



## Cooperative Program

1. **SBC entities, especially those which receive Cooperative Program funding share an equal responsibility in promoting and advancing the Cooperative Program, in compliance with the Business and Financial Plan, Section VI, Part C (*Cooperative Program Promotion – Each Convention entity shall report on its efforts during the year in promoting Cooperative Program missions giving*). Providing examples, please describe ERLC’s commitment to promote the Cooperative Program.**

In all our organizational outlets, the ERLC promotes the tremendous Great Commission impact that gifts to the Cooperative Program make possible, particularly in the work of the ERLC. As the entity that is the most dependent on Cooperative Program funds, as an organization we are critically aware of the importance of the Cooperative Program. The ERLC takes every opportunity to promote the Cooperative Program and give thanks for the sacrificial giving and prayerful support of Southern Baptists.

As one example, once again this year we have had the privilege of placing several ultrasound machines at crisis pregnancy centers around the country through our Psalm 139 Project. As an organization, we take the stewardship of issues we have been entrusted to advance seriously, and we want to do everything we can to serve the cause of pro-life ministries around the country. In the midst of these placements, however, we were able to tell the organizations—along with those interested in giving so as to place additional machines—that 100% of any donations to Psalm 139 would go toward the ultrasound machines because all administrative and promotional costs were covered by Southern Baptist churches around the country through the Cooperative Program.

Additionally, in coordinating the work of Southern Baptists’ Global Hunger Relief initiative, we are uniquely suited to show how our cooperative partnership with IMB, NAMB, the Executive Committee, Lifeway, Baptist Global Response, and the WMU, partner together to feed hungry people around the world and carry the gospel with it. More still, one of the very purposes of our Leadership Network is to promote broader participation in SBC life, most notably through giving to the Cooperative Program. Here, we highlight the work the ERLC and other entities are doing and strive to be an ambassador for our denomination, highlighting how much Kingdom good we as Southern Baptists can do when we partner together. Beyond this, at every ERLC conference we hold private gatherings of key leaders and next generation pastors with the express purpose of promoting the Cooperative Program, both encouraging SBC churches to expand giving and seeking to identify and encourage like-minded non-SBC churches to become SBC churches and participate in Cooperative Program giving. This year, at the ERLC National Conference, we were able to gather once again with strategic pastors and leaders and highlight the Cooperative Program at a private lunch. Vance Pitman began the event with a testimony for why he believes in the CP and what it has meant for his church and ministry in Las Vegas. Thereafter, the ERLC led a panel discussion featuring Russell Moore, Ben Mandrell, Ronnie Floyd and Amy Whitfield, where the group was able to highlight throughout the event the importance and strategic purpose of the Cooperative Program and all the good work that is being accomplished across the Southern Baptist Convention.

2. **Please give examples of how ERLC’s staff operates within the guidelines of the SBC Business and Financial Plan as described in Section VI, Part D (*No Financial Appeals to Churches – In no case***



***shall any Convention entity approach a church for inclusion in its church budget or appeal for financial contributions).***

ERLC employees are informed clearly that we operate under the Business & Financial Plan of the Convention which clearly states that we are not to direct financial appeals directly to churches. This message is reinforced regularly with the staff. The ERLC receives less than 5% of our operating income from individual donors and the vast majority of those funds are from individuals (not pastors or churches) who believe passionately in our work and want to give in that way. We are deeply appreciative of the Cooperative program with over 75% of our operating income from that source. The ERLC takes every opportunity to promote the Cooperative Program. Dr. Moore makes it very clear that we are able to speak clearly on a wide variety of issues because of the strength of the Cooperative Program. The ERLC maintains a prophetic voice in our culture, among our churches, and in the political arena specifically due to the nature of the Cooperative Program funding.

