force as well as some who have served at the Executive Committee and there was not a recollection of any deliberate engagement with the implementation of Component One.

The chair of the GCR Task Force and then later as the President of the Executive Committee itself, expressed to us that several GCR items were never fully implemented. Even after Dr. Floyd came into office at the EC, no discernable attempt was made to re-engage the specific language used in the original recommendation, with one person testifying that they did not recall even a conversation about reengaging with the earlier recommendations from the GCR report.

In short, Component One was never implemented.

In the intervening years, other emphases have been set forth and with the adoption of the Vision 2025 initiative the attention of the convention has moved on toward other foci. We do not recommend any further action on this matter.

Component Two: Making Our Values Transparent

Component Two Original Recommendation:

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, adopt the following as Core Values for our work together:

***CHRIST-LIKENESS** – We depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and prayer to make us more like Jesus Christ.*

***TRUTH** – We stand together in the truth of God’s inerrant Word, celebrating the faith once for all delivered to the saints.*

***UNITY** – We work together in love for the sake of the Gospel.*

***RELATIONSHIPS** – We consider others more important than ourselves.*

***TRUST** – We tell one another the truth in love and do what we say we will do.*

***FUTURE** – We value Southern Baptists of all generations and embrace our responsibility to pass this charge to a rising generation in every age, faithful until Jesus comes.*

***LOCAL CHURCH** – We believe the local church is given the authority, power, and responsibility to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world.*

***KINGDOM** – We join other Christ-followers for the Gospel, the Kingdom of Christ, and the glory of God.”*

Evaluation of Component Two’s Implementation

Just as with Component One, an evaluation of the implementation of Component Two included a survey of a selection of SBC Annuals beginning in 2011 as well as several formal and informal interviews.

There were no references to this “Core Values” list from the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendation from 2010 in the surveyed annuals. We also found no further official documentation regarding the adoption of or discussion related to the implementation of this core value list either as encouragement to churches or from the Executive Committee to model the items on this list in particular.

Once again, interviews, both formal and informal, presented a narrative in which there appeared to be no significant emphasis placed on platforming these core values.

Observations on Component Two’s Implementation

Component Two’s “Making our Values Transparent” was an attempt at creating “a new and healthy culture” in the SBC and to “establish a culture of trust, transparency, and truth among all Southern Baptists.”

Unfortunately, we have determined that Component Two did not appear to have been implemented in any significant way. As noted, there is no discernable emphasis placed on publishing or branding any material enumerating these core values. Further, there is no objective evidence pointing toward a positive movement in this area as a whole. Admittedly a subjective observation, our SBC culture does not appear to have made positive movement in this area. In actuality, all discernable available evidence points to the contrary.

With that said, we recognize that all throughout our convention an army of humble, Christ-following servants exist who do embody the values enumerated here. From those on the mission field overseas to faithful churches large and small here at home; from godly mothers to tired pastors; from passionate professors to humble convention employees; from associational strategists to faithful custodians, God's people are at work among us.

However, we can identify current objective evidence of a clear erosion of "trust, transparency and truth" from within our convention which has ravaged our cooperative work over the intervening years. By example, such erosion has been witnessed in the Executive Committee stemming from arguable instances of entity overreach as well as, in some cases, dereliction of duty. There have been notable and numerous moral failures in pastors and other leaders. We have witnessed varying sorts of examples of dishonest and bereft leadership in the SBC at large leading to terminations and resignations. And as for transparency? Obfuscation and diversion have been evident at numerous points.

We have seen uncharitable and unChristlike behavior on social media where Christians have cast aspersions upon fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This might be the most egregious trend yet in which much of our online activity is not commensurate with the heart of our Lord. We have noted significant political and even health-related embroilments among our numbers leading to division. Even now, irrespective of the earlier Calvinist/Traditionalist debates which divided us in the contemporaneous years surrounding the original GCR report, we have noted a rise in internal divisions of interpretive matters of ecclesiology and expressed suspicion of motives while leveling uncharitable charges at one another.

The onus is on us, each of us as individuals, to do better, to repent of those actions and to seek Christlikeness in our deportment toward one another and to love the lost around us, for Christ's sake. All Southern Baptists must do better. Our only recommendation in this area is a call for each of us to take inventory of our own actions and attitudes, to repent if necessary, and to walk closer to Christ while living out a testimony which honors our Lord.

Component Three: Encouraging Cooperative Program Giving and Other Great Commission Giving

Component Three Original Recommendation:

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider recommending to the Southern Baptist Convention the adoption of the language and structure of Great Commission Giving as described in this report in order to enhance and celebrate the Cooperative Program and the generous support of Southern Baptists channeled through their churches, and to continue to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our outreach. We affirm that designated gifts to special causes are to be given as a supplement to the Cooperative Program and not as a substitute for Cooperative Program giving. We further request that the boards of trustees of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, in consultation with the Woman’s Missionary Union, consider the adoption of the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offering goals as outlined in this report.”

Evaluation of Component Three’s Implementation

In an effort to both affirm a new designated category of giving called Great Commission Giving and at the same time re-affirm an existing un-designated category of financial cooperation named The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists found themselves at a crossroads in 2010. Significant debate took place on the floor as this third recommendation was proposed and amendments were offered to help find clarity and bring about consensus.

The first amendment received says, Southern Baptists should “continue to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our outreach.” The second amendment adds the following sentence: “We affirm that designated giving to special causes is to be given as a supplement to the Cooperative Program and not as a substitute for Cooperative Program giving.” The language regarding Great Commission Giving remained in the recommendation.”²

In 2011, the newly approved designated category, “Great Commission Giving” was added to the Annual Church Profile. “The 2011 ACP included a new category called Great Commission Giving, which totaled \$695,694,322 (with four state conventions not reporting). The category was added following the approval of a recommendation brought before the SBC annual meeting in Phoenix on June 14, 2011, to add to the ACP each church’s financial commitment to Southern Baptist mission enterprises.”³

This new category would include contributions that any local church made to the Cooperative Program and/or Southern Baptist causes such as the Annie Armstrong or Lottie Moon offerings. It

²<https://www.baptistmessenger.com/sbc-messengers-approve-gcrtf-report/>

³<https://news.lifeway.com/2012/06/12/sbc-baptisms-and-churches-increased-in-2011-membership-declined/>

would also include designated giving to an individual seminary, any SBC local association or state convention mission offering.

Here is a summary of Great Commission Giving since its introduction in 2011:

Year	Great Commission Giving
2011	\$695,694,322
2012	\$744,043,625
2013	\$777,452,820
2014	\$637,498,179
2015	\$613,201,805
2016	\$646,017,306
2017	\$593,980,600
2018	\$572,281,994
2019	\$540,859,296
2020	\$409,835,470
2021	\$516,093,240
2022	* Not Counted on ACP *
2023	* Not Counted on ACP *

This chart was prepared from the Southern Baptist Convention Annuals 2011-2023

Great Commission Giving had a robust beginning but has unfortunately observed a steady decline over the past decade among Southern Baptists.. Many attribute this to the combination of constant confusion as to its definition and the lack of unity as to its purpose.

The Cooperative Program had been in financial decline and a call to resurgence was made for local churches to make it priority once again in the churches, association, and ultimately the state conventions. Finally, the Great Commission Task Force urged state conventions to make significant strides to shift towards a 50-50 CP split, thus forwarding more on to the SBC national allocation budget.

Although the Cooperative Program has continued to decline, some state conventions have sacrificed and answered this call to give. “The national CP increase is largely attributable to CP gifts forwarded by cooperating state Baptist conventions (see chart A). The 41.49 percent to SBC causes is the highest in history and only the fourth time since 1925 the division has topped 40 percent.”⁴ At the time of the 2010 passing of the GCR, state conventions were sending an average of 38.0-39.0 percent to the national CP allocation budget. We are thankful to report the percentage has increased to nearly 42.0 percent as of the 2023 budget year.

⁴<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/sbc-life-articles/state-conventions-lead-out-in-national-cooperative-program-mid-year-increase/>

Summary of Cooperative Program giving since 2011:

Year	Total CP	State CP	National CP	State %	National %
2022-2023	\$449,190,469	\$260,613,239	\$188,577,230	58.02%	41.98%
2021-2022	\$455,169,949	\$263,890,608	\$191,279,341	57.98%	42.02%
2020-2021	\$457,928,996	\$270,153,074	\$187,775,922	58.99%	41.01%
2019-2020	\$455,553,027	\$267,746,391	\$187,806,636	58.77%	41.23%
2018-2019	\$458,273,239	\$267,305,836	\$190,967,403	58.33%	41.67%
2017-2018	\$463,077,368	\$271,832,409	\$191,244,959	58.70%	41.30%
2016-2017	\$462,662,332	\$270,713,506	\$191,948,826	58.51%	41.49%
2015-2016	\$475,212,293	\$284,743,512	\$190,468,781	59.92%	40.08%
2014-2015	\$474,272,984	\$290,501,682	\$183,771,302	61.25%	38.75%
2013-2014	\$478,700,850	\$297,729,271	\$180,971,579	62.20%	37.80%
2012-2013	\$482,279,059	\$298,859,256	\$183,419,803	61.97%	38.03%
2011-2012	\$481,409,086	\$294,768,603	\$186,640,483	61.23%	38.77%
2010-2011	\$487,884,065	\$301,498,029	\$186,386,036	61.80%	38.20%

** This chart was prepared from the Southern Baptist Convention Annuals 2011-2023 & SBC Executive Committee **

An urgent call to increase both the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering supporting national missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering supporting international missions was made. The recommendation asked for Southern Baptists to give no less than \$200 million annually to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and no less than \$100 million annually to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Here is a summary of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering since 2011:

Year	Annie Armstrong
2011	\$56,161,275
2012	\$54,471,057
2013	\$57,004,211
2014	\$58,151,828
2015	\$58,019,374
2016	\$58,860,553
2017	\$59,668,080
2018	\$61,185,206
2019	\$61,600,104
2020	\$49,483,158
2021	\$66,515,422
2022	\$68,900,000
2023	\$70,388,000

** This chart was prepared from the Southern Baptist Convention Annuals 2011-2023 & NAMB **

Although the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering has never met the goal of \$100 million being received annually, it continues to increase and break records almost on an annual basis.

Here is a summary of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering since 2011:

Year	Lottie Moon
2011	\$146,800,000
2012	\$149,300,000
2013	\$154,100,000
2014	\$153,000,000
2015	\$165,800,000
2016	\$153,000,000
2017	\$148,000,000
2018	\$158,900,000
2019	\$157,300,000
2020	\$159,500,000
2021	\$177,600,000
2022	\$203,700,000
2023	\$195,900,000

** This chart was prepared from the Southern Baptist Convention Annuals 2011-2023 & IMB **

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has reached the goal of \$200 million being received once, in 2022. Other than that year, it has fallen short of the recommended goal of \$200 million being given by Southern Baptists annually.

Observations on Component Three’s Implementation

The new giving mechanism of Great Commission Giving was poorly defined and never fully adopted by the broader Southern Baptist family. At one point, as many as seven state conventions chose not to report Great Commission Giving on the Annual Church Profile. In 2022, Lifeway chose to no longer report Great Commission Giving on the ACP and changed the categorical name to Total SBC Mission Expenditures.

