



**BIVOCATIONAL & SMALL CHURCH
LEADERSHIP NETWORK**

BSCLN LEADERSHIP SERIES

**STRENGTHENING YOUR
ASSOCIATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

What does it mean to be a servant to servants? In Southern Baptist life, it would obviously include the work of the local association of churches and the Director of Missions that direct that work. An older label for this position was “Associational Missionary” and may still be a more accurate description of the activities of the DOM and his calling. Most DOMs do minimal “directing” but usually perform as a missionary for the local churches as well as ministry partner for those pastors.

Years ago, I received some excellent advice from a pastor who probably knew Noah when he owned a boat! He said to me as a young DOM, “Never forget, the church is always right even when she’s wrong!” It took me a few years to really begin to mine the wisdom of such a challenging statement. It finally dawned on me when I fully realized that the church never belonged to me or any pastor but was in all reality, the “Bride of Christ” and He would be returning soon to claim her for Himself.

When I finally understood the role of pastor as “bride’s caretaker” and the DOM as a servant/partner in that endeavor, I began to appreciate that wise and sage advice. The association only exists for the welfare of the local church and is to expend itself in her caretaking, protection and equipping for her calling of ministry.

So, what exactly does a good Director of Missions do? He exists to serve the local church and support the pastors in their personalized caretaking of those churches. Missions deployment, training opportunities, conflict management support, and community relationship development are all just examples of the kinds of weekly duties of an active DOM. These all focus on the support and equipping of the local church to fulfill her mission, but there is another and even more important role the DOM should strive toward. Being a ministry partner to pastors is an exemplary calling in and of itself.

If there were ever an overlooked and ignored category of believers, it would have to be that group of believers who sacrifice so much of themselves for the welfare of the family of faith. Pastors and their families are the unsung heroes of our Lord’s kingdom, and it seems their spiritual, physical, emotional and other needs are rarely met fully.

It is imperative that the DOM step into the role of not just partner but minister to the ministers within his local association.

There is no doubt that pastors are on the front lines of battle, and their health and welfare is often one of the first casualties of that war. It has been reported that hundreds of pastors leave the ministry each month, many pastors' marriages end in divorce, depression and discouragement is rampant, and finally -- and maybe most importantly -- most pastors report a diminished personal relationship with Christ and lack of personal spiritual growth due to the challenges of daily ministry. WHO IS CALLED TO MINISTER TO THE MINISTER?

The Director of Missions is a unique position within the Southern Baptist Convention that places a specialized minister alongside a collection of pastors from local churches. The DOM not only is strategically placed to cast a "missions" vision to local church congregations but to also partner with and befriend local pastors who in many cases feel they have no one else to which to turn.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

1. **Christ Comes First.** Remember in all things, the worship and work of Christ is preeminent over all else. If it doesn't fit His agenda, it shouldn't be on ours!
2. **Develop Relationships With The Local Churches.** Don't forget that you belong to and are employed by those churches. Having personal relationships and regular visitation with them builds trust and an ability to speak wisdom into their activities when the opportunity presents itself.
3. **Build Bridges Between The Local Community And The Local Churches.** As a Director of Missions, you have a unique ability to insert yourself into the daily life of local communities and through you, your churches have access to those relationships. Be proactive about raising the visibility of your local churches in the public community.
4. **Research, Understand And Communicate Southern Baptist Convention Information.** Become the first person your local churches want to call when they have a question or a problem, especially if it involves Southern Baptist life. You don't have to know all the answers BUT you should know who to always call to get the answers you don't have!
5. **Explore, Develop and Promote Missions To All Churches.** You are, after all, a missionary, and you should be leading in the evangelistic outreach from the local community to the "uttermost."
6. **Create Fellowship Opportunities For Your Pastors And Their Families.** No one fellowship strategy will meet the needs for all your pastors, so be creative in finding ways to bring your pastors, and their families together for rest, recreation and rejuvenation.
7. **Learn To Train The Trainers.** The DOM is strategically situated to be a specialist in many areas of Southern Baptist life and can be of great benefit to pastors and churches. Take the time to learn new things so your pastors can benefit from your knowledge.
8. **Befriend The Friendless.** Most pastors complain of a lack of personal relationships due to the transparent relationships they must maintain with their congregation. Become a friend and

confidant to pastors who just “need someone to talk to.” Remember, confidentiality is your greatest asset.

9. **Mentor The Inexperienced.** A significant number of your pastors will be either new to the ministry, fresh to the field or experiencing new situations daily. They need someone they can trust to give them good advice and steer them to safety. Build quality relationships that allow you to speak words of wisdom into the lives of struggling pastors.
10. **Model An Exemplary Ministry Lifestyle For All To See.** Your pastors and churches will not trust you to speak into their individual issues until they have witnessed your ability to manage your personal ministry well. Make sure you are caring for yourself, your family and your personal walk with the Lord before you begin to try to help others do the same.

