



# Utah-Idaho Connections

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

## *Focus on the Landscape... Across Utah and Idaho*

It is hard to believe we are already through the first month of 2021. I was excited to turn the calendar from 2020 to 2021. The last month of 2020 ended very emotionally for me.

Typically, Christmas and New Year's holiday is a time to relax and refresh my soul. This year my emotional gauge needed filling just as much as my physical and spiritual gauges. Being with family as Hunter was able to get two weeks leave from the Army, Tanner having finished the fall semester of college, and JeQuita on break from teaching, made it a special time of celebrating the birth of our Savior together as a family!

During the last weeks of December I was anticipating, for the fifth year in a row, that we would surpass the State Convention Cooperative Program Budget. I also knew we were going to be close to meeting our State Missions Offering goal for the first time in many years. I reflected on meetings with the Executive Board and the Budget and Finance Committee preparing for the potential impacts of COVID earlier in the year. I praise the Lord for how incredible our God is and celebrated the faithful giving of our churches and church members that makes Utah-Idaho SBC such a special family.

Next, I reflected on our pastors, staff, and church leaders. How hard the year had been on all of you. The challenging decisions you had to make due to the pandemic. You did all you could to make sure the gospel was still being proclaimed and still ministering to your disciples. I recalled the number of churches who had multiple baptism services during the pandemic. I continued to think about all of you I had been praying for on my prayer list. I knew many of you were or had dealt with COVID personally, in your family, health challenges and the losses we have experienced with love ones, extended family, close friends, and church members graduating home to the Lord in heaven.

At that time, my emotions were all over due to a close pastor friend who was in the

## **UISBC Cooperative Program Giving Report**

### November/December 2020

Cooperative Program giving	
	November \$48,440.50
	December \$57,999.60
Cooperative Program budget	
	\$61,673.42
Over/Under CP budget	
	November -\$13,232.92
	December -\$3,673.78
State Missions Offering given	
	November \$22,779.32
	December \$9,108.81

### January-December 2020

Cooperative Program giving	\$746,807.34
Cooperative Program budget	\$740,081.00
Over/Under CP budget	+\$6,726.34 (+0.9%)
State Missions Offering	\$92,794.16
State Missions Offering 2020 Goal	\$95,000

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Lee cont.

hospital that I was calling and praying with over the holidays, another pastor who had been life-flighted to a hospital with COVID and a long-time retired pastor and someone I admired who had recently graduated home to the Lord followed by his wife from a vehicle accident the same week. These were fresh for me as they brought back the loss of my mom this last summer from dementia. Yes, men of God cry, and the Lord comforts them.

I missed a call as I was reflecting that morning. After my devotional time I listened to the voice mail. I just could not bring myself to return the call. I knew it was news my pastor friend was not going to be able to make my call that morning for prayer because he had a much higher appointment with the Lord on High early that morning.

Yes, we are called to rejoice when our emotional, physical, and spiritual gauges are running low. We are called to rejoice at all the time even in the middle of a pandemic for His kingdom is advancing, and people are desperately looking for hope.

*Rob Lee*

## **GuideStone announces release of its *Ministers' Tax Guide***

*By Holly Taylor*

DALLAS — GuideStone® has released its most popular annual publication, the *2021 Ministers' Tax Guide for 2020 Returns* prepared by Richard Hammar, available now for GuideStone participants at [GuideStone.org/TaxGuide](https://www.guidestone.org/TaxGuide). The tax guide includes tax highlights for 2020 — including 2021 annual contribution limits, 2021 standard business mileage rates and certain tax implications of the CARES Act — along with step-by-step filing instructions for ministers' personal taxes and comprehensive examples and sample forms.

Additionally, GuideStone participant churches and church administrators have access to the annual *Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches*. This publication is included in the full tax guide or as a separate electronic copy.

GuideStone participants can receive both free resources by visiting [GuideStone.org/TaxGuide](https://www.guidestone.org/TaxGuide) or can request a free printed copy of the tax guide by calling 1-888-98-GUIDE.

The guide was again written this year by Richard Hammar, a noted CPA, attorney and widely published author.

“We are thankful once again to provide the tax guide for our participants and their preparers,” GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. “This free guide is a tangible way in which we live out our vision of honoring the Lord by being a lifelong partner with our participants in enhancing their financial security.”

