



GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Relative to the listed Ministry Assignment, please describe accomplishments in the past year that creates "value added" to the Cooperative Program dollars that ERLC receives.

I. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.

Throughout the year, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has sought to provide an array of resources to churches to help them apply the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life. Each day, the ERLC website publishes new content directly related to the issues of human dignity, family stability, civil society, and religious liberty—and these in a variety of formats ranging from popular-level to academic, articles to videos to podcasts. In the 2015 year, the ERLC set record numbers in terms of downloads, reach, and followers.

Additionally, the ERLC strives to respond quickly to events in the news important to Southern Baptists so as to help train churches and assist Southern Baptists in thinking through the issues. Beyond this, the ERLC has been intentional in launching events—ranging from area pastor lunches, leadership summits, and large-scale annual conferences, designed to equip men and women to think through these issues from a kingdom-focused, gospel framework.

As a few examples of church-minded resources created in the past year, the ERLC has produced bulletin inserts for SBC churches for each of the respective emphasis Sundays as well as downloadable “Issue Analysis Briefs” for pastors and church leaders. These give leaders an in-depth analysis on individual issues. The ERLC has also launched an ebook publishing initiative, Leland House Press. One new title published this year under this imprint is *Women on Life: A Call to Love the Unborn, Unloved, and Neglected*. Dr. Moore also published a major book on the issue of cultural and political engagement titled *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*. We provided numerous resources free of charge to SBC churches and state conventions around the country for various events.

The ERLC also launched several new multi-media initiatives, including Signposts, a weekly podcast featuring Dr. Moore answering difficult ethical questions, interviewing prominent

authors and thought leaders, and offering cultural commentary on pressing Christian issues. The ERLC continued the expansion of both Canon and Culture, a long-form policy website featuring leading Southern Baptist and conservative scholars as well as the ERLC video channel featuring hundreds of hours of interviews, discussions, and video productions on a variety of issues. Beyond this, the ERLC also partnered with Lifeway's Ministry Grid to produce a sexual ethics training track for pastors and church leaders, and with B&H to create a long-term strategy to produce ministry-minded guidebooks on key issues pastors and church leaders face.

II. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.

As the SBC entity charged not only to serve as a moral and ethical voice to Southern Baptist churches, but also to be a gospel witness in the public square, the ERLC engaged the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government on multiple fronts, from meeting with lawmakers and advocacy partners to issuing public comments to the administration to filing amicus briefs in the Supreme Court.

The ERLC labored in the public square on a range of issues, from religious liberty to the sanctity of human life to marriage to human trafficking to racial reconciliation and many areas in between, seeking to apply the gospel to public policy for the sake of religious liberty and human flourishing. Among the many specific policies engaged, the ERLC voiced continued objection to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mandate on abortifacients and contraceptives in violation of the consciences of millions of Southern Baptists and others—whether via amicus briefs in the courts, public comment to the administration, or roundtable discussions.

One of the means by which the ERLC engaged the public square was through one-on-one meetings and other communication with elected officials and their staff. Through regular interaction with congressional offices, the ERLC sought to ensure that social and religious liberty issues were neither steamrolled nor relegated to back burner status by lawmakers hostile to a biblical worldview. A second means by which the ERLC engaged the public square was through coalition work. ERLC staff participated in numerous coalitions, both formal and informal, among religious, life, family, and other public policy groups on issues of common agreement in an effort to find unified approaches to advance sound policy in the public square. In every instance, the ERLC brought a decidedly Baptist and gospel-focused perspective to the issue at hand. In many cases, the ERLC helped to reshape thinking and action among coalition partners by consistently voicing its positions through the lens of the gospel, in a winsome manner.

The ERLC continued to advance advocacy efforts with the creation of a director level office of

advocacy at our Washington office. After a year-long search, Mr. Steven Harris was appointed as the ERLC Director of Advocacy, and he has worked over the last six months to redouble ERLC efforts in coordinating advocacy efforts on behalf of Southern Baptists in Washington.

