

**Progress Report of the
Great Commission Resurgence Task Force
of the Southern Baptist Convention
February 22, 2010**

***Delivered by Dr. Ronnie W. Floyd,
Chairman of the Great Commission Resurgence
Task Force of the Southern Baptist Convention***

I want to thank Dr. Johnny Hunt and each of you for extending us the privilege of serving on the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. Our entire task force has joined me in believing this was not a request to dialogue about denominational matters, but a calling of God to respond to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

When we meet, we pray and we share the Word of God together. The first action in our first meeting was to get on our knees for a while before anything else was done and cry out to God. We also share our dreams and visions for the churches and work of Southern Baptists. We share our passion to see the Gospel advanced globally. Our task force is very diverse. In June of 2009, we started as 22 individuals with all kinds of varying thoughts and desires. In February of 2010, we are one in Christ and one in heart in what I am going to share with you tonight. As Chairman, I thank the members of this task force and our President for their great service to Jesus in this assignment.

To Dr. Morris Chapman and Chairman Randall James, thank you for the privilege of speaking to the Executive Committee. To the members of the Executive Committee, I have been where you are. I served on this committee for ten years and served as Chairman for two of those years. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of sharing our vision with you tonight. To the leaders of our SBC national entities, I am grateful to each of you and have appreciated dialoguing with you. To the leaders of our state conventions, thank you for meeting with our task force and sharing your

heart and vision. To the members of the press here tonight, thank you for helping us share our work with Southern Baptists and thank you in advance for your work in helping us share our journey and future actions with Southern Baptists and beyond. To everyone here tonight, thank you for coming to share in our time together.

When I was asked to embrace the chairmanship of this task force, I told Dr. Hunt the first thing I wanted to do was to support this movement with prayer; therefore, we asked God to give us at least 5,000 prayer partners to walk with us in this journey. We established a website where each prayer partner could register their commitment to pray daily for the work of the Great Commission as well as for the Task Force. On August 1, we launched www.pray4gcr.com and asked God to call at least 5,000 prayer partners to join us in praying daily for the Great Commission. Within just 35 days, God raised up at least 5,000 prayer partners, and today we have 6,218 GCR prayer partners from 1,574 cities, 49 states, and 30 countries of the world. We pray this number continues to increase all the way to Orlando. If nothing else would occur from our work, this Great Commission Resurgence would already be on the way to success because we are praying daily for it to occur. Without a strong commitment to prayer, we will never see a resurgence of the Great Commission in our personal lives, churches, and through the work of Southern Baptists.

In our 2009 annual meeting, over 95% of our messengers approved with great enthusiasm the following 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.* This was a

significant moment that began a grassroots spiritual movement called the Great Commission Resurgence. We believe the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando expect change and expect the leaders in our Convention to lead us towards the changes that are needed.

As we have listened to Southern Baptists, read their vast correspondence to us and considered over 137 items they have recommended for us to do, we have tried to keep our focus on one thing: the Great Commission. We have been asked to bring a report and any recommendations concerning how Southern Baptists can work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission. There has been a strong pull away from this focused assignment. Much noise has been generated about our work, but we have stayed focused on Great Commission matters.

In our last meeting together, I began our time with words from the book of Joel. I had shared with our task force that in days of praying and fasting, I had asked God for a word about our work. When I shared with our group what I believed God had shared with me about the Great Commission Resurgence, there was an immediate unanimity about this word from the book of Joel. In fact, when we spent time talking about what to share in our progress report to you, they believed I needed to share these words with you.

The Bible records in Joel 2:12-17 the following words, and I am reading from the Holman Christian Standard Bible,

Joel 2:12 Even now—

|this is| the LORD’S declaration—

turn to Me with all your heart,

with fasting, weeping, and mourning.

Joel 2:13 Tear your hearts,
not just your clothes,
and return to the LORD your God.
For He is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger, rich in faithful love,
and He relents from sending disaster.

Joel 2:14 Who knows? He may turn and relent
and leave a blessing behind Him,
|so you can| offer grain and wine
to the LORD your God.

Joel 2:15 Blow the horn in Zion!
Announce a sacred fast;
proclaim an assembly.

Joel 2:16 Gather the people;
sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom,
and the bride her honeymoon chamber.

Joel 2:17 Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers,
weep between the portico and the altar.
Let them say:
"Have pity on Your people, LORD,
and do not make Your inheritance a disgrace,
an object of scorn among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

The urgency and call from God was for His people to return to Him in total surrender, complete humility, and with a new attitude. God told them it was not good enough to simply rip your garments when something is not good. God wants our hearts broken before Him, returning to Him with praying, fasting, weeping, and mourning. The call from God was to return to Him now and they would realize that He was full of compassion and grace, willing to release them of judgment, and once again bless them. He called them to respond to Him individually and together. He called them to fast together, to worship together, and to come before Him together. He called them to do this now, with urgency, even calling newlyweds to leave their bridal chamber before they consummated their marriage so they could repent and return to God.

I believe with all my heart that God is calling us to return to Him *now* in deep repentance of our sin, in brokenness over our sin, denying our pride and selfishness and returning to God with complete humility. The boasting, ego, and pride that goes on in our lives, our churches, and our denomination is unacceptable to God. The disunity in our churches and in our denomination is so wrong and sinful. We need to repent and return to God.