*Holly Taylor is the content marketing editor for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention®.*

# U & I Praying Together

## Pastorless Churches

- Sevier Valley Baptist Church, Richfield, Perry Causey, Interim
- First Baptist Church, Mt. Pleasant, interim Don Carter
- Salt Lake Chinese Baptist Church
- Stites Baptist Church
- Central Valley Baptist Church, Cascade
- First Baptist Church, Orofino
- Crossroads Church, Rose Lake
- Christ's Country Cowboy Church
- Pocatello Cowboy Church
- Teton Valley Cowboy Church
- First Baptist Church, Moab
- \*Red Hills Southern Baptist Church, Enoch
- \*Christian Community Church, Mesquite

## Welcome New Pastors

- Layton Hills Baptist Church, Layton, John Jemar
- First Baptist Church, Burley, Corey Zanotti
- Valley Christian, Panguitch, Dan Maruyama

## Prayer & Praises

- Prayers of comfort and peace for the Slaughter family as they grieve the home going of George and Elizabeth.
- Prayers of comfort and peace for Deborah Rhodes and Christian Community Church, Mesquite in the passing of Pastor Dan Rhodes from COVID.
- Prayers of comfort for David Payne's extended family and Sevier Valley Baptist Church, where he had been serving as interim pastor the past three years, as they grieve his home going.
- Prayers for our pastors and pastors' wives recovering from COVID-19.
- Prayers for our pastors, pastors' wives, church leaders, and churches as they continue to adapt and make decisions related to COVID-19 pandemic impact on ministries.
- Continued prayers for pastor's wife, Hope Waldrop's recovery and continued treatment.
- Prayer for Ben Neiser, State Collegiate Ministries Coordinator, campus minister at BYU and Utah Valley State University and co-planter of Mosaic in Provo, and family as he assists his family with his dad's recovery from surgery.
- Prayers of peace and comfort for Valorie Ruth, wife of Pastor Steve Ruth, Calvary Baptist Church, Weiser in her father's death.
- Prayers for comfort and peace for retired pastor Andy Hornbaker, Sr. in his wife's, JoAnn, passing into glory with Christ.

# Prepare yourself and your churches for the missionary task

By Todd Lafferty

We might not know what to expect for 2021, but we do know that God is still moving and Southern Baptists need to be prepared to answer the call to reach the nations. At the IMB, we've been so grateful to hear from individuals and churches who remain committed to using their gifts, skills and experiences to share the gospel, make disciples and plant churches. We're thankful for each of you because there will never be enough missionaries from any country to complete the job of reaching the unreached with the gospel.

One of IMB's strategies is to stay focused on the Core Missionary Task (CMT). This includes entry to a people group or country, evangelism among non-believers, disciple making of believers, church planting, leadership development and, finally, exit to partnership. This final step is crucial to leaving the task in the faithful hands of local church leaders and national partners.

The great thing about the missionary task is that there are opportunities for short-term teams to engage in every aspect. Let me share with you three quick insights I learned about short-term teams and partnerships while serving almost 29 years overseas.

## **Partner with IMB missionaries as soon as possible.**

Joining existing work can multiply your efforts. Missionaries are uniquely situated on the front lines to direct you and your teams to the most strategic work that can lead to long-term results.

Here's an example of what that looked like for one church in Arkansas. This church chose an unengaged, unreached people group and committed to pray. They also decided to make trips to South Asia to try to find their people group. On these first trips, they did not contact the IMB for help.

They went for five years in a row and were not able to find the people group. They finally connected with Steve\*, a missionary in South Asia. Steve assured the church he would start looking for members of this people group.

The next time Steve held a church-planting training event, he asked if anyone knew a person from this people group. Right there in front of him was a fairly new pastor from this exact people group. Steve rejoiced that he had met this pastor. Until that time, he did not know of any believers among this group. The young pastor was leading a small group in his village who had come to faith.

When Steve asked the pastor when the people in his village had come to faith, he found out that they had all come to faith in the previous five years. Once the church in Arkansas started praying, the Lord started working. The church was excited to hear this news and to finally have contact with the people for whom they had been faithfully praying. On their next trip to South Asia, they met these dear people and

*Missions cont. on page 4*

# Let's Start Rebuilding: A Call to Churches and All Baptist Bodies

In this tenth month of COVID-19, churches, and Baptist bodies such as associations, state conventions, and SBC entities have faced enormous challenges. While many wonderful things have occurred and we marvel at God's activity among us, there is a need to start rebuilding.

Pastors have sought counsel about the uncertainty of seeing their churches one day return to pre-pandemic practices and in-person attendance. In recent days, I have told many that I believe the key word for churches in 2021 is: Rebuild. Pastors, church leaders, and leaders of our Baptist bodies around the world will have to start rebuilding, day by day and inch by inch.

We have seen flexibility and agility become imperative for effectiveness over these past months. While maintaining this attitude and practice, each of us will need to rethink progress and growth. Rebuilding requires us to begin where we are and start again.

Nehemiah called for this mindset and action when he arrived in Jerusalem. The city was in ruins and the gates had been burned. The broken wall meant their protection was gone and the enemies had easy access into the city.

Nehemiah's burden was a divine wake-up call to himself and the people. Nehemiah called to them, "*Come, let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall.*" **Nehemiah 2:17.** Testifying to the people about how the gracious hand of God had been on him, the people declared, "*Let's start rebuilding.*" **Nehemiah 2:18.** The Scripture says their hands were strengthened to do the work. Even while facing multiple obstacles, the wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days. The miraculous hand of God was evident.