Unfortunately, most of our formal and informal interviewees were in agreement that the genesis for the newly named category ultimately came about due to the low Cooperative Program giving percentages of some of our largest churches. We were told that a few of our large church pastors wanted to put forth a higher percentage of giving numbers published in Baptist Press, so that the numerical value was more palatable when nominated to convention office or elected as an entity head.

In summary, both the Cooperative Program and Great Commission Giving continue to experience decline. While the Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon offerings have not fully realized the goal of Component Three, we are grateful for the continual trend of upward giving. While Great Commission Giving did not necessarily hurt the Cooperative Program in any discernibly measurable way, it certainly did not help it, in any measurable way.

Component Four: Reaching North America

Component Four Original Recommendation

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider any revision to the ministry assignment of the North American Mission Board that may be necessary in order to accomplish the redirection of NAMB as outlined in this report; and that the Board of Trustees of the North American Mission Board be asked to consider the encouragements found within this report in all matters under their purview.”

Since the implementation of Component Four of the Great Commission Resurgence (GCR), the effects of the restructuring of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the funds it allocates to states have been a major point of contention. In addition, many have pointed out the decline in certain numerical categories since 2010.

In spite of some disappointing numbers, there have also been good results. As a result of the GCR, NAMB unified the SBC's church planting efforts, and the two mission agencies have seen their highest-ever totals in Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong Offerings.

NAMB was formed in 1997 after the restructuring that took place during "The Covenant for a New Century," combining the Radio and Television Commission, Brotherhood, and the Home Mission Board. Before this, the Home Mission Board had a broad mission focus, and with the folding in of other entities, the areas of focus only grew. The reformed agency swelled in size, budget, and employees. There were over 450 employees in the home office. According to the 2006 SBC Annual, NAMB focused on ministries as varied as evangelism, church planting, collegiate ministries, disaster relief, men's ministry, revivals, ethnic ministries, volunteer missions like World Changers and Baptist Builders, Campers on Mission, missions education, "communication technologies," and strengthening associations. As a result of these varied concentrations, NAMB lacked focus and direction and was compared by one person to "an octopus with all tentacles and no head." By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, NAMB suffered under poor leadership at the highest levels, lacking united direction and focus. A long-time trustee of NAMB said the agency needed to be "radically reformed and streamlined."

NAMB partnered with state conventions through long-standing "Cooperative Agreements" which outlined how states would spend the money they received from NAMB. Without intention to do so, over the years, NAMB adopted a "funding before strategy" model, which resulted in both good and bad results. It funded positions as diverse as associational Director of Mission's (DOM), Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) directors, secretaries in convention buildings, and in one case 7 urban strategists in Nebraska. NAMB was among the primary targets of the phrase "bloated bureaucracy," which became a repeated phrase from the reports, although not the only target. Among those we interviewed, there was near unanimous agreement that NAMB desperately needed reorganization and refocusing on its primary tasks. In addition, most everyone agreed that Cooperative Agreements, in place for at least 40-50 years, needed retooling or replacement, and a new method for dispersing funds was required.

At the same time, the burgeoning church planting movement among broader evangelicalism was gaining traction with many strong voices, except for Southern Baptists. This was partly due to lacking a homogenous strategy for training, tracking, assessing, and reporting church plants across the SBC. Along with NAMB, each state, and even many local associations, had their own way of assessing planters, picking sites, funding planters, and reporting on their success. At one point, there were over 42 different assessments for church planters, with requirements varying depending on where one intended to plant. Before 2010, Annual Church Profile (ACP) statistics were reported to NAMB using different variables depending on the state convention, leading to confusion about how many new churches were actually planted each year.

One of the goals of GCR Component Four was *"liberating NAMB to conduct and direct a strategy of reaching the United States and Canada with the Gospel and planting Gospel churches."* This was to be done partly through "a priority to reach metropolitan areas and underserved people groups." In addition, NAMB was to *"reclaim its mission of assisting churches to make disciples."* The goal of the GCR was to accomplish this through strategic partnerships with state conventions, resulting in a national strategy to *"mobilize Southern Baptists in a great effort to reach North America with the Gospel and plant thriving, reproducing churches."* Part of this was also to be done through the "phasing out of Cooperative Agreements within seven years" to refocus the funds of NAMB and ministry assignments towards helping churches plant churches.

Evaluation of Component Four Implementation

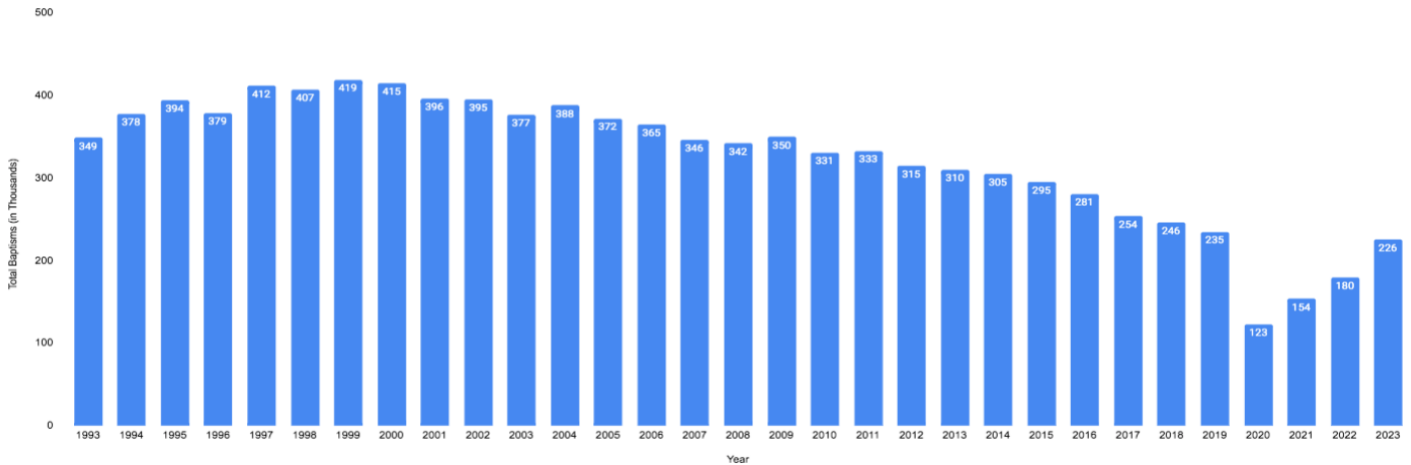
One writer has called Component Four the "true heart" of the GCR report. According to the document, the central concern was to liberate NAMB to enable them to conduct a direct strategy of reaching North America with the Gospel and planting churches. What follows is an evaluation of the critical aspects of Component Four of the GCR using statistics, interviews, and facts surrounding the NAMB culture and how it's viewed in the SBC.

A. Baptismal Numbers and Evangelism

The overall number of baptisms in the SBC since the passage of the GCR is only part of the story, although it is a rather substantial part. Southern Baptists understand that the responsibility to make disciples, which includes sharing the good news and baptizing converts, falls directly at the feet of the local church. NAMB does not baptize people; churches do. However, in the past, NAMB has played a critical role in supporting, promoting, and equipping churches in the evangelistic endeavor of the Great Commission.

Before the GCR, evangelism was strengthened through Cooperative Agreements in a convention-wide network of state convention evangelism directors who partnered with NAMB to provide resources, training, and encouragement for local churches in their particular states to reach their communities. Also, pre-GCR, there was a convention-wide evangelism effort through the "God's

SBC Total Baptisms (in Thousands) by Year



Plan for Sharing" (GPS) initiative. The plan was to mobilize Southern Baptists to share the gospel with every person in North America by 2020 through various strategies and resources that had been "field-tested and approved."⁵ The initiative had buy-in from all the state conventions and some associations. Yet, the GPS strategy, or any evangelistic strategy outside of church planting being prioritized, was seemingly ignored by the GCR report. With the arrival of new leadership at NAMB, who began to carry out the GCR recommendations from the messengers, many teams were dismantled, including the team for God's Plan for Sharing, and the budgets and personnel for evangelism was reallocated. Without a leading voice for evangelism at the national level, state conventions, and associations were forced to pick up the slack, resulting in less success and effectiveness than before.

Promoting evangelism through different initiatives and keeping it front and center of SBC life over the years was considered integral to the convention's success regarding evangelizing the lost and church growth/planting. Baptisms have fluctuated over the years according to changing variables and emphases within the SBC and the broader culture. Still, during the first decade of the 2000s, there was a steady decline except for two years, ending the decade at approximately 350,000.⁶ The GCR strategy hoped to reverse what some saw as plateaued levels and others as a downward trend in baptismal numbers. Unfortunately, in the next decade, in a post-GCR convention, there was an accelerated decrease in baptisms, falling to 235,748 by 2019.

It could be argued that the dismantling of the evangelistic support system and a lack of follow-through with the GPS initiative significantly impacted declining baptisms. However, it is impossible to know what the effect would have been otherwise without the counterfactual data on GPS being fully implemented through 2020. The most recent numbers from 2023 saw an increase in baptisms by 26% at 226,919, something certainly worth rejoicing. This makes three straight years, post-COVID, that baptism numbers have increased, though still below the baptismal numbers before Covid. It is hoped that NAMB will continue to expand and revise her strategy in helping and encouraging established churches to reach more people and move beyond previous high numbers of

⁵Kelley, *The Best Intentions*, 174.

⁶Since 1950 baptism fluctuation has ranged from approximately 350,000 to 435,000 with a steady decline since 1999. See chart on page 16.

the past. But what can be said of the GCR report strategy of prioritizing the planting of churches to penetrate lostness in North America is that it did not see the rebound in baptisms as had been hoped. The total number of SBC churches increased, but the categories of members, baptisms, and worship attendance fell during that time.

As previously stated, churches of the SBC bear the brunt of responsibility concerning reaching the lost and baptizing believers. Still, the role of NAMB in supporting evangelism should not be overlooked. The purpose of NAMB, or any entity of the SBC, is a supporting role in the church's mission to make disciples. Various factors could be argued concerning the drop, but in an honest assessment, NAMB's divesting of this evangelistic support system, with its lack of follow through and support of GPS to completion through 2020, could be seen as one of the factors in the diminished numbers on baptisms. The heart and soul of the SBC has always been cooperative evangelism, with NAMB playing a significant role in supporting the gospel cause at the state and local levels. The ending of Cooperative Agreements as a whole (as supported by the GCR and voted on by messengers in Orlando) with the dismantling of an evangelistic support network in favor of a sole-focused church planting priority helped (though not entirely) contribute to baptismal numbers not seen since WWII. A cooperative network where NAMB encourages and helps state conventions, associations, and churches to strategically invest evangelism dollars in collaborative efforts among churches reaching their neighbors appears to be critical if a baptismal turnaround is to be achieved.

But even with the challenges mentioned above, things are moving positively as the need for evangelistic support has not gone unnoticed by NAMB. In an internal comprehensive self-review presented to our task force by NAMB evaluating her ministry since the passage of GCR, it was noted that pastors wanted more hands-on support in evangelism. In February 2019, NAMB answered this call by launching the Who's Your One initiative that encouraged churches, in particular church members, to pray for and witness to people in their personal sphere of influence. While this has not rebuilt the previous cooperative network, it was an initial step in returning the SBC to her evangelistic roots. Other items would follow, including training, events, and new initiatives, under the broad categories of "inspiring and equipping." Also shown from the NAMB self-review were several new tools made available.⁷ In addition, several new hires are also seen as a positive change in direction concerning evangelism for NAMB targeting various people groups.

