

## **2017 SBC Ministry Inquiries**

### **LifeWay Christian Resources**

#### **COOPERATIVE PROGRAM:**

**1. While LifeWay Christian Resources does not receive Cooperative Program dollars, please describe how LifeWay's work with SBC churches support cooperative missions and cooperative funding. Are there ways in which LifeWay can help promote and advocate for the Cooperative Program?**

The Southern Baptist Convention created the Baptist Sunday School Board in 1891 and authorized an annual salary of \$2,100 for J.M. Frost, its corresponding secretary and only employee. However, the SBC didn't allocate any funds for the salary which Frost was expected to generate with the new publishing entity. He did, and that's what the BSSB and LifeWay Christian Resources has done for 124 years.

LifeWay receives no funds from the denomination, including no allocation from the Cooperative Program, and never has. Instead, LifeWay provides its SBC-assigned ministries through a business model of creating trustworthy Christian resources that grow His church and Kingdom. In fact, LifeWay invests nearly \$3 million a year back into the denomination and its ministries.

LifeWay also solicits donations from 150,000 summer participants in World Changers, CentriKids and Fuge resulting in a check to the International Mission and North American Mission Board totaling more than \$700,000.

LifeWay also supports SBC missions and the Cooperative Program in a myriad of ways including:

- Orientation of new trustees and employees covering the SBC's ownership of LifeWay, election of our board of trustees, and the importance of the Cooperative Program to sustain other SBC ministries;
- Inclusion of education and promotion material about CP and SBC's mission agencies in periodic shipments to SBC churches;
- Inclusion of missionary stories as illustrations in Bible study lessons, VBS materials and other resources as appropriate;
- Designation of a member of LifeWay's leadership team as liaison with the SBC Executive Committee on CP communication. That individual served two years on the Cooperative Program Advisory Council, helping develop a multi-year national strategy for the CP;

- LifeWay Stores also partnered with SBC Global Hunger Relief for a national food drive to benefit local ministries in their communities.

#### **ETHNIC PARTICIPATION:**

**2. Please give a progress report of ethnic participation within LifeWay Christian Resources, including active involvement of ethnic churches and church leaders, across all levels and aspects of the LifeWay Christian Resources ministry—such things as board of trustees composition, senior administrative staff, other professional staff, support staff, and ethnic church and church leader composition of any external advisory groups— demonstrating progress, if any, in ethnic participation over the past two decades (1997-2016), giving special attention to progress over the past five years (2012-2016).**

LifeWay Christian Resources creates products that help spiritually transform people from all cultures and backgrounds and encourages predominantly ethnic churches to utilize those products to help their members know Jesus Christ and seek His Kingdom. Following are several resources that give evidence of the ministry's commitment to that end.

LifeWay offers resources in 34 languages and is committed to providing two basic evangelism and discipleship resources, *Share Jesus without Fear* and *The Call to Follow Christ*, as free downloadables on [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) in multiple languages. *Share Jesus without Fear* is currently available free of charge in Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Tagalog, Telugu, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. *The Call to Follow Christ* is available for free in Chinese, French, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, and Vietnamese. The division continues to work with volunteers around the world to translate those resources in additional languages.

The Resources Division has employees who work specifically with predominantly Hispanic and African American churches. The division offers a series of webinars to train Hispanic leaders online at its *Español* site on [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) along with various regional training events in the U.S. and in Latin America. The division provides age-graded Spanish curriculum along with discipleship, VBS and leadership resources. In 2014, it introduced two new lines of Bible studies for groups in Spanish called *Conetándose* and *Estudios Bíblicos para la Vida*. LifeWay sponsors events designed primarily for African-American churches including ALPHA for pastors, Transformational Church Conferences, BETA for education leaders, I'm the Man Conference for men, the new Purely Sisters Conference for women and the National Black Church Leadership and Family Conference. CRD also produces an urban Sunday School curriculum called YOU, which was chosen by the SBC's National African American Fellowship as its official adult curriculum. Additionally, African Americans serve as directors in Customer Service and Church Partnerships areas and in leadership roles as editors and managers in other areas of LifeWay.

