

ACCELERATE

BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK OF PA/SJ

#L  VEPA/SJ

JOHN
13:34

Loving our neighbors in Pennsylvania/South Jersey

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.



Baptist Resource Network
Pennsylvania/South Jersey

ACCELERATING KINGDOM MOVEMENT

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ACCELERATE

BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK OF PA/SJ



51st Annual Meeting of the Baptist Resource Network of PA/SJ

SHERATON HARRISBURG HERSHEY HOTEL
4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another” (John 13:34 CSB).



Baptist Resource Network
Pennsylvania/South Jersey

ACCELERATING KINGDOM MOVEMENT

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ACCELERATE

is a publication of the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey and BRN United.

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For your safety, we recommend that you follow current local, state, and CDC guidelines and recommendations regarding COVID-19 and its variants while in attendance.

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Welcome to the new format for this year's annual meeting!

You'll notice we started the day with our business session, so you can enjoy an uninterrupted conference experience.

WELCOME



BARRY WHITWORTH

*Executive Director,
Baptist Resource Network*



Fifty years. That is how long Southern Baptists in Pennsylvania and South Jersey have rallied together for Kingdom impact in our region.

This major work in Pennsylvania and Southern Jersey began in 1958 with the establishment of three missions, in Pittsburgh, Middletown and Levittown. Shortly thereafter, in 1970, what was then called the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey was officially organized at the Country and Town Baptist Church, which was then meeting in Camp Hill, Pa.

Fifty years later, the now called Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey seeks to resource nearly 330 churches across our northeastern landscape who seek to push back the lostness in our significantly sized region. Statistics indicate that 14 million people do not yet have a relationship with Jesus Christ! We must continue this work!

Yet, we also want to celebrate all the work God has been doing these past 50 years. Psalm 100:5 tells us, *“The Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”* All generations! We celebrate those who came before us to pave the way for the work God is doing now, and we celebrate those still to come who will continue allowing God to work through them.

We’re so glad that you’ve come to Harrisburg to celebrate this culmination of our 50th year in our very first Accelerate Conference! Expanding on previous annual meetings, you will notice a decidedly different—more conference, less business—atmosphere for this year’s annual gathering of churches.

Our theme for this year’s gathering is #LovePASJ (or Love Pennsylvania/South Jersey), based on John 13:34, *“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.”* As we regather after the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems appropriate to focus again on the basics... loving each other and loving our neighbors!

At this conference, we are going to unpack “KNOW,” the first phase of three phases of the #LovePASJ initiative, whose goal is to accelerate Kingdom movement by equipping churches to KNOW their communities and neighborhoods so they may love them in Christ’s name. It’s our hope that all participants will walk away inspired to love their neighbors more deeply and to join other churches all across our region in making a greater impact for the Gospel.

To this aim, Will Mancini, author of *Future Church* and our keynote conference speaker, will share powerful messages on how to reshape the day-to-day ministry of your church to multiply the number of disciples of Jesus you’re releasing into the world. He’ll also share how he has been working with the BRN over the last two years through a process called Denominee, which has helped the network reframe its vision and strategies so as to deliver consistent value to our churches.

We also have some exciting breakout sessions lined up for you, all focused around the first phase of our #LovePASJ initiative. As we together learn more ways to KNOW our neighbors I hope you are inspired to engage the neighbors who are different from you, learn ways to exegete your community, and help your church reach out beyond its walls.

As we look back over our last 50 years and into our next 50, it’s my hope that we celebrate all that we have accomplished together and all we are working together to continue to do to accelerate Kingdom movement in Pennsylvania and South Jersey. With over 14 million people who don’t have a saving knowledge of Christ, it’s more important than ever to #LovePASJ and to follow His command to love them!

Your Missionary to PA/SJ,

SCHEDULE

- 9:00 a.m.:** Welcome/Business Session
- 10:00 a.m.:** Prayer Time
- 10:15 a.m.:** Worship led by Seven of Messiah University
- 10:30 a.m.:** Conference Opening Remarks, Barry Whitworth
- 10:45 a.m.:** Worship led by Seven of Messiah University
- 11:00 a.m.:** Main Session 1: Barry Whitworth, Executive Director, Baptist Resource Network
- 11:30 a.m.:** Introduction of Breakouts/Break
- 11:45 p.m.:** Breakouts Session 1
- 12:30 p.m.:** Lunch/Ministers' Wives Lunch (please take time to visit the expo!)
- 1:30 p.m.:** Worship led by Seven of Messiah University
- 1:45 p.m.:** Main Session 2: Will Mancini, Ministry Consultant, Future Church Co.
- 2:15 p.m.:** Introduction of Breakouts/Break
- 2:30 p.m.:** Breakouts Session 2
- 3:15 p.m.:** Break
- 3:30 p.m.:** Worship led by Seven of Messiah University
- 3:45 p.m.:** Main Session 3: Will Mancini, Ministry Consultant, Future Church Co.
- 4:15 p.m.:** Giveaways
- 4:30 p.m.:** Main Session 4: Will Mancini, Ministry Consultant, Future Church Co.
- 5:00 p.m.:** Closing, Barry Whitworth; Worship led by Seven of Messiah University
- 5:30 p.m.:** Dinner Performance by Piercing Word

Thank you to
today's sponsors!



FACILITIES

SHERATON HARRISBURG HERSHEY HOTEL

4650 Lindle Road
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

REGISTRATION

Registration is located in the Convention Center Lobby. You must stop by registration, even if you pre-registered online, so that we can provide you with a meeting information packet and a name badge.

COFFEE

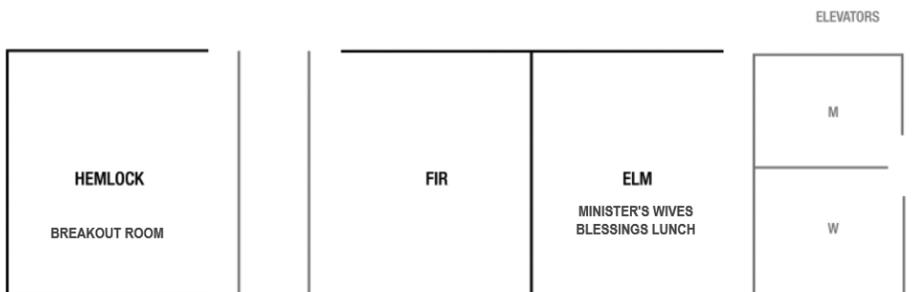
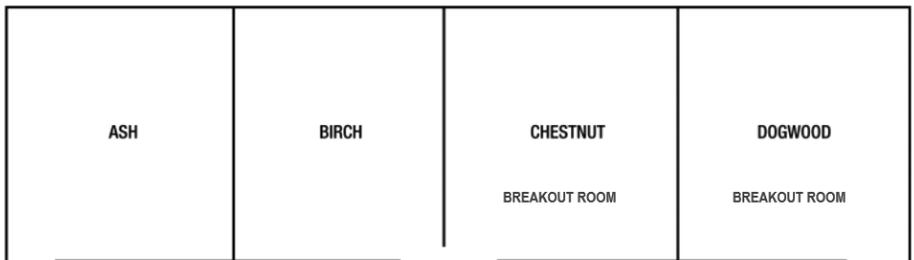
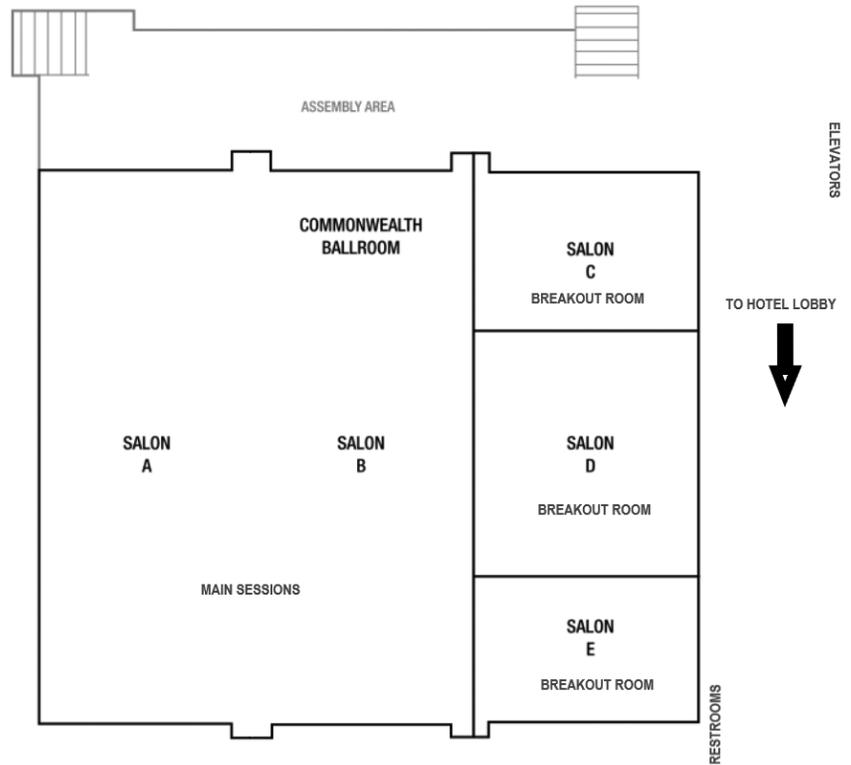
Coffee is located in the hotel lobby until 10:30 a.m.

EXPO

Displays are located in the Convention Center Lobby as well as in the main hallway going towards the hotel entrance.

50TH ANNIVERSARY GIVEAWAYS

You must be present in order to receive a giveaway. No purchase is necessary. Thank you to our sponsors and vendors, who made this possible.





PEOPLE

AT-A-GLANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Dewey and Kathie Aiken NC/PA Onsite Coordinators, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
Larry Anderson Director of Healthy Churches, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Steve Bass Assistant to the President for Convention Relations, North American Mission Board
Elizabeth Benge Executive Assistant to Barry Whitworth, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Jim Bower Bower Insurance/Brotherhood Mutual
Kyle Canty SEND City Missionary/Church Plant Catalyst - Philadelphia, North American Mission Board
Rob Ginder Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Treysta Technology Management
Johnathan W. Gray President/CEO, Ministry Trust/Christian Timber
Michael Heath Adjunct Faculty, Director of Admissions, Missio Seminary
Aaron House President, Piercing Word
Kenton Hunt BRN Disaster Relief, Harrisburg
IMB Missionary (*unnamed for security reasons*) International Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia
Theresa Krieg President, WMU of PA/SJ
David Ludwig Associate Director of Healthy Churches, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Will Mancini Founder/Ministry Entrepreneur, Future Church Co.
Kevin Marsico Emcee, Lead Pastor at NorthStar Community Church, Frederick, Maryland
Bryan McClelland BRN Executive Board Member and Senior Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church
Buff McNickle President, BRN Executive Board; Pastor, Grace Falls Church, Absecon, New Jersey
Dan Nold Pastor, Calvary Church, Harvest Fields
Vladimir Prokhnevskiy Shoebox recipient, Operation Christmas Child, Boone, N.C.
Eric Reiber BRN Campus Ministry Director, Penn State University, State College
Seven Worship Band, Messiah University, Mechanicsburg
Joe Velarde Pastor, Riverbend Community Church, Send Network PA/SJ Missionary
Sam Warner Vice President of Development, Ministry Trust/Christian Timber
Kurt Weaver Director of Strategic Partnerships, Pennsylvania Family Institute, Harrisburg
Heather Wells Manager, Retirement Services, GuideStone Financial Services
Barry Whitworth Executive Director-Treasurer, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Beth Whitworth Ministry Wives Consultant, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Stan Williams Director of BRN Next Gen Ministry, Baptist Resource Network, Harrisburg
Peter Yanes Executive Director of Asian American Relations and Mobilization, SBC Executive Committee
Attorney R. Davis Younts Baptist Resource Network Legal Counsel, Yount's Law

Accelerate Conference

Keynote Speakers

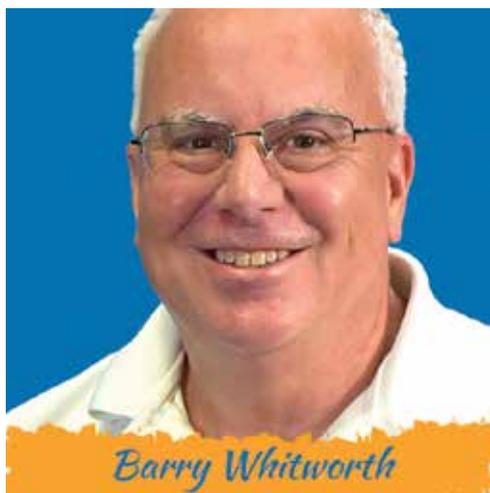


Will Mancini

Founder/Church Consultant and Ministry Entrepreneur of the Future Church Co.

Will Mancini is Founder/Church Consultant and Ministry Entrepreneur of the *Future Church Co.* He started several interconnected organizations under The *Future Church Co.* that help the church embody the movement that Jesus founded. Will's visionary planning tools, the *Vision Frame* and the *Horizon Storyline*, are used by thousands of churches every year through his calling to raise up other consultants and trainers. In 2015, he cofounded *Younique* to deliver gospel-centered life design through the church. In 2019, Will founded *Denominee* to help networks and denominations re-invent how they bring value to the church. He currently provides clarity and innovation consulting directly to church teams through *Pivvot*. He has written six books, including *Younique*, *Clarity Spiral*, *God Dreams*, *Innovating Discipleship*, and *Church Unique*. He enjoys speaking about how to live a life of more meaningful progress. Will lives in Houston with his wife Romy and has four children.

Website: futurechurch.co.



Barry Whitworth

Executive Director, Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey

Barry has been in ministry for over 30 years, serving as a mission pastor, associate pastor, church planter, pastor, interim pastor, transitional pastor and planter, church planting strategist, lead church planting catalyst, church planting director, and now executive director. Before his calling as Executive Director of the *Baptist Resource Network (BRN)* in February 2017, he was a church planting missionary and served the Multiplying Churches Team Leader for the BRN. Barry, who has planted churches and served on church staffs in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, says his passion is the local church — to assist and encourage the churches in “reaching the lost [and] discipling the saved.” He seeks to help Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptists “decrease lostness,” “push back darkness” and “have an impact in our generation for such a time as this.” He and his wife Beth have two daughters and six grandchildren.

Website: brnunited.org

Accelerate Conference Musical Guests



Worship by: Seven, Messiah University

Seven is a group of multi-talented musicians from Messiah University who have a heart for ministry, performance and creativity. They write, collaborate, perform concerts and lead worship with great enthusiasm and expression. They represent a wonderful cross-section of the Messiah University community, with members from a variety of academic majors. Seven's mission is to spread the message of Jesus Christ through musical worship that incorporates each member's unique gifts and creativity.

Website: messiah.edu/info/20653/seven



Performance by: Piercing Word, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Piercing Word is a group of theatre professionals who are passionate about coming alongside Christian leaders to help them engage their people with the Word of God. They do this by performing scripture in dramatic and musical presentations that are word-for-word from the ESV Bible and providing resources on how to better memorize and study the Bible. Piercing Word is a full-time, non-profit theatre ministry based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Website: piercingword.org

Accelerate Conference Breakout Sessions



How do I engage my neighbors who are different than me?

Practical ways to communicate the Gospel across cultures, generations, and genders

Features Dr. Larry Anderson, BRN Director of Healthy Churches

FOR INDIVIDUALS



How can we know our neighbors if they won't talk to us?

Winning strategies for establishing trust in your spheres of influence

Features Buff McNickle, BRN Director of Compassion Ministries

FOR INDIVIDUALS



How can I create a prayer movement within my church?

Knowing, praying for, and blessing your neighbors—by name!

Features David Ludwig, BRN Assoc. Director of Healthy Churches, and Elizabeth Benge, BRN Executive Assistant

FOR INDIVIDUALS/CHURCH LEADERS

Accelerate Conference Breakout Sessions



How can I lead my church to reach out beyond its four walls?

How to multiply “Jesus-apprentices” and catalyze an epic release of leaders through a “front-yard mission” strategy

Features Pastor Dan Nold of Calvary Church, Harvest Fields, Pa.

FOR CHURCH LEADERS



Having ‘eyes to see and ears to hear’ as you study your community

Know and rely on the role of the Holy Spirit in exegeting your neighborhood

Features Dr. Barry Whitworth, BRN Executive Director, and Pastor Joe Velarde, Send Network PA/SJ Missionary

FOR INDIVIDUALS/CHURCH LEADERS



Unpacking what you need to know to impact the next generation with the Gospel

Gen Ed on the Next Gen

Features Stanley Williams, Director of BRN Next Collegiate Ministry, and Eric Reiber, BRN Collegiate Minister, PSU

FOR INDIVIDUALS

A SOUTHERN BAPTIST GLOSSARY

ACCELERATE CONFERENCE: The Baptist Resource Network holds this annual meeting/gathering each autumn to report on the accomplishments and vision of the state convention and to provide inspiration, training and encouragement to churches.

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING (AAEO): An offering held around Easter to support the field work of the North American Mission Board.

ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE (ACP): Also known as the annual letter, this is the annual report sent from the local churches to the state convention.

ASSOCIATION: A group of churches that cooperate regionally.

BAPTIST FAITH & MESSAGE (BF&M): The list of beliefs held by Southern Baptists.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM (CP): This is our typical giving mechanism to support the IMB, NAMB, ERLC, and SBC seminaries.

ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION (ERLC): This national entity addresses specific moral issues in broader cultural conversations.

GUIDESTONE: A SBC entity that provides retirement accounts and taxation information for ministers.

INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD (IMB): The missionary sending agency of the SBC that deploys outside of North America.

LIFEWAY CHRISTIAN RESOURCES: The publishing house of the SBC, Lifeway is one of the world's largest providers of Christian resources.

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING (LMCO): An offering held around Christmas to support the field work of the International Mission Board.

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD (NAMB): NAMB assists Southern Baptists in their task of fulfilling the Great Commission in the United States, Canada and their territories through a national strategy for sharing Christ, starting churches and sending missionaries, in cooperation with Acts 1:8 partners.

WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION (WMU): A missions education, prayer support, and involvement organization that also promotes the Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon offerings.

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NETWORK OF PA/SJ

We are all in this together.



GABAPTIST.ORG



MISSIONS
GEORGIA BAPTIST



Uniting together
to love our
neighbors in
Pennsylvania
and South
Jersey

JOHN
13:34

14 MILLION
PEOPLE IN
PA/SJ DO
NOT KNOW
JESUS.



CAMPAIGN
PLANNING GUIDE

BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK of PA/SJ

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another” (John 13:34 CSB).

“#LovePASJ” (or Love Pennsylvania/South Jersey) is a new missional framework for engaging our neighbors in in this region. This three-phase initiative encourages churches to love their neighbors through KNOW, SHOW, and GROW.

KNOW

The first phase, KNOW, will provide resources and encouragement to churches to love their neighbor(s) through prayerwalking, community exegesis and exploration, and adopting neighborhoods for Christ.

SHOW

The second phase, “SHOW,” will examine what it means to follow Christ through words AND actions; through compassion ministries, evangelistic outreaches, and other ways to show love to our neighbors.

GROW

The third phase seeks to teach participants to “GROW” in all that Jesus commanded with a special focus on intentional discipleship and leadership development.

#LovePASJ Overall Objective:

To accelerate a Kingdom movement of Baptist Resource Network churches loving their neighbors in such a way that the statistic of 14 million lost people in PA/SJ is dramatically reduced – or even abolished!

#LovePASJ PROCESS

GOAL 1: ENLIST



100

Enlist 100 churches to exegete their communities

BRN churches and their members are encouraged to join forces with other BRN churches to prayer walk and exegete their communities. They can begin the process by signing up at www.lovepasj.com to receive a daily devotional and access to helpful resources.

GOAL 2: ESTABLISH



500

Establish, identify, or recognize a gospel footprint in at least 500 neighborhoods

The BRN will provide enlisted churches information about Bless Every Home, a ministry that resources church members to pray over their neighbors by name, a “mapping tool” and other exegesis tools to help them understand baseline information about their neighborhoods, and resources to help them discover and connect with neighborhood “persons of peace,” all in an effort to establish a new or stronger gospel footprint.

GOAL 3: ENGAGE



5,000

Engage in at least 5,000 gospel conversations

Churches are urged to engage in regular rhythms of gospel conversations within the communities they have been studying. The Baptist Resource Network will provide online training and resources to help church members to have these gospel conversations and will come alongside to celebrate those connections.

GOAL 4: EMBRACE



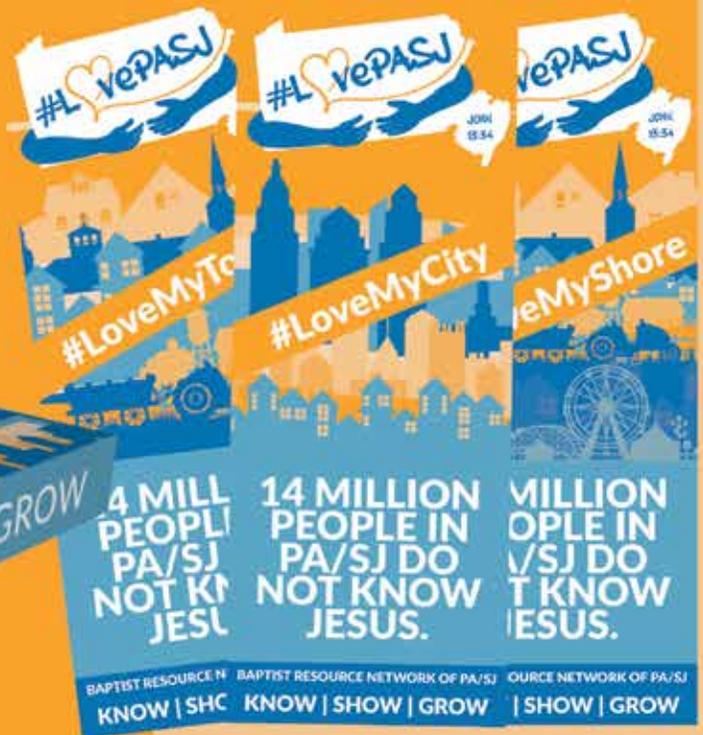
50

Embrace and adopt 50 new neighborhoods for the gospel

Churches will embrace 50 new places within boroughs, townships, and city neighborhoods and seek to establish a gospel presence for further Kingdom impact.