It is the hope of this task force that with this rebuilt evangelism team at NAMB, a network can be reconstructed connecting with state convention evangelism leaders and local associational mission strategists that would strategically strengthen the cooperative spirit at the local church level that has benefited the SBC in the past. Cooperative evangelism is integral to the SBC's DNA, along with church planting, and NAMB can play an even more significant part in helping SBC churches fulfill the Great Commission.

B. Church Planting and the Send City Strategy

According to the GCR recommendations and endorsed by a vote of the messengers, Cooperative Agreements were to be replaced by "*strategic partnerships*," though these new partnerships were not explicitly defined. NAMB (and before, the Home Mission Board) partnered with state conventions through the long-standing "Cooperative Agreements" that outlined how state conventions would

⁷NAMB: A Comprehensive Review, 7.

spend money they received from NAMB for evangelism, church planting, and other ministries. Each state convention had its unique agreement with NAMB and had its own unique approach to church planter assessment and training. The pre-GCR NAMB had adopted a "funding before strategy" model, which led to subsidizing ministry initiatives that were widely dispersed rather than strategically focused. In the past NAMB provided a certain amount of dollars for evangelism to each state, and at the end of the year each state would report how those funds were spent. Reviews of those reports showed that millions were going unspent for the purposes of evangelism training and equipping for pastors.⁸

Among those this evaluation task force interviewed, there was near unanimous consent that NAMB desperately needed reorganization and refocusing on its primary tasks. In addition, most everyone agreed that Cooperative Agreements, in place since the 1960s, needed rethinking or discontinuing and that a new or revised method of cooperation and dispersing funds was necessary.

One hope of GCR Component Four was "*liberating NAMB to conduct and direct a strategy of reaching the United States and Canada with the Gospel and planting Gospel churches.*" This was to be done partly through "*a priority to reach metropolitan areas and underserved people groups,*" as led by NAMB. In addition, NAMB was to "*reclaim its mission of assisting churches to make disciples.*" The result of this was the "Send City Strategy" adopted by NAMB to reach the "*metropolitan and underserved people*" as directed by the GCR.

The Send City Strategy was to replace the Cooperative Agreements with state conventions coming alongside NAMB's leadership, who would "*conduct and direct a strategy*" to reach what was estimated to be 80% of the unreached people groups concentrated in metropolitan cities in North America. Thirty-two cities were identified in the Send City category, later expanded to include other underserved people groups.⁹ The SBC can rejoice that 27% of all baptisms in non-South states in 2022 came from churches started since 2010.¹⁰ Today more than half of SBC churches in Canada have been planted since 2010. Also, through the Send Network NAMB reported various new works in Puerto Rico, Canada, and New England.¹¹

According to the approved GCR report, at least 50% of the ministry efforts of NAMB would be focused on "*planting healthy, multiplying, and faithful Baptist congregations in the United States and Canada.*" The result of this standard was that the church planting budget grew by \$56,410,848 over time¹². This increase in funds did not result in a numerical increase in churches started, as the number of church plants in 2022 decreased by 364 plants compared to 2011.¹³ Nor were baptisms increased through the strategy of prioritizing church planting as hoped. While those interviewed agreed there needed to be a unified method for assessing planters, funding plants, and reporting church plants, as different states reported their church plants differently, the overall number of church starts dropped.

⁸Ibid., 10.

⁹Ibid., 4.

¹⁰Ibid., 6.

¹¹Ibid., 10.

¹²Taken from *SBC Annual 2012*, 287. (\$24,325,678) and *SBC Annual 2023*, 143. (\$80,736,526)

¹³Taken from *2012 SBC Annual*, 187. (1003 church starts) and *2023 SBC Annual*, 213. (639 church starts) It should also be noted that church plants have increased each year since 2019 which reported 552 new church starts.

One indicator of whether the money and resources in church planting are bearing fruit is the survivability of those churches planted. According to NAMB's internal comprehensive self-review, 90% of churches planted by the Send network have a four-year survival rate, which is worthy of praise. However, there are no published reports about the survivability rates of churches beyond these four years once funding ceases.

In the Send City strategy, the goal was to plant churches in selected major metropolitan cities. Many of these areas were outside the South, and with the focus on large cities, NAMB did not engage in rural areas. This loss of support in rural areas led to more distrust of NAMB and strained relationships in many states and associations. Through their Planting, Replant, and Revitalization initiatives, NAMB has begun to focus again on rural areas in both traditional southern states and pioneer areas.

Observations on Component Four's Implementation

The North American Mission Board needed reorganization and refocus. Following the Covenant for a New Century, they had become a bloated, multi-focused organization and needed to be streamlined. In addition, Southern Baptists needed a unified voice in church planting. Throughout local associations and state conventions, there were too many varied standards, too many methods of counting, and too many funding methods. In those areas, the GCR was successful in that NAMB was able to reorganize from an overloaded organization and focus their ministry assignments on a few things they could do well. Today, many consider the North American Mission Board one of the leading voices in the country for church planting, with an extended network in almost all areas of the country through the Send Network, standardized methods of training and assessing, and as a guiding voice in the field. NAMB now provides a consistent method of assessment, training, endorsing, and funding for SBC church plants. Also, the North American Mission Board is a healthier organization than before implementing Component Four of the GCR and is no longer overstaffed or lacking focus. NAMB has become the leading voice for church planters among Southern Baptists and has begun redeveloping relationships with all states through the Send Network.

However, that is not to say that everything has been a success. Baptisms and church starts are down. There are still strained relationships and distrust of NAMB due to, in part, financial implications related to the dissolution of Cooperative Agreements. In many places NAMB jointly funded positions that states and associations were unable to fund fully by themselves. Under the new arrangement, NAMB now funds fewer roles, but the ones they do are focused on church planting and evangelism and they are fully funded by NAMB. The phasing out of the old model of Cooperative Agreements resulted in the elimination of many jobs across state conventions, further escalating tensions, but did free up money for church planting. For instance, within the first few years of the GCR all of the southern states had moved from the Cooperative Agreements to the "grant" model followed today, freeing up more than \$8 million for church planting in non-southern areas. It was not until 2020 that Cooperative Agreements were fully phased out across the SBC. In the midst of NAMB's effort to penetrate lostness in the most underserved and under-reached parts of North America solely through church planting, they lost relationships with some state conventions, associations, and churches. This was an unintentional outcome, but it did affect how many pastors and leaders view the work of NAMB. By switching to a more sound "*strategy before funding*" or "grant" model, NAMB was able to ensure a plan was in place before funds were allocated. Through new partnerships of the Send Network with state conventions, they have worked to invest money back into states through church planting and evangelism, hoping to restore those relationships and

trust. That strategy is being met with appreciation and excitement from a number of state conventions.

The messengers gave the North American Mission Board a clear mandate through the GCR. The result after 14 years is an organization that is streamlined in personnel and focused, but has fallen out of favor with some churches and pastors. By carrying out the recommendations of the GCR, they fulfilled the will of the messengers but ended up with a system with which many people are frustrated despite the many good things they have done. This tension is part of the paradox of Component Four of the GCR. The messengers called for change by approving the GCR, but many were left frustrated with the resulting changes, loss of funding for state and local positions, decrease in baptisms and church starts, and a realized loss of evangelism focus for established churches. Even though change at NAMB was the will of the messengers, that does not mean that every implementation of change was carried out perfectly, and recent efforts by NAMB to increase focus on evangelism prove their acknowledgment of that fact. There was a problem at NAMB that needed solving and the GCR was the solution that the messengers approved. The dilemma of the GCR is that while it solved some of those problems, it also created new ones, including dismantling the evangelistic network between NAMB and state conventions that promoted and supported evangelism at the local church level. Many of the problems created were also relational in nature, though not all of them. Our Task Force is pleased to report NAMB is taking steps to correct those problems through a renewed focus on evangelism and continued efforts to partner with legacy states through the Send Network and we laud them for their efforts.

Component Five: Reaching Unreached and Underserved People Groups Within North America

Component Five Original Recommendation:

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request that the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention consider a revised ministry assignment for the International Mission Board that would remove any geographical limitation on its mission to reach unreached and underserved people groups wherever they are found.”

Evaluation of Component Five’s Implementation

Through review of current and previous ministry assignments and various annuals of the SBC, the recommendation to revise the ministry assignment of the International Mission Board to encourage coordination between the IMB and NAMB as it related to assisting churches in the United States and Canada reach unreached and underserved people groups was implemented.

At the June 14-15, 2011 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix, Arizona the messengers adopted a recommendation to change the ministry assignment of the IMB to include the statement:

1. Assist churches by evangelizing persons, planting Baptist churches, and nurturing church planting movements among all people groups outside the United States and Canada; ***and provide specialized defined and agreed upon assistance to the North American Mission Board in assisting churches to reach unreached and underserved people groups within the United States and Canada.***

The implementation of this change encouraged the IMB and NAMB to coordinate together as they deemed appropriate to develop opportunities for the IMB to serve unreached people groups in North America and Canada.

Today, the partnership between the entity heads of the IMB and NAMB, Paul Chitwood and Kevin Ezell respectively, is healthy and vibrant. The two entities have partnered together in various ways to support missions work in North America and around the globe. In particular, since 2017 the IMB and NAMB collaboration through Send Relief to support compassion ministries in North America and around the world seems to have been successful and continued the significant compassion ministry work of Southern Baptists. According to Send Relief, they have served 2.56 million people in 85 countries.

Additionally, NAMB has worked to serve unreached and underserved people through Send Cities and Send Networks as well as Send Network Español. According to NAMB research, more than half of new church plants identify as non-Anglo. Send Network Español serves potential Hispanic church planters in various contexts. Through Send Network in Puerto Rico, church planters in partnership with NAMB have planted 22 new congregations since 2016.

Observations on Component Five's Implementation

It appears that NAMB and IMB have found unique ways to partner together to serve underserved and unreached people groups. These areas have been primarily through Send Relief and Send Network opportunities.

Since the implementation of Component Five, the senior leadership of both IMB and NAMB have worked together to ensure the most effective outreach of the gospel in these areas. Present and past leaders of both organizations should be recognized for their willingness to work together. Still today, the positive interpersonal relationship between Dr. Chitwood and Dr. Ezell has contributed to greater collaboration between the two entities.

Component Six: Promoting the Cooperative Program and Elevating Stewardship

Component Six Original Recommendation:

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider working with the leadership of the state conventions in developing a comprehensive program of Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education in alignment with this report.”

Evaluation of Component Six’s Implementation

In an unprecedented move, the Great Commission Task Force recommended that the primary responsibilities of promoting the “Cooperative Program” and “Stewardship Education” shift away from the SBC Executive Committee and toward the state conventions. One might assume that at one point in time the states oversaw this responsibility, gave it away, and were now assuming it once again. However, this is not the historical record within SBC documentation.