Knowing God does miracles and His presence is with us, we must declare together, "Let's start rebuilding." It is a call to action filled with hope. It also involves knowing where we stand and where we want to be, working intentionally and strategically. It was not easy for Nehemiah and the people in Jerusalem, and it will not be easy for us. However, if we are willing to focus on the future and begin rebuilding, clarity of our vision will return.

What would Nehemiah tell us about rebuilding amid adversity and hopelessness?

- 1. As you understand where you are and how far you have to go, you will develop a burden.** A burden is something you go to bed with at night, get up with in the morning, and live with throughout each day. When this burden is great, we come to God in our brokenness and desperation.
- 2. Take up fasting and praying for a few days, pouring your heart out to God.** Through this experience, God will increase the burden; but, He will also give you His vision for yourself and the people you are leading.
- 3. Share your burden and vision with your people.** Call upon them to resolve with you that it is time to begin

*Rebuild cont. on page 5*

visited their village with the missionary. They shared the gospel and ten more people gave their lives to Christ and were baptized.

Over the next few years, as the church partnered with Steve, more than 200 came to faith. The believers started a church and built a training center so that they could reach out to the other 42 unengaged, unreached people groups in that area.

### **Look for some Epaphroditus-like qualities in your short-term volunteers.**

Epaphroditus is my favorite short-term partner in the Bible. His story is found in Philippians 2: 25-30. When I read this passage, I see some important qualities that Paul described in his friend, sent as a short-term worker from the church in Philippi.

How did Paul describe this short-term missionary?

- **Brother**—Epaphroditus was saved, a brother in Christ.
- **Fellow Worker**—He worked with Paul. He didn't bring his own agenda but chose instead to learn from Paul and to join in the plan that Paul was implementing.

- **Soldier**—Soldiers lock arms and fight battles together. Paul had spiritual battles to fight and he needed partners to fight alongside him. Thankfully, Epaphroditus was a partner, even in the difficult times.

- **Messenger**—This literally means “apostle of the church.” Epaphroditus was sent by the church with a mission to engage the lost alongside Paul.

- **Minister**—He had a heart to serve the needs of the frontline workers and almost lost his own life doing so.

What qualities are the short-term workers in your church bringing to the team? How might you, personally, develop these qualities in your own life before your next mission trip?

### **Nurture the cross-cultural calling you see in members of your church.**

Here are three ways you can nurture and train those who are sensing a call to serve cross-culturally:

- **Short-term trips for cross-cultural ministry**—The report of what was happening in Antioch came to the attention of the apostles in Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to check it out. That short-term trip turned into a lifetime calling. (Acts 11:22)

- **God's blessing in ministry**—Look for fruit in their ministry that flows out of abiding in Christ and walking in the Spirit. (Acts 11-23-24)

- **Leadership in the local church**—Is this person engaged in ministry now? If someone indicates an interest in missions, help them learn, grow and engage in ministry through your church and in your community. (Acts 13:2)

The Revelation 7:9 vision promises that one day we will see a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language before the throne worshipping the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Your preparation now and your continued partnership with us will multiply laborers across the world so that we can make disciples of all nations.

*Todd Lafferty is executive vice president of the IMB.*

*If you or your church would like to explore short-term mission opportunities or a partnership with an IMB missionary as you prepare for your next mission trip, connect with the IMB now by emailing [info@imb.org](mailto:info@imb.org).*

## SEND Network Gathering

We are excited to announce the first ever Utah-Idaho Send Network Gathering on March 17 at The Point Church (Kearns, UT) from 10 AM-3:30 PM. This gathering will focus on how we can better reach our communities with the Gospel and plant healthier churches. This will be a huge benefit for established churches and church plants. All are welcome to attend, whether you are a pastor or a lay leader at your church. Local pastors from Idaho and Utah will be leading the conference, including a local worship team from Redemption Church in Ogden.

Signups are at [SendNetworkGatherings.com](http://SendNetworkGatherings.com). If you sign up there, you will be given lunch, NAMB swag, and free books. Special thanks to several of our local churches and UISBC for their sponsorship of this event.

We look forward to seeing you there!

*Bobby Wood*

*Send City Missionary/Church Planting Catalyst - Salt Lake City*

*North American Mission Board*



SEND NETWORK  
**GATHERING**  
MARCH 17, 2021

**Local Gatherings**  
Worship | Teaching | Breakouts

rebuilding the ministry, even in the midst of adversity. This definitive call to others will activate a resolve, "Let's start rebuilding."

**4. Remember that all leaders, churches, and ministries face the forces of evil.** Obstacles will be endless and the temptations that distract you from God's work will never cease. When Nehemiah faced threats and ongoing intimidation, he responded, "*I am doing important work and cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?*" **Nehemiah 6:3.** Progress and advancement cease when toxic, divisive people are setting the agenda and influencing a ministry.