With rhetoric we bemoan our dismal baptism numbers, our declining and plateaued churches, and our economic selfishness. The casting of criticism has resulted in a caustic cynicism that just adds to our rhetoric and writings. We attempt to treat symptoms rather than the root issues of sin and carnality. The rhetoric needs to cease and the repentance personally and corporately must begin. We need to repent of our sins and return to God.

While tonight you will hear our vision that does ask Southern Baptists to considering changing some things, we realize our number one need is to return to God in deep repentance and experience a fresh wave of His Spirit

upon our lives, ministries, and work of our denomination. We need a fresh and compelling vision that will only come when we are right with Him.

In order to understand the power of Joel 2:12-17, you have to understand it within the context of the entire book.

Joel 1:1-14 A present crisis was occurring as God was judging His people for their sinfulness. He took away His provision to them, His protection of them, and their personal joy.

Joel 1:15-2:11 A future crisis was predicted to occur which Joel called, "The Day of the Lord," a time of judgment occurring apocalyptically, at the end of time of which no person would be able to endure.

Joel 2:12-17 The people of God returned to God in prayer, fasting, and repentance.

Joel 2:18-27 THEN God answered their prayer and saw their change in heart and once again provided for them, protected them, and granted them joy.

Joel 2:28-32 AFTER THIS the Lord gave them a word about the Holy Spirit of God coming upon all people everywhere. Joel prophesied there would come a day when the Holy Spirit would come upon all people and God would do miraculous things in their midst. The initial fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 began on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. However, the complete fulfillment of it will take place the nearer we are to the return of Jesus Christ.

Joel not only said that God will pour out His Spirit upon all people, but He would pour out His Spirit in the final days. Joel says, "in those days," there will be an outpouring of the Spirit released as the Gospel increasingly is shared prior to the coming of the Lord and the final judgment. I believe we are on the brink of the mightiest outpouring of the Holy Spirit to have ever occurred in the world. There are certain parts of the world where we

are now seeing a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in gospel sharing, gospel preaching, gospel churches, and gospel change.

How else would you explain that in an Al-Jazeera interview, the Libyan Sheik talked about how six million Muslims convert to Christianity annually? How else would you explain a church planting movement in a northern Chinese province that has 20,000 new believers and 500 new churches in less than five years and at the heart of this has been one of our workers? How else would you explain another church planting movement in China that started in 2001 and today is the fastest church planting movement in the world to date? They have seen nearly two million baptisms and more than 80,000 new church starts in less than a decade. All of this has been assessed and validated. How else can you explain that people are coming to Christ from virtually every religious background including Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims? Be encouraged, God is also pouring out His Spirit mightily in Asia, the Orient, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe as well as other places around the globe.

The invitation of God that Joel wrote about in Joel 2:32, Peter talked about in Acts 2, and Paul wrote about in **Romans 10:13**, was that there would come a day when, **"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."** The closer we get to the coming of Jesus Christ, the more the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come upon the world. This outpouring will result in an ever increasing sharing and explosion of the gospel message globally. In this climactic and cosmic moment, as this outpouring of the Holy Spirit and gospel explosion occurs simultaneously and globally, we will see an ever-increasing, exceeding number of people responding in unprecedented ways to Jesus. The result will be the greatest worldwide harvest in human history as God bestows in this final moment an unusual wave of grace upon the world in His final call to every person across the globe to declare Jesus as Lord.

I believe we are on the brink of this global harvest. It is a great day to advance the gospel to every people group in the world. I have a question for you. How else can one explain that Revelation 5 and 7 both verify there will be redeemed people giving praise to Jesus who are, "from every tribe and language and people and nation?" The Great Commission will be fulfilled, the gospel will be advanced, people from every tribe, language, and nation will be saved and worshipping at the Throne of God. While God can fulfill His Great Commission without us, I pray we will return to God and get in on this mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will result in the greatest worldwide harvest in human history.

Now is the time we must experience this Great Commission Resurgence. In Joel chapter three we learn that, in the future, multitudes will be in the valley of decision. They will not be in that valley to be given a final opportunity to make a decision for Christ because it will be too late. They will be in that valley to receive God's final decision about them.

This is why we must answer the call of Jesus Christ to advance the gospel personally, strategically, and progressively, meaning we must take the gospel to people and places where the gospel has never been before. We must answer God's call to global advancement.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Why is this needed? Why do we really need a Great Commission Resurgence?" The answer is simple: The lostness of North America and the entire world is staggering.

Do you realize that among the 340 million people living in North America, there are 258,000,000 people estimated to be lost and perishing? Do you realize in the seven states or conventions that cover Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Washington, Oregon, and Canada, there is a population of 92 million plus people with at least 82% of them being lost? Do you realize that we have only 3,983 churches and congregations in this entire region and 2,276 of them are in the state of California? Do you

realize that in the nine northeastern states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont, there is a population of 54,924,000 plus people with an estimated percentile of lostness of 83%, and we have only 1,068 churches and congregations to penetrate this lostness?

