

# **ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS COORDINATOR 2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **TOGETHER IN DISASTER RELIEF**

One of the joys of serving as the Associational Missions Coordinator for Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association is to see the joy and sometimes surprise from individuals who learn of what the Lord does through the association.

Dr. Richard Blue recently told us of a lady who was so impressed with the work of chainsaw units in North Carolina that she made an immediate contribution to Disaster Relief. When she encountered a member of the unit who explained that they were there to cut trees from off the homes and property of victims of the storm, she asked, "How long will you be here?" The relief worker replied something like this, "Honey, we'll be here as long as you need us." This kind of servant spirit gripped her and as a result, she later made the contribution.

Sometimes we find God at work in the small things, such as cutting up downed trees after a storm, providing Sunday School Leadership Training for workers in the local churches, providing training for Pastor Search Committees as they seek to find God's man to lead their congregation, painting rooms to be used for counseling at the counseling center, and the list goes on.

## **TOGETHER IN EQUIPPING CHURCHES**

This past year, ELBA in partnership with the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, the Louisiana Baptist Convention and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary provided Conflict Intervention Training to pastors and church leaders from our area. The Training consisted of three weekend retreats over a period of months. The first retreat was just for the pastors. The second retreat included the pastor and a key leader from the church and the final retreat was for the pastor and his wife. Ministers' wives are often the silent victims of conflict in the church. We called the teaching material "Keeping Your Church Out of Trouble and Keeping Trouble Out of Your Church." One pastor recently reported how that training had been useful to him as he dealt with issues in the church where he serves.

This is a clear example of doing together what we cannot do alone. It is highly unlikely that the participants would have had the opportunity to receive such training without the cooperative endeavors of the participating entities.

## **TOGETHER MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHURCH EMPLOYEES**

Three years ago (August 2008), Roddy Conerly (former Director of Missions for the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge), Lonnie Wascom (Director of Missions for the North Shore Association) and I began exploring ways to help ministers with their health insurance needs. We found that there were a number without any insurance and others that were paying extremely high premiums. That journey has taken us down a number of roads. At the time of this writing, we have the majority of the technical and legal matters taken care of so that we can now begin collecting “Health Questionnaires” from persons interested in receiving a quote for coverage. Many of the Directors of Missions from around the state have expressed interest in helping their ministers and church employees secure medical insurance coverage. We have some preliminary data which indicates that participants can receive comparable coverage for less than what other insurance carriers provide. Please note: this is a work in progress, but we continue to work with this issue to help our churches. If your church provides medical insurance for the staff, it would be advisable to secure a quote through the Baptist Healthcare Benefits Program to see if this program might provide substantial financial savings. The name of the health plan is called “The Koinos Plan” coming from the Greek word meaning “fellowship.”

## **TOGETHER MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN CRISIS**

Another way that the Association has proven beneficial to the churches is through the Christian Counseling Center. Our Christian Social Services Team has done an outstanding job of being where the Lord wanted them, when He wanted them, to provide this service to the churches and their people. We have four counselors working out of the center to provide counsel based on the Word of God with the intention of letting their clients know that Jesus is the greatest priority of their lives. We continue to refer clients to the center through the churches. This is an obvious work of God. He has provided the facility, the counselors, and the resources to minister. One example of God’s provision was the donation of office furnishings. A local credit union donated chairs, desks, and other furnishings to equip the center, a true God-send.

## **TOGETHER ON MISSION**

Sixty “missionaries” from ELBA churches went to Philadelphia, Mississippi this past July to work with two Choctaw Indian Baptist Churches in VBS and to replace the roof on one of the churches. The Corinth Baptist Church was the one where we replaced the roof and conducted VBS. The Sunday after we were there, they doubled in their attendance and have several that have either made professions of faith or are being counseled for salvation. They experienced a renewed excitement as a result of God using our team to minister to them. Here again, we did together what we could not do alone. Some of the participating churches that often schedule their own mission trips opted to participate in the Associational endeavor, thus strengthening the ministry. The Associational trip provided an opportunity for participants from other churches to become engaged in a mission opportunity who may not have done so otherwise.

## **TOGETHER IN REACHING LIVINGSTON PARISH THROUGH MISSION CHURCHES**

We have five mission congregations in our Association. Victory, a mission of Macedonia is currently engaged in preparations for building their first unit facility. On October 1, they had a ground-breaking and note-burning service on their property located on North Corbin Road. They have completely paid for their land and are working with the Louisiana Baptist Builders to secure their plans and enlist volunteers to work on the building. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2012. The pastor of Victory is Brother Fred Dyess.

One Life, a mission of Walker Baptist Church, is currently meeting in the facility in Port Vincent that was the Catholic Church. They have been told that they need to be prepared to move to another facility by the end of 2012, therefore, they are prayerfully seeking where the Lord would have them to locate. With limited property and facilities available in the Port Vincent area, they need for their sister congregations to pray for the Lord's leadership and provision. Brother Frank Valenzano is the pastor.

South Walker Baptist Church, located on Hammack Road south of Walker, is a mission of Hebron. This mission congregation has gone through considerable transition over the past few years and is involved in a significant ministry in their area. They have seen the Lord bring them through major leadership transitions and financial challenges. God has been faithful to use them and bless them. Mark Carroll is the pastor.

Christ's Community, currently meeting in the former Eden Baptist Church, is a mission of Judson. They are also dealing with the challenge of securing a permanent church facility to be built on their property located on Juban Road, just south of I-12. One of the significant challenges they faced was wetlands mitigation. They had to pay in the neighborhood of \$90,000 in mitigation fees which wiped out their building fund. In spite of the challenges, they have seen an average of one baptism each month of this past church year. Willis Easley is the pastor.

The latest mission congregation in the association is Watson Baptist Church. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, First Baptist Church of Denham Springs voted to become the sponsor congregation for them. Watson has purchased property on Cane Market Road, east of Highway 16. They, too, are working with the Louisiana Baptist Builders to secure a first unit building and engage volunteers for their construction. Dr. Dennis Phelps, Professor of Preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is the Interim Pastor.

These five mission congregations reported a total of 24 baptisms this past church year. The Church Planting Team of the association continues to explore the need and development of church plants in the parish.

Let me encourage you to see the ministry reports in this Book of Reports to discover other ways that **"TOGETHER WE DO WHAT WE CANNOT DO ALONE."**