CONNECTING WITH BIVOCATIONAL PASTORS

I. Problems with Connecting

- They are usually not available during the day Monday-Friday.
- Their first response to most invitations is “I do not have time.”
- They have a difficult time admitting they have a need.
- Some have developed a Lone Ranger complex.
- Because of their busy schedules, they are difficult to contact.
- Many bivo pastors are older and do not use the internet regularly.
- Some struggle with insecurity due to lack of training or experience. This causes them to shy away from meetings with other pastors, especially fully-funded pastors.
- Some view denominational workers, including DOMs, as moderates if not liberals. Their first encounter with you will be used to test your heart to see if it beats with theirs.
- Some bivo pastors have been devalued or put down in the past and, as a result, have backed away from associational involvement.
- Younger bivo pastors do not feel a need for the association because of their involvement with other ministers and other networks through social media.

II. Insights into Connecting

- The number of bivo pastors in the SBC is large and growing.
- Most associations have a majority of bivo pastors.
- Bivo pastors are not lacking in faith by remaining bivocational.
- Bivo pastors are real pastors not second-class preachers, part-time preachers or little preachers.
- There are a few bivo and fully-funded pastors who have preaching stations but do not pastor the congregation.
- Many bivo pastors are well educated but may need training in ministry skills.
- Many bivo pastors surrender to the ministry late in life and have not had much formal ministry training.

- A DOM who wishes to impact his bivo pastors must be creative.
- Support for bivo pastors and their churches is weak among SBC Agencies and State Conventions. Support through the local association is critical. The BSCLN can become a vital partner in this ministry.
- Bivo pastors are very busy but they need the local association and fellowship with other pastors.
- Bivo pastors do not normally read mail-outs but will respond best to peer involvement. Mail to them should go to their home address not the church.
- They respond well to genuine friendships.
- Whatever they attend must be of high quality or they will not return.
- They can attend special events if given enough time to make arrangements to be there.
- Doing things that include the wives is more appealing.
- Do not give up on first attempt to get them involved. They work best with a consistent schedule.
- Time management is their #1 issue.
- Neglect of family is their #1 failure.
- Sermon preparation helps are always of interest.
- Share the pie chart of SBC churches with them. They are usually surprised that their church is as big, if not bigger, than many SBC churches.
- Guard against spending most of your time with the few fully-funded pastors who are always available.
- Be willing to do some of your activities on the weekends when bivo pastors have the most flexibility.
- Some bivo pastors spend most of their ministry years moving from church to church in the same association. The sooner you can become their friend the better.

III. Plans for Connecting

- Institute an Associational Bivocational Council.
- Implement Ministers Fellowship Meetings.
- Conduct Fellowship Revivals.
- Strengthen Executive Board membership and meetings.
- Utilize retired ministers in visiting churches in association.

- Make the effort to go to their setting, come without an agenda, listen to their story, affirm their strengths and successes and make yourself available.
- Do not plan a meeting to include bivo pastors just to have a meeting. Always make the event a little better than they anticipated.
- After carefully and prayerfully examining their potential, place several bivo pastors in key roles in the association. As they begin a new role, conduct on-the-job training to insure success.
- Use bivo pastors in key preaching slots in associational events.
- Provide financial assistance to bivo couples in attending regional and national bivo events.

- Ray Gilder

RAISING AN ASSOCIATIONAL PRESENCE IN MULTIPLE CHURCHES

Enlist Older Retired Pastors to represent the association in visiting the churches.

Visit different churches on Sundays to encourage and affirm Smaller Churches.

1. Those enlisted can be given a simple associational ID badge to wear.
2. If they are asked why they are there, simply say that they represent the association and just came to encourage and affirm the pastor. Say the association just wants you to know that we know you are here, we appreciate what you do and is there anything that the association can do to assist you and/or your church?
3. Those enlisted to visit would be assigned certain churches.
4. Those enlisted would not be required to visit every Sunday; but, as often as their health allowed and to report the visit to the DOM.
5. The number enlisted would depend on the number of churches within an association.
6. The result is the DOM has more associational presence in the churches more often, and the bonus is that the retired pastors absolutely are excited to have a ministry that allows them to exercise their services when they feel up to it. This also taps into untold experience and ministerial knowledge.
7. There are also Older Deacons that might be enlisted for this ministry.

- Gary Mitchell

ESTABLISH A MINISTER'S FELLOWSHIP MEETING

Men in the ministry are under considerable pressure. They often keep their concerns to themselves. They need an opportunity to be real with their peers.

