

## **A Summary of Actions Taken by The Southern Baptist Convention Affecting The Home Mission Board, 1951-1994**

As an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) the Home Mission Board has taken its direction for mission and identity from the actions of the SBC in its annual convention. Throughout the 1951-1994 period these actions have enlarged, and reinforced the purpose and the need of a separate agency concerned with domestic missions. The following is a synopsis of actions taken by the SBC in its annual session.

During the 1943 and 1944 Southern Baptist Conventions comity agreements were developed that geographically divided the work of Baptists in the United States between the SBC and the Northern Baptists. However, these comity agreements dissolved in 1951 after the Northern Baptists became the American Baptist Convention and the California Baptist Convention was added to the SBC. The Committee on Relations with Other Religious Bodies presented a report to the SBC meeting in San Francisco which recommended:

...the Home Mission Board and all other Southern Baptist boards and agencies be free to serve as a source of blessing to any community or any people anywhere in the United States.

Additionally, the Home Mission Board was able to receive instruction concerning its expanded role by having its board request this instruction in any session of the Convention.

In 1958 and 1959 the SBC, after receiving a report from a special committee—The Committee to Study Total Southern Baptist Convention Program, recommended the Home Mission Board develop a “a uniform Southern Baptist Convention-wide pattern of mission work” (SBC Annual, 1958, Recommendation 10, p. 62). This program was to be conducted with the state conventions “to develop a single uniform mission program (SBC Annual, 1958, Recommendation 14, p. 63).

The Program Statement for the Home Mission Board was adopted by the SBC meeting in Detroit in 1966 (SBC Annual, 1966, pp. 67-79). This Program Statement was later revised in 1973 (SBC Annual, 1973, pp. 56-65) and expanded in 1975 (SBC Annual, 1975, pp. 58-59). However, it would constantly undergo revision up to the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida.

At the SBC meeting in Houston in 1968 “A Statement Concerning the Crisis in our Nation” was approved. This statement requested the “Home Mission Board to take leadership in working with the Convention agencies concerned with the problems related to this crisis in the most effective manner possible and in keeping with their program assignments” (SBC Annual, 1968, p. 69).

The Home Mission Board articles of incorporation were restated and adopted by the SBC in 1974 (SBC Annual, 1974, pp.56-57). The charter of the HMB was amended by the

SBC in 1976 (SBC Annual, 1976, p.31). In 1978 the Statement of Purpose was revised as follows:

The Home Mission Board serves as the channel through which the Southern Baptist Convention expresses missions and evangelism concerns in the United States and assigned territories by developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to enable churches, associations, and state conventions to move into new frontiers in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to make disciples, and in establishing congregations for witnessing and ministering (SBC Annual, 1978, p. 46).

The Purpose Statement was again revised by the SBC in 1989. The newest purpose statement reads:

The Home Mission Board serves Southern Baptists by assisting churches to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, start and grow new Testament congregations, and minister to persons in need in the name of Christ. The Home Mission Board cooperates with churches, associations, state conventions, and other Southern Baptist Convention agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy of missions and evangelism in the United States and assigned territories (SBC Annual, 1989, p. 36).

The Program Statement for HMB concerning the Program of Chaplaincy Ministries was revised by the SBC in 1985. The Program Statement was revised, again, by the SBC in 1988. The 1988 revision reflected changes related to these areas: 1) The Program of Church Evangelism Development, 2) The Program of Associational Evangelism Development, 3) The Program of Personal Evangelism, and 4) The Program of Mass Evangelism (SBC Annual, 1988, pp.54-56). In 1993, the SBC revised the Program Statement of the HMB in order to change the purpose statement for the Program of Christian Social Ministries. This revision was to accommodate the inclusion of the statement "ministries with disabled persons" (SBC Annual, 1993, p. 65).

The last overhaul of the HMB Program Statement came during the SBC in 1994. The impact of this last revision was probably most significant in Black Church Relations and Language Missions. Black Church Relations became African-American Missions and Language Missions was tasked with convention-wide leadership training in language missions in addition to this program's existing assignments.