**5. Begin to rebuild the ministry you are leading today and increase your focus and intentionality on fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.** We are called to

go, make disciples of all nations, baptize them, and teach them how to live like Jesus. We limit the Great Commission work Christ assigned to us when we chase after anything else.

When rebuilding begins, let's remember it is the Great Commission in which we cooperate. As we stand upon our deep and abiding beliefs in *The Baptist Faith and Message*, we have historically worked together to fulfill one major task: The Great Commission. The Great Commission is the only way to unity and cooperation. This is true for a church, an association, a state convention, and the entire Southern Baptist Convention. Knowing this, why would we not choose to do it? Let's start rebuilding!

*Now is the time to lead,*  
**Ronnie Floyd**

## *Digital Kit provides tools for Cooperative Program promotion*

*By Scott Barkley*

NASHVILLE (BP) — A new resource for churches is offering a set of tools for greater financial stewardship and support of missions and ministry through the Cooperative Program.

The CP Digital Kit, available at [sbc.net/cp](http://sbc.net/cp), provides a collection of links to videos, CP promotional items and graphics to help churches explain the purpose and mechanics behind Southern Baptists' engine for reaching others for Jesus Christ in every town, city, state and nation. Through CP, Southern Baptists have become the largest Christian missionary-sending agency in the world.

"The SBC Executive Committee assists churches by promoting the Cooperative Program," said Willie McLaurin, SBC Executive Committee vice president for Great Commission Relations and Mobilization. "Through the Cooperative Program, we collectively engage our culture, fund missionaries across North America and around the world and fuel missions and ministries in your city and state. We value the strong partnership and leadership of the local church in prioritizing, elevating and accelerating the Cooperative Program."

Upon registering for the digital kit, an email with a link to a zip file will go to the recipient. That file will contain PDFs of articles and other resources, including CP logos and an updated CP allocation budget graphic.

"Our team has created a helpful tool that any church can use to promote the vision of Southern Baptists and our work that we do together through giving through the Cooperative Program," said SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Ronnie Floyd. "Regardless of the size of your church or the size of the town you live in, this tool will lead your people to understand their church can touch the world for Jesus Christ."

With the download, recipients also get a link to Floyd's book *Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship*. It, as well as an ancillary kit, can be downloaded at [sbc.net/stewardship](http://sbc.net/stewardship). Other digital tools related to the Cooperative Program include 15 videos testifying to its impact as well as [CP Stories](http://CPStories), a weekly resource for churches.

*Scott Barkley is a national correspondent for Baptist Press.*



# WMU board meeting underscores mission matters most

By Julie Walters

(BIRMINGHAM, Ala.) – Jan. 13, 2021 – Approximately 170 missions leaders – from Hawaii to Maine and everywhere in between – gathered online this year for WMU’s board meeting, Jan. 8-9.

Linda Cooper, president, and Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director, acknowledged 2020 could be characterized as a year of “overwhelming, catastrophic loss,” yet went on to speak of God’s faithfulness.

“The emotions and exhaustion of 2020 have taken a tremendous toll leaving us all feeling unsettled,” said Wisdom-Martin. “It could almost be tempting to forsake our call and pack it in, but God was with us every moment.”

Despite the COVID pandemic that sharply impacted sales as many churches suspended in-person gatherings, WMU affirmed the “mission matters most” and quickly adapted in 2020 with new initiatives to engage all ages in missions such as:

- reached out to SBC seminary presidents to offer help to international students stranded on campuses. WMU members quickly “adopted” students.

- engaged WMU leaders across the country to handwrite more than 18,000 letters asking churches to support the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

- sent daily prompts encouraging prayer for pastors and missionaries.

- worked with IMB and state WMUs to offer assistance with a surge in requests for missionary housing.

- partnered with state WMUs to provide PTSD resources. Melissa Lamb, president of New Mexico WMU, held online Bible studies that engaged 436 women from various states using one of these free resources.

- offered GA and RA lessons on Facebook Live over the summer. The first lessons had more than 11,000 views.

- provided weekly preschool stories online to Missions Friends. The first one had 8,000 views.

- ministered to senior adults sheltering-in-place or living in assisted care facilities by delivering books to them in partnership with the WMU Foundation and Iron Stream Media. This initiative is Honor 6:2, based on Ephesians 6:2.

- launched a new podcast with 31 episodes in 2020. [On the Journey Conversations](#), hosted by Wisdom-Martin, features inspiring interviews with nuggets of encouragement and wisdom for leaders on their faith journey. New episodes will be available bi-weekly in 2021.

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, said she is “encouraged for our future and in awe of how God has moved powerfully through the ministry and mission of WMU in the year 2020. As in our history, WMU rose to the challenge of a difficult year.”