We need to embrace the reality of lostness, but we must also grasp it in a global context. The United States comprises only 4.5% of the world's population of 6.8 billion people. Of the world's population, there are 5,845 people groups who have no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the 6.8 billion people in the world presently, 4 billion of them have little to no access to the gospel and 1.5 billion of these have never even had the possibility of hearing the name of Jesus and the message of the Good News. Missiologists will tell you that 90% of the entire world is lost without Jesus Christ. Every Christ-follower, local church, local association, state convention, and national entity needs to understand the lost condition of the world.

Please understand: To the degree we grasp lostness will be the degree we are willing to do whatever is necessary to penetrate it. If we do not understand lostness intellectually and theologically, we will not change nor will we do what must be done to penetrate it. I am convinced we have not only forgotten what it is like to be lost, but we act as if lostness does not exist, there is really no hell, and many times conduct ourselves as Universalists. Concerning lostness, it seems we have developed theological amnesia or theological Alzheimer's disease.

Let me make something very clear: There is no other way to God than through Jesus Christ. Repentance of sin is necessary to salvation. If one does not know Christ, he or she spends eternity in hell. Based upon our theological understanding of salvation, Jesus is the one and only way to God; therefore, we have no alternative but to do whatever needs to be done

to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ into places where the gospel has never been before. The level of our urgency will be determined by our understanding and belief in the lostness of the United States and the entire world.

This is why our task force believes we must return to the primacy and centrality of the local church in our denomination. Jesus loved His church and gave His blood for us. The headquarters of our denomination is not in Nashville, Louisville, Dallas-Fort Worth, Richmond, or any other location of one of our national Baptist entities. The headquarters of our denomination is in each one of the 50,000 local churches and congregations in our convention.

In order for this Great Commission Resurgence to occur, each church has to own the responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission. Each church has to own Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. Each church has to own the responsibility of reaching their village or community or town or city with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each church has to own the responsibility of reaching their region, America, and the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe that each minister of the Gospel needs to become a missional strategist. Why? If we do not begin to understand the complexity of lostness in our own backyard and strategize to reach them, the lostness will never be penetrated with the Gospel. Business as usual and what we are doing as a whole is not working.

It is said, "*Facts are our friends.*" This is true, as long as we pay attention to the facts and do not act as though they are non-existent. If we deny the present reality of where we really are, we are jeopardizing our future and the generations who will follow us. We need to return to God and recommit ourselves to advancing the Gospel to all generations.

Let me illustrate: In 1950, our convention had 27,788 churches, while in 2008, our convention had grown to 44,848 churches. In 1950, the

population of our nation was 150,600,000 people, while our population today is 306 million people. Even though the population of our nation has more than doubled, and our convention has at least 17,060 more churches than we did in 1950, we still baptized 33,887 less people in 2008 than we did in 1950. This should break our hearts and put us on our knees. If we are honest with ourselves, it is hard to defend that we are holding our own or doing as well as we can. How can we even think this when we are not reaching the present generation of teenagers? In 1972, we baptized 140,000 teenagers and in 2008, we baptized only 75,000 teenagers. May God help us.

This is why we believe that every local church needs to begin to operate as a missional strategy center. After the church gathers for worship, the church must scatter and send the people to advance the Gospel. When ministers see themselves as missional strategists and churches begin to operate as missional strategy centers, releasing and sending our people to advance the gospel regionally, nationally, and globally, we will begin to penetrate the lostness in our world.

As one member of this task force, through this GCR journey, God has changed my life. I believe that most, if not all, of the members of our task force would testify the same. We have been gripped by the reality of the lost condition of our world and about our condition as a denomination, but through this journey we have also been set on fire by the call of God to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through intense times of prayer and seeking God, we believe God is giving us a vision for the future of our convention of churches. On this 22nd day of February, 2010, we desire to begin to unveil this vision. While tonight is a substantial progress report, our work is not yet done.

As we begin to unveil our vision for the future, we pray it is clear and compelling. We believe Southern Baptists asked us to address this question:

What needs to be done? What needs to be done in order for us, as Southern Baptists, to work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission? What needs to be done to assist our churches in their Great Commission work? What needs to be done to reach North America for Jesus Christ? What needs to be done to advance the Gospel to every people group in the world? What needs to be done to build our missionary force in number and strength, rather than see them have to be brought home due to financial challenges? Therefore, we are going to begin to unveil to you tonight some of the things we believe need to be done.

We are asking our Southern Baptist Convention to act on what we believe needs to be done. Surely Southern Baptists can agree that we need a new and compelling vision for the future. We have been asked by this convention to give a report and recommendations about how we can more faithfully and effectively work together to advance the Gospel and it is our intention to do just that. This June, we are asking our convention to accept this vision, endorse this vision, and champion this vision. We are asking each of you to join us in this vision. It is our prayer tonight that God continues to build a coalition of Christ-followers all the way to Orlando. We urge you to come around this vision as we share it and continue to unfold it as our work progresses toward its conclusion.

We ask you to re-imagine with us ways we can better fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Our progress report tonight will speak to six specific components of this vision we are asking Southern Baptists to champion for the future.