Additionally, the ERLC hosted a series of events in Washington to bridge relationships between Southern Baptists and lawmakers and to ensure Southern Baptist voices were heard on Capitol Hill, launching a series called Capitol Conversations, in which the ERLC hosts conversations with leading public officials and thought leaders to discuss important issues. In June 2015, following the Supreme Court *Obergefell* decision, the ERLC hosted one such discussion on marriage and the Supreme Court ruling featuring Dr. Moore, Sen. James Lankford (R–Okla.), Mark Dever of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Mollie Hemingway with The Federalist, and Ryan Anderson of the Heritage Foundation. Later in the year, the ERLC hosted Capitol Conversations on both the Planned Parenthood video controversy as well as the Syrian refugee crisis with panelists including Rep. Diane Black (R–Tenn.), Charmaine Yoest of Americans United for Life, Knox Thames of the U.S. State Department, among several others.

Additionally, the ERLC sought to connect Southern Baptists with the public square through its Canon & Culture initiative. In its second season, Canon & Culture recorded and published episodes on topics about Christianity and the public square.

III. Assist churches in their moral witness in local communities.

Over the course of the ministry year, the ERLC has offered an array of resources designed to assist churches in their moral witness in local churches. The ERLC provides new resources daily—from e-books, to blog posts, articles, essays, podcasts, videos, bulletin inserts, and sermon outlines—for Christians and churches to help think through moral and ethical issues. Additionally, the ERLC has enhanced a rapid response strategy for news-related items that churches may want to address. The ERLC has worked to develop protocols that allow for rapid production of content—including bulletin inserts, articles, briefing videos, interviews, etc.—that are produced quickly following consequential news. Around the country, the ERLC has established the Church Equip program that is designed to train churches on topics of their choosing utilizing the leadership of the ERLC to bring help to Southern Baptist churches around the country. Additionally, senior leaders from the ERLC have preached and spoken in Southern Baptist churches around the country. More broadly, in individual states, the ERLC has partnered with state conventions regularly—whether in states like Oklahoma where the ERLC partnered with the BGCO to lead a regional conference on homosexuality and the future of marriage; in Texas, where the SBTC has partnered with the ERLC to lead a major conference on marriage; in Iowa, where the ERLC partnered with the Baptist Convention of Iowa to develop an event on political engagement near the time of the Iowa caucuses; and in Alabama, where the ERLC

joined with the Alabama State Board of Mission to develop a statewide event on religious liberty and cultural engagement.

In an effort to further support the work of those on state convention staffs who are assigned the responsibility of addressing moral, ethical, and public policy matters, the ERLC continued to develop annual State Ethics Leaders gatherings in which experts on selected social and cultural issues speak to the state representatives. Recent years have seen this expanded within the context of the work of the ERLC Research Institute so as to best encourage and support those on state Baptist convention staffs. In addition, on an ongoing basis, ERLC staff interacts and supports those on the state level who address moral and ethical issues.

IV. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.

ERLC staff regularly published articles in Baptist Press and on the ERLC websites. From the latest developments pertaining to religious liberty and persecution around the world, as well as many other important topics including adoption, marriage, human trafficking, race, and others, the ERLC addressed a wide array of concerns. On our website, entire channels are devoted specifically to these important issues as part of our “Issues at a Glance” pages and will be undergoing continued improvements and updates. These pages feature brief explanations of the various topics, informational videos, links to news stories and applicable Scripture references. Additionally, on our “Canon and Culture” channel, members of the ERLC Research Institute and others contribute academic articles and essays designed to engage the culture and promote religious liberty in the academy.

Beyond this, the ERLC labored to promote religious freedom with like-minded groups and organizations. As one example, the ERLC held a number of events in Washington with elected officials and organizational entity heads and senior leaders designed to convene important conversations on how to promote religious liberty in the culture and in Congress, on topics such as how to defend marriage over against recent Supreme Court rulings, how to work for justice for the unborn in light of the horror of the carnage revealed in the Planned Parenthood video scandal, how to balance justice and compassion for immigrants fleeing religious persecution in the Middle East.