#LovePASJ Campaign Resources

Baptist Resource Network churches will have access to several #LovePASJ campaign resources, including one full kit containing guides on prayer walking and exegesis, conversation starters, and a showcase of digital media. Churches can also order one customized banner, which highlights their specific region!



RESOURCES ARE BEING ADDED DAILY!

Download or order #LovePASJ resources at www.lovepasj.com.

BLESSEVERYHOME.COM, in partnership with the Baptist Resource Network, gives you the tools to become a Light for Christ in your neighborhood.



COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

See your mission field like never before!

The Community Connector, previously known as the Mapping Center, gives you an unparalleled look at every home in your area.

See your mission field like never before with information on nearly every home in your area.

- ✓ Each home contains more than 15 different attributes including ethnicity, length of residence, language spoken, marital status, age group, and more.
- ✓ Upload your organization's attenders file to plot all of your attenders on the map and connect them with new prospects.
- ✓ Apply multiple filters of likely attributes to search for specific groups of people.
- ✓ Easily create projects to learn more about who lives in specific zip codes, neighborhoods, or even down to a single street.
- ✓ Download your projects to create targeted mailing lists and summary reports.
- ✓ Integrates with Church Community Builder software and Bless Every Home's other products.

The Baptist Resource Network pays for this service on behalf of network churches. Simply request a particular address and radius, and we will send you a complete report!

BLESS PARTNER

Take your prayer to another level.

The Bless Partner solution is the recommended starting product for churches and associations. It gives you the tools you need to transform member homes into mission outposts by encouraging them to pray for their neighbors by name and live out a Pray-Care-Share lifestyle.

- ✓ A real-time dashboard that allows you to track your church's progress in covering your mission field with Pray, Care, Share, and Disciple actions.
- ✓ The ability to view every individual home that your affiliated Lights have adopted, along with the progress your Lights have made with the people in that home.
- ✓ A map allowing you to view where your Lights are located as well as the overall nationwide Pray-Care-Share progress.
- ✓ The name, address, and email address of all of the Lights associated with your church.
- ✓ A promotional URL that makes it easy for your members to sign up and be automatically linked with your church.

CHURCHES ARE URGED TO SIGN UP through the Baptist Resource Network to receive two months free! Individuals may sign up for personal prayer lists of their neighborhood **FOR FREE!**

<https://blesseveryhome.com/signup/?onb=12>

NEW MOVERS

Find out who is moving into your mission field.

Churches and individuals may sign up to receive a weekly list of up to 25 households that have moved into a 15-mile radius of your organization.

- ✓ The list includes name, address, and how many miles they moved from their last address.
- ✓ Weekly movers are also plotted on your map and can be filtered to show the most recent movers.
- ✓ New movers can be paired with your affiliated Lights who have opted in to visit new movers in their neighborhoods. Your Lights receive an automatic email notification asking them to pray for and visit the new mover assigned to them. As an administrator, you will receive a list of the Lights and new movers that were connected.
- ✓ These people are more likely to accept an invitation to your church as they are possibly looking for a new church home or new community to join.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Contact the Baptist Resource Network's Help Desk by phone at 717-652-5856 or by email at helpdesk@brnunited.org.



National Collection Week
NOV. 15-22, 2021



SEND GIFT-FILLED SHOEBOXES IN JESUS' NAME

DECLARE HIS
GLORY AMONG
THE NATIONS!

PSALM 96:3

Samaritan's Purse partners with churches and groups around the world to give boys and girls in need a tangible expression of God's love and the Good News of Jesus Christ. After they receive Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts, many children also participate in our follow-up discipleship program, The Greatest Journey, where they learn how to follow Jesus and share Him with others.



Visit our booth, scan the QR code, or check out samaritanspurse.org/occ to learn more.

VIEW SOLICITATION DISCLOSURE INFORMATION FOR SAMARITAN'S PURSE ONLINE AT [SAMARITANSPURSE.ORG/DISCLOSURE](https://samaritanspurse.org/disclosure).



**PIERCING
WORD**



**GOD'S WORD
CENTERSTAGE**

**WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT COMING
ALONGSIDE CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO ENGAGE
PEOPLE WITH THE WORD OF GOD THROUGH
LIVE SCRIPTURE PERFORMANCES!**

"To all who love God's Word: I am sold on the purpose and the people of Piercing Word and commend them to you. Please take in one of their presentations. Each performance has had a powerful and lasting impact on our congregation. Piercing Word helps us understand Scripture, encourages us to live Scripture, and makes us want to memorize Scripture for ourselves. See and hear for yourself the unique and powerful way Piercing Word communicates God's Word, and imagine how they can enhance your ministry."

BEAU ECKERT, SENIOR PASTOR,
CALVARY CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA

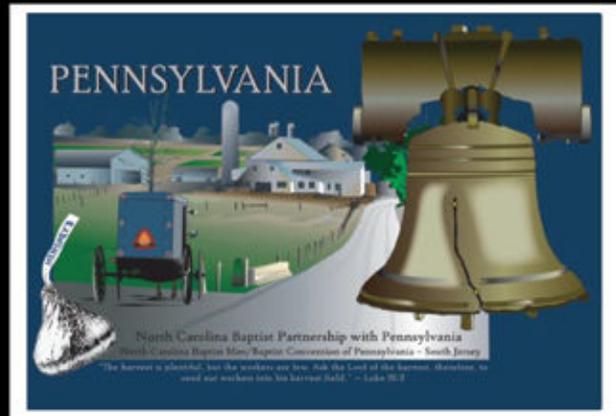
To start a conversation about bringing Piercing Word to your church or event, go to piercingword.org and click on "Request a booking"

PIERCINGWORD.ORG

888-244-3461



The North Carolina / Pennsylvania Baptist Partnership



What's This?:

An avenue through which North Carolina Baptist churches, associations, and individuals have opportunity to partner with Pennsylvania Baptist congregations, church plants, and ministries in fulfilling the God-given task of reaching the lost for Christ.

What do Partnership Teams do?:

NC Partnership teams have served all around the world in many different ways:

Bible School

Backyard Bible Clubs

Community Surveys

Revival Teams

Youth and Children's Camps

Music ministry

New Construction

Renovation of existing facilities

Painting

Landscaping and cement work

Sports clinics and camps

Leadership Training

...And More!

What can a Partnership team do for me and my church?

The purpose of a NC Partnership team is to partner with you in reaching your community for Christ. This could include a direct ministry such as a Backyard Bible Club, sports camp, evangelism, and other outreach activities – OR - one that better equips your church *for* ministry – such as leadership training or facility construction or renovation.

How much will having a Partnership team cost?

NC Partnership teams pay their own way to the field. They are also prepared to pay their own housing, transportation, and meals *if necessary*. If it's possible for them to stay in your church facility and/or for your church to provide one meal a day for them – that helps greatly, but is not required. Also, most VBS or Park Party teams are willing to bring some materials if needed. Construction and renovation-type teams usually expect materials to be provided by the requesting church or organization – although on occasion, they may be willing to contribute toward materials if needed.

How do I go about requesting a team from North Carolina?

Pray about how you might use a volunteer missionary team to assist you in fulfilling your ministry. Fill out one (or more!) of the enclosed NC Partnership Volunteer Request Forms. Send the form to Mark Abernathy, Baptists on Mission (BOM). We will be glad to receive requests throughout the year, but most of our churches begin their missions planning 8-10 months in advance, and will be eager to see a list of requests beginning in October. So please submit the request as soon as possible.

What happens then?

Baptists on Mission will work to promote your project among our churches here in North Carolina (and beyond via our website!) and help find a team to fill it. While we cannot guarantee a team to fill your request, we will promote it throughout the year in a variety of ways. When a team shows interest, the team leader will be put in direct contact with you. If you both feel it is a good fit, you both will set the dates of service and work out all the necessary details.

If you have any questions about the North Carolina/Pennsylvania Partnership, please feel free to contact:

Mark Abernathy, Baptists on Mission (919-459-5607; mabernathy@ncbaptist.org) or
Dewey and Kathie Aiken, NC/PA On-Site Coordinators (828-553-7694; dewey_kate@hotmail.com)

Baptists on Mission is an auxiliary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina



Let us Pray!

Scripture states that *“unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain”* (Psalm 127:1 CSB). Clearly, the task of pushing back lostness in Pennsylvania/South Jersey is very large, which requires the Lord’s hand in all that is attempted. To that end, the team at the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) has increased its shared prayer times, which has built a solid sense of unity and direction in their work.

“There is never a movement of God separate from prayer,” acknowledges BRN’s Executive Director Barry Whitworth. “Throughout history, any time there has been revival or awakening, it is because God’s people are praying. We believe at the BRN that one of the things we can do as a priority on our team is to pray.”

To that end, on the first Thursday of every month, the BRN team fasts and prays together, devoting the morning for praying over the network’s churches, ongoing projects, and personal concerns. Team members also pray throughout their weeks during meetings, trainings and personal interactions with our churches.

Already, the BRN team is seeing results from these shared

prayer times.

“I do not believe there is a discipline that brings a team closer together than prayer,” shares Larry Anderson, director of healthy churches. “Our monthly prayer time has opened up hearts, lives and opportunities for us to grow closer

DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER, BEING WATCHFUL AND THANKFUL. ~ COLOSSIANS 4:2

to one another, all while we are seeking His wisdom and His will, in our walk and our work.”

Cliff Jenkins, director of multiplying churches, agrees.

“We feel it is our responsibility to petition the Lord on behalf of our partners,” he said. “Prayer is essential to everything we do. It is an important way the BRN serves our congregations and pastors.”

Lori Zeppuhar, who manages the BRN’s Help Desk and often has the opportunity to pray for those who call the office, walks away from each prayer experience personally affected.

“It is powerful when we get together as a team to pray over the mission God has given us. The Spirit moves in our time as we pray and ask God to do a mighty work in whatever we are specifically praying for,” she said.

“Watching God work in response to our prayers builds greater faith in my life, and I’m so grateful our team values prayer the way it is valued in scripture.”

During the pandemic, the network established a Pastor Prayer Line, 800.451.6599 x7, where pastors can leave confidential prayer requests, only heard by and prayed for by our

trained disaster relief chaplains. Even now, pastors are urged to solicit prayer as needed.

But that’s not all.

“We prioritize prayer so much that we have dedicated a room in the BRN office building for our staff to regularly spend time in prayer for pastors, churches, and prayer requests that have been made known to our team,” shared Andy Weber, BRN director of finance and operations. The room, which will showcase scriptures, will provide a quiet space for individual interaction with the Lord. ■

PASTOR PRAYER LINE: 800.451.6599 x7

Congratulations and blessings Baptist Resource Network on this year's Accelerate Conference!

All of us here at the South Carolina Baptist Convention *love, support, and are praying* diligently for you!

We are thankful for the work you are doing in Pennsylvania and South Jersey and have no doubt the Lord will continue to bless your efforts there!

We see a day when every life is saturated and transformed by the hope of the Gospel!



**SOUTH CAROLINA
BAPTIST CONVENTION**

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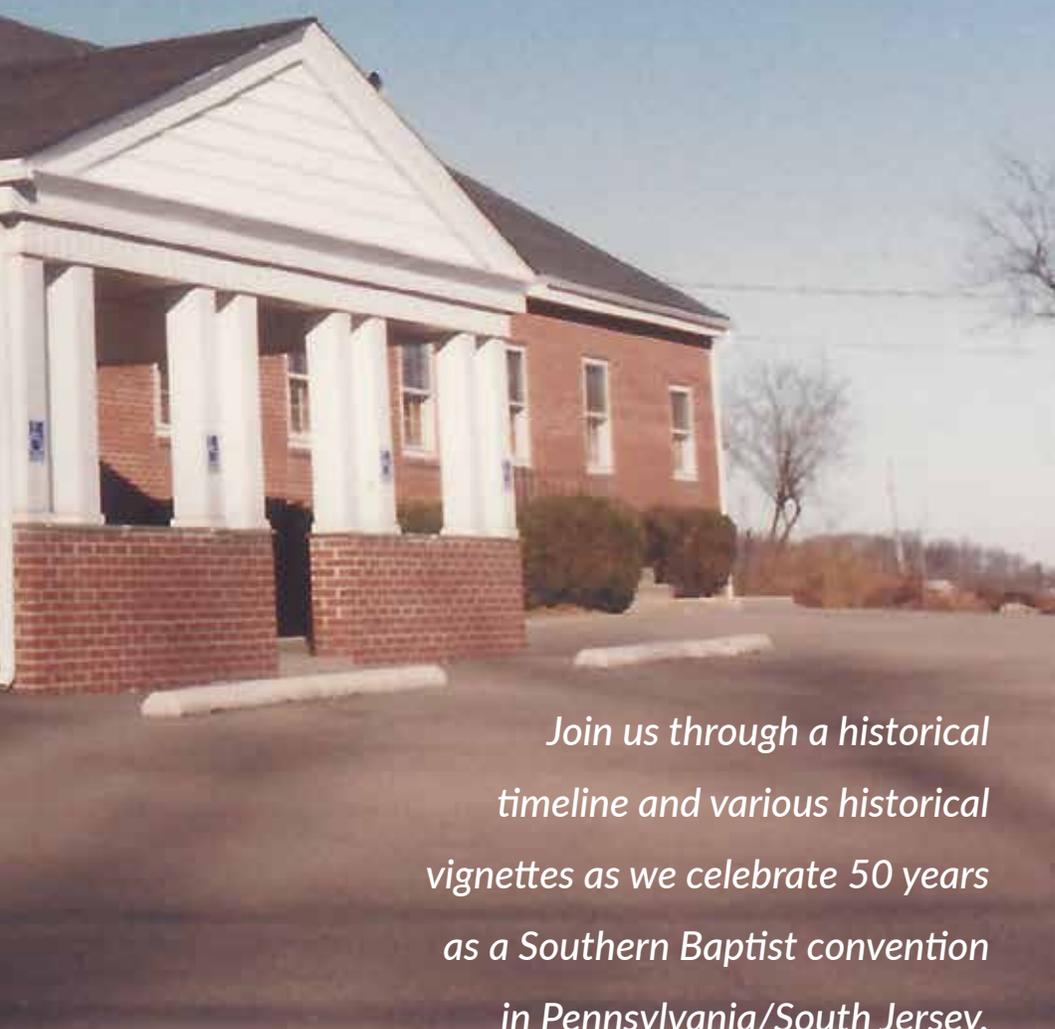
THE BAPTIST NETWORK

5



Wrightsdale Baptist Church, Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania (File photo).

IST RESOURCE K CELEBRATES 50 YEARS



Join us through a historical timeline and various historical vignettes as we celebrate 50 years as a Southern Baptist convention in Pennsylvania/South Jersey.

Historical Timeline

1922

FIRST CHURCHES IN PENNSYLVANIA

The first Southern Baptist churches were established in Pennsylvania as a result of the local mission efforts along the Maryland border. The first of these churches was started in 1922 in Hungerford, Pennsylvania, a short distance south of Shrewsbury on the road from Baltimore to York as a mission of Gunpowder Baptist Church of Maryland led by Pastor C. E. Henderson. It was constituted as Turnpike Baptist Church on December 2, 1923. The Turnpike Church is still active at its original location, which has been absorbed by Shrewsbury, but it is no longer an SBC church.

1933

LONGEST SBC ASSOCIATED CHURCH IN PENNSYLVANIA

The oldest church in Pennsylvania that has been continuously Southern Baptist is Wrightsdale Baptist Church, which was established east of the Susquehanna River in 1933 in Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania.

1958

THE BEGINNING

The major work of the Southern Baptists in Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey began with the establishment of three missions in 1958: one in Pittsburgh, one in central Pennsylvania at Middletown, and one in Levittown, northeast of Philadelphia.

1961

THE BEGINNINGS OF AN ASSOCIATION

In 1958, several churches established State Line Baptist Association, which was called Eastern Pennsylvania Baptist Association by 1961. At the annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of Maryland in 1961, these churches attended and expressed a desire to affiliate with that convention.

1963

GREATER PITTSBURGH BAPTIST ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED

On September 13, 1963, Southern Baptists in the Pittsburgh area met and organized Greater Pittsburgh Baptist Association (GPiBA). Four churches and their five missions joined in this effort. The GPiBA began full operation on January 1, 1964, with Joseph Waltz as superintendent of missions.



Wrightsdale Baptist Church Pastor Ryan Day poses with two baptismal candidates. (Photo by Wrightsdale Baptist Church).

WRIGHTSDALE CHURCH - 'long discipleship in the same direction'

By Macala Leighey

In 2020, we've been saying, "The best is yet to come," said Pastor Ryan Day. "We do believe that the best is yet to come...Jesus is still building His church, and we're leaning forward into that. We're believing by faith that the Gospel is still just as powerful as ever."

Stemming from 88 years of history and steady ministry, this hopeful attitude continues to fuel Pastor Day and his congregation at Wrightsdale Baptist Church in Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania.

Wrightsdale Baptist Church is the oldest Southern Baptist church in Pennsylvania, as it was the first of its kind to open its doors back in 1933.

"Wrightsdale really has an amazing history. There were some believers back in the mid- to late-1920's [and] they lived in western North Carolina and Virginia. They decided they wanted to come to Lancaster County... [it's] known for its fields and for its good soil...so a lot of folks basically did a northern migration," explained Day.

"Many of them attended a Baptist church that was located in Maryland, [but] over time, they decided they wanted to see something happen here. They found a small little chapel that wasn't being used a whole lot, they reached out to a local Presbyterian church that owned the property [and] they started to use it. Slowly, but surely, the Lord was building it up [and] people began to come."

From its humble beginnings, Wrightsdale continued to expand and have "steady growth" throughout its early years.

"God just continued to use [Wrightsdale], as faithful people were here serving, faithful pastors were preaching, the Gospel was going forward, people were coming to Christ being baptized, [and] there were disciples being made...just steady growth in this area," said Day.

This steady growth eventually led to the congregation outgrowing its little chapel.

In 1960, the members of Wrightsdale built a new building.

"Then as the church continued to grow, they outgrew that. Our current facility kind of has two phases added on to it,"

explained Day.

"The first phase was a big gymnasium and family life center, and then back in 2006 we added on the current sanctuary, [which] keeps about 300-350. It's just been an amazing story...this is just a testimony of God's grace of long discipleship in the same direction."

When Day became the lead pastor at Wrightsdale in 2020, he was immediately encouraged by this long-term growth.

"When my wife and I came here in 2020, really at the end of 2019 when we started conversations with Wrightsdale, we were just so encouraged to see such a long track record of a healthy church," he said.

"It was something that really encouraged us, to see the markers of good spiritual health and growth be present here over such a long time."

In an effort to keep that growth going, the church decided in 2013 to make family ministry a priority.

"Our church really made a decision that, if we're going to keep growing, [then] we have to be reaching families. You have to be reaching that next generation of young people, those parents and children, to keep your church growing in the right direction," said Day.

"Our church hired a really dynamic and creative leader, his name is Brad Thorne, and Brad is our Director of Family Ministries. He just brings a ton of creativity [and] outreach ideas."

Since hiring a Director of Family Ministries, Wrightsdale Church has created a number of staple events within the community, including "Legopalooza," "Soaklanco," and interactive prayer meetings.

"Legopalooza" features games with thousands of legos spread throughout the church's gymnasium for families to enjoy.

"Soaklanco," playing

off the reference to Solanco (Southern Lancaster County), in a partnership with local fire departments to provide "a homemade water park" for local families.

"Prayer Connect Live" features an online prayer meeting with live interviews and Zoom calls with local leaders in the community, such as Bryan Cutler, current Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, exposing church members to how to pray for them.

Along with seeing God work through community outreach events, the Wrightsdale congregation has also seen God at work within their own walls.

"Back on the first Sunday of May, we held a special Sunday called 'Love My Church,' and as part of that Sunday we invited our church family to give special gifts. Basically, on that Sunday, every single dollar that was collected was to be designated to help pay down our church mortgage," Day said.

"We were just over-the-moon, so excited, with the way

that God and God's Spirit moved on people's hearts. By the end of that Sunday, we raised \$75,000. We actually paid off our church mortgage in one day!"

The mortgage was a debt that the church had been paying for nearly a decade.

"The most exciting thing about paying off that mortgage, is not necessarily getting out from under a debt - obviously that is a blessing - but the better blessing is the way that it kind of positions us strategically, to think about other kinds of outreaches, other kinds of ministries, and other ways we can still be Kingdom-focused," said Day.

Day also shared that the church will be holding a "huge celebration" this Sunday to rejoice in this recent blessing and to praise God for all He has done at Wrightsdale throughout the years.