Component #1: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, we will ask Southern Baptists to rally towards a clear and compelling missional vision and begin to conduct ourselves with core values that will create a new and healthy culture within the Southern Baptist Convention.

We believe our missional vision needs to be the following:

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.

Can you imagine what would happen if the Southern Baptist Convention and its entities would begin to be compelled by this missional vision? This missional vision should drive the entire work of Southern Baptists. We are a people who believe we are called to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations. If we want to see solidarity occur and execution take place, we need to rally our Southern Baptist Convention entities around this missional vision. Our churches will be thrilled to be a part of a convention with such a compelling missional vision.

We also believe that if this missional vision is to be embraced long-term, we need to create a new and healthy culture within the Southern Baptist Convention. We believe the following eight core values can help create this new and needed culture. These core values articulate what we stand for, how we should work together, how we govern our personal relationships, and how we should be guided in making decisions. Therefore, we desire that these eight core values be embraced:

CHRIST-LIKENESS

We depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit 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 each other 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 of 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.

If we are going to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and make disciples of all the nations, we need to learn how to get along with each other, creating a new culture among us. Our present culture represents 1 Corinthians 3 much more than 1 Corinthians 13. Envy, strife, and division needs to become unacceptable. Instead, let this world know us by the depths of our love for Jesus, the Gospel, and one another. If we are going to keep our people engaged and give hope to a future generation, we need to create a culture built upon these core values.

How can we not conduct ourselves with Christ-likeness? How can we not live out the Truth of God's Word we so valiantly stand upon? How can we not be passionate about unity, working together for the sake of the Gospel? How can we not trust one another when trust is the key to all relationships? How can we not pass on the charge of the Great Commission to a rising generation, giving them a compelling, missional vision and creating a culture that operates by biblical values? How can we not have a denomination that responds to the local church, serving and assisting it at all times? How can we not embrace other Christ-followers for the Gospel, the Kingdom of Christ, and the glory of God? The Southern Baptist Convention is not the Kingdom of God, but is a part of the Kingdom of God.

We began with our desired Missional Vision and Core Values because they have to drive and sustain our Great Commission work together.

Component #2: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, that our North American Mission Board needs to be reinvented and released. Therefore, in order to do this, we will ask Southern Baptists that the North American Mission Board prioritize efforts to plant churches in North America and to reach our nation's cities and clarify its role to lead and accomplish efforts to reach North America with the Gospel.

What does all this mean? We believe the North American Mission Board can be a catalyst in helping our churches develop a stronger and more strategic vision to reach the United States and Canada.

The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention exists to assist 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 direct strategy for planting churches in North America with a priority to reach metropolitan areas and under-served 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 want each to have a vision for and get involved in planting churches some way, 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.

Why should priority be given to the cities? Do you realize that close to 200 million Americans live in the top 100 metropolitan regions of America? Do you realize that for the first time in recorded history, the majority of the

entire world is living in metropolitan areas? I want to highlight just one of the major cities in America, New York City. 8.3 million people live in the city itself; however, metropolitan New York City has 18.8 million people. In New York City, there are over 500 different ethnic groups with significant population. Over 60% of New York City residents were born in another country or are children of those born outside of the United States. If we are going to reach a major city like New York City, we need an explosion in church planting to occur. If we could penetrate a city like this with the Gospel, we would penetrate a major international city that exerts powerful influence over global finance, fashion, commerce, culture, politics, and entertainment. Just think what would happen in New York City if we were able to implement an aggressive strategy to mobilize hundreds of our churches to plant gospel churches in this city. I could say the same about other cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, or other major cities in America.

Speaking of reaching major cities, 80% of the 33.7 million people who live in Canada live in metropolitan regions. While we give priority to planting churches in the cities of North America, we cannot forget the nation to the north of us, where there is an estimated 76% lostness and we have only 270 churches to penetrate this lostness.

Besides church planting, we envision the North American Mission Board assisting churches in the ministries of evangelism and discipleship. As this ministry develops an evangelism strategy for reaching North America with the Gospel, we want it to not only encourage churches to do evangelism, but to also embrace discipleship. As we lift up the need for spiritual awakening in our nation, we can realize our missional vision of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.

We also believe to increase our involvement in the Great Commission, the North American Mission Board needs to be empowered to assist churches

through the development of current pastoral leadership. We desire to equip our pastors for contextual evangelism and church planting. We desire to see pastors connect with other pastors through leadership development. We believe the North American Mission Board can assist our pastors by equipping them to reach their regions with the Gospel. We desire this ministry to build missional momentum among our pastors.