Abroad, the ERLC established its first ever international office, designed to promote religious liberty for Southern Baptists around the globe, particularly calling attention to persecution of Christian minorities in the Middle East. Senior leaders from the ERLC joined a group of Southern Baptist pastors and leaders in 2015 to tour the region, meeting with government officials and senior coalition leaders in the area to promote the work of the international office and its newly

appointed director, Mr. Travis Wussow.

The ERLC also named leaders for their distinguished service awards on the basis of their contribution to the cause of promoting religious liberty—with Dr. John Perkins being awarded the John Leland Religious Liberty Award for his lifelong gospel stand for racial justice, and theologian J. I. Packer being named the Richard Land Distinguished Service Award for his faithfulness in defending the faith and being a witness in the culture throughout decades of evangelical service.

The ERLC continued to participate in a number of regular gatherings with religious leaders and groups on issues of domestic and international religious liberty, along with other issues important to Southern Baptists. Prior to and following the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions on marriage, the ERLC helped lead the charge in support of religious liberty. Upholding a robust, Baptist understanding of religious liberty among our coalition partners, we helped attract support from a broad spectrum of the evangelical world showing our stalwart commitment to a Christian sexual ethic. The ERLC also worked to continue to cultivate relationships with members of Congress and their staff by speaking at Capitol Hill events and meetings.

Based on the listed Ministry Assignment, what opportunities or challenges do you see on the horizon from 2016 and beyond that would necessitate changes, or new directions, in how you are accomplishing the above Ministry Assignment?

I. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.

With each new year comes new challenges and questions in our culture that affect the lives of Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist churches. Part of the ERLC's role is being attentive to those questions and applying the gospel to them for the benefit of our churches. One way we are able to both be attentive to and influential within the life of our churches is through the work of our Leadership Network. Through our partnerships with pastors and churches active in the work of the ERLC, and through our active conversation with them about their churches and needs, we are able to think through much more effectively how we can serve the SBC at large. This year, we will welcome a new cohort of pastors into our Leadership Council, which will also bring new voices and churches into intentional and strategic partnership with the ERLC so as to help equip churches to apply the gospel to the Christian life. More than that, we have a number of national events and digital strategies in the planning and production stage that we expect to be helpful and consequential to the mission of the ERLC in the 2016 year.

II. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.

With a pending presidential election come many new opportunities for the ERLC to continue to make inroads in building coalitions, driving conversations, and being a voice of influence on Capitol Hill to represent Southern Baptists and their concerns well and to speak to issues of religious liberty and Southern Baptist concerns around the country. A continued focus in the 2016 year will be Capitol Conversations, regular ERLC meetings with coalition partners, elected officials, and influencers to keep close contact and influence with those crucial to defending America's first freedom of religious liberty. Beyond this, additional work done over the last year along with key strategic partnerships we have developed have poised the ERLC to grow its media presence, including the finalizing of construction of a fully equipped television studio in the Southern Baptist Convention building in Nashville, which will serve to amplify the message and vision of Southern Baptists.

III. Assist churches in their moral witness in local communities.

In the year ahead, we have unique opportunities to use enhanced digital platforms and ERLC events to cultivate strategic relationships with churches to invest in local communities. Being the smallest SBC entity, it is an organizational challenge to be as involved in all of our states and associations as we would aspire to be, but through digital platforms, events, podcasting, and video conferencing, the ERLC has the ability to extend its reach in unique and strategic ways even further into the life of local churches.

IV. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.

With a presidential election cycle in full swing, increased attention to the issue of religious liberty provides the ERLC a unique opportunity to be a prophetic voice in the public square. Additionally, an increased attention to large-scale events provides the ERLC with the ability to speak to a broad audience on issues of concern to Southern Baptists. Additionally, through the work of the Research Institute, the ERLC has an arsenal of strategically-gifted and committed Southern Baptist thinkers that can help drive the conversation in the public square on issues of importance to Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist churches.