

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

DALLAS, TEXAS

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HOW IT STARTED

May I briefly review how we came to be where we are? You recall the story. Adoniram Judson and his wife arrived in India somewhat confused because of their careful study of the New Testament during a long trans-oceanic voyage. After discussions with William Carey, they became convinced of the Baptist position and were baptized by Carey in the church he had built in Calcutta. Soon thereafter, Luther Rice arrived and in a reasonable period of time, he, too, was baptized into the Baptist church. There were then three Baptist missionaries from the United States in India with no support. The decision was made that Luther Rice would return to the United States and seek support for the Judsons who were to go to Burma and plant the Word of God there. This all happened in 1812.

Rice returned in 1813. On his horse, he departed from Northborough, Massachusetts, located about 40 miles west of Boston, to go up and down the Eastern seacoast visiting churches and seeking support for missions. He soon discovered that this was not the way to support missions; churches should organize to support missions. In conference with Baptist leaders from Boston to South Carolina, the decision was made in 1814 to call a "great" meeting in Philadelphia to organize for foreign mission support. In due time the meeting was held.

It was a "great" meeting although only thirty-three persons appeared for the session—twenty-six pastors and seven laymen. Incidentally, over 20% of those in attendance were laymen, which is far greater than the number of laymen who are attending this convention. It is also interesting to note that 158 years later the Southern Baptist Convention convened in Philadelphia and this meeting was attended by upward of fifteen thousand persons, representing thirty-three Baptist conventions throughout the United States.

The Triennial Convention, as the organization became popularly known, began to function, enlisting support for missionaries. Luther Rice assumed the arduous task of leading the Convention as he traveled by horseback and horse and buggy from Massachusetts to Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and intermediate states, stirring the hearts of people to support missions.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION ORGANIZED

As the years passed, tension began to grow between the North and the South over the question of slavery as well as the structure of the mission organizations. In 1845 a meeting was called in Augusta, Georgia, at which the Southern Baptist Convention was organized. This meeting was attended by 166 delegates and representatives of fourteen organizations. There were two significant actions taken at the organizational meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention: namely, the creation of the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board.

These early Baptist leaders recognized the need of winning America for Christ; the leadership was to be provided through

FELLOW MESSENGERS AND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS:

At the outset I want to thank Southern Baptists for their cooperation during my tenure of office. You have been most gracious and generous to me. Your church doors have been opened, your pulpits have been offered, and your fellowship halls available. You have made me feel welcome; you have made the office feel accepted; and you have made my term of service an interesting and challenging experience.

STATE OF THE CONVENTION

I have traveled very extensively and everywhere I have gone I have found the state of the Convention good. For the first time in history we have baptized over 400,000 people for three consecutive years. Sunday School enrollment is up. Total membership is up. Total giving is up. Interest in seminary education runs high with a near-record enrollment. The program of the Home Mission Board continues to expand although the number of missionaries remains static. The Foreign Mission Board has entered its seventy-seventh country and the number of foreign missionaries is at an all-time high. The Radio and Television Commission services more stations with more programs than ever before. In their own areas of activity, the Annuity Board, the Brotherhood Commission, the Christian Life Commission, the Education Commission, the Historical Commission, the Stewardship Commission, the Southern Baptist Foundation, the Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Baptist World Alliance are doing a good job.

Yes, the state of the Convention is good; and herein may lie our greatest peril. We must not let good become the enemy of the best. A five-talent performance with a ten-talent capacity must not satisfy us. "To whom much is given, much is required." Much has been given Southern Baptists. There are 12,300,000 members; 34,000 churches; 27,000 pastors; 2,550 foreign missionaries; 2,200 home missionaries; thousands of teachers, administrators and faithful employees of our seminaries, colleges, hospitals, and other agencies and institutions; 1,200 associations and 33 state conventions. We have the Bible as our guide; Christ as our emancipator; the best of methods for our procedure; dedicated, called out and trained personnel for our ministries and an increasing number of committed persons among our constituency.

a Home Mission Board. We still turn to our Home Mission Board and say, "You provide us leadership in winning America for Christ." We say, "Home Mission Board, you go into the big cities, you go into the highrise apartments, you go into the suburbs, you go into the inner cities, you go to the ghettos, you lead us in a program of winning the big cities for Christ."