However, more often than not they sense they are in competition with other ministers instead of being on the same team. The Association is an excellent place for that peer learning and group sharing to happen. Consider setting aside one night each month for a "Ministers Fellowship." Using the term "minister" instead of "pastor" indicates that all ministers are invited: pastors, youth ministers, associate pastors, retired ministers and other ministers in the association. Begin with a light meal at 6:00 P.M. (this allows bivocational ministers to come straight from work). A few subs, some chips, drinks and dessert are all you need. Do some kind of training from 6:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. The DOM can lead this or someone else can be recruited for that purpose. From 7:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. have specific prayer for each other. Have one minister share his most pressing requests, then stop and ask "Who will pray for Brother _____ and his concerns?" After prayer for that brother, go to the next and repeat the process. It will take at least an hour if it is done seriously. At first, the ministers will have a tendency to share surface concerns or issues about church members. However, as the process continues month after month, they will open up and share their real concerns. This greatly increases fellowship, trust, love and appreciation for each other. Your association will be stronger as a result.

- Ray Gilder

INCREASING THE ATTENDANCE AT ASSOCIATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS:

Executive Board Members in most associations have become a small group of senior adults from the churches who have a deep appreciation for the association and a loyalty to its future. Seldom do you find a young adult at these meetings. Most associations have as a guideline that each church is represented by two executive board members from that church. Consider having the association adopt a proposal that each church be asked to provide two additional board members who are encouraged to bring their spouses. The stipulation should be that these two new members must be under 50 years of age. Explain that the purpose is to help younger church members better understand the benefit and potential of the association working together. Another stipulation could be that each church request that one of their executive board members bring a brief report to the church regarding associational matters at the church business meeting. This would basically double the attendance at the Executive Board meeting, and the excitement level toward working together would increase as well.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS:

Executive Board Meetings do not have to be boring. However, many associations have perfected the art of doing so. Here are some ideas which may increase the enjoyment and productivity of these meetings. Have a meal for the executive board members. Then, conduct the business of the association. After that, move into the church auditorium and have an associational rally. Everyone is invited to the rally, not just those on the executive board. At the rally, have congregational singing, then, the Director of Missions can call for testimonies from those present. There is always someone who has been blessed by God in a special way during the past month. After hearing three or four testimonies, those who have not had such a good month are encouraged by what has happened in the lives of others. Have someone bring special music. Then, let the host pastor preach a sermon. Folks come away feeling like they have been to a great meeting instead of a boring one.

- Ray Gilder

REACHING OUT TO BIVOCATIONAL PASTORS

Establish a Bivocational Council

In most associations, the majority of the churches have a bivocational pastor. This is especially true in the associations outside of the larger cities.

Many Directors of Missions have a difficult time connecting with their bivocational pastors because of work schedules. It must be understood that most bivocational pastors are not available to come to a Monday morning pastors meeting or a noon luncheon. Instead of giving up and just relating to those who are available, there needs to be an effort to find ways to involve these pastors in the life of the association. One thing that must be emphasized is the fact that the association needs them but they also need the association.

One of the temptations of a bivocational pastor is to become a Lone Ranger. This makes him an easy target for Satan and a candidate for discouragement.

He desperately needs time with his peers to share common issues and find an encouraging word. A Bivocational Council for the association may be one way to help meet this need. Here are some thoughts about establishing an Associational Bivocational Council:

- Locate 3-5 of the most energetic and capable bivocational pastors in your association and ask them to become the Associational Bivocational Council.
- Have them elect one of their group to become the chairman of the Council.
- This person represents the bivocational pastors when the regular Associational Council meets.
- This Council should meet monthly with the DOM to discuss issues facing the bivocational pastors and their churches in the association.
- They should make plans for special events for the bivocational pastors and their churches. The state convention may offer leadership in helping with this planning.

- Have the Bivocational Council divide the bivo pastors in the association among themselves. Then they go one on one with their list to become a friend and an encourager for each of these men. Bivo pastors respond best to personal contact with a trusted friend.
- They can help promote events and special opportunities for bivo pastors offered at the state level and national events.

It is amazing how encouraged and excited bivo pastors become when they realize that their association wants to connect with them. They begin to feel a part of the association and take more interest in helping it become stronger and more effective in ministering to the community.