"Really, [it's] just celebrating what God is doing in our midst. It's His work, it's the work of the Kingdom, it's the work of the Gospel and He gets the credit for that." ■



For 35-plus years, the Steve and Kathy Sheldon have invested their lives in families, churches and communities in their home state of Pennsylvania. After being stationed in San Diego while Steve was in the U.S. Navy and then serving in churches in Kentucky while he was studying at Campbellsville College (now University) and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Sheldons returned to their home state in 1984 "and have been serving in Pennsylvania ever since," Kathy said. During that time, Kathy served 11 years as president of Pennsylvania/South Jersey WMU while Steve served as a pastor and director of missions, including 23 years as pastor of Bux-Mont Baptist Church in Hatboro, Pa., in suburban Philadelphia. He recently retired as pastor of Wrightsdale Baptist Church in Peach Bottom, Pa., and they moved back to their hometown of Waynesboro. -- By Trennis Henderson (WMU)

NEW BEGINNINGS:

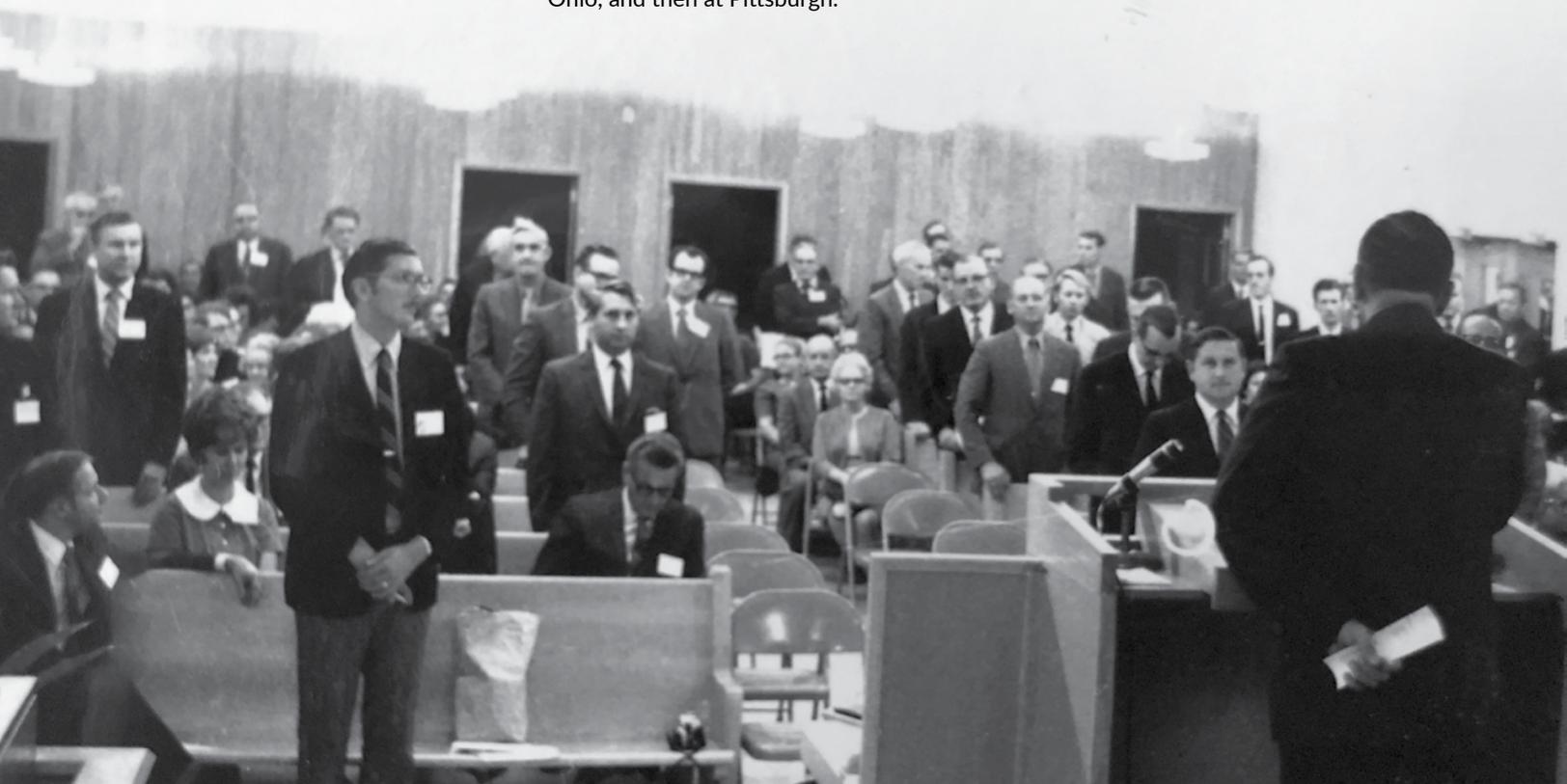
Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/ South Jersey is officially organized on October 2-3, 1970

**The BCPSJ's
organizational meeting
was held at Country and
Town Baptist Church on
October 2-3, 1970.**

Joseph Waltz was the logical choice among the pastors and leaders of Southern Baptists in the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptist Fellowship (PSJBF) to be the first executive secretary of the convention. One suspects that the personnel committee at first expected to choose someone from outside the region, but found that they could find no better person for the office than Joseph Waltz. Among the ordained ministers of the region, he had the greatest seniority. He had been working in Pennsylvania almost from the beginning of the work. He had two successful pastorates in pioneer territory, at Fairborn, Ohio, and then at Pittsburgh.



Joseph Waltz



As superintendent of missions of Greater Pittsburgh Baptist Association from its beginning, he had demonstrated his ability as an administrator. In this position and earlier as president of the Ohio Convention, he had been much involved in denominational work. He had been active in the development of the new state convention from the days of the Northeastern Baptist Regional Fellowship.

Joseph Waltz and his family moved from Pittsburgh to Hershey in July 1970, and on August 1, he took up his work as executive secretary of the PSJBF. According to the position description under which he was appointed, he served not only as the executive officer of the convention, but also served as secretary of evangelism and editor of a state Baptist paper that was to be published to inform the people about the work. He was also responsible for seeing that the records of the convention were kept and would serve as treasurer when the BCPSJ became fully operational on January 1, 1971.

In the remaining months of 1970, Joseph Waltz began working on his responsibility to establish a state Baptist paper. He contacted three publishing companies for information. The Maryland Baptist offered the proposal that was ultimately accepted. The Maryland state paper was published every Thursday. The editor, R.G. Puckett, suggested that the Pennsylvania/South Jersey paper be issued on the third Thursday of every month. The *Maryland Baptist* normally was eight pages long. The Pennsylvania/South Jersey paper would have its own news on the front and back pages of an eight-page paper. The remaining pages would be identical for the Pennsylvania/South Jersey paper and the Maryland Baptist that week and would contain SBC news of interest to readers in both areas. Joseph Waltz presented this plan to the Executive Board at their next meeting on January 9, 1971. There would be an initial cost of \$500 and a cost of \$240 per month. The board voted that the paper be called *Penn-Jersey Baptist*, that it be published



This association covered 29 counties in western Pennsylvania.

1970

JOSEPH WALTZ TAKES OFFICE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER AND SERVES FROM 1970-1971

Joseph Waltz and his family moved from Pittsburgh to Hershey in July 1970, and on August 1, he took up his work as executive secretary of the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptist Fellowship (PSJBF).

THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF PENNSYLVANIA/SOUTH JERSEY (BCPSJ) IS OFFICIALLY ORGANIZED

The BCPSJ was organized at the Country and Town Baptist Church, which was then meeting in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, on October 2-3, 1970. Joseph Waltz served as the first executive director.

1971

PUBLICATION OF PENN-JERSEY BAPTIST PAPER

Under the leadership of Joseph Waltz, the Penn-Jersey Baptist was published for the first time on February 18, 1971.

ED PRICE BECOMES INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER OF BCPSJ

After the death of Joseph Waltz on December 13, 1971, Ed Price served as acting Executive Director-Treasurer for eight months.

1972

G.W. BULLARD BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER OF BCPSJ

On August 1, 1972, G. W. Bullard takes office as Executive Director-Treasurer and serves from 1972-1978.

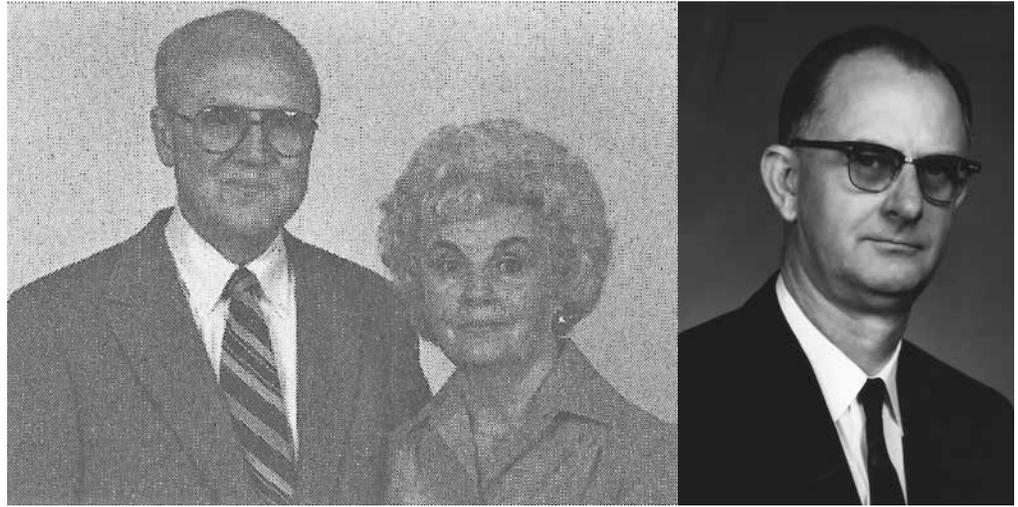
1978

ELLIS BUSH BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER OF BCPSJ

On April 1, 1978, Ellis Bush takes office as Executive Director-Treasurer and serves from 1978-1986.

HARRISBURG OFFICES PURCHASED

On January 29, 1983, the BCPSJ Executive Board approved the lease of the building and on February 28, 1983, the state convention offices were moved to the new building.



Ed and Mary Price

G.W. Bullard

>> by the *Maryland Baptist*, and that it be mailed to each family in the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey. It was calculated that three thousand copies per month would be needed.

After the death of Joseph Waltz on December 13, 1971, Ed Price served as acting Executive Director-Treasurer for eight months. Then, on August 1, 1972, G.W. Bullard took office as Executive Director-Treasurer and served from 1972-1978.

Bullard had shown his administrative ability as superintendent of missions in Delaware Valley Baptist Association since 1965. He had earlier served as associate state Sunday School secretary (1945-1946) and state superintendent of associational missions (1946-1950) of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He had served as pastor of Temple Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina, and Gregory Memorial Baptist Church of Baltimore, Maryland. He had also been active in the development of the BCPSJ from the days of the fellowship.

The BCPSJ showed considerable growth during G.W. Bullard's time as Executive Director-Treasurer. The number of churches had increased from 51 to 86, and the number of chapels, from 26 to 46. Reported church membership increased from 8,291 to 15,572.

On April 1, 1978, Ellis Bush took office as Executive Director-Treasurer, serving until 1986.



Ellis Bush

J.N. Evans (right)



Dedication of the Baptist Resource Center

One of Bush's greatest achievements while he served as Executive Director-Treasurer of BCPSJ was the purchase of the building then known as the Baptist Resource Center in Harrisburg, which continues to serve as the headquarters for the now called Baptist Resource Network (BRN). Previously, Bush had been negotiating with a realtor to lease the building, but had not been satisfied with the terms. Eventually, at their meeting on January 29, 1983, the Executive Board approved the lease of the building and on February 28, 1983, the state convention offices were moved there.

After Bush ended his period of service, J.N. Evans served as Interim Executive Director-Treasurer for one year from 1986-1987. Evans had been employed by the Home Mission Board for twelve years, working with state conventions in the eastern part of the United States. From 1961-1966, he had served as director of missions for the Baptist Convention of Maryland and had worked with the churches of central and eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey.

On Nov. 7, 1986, the BCPSJ was able to dedicate the Baptist building free of debt at the annual meeting, thanks to a capital fund drive that turned out to be a great success. The assistance of Florida Baptists in the capital fund drive was one of many blessings that came to the BCPSJ as the result of a long-standing partnership between Florida *(continued on page 24)* >>



Wallace Williams

Volunteer Mission House & Conference Room

1986

THE BCPSJ SHOWS GROWTH

In 1986, there were 173 congregations in the BCPSJ with a membership of 19,231, and a Sunday school enrollment of 15,657.

J. N. EVANS BECOMES INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

Home Mission Board employee J.N. Evans serves as interim Executive Director-Treasurer for one year from 1986-1987.

BCPSJ BUILDING DEBT FREE

In spite of the light rain and falling temperatures, a large crowd stood outdoors on Nov. 7, 1986, to dedicate the BCPSJ building debt-free.

1987

WALLACE WILLIAMS BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

Wallace Williams takes office as Executive Director-Treasurer and serves from 1987-1992.

1991

BCPSJ CHURCH MEMBERSHIP GROWS

In 1991, the BCPSJ records a membership of 25,553!

1992

THE BCPSJ GROWS ETHNICALLY

By 1992, there were 31 ethnic churches and ten other units in the BCPSJ, with a total membership of 1,358.

1993

DAVID WALTZ BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

On May 7, 1993, David Waltz takes office as Executive Director-Treasurer and serves from 1993-2016.

1994

VOLUNTEER HOUSE PURCHASED

On February 5, 1994, the property at 98 Holbrook Street was purchased for the purpose of it being a volunteer house and multi-ministry center.

EXECUTIVE LOOK BACK

Former BRN executive director reflects on years of service

By Macala Leighey

What started merely as an interim position, a temporary job that was meant to be filled by someone else, soon became a beloved, long-term calling for former Baptist Resource Network Executive Director Dr. David Waltz.

"The board asked me if I would be the interim executive director, that was in the Fall of '92, [and] as I served as the interim, I began to feel like maybe God...[well] I felt the nudging and I felt like my gifts fit it," said Waltz.

At the time, the BRN was known as the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania and South Jersey (BCPSJ) and Waltz was serving as the Director of Evangelism and Brotherhood, a position he never expected to be offered.

"Well, that's kind of a miraculous story, and almost, to me, quite unexpected. I was very, very happy as a pastor in Williamsport... the church was growing, we had great fellowship...I mean things were just so exciting."

Waltz continued: "Part of the surprise, in that move, [was] I felt like it was really important for me, as a pastor, and for our church, to do what we thought was the biblical right thing to do, not just what was tradition. Some of the decisions we had made I knew would be controversial [such as placing women in leadership] and I felt, when we made those decisions, no way they would

consider me for a state convention post."

After "much prayer and thought," Waltz agreed to take on the director position, which ultimately led to an even more surprising role.

In 1993, Waltz officially became the BCPSJ Executive Director-Treasurer.

"The administrative committee felt like I was the one and recommended me to the board, and the board questioned me at length," said Waltz.

"It ended up that they called me as the executive director unanimously...I think there was one abstention out of the full board."

During his 23 years as executive director, Waltz was instrumental in advancing the convention's finances, starting a volunteer house, leading the convention to become a resource network, and encouraging diversity.

"One of the first challenges I faced was that we didn't have enough money. We were spending more money than was coming in [and] our budget was more than our resources were... so there was an extreme sense of urgency to face the budgetary crisis," shared Waltz.

"We also had some vacancies that we just didn't fill because we didn't have the resources right then to fill them, but I realized that - I guess part of this came from being a pastor of a church - there were a lot of things volunteers could do if you would give them the opportunity and open up the door for that to happen."

In 1994, an opportunity arose for the convention to purchase a volunteer house, and



Dr. David Waltz offers a report at the Baptist Resource Network annual meeting. File photo.

despite financial concerns, they did just that.

"I explained how I felt that, [with] a project like that, churches and people would be willing to give over and above the regular gifts, because it's something tangible they could see and catch the vision for. Secondly, once it was paid for, the volunteers that could come from outside of the state, stay there and help us would more than pay any expenses or costs that it was to the convention," said Waltz.

Waltz also shared how the Volunteer House strengthened the faith of his colleagues and the congregations of the BCPSJ.

"The transformation that came just by, in a sense, risk-taking, taking steps of faith for our board. That was a great step of faith they took, and our people...and, yet, to see God provide and see the results of that when you're willing to trust Him."

Later in his career as executive director, Waltz tackled the transition of the BCPSJ becoming a resource network.

"The change from an Associational State Convention model to a Baptist Resource Network regional model was a big change, and we didn't have a model to go by, cause no other state convention had done it. We were the first."

Waltz continued: "I tend to forget the negative parts, but there was a lot of opposition to that and a lot of questions, and I understand that. Change is really hard, but society was changing [and] we needed to make changes."

As the BCPSJ shifted to become the BRN, the organization also moved toward a greater acceptance of diversity.

"One of the things that really burdened me, when I became executive director, [was] though we had diversity in our churches, we didn't have that diversity in our staff, nor on our board," said Waltz.

Waltz explained that through his years of service, he saw the network's staff and board grow in diversity and love for one another.

"By the time I retired, I was thrilled. Our staff and our board looked like our churches, in terms of numbers, racial backgrounds and ethnic backgrounds. Even on our board, it wasn't just a matter of having them at the table, which was important, but it was thrilling to me when it came to the point where they were at the head of the table," said Waltz.

In 2016, Waltz retired from the BRN and his executive post. Through many years of challenging decisions, rich relationships, and God-given growth, Waltz found his time as executive director "extremely" rewarding.

"When I became executive director, I had so much to learn and so many things that I didn't know about other cultures, and as I look back...I'm just so grateful for the transformation that came in my own life," said Waltz. "I'm grateful for all I've learned, I'm grateful for all I gained [and] the opportunities that I had...I found the time serving at BRN extremely fulfilling [and] I truly loved being the executive director." ■

1995

25TH ANNIVERSARY

The BCPSJ began a year-long celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary at the beginning of 1995.

THE BCPSJ CONTINUES TO GROW

By November of 1995, the convention has reached 231 congregations.

1996

VOLUNTEER HOUSE RENOVATIONS

In 1996, renovations were completed in the Volunteer House. Much of the work was done by volunteers from Virginia. The garage was converted for a library for the Harrisburg branch of the Northeast Baptist School of Ministry.

BAPTIST RESOURCE CENTER RENAMED

At a meeting on May 10, 1997, the BRN's Executive Board approved a change in the sign at the office building, so that it would read "Baptist Resource Center."



1998

PURCHASE OF THE GUEST HOUSE

In May of 1998, the purchase of the guest house, the house next door to the state office building, was approved.

THE BCPSJ CONTINUES TO GROW

The 1998 reports revealed that the number of BCPSJ churches had reached 300.

2000

Under Waltz's leadership, the BCPSJ transitioned to becoming the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, a move that was officially legalized on August 11, 2017.

30TH ANNIVERSARY

The *Baptist Resource Network* celebrates 30 years of ministry!

2016

STAN SMITH BECOMES INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER OF BRN

Stan Smith takes office as Interim Executive Director-Treasurer for one



>> Baptists and the BCPSJ that began under the leadership of Bush in 1981.

In 1987, Wallace Williams took office as Executive Director-Treasurer, where he served from 1987-1992. Under his leadership in 1991, the BCPSJ recorded a membership of 25,553!

On May 7, 1993, David Waltz took office as Executive Director-Treasurer and served from 1993-2016. On February 5, 1994, the property at 98 Holbrook Street was purchased for the purpose of it being a Volunteer House and multi-ministry center. The house was of great value in housing volunteers and serving as a center for seminary education for the Harrisburg area. Jim and Ann Cravens lived in the house for several months and helped initiate renovations. On September 1, 1994, Howard and Jean Girard came to live in the house and to serve as its first host and hostess and to coordinate the use of volunteers to complete renovations.

The BCPSJ began a year-long celebration of its 25th anniversary at the beginning of 1995. A 25th anniversary committee led by Harold Price had been meeting to plan the commemoration. Beginning with the January 1995 issue of *Penn-Jersey*, the PJB displayed the 25th anniversary logo designed by Jim Mendillo, a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Vorhees, New Jersey, with the motto "From Generation to Generation," showing a torch passed from one hand to another. The committee planned for T-shirts, cups, and tote bags with the imprint of the anniversary logo.

In 1996, renovations were completed in the Volunteer House. Much of the work was done by volunteers from Virginia. The garage was converted for a library for the Harrisburg branch of the Northeast Baptist School of Ministry. A classroom was added for that program. A dedication service for the Volunteer House was held on Saturday, October 5, 1996. The classroom was named "The Virginia Room" in recognition of contributions from Virginia and work done by people from that state. The moving of the classes to the Volunteer House freed valuable space in the state office building for the use of the Missions Division.

In May of 1998, the purchase of the guest house, the house next door to the state office building, was approved. During the summer, many volunteers worked to renovate the house and to remove excessive shrubbery. Howard and Jean Girard served as coordinators for this effort. The house was first designated as the Mission House. In addition to providing additional conference space and overnight accommodations for visiting workers, its primary purpose was to provide housing for Missionaries in Residence.

Under Waltz's leadership, the BCPSJ transitioned to becoming the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, a move that was legalized on August 11, 2017.

In 2016, Waltz retired from the BRN and his executive post, and Stan Smith, who previously served as associate director, took office as Interim Executive Director-Treasurer for one year.