Note this excerpt from a 2010 article: “From the time the Cooperative Program was created and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention (usually dated to 1925 when it was officially named), responsibility for promoting the Cooperative Program has been a joint venture of the Southern Baptist Convention and the states, with the responsibility for strategy development uniformly assigned to the SBC, and the “field” responsibilities consistently shared with our state convention ministry partners. At no time in its history has the Southern Baptists Convention failed to exercise its right and responsibility to promote the Cooperative Program and engage in stewardship education for the purpose of supporting the ministries of the Convention.”¹⁴

Upon interviewing former employees of the SBC Executive Committee, it was confirmed that the historical timeline reveals that while state conventions have helped share the responsibility of Cooperative Program promotion in the field, the sole responsibility and ministry assignment of CP promotion has been SBC driven and not state convention driven. After further evaluation, only one documented action has been observed regarding this recommendation.

At the February 21-22, 2011 meeting of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, action was taken in response to this recommendation from the GCR Task Force in 2010. Addressing another recommendation by the GCR task force involving the matter of CP/stewardship promotion, the Executive Committee voted to “pursue an enhanced relationship among and between the state conventions, associations, entities, and the Executive Committee for the purpose of developing a holistic and unified approach in promoting the entire Cooperative Program and stewardship education across the Southern Baptist Convention.”¹⁵ Furthermore, this step of approval was reported and documented in the 2011 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁶

¹⁴<http://www.baptist2baptist.net/gcr/articles/RSO-03-19-10.asp>

¹⁵<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/exec-comm-responds-to-gcr-proposals/>

¹⁶http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_2011.pdf

Observations on Component Six's Implementation

While it appears there may have been good-faith attempts from the SBC Executive Committee to work with the Executive Directors of the state conventions, there was never a realized goal of creating, implementing, and sustaining a unified strategy between the Executive Committee and the state conventions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr. Frank Page introduced the "Great Commission Advance " initiative at the 2013 SBC Annual Meeting in Houston. This new campaign was a renewed emphasis on churches increasing their CP percentage annually by one percent until the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 2025. No allusion to Component Six from the Great Commission Task Force was directly mentioned, but some believe this new initiative was an indirect response to the proposal from 2010.

Furthermore, it appears that the financial cost and burden for promoting the Cooperative Program and facilitating stewardship education was a price too steep which many were unable to pay. Several state conventions did not have the infrastructure nor the funding in place to adequately take this handoff successfully. After conducting a short survey via email with current Executive Directors from all forty-one state conventions, it was discovered that over two-thirds of the state conventions do not have a staff member in either a part-time or full-time capacity that is dedicated to promoting the Cooperative Program. The other one-third of the state conventions have a part-time or full-time staff member who is dedicated to the promotion of the Cooperative Program. Of those employees, the majority only have that role as a small portion of their job description.

After conducting interviews with former employees of the SBC Executive Committee, it became clear that Component Six was at best a fumble, for the hand-off never quite happened. In summary, Component Six was approved by the messengers, but no plans were made to enact it and no action was taken to carry it out.

Component Seven: **The Call of the Nations and the SBC Allocation Budget**

Component Seven Original Recommendation:

“That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010 in Orlando, Florida, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider recommending an SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget that will increase the percentage allocated to the International Mission Board to 51 percent by decreasing the Executive Committee’s percentage of the SBC Allocation Budget by 1 percent.”

Evaluation of Component Seven’s Implementation

An evaluation of the annual Book of Reports since 2011 shows that the SBC CP Allocation Percentage budgeted to the IMB has not reached 51 percent. Between 2013 and 2023, the Program Allocation Percentage budgeted to the IMB has consistently been 50.41 percent.¹⁷

However, the annual Book of Reports for this same time period shows that the Percentage of SBC Share of Total CP to the IMB has consistently exceeded 51 percent.

While the IMB has received over 51 percent of the SBC Share of Total CP stemming from CP allocation budget overages, the allocation budget itself was not adjusted accordingly. Further, the rate of inflation increase exceeds that of the CP giving increase. Thus, while both the SBC share of total CP and the percentage of CP given to the IMB are greater, the value of that money is worth less than in 2010. Inflation, national debt, and other economic factors have a significant impact on the value of money given to global missions.

Observations on Component Seven’s Implementation

The total amount of money received by the IMB has *increased*, but the number of missionaries has *decreased*. According to the Book of Reports, the IMB reported 5,624 “overseas personnel” in 2011 and currently reports 3,532 “field personnel” -a 37.19 percent decrease in the number of missionaries on the field.¹⁸ While there are many metrics by which to gauge what it means to reach the nations (baptisms, churches planted, etc.) the number of missionaries on the field has been a traditional indicator of SBC mission’s commitment (Romans 10:14). Southern Baptists should be aware of the impact of inflation (and the political and economic factors contributing to inflation) on world evangelism. The decrease in missionaries (37.19 percent) is actually less than the increase of US Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation (41.99 percent) since 2010.¹⁹ While Southern Baptists are allocating more to the IMB, CPI inflation has outpaced the rate of giving.²⁰ The IMB should be commended for its efforts in keeping missionaries on the field and for its wise stewardship of CP dollars.

¹⁷<https://sbhla.org/digital-resources/sbc-annuals/>

¹⁸<https://www.imb.org/fast-facts/>

¹⁹https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

²⁰To compare US with global CPI inflation, see <https://www.global-rates.com/en/calculations/inflation-calculator/>

Second, as noted above, the CP Allocation Budget percentage received by the IMB has consistently exceeded 51 percent, from a low of 51.26 percent in 2022, to a high of 51.97 percent in 2013-2014 and in 2018-2019. During this same time, Southern Baptists celebrate that the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has reached record levels. In 2022, the IMB reported the largest Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (\$203.7 million) “in the 177-year history of the IMB”.²¹

Finally, it must be noted that although the IMB has ultimately been receiving 51%+ of CP funds, the allocation budget was never adjusted accordingly. The IMB only receives 50.41% of the allocation budget. The remaining funds make up the difference when there are CP overages. Ultimately, Component Seven was not fully implemented.

²¹<https://www.imb.org/2022/10/06/lottie-moon-offering-reaches-historic-high-proves-commitment-to-revelation-79-vision/>

Appendix

- Brief Timeline of Events related to the GCR (pg. 26)
- Correspondence Regarding the Request for Confidential Access to the Sealed GCR Recordings. (pg. 27)
- A Complete Copy of the Original GCR Report, “Penetrating the Lostness: Embracing a Vision for a Great Commission Resurgence Among Southern Baptists” (pg. 32)

*All material produced from our meetings and research will be submitted to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

This cache will include all meeting agendas, email correspondence between task force members, a few other pertinent email correspondences, extemporaneous notes, a collection of primary source material including hard copies of a number of articles, papers, news stories, emails, addresses/presentations and other peripheral material.

Please note that it was decided that our formal Zoom and In-Person interviews were not going to be recorded so there will be no audio or visual submissions in this particular repository.

Finally, there will be no restrictions placed on the material submitted and all Southern Baptists are welcome to access that material at their convenience.

Brief Timeline of Events Related to the GCR:

- Spring 2005 Southern Baptist Journal of Theology publishes the article "A Resurgence Not Yet Realized: Evangelistic Effectiveness in the Southern Baptist Convention" by Dr. Thom Ranier
- June 2006 Frank Page is elected SBC President on the first ballot, defeating Ronnie Floyd and Jerry Sutton in what Page called a win for "grassroots Baptists." Forrest Pollock's nomination speech centered on the importance of the Cooperative Program and has been identified as the reason for what many called a surprise upset win by Page over Floyd.
- November 28, 2007 at the Building Bridges Conference Dr. Danny Akin presents "Answering the call to a Great Commission Resurgence."
- September 22, 2008 In his first presidential address to the SBC EC Johnny Hunt calls for a "Great Commission Resurgence. "
- April 16 2009 Dr. Danny Akins preaches "Axioms for a Great Commission Resurgence" in chapel at SEBTS.
- April 27, 2009 Johnny Hunt releases "A Declaration for a Great Commission Resurgence" and urges pastors and leaders to attach their name to it in support.
- June 23, 2009 Messengers approve a motion from Dr Al Mohler to appoint a task force to study how Southern Baptists can work more "faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission. "
- August 1, 2009 the website www.pray4gcr.com goes live to post updates and information about the work of the Task Force.
- First GCRTF meeting held in Atlanta August 11-12
- Second GCRTF meeting held in Rogers, AR August 27-27
- September 17, 2009 a listening session with State Executives Listening Session is held by the GCRTF
- February 22, 2010 Progress Report of the GCRTF of the SBC given to the Executive Committee and released to the public.
- May 7, 2010 Dr. Morris Chapman, SBEC President, releases a white paper with concerns about the Great Commission Resurgence Report. "What's in a name? The Cooperative Program and Great Commission Giving"
- May 19-21 2010, A series of articles from Between the Times, the faculty blog of SEBTS, authored by Danny Akin and Nathan Finn. "Funding Great Commission Faithfulness: A Response to Morris Chapman."
- Penetrating the Lostness Report given at 2010 SBC Meeting
- June 15-16, 2010 Messengers at the SBC Meeting adopt an amended version of the Great Commission Task Force Report
- June 15-16, 2010 Jay Adkins makes a motion to unseal the records of the GCRTF. Ronnie Floyd introduces Al Mohler to speak against the motion, and after much discussion on both sides the motion is defeated.
- June 15, 2010 In his final report before retiring, Chapman addresses the SBC Meeting in Orlando saying that the last five recommendations of the task force did not sufficiently address spiritual needs, but instead concentrated on organizational issues.
- June 12, 2013 "Will Southern Baptists be Great Commission Baptists?" (Six Marks of a Great Commission People) SBC Convention Sermon by Dr. Danny Akin
- June 2023 Randy Chestnutt (OH) makes a motion at the 2023 Annual Meeting to "appoint a task force to study and bring a report to the 2024 Annual Meeting on the impact that the adopted recommendations of the 2009 Great Commission Resurgence Report has had on 1) the effectiveness of our North American Gospel mission effort and 2) the impact on the relationships between SBC ministry partners. " The motion was adopted.
- June 12, 2025 The records of the original Great Commission Task Force held at the Southern Baptist Historical Library will be unsealed.

September 17, 2023

Director Taffey Hall,

Thank you for your helpful and wonderfully informative insight during our conversation on Thursday, September 14th of this past week. Your guidance and direction was as graceful as it was beneficial to me.

As you are aware, during the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention which took place in New Orleans, Louisiana this past June, President Bart Barber was charged with appointing a task force to evaluate the outcome of the 2010 Great Commission Resurgence effort. I have been tasked with leading our newly appointed “Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force” with the goal of bringing a report to the 2024 Annual Meeting in Indianapolis with our findings.

For your records, the following individuals have been appointed by the president to serve as members of this task force:

Jay Adkins, Chair
Robin Foster
Adam Groza
Luke Holmes
Chris Shaffer
Jeremy Westbrook

It is my understanding there are a number of articles housed in the depository of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives which I believe to be germane to our task.

I am referring here to items including but not limited to submissions from the Presidential Collections of Johnny Hunt (AR 914) and Bryant Wright (AR 932) as well as the sealed GCTF proceedings (AR 913) which include two boxes containing 57 compact disc recordings of the GCTF meetings and proceedings, as well as a video recording of the presentation of the GCR report from the SBC Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida in 2010 submitted by Ronnie Floyd.

Per our phone conversation, I am aware that an official request must be made to your office in order to be provided access to this sealed material, which is scheduled to be opened less than two years from now on June 16th, 2025.