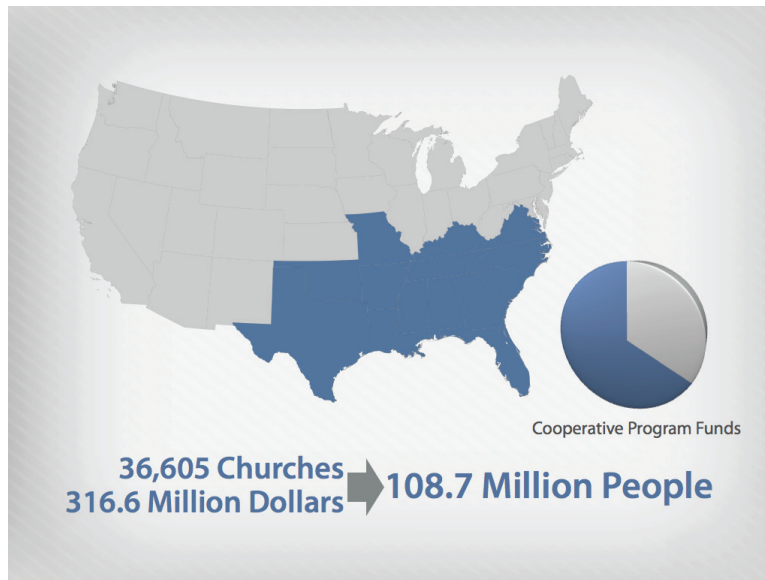
We believe that long-term successful Gospel work in our denomination in the future must have trusting and flexible partnerships. We believe that the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Christian Resources can work together to deepen our commitment to disciple making and heighten our commitment to equip current pastors to missional leadership.

In our vision for the North American Mission Board, we desire for them to assist churches by the appointment of direct missionaries. As the North American Mission Board appoints, approves, supports, supervises, and deploys missionaries who are assigned to accomplish the ministries of the board, they are accountable to the North American Mission Board and become a major missionary force.

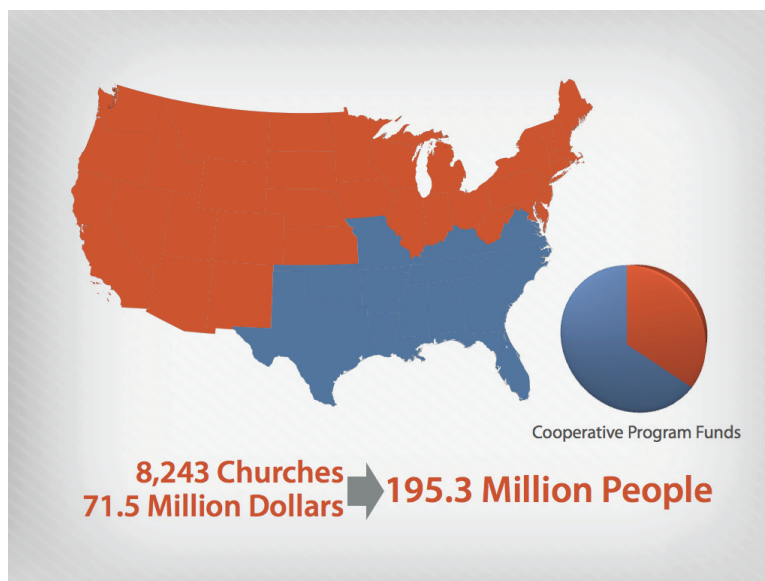
We also desire for the North American Mission Board to assist churches through missional impact in our churches, our convention, and the cultural context of North America. As they educate Southern Baptists for mission involvement and commitment, they will direct and facilitate disaster relief ministries and Christian social ministries, endorse chaplains, communicate with associations and state conventions, and assist volunteer mission involvement.

If we are going to penetrate the 233,000,000 lost people in the United States, we are going to have to address one of the stark realities that exists in our convention.

At the present time in the United States, we spend two-thirds of the Cooperative Program dollars on one-third of the population. We currently have 36,605 churches and spend \$316.6 million on reaching 108.7 million people.



Conversely, we spend one-third of Cooperative Program dollars on two-thirds of the population in the United States. We have only 8,243 churches and spend \$71.5 million on reaching 195.3 million people.



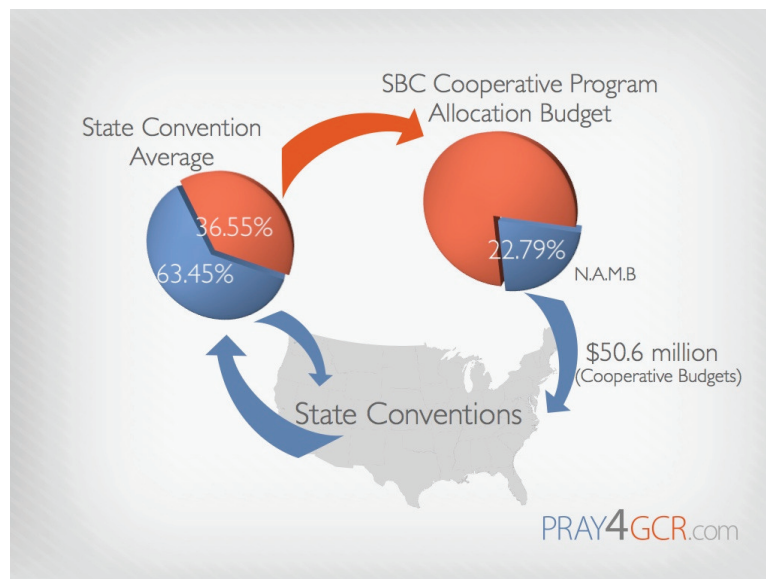
We need to see this change dramatically if we are going to penetrate the lost and dark areas of America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Somehow, some way, more churches have to be planted, more missionaries allocated, and more dollars directed to reaching the two-thirds of the American population, of which most is lost and perishing.