We say, "Home Mission Board, you lead us in winning the countryside for Christ, you go to the Great Plains of Montana, you go to the barren deserts of Nevada, you go to the valleys of Appalachia, you go to the plateaus of Arizona, you go to the basins of our rivers and you provide leadership in winning the open country for Christ."

We say, "Home Mission Board, you go to the towns, the villages, the hamlets, the community settlements; you go to places where people congregate in small numbers and you take the Gospel to those people."

We say, "Home Mission Board, you go to the 70,000,000 people in this country who were either born in a foreign country or who have one or both parents born in a foreign country; you go to the 25,000,000 people in this country who do not speak English, or if they speak it at all, it is a second language; you go to the original Americans and take the Gospel to every tribe of them; you go to the military and provide a Gospel message through a chaplaincy service; you cooperate with the 22,000,000 blacks in their conventions; you go to the ignorant, those in poverty, the revolutionaries, the drug addicts, the outcasts of society, the youth, the middle-aged, the aged, and take the Gospel to them."

We say, "Home Mission Board, you lead us in a great program of evangelism, you challenge our states to intensify their programs of evangelism and provide support that is appropriate to them. You challenge our associations to a new intensity of evangelistic effort. You encourage the old techniques, the revivals, the tent meetings, the simultaneous crusades, tract distribution, and other methods of confronting people with the claims of Jesus Christ. You provide us with new methods of evangelism, you train our laymen to witness, you use a bus ministry to bring the lost to the church, you use radio and television to fervently proclaim the Gospel, you work among our high schools in evangelistic outreach, you lead us in a program of winning America for Christ."

Then we say, "We will finance it."

Now, let's look at the budget that is reported in the Convention Annual—\$16 million dollars plus. About \$3 million of that is payments from a \$40 million loan program and other extraneous income which means the portion of the budget for missions is approximately \$13 million. We have approximately 12.3 million Southern Baptists. As Southern Baptists we give an average of a little over one dollar each to win America to Christ—fifty cents through the Cooperative Program and fifty cents through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. This is not enough. It doesn't represent real commitment on our part.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? It is the Home Mission Board.

FOREIGN MISSION BOARD

And the second major decision made, when the Southern Baptist Convention was organized, was the establishment of a Foreign Mission Board. That stalwart band of Christians had bifocal vision. Their vision extended to the uttermost parts of the earth as they accepted the Commission to carry the Gospel to all people. From the meager beginning, our Foreign Mission Board has grown into a great institution headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, with 2,550 foreign missionaries in seventy-seven countries. We have the largest group of missionaries of any Protestant body in the world. These fine, committed Christians are preaching, they are healing,

they are teaching, they are organizing, they are encouraging, and best of all, they are training many hordes of national Baptists to the propagation of God's Word in their own countries.

The Foreign Mission Board works with about 7,000 churches, 6,000 mission points, 6,000 national pastors, 148 kindergartens, 150 elementary schools, 45 secondary schools, 18 colleges, 5 women's training schools, 75 theological schools, 7 nursing schools, 20 hospitals and 215 clinics and dispensaries.

There are 2½ billion unchurched people in the world. We have one missionary for each one million unchurched people in the world.

Today 150,000 people will die; 100,000 of these will have never heard the Gospel. Today 350,000 babies will be born; over 250,000 of these will never hear the Gospel. This should not be so. It is our task as Christians to tell the Good News. God would not give us a task to do without making available the strength to perform the task. God would not give us a command and withhold the resources to fulfill the command. God would not give us a commission without enabling us to fulfill the commission. The task is great but not too great. The command is demanding but not too demanding. The commission is challenging but not too challenging. We have the resources of the risen Christ and His Spirit available to us and we have the assurance of the return of Christ. Because Christ commands it, we should attempt the task; because the Holy Spirit is with us, we should commit ourselves with assurance; and because Christ is coming again we should proceed with diligence and haste.

Somehow we must reorder our priorities if we are going to take the Gospel story around the world. I ask myself, "How many times do I want the Gospel preached over and over to me until it is first preached to someone who has never heard it before?" I heard someone make the statement that 80% of the preaching in the world is done by 70% of the preachers to 10% of the people. This is not as it should be. I would challenge you to take the Gospel around the world.

