

Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

For period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Introduction

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) exists to help local churches fulfill their divinely appointed mission from God. The convention staff, under the leadership of Executive Director-Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr., is committed to helping Baptist churches and associations maximize their ministry outreach for the purpose of building God's kingdom through a strategy of "impacting lostness through disciple-making."

Following are brief summaries of some state convention ministry activities that have taken place from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. These summaries are abbreviated versions of ministry reports that will be published in the program book for the 2019 BSCNC Annual Meeting, scheduled for Nov. 11-12 in Greensboro.

ADULT EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

During the summer of 2018, we set out to host Gospel Conversations Trainings across the state and to find trainers to be a part of the DiscipleNC team, with the ultimate goal of having a trainer in every region of the state. From July 2018 to June 2019, we have hosted eight trainings with a total of 227 people representing 49 churches in attendance. At the Gospel Conversation Trainings, attendees learned practical tools to share their faith and were given time and space to practice in the field. These tools included "3 Circles," personal testimony and understanding spheres of influence.

ASSOCIATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Associational mission strategists (AMSs) across North Carolina play a crucial role in the life of our churches and can be a vital, significant and strategic force in the effort to help plant new churches and assist in the revitalization and replanting of existing congregations. For this reason, Associational Partnerships continues to offer opportunities, training and resources to help associational missionaries enter the field with a fresh, intentional and deliberate approach. We are grateful for the important strategic ministry partnerships with the associational leaders representing 77 associations across the state.

Events, conferences and training: Associational Partnerships and the North Carolina Associational Missions Conference (NCAMC) formed a joint planning team consisting of the AMS officers and Baptist state convention staff that collaborate to enhance our relationship and plan the annual NCAMC. During this year's three-day training event in April, we offered a full day devoted to potential and new AMS training and a full agenda of education, training and fellowship opportunities for all associational staff. A conference for new and potential AMSs was offered at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, Ala., in January. The theme was "Associational Transitions ... Moving Into a New Future!"

Associational Partnerships assists associations with filling vacant associational ministry positions through associational search committee training along with a database of possible candidates.

Associational Partnerships continues to develop and connect potential AMSs, new AMSs and experienced AMSs with training and orientation opportunities offered by the convention and other entities that resource associational missionaries such as the Southern States Associational Missions Conference, the Network of Baptist Associations (NOBA) and the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL). Premier training is available during these opportunities for sharpening skills and developing competencies for future associational challenges.

CHILDHOOD EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

Safety and security has been a primary focus of ministry this past year throughout the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and our own state convention. This emphasis has led to many opportunities for training and resource development. A new resource available at ncbaptist.org/children is a “Framework for Creating Safety and Security Policies” to assist churches in writing policies specific to their context and culture. The resource is available at ncbaptist.org/safetypolicyframework. Other resources available to assist churches in this area are available at ncbaptist.org/children-resources-all.

CHURCH HEALTH AND REVITALIZATION

Church revitalization continues to be an emphasis for the BSCNC as it is desperately needed in many North Carolina churches. According to LifeWay statistics, 48 percent of North Carolina churches are plateaued, while 38 percent are declining. Based on these figures, church revitalization is more than just a topic for discussion, it is a call to action. We recognize that our churches did not get into a state of decline quickly, so it will not be a quick process to return to disciple-making. Therefore, we have come to understand that equipping the pastor for this journey of revitalization is paramount. To address this need, we have 11 revitalization cohorts meeting monthly. These cohorts are pastors brought together within their local associations as they prepare for the difficult call to church revitalization.

CHURCH PLANTING

Church Planting N.C. celebrated the addition of 80 new churches in 2018. Of these 80 new church starts, 57 of those received training, coaching, and financial assistance through the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) and the Cooperative Program. In addition to the newly planted churches, 23 additional churches, mostly new mission works, joined the BSCNC through affiliation. Of the new church plants launched in 2018, 68 percent identified as non-Anglo, which included 24 Hispanic congregations, four Asian congregations and 10 African American congregations. We were also blessed to add 17 new congregations who identify as being multiethnic.

New churches planted in 2018 reported 152,901 evangelistic contacts, and we praise God with them for 7,117 professions of faith through the members of these churches. We rejoice in a reported total of 1,537 baptisms in 2018, an increase of 636 baptisms from 2017. New churches have a tendency to reach those who have been unreached with the gospel. Over the last four years new N.C. church plants have reported more than 28,000 professions of faith.