The GCR Task Force urges Southern Baptists to recognize and affirm the following needed specifications regarding the reinvention and the release of the North American Mission Board to fulfill its priorities.

- The North American Mission Board must become the leader in our strategy to reach North America.
- The North American Mission Board must become streamlined in order to be a true missional leader in reaching North America.
- The North American Mission Board must serve and mobilize churches to plant churches, giving priority to the cities and under-served regions in North America.
- The North American Mission Board must become decentralized so it can serve the churches more effectively. We envision up to seven different regional offices existing with a limited staff, responsible for the three main emphases of the board.
- The North American Mission Board must be released in order to budget for a national strategy. The North American Mission Board and the state conventions have operated for several decades by what is called cooperative agreements and cooperative budgets. Through the years they have become complex and at times cumbersome, resulting in a lack of accountability.

In 2007-2008, our state conventions kept within their respective states an average of 63.45% of the dollars that churches gave through the Cooperative Program. The remaining percentage of 36.55% of the dollars

that churches gave through the Cooperative Program went to the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget. The SBC allocation formula for all funds received nationally allocates 22.79% to the North American Mission Board. Follow me closely: While our state conventions keep an average of 63.45% of the dollars within their respective states, the North American Mission Board then sends back to the state conventions an additional \$50.6 million due to these cooperative agreements and budgets. This process complicates the work at times, resulting in a lack of productivity and accountability.



Therefore, we urge the Southern Baptist Convention to grant the North American Mission Board freedom to budget for a national strategy. As this freedom is realized over four years, the North American Mission Board will begin to negotiate with each state convention accordingly. Our vision is that the North American Mission Board is to free at least 25% of the cooperative budgets annually in order to penetrate the lostness of North America more effectively. Each partner will be considered individually, rather than collectively. Therefore, at the end of these four years, the North American

Mission Board will be completely free from these present agreements. It is understood that state conventions will manage their budgets accordingly.

Furthermore, regarding any future partnerships with the North American Mission Board that involves financial support, we are urging that funding only be allocated that is project-driven, meaning these projects must be driven by the North American missional strategy and fulfill the direct mission and priorities of the North American Mission Board.

Additionally, any funding must be streamlined, since the North American Mission Board will become the leader in reaching North America. The granting of this freedom will result in it accomplishing its mission more effectively. Finally, there must be direct accountability to the North American Mission Board for what they fund. We believe adherence to these details will bring alignment of the North American Mission Board with its mission, freeing this ministry to be the leader in our strategy to reach North America. We are encouraging strongly that the North American Mission Board be responsible to its Board of Trustees and the Southern Baptist Convention to carry this out.

- Another major specification for the North American Mission Board is to commission missionaries focused on fulfilling the tasks of the board.
- The final specification for the North American Mission Board is to develop the *Leadership Center of North America*, which will exist to provide a process for in-depth assessment for church planters, equipping them in a much more effective way. Additionally, it will provide a networking strategy to equip current church leaders in reaching their own community or city, their region, and North America.

We appeal to all Southern Baptists to dream this dream with us and embrace this vision for reaching North America. We believe we can make

significant advancement in our nation and Canada for Jesus Christ if we are willing to make these needed changes.

Component #3: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, we will ask Southern Baptists to entrust to the International Mission Board the ministry to reach the unreached and under-served people groups without regard to any geographic limitations.

The International Mission Board exists to assist the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to be on mission with God in penetrating the unevangelized world with the Gospel and making Christ known among all people. The GCR Task Force passionately believes that the International Mission Board assists churches by evangelizing persons, planting Baptist churches, and nurturing church planting movements among all people groups.

This means we are unleashing the International Mission Board upon American soil to reach the unreached and under-served people groups without regard to any geographical limitation. Globalization has flattened the world. While years ago a people group was located within a specific geographical location, this is no longer reality. Reality today is that these people groups are located all over the world, including the United States. In our discussion with some of the leaders of the International Mission Board, they are excited about this new opportunity for global advance within the United States. Most of the 586 people groups that do not speak English in the United States have strategy coordinators working overseas with the same groups. With geographical limitations removed, a new synergy can be created in international missions.

For example, the Wolof people group from West Africa has a major representation located in New York City. The same is true of the Somalis of East Africa who have a major representation located in Minneapolis. As the International Mission Board is released to reach the unreached people groups in America, the result will be that people will come to Christ, churches will be planted, and gospel work in the United States and across the world will be advanced for Jesus Christ.

We are confident that the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board can communicate with one another effectively about their respective work and communicate with our state conventions and local associations about what God is doing in their gospel work. This will alleviate any duplication and release all parties to do gospel work, taking the Gospel to places the Gospel has never been before. We believe that with this bold and needed change, we are positioning our convention of churches for a major evangelistic harvest, a discipleship revolution, and an unprecedented, exponential explosion in church planting.