RELATING TO BIVOCATIONAL PASTORS

What has been discussed by bivocational leaders for the last 20 years is rapidly taking place across America. Bivocational status for a minister is becoming the norm. Soon, the exception in the ministry will be a pastor or minister who is considered fully-funded. Churches and local associations, along with state and national conventions, will have to change the way they look at and relate to ministers of the Gospel. Below are some items which may help them adjust to the new norm in ministry:

- Acknowledge the Biblical and historical roots of bivocational ministry.
- Consistently produce suggestions for effective time management.
- Focus on recruiting and training lay leaders in the church.
- Challenge bivocational ministers to make time for their families.
- Be creative in scheduling opportunities for fellowship and training among bivocational ministers.
- Provide online training which is available at the student's convenience.
- Offer training in ministry skills to those who will never enroll in formal education.
- Begin to recognize bivocational and smaller membership church pastors who are making a significant impact on their community.
- Develop strategies to help churches whose pastor is bivocational to plant other bivocational churches.
- Champion church health and growth which focuses on more than increased attendance.
- Stop thinking of church in terms of brick and mortar and focus on a body of believers wherever they may meet.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. However, it is a good starting point. The Lord is at work. He is preparing leaders for what lies ahead.

- Ray Gilder

A FRESH IDEA FOR REVIVALS

Smaller Churches sometimes find it difficult to have revivals.

Congregation may be too small to support a revival financially and in attendance.

Progressive Revivals address this situation.

1. The idea is to have several churches from as little as 2 to an unlimited number, pool their resources to hold a joint revival.
2. Each Church would host at least one service and each pastor of the participating churches would preach at least one time.
3. When a church is hosting a service, the pastor should have the opportunity to attend his own church without having to preach. The Host Church would supply the Music each night.
4. Each church would take a love offering each night to cover any expenses, nursery worker etc. All love offerings would be pooled with the other churches participating to be used for joint missions to be determined by participating churches or for a special project of the association.
5. If enough churches participate, then in the final service, all the churches could come together and the love offerings could support an Evangelist and/or worship Team for the concluding service. The only cost is if you choose to have an outside evangelist team come in on the last night, and of course that's certainly not required. The attached example generated over 600 in attendance that last night and the altar call was awesome!
6. The Bonus result is that many smaller church pastors are never asked to preach anywhere outside their church and aside from building relationships among the churches, the joining together for revival adds larger numbers in attendance than if a Smaller Church were to have their own revival. Of course, it goes without saying that this method does not cost anything.

TWO DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATORY REVIVALS

<u>Progressive Revivals</u>	<i>(Held in progressive weeks; Four churches needed for progressive three-night revivals)</i>	
Week One	Church "A" hosts	Pastors "B,C,D" preach
Week Two	Church "B" hosts	Pastors "A,C,D" preach
Week Three	Church "C" hosts	Pastors "A,B,D" preach
Week Four	Church "D" hosts	Pastors "A,B,C" preach

<u>Joint Revival</u>	<i>(Held in the same week; churches from the same general area to promote inter church fellowship)</i>	
Night One	Church "A" hosts	Pastor "B" preach
Night Two	Church "B" hosts	Pastor "C" preach
Night Three	Church "C" hosts	Pastor "A" preach

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR A MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE!

Many times the Director of Missions is enlisted to train a Ministerial Search Committee. The following “Ten Commandments” have been derived from many years of seeing successful and sometimes, not so successful committees. Ground rules for a committee are always a good place to start for any activity.

I. Be Prayerful!

Bathe the whole process of searching for a Pastor in careful and continuous prayer, for without God’s leadership, this would be a vain endeavor.

II. Be Confidential!

It is important that all information received and reviewed by the Pastor Search Committee be held in strictest confidence. Many church members will ask lots of questions and even demand information. Make sure that any information released outside the committee has been approved by all members of the committee.

III. Be Unanimous!

If a committee cannot be 100% in unity for presenting a candidate, it is assured that the church will not have a strong positive vote for that candidate and he will begin his ministry with undue burden.

IV. Be Honest!

- Sometimes, there are issues within the church that the committee is tempted to not share because it might scare a candidate away. It is deceitful to not share this information. A fully informed candidate will be a confident candidate.
- Work out any details of employment including compensation, benefits and vacation before requiring a decision. “The worker is worthy of his hire.” Scripture teaches us that any Minister should be cared for financially so that his family is not unduly burdened by the ministry.

V. Be Consistent!

Do not examine a candidate without a resume! Oftentimes, a committee will already know a candidate personally. Request a resume from even the most recognizable candidates so that the process will be fair for all involved.

VI. Be Thorough!

Be sure to do adequate background checks of any final candidate including calling his primary and secondary references! In this day and age of church litigation, it is incumbent on the committee to perform all due diligence in protecting the church members from any opportunity of wrong-doing.

VII. Be Courteous!

Call any candidate that is eliminated from the interview process and communicate that he is no longer being included! Do not leave a candidate wondering if he is still being considered for a position when you have decided negatively. You are not acting with lovingkindness by leaving a candidate thinking he is still being considered when in fact, he is not.