Cathy Meyer, executive director New York WMU, agreed. “God is on the move! In a year when ministry has changed for

WMU cont. on page 7

# Seven Reasons You Must Not Abandon Your Online Services

By Thom S. Rainer

We are seeing the trends, and they are troubling.

As churches return to in-person gatherings, they are abandoning their digital and streaming services. At the very least, they are not giving them the attention they did during the quarantine.

It’s a mistake. It’s a big mistake. Here are seven reasons why we believe strongly your church must continue to emphasize and invest in digital and streaming services.

**1. It will grow slowly after it declines.** One pastor wrote me: “We had 750 people view our online services the first week. Now it’s dropped to about five during the live streaming service. It’s really not worth our effort.” I get it. But the instant growth churches saw at the onset of the quarantine was an anomaly. Churches that are investing time and other resources in digital services are seeing slow but steady growth after the immediate declines.

**2. It is a great alternative for those who are physically unable to attend the in-person services.** Some of your members and guests are homebound. Others are out of town. The digital service becomes their only alternative. And for those of you who are arguing that digital services will be an excuse for physically able persons not to attend, we are not seeing that reality take place. At most, any losses are more than offset by gains.

**3. It is a complement to the in-person service.** Though it’s in its incipient stages, we are seeing digital services become a first step for people to come to the in-person services. They “test run” the church several weeks before they attend in-person. We are particularly seeing this trend among nominal Christians and non-Christians.

**4. It opens the door for ministry to the community.** A church is not only supposed to be in a community, it should be a ministry to the community. Your church will have much greater visibility to the community with online services than most other alternatives. I am working with one church that is investing \$20 per week on Facebook ads to send the services to those in the church’s zip code. It is beginning to show fruit.

**5. It is an incredible instrument for prayer.** I am encouraged to see an increasing number of churches offer prayer lines through phone numbers and/or email addresses. A pastor recently told me that their email address (prayer@<churchname.com>) was growing in the number of prayer requests sent by the week. The church puts that email address on the lower third of the stream several times during the services.

**6. It is truly an Acts 1:8 ministry.** Church leaders and

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us all, I am so encouraged with the future ministry, resources and platforms national WMU is implementing. Missions discipleship is as relevant today as it will be tomorrow in making future missions disciples.”

### **Holding the Ropes**

Via recorded video, IMB President Paul Chitwood stated that throughout its 175-year history, Southern Baptists have maintained an uninterrupted witness among the nations in spite of famine, wars, civil unrest, and in 2020, a global pandemic.

“We give gratitude to God for all that Southern Baptists are doing to reach the world for Christ and certainly for our WMU partners and advocates,” Chitwood said. “We have seen His faithfulness time and time again in this past year as He has maintained our collective missions efforts despite COVID-19 and many other challenges that affect international work.

“We also – for the past 132 years – have been able to rely on the steadfast support of the Woman’s Missionary Union,” Chitwood continued. “And without fail, since the auxiliary was founded in 1888, Southern Baptist women and men have held the lifeline of international missions through WMU-led prayers, WMU-led financial support, and WMU-led opportunities to go to the lost, both at home and abroad. Because your authentic, heartfelt efforts are truly undergirding us, I want to say thank you, to each one of you for steadfastly holding this lifeline.”

Chitwood said that today, more than 3,500 missionaries continue to journey into difficult and spiritually impoverished places across the world to sow seeds of love and truth and to enable the lost to know the saving grace of Jesus.

“As a result of your financial gifts and your unwavering prayer support ... and because you advocated for your fellow Southern Baptists to do the same,” Chitwood asserted, “it’s my honor to report that our latest reports from the field show that more than 535,000 people heard a gospel witness as IMB missionaries and their close indigenous partners shared the gospel boldly this past year. More than 89,000 people came to faith, committing to follow Jesus Christ with their lives. Nearly 48,000 of those followed through with believer’s baptism and over 12,000 new churches were planted.”

Also addressing the group via recorded video, NAMB President Kevin Ezell said, “You make such a huge difference in the lives of our missionaries through your prayers, your encouragement and the tangible gifts you provide for them, literally all year long.”

Ezell acknowledged the pandemic hit in the spring, causing many churches to close their doors about the same time they typically would have been receiving gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The 2020 offering total dropped from \$61.6 million in 2019 to \$49.3 million, representing a 20% decline, but Ezell said there is still great reason to celebrate.

“God’s faithfulness and the generosity of Southern Baptists is remarkable and we are deeply grateful,” Ezell told WMU leaders. “It’s a great testimony to your work and your commitment. Your missionaries have continued to make an impact for the gospel and meet needs during the most exceptional year. What you are doing is making an eternal difference and we are blessed to be your partner in reaching North America for Christ.”

### **Mission Matters Most**

During 2020, WMU made mid-course corrections to ensure the organization ended the year in the black, including a voluntary retirement offer elected by 12 staff members. With fewer staff members and present personnel effectively working remotely since March due to the pandemic, WMU has become a more agile organization. As such, the executive board approved the exploration of potentially selling the WMU building and/or property.