It takes 2,500 Southern Baptists to support one home or foreign missionary. It takes only 450 to support a pastor.

Australia has a missionary for each 500 members; England, one for each 1,000 members and Southern Baptists, one for each 2,500 members.

We do a little better about financing the Foreign Mission Board. If you will look in your Book of Reports, you will find that we gave about \$3 apiece to the Foreign Mission Board last year. This is not enough. Our Foreign Mission Board budget should be \$100,000,000. The number of our missionaries should be 5,000. We have the people in our pews that God could call. We have the money in our pocketbooks to pay the added cost. May each church more fully accept the Great Commission as its own Commission.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? It is the Foreign Mission Board.

SEMINARIES

As the Southern Baptist Convention began to grow, the need for an educated ministry soon became apparent. In 1859 a seminary was organized in Greenville, South Carolina, by a group of pastors. Later arrangements were made for it to be taken over by the Convention. The seminary was moved to Louisville, Kentucky.

From this beginning of one seminary, there are now six located throughout the United States—one in Louisville, Kentucky; one in Fort Worth, Texas; one in New Orleans, Louisiana; one in Wake Forest, North Carolina; one near San Francisco, California; and one in Kansas City, Missouri. These six seminaries have almost 6,000 students preparing for full-time Christian service.

These six seminaries operate to train Southern Baptist ministers, administrators, missionaries, educational workers, music workers, social workers and a growing number of other Christian-related vocations. It may interest you to know that the beginning enrollment of the seminaries in 1973 was within 16 of being the highest number in history. In all likelihood, 1974's fall enrollment will be the largest in the history of Southern Baptists. Fifteen percent of all seminarians in the United States are in our seminaries, although Southern Baptists represent less than 6% of the population.

The seminaries are not perfect; the teachers are not perfect; but this Convention elects 25% of the Board of Trustees each year and commissions them to work with the administration in keeping the seminaries consistent with the beliefs, the ideals, and the programs of the Convention. No church, no association, and few states could operate a seminary. Collectively, the 34,000 churches working cooperatively through the Southern Baptist Convention maintain six great seminaries, including the two largest Protestant seminaries in the world. Incidentally, these six seminaries are doing an excellent job in training Southern Baptist leaders in every facet of its life for the future. There are those among the 292 faculty members with whom we may not agree totally, but as I see their graduates in pulpits, on mission fields, in choir lofts, in educational ministries, in social ministries it makes me proud of our seminaries.

There is one thing worse than having a difference of thought on a seminary campus and that is for all the faculty to think exactly alike.

Southern Baptists must provide education for an increased percentage of its ministers. This includes seminary training, diploma work in our seminaries, seminary extension, and other means so that any Southern Baptist pastor who desires to further his education, can find some accessible means to secure that training through institutions or agencies supported by either the state or the Southern Baptist Convention.

We cannot expect all those who go to non-Southern Baptist institutions to come away with a commitment to Southern Baptist programs, with an understanding of its organization, with a favorable attitude toward its literature, with a conviction to support mission giving through the Cooperative Program and with a fervor for the agencies of the Convention. If others train our ministries, others will be shaping their attitudes.

With an increasing number of ministers desiring additional training this is not a matter to be considered at some future date, but it is a situation that must be given immediate attention.

The Seminary Extension Department operated by the seminaries reports a record enrollment of 4,973 persons with interest increasing year by year.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? The Southern Baptist Convention is seminary education.

Many times I have heard the question, "What do they do with all that money we send to Nashville?" It is a good question. May I remind you of the fact that 50% of the money goes to the Foreign Mission Board, 18.75% to the Home Mission Board and 21% to our seminaries. This is a total of 89.75 cents of each dollar for foreign missions, home missions and seminary education.

It did not take the leadership of Southern Baptists long to recognize that in addition to a trained pulpit they needed a trained pew. Methods should be developed to educate the person in the pew in the Bible, Christian ministry, sharing one's faith, stewardship, Baptist doctrines and other areas essential for an individual to function in a democratic organization such as a Baptist church and to perform as a worthy member of the body of Christ.

It would be a drastic oversimplification to say that the Sunday School Board was organized. Actually the Sunday

School Board evolved over a long period of years to become the largest of the Southern Baptist Convention agencies. From the Sunday School Board come periodicals, information on methods, and assistance in the area of Bible study, church training, church music, Christian literature, Vacation Bible School, deacon's training, church administration, and a multitude of other areas.