VIII. Be Faithful!

Follow all church guidelines for the Pastor Search Process. Every church has written or unwritten processes for calling a Pastor. Be sure to follow these so that the new Pastor will not have a questionable calling.

IX. Be Positive!

The Pastor Search process is often a long and arduous journey and the temptation is to grow weary in the midst of it. Be positive not only with one another but with the church membership.

X. Be Supportive!

Your job is not done when the new Pastor is called! Stand firmly with the new Pastor and help him to navigate the many obstacles he will face in his first year of ministry.

YOUR PASTOR'S BEST FRIEND

There is undoubtedly many resources modern pastors are in need of, but without question the one complaint I hear repeatedly is that the pastorate leaves very little room for close friendships. One pastor sat weeping with me recently and kept repeating, "I don't have anyone who understands what I am struggling with!" Unfortunately, he is correct. He, like so many other pastors, is more of a "Lone Ranger" who works tirelessly for the welfare of so many others and yet does very little to either take care of his own needs or those of his family. The fact that he is a Bivocational minister only worsens the problem. The need to balance the requirements of his pastoral duties with the daily requirements of a secular job is a herculean task. Throw in the fact that he is a husband and father, and we can see a man that is perpetually on the edge of a stressful abyss.

Who can stand in the gap for these men of God? Obviously, no one else can do each job these men have surrendered to perform. They have their family, their church and their daily job that all require perpetual attention. Even though this pastor wept over his lack of friendships, I knew his greatest need was not a friend but a "Barnabus"! Remember him? He was the guy who came alongside the infant Christian named Paul and poured into the inexperienced Christian's life the basic strategies for success as a minister. Paul's later years would only highlight how successful Barnabus had been in nurturing Paul through those trying first years.

Where are the "Barnabus" partners for today's pastors? Until recently, most young ministers were mentored by older pastors who in turn had been mentored by earlier older pastors! This tradition of mentoring hearkened back to the Biblical partnership Paul received from Barnabus and who in turn then shared with Timothy. The problem we see in the modern church is the level of need required from our pastors on multiple fronts has eclipsed many young men's ability to provide the time to be mentored by older pastors. Couple this with an aging cadre of pastors who themselves may no longer have the vision, health or desire to share with a younger minister, and you have a recipe of inadequacy for a new generation of pastoral ministers.

Enter the Director of Missions. The DOM is positioned to not only cast visions of evangelistic missions and outreach but to also come

alongside struggling pastors and provide the kind of partnerships and friendships so many lonely pastors yearn for. There is no doubt that each pastor is uniquely called, uniquely gifted and uniquely desirous of others to join him in his ministry. Some pastors will readily recognize and solicit help, while others will staunchly deny they need or desire help until something obviously overwhelms them. Then they become open to the loving support of a partner in the ministry. No matter the level of “Lone Ranger” tendencies, each pastor will sooner or later be open to outside help and this is when the local DOM can do his best work!

How can a DOM be a good partner, mentor or friend to his local pastors? There are any number of strategies, but a few points represent a good place to start:

First, learn to become “just a friend” to your pastors. DOMs tend to be like pastors in that they are focused on the job first and personal needs either secondary or last. Yes, one of your pastors may definitely be in need of theological instruction or denominational direction, but you may discover that before providing that necessary education it may be more important for him to receive a much more basic encouragement by a friend. Are you a friendly guy? The Bible says, “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” If you, as a DOM, are too busy to just be friendly with your pastors why would you be surprised that your pastors have no friends?

Spend time with your pastors when the only reason for doing so is just to be with one another. Break bread together whether it is by going out for a simple lunch or maybe supper. Be sure to include your wife and even your family if they are willing and it is appropriate to the pastor’s situation. I have made it a priority to regularly schedule and provide banquets for my pastors and their wives for no other reason than to just get together for laughter and fellowship. These times together have sometimes been no more than hamburger cookouts, while other times we have enjoyed grilled steaks or pork chops. The menu will always be secondary to having a special and intimate time with others who are most understanding of us because they are in the same boat. Believe me, these guys love talking to one another in a safe environment away from their church congregations.

Second, become an advocate for your pastors. Years ago as a boy, I was instructed in the ways of being a part of family. I was taught that we might bicker and disagree amongst ourselves but no one, and I mean

no one, would ever be allowed to attack one of us without having to face all of us! Your pastor needs someone to always have his back even when he is in the wrong. Sometimes, pastors will make mistakes and they will need help surviving and even correcting the situation they have inadvertently created. Publicly attacking and tearing down such a pastor does not move him toward repentance and restitution, but instead weakens him further and ultimately may lose him to the ministry. At the very least, it will cause him to be distrustful of those around him including his DOM. Instead, publicly help him if at all possible, and privately seek to counsel and instruct him, so he may not only survive his present predicament but also become a better minister in the future.

