

GUEST OPINION: If not the Cooperative Program, then what?

*By Rick Blythe
Correspondent*

Editor's Note: October 2 is Cooperative Program Sunday across the Southern Baptist Convention.



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Someone told me one of the problems of the Cooperative Program is that it is faceless. Think about it; all the other mission offerings emphasized in our Mississippi Baptist Churches have a name and a face attached to the offering – the **Lottie Moon** Christmas Offering for International Missions, the **Annie Armstrong** Easter Offering for North American Missions, the **Margaret Lackey** State Missions Offering, and the **Edwina Robinson** WMU Offering. But the Cooperative Program is just the **Cooperative Program!** Or is it?

The last few years have brought about storms of conflict and challenges for churches and especially the churches in our Southern Baptist family of faith. Some storms have been beyond our control (Covid-19) but certainly not beyond God's sovereign control, and others have been of our own making. The storms have threatened to splinter us and tear us apart.

I contend the **Cooperative Program** is the tap root of Southern Baptist life going deep into the fertile soil of the gospel allowing us to focus our attention on fulfilling our Master's mandate (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8). This mandate enables us to stand strong when the storms are raging. The Cooperative Program anchors Mississippi Baptists deep into the soil of the gospel but unlike the tap root of the pine tree hidden from the human eye, the face of the Cooperative Program is never hidden. The Cooperative Program is manifested every day in the faces of our missionaries, the men and women involved in Disaster Relief ministry, the students receiving encouragement and spiritual counsel through Collegiate Ministry and the Baptist Student Unions located on 25 campuses across Mississippi, the students at Blue Mountain College, Mississippi College and William Carey University enrolled in Church Related Vocations and preparing to be leaders in the churches. The face of the

Cooperative Program is the children being ministered to on the campuses of our Baptist Children's Village located across the state.

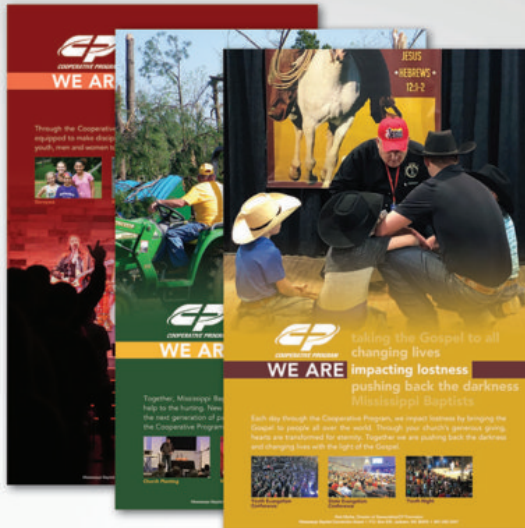
While the Cooperative Program anchors our churches towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission, the question that every generation has to answer is; will we stay anchored to the Cooperative Program as our primary method of reaching the nations and ministering to the individual? If not, what is the alternative? Will we have to bring more missionaries home? Will we have to put a hiatus to Disaster Relief and compassion ministry because the funds are not available? Will we no longer be able to provide financial aid to those in our Colleges, Universities and Seminaries preparing for the ministry? If not the Cooperative Program, then what?

For more information on the Mississippi Cooperative Program and to download promotional resources, visit <https://www.mbc.org/what-is-cp/cp-resources/>. E-mail: lleavell@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3347.

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