Last year the Sunday School Board issued 83.5 million periodicals, bulletins and special study items; they published 72 new books and sold over 5 million books and supply items.

The Sunday School Board is on the front line of Baptist agencies. It communicates through the printed word. I marvel that the Sunday School Board communicates as well as it does as we think of the great variation in education, in travel, in geography, in experience, and in attitudes that exist among the 12 million Southern Baptists.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? It is the Sunday School Board.

Three-quarters of a century ago, the inventive genius of man developed techniques of communicating without wires. Soon thereafter, the radio industry was born.

Discerning Southern Baptists saw in this new means of communication an opportunity to spread the Gospel. Thus the Radio Commission came into being.

As television developed and this new phenomena became an effective mind molder and opinion maker, Southern Baptists enlarged the work of the Radio Commission to include television. We now have located at Fort Worth, Texas, an effective Radio and Television Commission.

Currently the Radio and Television Commission has thirty-nine programs broadcast on 2,802 stations. There are 9,000 separate programs each week, an average of one each sixteen seconds. During a recent twelve-month period there were written responses from over 190,000 new people. During the month of March there were 31,000 responses for one program.

The average Southern Baptist provides less than 15¢ a year for the ministry of the Radio and Television Commission. Proctor and Gamble spends forty times as much on the radio and television to sell "soap" than the Southern Baptist Convention spends to sell the "cleansing power" of Jesus Christ.

Radio and television can enter a home where a visitor is not welcome; it can enter a high-rise apartment with a guard standing at the door; it can enter a village inaccessible by modern means of transportation; it can penetrate the Bamboo Curtain; it can go over the Iron Curtain.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? The Southern Baptist Convention is the Radio and Television Commission.

BROTHERHOOD

Southern Baptists believe in the priesthood of the individual; that not only should the individual accept the "office" of the priesthood but he should accept the "duties" of the office. Each competent individual is responsible to God for his own ministry. The work of all the people of God, the "laos", is indispensable if the Christian church is to grow and develop.

Southern Baptists recognize this and have taken positive action to enlist men. As a result the Brotherhood Commission has been organized and given the mandate to enlist men in mission education, mission involvement and the support of missions.

Perhaps the next great advance of Christianity awaits the involvement of increasing numbers of lay persons. I believe this to be true. We need more people called for full-time Christian service, but we also need to involve great multitudes of unenlisted lay people to carry the Word of God to the uttermost ends of the earth.

To me the greatest apostasy of the last one hundred years has been the perpetuation of the non-Biblical concept that

the burden for evangelism and missions lies only with the full-time Christian worker and that the "layman" has little responsibility. Lay people are expected to occupy the church pew, to fill the offering plate, to teach a Sunday School class, to attend Church Training but otherwise are seldom challenged by the church program.

We seem to have forgotten that in the early church the "laos" were the people of God—all the people of God. There was no distinction between those we now call "ministers" and those we now call the "laity" insofar as their obligation and responsibility for living the Gospel and spreading the Gospel was concerned. Once again, we need to get the lay people involved.

We turn to the Brotherhood and we say, "You provide us leadership in this area."

Incidentally of the dollar that you send to the Southern Baptist Convention, one cent of it goes to the support of the Brotherhood Commission.

What is the Southern Baptist Convention? It is the Brotherhood Commission.

In 1888 Woman's Missionary Union was organized as an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention. What a marvelous job the women have done in missionary education, in calling out missionaries, and in launching two great programs to support home and foreign missions. This year these programs will produce \$30 million for the cause of Christ. Thank you, ladies, for what you have done.