I have made it a point over the years to refer to “my pastors” as my best friends and surprisingly they have become just that. It’s amazing that when you publicly give your support to someone and especially pastors, they will take ownership of that relationship and respond in kind. “My pastors” know I belong to them and they value that relationship. They know that I will always seek to tell them the truth about what I believe is best for them and their congregations even as they also know I will stand up and always seek to support them in difficult circumstances.

Finally, it is important to become the face of the convention for your pastors. For so many pastors, there is absolutely no time to invest in convention matters. By the time they have been husband, father, pastor and employee, there is very little time left to become proficient in understanding the “ins and outs” of an often confusing denominational convention. Budgets, entities and legal institutions are often as inscrutable as the dark side of the moon for men who are more concerned with dealing with daily problems that arise from living life itself. The convention becomes something of mystery and cloaked with misunderstanding.

As a DOM, you owe it to your pastors to become proficient in wading through the often politically-charged waters of the convention to procure those necessary resources for your pastors to perform their best. Recently, I received a frantic call from a pastor of a small country church who had been told by a convention secretary that his “church just didn’t exist!” He was flabbergasted and ready to withdraw all support of and participation in the convention. I asked for just a day to find out what was going on, and to all of our amazement, the convention had filed the address for his church under a nearby town.

With just a couple of computer keystrokes, the situation was resolved and I was the hero of the day because of just one phone call to the right person at the convention.

Also, there has been a proliferation of resources recently made available to churches from a myriad of providers. It can be overwhelming to a pastor to try to decide which resources are best for his church. A good DOM will have a working knowledge of lots of resources and be prepared to make recommendations for pastors with questions. It's not inappropriate to request a pastor to give you some time to put together some materials for his decision. You don't have to know all the details but you do have to know where to go and take the time to get him the answers to his questions.

There is no doubt that the life of pastors and especially bivocational pastors are filled with a mind-numbing, non-stop onslaught of requirements and obligations. The experienced and committed Director of Missions can be a "Barnabus" to his pastors with just a little planning and intentional intervention. Why not recognize that a significant portion of your ministry as a DOM is to the most over-challenged and under-appreciated of all Christians, the pastors? I truly believe God will honor any ministry that honors His personally chosen leaders.

THE JOY OF ASSOCIATION SERVICE

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (HCSB)

“Two are better than one.” What a beautiful truth that is found throughout scripture. Whether it be “in the mouths of two or three witnesses” or our Lord sending His first missionaries “out in pairs,” working together has always been wisdom in action. Someone once said, if the denominations and conventions were to disappear today, tomorrow there would be fresh associations because Christians like to work together! That’s why associations of churches have always prospered and successfully helped churches work together to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ.

Fellowship

Fellowship is the first and maybe the greatest attribute of association service. The pastorate, though filled with believers, is a lonely position to serve. An overwhelming majority of pastors and church leaders report their personal interactions with others to be very limited due to the unique requirements of Kingdom leadership. Most pastors do not feel it appropriate to get too close to individual church members and, therefore, rarely report having close friends. The fear of betrayal, the lack of time, and ultimately the constant scrutiny of church members prohibit many pastors from ever developing those close personal relationships with others that so many of their church members take for granted.

Within this vacuum of meaningful relationships, the intentionally created fellowship of an association of church leaders can make a great difference in the lives of many pastors. Thoughtful association leadership will easily understand the need for fellowship among pastors and regularly develop opportunities for pastors and their families to gather and share with one another. Whether it be for a simple evening meal or a detailed and distant retreat, most pastors will benefit from spending quality time, structured as well as unstructured, with other pastors. The opportunity to just share and have someone who totally

understands the pastorate and is willing to listen is of great value to most pastors. Of course, there will always be those who thrive on little personal interaction with their peers, but for the most part a greater portion of pastors will not only enjoy but will begin to request these special times together.

Missions

Missions is another area where the local association displays its ability to fulfill a scriptural mandate of working together. As Southern Baptists, we are intimate with our mission offerings taken at Christmas, Easter and often at other times throughout the year. We encourage the taking of corporate offerings based upon Paul's admonition to the Roman church to be a partaker in the successes and struggles of other churches. "Right now I am traveling to Jerusalem to serve the saints, for Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." Romans 15:25-26

Mission trips are also an important work of the local association. Many pastors recognize that their churches may not be able to develop or implement many mission projects or trips due to the size of their respective churches. Small churches do not have the necessary resources to accomplish many mission endeavors; therefore, they often either limit themselves to small mission activities or cease missions outreach altogether due to discouragement. By working together, many small churches and even larger ones can participate together and accomplish great things for the Lord. Souls are saved, lives are rebuilt, churches are planted and church member/missionaries are revived through mission projects and trips. Add in the exciting dynamic of working beside other believers from different churches, and you have a recipe for developing a motivated follower of Christ.

