

Heritage, Values, and Joyful Giving

by Larry Black, Church Planting Strategist, Central-West Region



Daniel Bannister (r) baptizes in the river

When asked why he values the Cooperative Program even if it requires sacrifice, catalytic church planter Daniel Bannister responded with praise for this nearly-a-century-old missions plan. The following is his testimony. What would be yours?

"I have grown up in Southern Baptist churches all my life. My father was a Southern Baptist pastor in Louisiana for over 20 years and served as vice president [of the Louisiana Baptist Convention]. Dad instilled in me a value for God's Word and for the Cooperative Program and what we as Southern Baptists can accomplish together through partnership in missions.

"As a local church pastor, I see the incredible value of cooperating in missions together. Something that I have come to believe very strongly is that no

local church on her own can fulfill the Great Commission. Instead, He has given those resources to the global body of Christ so that as we work together, the Gospel will be taken to the whole world. Therefore, it is God's intent that we work together in taking the Gospel to the nations so that His Kingdom grows through our working together in cooperative partnership. This idea is modeled for us in the book of Acts as churches partnered together to support the work of the apostles and sending missionaries.

"I pastor the Iglesia Fuente de Vida, a church plant that has been meeting for almost two years [in Charlottesville]. This church plant would not be in existence apart from the Cooperative Program. In addition, as a catalytic church planter with the SBCV, I have been blessed with not only financial resources, but equipping through formal and informal training. In spite of the fact that many of our members have few economic resources, we have been excited to participate with Southern Baptists in the transformation of the world. This has been part of our DNA since before we launched, and our membership holds our participation in missions as a high value. If you ask any of our members about our

involvement, they will let you know very quickly that we are called to 'pray, give, and go' and [that] part of the way we do that is through our participation in the Cooperative Program.

"Some have asked me about how the economic crisis has affected the ability of our church and its members to give to the Cooperative Program. I quickly share with them [that] the God of the universe who owns everything is passionate about missions. If we commit ourselves to the work He is passionate about, how will He not give us the resources to be involved? Therefore, the excuse that 'we don't have the money to give' becomes a demonstration of doubt in God's ability to provide what we need. For this reason, we give gratefully to the Cooperative Program, knowing that 'God will provide all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' In fact, since we have started, God has not only met our needs, but He has continually blessed us with an abundance of resources beyond our own imagination.

"We believe firmly as a church that all healthy living things reproduce, and we are responsible to start new churches. This became a reality for us much quicker than we had anticipated. Before we had reached our one-year anniversary as a church, God began leading us to start another congregation on the south end of Charlottesville. We reasoned that we did not have the people or the resources, but God made it clear that this was His will. He sent the resources through other sister SBCV churches who came alongside of us to help us start the new congregation.

"It is His will that we do this great work together, and since it is His work, we must do it His way—together. Jesus prayed that we would be one in John 17 so that the world would know that God the Father had sent Him. The Cooperative Program gives us an excellent way to demonstrate our unity of purpose, vision, and cooperation in such a way that the direct result is the carrying of the Gospel around the world."

If we commit ourselves to the work He is passionate about, how will He not give us the resources to be involved?

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