But the Southern Baptist Convention is more than these. It is a Stewardship Commission seeking to enlist more and more members to acknowledge God as the owner, man as a steward, and to challenge men to return to God at least a tithe of that with which they have been entrusted; it is a Christian Life Commission challenging Southern Baptists and the nation in the area of Christian morality and ethics, so sorely needed at this time; it is an Education Commission working with the state-owned Baptist colleges and universities to bring about coordination and cooperation so that these institutions can be more effective in their programs of collegiate training for young people; it is a Historical Commission preserving the history of the past and keeping records of the events of the day which will be Baptist history tomorrow; it is the Southern Baptist Foundation seeking more efficient utilization of investment funds for Baptist institutions and providing another channel for Southern Baptists to make lasting contributions in support of any or all of its agencies and activities; it is cooperation with National Baptists in the operation of the American Baptist Seminary in Nashville; it is the Public Affairs Committee, headquartered in Washington, providing constant vigilance in the area of Religious Freedom and the Separation of Church and State; it is membership in and support of the Baptist World Alliance as this body seeks to strengthen Baptist fellowship, organization and witness throughout the world; and it is a small staff located in the headquarters building in Nashville carrying on the day to day work of the Convention, providing public relations and publicity, seeking program coordination, and distributing Cooperative Program and designated funds on a predetermined formula to the agencies of the Convention.

All of these eight agencies and organizations combined receive only 4¢ out of each Cooperative Program dollar sent to Nashville.

HOW FINANCED?

How is all this program financed? Where does the money come from and how is it distributed?

Before 1925, various agencies of the state and the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, separately and independently, zeroed in on the local church for assistance. They begged, they cajoled, they entertained, they preached

and they talked. Often the most effective speaker would get the most money regardless of the priority of his cause.

The continuing pressure on the church created problems in the local church. All the causes were good but the local church was not in a position to evaluate the work of each and the repeated demands of the special offerings created serious problems in the local church. From this came the Cooperative Program. There was thus established a channel through which a church could devote a portion of each undesignated dollar to the support of all the state convention agencies and all Southern Baptist Convention agencies. The church itself would decide what portion of the undesignated dollar would go to these causes. Then the money would be sent to the state convention headquarters and there a division would be made between the state and the Southern Baptist Convention. The Cooperative Program thus made it possible for a church to make "one gift for all."

The Cooperative Program has proved to be a benefactor to Southern Baptists. It has worked well. It will continue to work effectively only if:

(1) Churches recognize their responsibility. The average church of the Southern Baptist Convention keeps 91¢ of the undesignated dollar in the church, 6¢ goes to the state convention, and 3¢ to the Southern Baptist Convention. For its own good, 91¢ is too much for the church to keep. The average is 9¢—that means most churches are under the 9¢. A church cannot get "open-window" blessings if it is so self-centered that over 90¢ of each undesignated dollar has to be spent locally. I firmly believe that in 99 churches out of 100 a committed pastor and two deacons can bring about an increase in Cooperative Program giving if they are currently giving less than 10% for missions through the Cooperative Program.

(2) We should bear in mind that the Cooperative Program is a two-part agreement. It is an agreement between the state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. (Although the association is not included in the cooperative Program, most churches should include a worthy item in their budget for the support of associational missions.) Fulfilling this cooperative agreement, the church should recognize that it should give a worthy portion of its undesignated dollar through the Cooperative Program to help finance all the state agencies and activities and all the programs of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The state convention should recognize that this is a cooperative agreement. It was originally developed as a result of conferences between the state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. State conventions should not reduce the portions of the funds allocated for Southern Baptist causes without a prior conference with representatives of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Likewise, the Southern Baptist Convention is part of the agreement. They should help by encouraging stewardship and mission giving, by being good stewards of the funds they administer and by cooperating with the state conventions in promoting increased giving through the Cooperative Program.

In 1975, we will be observing the 50th Anniversary of the Cooperative Program. It is a year of thanksgiving for indeed we should be grateful for that which has been accomplished through the Cooperative Program. This should also be a year of commitment. A goal of \$150 million is being suggested for Cooperative Program giving during the 50th Anniversary year. This is an attainable goal. The money is in the pockets of Southern Baptists. We need to commit ourselves to this worthy goal. By so doing, we can put more missionaries on the foreign fields; we can put more missionaries on the home fields; we can strengthen seminary education and expand it by making it available to many who are not now being served through Southern Baptist educational channels; we can increase the work of the Radio and Television Commission;

and we can strengthen the work of every other agency of the Convention.

Southern Baptists give 2½% of their income to their church. There is room for improvement.