Would you please receive this correspondence as the official request from the Chairman of the committee, to allow the 6 members of the “Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force” to be provided access to these sealed materials identified as AR 913, so that we may best execute the task assigned to us by the Messengers of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and I am looking forward to hearing back from you as you are able to respond. Please advise if there is any other information you need from me to carry out this request.

Blessings and Peace,


Jay Adkins
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Westwego, Louisiana
Chairman, Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force
2023-2024 First Vice President, Southern Baptist Convention

September 18, 2023

Dear Jay Adkins,

Thank you for the email, and it was nice talking with you on the phone last week as well. After our conversation and in reviewing the donor file for the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Collection, we discovered there is no provision in the donor file for access to the recordings before the open date. Therefore, these materials will be open and available for research on June 16, 2025. We are obligated to honor the donor file as it is written. Previous SBHLA director, Bill Sumners, arranged the donation of the GCR Task Force recordings. I have consulted with him on this matter and he agrees. We have an abundance of material related to the GCR report and task force ready for you to review in the main reading room of the SBHLA this morning. We look forward to seeing you and assisting you with your work. Hope this information helps.

Blessings,

Dr. Taffey Hall, Director
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives
901 Commerce Street, #400
Nashville, TN 37203


Jay Adkins
[REDACTED]

February 18, 2024

Dr. R Albert Mohler,
[REDACTED]

Dr. Mohler,

I hope this correspondence finds you well. Having been raised in Kentucky and spent most of my formative years there, I am particularly thankful for your stewardship of our flagship seminary. Your leadership in our larger cooperative effort and influence on my own life has shaped both who we are as a convention and who I am as a minister of the Gospel. I will be forever grateful for your work and faithful service.

I write you today in my official capacity as the Chairman of the Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force to your role as the President of the Council of Seminary Presidents.

As you know, this past summer the Southern Baptist Convention meeting here in New Orleans passed a motion for the creation of a Task Force who would in part, “study and bring a report to the 2024 Annual Meeting in Indianapolis on the impact that the adopted recommendations of the 2009 Great Commission Resurgence Report has had on, number one, the effectiveness of our North American gospel mission effort and #2, the impact on the relationships between SBC ministry partners.”

To that end and due to what I believe is my responsibility to lead our Task Force with the utmost integrity being the best steward of my assignment as chairman of this effort, please receive this correspondence as one final formal request to, in your capacity as Chairman of the Board of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, allow our convention assigned and presidential appointed Task Force limited access to the original 57 cd’s of audio recordings of the proceedings of the GCR Task Force which were sealed for 15 years by convention action in June of 2010.

As you may recall, on Thursday, September 14th I made a phone call to Dr. Taffey Hall inquiring how one would go about making a request to privately access sealed documents at the SBHLA. She was gracious and helpful in her engagement and explained to me the normal process for something along those lines to take place. She explained that a formal request must be submitted by letter (or email) and that the donor would be the one who would make that decision. On Sunday, September 17th I followed up our phone call with an email making that formal request. In particular, the ask was as follows:

“Would you please receive this correspondence as the official request from the Chairman of the committee, to allow the 6 members of the “Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Task Force” to be provided access to these sealed materials identified as AR 913, so that we may best execute the task assigned to us by the Messengers of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.”

I assume you know that on Monday morning, I received the following response back from her:

“Thank you for the email, and it was nice talking with you on the phone last week as well. After our conversation and in reviewing the donor file for the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Collection, we discovered there is no provision in the donor file for access to the recordings before the

open date. Therefore, these materials will be open and available for research on June 16, 2025. We are obligated to honor the donor file as it is written. Previous SBHLA director, Bill Sumners, arranged the donation of the GCR Task Force recordings. I have consulted with him on this matter and he agrees. We have an abundance of material related to the GCR report and task force ready for you to review in the main reading room of the SBHLA this morning. We look forward to seeing you and assisting you with your work. Hope this information helps.”

As you may also recall, that afternoon at the hotel where the meetings were taking place, three of our Task Force members were speaking in the lobby as you approached us. At that point I made an informal request of you for this sort of limited and confidential access. You explained to us that it was not possible to bring this action about.

I certainly understand that convention related action cannot be overturned by any one person or group of people. However, it is my contention that our Task Force was also convention related action and I believe the argument can and should be made that implicit in the motion and ratification of the creation of this task force was permission for our team to have access to that material if needed.

Again, this request comes out of respect to your office and authority over the SBHLA. We are not asking for the sealed documents to be “opened.” That will happen in June of 2025. I am asking that our convention appointed task force be allowed limited and confidential access to that material if we feel it is necessary for clarification. Again, we are not asking for the public opening of this material, we are asking for the ability to do what I believe the convention has asked us to do and that is make a fully informed evaluation of the impact of the recommendations of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Report from 2010.

Thank you for your time on this matter and I do deeply appreciate you and your decades of service to our cooperative work. I will also send you this letter via email so an email response in return will be sufficient for our records.

Blessings to you and your family,

Jay Adkins



THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Office of the President

April 19, 2024

Pastor Jay Adkins
First Baptist Church
703 Avenue B
Westwego, Louisiana 70094

Dear Pastor Adkins:

I am thankful for your careful stewardship of the charge you have received from the Southern Baptist Convention. In this case I am responding to your letter addressed to me in my capacity as president of the Council of Seminary Presidents with respect to our oversight of the SBC Historical Library and Archives. I understand your request and appreciate the fact that you and the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force are fulfilling the assignment given you by the Southern Baptist Convention. I want to help in any way possible.

As we discussed, the SBHLA receives all materials with the stipulations or restrictions required by the owner/donor of each collection. This is how the library has operated throughout its history. The library staff are bound by donor restrictions since the SBC itself makes a very limited claim upon the ownership and control of any materials. The materials you request are under the seal of whatever agreement was in place when the SBHLA accepted and received the collection. You are by now familiar with the restrictions connected to the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force that were finalized by Dr. Ronnie Floyd acting in his capacity as chairman of the task force.

Please understand that the Council of Seminary Presidents has never intervened or interfered with this policy, since it is the arrangement set in place by the SBC. Thank you for asking questions so directly. I remain pledged to work fully with your task force and to be helpful in any way I can. I am copying all five of my colleagues on the CSP so that they are fully aware of our correspondence. Thank you for your service on behalf of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Sincerely,

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Council of Seminary Presidents, SBC

1825 Lexington Road · Louisville, Kentucky 40280
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Penetrating The Lostness

EMBRACING A VISION FOR A GREAT COMMISSION RESURGENCE AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

FINAL REPORT OF THE GREAT COMMISSION TASK FORCE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

(as amended and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, June 16, 2010)

Needed: A Great Commission Resurgence

In every generation, Southern Baptists have been called to reclaim our identity as a Great Commission movement of churches. Now is the time for this generation to answer the same call – to make an unconditional commitment to reach the nations for Christ, to plant and serve Gospel churches in North America and around the world, and to mobilize Southern Baptists as a Great Commission people. Now is the time for a Great Commission Resurgence among Southern Baptists. A world of lostness is waiting – what are we waiting for?

Assignment: A Great Commission Motion

In the 2009 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, messengers overwhelmingly adopted this motion: *That the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 23-24, 2009 in Louisville, Kentucky, authorize the President of the Southern Baptist Convention to appoint a Great Commission Task Force charged to bring a report and any recommendations to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, concerning how Southern Baptists can work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission.*

President Johnny Hunt appointed a Great Commission Resurgence Task Force of twenty-two members, led by Ronnie Floyd of Northwest Arkansas as chairman. Over the last months, this Task Force has met both extensively and intensively, listening to Southern Baptists, evaluating the most urgent needs before us, and looking to the future with the call of Christ to the nations as our inspiration and passion.

We have been joined by thousands of prayer partners drawn from all over the world. We asked you, as Southern Baptists, to tell us what you see and to share your concerns. Southern Baptists from every sector of this convention have talked to us, written to us, and prayed with us. We spent important hours listening to denominational leaders at every level, but we also spent much time listening to grassroots Southern Baptist church members, pastors, missionaries, church planters, and students.

Southern Baptists have spoken, and we have been listening.

Urgency: A World of Lostness

There are almost 7 billion human inhabitants of planet Earth. At the most generous estimate, somewhere around 1 billion are believing Christians. That means that over 6 billion people are lost, without Christ, and thus without hope. Of these 6 billion, over 3.5 billion have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Over 6,000 people groups are without any Christian witness. There is no way that Southern Baptists can make real progress toward reaching these unreached people groups unless we experience a genuine Great Commission Resurgence. We must see a tidal wave of evangelistic and missionary passion, or the numbers of unreached people groups will only grow, and lostness will spread.

In North America, evangelical Christians are falling behind the level of population growth. Put simply, we are failing to reach new immigrant populations, the teeming millions in urban areas, and a generation of youth and young adults who are living in a time of vast change and confused worldviews. Lostness is not only our concern when it is found across oceans – it must be our concern when it is across the street. North America represents a vast continent of lostness, where millions still have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and where many communities and ethnic groups are woefully underserved by Gospel churches.

In our own congregations, we see falling rates of baptism and other signs of concern. In 2008, Southern Baptist churches baptized more than 33,000 fewer people than in 1950 – and that was with more than 17,000 additional churches. Baptism rates among teenagers have fallen dramatically, and many young people become disengaged with the church soon after graduation from high school. In 2008 we baptized only 75,000 teenagers. In 1972, we baptized 140,000.

Why?

Research conducted by LifeWay Research on the Millennial generation and research by Thom Rainer on previous generations indicate that every American generation from early in the twentieth century forward has been less evangelized than generations before. Tracing generational patterns from the World War II generation to the Millennials, the estimated number of Christians has fallen from 65 percent to 15 percent. Churches in America are losing ground with each successive generation.

We desperately need to reach our communities for Christ – and this starts with our own young people. Furthermore, we must see this generation of young Baptists take their places on the front lines of the Great Commission Resurgence. Humanly speaking, that is our only hope for a bold advance of the Gospel in the coming generation.

Reality: What is Holding us Back?

The Southern Baptist Convention came into being in 1845 in order to mobilize the energies of Southern Baptist churches for missions and evangelism. It is just that simple. Over the last 165 years, Southern Baptists have grown into a massive denomination, with over 40,000 churches and an international reach for the Gospel. And yet, there are signs that Great Commission commitment is diminishing among us. While a passion for seeing the world reached for Christ cannot be reduced to a question of money, there is no way that we can reach the world without the resources that are necessary. Missionaries must be sent, churches must be planted, pastors must be trained, and a host of services must be made available.

But, the average Southern Baptist gives only 2.5% of annual income to the local church and beyond. Does this reflect a Great Commission passion? Clearly not. We will never be able to push back against lostness at this level of giving.

Local Southern Baptist churches are now giving an average of 6% of annual receipts to the Cooperative Program. In other words, when Cooperative Program giving is reported, local congregations are retaining an average of 94 cents of every offering plate dollar. These contributions are vital and much appreciated, but there is no way the world will be reached for Christ at that level of congregational investment in missions.

Our state Baptist conventions are doing important work in reaching their own states for Christ, planting churches, educating young Christians, and partnering with other Baptists across the nation and around the world. But approximately 63% of all monies given through the Cooperative Program remains in the states – and the greatest percentage of these monies remains in the states with the largest Southern Baptist populations.