COLLEGIATE PARTNERSHIPS

At the conclusion of the 2018-19 academic year, the Collegiate Partnerships Team notched a benchmark of seeing a full five years since implementing the new church-based strategy designed to fulfill a vision of seeing a reproducing gospel presence on every single college or university campus in North Carolina. North Carolina boasts a staggering 185 collegiate campuses. After only five years, gospel saturation throughout North Carolina's collegiate landscape has certainly increased, but there are still more than 100 college or university campuses yet to be engaged by a reproducing gospel presence. Even though the Collegiate Partnerships Team has identified a much more vast mission field across our collegiate landscape than had been previously targeted by the campus ministry system prior to 2014, by helping local churches engage these campuses in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission, North Carolina has seen far greater gospel saturation since we shifted our strategy from being convention-led to church-led.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

After decades of faithful and fruitful service to Southern Baptists through the International Mission Board and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC), Mike Creswell has retired. His work to promote generous giving to missions through the Cooperative Program has impacted countless lives for the gospel. The work to promote the Cooperative Program has been assigned to the Communications Team within the Administration and Convention Relations group of the BSCNC. Will Taylor has assumed this responsibility as well as integrating new churches seeking to join the convention as member churches. From July 2018 to July 2019, Taylor has been in consultation with more than a dozen churches that wish to join the Baptist state convention as member churches.

We celebrate that over the past 13 years, N.C. Baptists have given more to support Southern Baptist Convention missions through both the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong special offerings than any other state convention. In the years to come, we hope to encourage Baptists across North Carolina to give generously to missions through the Cooperative Program in a way that is consistent with our core Baptist convictions, that God's people are to obey God's Word in fulfilling the Great Commission.

DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE

The central focus of the Evangelism and Discipleship Group is to engage our state convention's strategy of "impacting lostness through disciple-making" as we strengthen churches by helping them develop a "disciple-making culture" that results in lives that are transformed by the power of God. We believe that a disciple is a transformed follower of Christ who is engaging the lost with the gospel and making disciples who, in turn, make more disciples. A disciple-making culture exists in a church when this process becomes the norm. Our staff is passionate to see this as a reality in North Carolina Baptist churches across our state. The Evangelism and Discipleship Group is comprised of two teams, the Disciple-Making Team and the Church Strengthening Team.

DISCIPLE-MAKING CONFERENCE

The 2019 Disciple-Making Conference was held on Feb. 26 at Green Street Baptist Church in High Point. Attended by approximately 700 people, the conference focused on disciple-making in a rapidly changing culture. The keynote speaker was John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. More than 40 breakout sessions were hosted, providing practical application to a vast array of evangelism and discipleship issues faced by the local church.

EMBRACE AND WOMEN'S EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

During the 2018-2019 ministry year, Embrace continued equipping women to make disciples in order to impact lostness. During the 2019 Disciple-Making Conference, Embrace hosted two breakout sessions to help women understand the postmodern culture that surrounds them and how to live as followers of Christ in a culture that encourages compromise.

Roundtables: In the spring of 2019, Embrace hosted five roundtable events across North Carolina. The curriculum of the 2019 roundtables was "How to Study Your Bible." Through this training, women learned the Bible study principles of observation, interpretation and application. Women learned the techniques of exegesis and were exposed to tools and resources for Bible study to help them grow in their walk with Christ.

N.C. Baptist Women's Retreat: During the weekend of Oct. 26-27, 2018, Embrace hosted the 2018 N.C. Baptist Women's Retreat. The 2018 theme was "Holy. Chosen. Beloved." based on Colossians 3:12-14.

Embrace Leadership Network: Embrace also launched the third year of the Embrace Leadership Network (ELN) at the beginning of 2019. The twofold goal of ELN is to holistically equip women for kingdom service in their local churches or associations and to introduce them to other like-minded women's ministry leaders from across the state.

Missions involvement: Embrace hosted "Embracing New York City," a four-day mission trip to New York City held Sept. 13-16, 2018. The ladies who participated in the trip worked alongside Graffiti Coney Island in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. Graffiti was launched in 2016 by Pastor Stephen Trainer. Graffiti's ministries include a church and the Graffiti Ministries Learning Center.

GREAT COMMISSION PARTNERSHIPS

Great Commission Partnerships exists to mobilize and empower churches to make disciples among unreached people groups and in least-reached places in North Carolina, throughout North America and around the world. We do this through a catalytic focus on multifamily housing, the Peoples Next Door initiative, and by helping churches form partnerships with church planters and missionaries in North America and around the world.

Multifamily housing: Nationally, 95 percent of those living in multifamily housing communities are unchurched. Throughout North Carolina, one out of every three people live in multifamily housing. When Great Commission Partnerships was tasked with catalyzing gospel work in multifamily housing communities, we knew of only 44 communities being engaged. Churches are now engaging 96 multifamily housing communities throughout the state, with 20 communities newly engaged in 2018. Great Commission Partnerships has catalyzed the engagement of 57 communities since the inception of this initiative in June 2017. Still, there is much to be done.