### **Ethnic Participation**

- 3. This past year a motion was made by Leroy Fountain asking the Executive Committee to give a progress update to ten recommendations adopted by the SBC in 2011 with respect to ethnic church and ethnic church leader participation in Southern Baptist life. The 2011 recommendation that specifically refers to our SBC entities is as follows:**

**“The Executive Committee to request from the Southern Baptist Convention entities to submit as part of its annual ‘data call’ [as described in Bylaw 18. E [12] a descriptive report of participation of ethnic churches and church leaders in the life and ministry of the respective SBC entity.”**

**Given this context, and using previous years’ submissions to this question as a model, please give a robust descriptive report of ethnic participation, including active involvement of ethnic churches and church leaders, across all levels and aspects of ERLC’s ministry—such things as senior administrative staff, other professional staff, support staff, customer facing representatives, and written and spoken language resources—demonstrating progress, if any, in ethnic participation over the past eight years, 2011–2019.**

As the SBC entity specifically assigned with the responsibility of making Southern Baptists and others aware of the Bible’s positions on racial reconciliation, among other issues, the ERLC has made this issue a focal point among the items we consistently address. Over the last six years, the ERLC has hosted a national conference on racial reconciliation (which was attended or viewed by thousands of people in person and online and attracted national media attention), consistently published materials on the biblical mandate for racial reconciliation and commentaries on flashpoints in society where we can bring a uniquely Christian and Baptist perspective to an item in the news concerning racial issues, and hosted the largest conference in the history of the ERLC on the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. On this day, when men and women were already thinking about racial tensions in the context of our country by virtue of the historic day, we were able to welcome five thousand people (along with a half-million viewers online) to an event in Memphis designed to talk about the gospel and how it calls us to racial unity.



Beyond that, the ERLC has included racial reconciliation in several of its hallmark resources designed to equip churches—video and printed church curriculum, the *Gospel for Life* book series, Sunday emphasis bulletin inserts, and several other areas. In the upcoming year, the ERLC is grateful for the opportunity to partner with LifeWay again to provide a new resource titled, *The Church and the Racial Divide*. This is a six-session Bible study developed by the ERLC, which we prayerfully hope will be of benefit to our churches and to this issue in the life of our denomination. In terms of external groups, the ERLC has continued to welcome new leaders into the ERLC Leadership Council, a small network of leaders and pastors within the denomination that ERLC leadership regularly meet with. Each year, we make it a priority to seek out and include leaders from a diverse set of backgrounds, and this year is no exception. When it comes to personnel, we have filled two director-level positions within the ERLC over the last several years, with Trillia Newbell serving as Director of Community Outreach, and Steven Harris serves as Policy Director in Washington while simultaneously working on his Ph.D. from Harvard University. Mr. Harris' appointment marked the first African-American representing Southern Baptists in our Washington office in Commission history. Over the last three years, the ERLC has also received from the Southern Baptist Convention increasingly diverse sets of trustees as well, for which we are grateful, including two African-American trustees, one Phillipino trustee, and one Hispanic trustee. More broadly, our leadership team regularly asks where and how we can identify venues, positions, platforms, and opportunities to increase participation on this front in the life of our organization. In terms of emphasis, Dr. Moore regularly addresses the issue of racial reconciliation in television, radio, and print interviews, and writes on the topic frequently. By God's grace, efforts in each of these areas will continue at the same pace if not greater in the ministry year ahead.

**4. How is the ERLC making an effort to protect against sexual abuse? How will ERLC integrate aspects of Caring Well in its policies and practices through its own organization and through its ministry assignment to assist churches in applying moral and ethical teachings of the Bible and giving moral witness in their local communities?**

Given the nature of the work we do at the ERLC, we are highly sensitive to any hint of sexual impropriety or any distortion of a biblical, God-glorifying sexual ethic. We have created a culture from the top down that protects against sexual abuse through biblical teaching on the subject, open communication, and practical deterrents. Understanding, teaching, and applying God's Word regarding this important topic is one way we protect against sexual abuse. Because it is the policy of the ERLC that all employees represent the entity to the public and perform roles central to its spiritual objectives, the ERLC expects all staff to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the beliefs and convictions of the ERLC in both their professional and personal lives. We have also created a culture where employees are heard and where leadership is approachable. Our open-door policy allows male and female employees at every level to feel comfortable raising a concern or complaint. Practically, as other means of protection, we have glass doors throughout providing literal transparency into every office.

