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## **FIRST-PERSON: We will not retreat: The real reason for supporting the Cooperative Program**

by Ronnie Floyd, posted Monday, April 20, 2020 (7 days ago)



*EDITOR'S NOTE: Ronnie Floyd is president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. April 26 is Cooperative Program Sunday in the Southern Baptist Convention.*

NASHVILLE (BP) -- When the coronavirus (COVID-19) began to spread across the globe, our work as Southern Baptists did not stop.

And as we approach and celebrate Cooperative Program Sunday in the SBC on April 26, it's possible that in our lifetimes, we have never had greater reason to continue to generously support the Cooperative Program.

Our missionaries are still on the field, both overseas and in North America. Our seminary students are still being trained for ministry and missions. Our work together in each of our respective regions, states, nation and world is still alive and active. Disaster Relief ministry is still operating through state conventions in this critical hour, along with our Send Relief ministry. Our chaplains are still ministering.

In an unprecedented time, all of these ministries are still present and making a difference for Jesus Christ -- and our churches are still making this happen through their financial support.

Undoubtedly, things have changed around the world. Amid uncertainty, our Southern Baptist churches, associations, state conventions and national entities are evaluating everything. We are all adjusting according to our locale and our own mission assignments. But it is imperative to be clear:

We will not retreat in this hour of uncertainty. We will not throw in the towel or raise the white flag of surrender because of this looming threat.

We have an overseas mission force that is growing again. The Lord has blessed us with 3,700 full-time, fully-funded missionaries and their 2,880 children who are focused on their work around the world. The International Mission Board has 1,001 candidates in the pipeline, nearly half of whom are preparing for long-term, career service. This represents more than 400 percent growth in the number of candidates in just the past 18 months.

We have more than 47,500 local churches that are points of light across the United States. We have 1,100 associations of churches, 41 conventions and 12 national entities. Each is a point of light across the nation and the entire world. Additionally, we are blessed with 5,017 missionaries in North America as well as 3,500 fully endorsed chaplains.

All of them are bright, shining lights. And all of this is possible because of continuing support from more than 15 million Southern Baptists -- many of whom are the brightest lights in their arenas of influence, from business to entertainment to law to education to politics to medicine to our homes and beyond. There is no telling how many of our Southern Baptists are on the front lines of the battle today in hospitals and clinics. Each is a bright shining light of life, peace and hope for the hurting, the dying and the grieving.

This is who we are. This is what we do together. Now is not the time to retreat!

We have been through past crises including economic recessions and depressions, wars, terrorist attacks and even pandemics. None of these have destroyed our work together.

This global pandemic will not destroy our work together either.

We understand that our churches face uncertain times. For the sake of keeping these Gospel lights shining brightly across our entire nation and world, we want to thank you for providing generous financial support through the Cooperative Program. This support places your church on the front lines of reaching the world for Christ. Your continued support makes a difference.

We will continually evaluate. We will make necessary adjustments. But we will not retreat.

As the people of God, we are under a divine call and mandate: Reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state and every nation. We have Good News for the whole world.

Until this is accomplished or Jesus returns, we go forward together.