I am going to ask at this time for two of our GCR Task Force members to come and share a brief word with you. Dr. Ted Traylor, who is the Senior Pastor of the Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida, and is also serving as the Chairman of the Presidential Search Committee of the North American Mission Board, is going to come and share a word with you as well as Dr. J.D. Greear, Lead Pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.

Component #4: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, we will ask Southern Baptists to move the ministry assignments of Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship

education from the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and return them to being the work of each state convention since they are located closer to our churches. Our call is for the state conventions to reassume their primary role in the promotion of the Cooperative Program and stewardship education, while asking the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to support these efforts with enthusiasm and a convention-wide perspective.

While the Executive Committee has held the Cooperative Program assignment since 1997, and later received the Stewardship Education assignment, history shows that we have struggled with where to place both of these assignments in order to serve our churches more effectively. While the GCR Task Force appreciates all the work that the Executive Committee has done in both of these areas, we believe at this time the best place for these assignments is in our state conventions.

Our state conventions are Great Commission partners of the Southern Baptist Convention. We envision that a consortium can be created by these state convention leaders that involves the President and CEO of the Executive Committee and together they can plan and execute an annual strategy that will promote the Cooperative Program to our churches as well as challenge our churches in biblical stewardship. We envision these state conventions to have the primary responsibility for both Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education.

In the 1930 minutes of the Executive Committee, it is recorded that that the 1929 Cooperative Program Commission noted that from the beginning it was understood that state conventions should be responsible for promoting the Cooperative Program in the field and gathering funds from the churches. It was also understood that the cost of the Cooperative Program promotion would be covered by the states from some of the funds that were

collected. Therefore, we believe historic precedence permits this move to be made and we also believe that State conventions are more than capable partners that are closer to our churches. For clarity, we are offering this proposal not only because it builds on historical precedent but because we believe that the Great Commission Resurgence needs Great Commission partners.

Regarding personal biblical stewardship, I stand amazed at research released in 2009 that informs us that the average church member gives only 2.56% of their income away. From the time I did my doctoral dissertation in the area of biblical stewardship until now, I have been astounded by the selfishness of God's people. Every pastor needs to preach a series of messages on biblical stewardship annually. These biblical stewardship principles need to be reaffirmed through your Sunday School or Small Group Ministry, as well as through special classes designed to help people embrace biblical stewardship. Even though we are envisioning the stewardship assignment going to state conventions, it is the responsibility of local churches to challenge their people to walk in obedience to God by honoring Him weekly with at least the first-tenth of all income as well as additional offerings to our local churches. Christians need to repent of the sin of not honoring God with at least the first-tenth of their income. Can you imagine the spiritual revival that would consume our churches if God's people would obey God in giving? Can you imagine the opportunities of advancing the Gospel regionally, nationally, and globally if God's people would obey God in giving?

The greatest amount of money that exists for the causes of Christ and the advancement of the Gospel is in the pockets and financial portfolios of our church members. Pastors and churches, be unashamed in the teaching and preaching of biblical stewardship. Stand on the authority of the Word of God and call the people of God back to Him through the giving of the first-

tenth and additional offerings to your local church. Remember, the only people who ever get offended with the declaration of biblical stewardship are the ones who give little to nothing at all to your church.

I am going to ask Dr. David Dockery, President of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, who also serves as one of our GCR Task Force members, to come and speak for a moment on this component of our vision for a Great Commission Resurgence.

Component #5: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, we will ask Southern Baptists to reaffirm the Cooperative Program as our central means of supporting Great Commission ministries; but in addition, we will ask Southern Baptists to celebrate with our churches in their Great Commission Giving that goes directly through the Cooperative Program, as well as any designated gifts given to the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, a state convention or a local association.

This Southern Baptist Giving Plan begins first and foremost with the Cooperative Program. We are reaffirming the definition of the Cooperative Program that was adopted by the 2007 Southern Baptist Convention. We believe the Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' unified plan of giving through which cooperating Southern Baptist churches give a percentile of their undesignated receipts in support of their respective state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention missions and ministries. Therefore, please understand clearly, we are not recommending any changes to the Cooperative Program but are reaffirming it as our central means of supporting the Great Commission ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention has a great delivery system to reach the nations and it is the Cooperative Program. We believe and call upon every church to work diligently at giving more through the Cooperative Program. The compelling vision that is being presented to you by the GCR Task Force should motivate every church to consider, not *if* I should give more through the Cooperative Program, but how *much* more should our church give through the Cooperative Program. We also believe our local associations, state conventions, and national entities should celebrate whatever amount a church gives through the Cooperative Program. In the spirit of one of our desired core values, which is unity, we need to work together in love for the sake of the Gospel. We do not know of a church in our convention that will be motivated to give more by receiving lectures from our denomination or by bearing the brunt of attack. We are convinced that the vast majority of our churches, and hopefully all of them, will be motivated to give more through the Cooperative Program when they are presented a compelling Gospel vision that will result in global advance.

When churches give more through the Cooperative Program and state conventions keep less of it within their respective states, and a compelling unified Gospel vision is cast for Southern Baptists, we will see giving through the Cooperative Program increase in a major way.

