



M I S S I S S I P P I
BAPTISTS

Church Planting Strategy

CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board
Church Planting Department

In the year 1900, Mississippi's population was 1,551,270. That year, Southern Baptists impacted the state through the ministries of 1,562 churches and 55 associations in partnership with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. In the year 2000, Mississippi's population was 2,844,658 and the Mississippi Baptist Convention was composed of 2,077 churches and 68 associations.

In a 100-year period the state of Mississippi experienced an 83% increase in population, but only a 33% increase in the number of Southern Baptist churches. In 1900, there was one Southern Baptist church for every 993 persons living in the state. In the year 2000, there was one Southern Baptist church for every 1,370 persons in the state. Mississippi's population continues to grow, while more than half our residents are unchurched. Mississippi Baptists need to strengthen and revitalize existing churches, but also plant new churches in strategic locations that can reach all Mississippians with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

WHY PLANT A CHURCH IN MISSISSIPPI?

It is easy to assume that Mississippi is overchurched, but in proper perspective Mississippi is a mission field so populous that it can't be won to Christ without starting new churches. God is bringing people to Mississippi from literally all over the world! It is our opportunity to plant an authentic, culturally relevant Southern Baptist church in strategic locations to reach the more than two million residents of the state who do not attend any church. We are constantly challenged to present the never changing message of Jesus Christ to an ever-changing society and culture. In response to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, a church planting

strategy challenges “On Mission Christians” to evangelize globally and make disciples of all people groups.

Experience demonstrates that churches that plant other churches tend to experience more rapid growth than those not involved in reproducing. God seems to bless these churches in miraculous ways.

Someone has said:

*“To grow something that lasts a season, plant flowers,
To grow something that lasts a lifetime, plant trees,
To grow something that lasts through eternity, plant churches.”*

In a recent publication, [Seven Steps to Planting a Church](#), the North American Mission Board, S.B.C. presents a compelling argument for planting new churches.

1. More than 170 million people in America do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Planting churches can accelerate the rate of leading people to Christ.
2. Planting churches is the most effective way to reach unchurched people. One estimate indicated that 60 percent of adults who join new congregations were previously not active in church.
3. New congregations grow faster than established congregations. They reach about two-and-one-half times more people per member than older churches.
4. Additional church units are necessary to reach the growing population. At the current yearly rate of one baptism for every 27 resident members, Southern Baptist churches would need 441 years to reach today’s lost population (254,105,000 or 68.9% of U.S. total).
5. Sometimes, people perceive traditions of older churches to be barriers to participation. Some people are more likely to attend and participate in a new church.
6. Mission congregations are needed in places where spiritual vacuums result from churches moving away.

7. Racial and ethnic groups need churches that recognize and celebrate their background, language, and cultural needs.
8. Pockets of people may be missed by churches. Some people groups, because of lifestyle, socioeconomic status, or other reasons, may not respond to existing churches. A new church can use approaches related to the immediate needs of these groups.
9. Communities with large numbers of unchurched people need evangelical congregations.
10. Housing patterns may be a hindrance to reaching people. A new congregation may be needed within a housing development, multi-housing unit, or high-rise.
11. New communities and newly developed areas need new congregations.
12. New congregations enlist additional people to work in kingdom business, providing opportunities for expanded Christian service and growth.
13. Multiplying congregations means multiplying Christian workers, missionaries, baptisms, witnessing church members, Bible study groups, mission support, and spiritual growth.
14. Planting congregations opens new doors for people to enter the church.

HOW IS THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION INVOLVED IN CHURCH PLANTING?

The M.B.C.B. through its Church Planting Department partners with the North American Mission Board, local churches and associations to plant new churches throughout Mississippi. Cooperation is a Baptist distinctive and is of significant importance to Southern Baptists. God can give the vision for church planting to any individual or group; however, transitioning from vision to plan, place and process is best done through cooperative effort and teamwork. The Church Planting Department will endeavor to organize a support network of partners to enhance the success possibilities for every new church planted.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE IN CHURCH PLANTING?

There are numerous resources available when the state convention, association, local churches, and caring individuals offer what God has entrusted to their care. The first avenue of resourcing focuses on DISCOVERY of a location, need, and the resources available to start a new church. Some Discovery tools include: demographic analysis and field assessments, associational probes, sponsorship covenants, consultations, key churches, financial assistance through limited congregational grants, and a prayer ministry for church planting.

The second avenue of resourcing focuses on DEVELOPMENT of the church planter and mission. This includes orientation, assessment, basic training, mentoring, networking and implementation of human resources and support services.