The next year, Barry Whitworth, a long-time church planter who has planted churches and served on church staffs in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, was unanimously elected as the BRN's next Executive Director-Treasurer. Whitworth previously served the BRN as the North American Mission Board's lead church planting catalyst for Pennsylvania/South Jersey and Send City missionary for Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, since 2012, after serving as the network's multiplying churches team leader since 2009.

The Baptist Resource Network has partnered with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) for the past several years to plant churches in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but beginning in 2020, the Send Network partnership extended to the entire Pennsylvania/South Jersey region, supporting church planting across its sprawling rural farmlands, mountains, coastland, urban centers and small towns. Joe Velarde, lead pastor of Riverbend Community Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, now leads the Send Network Pennsylvania/South Jersey efforts, which began March 1, 2020, under the direction of Whitworth and Cliff Jenkins, BRN's director of multiplying churches.

Whitworth also expanded the BRN's effort toward racial reconciliation. Three years before the death of George Floyd opened up long-awaited conversations about race and the plight of Black people in the United States, twelve BRN pastors, six African American and six Anglo, sat at a table to listen and learn from each other. Eventually, the conversations led to a visit to one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Philadelphia, Strawberry Mansion, where the pastors are now combining efforts to fight the overwhelming systemic racism and poverty.

Also in 2020, the BRN team embarked on a journey with Will Mancini and his associates at Denominee to help the network reframe its vision and strategies so as to deliver consistent value to churches in these rapidly changing times. Out of those sessions emerged several *enhanced* (rather than new) directions. Many of the new efforts clearly felt like a continuation and affirmation of the BRN's former strategical work. But what emerged were some clear paths to communicate to BRN churches, all with the goal of helping them "accelerate Kingdom movement." (See pp. 40-43 for descriptions of this work). ■



BRN pastors gather in Strawberry Mansion to seek ways to fight the overwhelming systemic racism and poverty together. Photo by Shannon Baker

year. Smith previously served as associate director.

2017

BARRY WHITWORTH BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER OF BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK

Barry Whitworth takes office as Executive Director-Treasurer in 2017 and continues to serve the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey.

2019

10/5 CHALLENGE LAUNCHED

At the November 2019 Annual Meeting for the Baptist Resource Network, Barry Whitworth presented the 10/5 Initiative, challenging 10 churches to participate in at least one of five areas of ministry: church revitalization, church multiplication, compassion ministry, collegiate ministry, and international missions.

2020

SEND NETWORK PA/SJ LAUNCHED

The Baptist Resource Network has partnered

with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) for the past several years to plant churches in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but beginning in 2020, the Send Network partnership extended to the entire PA/SJ region.

50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION POSTPONED

As COVID-19 halted ministry gatherings worldwide, the BRN decided to postpone its 50th anniversary celebration until the October 2021 annual meeting, now to be known as the Accelerate Conference.

2021

#LOVEPASJ INITIATIVE IS LAUNCHED

Baptist Resource Network Executive Director Barry Whitworth introduces #LovePASJ, a three-phase initiative aimed at helping churches love their neighbors all across Pennsylvania/South Jersey.

The Baptist Resource Network is indebted to author Frederick J. Boehlke Jr. and his book, "From Generation to Generation: A History of Southern Baptists in Pennsylvania/South Jersey" for this information.

A FUTURE LOOK: *Whitworth focuses on accelerating Kingdom movement*

By Shannon Baker

Dr. Barry Whitworth, executive director of the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, celebrated his 17th anniversary of work with the network on March 1. He also celebrated his fourth year as executive director on Feb. 1, a post in which he was unanimously elected to replace retiring executive director, Dr. David Waltz.

Whitworth, a long-time church planter who has planted churches and served on church staffs in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, previously served the BRN as the North American Mission Board's lead church planting catalyst for Pennsylvania/South Jersey and Send City missionary for Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, since 2012, after serving as the network's multiplying churches team leader since 2009.

Whitworth's long-time vision has been to see every church "become a healthy, multiplying church," which reflects the organization's focus on healthy behaviors of missional engagement, intentional discipleship and leadership development.

He's often shared his estimation that only about a third of BRN churches are missionally engaged; only around 20 percent of the churches have intentional discipleship pathways; and only around 10 percent have leadership development processes/pipelines.

He thinks today's culture is demanding churches to think more about their health. "It is making us ask questions, making us examine, making us pursue things differently than we've done before," he said.

Creating the right culture is a big challenge, he admitted.

"What I was doing in church planting was creating a culture of multiplication. Now that's broadened, because not only do I still want to see that, I want to see our existing churches get into multiplication, and that means new disciples, new leaders, new ministries, and new churches. That's the greatest challenge, getting us to a place where that's our culture."

His wife Beth agrees, noting that the various regional cultures of the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Appalachian Mountains, the midwestern urban Pittsburgh and the eastern urban Philadelphia all make establishing an organizational culture even more challenging.

"You have to know what the DNA [of each region] is, what they're like," she said. "When we first came it felt like coming into a family like a foster child."

But now after 17 years of serving churches, she and Barry are seeing more and more of "that feeling of being connected as a family of God."

Looking back, Whitworth said his favorite memory so far has been "watching brand new baby churches and now seeing the impact of those churches across the BRN. They've started churches, they've sent out missionaries, they're just making an impact

where they are."

With fondness, he remembers, "I don't think I laughed any harder than when I had all the multiplying church center leaders together. We would laugh, cry. Push each other around, play games It was, yeah; it's a real brotherhood."

Whitworth said distance didn't matter to these men, who despite being from all over the region, are still very close.

"We've had guys drive from the extreme part of western Pennsylvania to go to Philadelphia and be with a brother while he was going through surgery," he explained. "Relationship doesn't care about miles. Relationship cares about people. And if you have that then you've got what you need."

The emphasis on relationships is most evident in those the Whitworths lead, even showcased in the development of the network's new mission direction.

Dr. Larry Anderson, BRN director of healthy churches, noted, "What I have grown to admire about Barry's leadership is his willingness to go against the status quo. He is not willing to stand dormant with the church's plateauing and declining trajectory. He is not happy with the racial and political divisions we are facing in our world. His heart breaks for the lost, and he knows these new millennial believers need some new churches that can help them navigate their world through the Word."

Andy Weber, director of finances for the BRN, agreed. "Barry is a strategic leader



whose passion for the Kingdom is contagious, and his drive to invest in the next generation is evident. He is a prayer warrior who believes that anything is possible with our God," he said.

"On a personal note, Barry has been extremely instrumental to me in my walk with Christ. Not only has he been a great mentor, he has been an incredible friend. I am extremely grateful for him and his ministries throughout the Northeast," Weber added.

Cliff Jenkins, BRN/NAMB director of church planting, said, "People often use the titles of supervisor, manager or boss when describing their direct report. However, the term, 'leader,' is the only title that fits for Dr. Whitworth. Over the years, I have watched him tackle hard issues instead of shying away from them."

Jenkins added, "He leads by example and seeks to find common ground while aiming to do what is right. He listens well and is always a great encourager. I simply love the way you can see his heart in almost all of what he does for the Lord."

Buff McNickle, BRN network development and director of compassion ministry, put it this way: "Someone once said that life really is about the moments. Seventeen years ago was one of those defining life moments not only for the Whitworth family but for our BRN family. It was in that

moment that Barry's faith intersected with God's faithfulness and has allowed many of us to see God's activity and mission in full display.

"Barry's relentless passion for God's Kingdom and his strong leadership have the BRN poised for a bright future. I just pray that God blesses us with many more years and moments together."

Already the future has been impacted, when, in early 2020, the Baptist Resource Network team embarked on a journey with Will Mancini and his associates at Denominee to help the network reframe its vision and strategies so as to deliver consistent value to churches in these rapidly changing times.

Through the process of training and brainstorming, the BRN team sought to answer the question, "What does the state convention, our network, of tomorrow look like?"

"I am pleased to say the effort has been extremely positive," Whitworth cheered. "I believe it is already clarifying our mission, unifying our team, and amplifying our impact."

In monthly meetings, the BRN team did a number of mission-focusing exercises designed to help them focus on the outputs they desire to see as a result of their work.

These culminated into several new

directions, including the following:

First, we have clarified our **Mission (What are we doing?)**. Wholeheartedly, the BRN team has landed on "helping churches accelerate Kingdom movement." Every church, no matter where they are in its life, can benefit from taking new steps toward Kingdom advancement. The BRN will seek to help each church identify what those next steps are and to assist them with the tools necessary to accelerate forward.

The team also examined the areas they felt the BRN brings **Value (Why are we doing this?)**. As a network, the team determined they value *Unified Diversity, Passionate Innovation, Gospel-Driven Multiplication, Empowered Network, and Authentic Partnerships*.

The BRN team also revisited its **Strategy (How are we doing it?)**. They have devised a simple four-step process: Assess, Assist, Activate, and Advance, which help define the areas of service available to churches.

And finally, the team looked at Measures that help define when they are successful. The team believes they will be successful when they see BRN churches with *Thriving Leaders* and being *Kingdom Centric, Missionally Motivated, and Diversely Unified*.

"We believe this vital work will help us shift from being reactive to proactive and will allow us to develop and refine the right tools to help your ministry accelerate Kingdom movement for years to come," Whitworth said. ■

"What does the state convention, our network, of tomorrow look like?"

ACCELERATING KIN

BRN Mission Strategy



ASSESS

Church Context

Condition (baseline evaluation/progress)

Capability (of current pastor, leaders, and members)

Challenges/Barriers (physical, spiritual and emotional)

Classification (assessment results)

ASSIST

Consultation/Coaching

Creation of Strategy/Next Steps
Operating System/Plan

Crisis of Belief (Comfort or Conquer?)

Clarification of Commitments

Church Consensus

GDOM MOVEMENT

Multiplying Churches



Consultation/Coaching/Resourcing

Completion of Action Steps

Championing Achievements

Clarification/Adjustment/Refinement

Charting Next Steps

ACTIVATE

Contextualized Acceleration of Movement

Continuation of Process

Celebration of Wins

Curation of Resources/Capabilities/Campaigns

Completion of this Cycle (Repeat with Other Churches)

ADVANCE

What We Value:

UNIFIED DIVERSITY

We believe it is crucial that Christ-followers be unified in diversity—not uniformity—because this reflects and celebrates the fullness of God’s creative work through humanity and His desire that all of creation reflect His character and identity.

Genesis 1:26-27, Galatians 3:26-29, Revelation 7:9

PASSIONATE INNOVATION

We believe we must remain passionate about the need to become increasingly innovative in creating new ideas, strategies, and systems because it will be demanded in order to reach the unreached for Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:9, 43:18-19, Mark 2:21-22, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

GOSPEL-DRIVEN MULTIPLICATION

We believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is the main accelerant of the work that churches do across the BRN, because it is the only way to see a multiplication movement of new disciples, leaders, ministries and churches across our two-state region.

Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:21, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 2 Timothy 2:2

EMPOWERED NETWORK

We believe we are a great network of churches, because we have learned and are learning the value of relying on and resourcing one another in pushing back darkness and decreasing lostness within our region.

Exodus 17:12, Proverbs 27:17, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Corinthians 3:9, Philippians 4:19

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS

We believe our network needs to be capable and credible, because partnerships can only thrive when they are built on mutual trust, honesty and authenticity.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11, 2 Corinthians 8:21, Philippians 1:3-11

How We Measure Success:

When our churches have/are:

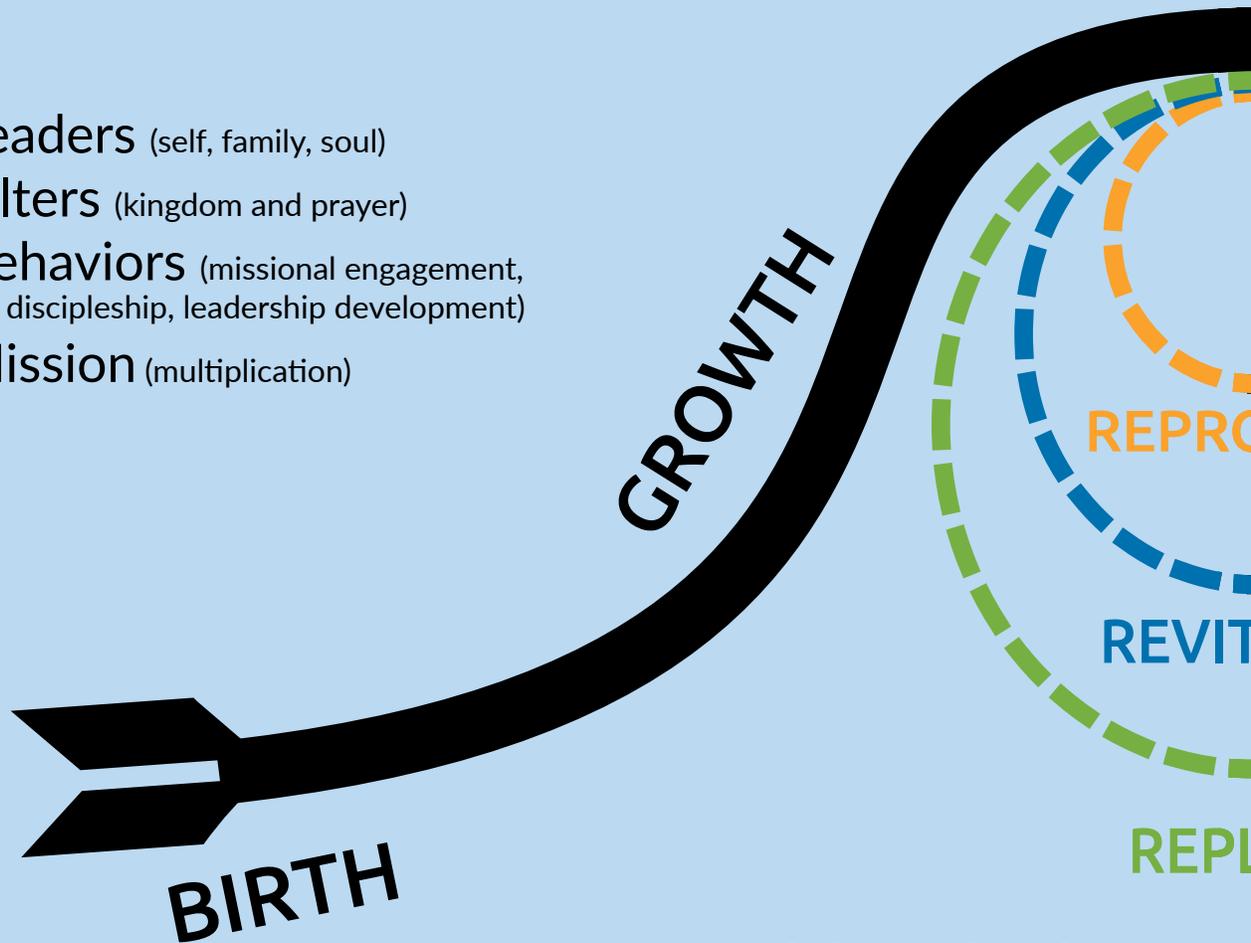


*resulting in multiplied disciples, leaders,
ministries, and churches*

CHURCH HEALTH

HEALTHY CHURCHES HAVE:

- Healthy Leaders (self, family, soul)
- Healthy Filters (kingdom and prayer)
- Healthy Behaviors (missional engagement, intentional discipleship, leadership development)
- Healthy Mission (multiplication)



THE BRN HELPS CHURCHES AT EVERY STAGE

CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

The BRN has a strong system in place to recruit and train new church planters. First-year church planters focus on the healthy behavior of missional engagement. Second-year planters focus on intentional discipleship. Third-year planters focus on leadership development. By the time they are stable churches, they are accustomed to practicing these healthy behaviors.

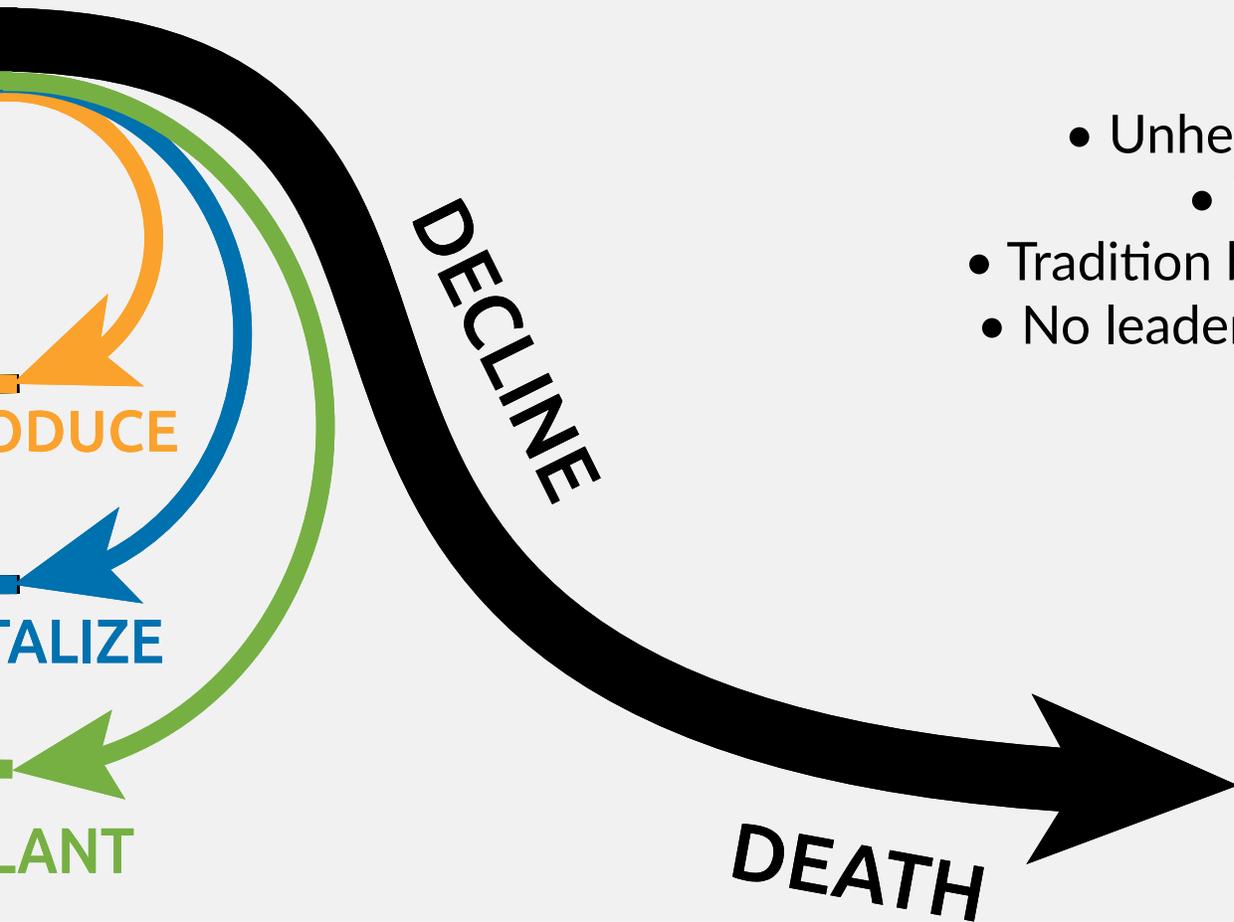
CHURCH REPRODUCTION

A stable church teaches disciples to make other disciples who make other disciples. Their pastors are planning for reproduction through leadership development. Their ultimate desire is to reproduce disciples, leaders, new ministries, and new churches. These outwardly-focused behaviors prevent a church from slipping into "self-preservation mode," which is unfaithful, and ultimately unfruitful. **The BRN can teach you to stay on mission.**

DYING CHURCHES HAVE:

- Unhealthy Leaders
 - Inward Focus
- Tradition beats mission
- No leadership pipeline

ILITY



RY STAGE OF THEIR LIFECYCLE

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

A healthy church is always looking for ways to maintain a strong connection to missional engagement, intentional discipleship, and leadership development. When a church starts to decline, they are likely neglecting one of these key behaviors. **The BRN can help you identify and address these issues at the first signs of decline so that your church might be revitalized before it dies.**

CHURCH REPLANTING

A church that fails to revitalize or reproduce can still be an effective tool for the Kingdom by choosing to close their doors and invest their remaining people and assets into a new church. By intentionally closing and passing their assets on to a new congregation, they are leaving a legacy of faith within their community that may sprout new fruit in the next season. **The BRN can help you close well.**

CHURCH HEALTH



HEALTHY LEADERS

We care about your health and the health of your family. Your fellow leaders in the BRN are your best source of no-nonsense talk about how you are REALLY doing. We want you to find connections with other leaders in the BRN who will help you maintain a healthy YOU. This is essential.

FAMILY CARE

One key resource from the BRN is Family Care. Ministry can be exceptionally lonely, so the extended support network that the BRN provides is invaluable to our partner pastors. We offer prayer encouragement and special funds for pastors when they face unexpected major life events. With assistance from the North American Mission Board, we also provide ongoing encouragement to church planter families as they start their new journey of planting a church. We sponsor retreats to help refresh leaders, pastor's wives, and women throughout the BRN.



HEALTHY FILTERS

All of the best behaviors in the world can be applied in the wrong way. A common example would be that we spend time trying to build the church instead of building the Kingdom. Jesus clearly said that He would build His Church, while we should seek first the Kingdom. For example, when we serve the poor, are we simply trying to recruit people to join our church, or are we being Kingdom-minded? Can we celebrate when someone is discipled better by a different local congregation or are we secretly bitter when they leave ours? Would we be willing to send our best leaders out to plant another church and expand the Kingdom, or do we want to hold on to them to build up our own local church?