So much good work is being done. Many of our churches are growing, baptizing, and sending. Over the past

two decades, Southern Baptist churches have learned to participate in missions in a whole new way – with tens of thousands of our church members going on mission trips and seeing a world of lostness with their own eyes. College and university students have been going, infusing a generation with new passion. State conventions are developing new ways of reaching North America, and local associations are devising new ways of linking churches together for ministry. On our seminary campuses, we see a generation of young Christians dissatisfied with business as usual – ready to risk themselves for the sake of the Gospel. Our mission boards report that Southern Baptists continue to answer the call, with candidates for service with the International Mission Board waiting for an opportunity to be deployed and church planters with the North American Mission Board ready and energized to plant Gospel churches. Throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, there are bright signs of promise and ample signs of hope. So, what will it take to see a Great Commission Resurgence launched?

Back to Basics: A Theology for Great Commission Faithfulness

A Great Commission Resurgence grows directly out of a Great Commission theology. Do we really believe that Jesus saves? Are we not united in the confidence that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved? Are we not certain that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only message of salvation and that salvation is found in Christ alone? Are we not confirmed in our knowledge that every single believer is called to be a part of taking the Gospel to the nations? Do we not yearn to see the nations rejoice in the name of Jesus Christ? Do we not know that today is the acceptable day of salvation? If so, we will be ready to do whatever it takes to see a Great Commission Resurgence change our priorities, reshape our plans, and fuel our lives for God's glory.

The foundation for a Great Commission Resurgence is the truth of the Gospel.

We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, Southern Baptists need a renewed commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of missions and evangelism, the message that is found only in Jesus Christ and His atoning death for sinners. These are first and foremost.

This will mean that we recommit ourselves to sharing, proclaiming, and teaching this good news, as well as ministering and living in the power of the Gospel.

We call upon Southern Baptists to acknowledge the centrality of the gospel message to everything we do and everything we are. We celebrate the great variety in Southern Baptist life, but we believe that our true unity can be found only in the good news of Jesus Christ. We call for a new focus on the primacy of the biblical Gospel.

We believe that every single person is a sinner, alienated from God and without hope apart from Christ. We are confident that God saves sinners by His grace and for His glory, and that our salvation is secured through the atoning life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that salvation is given to all who come to a saving knowledge of Christ, trusting in Him and in Him alone for our salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of everlasting life. We declare to the whole world our belief that Jesus saves – this same Jesus who is the divine God-man, our substitutionary Savior, and reigning Lord, the Head of His church.

In Jesus Christ we place our trust and hope. In His Gospel we place our hope and ground our efforts for a Great Commission Resurgence in Southern Baptist life. While holding firmly to the promise that Christ will be with us to the end of the age, we seek faithfully to proclaim the Gospel to the nations.

We must also affirm the primacy and centrality of the local church in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention. The New Testament identifies the church as the central instrument of the Kingdom of God. We must return the local church to the primacy and centrality in the life and work of our denomination at every level.

At the same time, our churches need a new missional vision. The missional vision of the church is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations – nothing less.

Each individual congregation must accept the responsibility to reach their village, community, town, or city with the good news of Jesus Christ. Churches across the Southern Baptist Convention must envision afresh their calling to reach their region, their country, and the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every local church must operate as a missional strategy center, releasing and sending Christ followers to advance the Gospel regionally, nationally, and globally to penetrate the lostness in our world.

All of our Baptist work beyond the local church must exist solely to serve the local church in this mission. This is true for every Baptist association, state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. None of these exists for itself – all exist for the churches. Every pastor must be a missionary strategist, and every church must be a missionary sending center. Every congregation exists to replicate itself and to plant other Gospel churches. Every entity of Baptist work must exist to serve our churches in this missional vision. Otherwise, a Great Commission Resurgence will never happen.

So, how can we make a Great Commission Resurgence happen? In truth, only God can bring this about. At the same time, our Lord has given this assignment to His church, and we are commanded to get to this work. The Great Commission is a command, not a suggestion.

COMPONENT ONE: Getting the Mission Right

In order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission, we ask Southern Baptists to adopt a new mission statement in order to focus our attention and direct our work toward a clear and compelling missional vision.

We believe that Southern Baptists will rally to a mission statement that offers a clear, concise, and deeply biblical vision of who we are and what we are to be about:

As a convention of churches, our missional vision is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.

Is this not who we are? Can we even think of settling for anything less? Our mission statement should be drawn directly from the words of Jesus. This missional vision must drive everything that Southern Baptists do, and reset every priority of the local church and the denomination.

If this is who we are, and what we know we must do, then let the whole world know that this is our mission.

Thus, we will ask Southern Baptists to adopt this missional vision as a statement of what draws us together, establishes our purpose, and defines our passion before our churches and the watching world.

COMPONENT TWO: Making Our Values Transparent

We must also work toward the creation of a new and healthy culture within the Southern Baptist Convention. If we are to grow together and work together in faithfulness to the command of Christ, we must establish a culture of trust, transparency, and truth among all Southern Baptists.

Thus, we ask Southern Baptists to embrace and adopt these Core Values:

CHRIST-LIKENESS

We depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and prayer to make us more like Jesus Christ.

TRUTH

We stand together in the truth of God's inerrant Word, celebrating the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

UNITY

We work together in love for the sake of the Gospel.

RELATIONSHIPS

We consider others more important than ourselves.

TRUST

We tell one another the truth in love and do what we say we will do.

FUTURE

We value Southern Baptists of all generations and embrace our responsibility to pass this charge to a rising generation in every age, faithful until Jesus comes.

LOCAL CHURCH

We believe the local church is given the authority, power, and responsibility to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world.

KINGDOM

We join other Christ-followers for the Gospel, the Kingdom of Christ, and the glory of God.

Thus, we will call Southern Baptists to embrace and adopt these Core Values as a means of ensuring that we work together in a way that will please our Lord and reflect our identity as fellow believers in service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

COMPONENT THREE: Encouraging Cooperative Program Giving and Other Great Commission Giving

A Great Commission Resurgence will require a new level of sacrificial giving from Southern Baptist church members and congregations. At the center of our funding stands the Cooperative Program, which since 1925 has served to mobilize the stewardship of Southern Baptists for worldwide missions and ministry.

We call upon Southern Baptists to reclaim our core identity as churches on mission, working together to take the Gospel to the nations and to fulfill our mandate as a Great Commission fellowship of churches. Our work together must be undergirded by cooperative investment in these tasks. We call upon Southern Baptists to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our reach. We also call upon Southern Baptists to celebrate all giving to our common work. We will recognize the total of all monies channeled through the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, the state conventions, and associations as Great Commission Giving. The greatest stewardship of Great Commission investment and deployment is giving through the Cooperative Program. We call upon Southern

Baptists to recommit to the Cooperative Program as the central and preferred conduit of Great Commission funding, without which we would be left with no unified and cooperative strategy and commitment to the Great Commission task. We are a Great Commission people who are called to sacrificial and increasing giving, that the peoples of the earth may know the salvation that comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Furthermore, we recognize that our national mission offerings are indispensable conduits for Great Commission funding. Therefore, we call upon Southern Baptists to adopt goals of giving no less than \$200 million annually through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and \$100 million annually through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions by 2015.

We reaffirm the definition of the Cooperative Program adopted by action of the 2007 Southern Baptist Convention. We honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective and efficient means of channeling the sacrificial support of our churches through undesignated giving which funds both the state conventions and the work of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We call upon the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to increase the percentage of their Cooperative Program giving.

We call upon the state conventions to increase the percentage of Cooperative Program funds directed to the Southern Baptist Convention.

We call upon every entity of the Southern Baptist Convention to maximize all Cooperative Program funds for the task of taking the Gospel to the nations and serving Great Commission churches in their fulfillment of this mandate.

We call upon all Southern Baptists to celebrate every dollar given by faithful Southern Baptists as part of Great Commission Giving, including designated gifts given to any Baptist association, state convention, and to the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We call upon Southern Baptists to evaluate every budget, from the budget of the individual Southern Baptist church member to the budgets of the Southern Baptist Convention and its entities in terms of a Great Commission focus and commitment.

We call upon Southern Baptists to exercise the stewardship of wealth for the Great Commission through estate planning and planned gifts that will undergird the work of the Great Commission long after we have departed this life.

Thus, we will call upon Southern Baptists to give as never before, to support the Cooperative Program as never before, and to celebrate every church's eager and sacrificial support of Great Commission Giving at every level.

COMPONENT FOUR: Reaching North America

As we listened to Southern Baptists, the mission of reaching North America with the Gospel was a clear concern and priority. This was a concern shared by leaders of the North American Mission Board as they met with us in the course of our work. The central concern of all was the priority of liberating NAMB to conduct and direct a strategy of reaching the United States and Canada with the Gospel and planting Gospel churches.

Thus, we believe that the North American Mission Board must be refocused and unleashed for greater effectiveness. Therefore, we call upon Southern Baptists to affirm NAMB with a priority to plant churches in

North America, reach our cities and underserved regions and people groups, and clarify its role to lead and accomplish efforts to reach North America with the Gospel.

The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention exists to penetrate lostness throughout North America by assisting Southern Baptist churches in their task of reaching North America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through ministries of evangelism, church planting, and to mobilize Southern Baptist churches as a missional movement. How will this be done?

This reinvention of the North American Mission Board that we envision will implement a missional strategy for planting churches in North America with a priority to reach metropolitan areas and underserved people groups. We desire for the North American Mission Board to encourage Southern Baptist churches to become church planting congregations. Regardless of the size or location of our churches, we call for each to have a vision for planting churches somewhere in North America. It is our desire that at least 50% of the ministry efforts of our North American Mission Board be given to assist churches in planting healthy, multiplying, and faithful Baptist congregations in the United States and Canada.

We also call for NAMB to reclaim its mission of assisting churches to make disciples, working with LifeWay Christian Resources and other partners. Our churches are in great need of leadership, strategies, and materials for making disciples. We believe that NAMB is best suited to fulfill this leadership mission for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Similarly, we call for NAMB to be prioritized with the task of leadership development through the development of current pastoral leadership, with particular attention to contextual evangelism and church planting. NAMB must become a central engine for building missional momentum among Southern Baptist pastors.

If we are going to reach the 258 million lost people in the United States and Canada, we must address the fact that the vast majority of our Cooperative Program mission funds devoted to North America are expended in the most evangelized regions of our work. Approximately two-thirds of our Cooperative Program dollars are spent on regions where only one-third of the population resides. In other words, the greatest percentage of mission funds remains where our own churches are concentrated. We call upon NAMB to penetrate lostness in partnership with state conventions located in the most unreached and underserved populations of North America.

Our hope and vision is to see NAMB reprioritized, decentralized, and fully authorized to lead Southern Baptists in this great work. This will mean the phasing out of Cooperative Agreements, a structure in place since the 1950s, that return a tremendous percentage of CP monies back to the regions where Southern Baptists are most greatly concentrated and often leaves NAMB with insufficient mobility to appoint personnel directly and ensure missional focus.

