

Task force report urges SBC to free IMB to work in North America

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force will ask the Southern Baptist Convention to give its International Mission Board freedom to evangelize unreached people groups on what had been the exclusive turf of the North American Mission Board.

The task force report—posted May 3 at www.pray4gcr.com—also calls for NAMB to phase out its cooperative agreements with state Baptist conventions over seven years and budget for a national strategy focused on church planting.

Messengers will consider the task force report and vote on its recommendations at the SBC annual meeting in Orlando, June 15-16.

The recommendation expanding the scope of IMB work calls on Southern Baptists to entrust to the agency “the ministry of reaching unreached and underserved people groups without regard to any geographic limitation.” The recommendation points to changing realities based on large concentration of unreached and underserved people groups in cities—and even smaller college towns— throughout the United States.

“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,” the report states.

The current IMB mission statement prohibits active missions involvement

in North America, it notes.

"We believe that restriction fits the past far better than the present, much less the future. ... (The IMB) 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," the report says.

However, the report says NAMB "retains the leadership mission of reaching North America with the gospel."

Another recommendation focuses on "liberating NAMB to conduct and direct a strategy of reaching the United States and Canada with the gospel and planting gospel churches."

The report urges NAMB to focus at least half of its efforts on helping church plant churches that will, in turn, start more churches and to shift funding away from where Southern Baptist 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," the report states.

"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."

An interim progress report initially had set a four-year goal for phasing out

cooperative agreements.

Other recommendations include:

- *Adopt mission and visions statements. The proposed mission statement reads: "As a convention of churches, our missional vision is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and make disciples of all the nations." Stated values are Christ-likeness, truth, unity, relationships, trust, future, local church and Christ's kingdom. The statement on truth says, "We stand together in the truth of God's inerrant Word, celebrating the faith once for all delivered to the saints."*
- *Give more. The report calls for "a new level of sacrificial giving" among Southern Baptists" and to call all funds channeled through the causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, state conventions and associations as "Great Commission Giving." This new nomenclature would apply equally to contributions given through the Cooperative Program unified budget or designated donations to individual causes.*

The report recommends minimum mission offering goals—no less than \$200 million for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and at least \$100 million for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

The report also asks Southern Baptists to affirm an intention to raise to 51 percent the Cooperative Program SBC allocation budget to the IMB.