Evangelism

Another place where the association aspect of working together really succeeds is in encouraging evangelistic outreach. For many church members, developing a mindset of invading a lost and dying world with the gospel is a rather daunting task, but if that same church member is part of a group of like-minded evangelistic workers, he/she becomes much more fearless. Isn't it interesting when the time came for Jesus to send His first missionaries out with His gospel of grace, that He "began to send them out in pairs"? (Mark 6:7) Jesus knew that it was human nature to be more careful and hesitant when alone

but if paired with a partner, human nature became more fearless and outgoing.

An association's Director of Missions is a local missionary who over time will develop an understanding of his regional opportunities for ministry and develop strategies to help his churches meet the needs of their respective areas. By working with multiple churches in meeting these needs, the DOM is able to bring a unified approach to opportunities of evangelistic outreach for many churches. As the DOM develops strategies, dispenses encouragement, and directs awareness of needs, the association works together to claim their portion of the kingdom for Christ.

Fellowship, missions and evangelism are just a few of the areas in which the association corporately excels. "Churches working together" is not a new idea; rather it was a part of the constitution of Christ's kingdom from its very beginning in scripture. Churches are strengthened by partnering with other churches, and individual believers will attempt greater things for the Lord if they have the encouragement of being a part of a greater group. As you develop your vision for association work, remember that the greatest benefit of the local association is that no church is alone. We are in this together until Jesus Christ returns and releases us from the mandate of the Great Commission!

THE MACEDONIAN CALL: CHURCHES HELPING CHURCHES

Somehow what seems like the most natural thing to happen within the larger body of Christ is often the most difficult to accomplish: churches helping churches. For the past fourteen years, I have assisted churches within the Appalachian region who open their doors on Sunday to an aging congregation that has lost touch with their community and are declining. Sometimes their only hope of keeping their dreams alive is to turn their properties over to another church or organization and to allow for a restart or a new church start. However, if the situation is addressed early enough and the membership is willing to cooperate together under the leadership of Christ, then the church can once again become a vibrant witness within their community.

Churches decline for a variety of reasons, some of which are due to conflict within the membership or issues related to church polity. Sometimes the decline is due to a loss of vision or loss of purpose, and the list of reasons includes a wide assortment of explanations. Every local church is different and their reasons for decline are unique to their situation as well.

Often when a local church recognizes their condition and desires to once again reach those around them with the gospel, they soon realize that they need help. As they look afresh at their community, they grasp that the demographics have changed, the culture has changed, and even the religious climate is radically different than it was even a few years earlier. As a result, some churches give up and close their doors; others endeavor to strengthen their church on their own, while others issue the “Macedonian Call” and appeal to sister churches to “come over and help us.”

Ideally, struggling churches desire to help themselves. A limited number of churches are able to successfully turn their church around and once again make a difference in their community. However, this approach often leads to deeper division within the church and is fraught with church splits and closures.

Conversely, churches that partner with a sister church that is

successful in reaching their community and who are willing to answer the “Macedonian Call” bring fresh eyes to look at the community; fresh hands to do the work; and fresh leadership to guide the process. These churches frequently experience success. Developing a long-term partnership with a sister church builds in accountability and a higher level of expectations.

The concept of the “Macedonian Call” echoes beyond Acts 16:9 and the principle is seen in the New Testament epistles. For example, when the church at Jerusalem was faced with meeting the increasing benevolent needs, churches in Macedonia rallied together to help with the hardship (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). The concept also is fleshed out in the “one anothers” found throughout the New Testament – serve one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, and so forth. Yet, the loftiest of ideas is laden with challenges that grow out of fallen humanity, and as a result if your church issues the “Macedonian Call” to sister churches, let me suggest some simple guidelines.

1. From the moment you issue a “Macedonian Call,” bathe the process in serious prayer.
2. Do not look to a church within driving distance of your church. A good rule of thumb is to look for a sister church that is outside your association or at least over one hour’s driving distance away from your church. The reason is that a church any closer is subject to have members change from one church to the other church and in the process create tension. Another reason is that occasionally rather than strengthening the church issuing the “Macedonian Call” they end up merging and becoming one congregation. While this sounds good on the surface, the long-term effect is usually beset with problems that diminish the work of Christ in the area.
3. Allow the church answering the “Macedonian Call” to become your eyes and ears for a season. A church from outside your area will see your church and church field with new eyes and hear the community with new ears. They will see the possibilities and the changing community surrounding you. Also they often bring in some of the resources needed to do the work. Be careful to avoid the sin of “paternalism.”
4. Outline from the beginning of the process mutually agreed upon goals and dreams of what you mutually sense God is leading you to accomplish.