Additionally, Caring Well is not only an initiative that was published on our website but one that many members of our team invested hundreds of hours in helping to develop and prepare in partnership with the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group. This initiative is the fruit of an enormous amount of prayer, purposeful work, remarkable effort, and determination not only to fight the scourge that is sexual abuse but also to provide practical, actional steps that churches and organizations can take.



Additionally, given the amount of work the ERLC does on the issue of abuse, our daily operations have required the ERLC to develop policies that will allow us to receive disclosures, serve churches, provide answers, and serve many other needs that are along the very same lines as those laid out in the Caring Well resources. The churches in our denomination are determined to root out this wickedness from our churches, and it is a privilege to do anything and everything we can, by God's grace, to making that resolve a reality.

### **ERLC Specific Questions**

5. **What has proven to be the most reliable metric for indicating future accomplishments or challenges to ERLC's ministry assignments? Please explain why it is the most important metric and provide examples of measurable progress in this specific area of ERLC's ministry and work.**

From year to year, the most reliable metric we have found is in discerning the impact of future accomplishments or challenges on SBC churches. When the ERLC evaluates initiatives, goals, responses, or strategy of any kind, our priority is to focus on how they will affect actual congregations—including the pastors, leaders, and lay people in them. As an organization, we want to shape the culture and influence the public square, but all of this happens with a primary commitment to the local church. To measure this metric, we evaluate quantitative indicators that reveal the level of church impact of a potential initiative or challenge. Some of these quantitative indicators include web traffic, resource downloads, conference attendance, social media reach, and churches served. While any of these indicators cannot give a clear picture of our impact individually, they can provide a window into our effectiveness when looked at collectively.

6. **How does the ERLC measure its effectiveness, and what does the ERLC report as its most significant accomplishments or advancements across all of its ministry assignments?**

As mentioned above, as an organization we want to shape the culture and influence the public square, but all of this happens with a primary commitment to the local church. To measure our effectiveness as an organization, we evaluate quantitative indicators that reveal the level of church impact of a potential initiative or challenge. Some of these quantitative indicators include web traffic, resource downloads, conference attendance, social media reach, and churches served. While any of these indicators cannot give a clear picture of our impact individually, they can provide a window into our effectiveness when looked at collectively.

- 7. How does the ERLC support Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders in having a voice on moral and ethical issues? Please provide examples. What resources does the ERLC provide to Southern Baptists pastors to position them for cultural preparedness and in some cases social action? Please give examples.**

See following pages.

- 8. Of all the moral, ethical and cultural issues confronting Southern Baptist pastors and churches, which does the ERLC deem to be of highest importance, or represent the highest leverage issue for our churches in the next two years? What other issues does the ERLC consider to be most relevant for Southern Baptist churches? How is the ERLC presenting biblical teachings and interpretation for these issues?**

As long as there have been Baptists, conviction regarding the issue of religious liberty has long been a hallmark of our theological consensus, and contending for this religious liberty has quite often been one of the most pressing needs for which we must advocate in order to ensure the free spread of the gospel. As we head into an increasingly secular society, one in which religious liberty has too often been recast either as a partisan wedge issue or stigmatized as bigotry, Southern Baptists must redouble their efforts to show why our First Freedom is of critical importance for all Americans. This is particularly important because the debate itself touches on so many areas of life—from the freedom of churches to carry out their mission faithfully, to the rights of individuals to live out their lives consistent with their faith, to the protection of vulnerable children and unborn children, and many other places in between.

One of the main ways the ERLC has served Southern Baptist churches in this area is at the level of education and explication. To the former, for years Americans had the luxury of not having religious liberty questioned. That day no longer exists, so we must remind both the world and ourselves of its importance. To the latter, the fight for religious liberty exists on many fronts, so we must be able to present and to persuade others on the issue in a myriad of contexts and situations. Over the last year, the ERLC has continued to develop resources designed to address religious liberty specifically, both its biblical warrant, common misunderstandings of it, and its relevance for all Christians, people of faith, and people of no faith. Religious liberty is too important for the freedom of our churches and the free spread of the gospel, and the ERLC will remain diligent to assist Southern Baptists in promoting religious liberty.