Furthermore, without the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we could be tempted to misapply good biblical behaviors in untimely ways. For this reason, we teach healthy churches to filter all of their activities through the filters of the Kingdom of God and Prayer. Kingdom keeps our focus on the glory of the King instead of our own fame. Prayer keeps us in a humble posture before our King so that He might direct our steps.



HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Missional engagement, intentional discipleship, and leadership development are three key behaviors of healthy churches.



HEALTHY MISSION

Our mission is to help you multiply at every level. We want disciples who make new disciples, ministries that birth new ministries, leaders who replicate new leaders, and churches that plant new churches. We believe that this mission flows directly from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (CSB).



HEALTHY CHURCHES

With almost 14 million lost people in Pennsylvania and South Jersey, it is essential that we embrace the mission of getting the church out of its buildings and into the midst of our communities. Healthy churches develop a discipleship strategy to move people from spiritual infancy to spiritual parenthood. Solid biblical preaching is a component of intentional discipleship, but is not the complete picture. In Acts 20:20, for example, we see the example of public teaching AND house-to-house teaching. We also hear about spiritual life stages throughout the Bible. A church that does not develop leaders is one generation away from closing. Healthy churches help every person consider their contribution to Kingdom growth, and every leader consider their contribution to future ministries. Multiplication is bigger than mere reproduction. We want to help you train up leaders who develop other leaders and plant churches that plant other churches.



MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

MAKING DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

Missional Engagement is defined as God's people (Christ-followers and His Church) taking the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ to a world that is separated from a relationship with a Holy and Eternal God. Engaging people missionally with the gospel involves the church going out to people rather than just reaching out and/or expecting the people to come to them.

Biblical References: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

ENGAGING THE LOST

Intentional Discipleship is developing spiritual maturity within Christ-followers through deliberate learning and accountability in peer-to-peer relationships and/or small groups. Intentional discipleship brings the Bible to life in Christ-followers, and what they learn moves from their heads, to their hands, then to their hearts, as it translates into habits that produce growth (spiritual maturity) in their lives. Further, through intentional discipleship, the disciple becomes a disciple-maker who leads others to become and know how to follow Christ.

Biblical References: Matthew 4:19, Matthew 28:20

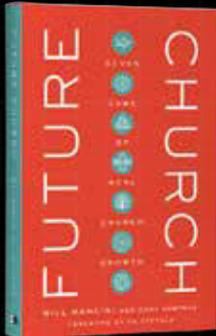
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ENSURING A NEXT GENERATION

Leadership Development is the deliberate and systematic activity by church leaders to purposely influence and develop others to become leaders within the Body of Christ. Every church needs leaders, especially for its future. The Kingdom needs leaders to advance the gospel around the world. Leadership development expands the capacity of individual Christ-followers to assume leadership roles within the Body of Christ, both locally and globally.

Biblical References: Ephesians 4:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:2

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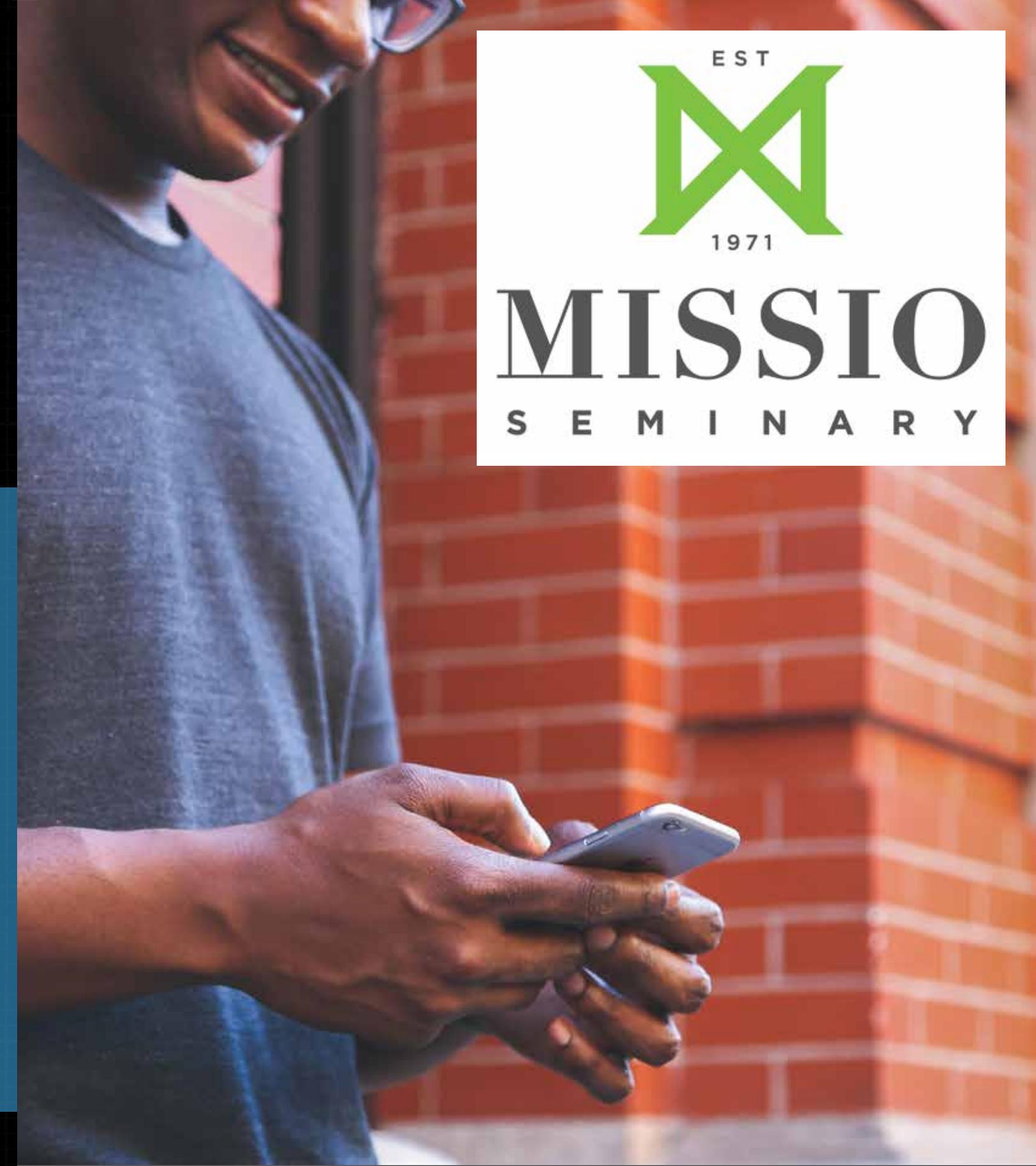
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Larry Anderson and David Ludwig teach about church lifecycles. File photo.

'We can get more accomplished together than we can do alone!'

When the pandemic hit, the term “Church Health” took on a deeper meaning. Every church was affected in one way or another, and the Church Health team was there, every step of the way, to help them through prayer, technological assistance, and reminders that the BRN was there for them.

“We ministered to congregations, mostly just to help them understand they weren’t alone in this process,” shared Larry Anderson, who directs the team comprised of David Ludwig, associate director, and four church health consultants, Greg Drayer, Robert Fontell, Buff McNickle, and Corey Mitchell.

“We began looking at how do we now communicate a gospel when we are dispersed as a body? What does that look like?” Everything was different. Churches

For some churches, the largest questions were how to communicate to a audience when you don’t have a budget to reach them? How do you communicate using only a phone to a full community?

There were so many needs, Anderson remembers. With so many church members displaced, how would they continue to evangelize the lost and show compassion to the community? How do they minister to those who were out of work or the essential workers who had to work? In the earlier days, much of the work was centered on compassion



BRN pastors meet with SBC Leaders. Photo by Larry Anderson.

had to embrace social media and speak into cameras (whether they were iPhones or other technology, based on people’s budget), Anderson recounts.

ministries: food distribution and giving away free hand sanitizer and masks. Through several Zoom roundtables, pastors were able to strategize together

how to care for their communities, how to prepare their buildings for safe return, and how to take advantage of the newfound technology for the future.

Anderson developed a series of “COVID Commandments” compilations, sharing practical suggestions for reopening churches and for hosting post-pandemic church. These presentations were well received in local PA/SJ churches and also on national levels, thanks to Anderson’s role as president of the State Directors of Evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention.

That role opened up the door for PA/SJ pastors to hear directly from SBC leaders, including former SBC President J.D. Greear and others.

Anderson recalls, “We all discussed what does ‘in church’ actually look like? Shorter services? Hybrid services for those who want to come in the building and those who were not willing to come into the building?”

“We helped pastors to be sensitive (like the “men of Issachar” in 1 Chron. 12:32) and to seek to understand the actual times in which we are able to do ministry. Pastors everywhere are navigating those who want the vaccinations, and those who don’t. Those who want to wear masks, and those who don’t.

This is a “difficult trial that we we’re all facing,” which requires having sensitivity to recognize people’s positions. No matter the position, “we are called the love them all,” he says.

“We can’t make a choice on who we love. Choosing to love or not love is not an option.”

Anderson says today, many churches have gotten to a place where they were able to go from treading water to starting to figure things out with a new vision. “They understand it is not going back, but it might be a new normal for them,” he explains.

“The tagline is always ‘We can get more accomplished together than we can do alone,’ and the reality is this was one of those chances where we got to really see the value of not being alone. We asked each church what was working for them, and we had a diverse body from which we could pull inspiration.

“So, it’s not just us being experts in Harrisburg; it was actually looking at what all of our churches were doing that’s working. And then leveraging that to support the other churches who were looking for areas of help in the different ways.”

As Anderson looks back, he sees God’s faithfulness.

“We were still highlighting and giving hope and people were coming to know the Lord during this process. The Lord is not going to be stopped because of a pandemic, and I think we got a chance to see that unfold before our very eyes.”

Anderson is excited, too, about the upcoming #LovePASJ initiative to be launched at BRN’s inaugural Accelerate Conference.

“The idea of bringing this level of

compassion, not as anomaly but as a norm, to me, is wonderful to think about.”

He sees the importance of embracing and getting to know one’s communities, especially in the aftermath of the global pandemic. #LovePASJ presents the possibility of the church getting to know the community, not the community getting to know the church, he stresses.

“Church members need to be equipped to know their communities. So often, instead, we go to them without knowing what they need. It is a waste of time,” he says. “But to learn their needs and then go and show love to them, to me, is the greatest strategy for reaching the lost. It is what the Lord did. Obviously, He already knew us, but He left heaven, came to Earth and showed us which way to go.”

Knowing the world is ever-changing and diverse, Anderson also likes how #LovePASJ doesn’t give a cookie-cutter approach to evangelism and ministry. Churches simply use the tools to discover the unique ministries God is giving them.

And the biggest blessing, says Anderson, is that our churches don’t have to figure it all out.

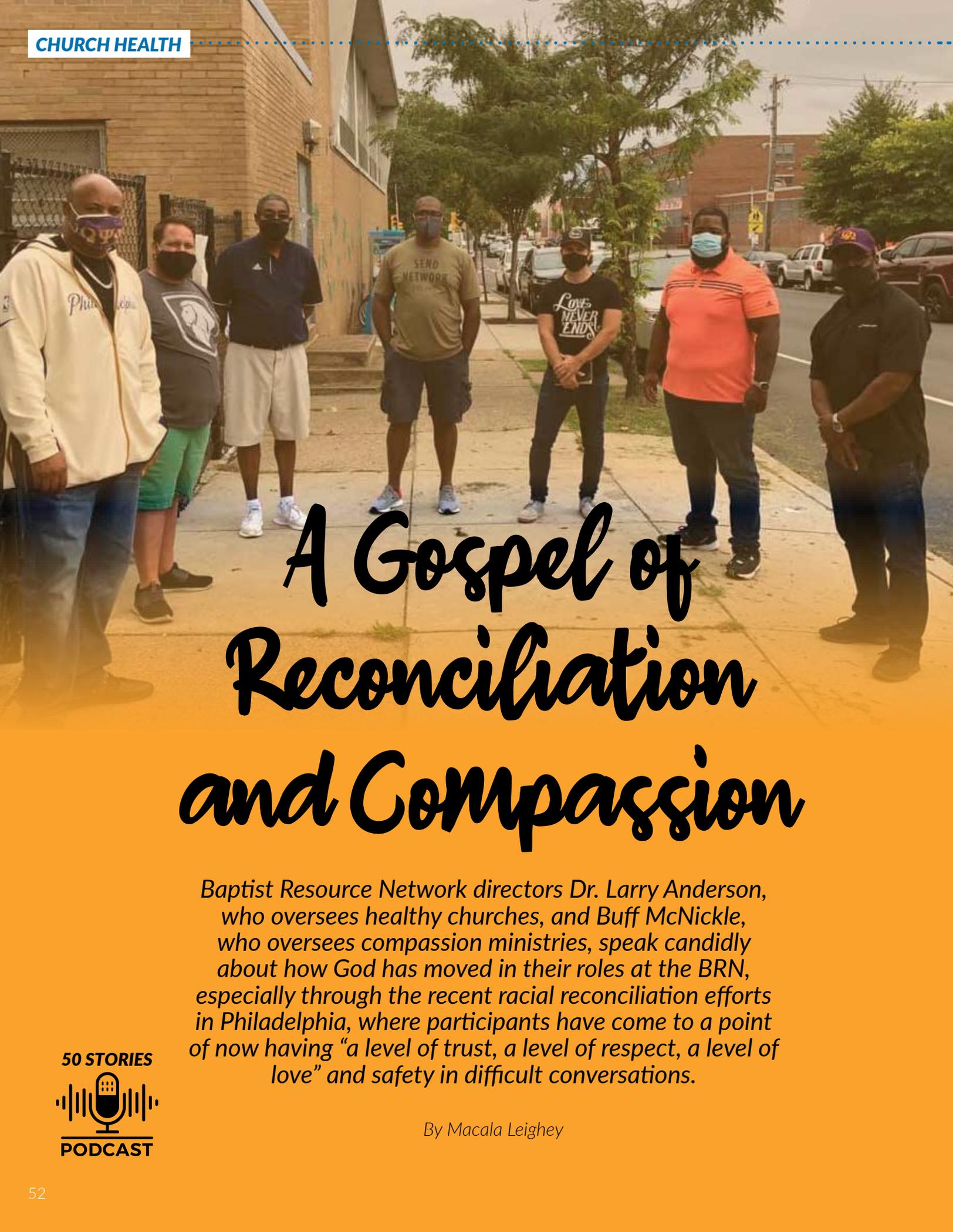
“We have all the tools ready for them to use! We have a play-by-play strategy on how to do it and will walk with you through it,” he says. “That’s what makes it valuable in my eyes. That’s what makes it #LovePASJ.” ■

BRN EVANGELISM GRANTS

The Baptist Resource Network is committed to reaching Pennsylvania and South Jersey with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, BRN churches may apply for evangelism grants specifically to support and promote outreach events and evangelistic efforts. Does your church or church plant have an upcoming outreach event or evangelism training that you think would qualify? Apply today at brnunited.org/resources/evangelism-grant.

BRN staff will review and approve qualified projects. Once approved, please be sure to take photos of your event and send them along with a brief follow-up report of how the funds were utilized, how the Gospel was shared, and the impact that was made in your community to helpdesk@brnunited.org. Completed projects will be showcased in the *BRN United* weekly newsletter.





A Gospel of Reconciliation and Compassion

Baptist Resource Network directors Dr. Larry Anderson, who oversees healthy churches, and Buff McNickle, who oversees compassion ministries, speak candidly about how God has moved in their roles at the BRN, especially through the recent racial reconciliation efforts in Philadelphia, where participants have come to a point of now having “a level of trust, a level of respect, a level of love” and safety in difficult conversations.



By Macala Leighey

PHILADELPHIA (BRN) -- "We laid our souls bare...we began to discuss our preconceived notion[s], experiences, and prejudices that we came in with, and we kind of just walked through this process of, historically, how did we get here," expounded the BRN's Director of Healthy Churches Dr. Larry Anderson about the Culture Ethics and Justice Coalition (CEJC).

The CEJC is an organization made up of roughly 14 pastors in the greater Philadelphia area, who started meeting in 2017 to address systemic injustice. The effort has sought to bring racial understanding and a united mission among churches in the area.

"It was something that was spurred and pushed by our now Executive [Director] Barry Whitworth. He wanted to deal with racial reconciliation," Anderson explained.

"We went from a very uncomfortable environment, from having some difficult conversations – we saw repenting, we saw tear-dropping – but we got to a point where we could ask simple questions."

Prior to his involvement with the CEJC or the BRN, Anderson attended Biblical Theological Seminary (now known as Missio Seminary) in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. After graduating at Missio, he became the seminary's first ever African American professor.

For the past eight years, he has served as a BRN director, while also serving the past 17 years as the pastor of Philadelphia's Great Commission Church, where he also leads a racial reconciliation effort on behalf of the BRN.

"I've been dealing with racial reconciliation for 20 years. I've grown tired of having racial reconciliation conversations. I think it's something that should have already been done," said Anderson.

However, despite his initial feelings towards the reconciliation effort, Anderson has seen growth within this community of pastors.

"When Christ prayed in John 17 that we would be one, as He and the Father are one, it wasn't saying that we would have uniformity, but it was saying that there would be a level of unity."

Anderson continued: "I think we've done that with our PA and South Jersey pastors, and I've been blown

away by how far we've come – to come to a point of having a level of trust, a level of respect, a level of love at the table [and] bring a comforting situation where you [have] a brother of ethnicity you can ask anything."

Anderson explained how Whitworth eventually stepped aside from leading the effort and moved him into the leadership role.

"He [Whitworth] got to this point where he's like, 'I trust you to lead us and move forward in this' and that was significant for me," said Anderson.

Buff McNickle, a fellow BRN director and member of the CEJC, also commented on the impact the organization has had on its members and himself.

"When I think back to that conversation, when we first entered into the CEJC, I needed to change. I thought, 'Well, I'm good...I'm okay,' but God has used men like Dr. Anderson and other men around that table."

McNickle, an Anglo pastor who has adopted three Black children, continued: "There is so much I need to learn, there is so much I need to gather ... and if I'm really [going to] do compassion ministry in our culture and our context, I gotta come from a humility standpoint."

McNickle is originally from Mobile, Alabama, and serves as the BRN's Director of Network Development and Compassion Ministries. He is currently the pastor of Grace Falls Church in Absecon, New Jersey, which he planted back in 2013.

"When I think of compassion ministry, I think of a bridge-building ministry. We've got to build bridges within our community by identifying needs, seeing those needs, and meeting those needs," said McNickle, sharing more about his role.

"My role in compassion ministry is to help us understand how to build those bridges. So that, relationally, that bridge is strong enough when we have opportunities to share the Gospel."

He explained, "The body of Christ – the church – has the resources we



(above) Pastors Josh Crans and Robert Fontell pray together at a racial reconciliation cohort meeting. (left) CEJC cohort members pray in Strawberry Mansion, Philadelphia.

need to meet those needs and to come alongside our communities, come alongside our cities and neighborhoods, and really bring the hope, the light, and the transformative power of the Gospel – if we get out of the building to do that."

As key leaders in the BRN and members of the CEJC, both Anderson and McNickle touched on the importance of racial reconciliation conversations, and bringing the Gospel to the forefront of those types of discussions.

"I think it starts with the Gospel. I think if you start in Genesis – you read that the Lord created man in His image and in His image he created male and female – if you start there...if He created all of mankind in His image, and we're all image bearers, then there's a certain way we all have to treat one another," said Anderson.

"I think the injustice, and all these things that we see systemically, would change when our hearts change, because there's a winner and a loser. If the winner is man, nationality, or race then everybody else is a loser, but if the winner is God...we all become winners."

McNickle agreed, "Well, I think the first thing people have to do is recognize and acknowledge that there is injustice, and then the second thing you gotta do is identify it and speak to it."

He continued: "I think so many people, when they want to look at injustice, they want to look ahead, but we gotta be willing to look back, and where we look back to is the Gospel." ■

‘The Holy Spirit is at work... through our church planting efforts’

We need you, says Cliff Jenkins, BRN/NAMB Director of Church Planting. Without you, we can't increase the number of healthy multiplying churches. We need you to help us accelerate Kingdom movement in church planting.

Much like healthy churches within the BRN, church plants have wrestled with COVID-19 and all the challenges it has brought. As the church planting arm of NAMB and the BRN here in Pennsylvania and South Jersey, church planting catalysts and Send City missionaries have worked tirelessly behind the scenes encouraging and supporting the plants and their families that are serving faithfully in these difficult times.

Most plants have struggled to get people back into corporate worship services, and some planters and planters' wives have dealt with attacks of doubt and depression. In other cases, planters have contracted the deadly virus, while some, sadly, have even lost close family members.

Despite these varied challenges, catalysts and planters alike have not removed their hands from the plow of ministry. They have continued to work to push back darkness and be the light that we are meant to be. In one shining example, Church Planting Catalyst Ken Cordray has been a part of Choices Pregnancy Services in the Pittsburgh area. This is an organization, solely supported by churches, that serves the community by providing free godly pregnancy counseling,

sonograms, and also some restorative construction projects to those in need.

In another example, Philadelphia Send City Missionary, Dr. Kyle Canty has been leading Mansion Hope: a ministry that is bringing together churches from different racial and social backgrounds to share the Gospel and participate in the restoration of the Strawberry Mansion area of north Philadelphia. Mansion Hope is also seeking to plant a church in this area out of the partnerships that are being developed.

