

# COOPERATIVE PROGRAM, WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

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As Southern Baptists, we have one thing that unites us. At our core is the passion to take the gospel of Christ to those who have never heard. We work together toward that common goal. As a child and young adult, my heart was sealed for missions. I am a product of the Cooperative Program.

The CP is Southern Baptists' unified plan of giving through which cooperating Southern Baptist churches give a percentage of their undesignated receipts in support of their respective state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention's missions and ministries.

Nearly 40 years ago, my tiny Southern Baptist church participated in a World Missions Conference (later called On Mission Celebrations). That was my first opportunity to be up close and personal with missionaries. More than 70 percent of your national CP dollars are at work in the United States and around the world supporting missionaries.

A new pastor's wife introduced our church to Acteens and my life changed forever. National WMU does not receive Cooperative Program allocations; however, many state WMU offices are funded through state CP dollars.

I felt God's call on my life as a youth while serving on the missions camp staff of a state Baptist camp supported by the CP. Statewide youth events helped me mature as a Christ follower. During this time, I met many who served through our state convention office. They took an interest in me. Those heroes of the faith called me by name. It made a difference.

In college, I participated in a CP-funded Baptist Student Union ministry. It was one of the greatest discipling influences of my life. During this time, I also served on an associational WMU council. I developed as an

associational WMU leader by attending statewide training events sponsored by the CP.

Every semester of seminary, a receipt showed a portion of my tuition was subsidized by a gift to the Cooperative Program. As a newly appointed North American Mission Board missionary, we were challenged to always express appreciation for gifts to the CP. I needed no convincing. For nearly 20 years, I served on state convention staffs in Arkansas and Illinois. I saw firsthand how gifts to the CP meant people had the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Christ.

Southern Baptists, I am grateful for the difference you have made in my life through gifts to the CP. Thank you for your partnership in my home state, the United States and the world to proclaim the hope found only in Christ.

"But you will receive power," we read in Scripture, "when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NIV).

Father, stir our hearts. May we have a passion for taking the gospel to the lost. Free us from distractions. Give us the energy and resolve to work together to declare Your glory to the nations.

