

SEVEN PILLARS FOR MINISTRY

Biblical Concepts for a Christ-Centered Vision

“By God’s grace, we will become the strongest force in the history of this Convention for reaching people with the message of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Milton A. Hollifield, Jr., Executive Director-Treasurer
Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

1. PRACTICE FERVENT PRAYER

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

James 5:16b

Prayer is the key indicator of the passion of a redeemed heart to worship God and work for His harvest. The call to pray for a fresh movement of God that will usher in a season of spiritual awakening and evangelization establishes direction for ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Such prayer will precipitate a burden in the hearts of God’s people to pray toward His passion for a spiritual movement to sweep across this state and nation. Kingdom- focused prayer that glorifies God must become a priority in the life, home and church of God’s people.

“Prayer knocks down the fences and makes things accessible that are otherwise fenced in and off limits. Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer; there are no boundaries to its jurisdiction.”

Ron Dunn, author
“Don’t Just Stand There, Pray Something”

2. PROMOTE EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLE-MAKING

“Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

Matthew 28:19-20a

This convention of churches will fail to accomplish her task if people are led to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but are not then encouraged to mature in their walk with Christ. Conversion is only the beginning of the spiritual journey. Those who do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord must be reached for Christ and assimilated into the fellowship of a healthy church environment that is conducive for good spiritual development. We believe healthy churches have a culture that fosters intentional disciple-making. Baptism numbers have declined across our nation and Southern Baptists are not even reaching our children with the gospel. This must change! Southern Baptists must become disciples who in turn make disciples. Beginning at home, continuing throughout our changing communities, across the nation and around the world, evangelism and disciple-making must become the expectation of every member of every church in the Convention. North Carolina Baptists must utilize all available means to sow and cultivate the seeds of the gospel as we strive to make disciples.

“The last command Jesus gave the church before he ascended to heaven was the Great Commission, the call for Christians to ‘make disciples of all the nations’ ... in place of Christ’s plan, historical drift has substituted, ‘Make converts and baptize them into church membership.’”

Dallas Willard, author
“The Great Omission”

3. STRENGTHEN EXISTING CHURCHES

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”
“And he (Paul) went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Acts 16:5
Acts 15:41

Many older churches are declining and some have died. Henry Blackaby has rightly said, “Discover where God is working and join with Him.” Spiritually healthy churches will discover new life when they launch contextually relevant ministries and challenge their members to live in daily worship and communion with God. North Carolina Baptists must embrace new ministry concepts and share what is learned with others. Local churches and Baptist associations can help other congregations through the establishment of networks and affinity-based ministries. Refreshing and exciting ways of accomplishing the task of Acts 1:8 missions can be initiated and sustained by existing congregations when they cooperate with others in evangelism, missions and ministry.

“A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth.”

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, co-authors
“Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples”

4. PLANT NEW MULTIPLICATION CHURCHES

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

North Carolina is exploding in population growth and vast ethnic diversity. Although there is still a monumental need and wonderful opportunities for existing Baptist churches to grow, many newcomers to North Carolina from other countries and states will never be reached by some of our existing congregations because of language and cultural barriers. Healthy New Testament churches must ensure that their ministry DNA includes the intention and goal to start other new churches committed to reaching the lost. This is the same method used by our missionaries in other countries to reach unreached people groups. Our goal is that healthy church plants will multiply by planting additional healthy churches. It is natural for churches to give birth to new congregations and to celebrate what God will do through that new church. The financial resources required to plant new churches come from existing congregations. Most new churches reach and baptize more lost people and experience growth faster than existing congregations. It is not about competition between churches, but it is all about the growth and expansion of God’s Kingdom.

“...God’s primary method of evangelizing a new community is by planting a New Testament church to reach the area with the gospel.”

Elmer L. Towns, author
“Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopedia”

5. REACH NORTH CAROLINA’S INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

“After these things I looked and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

Revelation 7:9

The churches of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina must reflect the ethnic diversity of North Carolina. More than 230 languages are now spoken within the boundaries of North Carolina, and abundant opportunities exist for Christians to present the gospel and make disciples of individuals who can then take the message of the Lord Jesus Christ back to their nation of origin, including places where many of us cannot travel. This ministry and others like it will open avenues for new relationships and evangelism. Many internationals are very religious, but they do not possess a living faith relationship with Jesus Christ – the only way to God. We must be good stewards of the opportunities for ministry around us because God is bringing the world to our doorstep. The face of North Carolina is much different than it was 25 years ago and it will never return to that former appearance. Years ago, someone helped each of us learn how to develop new friends and what it meant to be a responsible person in our community. Someone we trusted cared enough to help us discover a personal relationship with Jesus. The churches of this Convention must be willing to do the same with others.

“Breaking the (missional) code ... is about seeing that our work as the church is not completed until God’s kingdom has come home to every tribe living within a given context.”

Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, co-authors
“Breaking the Missional Code – Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community”

6. EMBRACE UNREACHED AND UNENGAGED PEOPLE GROUPS

“And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.”

Mark 13:10

It is estimated that more than 3,800 people groups around the world have no Gospel witness. This is unacceptable. Through the work of the Office of Great Commission Partnerships, the Convention assists the churches in their efforts to fulfill Acts 1:8 through our rich missions partnerships with other autonomous Baptist entities to take the Gospel to unreached and unengaged people groups of the world. Many Christians are misled to believe that they do not possess the skills and abilities to effectively impact an unengaged people group; but this is a lie. Furthermore, Satan delights in deceiving Christians with the allure of the “American Dream” in order that churches will forsake the all-encompassing claims of the Gospel. The churches of this Convention possess the makings of a missionary force that can impact multiple unreached people groups in North America and unengaged people groups around the world. The Convention stands ready to assist the churches in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

“We have massive resources, megabuildings, multitudes of programs, and a myriad of conferences and activities. Meanwhile, thousands of people groups around us in the world still haven’t even heard the gospel. From most appearances in the church, however, we seem to be okay with that. We seem content to let these people groups continue to be church-less, Christ-less, and gospel-less.”

David Platt, author
“Radical Together”

7. ENGAGE YOUNG CHURCH LEADERS

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

I Timothy 4:12

Young church leaders are intellectually astute and highly motivated. A new generation of Baptists is coming of age, and the Convention must learn from church leaders who are young, effective, enthusiastic and greatly devoted to Christ. They can help bridge the generation gap and work toward a renewed vision of collaboration and vitality among the churches of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Connecting with this generation of church leaders is critical for our future existence as a vital convention of Baptist churches.

“A few think we should give up on these young leaders, casting suspicion on how they think, lead and even sing. Such an approach will doom us to permanent generational disconnection. Rather, we need an ongoing strategy to engage young leaders.”

Ed Stetzer, Vice President for Research and Ministry Development
LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, TN



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