

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS COORDINATOR ANNUAL REPORT

October 12, 2009

Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). That has been so true. As I look at the lives of many around me, I clearly recognize how abundant the life I have in Christ Jesus is. The abundance of the life the Lord has given reaches beyond my own personal sphere. I see it in the life of other believers, church families, and in the broader family of faith called the Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association. In this report, I hope to communicate some of the abundance of the things the Lord has provided and done.

Evangelistic Block Party Trailer

Two years ago, the Lord opened a door for us to acquire what we call an **"Evangelistic Block Party Trailer."** The goal of having this unit is to assist the churches with their outreach and evangelistic ministries. I want to share some statistics that reveal the blessing this unit has been to the churches. One of the things we ask the users to do is to complete a "Highlights Form" which provides a report of the benefits of using the trailer. In the past two years, 16 different churches have made use of the trailer. Some of these churches have used it multiple times. Not all of the user churches have returned a "Highlights Form", but here is the information from those that have. We ask the churches to report on the number of "Community Connections" they made through their events. The churches reported 1,844 connections. There were 870 individuals that were able to hear a presentation of the gospel and 6 professions of faith that were recorded. Here are some of the comments that were shared by the churches that used the trailer:

- "This was our first connection to the community for our church start. The trailer was a perfect fit for us and a tremendous blessing."
- Using the trailer "was a great mission outreach to the children in our community for VBS."
- "We had over 125 attend from the church and community."
- "Many new people from the neighborhood came out and signed their children up for VBS."
- "It was a great showing of an event for our church. People were recognizing action at the church and honking to us. It's an excellent way to fellowship with the lost community."
- "We had a successful attempt to invite our community to 'Celebrate America' and present Jesus Christ to them."
- "Everything was great. We had over 100 people at the event. Most of them had never been on our church property." This same church used the unit again and offered this report. "We had 325 people registered on paper and more people from our church that did not register. We shared with many about upcoming events and made many connections to our community."
- "We used the trailer for our VBS Commencement. We had over 150 in attendance for our Sunday services. Many of these were families from our VBS."
- "Church-wide, community-wide event; have had 6 move their letter since the event. One baptism from the event at a later date."
- One church that reported 98 community connections said, "People requesting information on future events – 19; Want to know more about the Christian life – 11; need a visit – 2. Total attendance was approximately 130 – 135 people. Guest bags included a New Testament Bible and 'The Hope' DVD and Eternal Life tract. People from other churches commented about the party trailer. Will definitely use trailer again in the future."

As you can see, the Lord has blessed us with a great tool for connecting with the people in our communities.

Missions and Ministry Center

In March, Eden Baptist voted to dissolve the Corporation and deed the property to the Association. Since then, the Executive Board voted to accept the property and use it for a Missions and Ministry Center and a Church Incubator site. As a Missions and Ministry Center, we plan to convert some of the old

educational space to be used for the Associational Office. Plans are being drawn to maximize the use of the facility as efficiently as possible. The sign has been changed to reflect the use of the facility. The facility is also being used as a church incubator. At present, Christ's Community is occupying the remaining education space and the worship center until they are able to construct their facility on the Juban Road property. The Executive Board adopted Incubator Use Policies. Mission congregations will have three years to use the facility with the hope they can be in their own facility by then. However, the policy does allow for an additional two years if there is a need. Mission congregations using the facility will contribute toward the costs of its operation.

Associational Health Insurance Group

Late last year we began to explore the possibility of establishing an Associational Health Insurance Group with GuideStone. This has been a collaborative effort with the North Shore and Greater Baton Rouge associations. The process began by determining those eligible to participate in the group. The group is open to all full-time ministers and all bi-vocational ministers that put in at least 20 hours per week toward ministry. In order to establish the group, we were required to have 80% of all eligible ministers complete a Health Statement or waiver. Now that we have submitted the documentation, we should be able to have a reply concerning the rates. As soon as we have that information, we will communicate with all of the interested ministers to see how many would like to enroll. Those who completed Health Statements are under no obligation to actually do so. The goals are to see if the group would be able to offer medical insurance to those who do not currently have coverage and to see if it might provide coverage to those who do at a more affordable rate. If the group is established, other ministers may enroll at a later date, usually in January of each year.

Empowering Kingdom Growth

In 2008, the Association voted to participate in the Empowering Kingdom Growth Initiative. We initially had 14 churches indicate their participation. The initiative was a three-part process, beginning with an emphasis on developing a kingdom heart, using the resources developed by Dr. Kenneth Hemphill, "Empowering Kingdom Growth, The Heartbeat of God." This study was designed to rediscover the passion of God for a lost world. Phase 2 was "Developing a Kingdom Strategy, the Acts 1:8 Initiative." This study was an emphasis on the mandate of God to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. It was designed to help us refocus on the mission of the church, the building of the kingdom. Phase 3 emphasized the development of Kingdom Resources. The key study material was "Making Change." This resource emphasized Christian money management so that God's people would have the resources to invest in kingdom endeavors.

The EKG Steering Committee developed a projected schedule which was to begin with an EKG rally at FBC Denham Springs. However, those plans were changed as a result of Hurricane Gustav. As a result of the recovery endeavors, several of the churches either cancelled or postponed their participation. We were unable to obtain a definite count of churches that completed the initiative, but reports from those we did hear from were very positive.