If you are into numbers, this year we have fifty-six (56) church plants in our area and fifty-one (51) of them are NAMB funded. Of this total number, twenty-nine (29) are new plants: twenty-four (24) have planted or are completing residencies and

status and are well on their way to becoming healthy multiplying churches.

However, please do not lose sight of this simple fact: behind these numbers are hundreds of families: husbands, wives and children who are on mission for God here in our midst. They are loving their neighbors, serving the less fortunate and, most importantly, sharing the Gospel.

Overall, the Holy Spirit is at work! He is moving through our church planting efforts. We are receiving reports that relationships are deepening, core team members are growing in their faith, and people are becoming followers of Christ. So far in 2021, over 200 people have made professions of faith- 50 of them from one non-NAMB funded church plant in York, Pa.!

Moving forward, we need your help! Churches plant churches. We desperately need you to raise up leaders and planters in our local churches. Fewer and fewer southern wives are saying "yes" to leaving their extended families, packing up their babies and following their husbands to "foreign northern lands."

We want and need planters who are indigenous to Pennsylvania and South Jersey and who don't have to fall in love - they already Love PA/SJ! We need you to start leadership development cohorts in your churches- some will and need to stay in your church, but others are needed to plant.

We need you to start church planting residencies. We need you. Without you, we can't increase the number of healthy multiplying churches. We need you to help us accelerate Kingdom movement in church planting. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

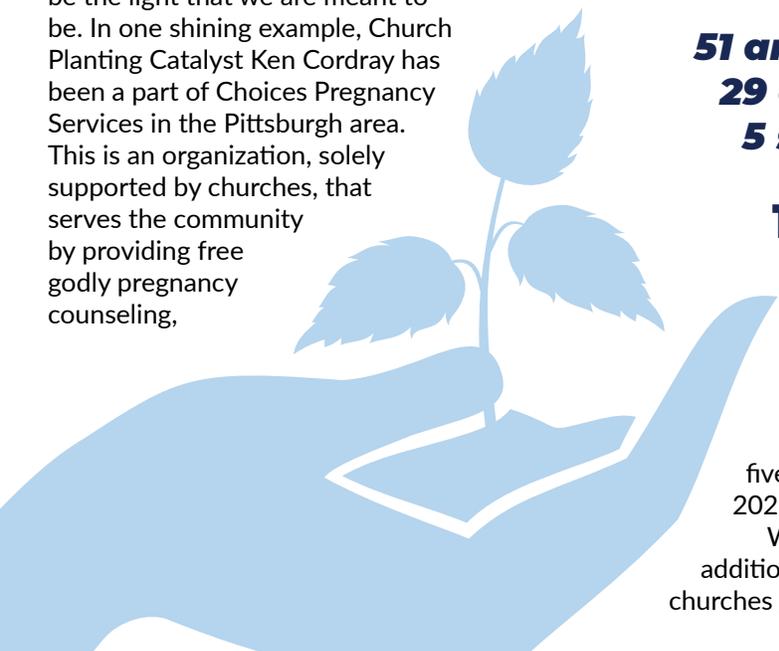
56 CHURCH PLANTS:

**51 are NAMB-funded,
29 are new plants,
5 started in 2021**

**11 CHURCH
PLANTS
have
graduated!**

five (5) have started in 2021.

With these new additions, we also saw 11 churches graduate from plant





Baptism at Harvest Church, Kittanning, Pennsylvania

Share Christ. Show compassion. Plant churches. Send prayers.

The Great Commission involves us all. Get involved today by praying for North American missionaries.



Planting transformation, one church at a time

By Macala Leighey

BREINIGSVILLE, Pa. (BRN) — “For me, I love seeing them [pastors] succeed, probably more than I long for my own success. My success is wrapped up in their success and that’s the greatest joy for me,” said Rev. Hal Hopkins, a church planting catalyst for the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey and the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

For 25 years now, the “Philly-born and Philly-bred” pastor, now serving at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Breinigsville, Pennsylvania, has faithfully served as a mentor and guide for church planters across the Pennsylvania and South Jersey region, as well as within the continental bounds of North America.

Prior to stepping into his role as a church planting catalyst, he served as a pastor in the Philadelphia area, leading his first church when he was only 23 years old.

“It began with my own heart-passion for God. It happened late in my high school years, where I really got a heart – a passionate desire – to study God’s Word [and] to share it with other people. So, I started doing that,” he explained.

After first pursuing a career in music, God quickly led Hopkins to the conclusion

that he was meant to be in ministry.

“That [music] was my agenda, but the Lord had something else. He used a lot of other circumstances to bring me to the place of surrendering to His call.”

Hopkins cited one of these affirming “circumstances” as a stranger on the subway, who asked if he was a minister.

“I said, ‘No, ma’am.’ I didn’t know this lady; I’d never seen her before [and] I wouldn’t know her if she showed up today. It was one of those seminal moments that the Lord used to just kind of speak to my heart about ministry,” explained Hopkins.

A few more instances of affirmation and a couple of opportunities to teach later, and Hopkins was sold on entering ministry.

“I just finally concluded, after a number of different issues, that this is what the Lord wanted me to do. And, if I thought I was going to continue to live life, then I better do it in obedience for Him.”

Heading into his 15th year of pastoring, Hopkins had a healthy relationship with his congregation and his church was doing well, but something was different. He felt the Lord stirring something new within his heart.

“I had really begun struggling, because

Heading into his 15th year of pastoring, “Bishop” Hal Hopkins had a healthy relationship with his congregation and his church was doing well, but something was different. Before he knew it, a restlessness in his heart turned into years of mentoring and guiding church planters all across PA/SJ and the nation.

50 STORIES



PODCAST

I thought the Lord wanted to do something different with me. The Lord just began to stir in my heart, and it just didn’t satisfy the way it used to. So, I just began praying, ‘Lord what do you want me to do?’”

Initially, he just thought God was going to move him to another church, but then he heard about the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Convention (now BRN) looking for what was, then, called “an African American Church Starter.”

At first, Hopkins was not interested in the new position and was recruited by Dr. Stan Smith to find some pastors that would be interested in the role.

“We pulled together several listening sessions, [and] I was there as the host. Guys came together and shared their perspectives.”

Hopkins continued: “He [Smith] says every time they would offer a recommendation of what the position or person might look like, they would look over at me. Now, I don’t remember all that, but that was his perspective.”

Post-listening sessions, Smith approached Hopkins and asked him if he would consider taking the church planting catalyst position.

“I’m not a denominational kind of guy,



(left) Pastor Hal Hopkins celebrates 25 years of service to the Baptist Resource Network and North American Mission Board. (above) Hopkins' work has included mentoring church planters of various ethnicities and backgrounds.

[so] that was so far into me. As an African American, when we go into ministry we go into pastoring, we don't have all these other options to work in a denomination. That was just never on our radar," explained Hopkins.

He continued: "But, I felt like – earlier I had asked Dr. Smith to pray for me – so, I felt like I at least owed him the obligation to explore what he was asking me to consider. So, I did."

Convinced that he would never make it through the entire interviewing process, Hopkins was very much surprised when he was, in fact, offered the position.

"I just felt like it was a God thing, because I wasn't the guy for this. I didn't know anything – I knew very little about church planting at the time. But the door opened...and I said, 'Well, Lord, if this is the door you're opening for me, I'll go.'"

Heading into his new role as a church planting catalyst, Hopkins was not quite sure what to expect.

"I didn't have any expectations – I didn't know what to expect. What I knew was, at that moment in my life, I believed [that] this is what the Lord was doing. I trusted Dr. Smith and I trusted Dr. Waltz – Dave Waltz – we had developed a friendship over the years."

At the time, Dr. Waltz was the executive director for the BRN, and Dr. Smith was the point person for the church planting movement.

"They [Waltz and Smith] lived up to their promise. I got involved, [and] I learned a little more about church planting," said Hopkins, explaining he was specifically responsible for the African American churches.

"We were divided into silos – there was a white church planter, there was a black church planter, [and] there was a language church planter – that's what they called them then."

Hopkins continued: "So, I was going across the whole state into African American communities trying to plant churches, and then we had other guys who were doing the same thing with their particular people groups. So, I learned a lot about the communities across our state...we had some successes, but it was just exciting to see God build these relationships."

Along with building relationships, Hopkins says watching "God do the unexpected" is one of the best things about his role as a catalyst.

"Sometimes, church planters just come from unexpected places; where you

have not been necessarily cultivating a particular place or a particular group of people, [but] then, all of a sudden, from somewhere else God brings you a church planter."

He continued: "Just to watch God do that and be able to thank Him for it, because you know, really, you had nothing to do with it. This was a God thing, and it just emerges and you just join God in His activity and watch Him do it."

For 25 years, Hopkins has been motivated by the pastors God has placed in his life, whether expected or not. He has come to love the day-in and day-out of being a church planting catalyst, the position he never expected to accept.

"I guess the thing that keeps me motivated and excited about this work is I love – I love! – seeing pastors succeed. I love to hear their vision about what they want to see God doing and then, in some small way, being a part of getting them from where they are to where that vision becomes a reality," said Hopkins.

"To see guys willing to take that step, willing to step out on faith...that's what I long for, that's what motivates me, [and] that's what excites me. I don't know anything I love doing more than seeing them succeed." ■

'Change the university, you change the world'

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After three decades of equipping collegiate ministers and young adults, BRN Collegiate Director Robert Turner retired on June 30. His successor, Stan Williams, a long-time collegiate minister serving the Philadelphia area, was one of many whom Turner mentored in the ministry.

"Change the university, you change the world."

This profound statement, originally written by Lebanese diplomat Charles Malik in 1982, became the motto and mindset for BRN Next Collegiate Ministry Director Robert Turner.

Turner first joined the Baptist Resource Network in 1992 and after three decades of equipping collegiate ministers and young adults, he retired from the Baptist Resource Network on June 30.

Over the years, Turner's passion for equipping campus ministers and guiding young adults in their walk with Christ grew.

"This chapter in the life of a young person is so important, and I think that's why I'm so passionate for collegiate ministry. I mean, it's cool hearing all these young people, but you have the ability to leverage influence in the life of a young person at a crucial time in their life," said Turner.

"Being present in the university context with students is just amazing for shaping the future... the future leaders are all there."

"So, I think the biggest change I've seen

in collegiate ministry, over my lifetime, is that it used to be that a campus minister saw him or herself as, 'My job is to start this group on campus, so what is it going to take to do that?' That's important, but I think now the question is different, the question is, 'What's it going to take to reach this campus for Christ?'"

Concluding this thought, Turner explained, "I think campus ministers now think more as missionaries, they approach their campus more as a missionary than they do as a program leader."

Throughout his years at the BRN, Turner has also been instrumental in coordinating mission efforts, transitioning the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey into the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, and serving as a collegiate ministry consultant for Lifeway.

"Serving on the staff of the BRN here...I can't tell you how fantastic the support has been over the decades. Working with our team of campus ministers here is the highlight. We're like family," he said.

"God's given me the privilege of working

with some of the best – best! – people in the Kingdom. I mean, some of the greatest people work in this ministry, but here in Penn/South Jersey, the people who have come through on our team, are just fantastic... just wonderful people I've been privileged to know."

Stanley Williams, long-time collegiate minister serving the Philadelphia area, began serving as BRN Next Gen Director, effective July 1.

Williams took over as the Next Gen Director after long-time director Robert Turner stepped into retirement.

"The university is without question the most significant institution – I would argue even more influential than the media, and the media is pretty strong," said Williams.

"So, the role – Next Gen director for collegiate ministries – is framed to prioritize me championing our missionaries who engage campus ministry/college ministry, obviously our college pastors, folks who are in Collegiate Church planting – anyone, frankly, who has a desire to be involved in reaching college students," stated Williams.



Within the Baptist Resource Network, there are several campus missionaries who do campus-based ministry. These missionaries are assigned to individual campuses throughout PA/SJ, such as, but not limited to: Penn State University, California University of Pennsylvania, Clarion University, and Montgomery County Community College.

There are also collegiate church planting networks affiliated with the BRN – Salt Company and Grace Point – as well as a “variety of churches who are very passionate about reaching college students.”

“Whether it’s campus based, or a variety of other creative expressions of a local faith community engaging a university or college...if you’re engaging young people in the academic bubbles, [then] that’s who we want to resource,” said Williams.

For Williams, providing resources for collegiate ministers and putting boots on the ground at the university level is not only part of his job, but part of his personal mission.

“When I went off to college – which is probably why college ministry is as significant in my own journey as it is – I’ll be clear, there were several places along the way [to become a Christian], but I did not become a Christian until I was a college student,” shared Williams.

During his first year of college, Williams crossed paths with a now dear friend, Leslie Braxton.

“Leslie Braxton was the star football running back of the team, but he was also a very devoted Christian. His life spoke to me, everything I saw in who he was, was something I wanted in my own journey.”

Williams continued: “Everybody likes him, even people that don’t like him respect him, because of who he is and how he chooses to live. It was because of that I just decided I was going to hang out with Leslie.”

It was one day after studying with Braxton that Williams, unbeknownst to him at the time, realized that his new friend was a Christian.

“I found out that Leslie – before he would study all of his other books – there was this black book that he would usually study, and I noticed. So, I wanted to see what the book was and it turned out it was a Bible.”

With this, then, disappointing revelation, Williams made a plan to challenge Braxton.

“In my mind, I was like, you know, Leslie’s a pretty awesome guy. He just has one problem: He’s a Christian... I need to help him out. I’m gonna give him some real hard questions, give him lots of doubt, and then he’ll be a decent



Stan Williams

person like me because he won’t be a Christian.”

Needless to say, Williams’ plan did not go as expected and, eventually, he started studying the Bible and attending church with Braxton. After a Sunday of conviction and much wrestling, Williams surrendered his life to Christ.

“I remember it was the first weekend in February of 1983, [and] in our tradition we call it ‘walking the aisles.’ I knew I had known for a while, I’d just been wrestling with it, [but] that particular Sunday I said, ‘You know what, I’m gonna give my life to

Christ.”

Since then, the Lord has grown Williams’ passion for reaching college students and young adults.

“The value of engaging universities is heightened when we underscore it in light of the fact that this is where young people are coming into their own as adults. This window, in this domain, [is] where they are actually choosing who they will be, establishing a sense of identity, [and] wrestling through principal questions.”

Williams continued: “You have young people who genuinely desire to live for Christ, and yet they are coming into a university system, which has layer upon layer upon layer. So, for that young person to walk through that space and not give up their faith is a miracle. We believe that miracle is facilitated because the church decides she’s going to go with her young people.”

Many of the BRN’s collegiate ministers are back on the mission field and walking alongside students, as classes resumed on Aug. 23 for most universities.

“This fall, if the Lord tarries, will be the first time in almost two years that college students are going to attempt to live in mass and dormitories. I just I can’t put words to what a college person is trying to feel....so we need to be in prayer.”

Williams shared some specific ways the BRN community can be praying for students, faculty, and collegiate missionaries.

“So, we pray certainly for the students and their safety, but also for the professors who will be there. If you would also pray that missionaries and campus ministers allow the Spirit of God to invade their thinking about innovative approaches...I am hopeful that, because it is that kind of critical moment, it will produce some very novel opportunities to share the gospel.” ■

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR BRN COLLEGIATE MINISTERS:

- **STAN WILLIAMS**, *BRN Next Gen Director*
- **AARON BATDORF**, *Lock Haven University*
- **AUSTIN BURTON**, *intern, Penn State University*
- **KIM CARSON**, *California University of Pennsylvania*
- **PASTORS WILLIAM CHEUNG/JAMES WON**, *University of Pennsylvania*
- **MICHAEL ‘HAIR’ KELLY**, *Swarthmore College*
- **PAUL MANNINO**, *Kutztown University*
- **AUTUMN MILLER**, *Penn State University*
- **PASTORS CURTIS MORRIS/RICKY WILSON**, *Cheney University*
- **CORY MULLIGAN**, *Temple University*
- **BRIAN MUSSER**, *Drexel University*
- **ERIC REIBER**, *Penn State University*
- **BRADY RENNIX**, *Delaware Valley University, Gwynedd Mercy University, Montgomery County Community College*
- **ZAKK ROBERTS**, *Carlow University, Carnegie University, Chatham University, Dequesne University, Point Park University*
- **KAYLA SMITH**, *Penn State University*
- **SCOTT UNDERHILL**, *Clarion University*



Seeking more than a degree

Campus minister Kayla Smith knows her mission field -- Penn State University -- because she was once a part of it! Hear her transformation story and how God is using her to reach students today.

50 STORIES



PODCAST

By Macala Leighy

Penn State University is made up of 24 different campuses across the state of Pennsylvania, with the addition of an exclusive online campus. Collectively, these campuses are home to a whopping 76,000 students each year. According to Penn State's online domain, the university's main campus, University Park located in State College, Pennsylvania, accounts for more than 40,000 undergrad students. Of those 40,000 students, 42% are out of state and 58% are in state, with nearly nine percent representing international students on each campus.

Among those staggering statistics is a community of students seeking much more than just a degree. New Life Student Fellowship is a group committed to reaching and equipping students for a lifetime relationship with Jesus Christ.

"This year with our New Life students, they have really been grasping the concept that we are blessed to be a blessing," said Kayla Smith, Newlife Campus Minister.

She continued: "They're [students] excited about their faith now, as they're seeing it be freed from the confines of Sunday morning church. They're taking their faith to the streets, the fields, the sidewalks, and other terrains...but really, they are just taking their faith into real life."

Smith has been a campus minister at University Park since she, herself, graduated from Penn State back in 2017.

"I ended up becoming a Christian halfway through college and got involved with New Life as a student my junior year. [I] was heavily involved my junior and senior year, and my senior year the director approached me about coming on staff after I graduated and becoming a collegiate missionary."

Prior to her time at Penn State, Smith did not identify as a Christian, nor was she actively pursuing a relationship with God.

"By the time I was in middle school, I would say I was an atheist. I didn't really put much thought towards it - it wasn't like I was going around being like, 'God's not real,'" confesses Smith.

She continued: "Most of my friends were not very spiritual or religious...there just wasn't a culture of Christianity and religion among my friend group, so it just faded."

Although she did not yet have a passion for Christ, she did have an enthusiasm for comedy and entertainment.

"I did a lot of sketch comedy and different videos and stuff when I was in high school, and that kind of translated to college at Penn State."

Continuing, Smith stated, "My freshman year of college, about halfway through, I just needed a hobby. So, I thought, 'Okay, well, I'm going to start doing creative stuff,' and so my best friend and I made a YouTube channel."

Smith and her friend would film, edit, and post weekly videos as a way of expressing their creative minds. The young girls never anticipated their videos reaching viewers continents away.

"What ended up happening, was that through mutual friends sharing our videos a missionary in Africa ended up seeing my videos," said Smith.

"It was fun to read a message from someone who was living in Africa. I was like, 'No way! Someone over there is watching these videos?' It was just mind blowing because I was just making these videos for fun."

The missionary eventually reached out and began a conversation that God would use to change Smith's life.



Kayla Smith, collegiate minister at Penn State University

"She [the missionary] ended up [being] a Christian...we got talking and a faith conversation just kind of developed out of that. I ended up kind of just taking it as an opportunity to ask like every question you could ask a Christian, and it was the first time in my life that I was hearing answers that were logical."

Smith continued: "This missionary ended up being Autumn [Miller], who I work with [now]... Autumn was there for a year in Africa, and ended up coming back home to Pennsylvania. We ended up meeting up and she gave me a Bible."

Through patient conversations, answered questions, and time well-spent in God's Word, Smith felt her views of God shifting, and her love for Christ growing.

"Through reading the Bible and just wrestling with the things in it, I think God just changed my heart. It was all I could think about...Jesus. As I started to get to know his whole character, that he was much more than a cop who didn't just want me to stop having fun, I started to fall in love with who He was."

She quickly realized just how monumental this heart change was and what it would mean for her life.

"I knew this was a really big deal and that nothing in my life would be the same if I chose to believe this and follow Jesus," said Smith.

Fast forward a few years, and now, Smith remains a follower of Christ and a frequenter of University Park, sharing the same Truth with students that changed her life when she was once one of them.

"Part of our role, as campus ministers, is to help them [students] see the interconnection between their faith and God's heart on these matters, and how they can make a difference as citizens of the Kingdom of God," said Smith.

"It's just been so cool to see the student's desire to do that, to be bold and share their faith with others. To desire to sacrifice their quote-on-quote free time [for] serving and blessing others." ■

What we are aiming for: A church who knows its neighbors and their neighbors who know them

When Buff McNickle looks back over the past few years of ministry in Pennsylvania and South Jersey, he thinks of Pastor Brad Wingler and his “Hometown Mission Trip” approach.

“It was amazing and yet simple,” said McNickle, BRN director of compassion ministries, sharing how Edinboro Community Church is a great example of what the BRN is eager to see its churches to do more of. The church created a short-term mission trip to their own community.

He also thinks of Restored Church and Pastor Tim Walker who were willing to be a meal dropoff point last

year for BRN churches. The meals were provided for churches to give to communities through a relationship Disaster Relief Director Kenton Hunt had made through his connections in Pennsylvania. This effort sparked a vision in Walker’s church, beginning with a couple setting up a community garden to now a mobile food pantry that serves hundreds of families every month.

McNickle remembers SOAR Church Pastor Tom Dawson and his efforts to work with local officials and help Cape May County with so many different things—things like setting up COVID vaccine locations, where he helped lead the charge in Cape May County.

Dawson also led his church to hand out food and personal protective equipment supplies.