Peoples Next Door: Great Commission Partnerships formed the Peoples Next Door initiative to help churches discover, engage, and make disciples of the unreached people groups who are now living in North Carolina. Churches are engaging 86 of the 162 people groups that have been identified throughout our state. There are 76 people groups still unengaged.

Church Partnerships: Over the course of last year, Great Commission Partnerships orchestrated six vision trips with 19 pastors and leaders to help churches form partnerships in strategically unreached areas of the world. Learn more about these trips at ncbaptist.org/visiontrips. These trips are for North Carolina pastors and leaders to explore how they might partner alongside of church planters and missionaries in each of these strategic areas. We know of 273 North Carolina churches who are engaged in partnerships in cities throughout North America, and 82 North Carolina churches who are engaged in partnerships around the world.

OFFICE OF PRAYER

The Office of Prayer exists to serve, resource and partner with N.C. Baptist congregations, associations, institutions and ministries in mobilizing prayer toward revival, spiritual awakening and impacting lostness through disciple-making. God is truly working in a heightened way in North Carolina and beyond by calling pastors, ministry leaders, associational leaders and individual believers to seek Him for an outpouring of God's manifest holy presence through revival and spiritual awakening. This is not pervasive, yet it is taking place gradually in certain churches, associations and areas all across our state. Below are some of the ways the Office of Prayer has sought to join the Lord and fan the flames of God's prayer activity over the past year.

“Awaken” Prayer Gathering: The 2019 “Awaken” Prayer Gathering was held at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church on March 8-9. Richard Owen Roberts, founder and president of International Awakening Ministries in Wheaton, Ill., was the keynote speaker on Friday night and Saturday morning. Saturday morning featured a “Broken Before the Throne” concert of prayer. The 2020 “Awaken” Prayer Gathering is scheduled for March 13-14 at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church.

Pray for 30 Days: The “Pray for 30 Days” emphasis calls on North Carolina Baptists to unite in prayer for God to send revival and spiritual awakening to our state, nation and world during the month of October prior to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Annual Meeting in November. The 2018 theme was “Who is My Neighbor?” based on Luke 10:29.

STRATEGIC FOCUS TEAM

The Strategic Focus Team assists churches in taking a missionary approach to North Carolina's pockets of lostness. In 2011, the Baptist State Convention commissioned a study to better understand the current state of lostness in North Carolina. This study found 250 small geographic areas scattered across the state where the lost population is growing unusually fast. We call these small geographic areas pockets of lostness. Many of these pockets cluster around the state's major cities like Charlotte, Greensboro and Raleigh, but most of these pockets dot the landscape of smaller cities and towns like Beaufort, Taylorsville and Sylva. The population in these pockets is growing, changing and filled with groups of people not easily attracted to our churches. Since few of these people will come to us, we must go to them.

That realization compelled messengers attending the 2013 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Annual Meeting to affirm the strategy adopted by the board of directors to assist local churches to impact lostness through disciple-making across North Carolina starting in the most concentrated areas of lostness. Since 2014, strategy coordinators from the Strategic Focus Team have worked with local associations to help the churches take a missionary approach to these pockets of lostness. Each strategy coordinator primarily works in and around one of North Carolina's major population centers.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

This year has seen a focus on increasing the number of ways to deliver training to N.C. Baptist worship leaders, particularly through the extensive development of online training. Our primary training for worship leaders is through one of the Worship Leader Boot Camp experiences. We now offer a variety of possibilities depending upon how deep a worship leader wants to go and how much time they can allot the learning experience. We now offer five varieties of Worship Leader Boot Camps. To learn more, visit WorshipLeaderBootCamp.org.

YOUTH EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

Summer Youth Weeks 2018 consisted of seven weeks of camp at Fort Caswell. These weeks combined worship, small and large group studies, special interest tracks, church group devotions, a missions opportunity to package meals for Haiti and many other fun activities. The theme for the summer was "Reimagine," based on Psalm 78:1-2. Students took an in-depth look at the parables of Christ that challenge us to reimagine the kingdom of God. Attendance for the 2018 camps was 6,484, representing 277 churches. Total decisions reflected the greater things God was doing at camp, which included 367 first-time professions of faith, more than 890 recommitments and 15 called to full-time Christian ministry. Campers also packaged the 2 millionth meal for Haiti since beginning the project in 2011.

During the summer of 2019, we sponsored eight weeks of youth camp for teenagers at Fort Caswell. The theme for our 2019 camps was, "On This Rock," based on Matthew 16:18. Students took a closer look at how the church was formed with Jesus as its foundation. As of June 1, 2019, attendance was slated to total 6,638 representing 273 churches.