Missions/Church Plants

One Life – Mission of Walker

One Life is meeting in Port Vincent. Frank Valenzano is the pastor. One Life has seen significant growth and continues to reach people. Many of those reached by the church are unchurched people.

Christ's Community – Mission of Judson

As of June 1, Christ's Community is meeting in the former Eden Church facilities. Willis Easley is the pastor. The church has experienced significant growth this year and has made many improvements in the buildings to accommodate their ministries. Attendance continues to build as they look forward to the day they will move into their permanent facilities to be built on Juban Road.

Life Giving – Mission of Live Oak

This year, Life Giving has had to deal with a major transition, having lost their pastor. The Cooperative Missions Committee, made up of representatives from the mission, the sponsor congregation,

Association, and state convention, has worked diligently to see that the work continues. The Committee is working with them in their pastor search process.

Victory – Mission of Macedonia

Victory is meeting in the North Corbin Elementary School, located on Hwy. 449, northeast of Walker. Fred Dyess is the pastor. The church is currently in the process of seeking to acquire property for a permanent church site. The North Corbin area is one of the sites that the Missions Team identified as a target area for a church plant. In addition to the schools, there are several subdivisions in the area, and the Catholic Church has purchased 40 acres for future development into a church and school campus.

South Walker – Mission of Hebron

South Walker, formerly named Burning Bush Baptist Church, is located on Hammack Road, south of Walker. Mark Carroll is the pastor. This congregation has also had to work through some significant challenges, but, thanks to the Lord, they have made significant progress and continue to see growth.

Pastor Retirements

This year we have had two pastors retire after lengthy ministries. Merelin McCon and Tommy Shipp have each retired after 32 years of pastoral ministry to their congregations. Merelin served Judson Baptist Church and Tommy served First Baptist Church of French Settlement. These men have provided a tremendous example of faithful service to the Lord.

Pastorless Churches

Unless one of our pastorless churches calls a pastor before the annual meeting, we will have a total of 10 churches without pastors. This is the greatest number of churches without pastors in the 5 years I have been in Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association. Those churches are: Carroll, Central, FBC Denham Springs, Don Avenue, Doyle, FBC French Settlement, FBC Holden, Judson, Life Giving, Southside. Change is a constant in life. Things just don't stay the same. Some changes are welcome, others are not. Part of the challenge for churches is to remember that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord." Change can be a time for churches to come together for the sake of the kingdom, putting aside personal preferences and agendas to seek the Lord and His will. It is a time for each member to renew his or her commitment to "trust in the Lord with all thine heart, lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." It is also a time for us to remember to pray for our sister churches. With 43 churches in the Association, it would take 42 weeks for each church to pray for all the other churches.

Associate Associational Missions Coordinator – Freddie Arnold

Last year the Personnel Committee recommended to the Executive Board to bring on an Associate Associational Missions Coordinator. The Board approved both the position and funding for this and granted me the opportunity to engage the person to fill the position. Two questions that needed to be answered were:

- What would he do?
- What qualifications would he need to have?

To answer the first question, a position profile was developed identifying the tasks. Without attempting to enumerate all of them here, let me summarize. He is to assist in all areas of associational ministry as requested but with specific responsibility for missions, disaster relief, and church enrichment/development. What were the qualifications for this position? It would need to be a person who would be part time, have a working knowledge of both church and associational life and have experience in these areas.

From the time I learned that Freddie Arnold was planning to retire from the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans, I began praying, asking the Lord if he might be the man to contact about coming. I had a real peace and solid sense of the Lord's leading that he was the man to call. Freddie's retirement as a church planter strategist from BAGNO became effective on May 31. He then came on board in July.

We have already been the beneficiaries of his experience and work. Having participated in other On Mission Celebrations, he has assumed the lead role in working with the Missions Team in the planning and conducting of the Celebration. He is a resource person for the Team as they plan the Associational Missions Trip to Oklahoma in July of 2010. He has been a valuable resource in working with some of our mission congregations. Although we have not been called upon to engage in disaster relief this year, Freddie has experience as a Blue Hat in Disaster Relief. He has begun looking at ways to help strengthen churches through Sunday School and Discipleship. His years as a Minister of Education will enable him to assist churches with their educational needs. I'm also grateful that he can be an additional resource to the churches when they need someone to preach. We are blessed to have him and Elaine "back home."

I trust you will notice in all the matters reported on above, that these are not mere "associational activities." All of them are to assist the churches that make up the Association with their ministries. Evangelistic Block Parties are local church events in which the Party Trailer is made available. Health insurance is for the benefit of the ministers, not just associational staff. Even the Missions and Ministry Center is a tool and resource center for the benefit of the churches. It is a work center where staff engages in endeavors for the benefit of the local churches and for the greater good of the Kingdom. EKG was not for the benefit of the Association, but for the members of the local church. Associational staff exists to carry on the work of the Association for the benefit of the local church. We are here to encourage, support, and celebrate with the pastors and staff members of local churches. So, the Association exists for the benefit of the local church and the Kingdom of God.

As staff, we greatly appreciate your prayers for us as co-laborers in Christ.

In the Master's service,

David E. Brown

Associational Missions Coordinator