

WHAT IS THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM?

The Cooperative Program—How it came about

Since its inception in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has always had one mission—the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). To fulfill its assigned part of this divine mandate, each SBC entity made special offering appeals to the churches. This method was referred to as the “societal” approach to missions and resulted in severe financial deficits, competition among entities, overlapping pledge campaigns, and frequent emergency appeals which greatly hampered the expanding ministry opportunities God was giving Southern Baptists. Some entities took out loans to cover operating costs until pledges or special offerings were received.

In 1919, the leaders of the SBC proposed the 75 Million Campaign, a five-year pledge campaign that, for the first time, included everything—the missions and ministries of all the state conventions as well as that of the Southern Baptist Convention. Though falling short of its goals, a God-given partnership of missions support was conceived—The Cooperative Program. Since its launch in 1925, the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program has been dependent upon individuals, churches, state conventions, and SBC entities cooperating, working toward a common goal of sharing the gospel with every person on the planet.

Cooperative Program — How it works

Simply put, it begins with you. You give yourself first to God (2 Cor. 8:5). Next, out of gratitude and obedience to God for what He has done for you, you commit to give back to Him, through your church, a portion of what He provides. This is commonly called a tithe and represents ten percent of your income (Lev. 27:30, Mal. 3:10).

Your church decides the next step. Every year your church prayerfully decides how much of its undesignated gifts will be committed to reaching people in your state and around the world through Cooperative Program. This amount is then forwarded to your state Baptist convention.

During the annual meeting of your state convention, messengers from your church and other churches across the state decide what percentage of Cooperative Program gifts contributed by local congregations stays in your state to support local missions and ministries. The percentage to be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention for North American and international missions and ministries is also determined at this time.

At the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, messengers from across the country decide how the gifts received from the states will be distributed among SBC entities. These gifts are used by Southern Baptist entities to send and support missionaries, train pastors, and other ministry leaders; provide relief for retired ministers and widows; and address social, moral, and ethical concerns relating to our faith and families.

The bottom line – people around the world hear the gospel and receive Christ.

Note: Your local Southern Baptist association does not receive Cooperative Program gifts directly. It ministers through gifts received directly from churches and often receives Cooperative Program gifts indirectly in the form of support from state conventions and the North American Mission Board.

Cooperative Program — What it does

Churches in your state work together through your state convention to support a wide array of ministries and missions including: evangelism efforts, children's homes, volunteer missions, missions education, new churches, colleges and universities, collegiate ministries, camps, and much more. For additional information concerning your state convention, log on to www.sbc.net and click on state conventions.

Through the International Mission Board (www.imb.org), Southern Baptists support approximately 5,300 missionaries who are engaging more than 1,100 different people groups around the world.

New churches numbering over 1,455 are planted through the efforts of more than 5,271 North American Missionaries, whose efforts are coordinated through your North American Mission Board (www.namb.net) and individual state conventions.

Working together, Southern Baptists saw 955,909 new believers baptized in 2006!

Six Southern Baptist seminaries (Southern, Southeastern, Midwestern, Southwestern, Golden Gate, and New Orleans) educate in excess of 16,000 pastors, missionaries, and future church leaders each year.*

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission is dedicated to addressing social, moral, and ethical concerns, with particular attention to their impact on American families and their faith. They also provide print resources that offer scriptural responses to the moral and ethical problems of our culture.

Although they receive no Cooperative Program support, LifeWay Christian Resources, Guidestone Financial Resources and the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) actively promote Cooperative Program in publications and missions resources.

Cooperative Program — Its Potential

If "two are better than one" (Eccl. 4:9), how much better are more than 16 million? This is the current membership in more than 44,696 Southern Baptist churches across the United States. With a global population exceeding 6.5 billion and a command to take the gospel to every nation, we must enhance our cooperative efforts if we are going to fulfill Christ's command.

To help Cooperative Program reach its potential, would you please:

- **Pray.** Pray regularly for your Southern Baptist missionaries in your state and around the globe. "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers." Matthew 9:38 (HCSB)
- **Go.** Be involved in some sort of missions endeavor. Talk with your pastor about the available opportunities. You are God's missionary right where you live. "Go...and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:19 (HCSB)
- **Give.** Out of love for the Lord, give regularly to Him through your church. If you are not tithing, begin to do so and also discover the blessings of giving beyond the tithe. Encourage your church to increase its participation in Cooperative Program.

"Since you excel in so many ways ... now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving." 2 Corinthians 8:7 (NLT)

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse." Malachi 3:10 (NKJV)

Thank you for your love for the Lord, your love for people, and your participation in Cooperative Program.

Beginning with the year 2006, information reflects SBC fiscal year, October 1 – September 30, and is pulled from reports submitted by state conventions and compared with the SBC Annual.

* Statistic found in the 2008 SBC Book of Reports