The third avenue of resources focuses on DEPLOYMENT of a core group of volunteers, trained specialists, skilled leaders and sponsoring churches committed to being labor intensive in building Acts 1:8 congregations, comprised of “On Mission Christians,” who will ultimately become involved in a Church Planting Multiplication movement.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN CHURCH PLANTING?

Mississippi Baptists have many opportunities to become involved in a church planting movement by praying, giving, going, and serving.

- **PRAYER** is the vital key for successful church planting. The need is obvious for hundreds of Baptists to earnestly pray for the locations, church planting team and unreached people groups in Mississippi, who can be reached for Christ through a new church.

- **GIVING** is absolutely essential. We rejoice in the faithful financial support of Mississippi Baptists through the Cooperative Program, Associational Missions, the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering and the Mississippi Baptist Foundation to resource new church starts.
- **GOING** to be on mission with God is what Mississippi Baptists are all about. A church planting movement mobilizes mission volunteers to go to work in the mission fields within our own state, with an eye toward the harvest.
- **SERVING** as a church planter, mission pastor, core group member, or ministering through volunteerism can be of great value in Kingdom building. God continues to call, empower and equip people to be involved in planting new churches. He calls His people to join Him in the selection, planting, cultivation and harvesting process. Out of the harvest our future church planters will be born.

The assigned task of the Church Planting Department is to encourage churches and associations to carry out the Great Commission, beginning at home in Mississippi. As a key strategy for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, church planting will improve the church to population ratio and membership to population ratio in every county of the state and bring multitudes to know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

The local Southern Baptist association is the best place for initial contact about church planting. Most associations have developed a missions committee (council/team) for the purpose of addressing the need for new churches within the association. Many local churches have great interest, leadership and resources to invest in beginning new churches. The Church Planting Department of the M.B.C.B. is always available to partner with others in church planting possibilities.

CHURCH PLANTING IN MISSISSIPPI

Church Planting Department

M.B.C.B.

I. Vision Statement:

The Church Planting Department, in partnership with associations and churches, will lead Mississippi Baptists to plant as many new culturally relevant, reproducing churches as needed to reach the non-Christian and unchurched population of Mississippi.

II. Mission Statement:

The Church Planting Department will strategically and catalytically partner with every viable unit of Mississippi Baptist Life to discover, develop, and deploy the best possible resources and support systems for starting healthy, reproducing, evangelistic, Baptist congregations, wherever needed in Mississippi.

III. Objectives of the Church Planting Department: In Partnership

- a. Discover the best places or people groups to target for church planting.
- b. Develop the best possible church planting plan for each target area or unreached people group.
- c. Deploy resources and persons to implement the church planting strategy.

IV. Core Values:

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| a. Kingdom of God | f. People |
| b. Christ | g. Culture |
| c. Church | h. Integrity |
| d. Great Commandment | i. Innovation |
| e. Great Commission | j. Accountability |

V. Key Principles:

The following key principles are critical to making important and discerning decisions related to both established and new churches.

The following are the most important of our core beliefs:

- a. All of God's churches are important.
- b. A new church is usually more evangelistically effective than is an older church.
- c. The potential of churches, associations, and the convention in partnering to make a significant contribution to the Kingdom of God is worthy of recognition and enhancement.
- d. The role of the church to participate in local and global missions is encouraged, recognized, and honored.
- e. The role of the local church in evangelism, discipleship, and ministry deserves validation in the church planting process.
- f. The leadership ability of the church planter is extremely important to the success of a new church plant.

VI. Implementation:

Research and experience have led most church planters to function within the boundaries of the following:

- a. It is usually easier to start churches where there are more people and where people are new to the locale.
- b. Adequate resources contribute significantly, but do not guarantee, the success of a church plant.
- c. The more skilled the leadership of a new church effort, the greater the possibility of a successful and healthy church start.
- d. A new church is needed in every place that the number of un-churched and/or non-Christians is growing faster than the church membership.

- e. The sooner a new church start can take responsibility for providing the major amount of needed resources lessens the likelihood of dependency on outside sources.

VII. Church Planting Department Task Priorities

a. Climate Priorities

Create a positive climate for a church planting multiplication movement.

Develop and implement a concerted effort of prayer for church planting.

Create an atmosphere conducive to accelerating the process of planting churches in each association.

Effectively communicate the need, possibilities and methods for establishing new churches.

Develop a clear understanding of the people and environment of the association.

b. Personnel Priorities

Personnel is included as a priority because church planting is labor intensive. Achieving the church-planting mission cannot be done without personnel.

Enlist, affirm, train, and deploy equipping ministers to plant churches.

Discover, involve, and develop persons called to be involved in church planting.

c. Resource Priorities

Identify and deploy God's resources -- spiritual, human, material, financial -- for planting churches.

d. Implementation Priorities

Partner with God, churches, associations and individuals in planting churches.

