



## **REC Summary of the SBC Great Commission Task Force Report**

At this year's Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Florida, the messengers of the SBC adopted the recommendations of the Great Commission Task Force, which was organized by direction of the previous year's convention to study the Convention and make recommendations in accordance with the Great Commission as expressed in Matthew 28:18-20. The recommendations were adopted in their totality, and contain seven components. What follows is a brief summary of the components as we understand them, with particular attention given to what we see as the most significant aspects of the components. For those of you who are interested in reading the GCR Task Force's full report, or watching videos and accessing other media concerning these matters, go to [www.pray4gcr.com](http://www.pray4gcr.com). It should be noted that the recommendations as approved by the Convention are visionary in nature, and do not at this time involve the implementation of any bureaucratic or other changes to the structure or operation of the SBC or its agencies. The actual language of the approved recommendations reads something like "We recommend that the Executive Committee of the SBC consider recommending the recommendations of the GCR Task Force." If nothing else, we as Southern Baptists are committed to preserving the autonomy of the local church, and the language of the approved recommendations bears this out. Much more work will have to be done in future years to move the GCR recommendations from ideas into actions which produce apparent change.

**Component #1:** The first component states simply that the SBC's mission is to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and calls upon all SBC churches to adopt this missional statement. There was no substantive disagreement about the adoption of this first component.

**Component #2:** The second component lists and explicates a number of core values related to the mission statement of the first component. Similarly, there was no debate concerning the adoption of this component.

**Component #3:** This component addresses the increase of Cooperative Program and other Great Commission Giving. It calls for a minimum of \$200 million to be given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and a minimum of \$100 million to be given to the Annie Armstrong for North American Missions annually by 2015. This represents a significant increase in giving based upon this past year. With regard to Lottie Moon, the increase called for is approximately 33%. With regard to Annie Armstrong, it is approximately 100%. In addition to reemphasizing the importance of the Cooperative Program, the component opens the door for additional designated giving. There was much debate about this component, as some feel it threatens the Cooperative Program and thus the core of the SBC. It was the only component whose language was amended. The amendment served to further emphasize and affirm the Cooperative Program.

**Component #4:** The fourth component will affect greatly how the North American Mission Board operates. The component recognizes that there are particular regions of North America which are unreached by the gospel, and seeks to provide NAMB funds and resources primarily to those areas. Currently, through Cooperative Agreements in place since the 1950s, NAMB applies most of its resources to areas in North America where Southern Baptists are most prevalent. By phasing out these Cooperative Agreements, component four calls for NAMB to focus its energies in places where Southern Baptists and the gospel witness are least prevalent in North America.

**Component #5:** The fifth component recognizes a need to change how NAMB and the International Mission Board cooperate. Currently, the mission statement of the IMB is structured in such a way that it prevents the IMB from operating in North America. The component argues that the distinction between “home” and “foreign” missions which motivated the creation of the two distinct boards is outdated, and that there are numerous unreached people groups within North America, particularly in so-called “international” cities and on college and university campuses. Because these groups have their own culture and often their own language, the IMB is best equipped to reach these people groups. And so the fifth component calls for NAMB and IMB to work together so that the appropriate board can be directed to the appropriate groups of lost people regardless of their location. Many seem to think that this component involves the IMB taking over tasks previously overseen by NAMB. But the GCR Task Force considers these unreached people groups in North America to be a new dynamic in missions, in effect a “task” that at this point remains unassigned. Thus the component seeks to assign that task to the agency most equipped to accomplish it, not remove tasks from one agency and distribute them to another.

**Component #6:** The sixth component encourages the SBC to task state conventions with the primary task of promoting the Cooperative Program and educating churches concerning stewardship. Previously these tasks had been assigned to the Executive Committee of the SBC. The component affirms an important role for the SBC and its Executive Committee, but argues that the state conventions are more particularly equipped to carry out these tasks, and that such a responsibility is more consistent with the history of the SBC.

**Component #7:** Fifty percent of all Cooperative Program funds are distributed to the IMB. This final component calls on the SBC to increase that percentage to fifty-one percent, and to take that one percent of the budget away from Facilitating Ministries. This change represents a commitment on the part of Southern Baptists to reduce the infrastructure of the Convention for the benefit of the lost and our fulfillment of the Great Commission. While one percent of the budget may not seem like a large amount, when dealing with a budget the size of the SBC’s, it represents a significant increase.

If you have any questions about these components or about the GCR in general, feel free to ask any of us. Also feel free to educate yourself about the GCR further by visiting [www.pray4gcr.com](http://www.pray4gcr.com).