“In the midst of the noise and chaos of 2020, it was beautiful to hear the national WMU board speak with compelling clarity,” Wisdom-Martin reflected. “In one unified voice, they proclaimed the missions mandate of WMU matters most. We make disciples of Jesus who live on mission.”

“They backed their words with a decision to explore selling the current national WMU building in Birmingham,” she continued. “WMU has always sought to steward well the resources entrusted in

*On Mission cont. on page 8*

## ***SBC Annual Meeting Messenger Pre-registration Open***

Join us this summer in Nashville for four full days of equipping and inspiration. With more than 100 ancillary meetings, events, and gatherings throughout the week, you’ll connect with leaders and laypersons from around the country to be encouraged, equipped, and mobilized for Kingdom work.

You’ll need the following to pre-register:

- **Confirmation from your church that you will serve as a messenger**

- **Your church's SBC ID number**

If you do not know your church's SBC ID number, you will not be able to pre-register. Please secure that information from the church or your state convention prior to attempting to pre-register.

If you are in need of childcare, registration for your kiddos is also available.

If you have not yet booked your hotel, you can find out more information on hotel availability at [SBCannualmeeting.net](https://www.sbcannualmeeting.net).

### *Online cont.*

members are excited to discover their reach is beyond the community to other points in the nation and the world. The early Christians had to travel the Roman roads to get the gospel from town to town. The internet has become our Roman roads.

**It can provide cohesiveness to a multi-site church.** More churches are becoming multisite and multi-venue. A number of churches are beginning to open micro-sites. The streaming service can be a place for everyone to get information on what is taking place at all sites. One church takes the first five minutes of the streaming service to give a monthly update for viewing to all sites. It has become a great way for the different sites, venues, and services to all be on the same page. I am encouraged that more churches are resuming in-person services. Don’t let that be a reason or excuse to eliminate or minimize your digital services.

Your church would miss a great opportunity for ministry, gospel witness, and unity.

our care, and we are leveraging our resources to make the largest impact possible for the Kingdom. Together, we are committed to making a difference through missions discipleship, leadership development and compassion ministries.”

WMU’s first headquarters was in Baltimore, Maryland in 1888. The organization relocated to Birmingham in 1921 and operated from two different locations downtown before constructing the current headquarters in 1984, which is more than 137,000 square feet on 22 acres.

### Making Disciples

Ongoing work in WMU’s three key areas of missions discipleship, leadership development and compassion ministries continues to make an impact across the world in 37 countries.

“We tell the stories of Southern Baptist missions,” Wisdom-Martin stated. “We did a little experiment this year and counted the touchpoints for Southern Baptist missions through our printed resources, email blasts and social media. IMB and NAMB missionaries were named 11,465 times.

“When you think just one of those touchpoints may have been printed in a magazine with a readership of 60,000 or sent in an email database of 44,000, the numbers grow in ways I can’t begin to calculate. Missionaries – called by name – 11,465 times.”

Leadership development opportunities continued through WMU’s Christian Women’s Leadership Center as it migrated to a new online learning platform. Self-paced courses are offered each month on

[ChristianLeaderLearning.com](http://ChristianLeaderLearning.com).

Additionally, seven courses related to WMU’s compassion ministries made their debut on this website. A wealth of content related to leadership development and how to age-level missions organizations is also available on a newly redesigned [wmu.com](http://wmu.com).

In conjunction with the board meeting, 24 workshops were offered on three different tracks: information, inspiration, and innovation. Topics included innovative ways to engage different generations in missions, biblical stewardship, leadership development, and more. Affinity group meetings for age-level leaders and others will take place all month long.

One of the benefits of hosting these meetings online is more people are able to participate since travel budgets and safety were not factors. For example, most of the WMU leadership team in Montana joined in.

Sharon Ellington, executive director of Montana WMU, said, “This virtual January Board Meeting was amazing for Montana! My team learned things and we left with a renewed passion for missions and ways to help our churches to encourage missions and raise up a

generation of those making disciples who live on mission.”

In other business, the finance committee approved:

\$167,230 in [Pure Water, Pure Love](#) grants to provide much-needed wells and water filtration in Rwanda, Burundi, Haiti, Guatemala, and Liberia.

\$115,345 to be disbursed to state WMUs from the Second Century Fund managed by the WMU Foundation.

The executive board approved:

\$185 million as the goal for the 2021 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.  
\$65 million as the goal for the 2022 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

*WMU® is a nonprofit missions organization that serves as an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention with the purpose of making disciples of Jesus who live on mission. National WMU is not a part of the Cooperative Program allocation budget and receives no funds from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® or Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®. National WMU is supported through the sale of magazines and products, and from investments and charitable contributions.*

## Knowing the IMB online course

A tool that you can use as an overview of the IMB and how we can partner together in God's mission.