“He is constantly bringing people from all walks of life together in their communities,” shared McNickle, “All of it is possible by seeing a need and meeting it.”

He also thinks of Gerald Waters from Proclamation Community Church who shared free backpacks, school supplies and Bibles at George Washington High School in the Bustleton section of Philadelphia. The church also provided teachers with supplies, like reams of paper, masks and first aid kits, for the classrooms.

What is noteworthy about this





school is that according to its website, George Washington High School describes itself as a “home to students from over 70 countries who speak 28 different languages nestled in a neighborhood that now boasts the highest foreign-born population in Philadelphia.”

Waters said, “Our participation in this event helped us to establish another link in the chain that will seam our church into the fabric of the community for the sake of Christ.”

McNickle is quick to admit that the limitations brought by the pandemic caused his greatest challenge to be the relational connections that are paramount to him and the success of compassion ministry.

“We have been able to adapt and utilize new and creative ways to communicate and collaborate together but there is something powerful that can only happen when we are physically together,” he shared.

But he also feels his greatest achievement has been the knowledge and awareness he has obtained over this past year.

“We are blessed in the BRN to have some creative, out of the box, visionary leaders. It is both seen and felt in their collective ministries. I feel like we are just beginning to see what could happen when we work together, dream

big and work hard to plant the Gospel all over Pennsylvania and South Jersey,” he said.

McNickle points to the #LovePASJ initiative as “the spark to help us see incredible Kingdom movement over the next few years.”

“I think we are successful when we can go into any city, township, or neighborhood in our region and make the simple but significant discovery of who lives there and what their specific needs are,” he said, noting when churches continually reach out, “the people of that city, township, or neighborhood know the people who identify as the church and are the ones who feel as if God has sent them there to be His hands, His feet, and His heart in that community.”

In his ministry to BRN churches, McNickle also has learned of many who know those in their communities, love them passionately, and serve them selflessly.

“This is what we are aiming for. A church who knows its neighbors and their neighbors who know them.”

With the many available tools provided by the #LovePASJ initiative, such as surveys, conversation starters, Bible studies and more, McNickle says he looks forward to seeing and hearing about “all God is gonna do when our BRN churches leave their buildings and

hit the streets to intentionally get to know their community and neighbors.”

He added, “The needs that will be discovered, the lives that will be changed, and the hope that will be seen will be contagious.”

He’s already witnessed God’s faithfulness—even in a pandemic.

“I have seen God use these past months to be a clarifying call to many. He has allowed many of us to refocus, adjust, and adapt to what He is doing.

“It is amazing to learn and see how God is using many of our leaders to build relationships with key people in our communities through the willingness of the church to look outside the walls of the church and see the needs of the community. They have stepped up and stepped out in so many different ways that it is inspiring to watch.

“I feel like our role as the BRN and specifically Compassion Ministry is to come alongside these men and women and help them do “whatever it takes” to reach our communities for Christ. I am seeing men and women who are passionate about this approach and they are living daily with that mindset... whatever it takes. I want to find out who they are and help them in this pursuit!

Learn more about #LovePASJ at www.lovepasj.com. ■

Left and inset above: This past summer, a mission team from The Lakes Church from Lakeland, Florida, helped lead a joint VBS ministry with Grace Falls Church in Absecon, N.J., and Southside Baptist Church in Lumberton, N.J. **Above:** Gerald Waters and members from Proclamation Community Church share school supplies with their local high school.



SOARing in the Community

Tom Dawson, pastor of SOAR Church in Woodbine, N.J., has led his church to impact his Cape May community through compassion ministries and partnerships with schools, police departments, colleges, the local prosecutor's office, and other agencies.

50 STORIES



PODCAST

By Macala Leighey

What once started as a mere vision, provoking the mind of a tuned-out grad student, has come to life as a thriving, community-centered church in Cape May County, N.J.

"I was having a sense of calling on my life that God would call me to pastor," recounted Rev. Tom Dawson, pastor of SOAR Church in Woodbine.

"I'm kind of like the plan ahead type person. So in that sense of calling, I was working on my master's degree, and I was in class one day, not paying attention to the professor, but God was giving me a vision for SOAR."

Since that initial vision, SOAR – an acronym for "Soldiers Ordered After Righteousness" – has become a reality and the heartbeat of Dawson's church.

"My concept, or vision, behind that [SOAR] was to win people for Jesus Christ, teach them how to be soldiers, and to walk after righteousness. So, that's kind of our vision – take people, win them for Jesus Christ, and then disciple them."

Prior to becoming SOAR, the church was formerly known as First Baptist Church of Woodbine but at around year 10, the church had hit a wall.

"We were growing okay. We were one of the fastest growing churches in the county at that time, but I felt like everything was slowing down," Dawson explained. "And I was like, 'Okay, Lord, where do we go from here?' I mean, I knew we had a vision [and] I believe God gives you pieces of the vision at a time. So, it's like, 'Okay, what's our next step – what's the next move?'"

It turns out, the next move was outreach and a name change.

"I decided, which is biblical, to shift to focus in on outreach and outside in the community," shared Dawson.

With this shift, the church launched under the new name SOAR Church and started to develop creative ministry teams.

"I developed three creative teams and each team had seven people on there. I got just people in the congregation, not everybody was in leadership. So, I said, 'Each team come up with creative ways on how we're going to reach the community,'" said Dawson.

Dawson's congregation left him in awe,

with each team contributing ten different creative outreach ideas.

"That's how we got started reaching a community. It is amazing how some of them people just sitting in the pew – never said anything Sunday after Sunday – came up with some of the most impactful and creative ideas on how to reach the community."

Dawson continued: "I want to encourage every pastor, there are people sitting there – just because they quiet you overlook [them] a lot of the time – that [have] some creative stuff in them that can help you really revitalize your church."

One of the ministry areas that came out of the creative teams was autism support, as some of the SOAR Church families have children with autism.

"One of the quietest people on that team, in our church, came up with an autism walk. So, every year we do an autism walk – we

church also partners with police departments, colleges, the local prosecutor's office, and other agencies.

"I've learned that you need to collaborate with other agencies and it will open up doors," said Dawson.

He continued: "My advice to all pastors is connect with your community. If your community does not know that you exist, that's a problem. If your community don't know your pastor's name, that's a problem."

By being known within the community, Dawson and SOAR Church have been able to aid the area during troubling, tense times.

"One of the biggest things that we got involved with [was] when George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis...protests were going on all over the place. In our community, there was a protest out in the street, it was going on all day."

After being contacted by the Prosecutor's Office late at night, Dawson and one of his associate ministers went down to the protests to help bring peace.

"I kind of got in the street with them and was talking and it was a long time, but they knew who I was because of all of the outreach," said Dawson. "The protesters listened to us and not the police. Why? Because we have relationships with family members and they saw all the outreach we were doing in the community. That protest ended peacefully with prayer in the street with law enforcement and protesters locked up [in prayer]."



Pastor Tom Dawson, center, shares a donation from his church to the Wildwood School District. Photo by SOAR Church

raise money for autism, and it's given to those specialty classes. A lot of schools' budgets are cut, and they really don't have the resources and stuff to help engage those kids," he said.

In the last eight years, SOAR Church has raised and given more than \$40,000 to schools with autistic programs. The annual walk now benefits three to four local schools every year.

The autism walk "opened other doors for us to do other stuff within our schools throughout the county," explained Dawson.

Recently, the church gave away more than 900 backpacks across the county. The church is also preparing for a winter coat drive, which will provide students with winter apparel.

Along with serving local schools, SOAR

A powerful display of prayer and peace that was later that week included in President Trump's news briefing.

"I don't know how...but he put it in. It was the White House weekly update and they were showing what was going on around the country. That protest was on that video saying, 'This is how you end a protest.'"

Through several community outreach events, ministries, and, now, another church location, SOAR Church has watched God open door after door to build their community and His Kingdom.

"I've seen God just keep providing and keep the doors open. So, if God is still providing like that, then why should we stop doing what we're doing?" ■

Disaster Relief - 'ready' to respond

When the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our lives, the BRN leadership team had to take some drastic measures to ensure their viability and their ability to support our 330+ churches. Right away, the BRN initiated a spending and travel freeze, furloughed some employees, and reduced their expenditures to 40% of what they would normally spend.

But they desperately still wanted to support the BRN churches, so with less staff and less funds, they prayed for God to provide creative ways to continue effective ministry.

And boy, did He! To the tune of \$1,320,720 in products and resources!

The BRN's disaster relief team, headed by Kenton Hunt, worked tirelessly with government agencies and private industries to accumulate and share much needed resources that churches could use to reach their communities.

Through those efforts, the BRN acquired and distributed over 50,000 masks and 55,000 pairs of latex gloves, valuing around \$109,000. That doesn't include over 500 masks made by church members in Pennsylvania and South Jersey!

The BRN also acquired and distributed over \$750,000 worth of food rations and kits that have been shared with neighborhoods all over the two-state region. That is in addition to partnerships that the BRN helped facilitate between churches and SYSCO Food Systems, who provided food, at low cost, for those willing to distribute within their communities.

The BRN also acquired 8,000 gallons of concentrated surface sanitizer, which ultimately translates to 512,000 gallons of product worth \$400,000!

Altogether, through BRN Disaster Relief's efforts, nearly \$1,250,000 of products have helped our churches reach into their communities in order to share the Gospel!

BRN's Disaster and Crisis Relief teams are no stranger to ministry during disasters and crises. By definition, a disaster is anything that causes human suffering or creates human needs that the disaster survivors cannot alleviate themselves.

Hunt's heart is for churches to be passionate about the scriptural mandate to be involved in meeting these urgent needs of people in their communities.

He points to Titus 3:14, which says, "Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful."

"Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) is one of the top disaster response organizations in the world because we are able to quickly deploy well trained and experienced volunteers to the point of need and provide

logistical support for them," he says.

DISASTER RELIEF MISSION

He explains that the mission of Disaster Relief is to be a Christ-centered partnership of national, state, and associational ministries serving through the local church to bring help, hope, and healing to individuals and communities affected by disasters.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief is known for its mass feeding capacity, but we have added other ministries, too, Hunt said, pointing to flood recovery, chainsaw recovery, fire recovery, temporary roofing, and more.

"In addition, we have impressive capabilities in chaplaincy, shower, laundry, child care, communications, power generation, water purification and more," he said.

"Following Jesus' example, we bring real help at just the right time."

In recent months, Disaster Relief teams have helped with disaster recovery in Bucks County, Cameron, W. Va., Southwest Philadelphia to Saylorburg up in Monroe County, among other places.

READY CHURCH

Hunt referred to the saying in the disaster relief world that "all disasters are local and for the local church," which means churches need to be ready to respond locally, he said. "I want to be able to help churches prepare for that local response and whether you're wearing a gold shirt and all that or not."

Hunt's passion is to help churches be "ready" to help churches whenever a need occurs. A Ready Church is a church that commits to respond to crisis needs in its community with an equal commitment to sharing the Gospel. The commitment is the critical ingredient—not resources, buildings, or talents.

"So many times when that time comes, churches are afraid. They're worried about being too small, being too old or not having enough money, or not having enough know-how. And I'm telling you that for people who walk by faith and not by sight, those are all the wrong responses. So step out there and do that thing because you will learn it by doing it."

Hunt noted the other big part of this picture is that his teams have spent years training volunteers from our churches, to do this ministry, and so churches new to the work will have some backup.

"If jobs are too big for you and your church, call me because I can put some teams together that come be your church and your community, represent your church and help proclaim Christ to people who are in need," he urged.

And if it's too big for me, we've got literally tens of thousands of volunteers from other states who would love to come. We already know that that works. So that's my message with Ready Church."

A church must plan how it will respond to disasters, large and small, within the church and in the community. Plans need to be well developed and discussed by the church leaders and shared with the members. Families and individuals within the congregation need to participate in training to understand their role. A community action plan also needs to be developed for the churches response within the greater community of partners.

DISASTER RELIEF UNITS AVAILABLE

The Baptist Resource Network Disaster Relief team has a new Command and Communications Unit, thanks to donations from our partners at the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

This trailer has dedicated space for ham radio operations and for media personnel to work during their coverages of the local disaster. The space may also be used for volunteer teams check-in, incident management team operations meetings, and other uses. There is also a small bunk room for overnight stays. The unit is completely self-sufficient with a generator, air conditioning and heat.

Disaster Relief also is nearly finished building a Rapid Response Kitchen, which is fully self-contained with a per day feeding capacity of 1,000-1,200. The Rapid Response Kitchen serves as a training tool for SBDR volunteers and will also be available to BRN churches for community ministry and events.

Also, Disaster Relief has two Western Shelters, high quality shelters and support systems for emergency responses and other uses.

Want to learn more? Contact the BRN's Help Desk at helpdesk@brnunited.org. ■



Western Shelter

THE HOME DEPOT AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION - BUILDING ON THE POWER OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIP



The Home Depot has a dedicated field team ready to meet the specialized needs of the Southern Baptist Convention and affiliates across the U.S. Our extensive retail network connects churches and affiliates to an unbeatable supply chain—making purchasing faster, easier and more affordable.

CHURCH BENEFITS – After Completed Registration Process

- Volume Pricing Program (VPP) Planned purchases totaling \$1000 or more proceed to Pro Desk. Provide the SBC # 615-244-2355 and request VPP Pricing.
- Bulk Buy Discounts - Buy more Save more
- Direct Ship Availability
- 20% off paint, stains, and primers – Provide SBC Pro Xtra # 615-244-2355 at Point of Sale for instant discount
- Program designed for Church related projects only
- Program available nationwide
- Questions or Project Assistance: Contact your Pro Account Representative

HOW TO REGISTER

- Contact Pro Xtra: 1-866-333-3551 Option #1
- Provide the following information to properly identify the Pro Xtra Account:
 - Pro Xtra Email: SBDR_Logistics@NAMB.Net
 - Pro Xtra Acct Phone # 615-244-2355
 - Pro Xtra Acct Name: Southern Baptist Convention
- Provide all current forms of payment used at The Home Depot for Church Related Projects. This process will include providing billing address associated w/ form of payment.
- Contact your Pro Account Representative with any issues or concerns.
 - Michael Daniel 817-825-0279
 - michael_r_daniel@homedepot.com



Pro Account Representative: Michael Daniel (817) 825-0279 or
Michael_R_Daniel@HomeDepot.com



More than a tree removal team



By Macala Leighey

Disasters happen spontaneously and are very seldom planned, Kenton Hunt, state disaster relief director for the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey quipped as he thought about how to describe the incredible work accomplished through disaster relief ministry. “When disasters happen, we’re an organization – Southern Baptist Disaster Relief – that is there at the beginning. A disaster happens today, we’re going to try and be there tomorrow. You don’t necessarily go into a response knowing all the details, so that involves walking by faith.”

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A concept that is now familiar to Hunt, as he has been walking by faith and working in disaster relief for most of his life.

"I'm kind of the old guy now in the BRN. I've been here now – I should say my wife and I have been here – for 32 years, as of January the first."

Hunt continued: "I guess I got into disaster relief by working in a church and a town where there was an actual disaster. So, way back in 1996 – right after the wheel was invented – there was some major flooding. People lost their lives, and our church parking lot became a site where a mass feeding kitchen – where one of our mass feeding kitchens – was set up. That was really the beginning of my interest in it, which grew deeper really with every step."

Jeff Slagle, a BRN disaster relief "Blue Hat," shared that his involvement in disaster relief did not come until later in his life.

"I didn't start, or actually, I didn't get my training until after 9/11. I'm not even sure who introduced me to disaster relief, because I hadn't heard of it before 9/11," said Slagle.

"My first real disaster relief call was Hurricane Katrina, in Biloxi, Mississippi. Seeing the work that was done there and

the people that were being reached with the Gospel... it just convinced me right then and there that this is what I want to do."

Since his first disaster relief call, Slagle has worked up the ranks in disaster relief and has become a "Blue Hat" leader.

"A 'Blue Hat' would be considered like a unit leader. It's a hierarchy – it's an extra level of training and responsibility that I've come to love and enjoy doing," said Slagle. "I've always told people if I was independently wealthy, I would do disaster relief full-time."

Throughout their years of working in disaster relief, both Hunt and Slagle have had their fair share of traveling from state to state and having Gospel-sharing encounters.

"I'm sure Kenton could probably sing that Johnny Cash song, 'I've Been Everywhere,... I haven't been to as many places as he has," said Slagle. "I've been to Biloxi, down south after Katrina, the Carolinas I've been to several times, New Jersey, and a lot in Pennsylvania. I have not yet had the opportunity to go overseas – to Haiti or Puerto Rico – but that's still an option for me. I've got my passport. I'm ready to go... [if] things line up, [and] God says, 'Go,' I'm gonna jump on a plane."

Slagle also shared no matter how many places he travels to, or where he goes, he experiences a similar need among disaster victims.

"I've learned that the different places that I go, the hurt is the same. The loss, the confusion, and the frustration from the victims is universal."

He continued: "I think it's one of the most powerful ministries that Southern Baptists can do, because you meet people where their need is the greatest. You give them food, you make their house secure, you help them clean up, and then you share Jesus – what better ministry can we have?"

Hunt added to Slagle's thought, by stating, "Certainly when a person receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that is a transforming moment in their lives. Disaster relief is one of those ministries that really kicks the door open for sharing the Gospel with people."

To ensure that these physical and spiritual needs are met, the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief team, along with other state and national organizations, recruit a multitude of volunteers.

"Churches can compile the skills that they have in their congregations to help go rebuild a home, and that's tremendous," said Hunt.

"Everywhere we go, we're working with other volunteers wearing the same gold color that we're wearing, who have come up the way God's led them as a volunteer in their state. We can come together and work together because we're trained the same, and we have the same passion for Christ and the Gospel... our motives don't get mixed up."

In addition to disaster relief work, a fairly new organization, Send Relief, that the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board have created, is an added resource for disaster relief organizations.

However, no matter where the volunteers or workers come from, each job still produces the same exciting and fulfilling notion, Hunt said.

"We get excited when we see the whole thing go full circle. You know, go from destruction to now the family walking into their house and restarting – that's very fulfilling," he added.

"It's also sort of a metaphor, isn't it, for what Christ does in our lives, gives us a new start." ■





Meet Southern SBC Baptists

For almost 175 years, Southern Baptists have sought to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere. The Southern Baptist Convention was formed with a Gospel vision. Its founding charter identifies its singular focus: . . . for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the Gospel.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has grown to be a network of more than fifty thousand cooperating churches and church-type missions banded together to make an impact for God's Kingdom. Though as many as two hundred could be counted as "mega-churches," the vast majority of Southern Baptist churches run less than two hundred in weekly worship. No two Southern Baptist churches are alike; but there are certain commonalities that bind Southern Baptists together, regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, size, or locale.



Who Southern Baptists Are

Southern Baptists are as varied and diverse as the cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural communities where they live. Each Southern Baptist church is autonomous and unique; only when viewed together can one grasp the diversity that is the Southern Baptist Convention.

But to know Southern Baptists means to understand that the center of who and what we are is the Person and Work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Southern Baptists are people who have been redeemed through Christ from sin—the spiritual brokenness that causes us to resist God's ways and fall short of His glory.

Southern Baptists hold high the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the unifying center around which everything else is built and from which all ministry flows. We use the phrase regenerate church membership to emphasize that the starting point for everything related to a Southern Baptist church is each individual's personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives.

Southern Baptists believe that each human being is a sinner by birth and by choice, that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We believe that Jesus, "in His substitutionary death on the cross," made "provision for the redemption of men from sin" and "effected the reconciliation between God and man." And we believe that "There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord."

While the Bible does not teach that the waters of baptism have any saving power (salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, Ephesians 2:8), in keeping with the biblical emphasis reflected in our heritage and name, and as "a people of the Book" (the Bible), Southern Baptists believe that all true believers will long to be identified fully with their Lord and Savior through the act of believer's baptism.

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19). It is an act of obedience symbolizing (1) the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; (2) the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus; and (3) the believer's trust that his or her mortal flesh

Southern Baptist churches represent a broad range in . . .

- **size**—very small to very large
- **culture**—Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and every subculture within each region
- **age**—youthful church plants to historical organizations
- **ministry setting**—inner-city, storefront, suburban, small town, open countryside, cowboy, motorcycle
- **race and ethnicity**—Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Native American, Russian, and numerous other ethnic groups
- **language**—The Lord is worshipped in more than one hundred languages each Sunday in Southern Baptist churches scattered across the United States
- **worship style**—traditional, contemporary, and everything in between
- **theological perspective**—all within the framework of historic biblical orthodoxy.

shall be clothed with immortality in the final resurrection of the dead.

It is by the Gospel, because of the Gospel, and for the Gospel that the Southern Baptist Convention exists; so it only makes sense that everything about Southern Baptists is tied directly to the Gospel. ■

Source: SBC Executive Committee

Southern Baptist Ministry Entities—Assisting Churches in the Advance of the Gospel

The Convention assigns and conducts its work through eleven ministry entities—two mission boards, six seminaries, an ethics and religious liberty commission, a publishing and retail ministry, and a financial resources services ministry—and its Executive Committee. It also works closely with an auxiliary organization called Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU). While some of these ministries are self-sustaining, the majority are supported by the churches with financial contributions through the Cooperative Program. Of contributions received by the SBC, 73.2 percent funds missions and church planting and another 22 percent provides ministerial training through our seminaries. Each of these ministry entities exists for the express purpose of assisting churches in the ultimate goal of advancing the Gospel.

MISSIONS, EVANGELISM, AND CHURCH PLANTING

are facilitated through the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board.