Related to what our GCR Task Force is calling "Great Commission Giving," we are urging Southern Baptists to celebrate what all churches are doing for the Great Commission. Great Commission Giving includes Cooperative Program giving and designated gifts given to the Southern Baptist Convention, a state convention or a local association. Our task force does not see this as being competitive with the Cooperative Program as our central means of giving, but complementing it for the sake of the Gospel. The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention are giving to support the Great Commission; therefore, we need to celebrate what they are doing.

At this time, I would like to ask Dr. Robert White, Executive Director of the Georgia Baptist Convention, to come and say a brief word about what I have just presented from our task force, of which he is one of our members.

Component #6: We believe in order for us to work together more faithfully and effectively towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, that a greater percentage of total Cooperative Program funds should be directed to the work of the International Mission Board. Therefore, we will ask Southern Baptists to support this goal by affirming an intention to raise the International Mission Board allocation for the 2011-2012 budget year to 51%, a move that is both symbolic and substantial. At the same time, we will ask Southern Baptists to reduce the percentage allocated to Facilitating Ministries by 1% as part of our initial effort to send a greater percentage of total Southern Baptist Convention mission funds to the nations.

We believe that monies will be available in the Facilitating Ministries budget when the state conventions become primarily responsible for Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education. Therefore, we believe that at least 1% of this budget will be available and should be allocated to the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. This means that for the first time in our history, more than one-half of all monies that come from our churches through the SBC Cooperative Program will go to the reaching of the nations. The additional 1% would mean that the International Mission Board would begin to receive at least 51% of all monies that is given by our churches and received from our state conventions for the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

We believe this is a great move forward and we need to do all we can to reach the nations. It is our desire to see a collective effort from all of our churches, state conventions, and all of our national entities to do all we can to reach the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Roger Spradlin, Senior Pastor of the Valley Baptist Church in Bakersfield, California, who is also one of our task force members and serves as Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, will come and share a few brief thoughts concerning this component of our vision for a Great Commission Resurgence.

I want to thank you for listening to this Great Commission Resurgence Progress Report. In just a few minutes when I conclude this presentation, you can view it online at www.pray4gcr.com. Additionally, the manuscript will be available for download. Following our session here tonight, you may pick up a copy of this presentation if you so desire.

Please understand, our work is not finished and there is more to come. On Monday, May 3rd, we will release our Final Report of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. We will release it on our website at www.pray4gcr.com. When you come to the annual meeting of the 2010 Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Florida on June 15-16, you will receive in print the final report of our task force. On Tuesday, June 15, we will give our report and recommendations to the Southern Baptist Convention. We urge all Southern Baptists to join us in prayer and register their prayer support on our website. We appeal to all Southern Baptists to join us in support of this vision for this Great Commission Resurgence. We believe this could be one of the most critical moments in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I am reminded of the words of **Winston Churchill** when he stated, **"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."** Well, we have been looking at the results for several months. While we have discovered many good things occurring, it is clear that we know our greatest need is for a mighty spiritual revival to sweep through our churches across this nation. We must repent of our sins and return to God in order to see this great movement of God. As we near the coming of our Lord Jesus, we want all of our strategies to position us to be a part of this coming great Gospel harvest. We believe this vision we are unfolding to you tonight provides major momentum for the continuation of this Great Commission Resurgence movement and vision; however, a real, long-lasting Great Commission Resurgence must happen personally, as well as in our churches, and in all of our Southern Baptist local associations, state conventions, and national entities.

One of our task force members recently shared with us a strong word for all Southern Baptists to hear. He stated, *"We need to lay before this convention a compelling vision and give a prophetic warning that we have two choices: Die a painful death, or live a painful change . . . What our convention chooses to do will determine what God does with this denomination . . . Wilderness wanderings or Canaan conquests."*

I am reminded of the words of Jesus as recorded in **Mark 2:22**, **"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."**

Jesus is referring to grace. Therefore, Jesus was saying that if we are not willing, flexible vessels of God, available to respond and conform to what Jesus does in His work of grace by the Holy Spirit's power, we will miss the moment of this great outpouring of grace and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said if we are like old wineskins, we will be brittle and inflexible, lacking elasticity. Therefore, if He gave us fresh wine, a work of grace by His Holy Spirit's power, it would burst the wineskins. May our systems and ways not be like old wineskins.

When we come to Orlando, we will all have a choice to make. We can retreat to the past, attempt to preserve the present, or rise to a future compelled by the highest stake of all, the one thing we ultimately agree upon, the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people and places where the Gospel has never been before. This is why we must be willing to adjust and conform to the fresh work of God's grace and Holy Spirit.

The 2010 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida, can become a watershed moment for the reaching of the nations. It would be a great God moment that when this annual convention concludes, the world would know and record one thing about us: This people called Southern Baptists have joined together in unprecedented unity for the purpose of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.

We believe God wants to do it. We believe God can do it. We believe God will do it. Can it really happen? Oh yes, it can happen. Why? *God can do more in a moment than we can ever do in a lifetime.* May June 15-16, 2010 be the moment that will define the future for generations to come and show that Southern Baptists are a unified people, Bible-based, Gospel-centered, and set on fire by the Holy Spirit, believing we must join together like never before in presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.

May our great God be glorified as the nations exult in Jesus Christ!