**Course Title:** *Knowing the IMB*

### Course Description:

When it comes to helping Southern Baptist churches and missionaries get to the nations, the IMB has a storied past and a rich history. Throughout this course, you will discover what's unique about the IMB and what our collective of churches can accomplish together. You will take a look at the organizational structure that can assist you in the mission and find ways the IMB and our churches can engage in the missionary task in a multitude of ways all over the world. You and your church are invited to be a part of the task as we partner together to see a multitude from every language, people, tribe, and nation knowing and worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Design Features:

free resource and available on [imb.org/training](http://imb.org/training)

- designed to be done online in under 1 hour
- can be used as a small group or as an individual

- includes stories from the field
- utilizes videos, interactive tools, and infographics

**Who is this for?** SBC Associational Mission Strategists, State Convention Staff, Pastors, Church Planters and Mission Leaders

### Course Outcomes:

- Understand the vision and mission of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Understand the partnership between the IMB and SBC Churches.
- Recognize ways IMB can partner with churches in accomplishing the Missionary Task.
- Explore ways that the IMB can help churches mobilize their people to participate in God’s mission.

Link to *Knowing the IMB*: <https://imb.pathwright.com/library/knowning-imb/199579/about/>

# Lifeway donates nearly 30,000 Spanish Bibles to struggling Venezuelan communities

By Joy Allmond

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- Somewhere in a Venezuelan prison, \*Luis, a 26-year-old inmate, recently received new life after placing His trust in Christ. And his newfound faith has been bolstered in large part due to a new Bible he received through a partnership with Lifeway and an organization that has been mobilized to distribute copies of God’s Word throughout the country.

In August 2020, Lifeway Christian Resources donated nearly 30,000 copies of Spanish “Reina Valera” (RVR) Bibles of nine different types for distribution across Venezuela through the global ministry partner. Some of these types of RVR Bibles include large print, reference and “Colormax”—a more visually dynamic version suited for students.

This mission wasn’t without its challenges in a country already suffering from decades of dictatorial regimes. Fuel shortages and COVID-19 lockdowns hindered the distribution. Even still, hundreds of ministry partners were mobilized to transport Bibles through 2,200 churches in 19 Venezuelan states between October and December 2020, primarily to citizens who did not previously own a Bible—people like Luis.

“I had no Bible and it is a gift I never expected to receive,” wrote Luis. “It is something marvelous that I will truly cherish. I am moved as I see the hand of God operating through your ministry, which I realize is the result of much effort. The attention you give us here in prison seems incredible to me, because I know God is able to change lives.”

Because of the varied economic vulnerabilities Venezuela faces, most of its citizens can’t afford a Bible. The cost of a single Bible can set the average Venezuelan back about six months’ worth of wages.

“A very important part of our work since the beginning of Lifeway as an organization has been serving the church wherever the church is located, searching for the best way to serve their needs and to help with the realities of the local communities,” said César Custodio, Lifeway’s Spanish sales and marketing director.

“Over the years we have served countries such as Venezuela, through our commercial partners. However, this has been a mission that has been complicated because of the situation that this beautiful country has gone through in the last few years.”

This mission to get Bibles into the hands of Venezuelans began by selecting trusted local church partners in consultation with the Evangelical Council of Venezuela (CEV). Church leaders from the states that received Bibles compiled lists of beneficiaries divided into five categories:

*Bibles cont. on page 10*

## A Statistical Analysis of Growth in SBC Congregations by Race and Ethnicity from 1990-2018

Last spring, I (Ronnie Floyd) commissioned our Great Commissions Relations and Mobilization Team to discover where we were in our SBC congregations by race and ethnicity from 1990-2018. The team consists of Julio Arriola, Peter Yanes, Charles Grant, Ashley Clayton, and team leader, Willie McLaurin. Our Asian American Executive Director, Peter Yanes, was asked to lead this study and secured the needed assistance to accomplish the project.

This fall, one of the most informative and encouraging sessions we had with the Leadership Team of our SBC Executive Committee staff was with Minh Ha Nguyen. Minh Ha is the Manager of Research Data and Delivery of the International Mission Board, and the president of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship. He has almost completed his PhD from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary with a concentration in Applied Theology on the subject of globalization, urbanization and migration. Minh Ha worked with our team to present this study based upon research.

As a researcher and statistical analyst, Minh Ha also studies the history and reality of Southern Baptist Convention congregations by race and ethnicity. For example, did we experience growth or decline in SBC congregations by race and ethnicity between the years 1990-2018? Minh Ha believes the statistics and research reveals reality and this reality will encourage our Southern Baptist Family.

Let me share what we discovered thanks to Minh Ha’s research using the Annual Church Profile reports from 1990-2018. Below, you will see graphics that illustrate what we have discovered as well as a few brief observations that we found helpful.

