

A Climate of Upheaval

By Kie Bowman



Bowman

To suggest America is experiencing rapid change may strike you as an elaborate understatement.

Ironically, for most of our lives cultural change has been a constant. America is no stranger to change and even frequent disruptive adjustments to the status quo. In the midst of rapid change, regardless of how frequently it challenges us, we always have choices to make. We can recoil and hope for the best, or we can get involved and attempt to influence the moment. Southern Baptists have a history of choosing action.

For instance, in 1919 our Southern Baptist predecessors, including Baptist leaders in Texas like George W. Truett, L. R. Scarborough, and J. B. Gambrell [founder of The Baptist Record], led the convention to embrace a vision that would capitalize on global change and get serious about reaching the nations for Christ. They and others championed the idea of a new way of cooperating to fund missions, evangelism, and theological education.

The \$75 Million Campaign of 1919 was an effort to raise \$75 million for missions and ministry. By 1925, their initial vision matured and was presented to the convention as a way to work cooperatively and sacrificially to do “missions, teaching and benevolence.”

The plan was adopted and the Cooperative Program, which still serves as our best way of funding the Great Commission, was born.

Most of us are familiar with that history, but for a moment consider those dates. Think about the cultural upheaval around

those events. From 1914-1918, America was embroiled in World War I. The next year, Southern Baptists began pressing for a coordinated giving mechanism.

In fact, L. R. Scarborough used the unity and sacrifice exhibited by the nation during the war effort as a prime example of what can be done when we sacrificially commit and work together. So, rather than letting the specter of war and the cultural disruption it caused stop them from launching their vision, Scarborough appealed to that same can-do spirit present in the nation during the war as a catalyst for funding missions.

We are not the first generation to experience big challenges and constant change. The exact circumstances may be different today, but in one sense the questions before us are the same: Will we recoil at this moment of cultural change, or will we work together and give sacrificially in the face of the volatility around us?

The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, as we trust God with the future and give faithfully and sacrificially through the Cooperative Program, will continue to support missionaries, minister compassionately and responsively in times of tragedy, plant churches. and train a new generation of men and women for ministry. Our work together is greater than anything we can achieve separately.

Our generosity and faithfulness in giving is part of our answer to volatility and change. We give not in spite of change but as a response to it. After all, we are proponents of change – the kind that occurs in the human heart when lost people become followers of Christ.

Through sacrifice, generosity, and teamwork, God has used Southern Baptists as a powerful witness across Texas and throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. In the days ahead, regardless of unforeseen changes, our support of the

Cooperative Program can be among the things that don't ever have to change.

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