We recognize that in order to accomplish its mission for Southern Baptists, NAMB must work in partnership with the state conventions, and we affirm the need for this partnership to be based in cooperation and basic agreement concerning strategies. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the Cooperative Agreements must be replaced with a more appropriate structure and pattern of cooperation. Thus, we call for the leadership of the North American Mission Board to budget for a national strategy that will mobilize Southern Baptists in a great effort to reach North America with the Gospel and plant thriving, reproducing churches. We encourage NAMB to set a goal of phasing out all Cooperative Agreements within seven years, and to establish a new pattern of strategic partnership with the state conventions that will penetrate lostness and ensure greater responsiveness to the Southern Baptist Convention and greater effectiveness for NAMB in the appointment of missionary personnel and church planters.

Thus, we will ask Southern Baptists to unleash the North American Mission Board for a new era of leadership and service to Southern Baptists, pushing back against the lostness of the United States and Canada.

COMPONENT FIVE: Reaching Unreached and Underserved People Groups Within North America

When the Southern Baptist Convention was founded, the world was rather easily divided into “home” and “foreign” missions. That world is gone. Now, with revolutions in transportation and the movement of peoples, the world has come to North America. Indeed, some of the largest concentrations of populations of unreached and underserved people groups are found within the world’s so-called “international cities.” Beyond this, significant populations of these people groups are now found even in smaller communities, especially those with colleges and universities.

At present, the mission statement of the International Mission Board prevents active involvement in mission efforts within North America. We believe that restriction fits the past far better than the present, much less the future. The International Mission Board has the charge to develop strategies for reaching these unreached and underserved people groups around the world, and this most often means a deep involvement in language and cultural studies. We need to allow the IMB to utilize those skills and that knowledge within North America as well. Put simply, it makes no sense to duplicate this effort and work with an artificial separation of the mission.

Mission strategists estimate that there may be as many as 586 unreached and underserved people groups with representation within the United States. Many of these people groups are already within the reach of the International Mission Board, with personnel developing strategies based in their language and culture. We must take advantage of the expertise of both of our mission boards where it is most needed – working in coordination in order to make the greatest impact for the Great Commission.

Thus, such efforts must be done in communication with the North American Mission Board. This proposal has been thoroughly considered with NAMB leadership, and we are fully confident that these two mission boards can and will serve Southern Baptists and maximize their combined reach by working together in reaching these unreached and underserved people groups where they are found in North America. The North American Mission Board retains the leadership mission of reaching North America with the Gospel. We are encouraged to know that a spirit of cooperation already exists between the boards on this very issue.

Thus, we will ask Southern Baptists to entrust to the International Mission Board the ministry of reaching unreached and underserved people groups without regard to any geographic limitation.

COMPONENT SIX: Promoting the Cooperative Program and Elevating Stewardship

There can be no question that Southern Baptists must prioritize the promotion of the Cooperative Program and the elevation of stewardship among our churches. The 1995 “Covenant for a New Century” reorganization of the Convention assigned Cooperative Program promotion to the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. Later, stewardship education was added as a ministry assignment.

We believe that the state conventions must take the lead in both ministries. In essence, this is how the Cooperative Program began. As Albert McClellan, author of the official history of the Executive Committee noted, “It was understood from the beginning that state conventions should be responsible for promoting the Cooperative Program in the field and gathering the funds from the churches.”

The reason for this is straightforward and easy to see. The state conventions have the mechanisms in place

to collect funds and promote the Cooperative Program. This has been their historic role and continuing passion.

Clearly, there must also be a role for the Southern Baptist Convention. The Cooperative Program is a partnership, and both the SBC and the state conventions have important work to do. This means an important and continuing leadership role for the SBC Executive Committee as well.

We strongly encourage the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to work with the state conventions, charged with the responsibility of Cooperative Program and stewardship education, in developing a strategy for encouraging our churches to greater participation and investment in the Cooperative Program. This is an immediate need, made more urgent by the rise of a new generation of Southern Baptists, ready for leadership and deployment in service to the Great Commission. Our hope is that a unified strategy with clearly established goals will be in place by the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2013.

COMPONENT SEVEN: The Call of the Nations and the SBC Allocation Budget

For many years, Southern Baptists have been proud of the fact that 50 percent of all Cooperative Program funds received by the Southern Baptist Convention are distributed to the International Mission Board. Thus, we are able to say that half of all Cooperative Program receipts at the national level go to International Missions.

While this is a matter of genuine and understandable denominational pride, it has become too comfortable. It is time to increase that percentage above 50 percent.

We recognize that Southern Baptists are rightly committed to a full range of denominational programs, ministries, and mission efforts. The strength of the Cooperative Program is its reach and comprehensiveness, and for this we are thankful.

At the same time, we will never reach the world while staying in a position of denominational comfort. Therefore, it is our hope to see Southern Baptists break the “50 percent barrier” and make a bold statement of our present and future commitment to reach the nations with the Gospel.

We ask Southern Baptists to support this goal by affirming an intention to raise the Cooperative Program SBC Allocation Budget percentage received by the International Mission Board to 51 percent. Further, we ask that Southern Baptists affirm the intention to fund this increase through a reduction in the budget granted to Facilitating Ministries, thus making a statement about our commitment to reduce denominational infrastructure in order to set the pace for growth in commitment to reaching the nations.

CONCLUSION

The components of our report do not represent a revolution in Southern Baptist life and work. Our Task Force was given several months in which to look at the most urgent issues among us, and to find ways that will allow Southern Baptists to work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission.

We have come to the conclusion that these specific components will make a real difference, even as we recognize that these are only a start. This report must represent the beginning of a new spirit of Great Commission commitment and prioritization, not the end.

Therefore, at the conclusion of this report we bring a series of challenges that will reach every Southern Baptist church and church member, along with every level of Southern Baptist work and every entity of the Convention. We recognize that the challenge of working toward a Great Commission Resurgence will require the commitment of a generation, not merely of the messengers to an annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nevertheless, we are confident that these components are of vital importance to the future of our denomination and its work – and are key to making immediate progress toward a Great Commission Resurgence.

We must keep ever in mind the command that frames the very reason for our existence:

Then Jesus came and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” [Matthew 28:18-20, Holman Christian Standard Bible]

May God bring glory to His name and the redeeming power of the Gospel of Christ through granting to Southern Baptists in this generation what can only be described as a Great Commission Resurgence.

A world of lostness awaits. What are we waiting for?

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

1. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, adopt the following as the mission statement of the Southern Baptist Convention:

As a convention of churches, our missional vision is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.

2. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, adopt the following as Core Values for our work together:

CHRIST-LIKENESS – We depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and prayer to make us more like Jesus Christ.

TRUTH – We stand together in the truth of God’s inerrant Word, celebrating the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

UNITY – We work together in love for the sake of the Gospel.

RELATIONSHIPS – We consider others more important than ourselves.

TRUST – We tell one another the truth in love and do what we say we will do.

FUTURE – We value Southern Baptists of all generations and embrace our responsibility to pass this charge to a rising generation in every age, faithful until Jesus comes.

LOCAL CHURCH – We believe the local church is given the authority, power, and responsibility to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world.

KINGDOM – We join other Christ-followers for the Gospel, the Kingdom of Christ, and the glory of God.

3. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider recommending to the Southern Baptist Convention the adoption of the language and structure of Great Commission Giving as described in this report in order to enhance and celebrate the Cooperative Program and the generous support of Southern Baptists channeled through their churches, and to continue to honor and affirm the Cooperative Program as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our outreach. We affirm that designated gifts to special causes are to be given as a supplement to the Cooperative Program and not as a substitute for Cooperative Program giving. We further request that the boards of trustees of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, in consultation with the Woman’s Missionary Union, consider the adoption of the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offering goals as outlined in this report.
4. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider any revision to the ministry assignment of the North American Mission Board that may be necessary in order to accomplish the redirection of NAMB as outlined in this report; and that the Board of Trustees of the North American Mission Board be asked to consider the encouragements found within this report in all matters under their purview.
5. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request that the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention consider a revised ministry assignment for the International Mission Board that would remove any geographical limitation on its mission to reach unreached and underserved people groups wherever they are found.
6. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider working with the leadership of the state conventions in developing a comprehensive program of Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education in alignment with this report.
7. That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 15-16, 2010 in Orlando, Florida, request the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider recommending an SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget that will increase the percentage allocated to the International Mission Board to 51 percent by decreasing the Executive Committee’s percentage of the SBC Allocation Budget by 1 percent.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED TO ALL SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

We hold to an ecclesiology that honors and affirms both autonomy and cooperation. The Great Commission

Resurgence Task Force is well aware of this, and we realize that we cannot direct individual Christians, local churches, associations or state conventions to take any particular or specific action. This is as it should be. However, our doctrine of the church does not prevent us from challenging, encouraging, admonishing, and advising one another at all levels of SBC life for greater passion and effectiveness in pursuing the Great Commission. We are a convention of churches with a missional vision to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations. With all of this in mind, we wish to put forth the following as challenges for the future of the SBC that we might bring greater glory to the Lord Jesus as we seek to disciple all nations in the fulfillment of Matthew 28:18-20.

Challenges for Individual Christians

- Return to God in deep repentance of and brokenness over sin, denying self, and coming to God with complete humility.
- Commit to the total and absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of your life, understanding that Christ's lordship is inseparable from all aspects of the believer's life, including family obligations, business and profession, and recreational or leisure pursuits. We especially call on men to respond to this challenge.
- Devote yourself to a radical pursuit of the Great Commission in the context of obeying the Great Commandments of loving God and loving others.
- Participate in a local church sponsored evangelism training class sometime during 2011 and make this a regular component of the discipleship process in your life.
- Develop strategies as an individual for praying for, serving, sharing the Gospel and discipling neighbors, coworkers, and others with whom you come into regular contact.
- Bear witness to the Gospel through personal evangelism, seeing every individual as a sinner in need of the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone.
- Participate in a North American or international mission trip sponsored by your church or association at least once every four years.
- Grow in giving as a faithful financial stewards with at least 10% of your income going to your local church. However, see 10% as a place to begin in grace giving but not the place to stop.
- Determine to exercise a greater level of stewardship through estate planning and planned giving, leaving a percentage of your estate to your local church, the Cooperative Program, and to a faithful Baptist entity such as NAMB, IMB, a Baptist college, or our seminaries.
- Give serious consideration to adoption and orphan care as a component of Great Commission living.
- Determine to develop a well-rounded Christian worldview that allows you to clearly articulate both what you believe and why you believe.
- Repent of any and all sin that has prevented you from being fully used by our Lord in fulfilling the Great Commission. This includes sins of idolatry, pride, selfish ambition,

hatred, racism, bigotry and other sins of the flesh that dishonor the name of Jesus.

Challenges for Individual Families

- Emphasize biblical gender roles with believing fathers taking the lead in modeling Great Commission Christianity and taking the primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of their families.
- Recognize that parents have the primary responsibility of educating their children and helping them to cultivate a Christian worldview way of thinking and living.
- Build gospel saturated homes that see children as a gift from God and our initial mission field. Consider, in this context, the vital ministries of adoption and orphan care.
- Make prayer for and the evangelism and discipleship of children a family priority that begins with parents and is assisted by local churches.
- Develop strategies as a family for praying for, serving, and sharing the Gospel with neighbors, coworkers, and others with whom family members come into regular contact.
- Adopt a different unreached people group each month and pray as a family 1) for IMB missionaries working with the people group, 2) for the conversion, baptism and discipling of countless individuals within the people group, and 3) for the establishment of biblical churches among the people group.
- Adopt a different North American church plant each month and pray as a family 1) for the church's leadership team, 2) for the conversion, baptism and discipling of countless individuals in the church's region, and 3) for the birthing of future church plants from the church.
- Spend a family vacation participating in a local church or association sponsored mission trip.
- Consider setting up a mission's savings account for each of your children that would enable them to spend six months to a year in a North American or International Missions context soon after graduating from high school.

