

FIRST PERSON: Mississippi Baptists' tithing challenge

By Rick Blythe
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The latest statistics related to church giving do not convey

encouraging news. Vanco Faith, which tracks faith giving, reports:

- Only five percent of churchgoers tithe (Church Development).
- 1.5 million people tithe out of the 247 million U.S. citizens self-identifying as Christians (Sharefaith).
- Average giving amount per churchgoer is \$17 per week (Health Research Funding).
 - That's \$73.67 a month per giver.
 - That's \$884 a year per giver.
- U.S. Christians collectively make \$5.2 trillion annually – nearly half the world's total Christian income (Health Research Funding).
- If every Christian tithed 10%, faith organizations would have an extra \$139 billion each year (Health Research Funding).

What about the “State of the Plate” in the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention? Are the giving statistics any better? Not really.

However, there is some good news. In 2021, the members of the 2,000-plus churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention gave \$479,678,418 in both undesignated and designated receipts. That's fantastic, but here is the staggering news. Those same church members have a tithe *potential* of \$991,177,308.

I know you're wondering how I came up with those numbers, so let me explain.

According to the 2021 Mississippi Baptist Convention Book of Reports, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board churches reported a total membership of 524,752 members. The U.S. Census Bureau reports there are 2.6 persons per household in

Mississippi and the median household income for 2021 in Mississippi was \$49,111 (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MS>).

Dividing the total membership by 2.6 means there are 201,828 households represented in our Mississippi Baptist family of churches. If those households tithed a tenth of just the state median household income of \$49,111, that would be \$4,911/year per household, and $201,828 \times \$4,911 = \$991,177,308$.

Subtract what was actually given in total receipts in 2021 (\$479,678,418) and that means we have a tithe challenge in the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention of \$511,498,890.

With regard to the total number of members, we all recognize that on any given Sunday you couldn't find half of them with an FBI search warrant. However, churches report them as members which probably means the best prospect list for any church is the inactive members.

Making a plan to reclaim inactive members will probably result in an overall increase in giving.

While some would protest and point out the fact that there are many families in our churches that live below the median household income of \$49,111, I would point out there are many families whose household income far exceeds that threshold. For that reason, I think the median household income is a conservative number.

What does all of this mean? We have a tremendous stewardship challenge to address, but here is the best news. Jesus is Lord and where He guides, He provides!

If we can help you address the stewardship challenge in your church, please call us at (601) 292-3347. You may also email llevell@mbcb.org, or rblythe@mbcb.org

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