In addition to funds received through the Cooperative Program, the two special mission offerings sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union make major contributions for home and foreign mission support.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST GROWTH

The unusual growth of Southern Baptists in the United States has not been by accident. The growth has been a result of some very definite and basic principles. May I call some of these to your attention:

(1) Southern Baptists are a "people of the Bible." This should continue to be our reputation, our practice and commitment. We must believe the Book, we must read the Book, we must follow the Book, we believe the Bible is God's Word in which He reveals Himself to man and by which man has access to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Although I have never been to a seminary nor studied theology, I believe that when reading the Bible with a believing attitude, an open mind and an open heart, the Holy Spirit will cause the Word to speak to me in a way that I can understand and with a meaning that is sufficient for my salvation and adequate for my daily walk. I also believe, (and this is more difficult,) that I must grant the same right to others and if his understanding is not exactly like mine, I should not condemn or judge.

Stay close to the Book. Preach it and teach it, read it and receive it, acclaim it and proclaim it.

(2) Southern Baptists have always committed themselves to evangelism and missions. This is based on a belief that men are lost and salvation is only available through faith in Jesus Christ and that every Christian has the responsibility through evangelism (at home) and missions (away from home) to tell lost men of Jesus.

Evangelism and missions brought Baptists together. A desire to fulfill the Great Commission, the need of joint financial support for missions, the need for cooperation in training missionaries, and the appeal to call out missionaries—these have done more to bring Southern Baptist churches together than anything else.

Thirty-four thousand churches have been brought together in the Southern Baptist Convention largely to carry out the Great Commission, at home and abroad, to train pastors and missionaries, and to provide published material so that the pew as well as the pulpit can be informed.

Evangelism and missions will hold us together. At times theological matters become divisive among Baptists, matters of polity become disruptive, institutions and their needs become questionable, methods become argumentative; however, two things among Baptists will heal the breaches, soothe the ruffled feelings, calm tempers and unite us, and they are evangelism and missions.

Evangelism and missions are glue that sticks us together; they are a bolt that fastens us together; they are the rivets that lock us together; they are the weld that molds us together; and they are the thong that binds us together.

Truly, evangelism and missions are the great cohesive forces among Southern Baptists.

(3) Southern Baptists have magnified the Biblical basis for stewardship. They acknowledge God as owner and man as the steward, and the tithe as belonging to the Lord.

(4) Southern Baptists have developed a program for educating its own ministers and denominational leaders through their seminaries and providing Christian training in many universities and colleges operated by state conventions.

(5) Southern Baptists have impressed upon each individual his responsibility to share his faith and to provide a witness to lost people wherever they are found.

(6) Southern Baptists have put strong emphasis on the establishment of churches as the "body of Christ" and a fellowship for like-minded believers.

These are some of the things that have made Southern Baptists grow.

In conclusion, I would like to focus your attention on some of the many things Southern Baptists need to consider in the days that lie ahead:

(1) We need to provide more training for more of our ministers. A recent survey indicated that 22% of our ministers have a high school education or less; 69% have either attended college or completed college or have seminary training; and 36½% have completed seminary training. The 50¢ per capita that Southern Baptists put into training their ministers is insufficient and the present programs are inadequate to reach many who desire to further their ministerial training. This is our task. We should not leave it to others.

(2) We must recognize that the task of winning the world for Christ cannot be done by "paid" persons alone. Their efforts and their leadership must be supplemented by an increasing number of committed lay people who are willing; able and eager to share their faith. I believe in a God-called ministry. I believe that God still bestows the "highest gift," prophecy, to some and then lays His hands upon them to be His servants and the shepherd of His flocks. But the increasing perplexity of the age in which we live together with the frustration of adults, the trauma of youth, the confusion in our homes plus the increasing administrative responsibilities of our pastors all make added demands upon the pastor's time. Also, lost people are not coming to church.

On the other hand, many young people are not primarily concerned with taking a job that pays the most money; retirement at age 65 is almost universal (and this will probably be lowered in the lifetime of many here), many people retire earlier than 65, particularly in the military and government service, a large number of people attain their financial goals in life at an early age and an increasing number of people are willing to take jobs in areas where their life could count a maximum for Christ.

To supplement the work of the pastor and the missionary, we must recruit increasing numbers of "lay people" for effective Christian service.