While religious liberty is an ever-pressing need for the ERLC to address, there are all sorts of additional issues that present themselves in unique ways over the immediate horizon. As one example, as we head into an election year, and as our society itself has become more fragmented and more tribal over the last decade, there is a great need to guard against cynicism, tribalism, and to promote unity among the body of Christ when it comes to cultural and political engagement. This is an issue to which the ERLC has devoted a great deal of attention over the last year, and will continue to do so moving forward. Additionally, there are all sorts of questions related to technology—whether it be pornography, artificial intelligence, the effect of social media on families, mental health, or family stability—that previous generations of Southern Baptists never had to confront. In those areas the ERLC is providing resources and trying to ask questions and provoke conversations about issues in families. Oftentimes, it is difficult to know what kind of technology will

even exist in the future that will have radical implications for family.

That being the case, the ERLC is working along two fronts at any given time: equipping churches to think about principles applicable to any situation about how to prioritize family and the gospel's implications for our lives, and on the other hand, staying as current and informed as possible on all sorts of issues, technologies, and upcoming challenges that families will soon have to contend with but do not yet realize they will have to do so.

**9. How does the ERLC assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities in promoting religious liberty? Please explain.**

The ERLC assists churches by advocating on their behalf for the religious liberty that all Southern Baptist churches enjoy in the United States. We believe that religious freedom is not a gift bestowed on us by the government but rather a gift given to us by God. As such, and especially as there are mounting threats to religious liberty, the ERLC serves Southern Baptist churches by acting as guardians on their behalf—ever surveying the legislative and cultural landscape, sounding alarm to churches when there are genuine threats that should call them to action, and acting on their behalf advocating for the freedom of conscience for all people.

**10. What unique challenges does the ERLC face, in the near future, representing Southern Baptists in the public square, and offering guidelines to Southern Baptists with respect to moral advocacy, public awareness, social action, and religious liberty?**

See question number 8. In addition to that answer, and to elaborate on an area mentioned in the previous answer, one of the largest challenge the ERLC faces in the near future is dealing with both (a) the increasingly secular public square, and (b) the tribal instincts of Americans generally. For many years, one could see a clear example of secularization in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contraceptive mandate, paving over the consciences of a great number of Christian hospitals, universities, and organizations. With this particular encroachment on religious liberty and others like it, the ERLC must be all the more strategic and vigilant in seeking to persuade those in the public square on the public good of religious liberty and a free marketplace of ideas. More broadly, one challenge exists on the issue of religious liberty even as a social good. As society continues to secularize, on both the left and the right, too often religious liberty has been recast as just another battlefield for partisan warfare. In terms of fragmentation, a number of influences not the least of which has been the nature of social media, has led many to become increasingly tribal in ways that make it difficult not only to advance legislation but even to seek to persuade others of questions of common good. In all, the ERLC must be vigilant in reminding our elected officials of why Baptists fought so hard for religious liberty in the first place and what we expect of them in terms of defending our First Freedom in law. We also must continue to try and be a force for persuasion and kindness as we seek to persuade people of the interests we care about and, even more importantly, of the gospel in which we trust.

**11. How can Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders utilize the services and resources provided by the ERLC?**

One of the primary hubs for services and resources for pastors and church leaders is the ERLC website itself, [www.erc.com](http://www.erc.com). On our website, one can find links to a wide array of resources. These include articles, explainers, videos, podcasts, bulletin inserts, curriculum, podcasts, Bible studies,

interviews, event broadcasts, sermons, and much more. One of the strategies the ERLC has employed the last several years is a drive to provide as much content, on our website, free of charge, to as many Southern Baptist churches as possible.

An example, a significant way in which the ERLC seeks to invest in Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders is through our events. Each year we put on events around the country, whether large events like our National Conference or Evangelicals for Life, or smaller events like the ERLC Academy on the Hill in Washington, D.C. or others. Across all our events, though, we aim to record, preserve, and share video and audio of these events on our website to those who cannot attend. While some professional advisers in the event space might consider this “bad business” in that it foregoes an opportunity to sell content, the ERLC does not host events to make money but rather to make a difference in the lives of our churches. Our entire model is built around giving away as much free content as possible.

