Associational Missions and Church Planting

Associational Missionary ministry is one of the most difficult ministries when done well. Relationships must be developed not only with the pastors, but also with the staff and key leaders of the church. Work in the association is coordinated according to the needs of the churches. The missionary is a key player in the Kingdom work. Times are tough, but your missionary is praying for you and is more than willing to go the second mile.

Coronavirus has changed the way that we are doing ministry in all areas. For example, with ESL, instead of meeting with our ESL students in person, we have Zoom ESL classes. One of the positives to this is that we have ESL students who live in other countries who are attending our ESL Zoom classes. Wow! That is a change we never saw coming. Some of these students live in countries where Bibles are illegal, and the Gospel is a dangerous topic of conversation. So, what an opportunity God has given us to be able to reach these students in a whole new way! This has become the theme with most of our ministries. Zoom, video conferencing and webinars are the new norm. While technology can sometimes be a problem within our society God is using it for His own good and glory during these days of the pandemic. Our hunger ministries have been in great demand as people have struggled to pay the bills and buy the very basics. We have had new sources of food to help support our hunger ministries during these difficult days. We have had more than enough as God has continued to provide for our every need. Our Deaf ministries are thriving and growing due to Covid-19, ironically. More and more Deaf are joining online Bible studies, discussion groups and worship times. So, while we are ready to see Coronavirus become a thing of the past, we praise God for the wonderful things He is doing right before our very eyes!

Though Alabama has been blessed with a growing heritage of church planting / replanting / gathering, (new non-SBC into our SBC family) there are still many communities and peoples who do not have a healthy Baptist church in their area.  New church planters come directly from our partnership with associations and local churches as God is calling out new workers.  In collaboration with all the partners and CP giving and our mission offerings we are able to invest in the process of selecting, preparing and sending out planters to their fields.  As they go, we have 20 plus new plants that we are also supporting through congregational and/or rental assistance each month in cooperation with local associations.   During this COVID 19 time we have had 10 plus new church planters step forward in our process toward planting in other locations, as well as 2 church plants moving out to start new church plants as a part of multiplication.  This summer we will begin to build a 1-1 coaching support system for all planters in order for them to be fully supported and effective in the work.  Partnership with a purpose is our intent as church planters, churches, associations and ALSBOM work to see new churches planted throughout all of Alabama and beyond.

I praise the Lord for the opportunity to serve Him as a State Missionary with the Alabama Baptists. In the past year the Lord has allowed me to visit most of our Hispanic Baptist Churches and fellowship with their pastors. As part of the vision for our churches networking together, we have created a website and a Facebook page with the name of IBHAlabama. The Facebook page has been a successful tool for ministering locally and internationally. Through it, we were able to promote our first annual couple’s retreat for pastors and wives that took place in September of last year. We were also able to spread the news about our first pastor’s conference that took place November of last year and our evangelism conference that took place in February of this year. The attendance for these events surpassed our expectations, and we are grateful to the Lord for the positive response we have had to the IBHAlabama network. Since the start of the Pandemic we have started videos of prayer times 3 times a day. The prayer initiative lasted from March through the end of May and once a day every night during the months of June and July. Also starting in June we hosted virtual events once a month with different emphasis. As far as church planting is concerned, we have started conversations with various associations about the steps to bring in Hispanic church planters. Among the list of Associations, we have had conversations with are: Mobile, Baldwin, Marshall, Morgan and Etowah. We have also had individual conversations with churches looking at sponsoring Hispanic works. Three of these churches are: Forest Lake Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, First Baptist Church Jacksonville, and First Baptist Church of Madison. Lastly, we are working on helping some of our existing Hispanic ministries to build relationships with their local associations and with ALSBOM. Our goal for next year is to help our churches grow in involvement with their local Associations and ALSBOM, continue to provide resources for the local churches via State wide events and local opportunities for theological training using the BTCP (Bible Training Center for Pastors) and BTCL (Bible Training Center for Leaders) and to see at least one new Hispanic work started.

Respectfully submitted,