Challenges for Local Churches and Pastors

- Lead your church by calling a Solemn Assembly in January 2011 for the purpose of calling Christ's people to return to God, to repentance, and to humility in service to a renewed commitment to Christ and the Great Commission. We request that the newly elected President of the Southern Baptist Convention lead Southern Baptists in this effort.
- Become knowledgeable of the mission field of your specific region, identifying the various people groups and developing a strategy to penetrate the lostness in your region. Be intentional in working with your local association, state convention and NAMB in pursuing this task.
- Work to cultivate a Great Commission atmosphere that is contagious in your church and becomes the DNA of the pastor, staff, adults, students, youth and children of your local body

of Christ.

- Working with the IMB and NAMB, set goals for Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong that will enable us to send \$200 million to the IMB and \$100 million to NAMB in annual gifts by 2015.
- Strengthen mission education for believers of all ages, working with the Woman's Missionary Union and other missions education programs. Every believer must be made aware of the global missions challenge.
- Lead your church to grow and increase in sacrificial Cooperative Program giving.
- Make sure every sermon, devotion, or other type of teaching is gospel centered and driven by the inerrant and infallible text of Scripture with emphasis on how to apply the text to the lives of different kinds of people.
- Make sure every sermon, devotion, or other type of teaching clearly articulates and applies the gospel message and is centered in the grand narrative of Scripture.
- Call your people continually to a radical devotion and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- Preach passionately for the conversion of the lost and extend consistently the gospel call for persons to be saved.
- Honor the role of the evangelist, affirming the calling and witness of those who give their lives to the call of the Gospel.
- Challenge people to identify with Christ and testify to Him through believer's baptism by immersion.
- Call people passionately and consistently to surrender their lives to full-time ministry. Include in this call the challenge to a career as a missionary through the IMB or NAMB.
- Preach regularly and passionately on Christian stewardship, helping your people see this as a vital component of discipleship and life lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Undergird this with lessons on biblical stewardship in your church's Bible Study ministries.
- Cultivate an atmosphere of evangelism, missions, discipleship and biblical theology that permeates every aspect of the church's ministry.
- Give particular attention to the evangelizing and discipling of children and youth.
- Get involved in a regular church-planting program at some level of your congregation's capability. This can include specific partnerships with another church, your association, state convention or NAMB.
- Adopt an unreached people group and an underserved megacity in North America and regularly inform the membership about them, pray for them, and when applicable, work

toward short-term mission trips to serve them. Encourage families to consider moving to those cities to be part of the core group for that plant.

- Plan at least one evangelism training course annually for your church members; consider inviting members of other churches in your association to participate, especially smaller churches.
- Plan at least one North American or international mission trip a year and/or encourage members to participate in mission trips sponsored by a local association.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for sharing the Gospel with every person in your community with no regard to racial, social or economic status. This may include elements such as home-to-home evangelism, neighborhood block parties, servant evangelism projects, one-on-one mentoring, after-school programs, university campus outreach, innovative outreach events, neighborhood Bible studies, evangelistic mercy ministries, etc.
- Enter, if possible, the world of private Christian schooling and Christian homeschooling to provide a Christian alternative for the education of children, especially in areas hostile to the Christian worldview. See this as a complement to the many faithful Christians serving in the public school systems who see their calling to be salt and light in a missional assignment.
- Encourage Christian schools to send each student in their high school years on a cross-cultural missions experience or to an international mission field for at least one week before they graduate, developing a strategy to pay for these trips as a school in order to build a genuine passion and commitment to reach the nations.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for Great Commission discipling of all church members. This may include elements such as Sunday School and/or small group ministries, mission education programs, one-on-one mentoring, affinity ministries (e.g. women, singles, etc.), pastoral leadership training, diaconal leadership training, etc.
- Develop a comprehensive church-based strategy for reaching and discipling college students, including international students.
- Develop a comprehensive church-based strategy for reaching and discipling individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.
- Send teenagers and young adults on mission trips with the hope of exposing every young believer to global missions.
- Partner with like-minded ethnic churches or missions in evangelizing immigrants and other underserved ethnic minorities, including migrants and other short-term workers.
- Reclaim the Baptist vision of regenerate church membership, recognizing that this vision is central to our Baptist identity and understanding of the church.
- Reclaim corrective church discipline as the biblical means of restoring believers to healthy discipleship and faithfulness.

- Emphasize meaningful church membership through such practices as decision counseling, believer's baptism, new convert mentoring, membership covenants, prospective member classes, and redemptive church discipline.

Challenges for Local Associations

- Enthusiastically embrace the missional vision and core values of the SBC, allowing them to guide your work and set your priorities.
- Adopt The Baptist Faith & Message (2000) as your confessional basis of association and adopt some shared core values and priorities that characterize the cooperating churches of your association.
- Organize quarterly associational prayer meetings for the conversion of the lost and the planting of sound churches in the underserved and unreached areas of North America and around the globe.
- Work with state conventions and the SBC to set aside January of every year as a month of prayer for the conversion of unreached people groups around the globe.
- Plan at least one annual foreign mission trip and one annual North American mission trip and encourage all the churches in the association to participate, especially smaller churches.
- Develop associational collections of evangelism and discipleship resources and regularly inform the churches about the availability of such resources.
- Work with cooperating churches to plant at least one new church a year in an underserved area within or near the association.
- Work with cooperating churches to plan at least one mercy ministry focused outreach event every year.

Challenges for State Conventions

- Embrace with enthusiasm the missional vision and core values of the SBC, allowing them to guide your work and set your priorities.
- Adopt The Baptist Faith & Message (2000) as a confessional basis for cooperation and adopt shared core values and priorities that characterize cooperating churches.
- Make church planting a priority and develop church planting partnerships with North American urban centers and underserved regions outside of the Southeast and Southwest.
- Determine to return to the historic ideal of a 50/50 Cooperative Program distribution between the state conventions and the SBC, recognizing the historic commitment of the SBC and the state conventions to share expenses for the promotion and administration of the Cooperative

Program.

- Hold state convention colleges and universities accountable to Baptist convictions and an authentic Christian worldview education. Baptist colleges and universities must inculcate a Great Commission mindset in their students and deploy them worldwide in short-term missionary service.
- Eliminate programs that do not directly assist local churches in fulfilling their biblical mandate to make disciples of all people.
- Work with the SBC and local associations to set aside January of every year as a month of prayer for the conversion of unreached people groups around the globe.
- Work with local associations and local churches to plan regional evangelism and discipleship training events on at least a semiannual basis.
- Encourage state convention children's homes to consider deep investment in Great Commission adoption/foster ministries that connect children with Baptist families within the state.
- Recognize the powerful witness of Disaster Relief programs as Southern Baptists have touched millions of lives in the aftermath of disaster and in a moment of acute need.
- Develop and celebrate mercy ministries which can be used as avenues for churches to serve others and open doors for evangelism.

LifeWay

- Create materials that our churches can use to teach biblical stewardship through our Sunday Schools and other Bible Study Ministries.
- Create materials our churches can use to teach personal evangelism and the call to each Christian to be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission. Create a simple but biblically rooted disciple-making plan that helps pastors and leaders to multiply themselves.
- Develop materials that assist individuals in their understanding and involvement in the Great Commission, both in North America and the world.
- Strengthen ministries directed to the support of Christian schools and homeschooling families.

Challenges for the Seminaries

- Remember never to lose sight that your calling is to serve the churches of the SBC.
- Maintain fidelity to our Confession of Faith (The Baptist Faith & Message 2000).

- Train and send to our churches Great Commission ministers who will lead us in becoming Great Commission churches.
- Develop a strategy for cultivating more local church-based partnerships for M.Div.-level theological education, particularly in underserved regions in North America.
- Develop more opportunities for students to gain tangible experience and earn seminary credit by serving in local church internships or short-term mission assignments and provide financial assistance to students who avail themselves of these opportunities.
- Give primary attention to masters and doctoral level programs for the education and training of pastors, missionaries, and other church leaders.
- Train students in the skills of disciple-making, affirming this calling as central to the task of the minister.
- Develop programs of study (and host regular conferences and workshops) that are specifically geared toward equipping local church leadership (both students and non- students) in areas such as preaching, evangelism, discipleship, pastoral ministries, church planting, international missions, and biblical counseling, etc.
- Cooperate with local associations, state conventions, NAMB and the IMB in planning and hosting church planting training that puts international missions and church planting in the life-blood of all the students our churches entrust to your care.

Challenge for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

- Renew efforts to call upon God’s people to live and demonstrate Christ-likeness and moral witness as an example and testimony for Jesus Christ and continue efforts to preserve religious freedom in our nation so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed and the Great Commission fulfilled.

Challenge for GuideStone Financial Resources

- Mobilize those who are retired and receiving benefits to use their energy in praying for and becoming personally involved in the evangelization of North America and the World.

Challenges to All Southern Baptist Leaders

- Take advantage of every opportunity to support the Cooperative Program among Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist churches.
- Enhance confidence in all Southern Baptist work by honoring the Business and Financial Plan of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Commit to a continuous process of denominational review in order to ensure maximum implementation of the Great Commission.

THE GREAT COMMISSION TASK FORCE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Johnny Hunt - SBC President, Ex-officio member of the GCR Task Force, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, GA

Ronnie Floyd – GCR Task Force Chairman, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Springdale & The Church at Pinnacle Hills, AR

Daniel Akin – President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

Tom Biles – Executive Director, Tampa Bay Baptist Association, FL

John Cope – Senior Pastor of Keystone Community Fellowship, Chalfont, PA

David Dockery – President, Union University, Jackson, TN

John Drummond – Owner, DMG Development, Panama City, FL

Donna Gaines – Women’s Communicator, Pastor’s Wife, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, TN

Al Gilbert – Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Larry Grays – Senior Pastor, Midtown Bridge Church, Atlanta, GA

J.D. Greear – Lead Pastor, The Summit Church, Durham, NC

Ruben Hernandez – Vocational Evangelist, Plano, TX

Harry Lewis – Vice-President of Partnership, Missions, and Mobilization Group at NAMB, GA

Kathy Ferguson Litton – Women’s Communicator, Pastor’s Wife, First Baptist North Mobile, AL

Albert Mohler, Jr. - President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Mike J. Orr – Pastor, First Baptist Church, Chipley, FL

Frank Page – Vice-President of Evangelism at NAMB, GA

Jim Richards – Executive Director of Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, TX

Roger Spradlin – Senior Pastor, Valley Baptist Church, Bakersfield, CA

Ted H. Traylor – Pastor, Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, FL

Simon Tsoi - Executive Director of Chinese Baptist Fellowship of the U. S. and Canada, AZ

Robert White – Executive Director of the Georgia Baptist Convention, GA

Ken Whitten – Senior Pastor, Idlewild Baptist Church, Lutz, FL