Not only that, but one can find at our website other ways to utilize the services and resources provided by the ERLC. There, one can find ways to participate in our work in Washington, D.C. and around the country. One can connect with vibrant online communities advocating for life around the country placing ultrasound machines and serving women in crisis. Other opportunities include being a part of our seminary-level ERLC academy, joining our ERLC Leadership Network, finding resources about combatting sexual abuse and other Caring Well initiatives, and much more. There are several different ways Southern Baptists can find many other resources, but by far the most comprehensive way is to spend some time on the ERLC website as it points to nearly every venue possible that may be of benefit to our churches.

**12. Please give an update on the impact of the Caring Well challenge across the SBC, and what is next for this initiative? What are the key components of this initiative, and what are the expected outcomes? How does a local church pastor participate in the Caring Well initiative?**

In the pilot phase of the Caring Well Challenge, over 800 churches eagerly signed up to participate. The challenge itself is an eight-step process that helps churches do everything they can to help their church become safe for survivors and safe from abuse. The eight steps are commit, build, launch, train, care, prepare, share, reflect. Churches who participate are led through the steps and provided with free resources for each phase by email. The resources are also accessible at [caringwell.com](http://caringwell.com). While resources and videos have been provided for each of the steps, some of the key components have been the Caring Well Report, the Caring Well Conference, the *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused* curriculum, and the Introductory Guide to Caring Well.

**The Caring Well Report** was the product of the inquiry the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group was tasked with—the need to consider how Southern Baptists at every level can take discernable action to respond swiftly and compassionately to incidents of abuse, as well as to foster safe environments within churches and institutions. The Advisory Group listened to and learned from hundreds of survivors of sexual abuse, church leaders, and national experts in this field. The report includes the personal words and testimonies of many of those survivors. It was not only an important initial step, but has been a valuable resource for churches to better understand and respond to the issue.

**The Caring Well Conference**, held in Texas October 3–5, 2019, was designed to equip teams from churches participating in the challenge. It provided the opportunity to listen to survivors, learn from experts, and leave equipped with an understanding of the full spectrum of abuse issues. The

conference was made available online, so travel will not be an obstacle for anyone wanting the training. The main sessions are available online for continued training and for new churches who wish to complete the challenge.

***Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*** is a video-based curriculum and handbook that brings together experts from various fields to help leaders understand and implement the best practices for handling the variety of abuse scenarios at churches, schools, or ministries. This free curriculum is available in English and Spanish at [churchcares.com](http://churchcares.com)

***The Introductory Guide to Caring Well*** was created to help churches prepare to prevent abuse. Whether churches have extensive systems for abuse prevention or are in the early stages of implementation, every church can benefit from an effort to review and enhance its prevention practices, policies, and procedures. This Introductory Guide overviews screening of workers, best practices and policies for prevention, how to prepare for disclosure, and gives further resources for churches to prepare.

Through the challenge, churches, whether large or small, just getting started or who have done extensive work in the past preparing and training their church on this issue, have increased their efforts to share about abuse, care for those who have been abused, and prepare to prevent abuse. As the initial pilot group completes the 12-month challenge, the ERLC is applying feedback to enhance the challenge for the next round of participating churches.

Over the year, more churches have been introduced to the challenge through entities, state conventions, associations, and churches partnering with the ERLC to host sessions related to the Caring Well Initiative and to provide resources. The ERLC will continue serving to help will educate, saturate, and motivate Southern Baptist churches, entities, and leaders to embrace the challenge and utilize the resources.

Pastors who wish to have their church participate in the challenge can sign up or appoint a point person at their church to sign up at [caringwell.com](http://caringwell.com). By signing up, their team will be guided through the process and resourced along the way to help make their church safe for survivors and safe from abuse. Churches who have completed the challenge will continue to utilize the resources for training and equipping their churches on this important topic.