Provide churches, associations and individuals a process for planting churches.

Establish a network of church-planting systems that will be reproducing.

VIII. COOPERATIVE FUNDING ISSUES

a. General Issues

1. Priority

It is important to recognize that the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and the Church Planting Department must practice good stewardship with funds entrusted to their care. Because the need is great and funds are limited, this necessitates a concerted effort on all parties involved to invest funds as prayerfully, frugally, carefully and strategically as possible.

Funds must be allocated according to priority needs. The intent of the Church Planting Department is to prioritize funding where the following can be assured:

- a. The target group is the best defined and/or the target area is the best available.
- b. The best church planting leadership available is committed to and trained for the task.
- c. The best support system available is adequate to successfully implement a church planting plan, customized for the target locale or group.

2. Amounts

Some church planting projects will cost more than others. Not every church plant needs enormous amounts of money. Some can be done without help from outside sources, and such should be encouraged. This allows M.B.C.B. funding to be directed to the areas and persons

of greater needs. The Church Planting Department utilizes various funding formulas. These options seek to provide financial support in keeping with the need of the target location or people group while affirming the leadership plans and contributions of the local church and/or association that may serve as a sponsoring entity.

3. Dependency

It is generally recognized that at some point a new church can take responsibility for its own financial future, becoming self-sustaining and/or self-supporting, and capable of dealing responsibly with its own future. Some studies have indicated that a plurality of support from sources other than those that will determine the future of the new church will often result in unhealthy dependence on the outside sources of funding. The goal for a new church is to be self-sustaining and self-supporting within two to three years. Exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

b. Funding: Grant Assistance for New Churches

Purpose:

To assist new churches by providing financial help to aid them in becoming self-supporting, multiplying churches, committed to prioritizing the Great Commission. All grant assistance is based upon priority considerations and is subject to availability of funds.

Guidelines

1. A church that requests Grant Assistance must be in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and a Baptist association. Cooperation will be evidenced by contributing to world missions through the Cooperative Program, associational missions, and the state mission offering.

2. The application must be received in the Church Planting Department, M.B.C.B., at least 120 days, three (3) months prior to the beginning of approved assistance. Allocations are made (prorated) for the calendar year. The proper sequence of securing financial support should be:
 1. The New Church
 2. The Association(s)
 3. The Sponsoring Church(es)
 4. The State Convention

Grant assistance is negotiated by the Church Planting Department with the church plant and partnering entities. The amount granted is on a case by case basis as funds are available.

Grant Assistance for new churches is approved annually with a three-year phase out. Language ethnic congregations will be evaluated for further contributions on a case by case basis, should support be deemed necessary for years four and five. Renewal of a grant is not automatic. Continued funding is considered on an annual basis, with approval based upon performance review.

Additional aid from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board is available in the way of training. Church Planters are to attend Basic Training. Successful completion of Basic Training is required within one year of application approval or funding will cease. The North American Mission Board offers additional resource incentives for churches, who choose to participate in the training

program, and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board will be responsible for expenses related to Basic Training.

3. Each new church will be expected to participate in some key training events as offered by the state convention and local association that will enhance church growth and development. Funds to attend key training events will often be supplemented by the association, sponsor or M.B.C.B. Departments.

c. Funding Limitations

1. The new church is expected to file a monthly report to the Church Planting Department, association(s), and sponsoring church(es). Failure to submit a report for three consecutive months, without previous permission of the Church Planting Department Director, will result in forfeiture of funds for that three month period and termination of the grant for the balance of the year.
2. The new church will operate under the authority, policies and guidance of the sponsoring church or entities.
3. Grant Assistance will be limited to new church starts. New is understood to mean 24 months or less.
4. Churches older than 24 months, transferring to a Southern Baptist association from another denomination, can not be considered as a new church start. Such congregations, in cases of "extreme need," may apply for assistance from the Pastoral-Church Building Aid Committee.
5. Churches receiving Grant Assistance can not receive additional funding from the Pastoral-Church Building Aid account.

6. An adversarial relationship with sponsoring entities or failure to remain in friendly cooperation with the association and Mississippi Baptist Convention will terminate funding considerations.
7. Priority allocations will be granted to intentional church starts, less than 24 months old, that are not the result of a church split. On a case by case basis, exceptions will be made, when the association can endorse the new congregation, assuring that sufficient time has passed to seek reconciliation and that grant assistance from the state convention would not further intensify conflict. In such cases a one-year waiting period is advisable before requesting financial assistance from the state convention.
8. Each new church planter must meet the U.S. Department of Justice Immigration and Natural Services Employment eligibility verification guidelines, and agree to a personal credit and criminal background check, to receive Mississippi Baptist Convention Board assistance.