Out of the Resources Division, LifeWay's B&H Publishing imprint publishes or licenses products in over 35 languages with nearly 1,000 resources in languages other than English. B&H is the largest commercial

publisher of Spanish Bibles in the world and won 6 SEPA awards in 2015 (SEPA is the Spanish branch of ECPA), and was voted Publisher of the Year for the past two years.

The *RVR1960 Holman Study Bible* and *RVR1960 Fisher of Men Bible* continue to be received well as tools to focus the church on evangelism, discipleship, and ministry. The Portuguese version released in Brazil along with various other devotional and reference works in Spanish continue to aid the churches in Latin America. We also published Dr. Díaz-Pabón's *Secretos de Fe* (Faith Secrets) book, B&H Global's first original book in Spanish.

LifeWay Christian Stores carries hundreds of products for churches and individuals of different ethnicities including over 4,000 Spanish language products. A well-identified and carefully selected section for Spanish language products is found in most stores, appropriately sized for the cultural makeup of the community they serve. Stores also carry products by and of particular interest to African-American churches and members. For example, many of our stores carry LifeWay's urban Sunday School curriculum called "YOU".

The Retail division has buyers dedicated to selecting ethnic merchandise and intentionally integrates products for all audiences into promotional catalogs, including Spanish language product, to introduce a broad selection of resources and services that meet the needs of our ethnic customers.

We are proud to passionately equip diverse communities across the country, meeting unique needs for one singular mission.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE:**

**3. In response to a Ronnie Floyd motion, June 2013, Houston, TX, requesting the Executive Committee and SBC Entities to assist churches with mental health ministries, the Executive Committee appointed an advisory group in the fall 2013, to determine ways in which Southern Baptist entities and SBC churches can best help those who are in need of mental health assistance. The final report of this advisory group was presented to Dr. Frank S. Page, fall 2014.**

**If LifeWay feels that reporting on this subject is within its purview, or falls within the scope of its ministry assignment(s), or has made any progress in the area of assisting churches with training and equipping people with mental health challenges, or has developed or identified resources to assist SBC churches in the area of mental health ministry, please provide a detailed progress report.**

LifeWay takes seriously the opportunity to provide a variety of resources to assist individuals and churches in ministering to persons in our churches and communities who suffer with mental

health challenges. An extensive list of resources is available at LifeWay.com and a sample list of those materials available upon request.

#### **QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO LIFEWAY CHRISTIAN RESOURCES**

**4. What has proven to be LifeWay Christian Resources' most reliable metric indicating future accomplishments of, or challenges to LifeWay across all ministry assignments? Why is that metric the one LifeWay Christian Resources believes is most important to watch relative to each ministry assignment?**

There is an almost endless array of critical metrics necessary for an international ministry like LifeWay to constantly gather, analyze and respond to. However, one of the most meaningful for LifeWay is the number of churches we are reaching and how deeply we are reaching into each church.

**5. Please give a progress report on the relocation of LifeWay offices in downtown Nashville.**

In April, LifeWay held a chapel service to commemorate our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary then held a groundbreaking and prayer service on the downtown Nashville property that will house our new headquarters in 2017. Construction on this nine-story 250,000-square foot office building – one fourth the size of our former offices that were sold last year - continues according to plans with the goal of moving in by the end of 2017. Our new location is a place where we can truly build community and demonstrate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**6. Please give a status report for LifeWay Christian Resources' stores. Please include near and long term projections for LifeWay stores. What is the balance between the opening of new stores and the closing of existing stores in the coming year? How many stores are there in each of those categories?**

LifeWay's Retail division seeks to transform lives by the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. During fiscal year 2016, LifeWay's Retail division serviced millions of customers and tens of thousands of churches domestically and internationally through over 170 stores in 29 states and online.