Race/Ethnicity	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Anglo	35,937	37,203	39,268	40,168	40,738	40,597	40,033
African American	1,007	1,489	2,322	3,038	3,534	3,747	3,920
Hispanic	1,189	1,587	2,195	2,827	3,361	3,429	3,509
Asian American	645	881	1,271	1,551	1,747	1,936	2,095
Other Ethnic	668	914	1,109	1,300	1,562	1,735	1,981
Unknown	2,349	1,353					
Grand Total	41,799	43,427	46,165	48,884	50,942	51,444	51,538

There are 10 observations from this research by Minh Ha Nguyen and our team that I want to share with you:

1. This report tracks SBC congregations by race/ethnicity from 1990 to 2018 as reported in the Annual Church Profile (ACP). The analysis is done every five years, and the last period from 2015-2018 is incomplete.
2. The number of SBC congregations increased by 23.3% from 41,799 in 1990 to 51,538 in 2018.
3. African American congregations saw the largest growth of 289.3% from 1990-2018, while the Anglo group saw the

*Analysis cont. on page 10*

## Bibles cont.

- Church members who did not own a Bible
- New believers who didn't own a Bible
- Elderly church members (for the large-print Bibles)
- Pastors who did not own a reference or study Bible (for the reference Bibles)

Youth aged 10-18 years, of economically vulnerable believing families or new believers, who did not own a Bible (for the "Colormax" Bibles)

Local church leaders distributed the Bibles to beneficiaries in their respective churches and parishes using Bible fairs and special "Bible Month" events. Thousands of church leaders who had never owned a reference Bible, or whose old Bibles were well worn after years of use, received new ones to assist them with their sermon preparation and personal discipleship.

Teens walked miles due to transportation challenges to receive their first Bibles. In the States of Zulia and Amazonas, two indigenous groups—the Wayuu and the Piaroa—were able to receive Bibles.

Church leaders from all states expressed their appreciation for these Bibles that arrived just as the humanitarian crisis deepens in Venezuela and inflation rates skyrocket.

"We can see the current worldwide crisis, such as COVID-19 and



*Around 2,200 Venezuelan churches participated in the distribution of nearly 30,000 Bibles Lifeway donated to communities throughout the country.*

the way it has expanded throughout the country of Venezuela, imposing great challenges that grow every day and affect the local churches," said Custodio.

"We pray the church in Venezuela knows that Lifeway supports the great mission they undertake during these difficult times. It is with great joy that Lifeway and the Spanish resource team get to know that our work out of Nashville, Tenn., can bless the lives of the Venezuelan people. Our hearts and our prayers are united with the church in Venezuela."

As the economic crisis deepens and the COVID-19 pandemic spreads in the country, these Bibles provide churches with a tool to reach their neighbors and friends with the hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ—the same hope that will sustain Luis as he begins his personal ministry in a Venezuelan prison.

"How could I imagine starting a new life in this prison?" he wrote. "It was a fantasy. But when I came to Christ and came to know Him, He gave new meaning to my life. ... Thank you for the food and medicine you provide, and for this Bible. I have felt loved by Jesus and I know that other colleagues of mine here in prison have felt the same."

*\*Name has been changed for anonymity.*

*Joy Allmond is a writer for Lifeway Christian Resources.*

## Analysis cont.

smallest growth of 11.4%. From 1995-2000, the African American group grew by 482 congregations and from 2000-2005, this group grew by an additional 833 congregations.

4. From 1990-2018, SBC membership declined from 14,826,580 to 14,813,206. This represents a slight drop of -0.1%.

5. From 1990 to 2018, ethnic minority groups increased by more than one million (1,021,658) in membership while Anglo congregations decreased by one almost one million (900,127) in membership.

6. While the Anglo membership declined by 6.3% from 1990-2018, the Asian American membership grew by 270.7%.

7. Between 1990 and 2018, six in ten new congregations in the SBC were ethnic minority or non-Anglo congregations.

8. From 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, the most growth experienced among SBC membership was among African American, Asian American and Hispanics.

9. 22.3% of our SBC congregations are non-Anglo or ethnic minority congregations. In 1990, 8.4% of our SBC congregations

were non-Anglo or ethnic minority congregations. Therefore, our SBC non-Anglo or ethnic minority congregations have grown by 7,992 congregations since 1990, or by 223%.

10. With 22.3% of our SBC congregations being non-Anglo and many worshipping in multiple languages across America, the Southern Baptist Convention may be the most multi-ethnic and multi-lingual denomination in the United States.

Finally, be encouraged Southern Baptists. While challenges are revealed by the research, we know it also reveals the SBC is growing more diverse in non-Anglo or multi-ethnic congregations.

The future of America offers an amazing opportunity for our SBC to grow in a robust manner in the number of our congregations. While the number of Anglo congregations must recapture positive growth, the diversity of America calls upon our African American, Hispanic, and Asian American congregations to continue to capture the vast opportunities before them.

We will go forward to the future together.