In addition to the recruiting of lay persons by the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board (and good work is being done by both of these), we need to consider an inter-agency program (perhaps financed by the Convention) that would diligently, persistently, and intelligently seek to enlist for Christian service large numbers of the 10,000 graduates from our Baptist colleges this year, seek recruits from among the estimated 25,000 Southern Baptists who will graduate from state-supported colleges this year, recruit large numbers from those who attain their financial goals in life or who retire early and give hundreds of the 80,000 Southern Baptists who will reach the age of 65 this year an opportunity to invest one or more years in meaningful Christian service beyond the territory served by their local church.

(3) Southern Baptists suffer a substantial talent drain. There are pastors leaving the pulpit, denominational administrators gaining secular employment, missionaries resigning, and lay people becoming involved in a multitude of existing or newly organized groups not related to the Southern Baptist Convention, such as Bible schools, educational institutions, evangelistic, missions, civic and health organizations.

We spend thousands of dollars educating ministers; we spend additional thousands of dollars transporting and housing missionaries; we are short of pastors and in need of eight

hundred more foreign missionaries and hundreds of additional home missionaries; hence, we can ill afford losses in these categories. This is an appropriate area of concern to all Southern Baptists and should be made an object of continuous consideration.

There is little or no opportunity for the average Southern Baptist layman who desires to become meaningfully involved in some phase of Southern Baptist life, to express himself through existing organizations or agencies unless he is one of the only 375 who happen to serve on a Board or a Commission of the Convention. Many laymen are often frustrated in their efforts to involve themselves beyond the local church; often their efforts are frowned upon. Little wonder that many of our most talented and affluent laymen find fulfillment in activities and organizations not directly related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

(4) There are 100 million people in the Northeast one-sixth of this country. Forty-five million of them are unchurched. Embraced in this area is the financial, transportation, governmental, educational, entertainment, and political capital of the world. We should be making an all-out effort to claim more of these people for Christ.

The North-Central states including Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota are developing a program to double the number of churches and their total work by 1990. The Home Mission Board will be helping. This is a challenge to us all. Perhaps there are individuals, churches, associations and even state conventions that could find useful ways in which they could get involved in this challenging task.

If we are to maintain our baptisms in the face of the declining birth rate we must go where the prospects are and intensify our efforts there.

(5) We should intensify our teaching and promotion of stewardship not only to provide funds to extend the Gospel but to combat secularism and materialism. Christians grow by giving; increase by sharing; and enlarge by dividing. Full cooperation with plans for the 50th Anniversary observance of the Cooperative Program is a worthy goal for each church.

The sending ministry is one Christian activity in which all of us can become more meaningfully involved.

(6) Southern Baptists should be more cooperative in joint endeavors with other Christian bodies in areas of mutual concern. We can share our knowledge of evangelism without losing enthusiasm; we can share our methods of Bible study without adverse results; we can share our genius in organization without affecting the organization; and we can share "in dialogue" our theology without our beliefs being destroyed.

We have obtained maturity as a Christian body and we need not fear cooperating in a joint endeavor such as evangelism, which is of mutual interest and through which God can be honored and glorified.

(7) As individuals, churches and organizations, Southern Baptists need to appropriate and depend more on the presence, power and work of the Holy Spirit. We need more Spirit-filled people, Spirit-filled churches, Spirit-filled agencies and Spirit-filled meetings. As we become continually led by the Holy Spirit we become effective ministers in the hands of God.

Because some religious groups seemingly carry the doctrine, expression and manifestation of the Holy Spirit to excess does not mean that Southern Baptists should neglect the Holy Spirit or that we should fail to acknowledge His presence and claim His power and permit Him to work through us.

Sometimes we permit "tongues", the least of the gifts, to become so paramount in our consideration, that we neglect the "greater" gifts. Incidentally, I feel it would be helpful to many ministers, lay people and many churches if a "Blue-Ribbon Committee" of Southern Baptists would issue a "Statement on Tongues" and how to properly work with this phenomena when it occurs in churches.

What is often divisive, under the true leadership of the Spirit, might be made cohesive; for divisiveness is not of God.

Southern Baptists should be proud of their heritage. They can look back with satisfaction on reasonable accomplishments and they can face the challenge of the future with assurance knowing that God is available and that He will hear those who ask and open the door to those who seek. We are not alone in this task. The Holy Spirit is by our side and certainly Christ will return, for surely the King is coming. Let us be ready.