The Retail division also continued its emphasis on serving church leaders through the minister's discount program. At the close of fiscal year 2016, more than 200,000 ministers were represented in the minister discount program. Ministers, church staff, and furloughing missionaries use this discount for solutions vital to their ministry efforts. Additionally, the LifeWay Rewards customer loyalty program continues to grow. An emphasis this year on our *Price Match Promise* has helped our customers know that we will match the price in our store of any store or online retailer for any new item that we carry.

The division focused intently on serving church customers with a renewed commitment this year. An

initiative to hire a Church Connection Specialist for each store was launched. These employees specifically focus on reaching and serving the needs of our church customers with greater expertise.

ONESource Direct extends the distribution channel and helps churches maximize stewardship of their resources by continuing to connect them to savings opportunities on a broad range of quality products and services, such as background checks and church buses through LifeWay's ONESource program.

Ministry remains the division's primary purpose, emphasizing sensitivity to ongoing in-store ministry opportunities. LifeWay Stores donated over 10,000 Bibles to ministries across the country with a national Bible Drive, inviting customers to donate new and gently used Bibles through their local LifeWay Store. Stores also partnered with SBC Global Hunger Relief for a national food drive to benefit local ministries in their communities. In addition, LifeWay Stores partnered with Voice of the Martyrs and distributed more than 4,000 medical bags that customers filled with needed supplies. These medical bags were sent to persecuted missionaries overseas. And, LifeWay Stores once again partnered with Samaritan's Purse for a National Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Collection Day where more than 12,000 shoeboxes were collected through LifeWay Stores.

LifeWay's Retail division anticipates being well positioned to assist millions of customers every step of their way by providing trustworthy answers for life issues. Caring team members will be ready to prayerfully equip and guide customers. We plan to carry a vast selection of Bibles, Bible Studies and other products for transformational impact as we emphasize ministry concerns of the Southern Baptist Convention. Plans are to attract families with more in-store events and activities as we grow our ministry.

**7. What presence does LifeWay have in the global market? Does LifeWay provide curriculum and Christian resources outside of North America? Are there any LifeWay Christian stores located outside of North America?**

The focus of LifeWay Global is to "serve the Church in her mission of making disciples—worldwide." Over the past year, LifeWay Global has integrated all publishing lines into a unified strategy to better serve global churches. Those lines include Bible and Reference, Trade Books, Leadership Resources, Kids Resources, On-Going Curriculum and Short Term Studies. LifeWay Global experienced a record year in 2016 with more than 3 million lives impacted by our trustworthy content.

A strategic priority for LifeWay Global is the contextualization of our work. To that end, we have offices and indigenous staff in Beijing, Delhi, Cape Town, Mexico City, Guatemala City, and Rio De Janeiro. And our publishing ministry is increasingly focused on indigenous authors, including: Miguel Nunez, Sugel Michelen, Otto Sanchez, Laura Chavez, and G. Samuel Gollapalle.

For more than 25 years, LifeWay has published and distributed resources in English and Spanish. In 2016, we began to publish select resources in Portuguese and Mandarin. More than 50,000 lives were impacted this past year through LifeWay's training ministry in China.

Today, LifeWay distributes life-changing content to 75 countries via print and more than 150 countries through digital delivery (including Amazon, Apple, and Google).

LifeWay Global is expanding its resources for Latino churches, including the launch of *Disciples Path*, *Armor of God*, *Fisher of Men* studies, *Explore the Bible* in short term, and our 2017 VBS program: *Observadores Galacticos*. Global leadership training will be a growing priority with our publishing program anchored by *Hearts, Heads, and Hands* by Dr. David Sills—available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

**8. How many different languages are represented in LifeWay’s Christian resources? Please give a status report.**

LifeWay’s offers resources in 34 languages and is committed to providing two basic evangelism and discipleship resources, *Share Jesus without Fear* and *The Call to Follow Christ*, as free downloadables on [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) in multiple languages. *Share Jesus without Fear* is currently available free of charge in Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Tagalog, Telugu, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. *The Call to Follow Christ* is available for free in Chinese, French, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, and Vietnamese. The division continues to work with volunteers around the world to translate those resources in additional languages.