MINISTERIAL PREPARATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

are provided through Gateway, Midwestern, New Orleans, Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY MINISTRIES

are assigned to the Ethics and

Religious Liberty Commission.

CHURCH ENRICHMENT MINISTRY AND LITERATURE PUBLICATION

are assignments of Lifeway Christian Resources, which receives no Cooperative Program funding.

GuideStone Financial Resources, which also receives no Cooperative Program funding, manages **MINISTERIAL RETIREMENT AND INSURANCE NEEDS AND ADMINISTERS MISSION:DIGNITY**, an assistance ministry for retired ministers and their families.

The SBC Executive Committee is charged to conduct the **WORK OF THE CONVENTION BETWEEN ANNUAL MEETINGS** in all areas not otherwise assigned to one of the ministry entities.

The Woman’s Missionary Union is the sole auxiliary of the SBC. It cooperates very closely with the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board to **ENCOURAGE CHURCHES TO GIVE GENEROUSLY TO SUPPORT MISSIONS** with contributions through the Cooperative Program and two annual missions offerings.



SBC messengers endorse ‘Vision 2025’

During the 2021 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, messengers voted to adopt Vision 2025, six specific strategies to reach the world with the Gospel.

“Vision 2025 is not simply a slogan or rallying cry. It’s a path forward to help us reimagine a new future together of reaching the world for Jesus Christ – every person, every town, every city, every state, and every nation,” said Ronnie Floyd, President and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

“There are 331 million Americans and 7.9 billion people in the world. Eternal lostness exists and eternal hell is waiting, so we must do all we can to reach people so their names can be written in the Lamb’s book of life. ... We believe Vision 2025 is this vision.”

A complete list of the strategic actions of Vision 2025 as adopted by messengers, is listed below:



VISION 2025

Strategic Action 1
 Increase our total number of full-time, fully funded missionaries by a net gain of 500, giving us 4,200 full-time, fully funded missionaries through the IMB.

VISION 2025

Strategic Action 2
 Add 5,000 new churches to our Southern Baptist family, giving us more than 50,000 churches.

VISION 2025

Strategic Action 3
 Increase our total number of workers in the field through a new emphasis on “calling out the called,” and then preparing those who are called out by the Lord.

VISION 2025

Strategic Action 4
 Turn around the ongoing decline in the SBC in reaching, baptizing and discipling those under the age of 18.

VISION 2025

Strategic Action 5
 Increase our annual giving in successive years to reach and surpass \$500 million given through the Cooperative Program to achieve these Great Commission goals.

VISION 2025

Strategic Action 6
 Prayerfully endeavor to eliminate all incidents of sexual abuse and racial discrimination among our churches.

WHAT DO SOUTHERN BAPTISTS BELIEVE?

Baptist Faith & Message

The purpose of this statement of faith and message is to set forth certain teachings which Southern Baptists believe.



I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. GOD

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we

owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. GOD THE FATHER

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. GOD THE SON

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He

“Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches. We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.”

Committee Report on the submission of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000

honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. MAN

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the

command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. SALVATION

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25;

6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VII. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. THE LORD'S DAY

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. LAST THINGS

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead

will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. EDUCATION

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. STEWARDSHIP

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. COOPERATION

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly

and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. PEACE AND WAR

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the

right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. THE FAMILY

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7. ■

Various translations of the Baptist Faith & Message are available at <https://bfm.sbc.net>.

ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE

A window into your world

Know well the condition of your flock, and pay attention to your herds (Proverbs 27:23, CSB).

The Annual Church Profile (ACP) is an important tool for your church, the state and national convention. It's like a family portrait or photo album -- a yearly snapshot of how God is working in each of our BRN churches.

WHAT THE REPORT CAPTURES:

The annual report captures statistical information, such as the number of baptisms, attendance in worship and small groups, cooperative giving and questions specific to our region.

WHAT THE DATA DOES:

The data collected is used in many ways to measure the health of our congregations, and the effectiveness of the BRN and SBC ministries. The BRN seriously considers each church's report and adjusts ministry and strategies to better assist our churches. The report also allows us to report the number of Southern Baptists in our region, showcasing our cooperation and

effectiveness to a watching world. The data additionally helps churches set their goals and benchmarks when planning their yearly calendars.

Per the SBC Constitution, the SBC Credentials Committee uses your reported Undesignated Receipts and Cooperative Program giving each year to determine your church's messenger eligibility. Your ACP reported membership also determines the number of messengers your church can send to the BRN Annual Business Session. Filling the ACP out keeps the church in good standing with the BRN.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR REPORT:

Churches submit their reports annually (at the end of their calendar or fiscal budget year) either to www.sbcworkspace.com or to www.brnuned.org/acp. Please contact the BRN at helpdesk@brnuned.org for assistance. ■



THANK YOU,
Pennsylvania and South Jersey Baptists,
for praying, giving and going. Because of your generous
partnership and your giving through the Cooperative Program
and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering[®], we celebrate
these highlights from around the world.

769,494
heard gospel
witness

18,380
new churches
planted

144,322
new believers

together

**WE DO
SO MUCH
MORE**

86,587
baptisms

247
new people groups
and places
engaged

422
new
missionaries*

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIVING IN PE

ACCELERATING KINGDOM MOVEMENT THROUGH MISSIONAL GIVING

YOU ARE HERE



YOU give a tithe and offering to your church



YOUR CHURCH or a financial gift to the through the Baptist Re shares the undesignated and intern

70%

THE NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD (NAMB)* & THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD (IMB):

Missionaries in North America and all over the World

ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION (ERLC):

Religious Liberty and Public Policy Representation

SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARIES:

Gateway, Midwestern, New Orleans, Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern

*NAMB graciously provides funds back to the BRN to assist with church planting, evangelism, and hunger grants.



SBC

The SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION also receives a percentage (30%) of the Cooperative Program gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention to fund national and international missions, theological education, and religious liberty. An additional 100% of gifts from individuals and churches given through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions goes directly to missionaries on the field.



PENNSYLVANIA/SOUTH JERSEY & BEYOND

contributes a percentage of the Cooperative Program Resource Network, who funds locally, nationally and internationally.



The BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK

retains a percentage (70%) of the Cooperative Program for ministries in Pennsylvania/South Jersey. These ministries include:

- Church Servicing
- Church Resourcing
- Coaching/Training
- Disaster & Crisis Relief
- Multiplying Church Centers
- Next Generation Ministry
- Partnerships
- Pastor/Staff Benefits
- And more!



30%

Your giving to PA/SJ ministries is critical. The Baptist Resource Network (BRN), one of the largest non-South Southern Baptist state conventions based on population, seeks to reach an estimated 14 million people in PA/SJ, who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In fact, EVERY 4 MINUTES, one Pennsylvanian or South Jerseyan DIES without Christ!**

DON'T STOP

**This statistic is based on a conservative national average of 85% lostness and current vital statistics from the PA and NJ Departments of Health.

EVERY CITY, EVERY STATE, AND EVERY NATION.

Baptist Resource Network Giving Opportunities

The Baptist Resource Network is so thankful for your support! Below is a brief explanation of the Cooperative Program, which is the main ministry and missions funding mechanism for the BRN and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Also, we have listed several other giving options that support ministries in Pennsylvania/South Jersey, the nation and the world.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM (CP): Giving to the Cooperative Program is what makes Southern Baptists unique as this directly funds ministry/missions efforts locally, nationally, and internationally. In addition to the BRN and the International and North American Mission Boards, CP supports the six Southern Baptist seminaries and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. The more your church can give to CP the more ministry we can accomplish in Pennsylvania/South Jersey, the nation, and the world!

#LOVEPASJ STATE MISSIONS OFFERING: This state missions offering, inspired by early missions leaders Ed and Mary Price, is an annual observance in BRN-affiliated churches to pray for and give to support local ministries uniquely connected to PA/SJ Baptists and not funded through regular giving streams. www.lovepasj.com

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING® (AAEO) FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS: 100% of AAEO gifts given are used efficiently to support and equip missionaries in the United States and Canada. The annual offering was named for Annie Armstrong, a lay Southern Baptist denominational leader instrumental in the founding of the Woman's Missionary Union and gathering early offerings to support missions around the world. www.AnnieArmstrong.com

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING (LMCO) FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS: The Lottie Moon offering is similar to the AAEO but it funds and empowers international missionaries to be paid a salary as a missionary and have all the resources that they need to be successful on the field. 100% of this offering goes directly to the missionaries on the field or allows for additional missionaries to be sent out across the nation. imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering.

GLOBAL HUNGER RELIEF FUND: The Southern Baptist Global Hunger Relief (GHR) fund seeks to combat hunger in North America and around the world in a wide variety of ways, from participating in disaster relief to addressing chronic hunger, from eliminating urban food deserts to helping women rescued from sex trafficking—and much more. globalhungerrelief.com

www.brnunited.org/give ~ Thank you!

BRN CHURCH PLANTING FUND: This is a fund the BRN has developed to help build strategic monies in order to be successful in church planting across Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey. These funds are used for various purposes, such as assisting with development of planting strategy, funding of Multiplying Church Centers, church planter assistance, and church plant assistance. brnunited.org/give

BRN DISASTER RELIEF (DR): The BRN has a Disaster Relief director and over 700 trained volunteers in Pennsylvania and South Jersey. Funds contributed to DR allow our many volunteers to deploy to directly engage in disaster relief efforts, such as flood clean-up, rapid response mass feeding, and bringing the gospel to the lives of those affected by devastation. brnunited.org/dr

#LOVEPASJ LEGACY FUNDS: BRN partner, Ministry Trust, manages and produces funds for churches, ministries, and institutions and helps generous givers contribute to their Spirit-led passions. Generously given through estate planning, charitable gifts arrangements and more, these funds will build an endowment that will support church servicing and church planting all across PA/SJ. www.lovepasj.com



Uniting together to love our neighbors in Pennsylvania/South Jersey through the Annual State Missions Offering for the Baptist Resource Network of PA/SJ

Leave a Legacy

*through BRN
endowment gifts*

There are nearly 14 million people in our network's geographic region who do not have a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Every 4 minutes and 18 seconds someone in our geographic region dies without knowing Christ and will be separated from Him eternally.

The task is big, and we cannot do it alone. We are asking those around us to help us eradicate the darkness by shining the light of Jesus Christ and sharing the hope only found in Him.

Through a ministry partnership with Ministry Trust LLC, the Baptist Resource Network now has the opportunity to build endowments to further the efforts of the BRN in the areas of #LovePASJ and church planting for years to come. Let's look at how all of this works:

HOW DID THE FUND BEGIN?

This fund began in 2021 with the assistance of Ministry Trust (theministryfund.org) and through the generous giving of many.

- Tax saving strategies
- Personal income projections
- Estate stewardship consultation
- Giving Opportunities: Non-Cash Gifts, Planned Gifts, & Estate Gifts

WHAT DOES OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH MINISTRY TRUST INCLUDE?

- One-on-one private consultation
- Customized gift projections

WHAT GIVING OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR ME?

1-NON-CASH GIFTS:

You may give non-cash gifts, defined as an asset gift of value, which allows you to have significant tax benefits

Will you join us in this God-sized task?

while assisting the mission of the BRN, such as:

- Stocks
- IRA's and Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)
- Timber
- Real Estate & other Property

2-PLANNED GIVING:

Or you can include the BRN in your Planned Giving, which is defined as a legacy gift to the BRN, or recurring gift, made during an individual's lifetime or as part of their financial plan upon their death. These include:

- Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT)
- Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)
- Donor Advised Fund (DAF)

3-ESTATE PLANNING:

In addition, you may choose to focus on Estate Planning, which is

the planning and arranging during a person's life for the management and dispersal of an individual's assets to assist with funding BRN initiatives upon death or incapacitation. These include:

- Wills or Revocable Living Trust (RLT)
- Retirement Account
- Life Insurance

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

1. Contact the BRN, 800.451.6599, to inquire further about our endowed funds or about the opportunity to give.
2. Contact Ministry Trust, 470.851.2366, to learn how Non-Cash Gifts, Planned Giving, and Estate Planning can be an opportunity for you, or if you are ready to give.



The **#LOVEPASJ LEGACY FUND** allows for the creation, funding, and support of ministries like the following:

- Church Health,
- Church Revitalization,
- Church Grants,
- Collegiate Ministry,
- Compassion Ministry,
- Disaster Relief,
- Evangelism,
- Next Generation Ministry, and
- Other Ministries

The **BRN CHURCH PLANTING FUND*** allows for an investment in church planting, such as:

- Church Planting Internships,
- Church Planting Residencies,
- Church Planting Start-up Funds,
- Partnership with an existing BRN church to fund a new plant,
- Church planting training, and
- Much more

**Much of the successful planting that occurs in Pennsylvania or New Jersey is through indigenous persons originally from these regions.*

BRN Goals:

GOAL 1: \$10 million

reached in endowments for the #LovePASJ Fund.
We are 25% towards this goal!

GOAL 2: \$5 million

reached in endowments for the BRN Church Planting Fund.
We are 1% towards this goal.

The Value of Partnerships

Check out the tangible benefits of partnering/affiliating with the Baptist Resource Network, one of the largest evangelical organizations in PA and NJ!

BRN BENEFITS

- › Church Servicing and Resourcing
 - Including the Help Desk (helpdesk@brnunited.org, 800.451.6599)
- › Church Consulting
- › Church Health Evaluations (Assess, Assist, Activate, & Advance)
- › Church and Pastor Prayer & Encouragement
 - Pastor Prayer Line – 800.451.6599 x7
- › Conferences
 - Fall Conference - Accelerate
 - Spring Conference - Advance (evangelism/discipleship focused)
- › Trainings & Gatherings
 - Church Health
 - Communications & A/V
 - Compassion Ministry
 - Disaster Relief training and volunteer service opportunities
 - Multiplying Church Centers
 - Pastor Roundtables & Clusters
 - Racial Unity
 - Transitional Pastoring
 - Vacation Bible School, and more
- › Evangelism & Ministry Grants
- › Collegiate & Next Generation Ministry
- › Culture, Ethics, & Justice Coalition – Mission for Racial Unity
- › Church Planting financial & administrative coaching
- › GuideStone Financial Resources - Pastor/Staff matching benefits (Retirement & Life/Disability Insurance)*
- › Community Connector (Demographics to exegete and understand the church's community)
- › Networking amongst churches and pastors
- › Guest Speaking in churches (Sundays and other events)
- › Training Center & Mission House Usage
 - Harrisburg, PA – Volunteer Mission House, Guest House, Training Center, & BRN Offices
 - Pittsburgh, PA – Warren Mission House
- › Church Job Vacancy posting (BRN level and national level through Executive Committee)

SBC BENEFITS

- › International Mission Board (IMB)
 - Guest missionaries to visit your church
 - 1-8 week short-term missions options
 - Fully funding missionaries through Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon offerings
 - 2-3 year mid-term missions service
 - 3+ years long-term missionary service
 - Missionary Resources & Training
 - Church Resources & Training
- › North American Mission Board (NAMB) (funded through Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong offerings)
 - Church Planter funding for approved new works
 - Church Planter coaching & training
 - Church Plant start-up grants
 - Multiplication Pipeline Training System
- › SBC Seminaries
 - Approximate discount of 50% on tuition (based on master's level program study) Actual rates, fees, and discounts vary by seminary
 - Other discount rates are available for bachelor's and doctoral levels
 - Quality theological education
- › Executive Committee, SBC
 - Federal Tax Exemption: Use of the SBC's Group 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption, which is essentially the same as the church having its own exemption with the IRS
 - Voting privileges at the annual SBC Convention
- › GuideStone Financial Resources
 - GuideStone reduced retirement fees for SBC church employee retirement (No mutual fund management fees, only expense ratios that don't change based on the number participating in the plan)
 - .5%-1% management fee savings compared to similar programs. Savings on \$100,000 account is \$500-1,000 annually
 - *Matching benefits (Retirement & Life/Disability Ins.) provided by the BRN should the church qualify (as stated above and funded by both GuideStone and the BRN)
 - Health and Life Insurance
- › LifeWay Christian Resources
 - Resources, Bible Studies, Curriculum, Events, Camps, and more

OTHER BRN PARTNER BENEFITS

- › Alliance Defending Freedom Annual Membership – Discount on legal coverage and representation for religious freedoms
- › SBC State Convention Partnerships:
 - Georgia Baptists
 - North Carolina Baptists
 - South Carolina Baptists
 - Flint River Baptist Association (Georgia)
- › Mansion Hope – Collaborative work amongst churches to address structural and spiritual oppression in the Strawberry Mansion community of Philadelphia for the advancement the Gospel
- › Ministry Trust – Church estate & planned giving and long-term investment opportunities
- › Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company – Preferred ministry insurance coverage
- › RightNow Media – Free pastor subscription and approximately a 40% discount on a church-wide subscription
- › WatersEdge Services – Church loans, short-term investments, & church accounting services

How to Affiliate

Are you interested in affiliating with the 330-plus churches in the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey? Together, our bold commitment to the Great Commission and to each other will help expand God's Kingdom and impact our communities like never before! Partnership is not meant to be cumbersome, but we do ask for four vital areas of involvement:

AFFIRM SOUTHERN BAPTIST DOCTRINE:

Affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, the statement of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention. It summarizes key Southern Baptist thought in the areas of the Bible and its authority, the nature of God as expressed by the Trinity, the spiritual condition of man, God's plan of grace and salvation, the purpose of the local church, ordinances, evangelism, Christian education, interaction with society, religious liberty, and the family.

SUPPORT GOD'S WORK THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM:

Participate in the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified plan of giving through which cooperating Southern Baptist churches give a percentage of their undesignated receipts in support of their respective state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention missions and ministries.

FILL OUT THE ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE:

The Annual Church Profile is a process of collecting data regarding membership, baptisms, discipleship and more from PA/SJ Baptist churches.

AFFIRM THE SECURITY OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS:

Because we take the security of minors and vulnerable people seriously, the Baptist Resource Network now makes it a requirement that all affiliated churches affirm that they have protocols in place for the security of minors and vulnerable adults, as already required by state law. Those churches that do not affirm that they are in full compliance with applicable law and that they have protocols in place will be deemed as non-affiliated until such affirmation is provided.

brnuned.org/affiliation

PASSION LED US HERE



BAPTIST RESOURCE NETWORK OF PA/SJ

THANK YOU

to the following for making today possible:

**Best Printing USA, Norwalk, CT
BRN Executive Board
BRN Team Members
Conference Attendees
Conference Presenters
Conference Volunteers
James Taylor, Jetsquared
Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel
Sponsors & Vendors
Stray Production Services**

and finally, our BRN churches and partners!

Your generous support of the Cooperative Program makes this ministry possible and fuels evangelism and outreach in our local churches and all over the world! Thank you!

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 - With Friends of Churches Discount
- 5 DISCOUNTED LABOR RATE**

- 6 SECURITY PACKAGE**
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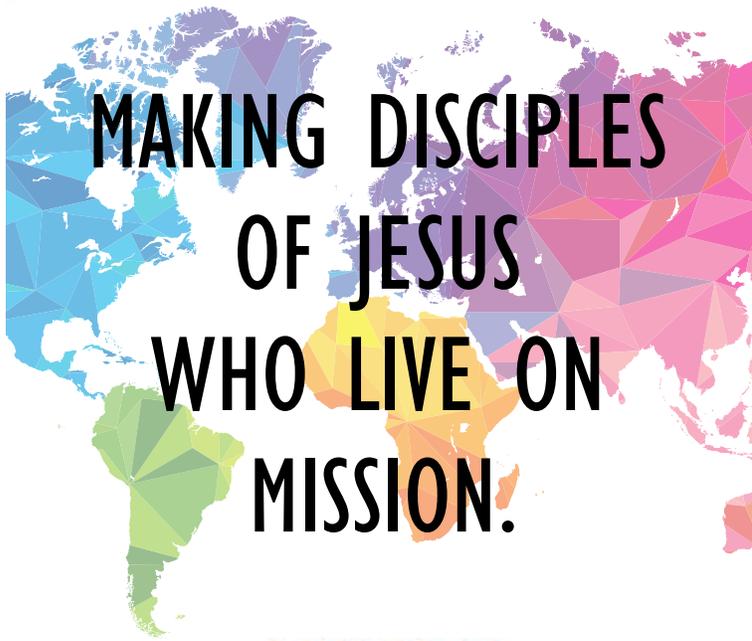
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Phyllis Bowers, Executive Director, The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation



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For more information on WMU, please contact Theresa Krieg,
President, PA/SJ WMU at TheresaBKrieg@gmail.com.

STAY CONNECTED!

BRN UNITED

Subscribe to the weekly e-newsletter of the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, which features news, events and resources of interest to Southern Baptists in our region. brnunited.org/news

#LOVEPASJ DEVOTIONAL

Sign up for this 30-day devotional, delivered five days a week for six weeks, which helps church leaders and members love their neighbors and seek to reach them for Christ. lovepasj.com

BRN HELP DESK

Have questions? Need a resource? Feel free to reach out to the Baptist Resource Network's Help Desk. helpdesk@brnunited.org or (800) 451-6599

Bridging the Gap Between Church and State

Join us as we work together to see a world where God is honored,
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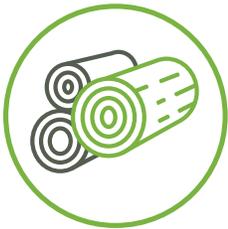
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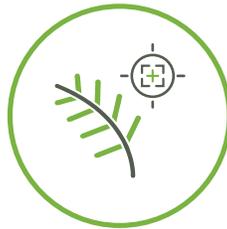
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MARCH 21, 2022

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