5. Look to develop a long-term partnership agreement. A written agreement that spells out the expectations and length of the partnership is the best arrangement. Partnership agreements by nature call for expectations with accountability. Most long-term partnerships are three to five years in length and work towards a diminishing level of assistance and involvement after the midpoint. A good guide to follow is the first year we do it for you, and you observe. The second year, or the second and third year, in a five-year partnership we do it together. Then in the final year or years of the partnership you do it, and we observe and assist if and when needed.
6. Plan to reciprocate the partnership church by either doing a joint mission project or mission trip.
7. Plan a series of celebrations throughout the partnership that mark each milestone, and plan a joint celebration at the end to commemorate what God has done through both of you as sister churches.

Churches helping churches is not only biblical but it is also practical. Paul's words to the Thessalonian church apply to us today as we encourage and build up one another, just as he set the example before us by encouraging and building up multiple churches throughout his earthly ministry (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Does your church sense the need to issue the "Macedonian Call" and seek a sister church to "come over and help us"? If so contact Ray Gilder, National Coordinator & Chairman of the National Coordinating Council for BSCLN. (Phone: 931-607-3146; Email: ray.gilder@bscln.net)

- Bill Barker, National SBC Missionary (NAMB) to Appalachia

“59 WAYS” TO ANSWER THE “MACEDONIA CALL”

Below are “59 Ways” a church answering the “Macedonia Call” can assist a sister church. Likewise, they are ways that a sister church can help you in reaching your community or city for Christ. Many of the ideas below can serve as bridge builders to reengage the church back into the community and provide relationship building opportunities out of which the gospel can be shared. A brain-storming session will reveal many more ways to engage the church and the community through the “Macedonia Call.”

1. Prayerwalking/Prayer Driving
2. Door to Door Survey
3. Street Witnessing
4. Evangelism Training
5. Special Evangelistic Events/Revivals and Crusades
6. Vacation Bible Schools
7. Backyard Bible Clubs
8. Demographic interpretation
9. Developing Bible Study Groups
10. Youth Activities
11. Children’s Activities
12. Children’s Day Camp
13. Leadership Development
14. Provide volunteer leadership
15. Bible Study/Sunday School training for leaders
16. Discipleship training
17. Block Parties targeted to neighborhoods or families or children and teenagers
18. Sports Camps focusing on popular sports in the target area
19. Wild Game Supper
20. Music, art and drama Camps
21. Clowning Events and Camps
22. Puppets
23. Face Painting

24. Musical Concerts
25. Working in Local Festivals or County Fairs
26. Jesus DVD Distribution
27. Fall Festival
28. Easter Egg Hunt
29. Christmas Party
30. Servant /Ministry Evangelism Projects
31. Literacy/ESL Classes
32. Prayer Partners
33. Bible Distribution
34. Food Distribution
35. Home Repair
36. Clean up Local Parks
37. Repair Local Playground Equipment
38. Landscaping at the church
39. Clean up Yards for the Elderly and Disabled
40. Build Handicap Ramps for the Elderly and Disabled
41. Free Car Wash
42. Clean Windshields
43. Work through Local Schools to Supply School Supplies
44. Back-to-School Parties
45. Work through Local Schools to Supply Hygiene Items
46. Follow up of New Converts
47. Parenting classes
48. Single-Mom Car Care
49. Parents Night Out
50. Weight Control Classes
51. Marriage Seminars
52. Financial Classes/Budgeting
53. Ladies Activities
54. Ladies Bible Study
55. Cooking Classes
56. Sewing Classes
57. Special Evangelistic Events Revivals and Crusades
58. Renovation Construction
59. New Building Construction

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONARIES HELPING CHURCHES EXPLORE THE “MACEDONIAN CALL”

Churches helping churches is a biblical concept, but seldom do churches come together assisting one another in impacting their community for Christ. Thus, the role of the associational missionary (AM) is critical. Like a PBX operator, the AM is the conduit connecting the stronger, healthier church with the declining, struggling church and walking them through the process. The AM is like the emergency room physician who tells the patient under his care following an automobile accident, “While x-raying your chest we found a rather large spot on your left lung and I need to talk with you about following up with your own physician.” He is like the auto mechanic who tells a client, “The engine’s misfiring is not a faulty plug, it is something more serious.” The AM is in a real sense both the person who does the diagnosis and the one who prescribes a cure or solution.

The wise AM takes time to build relationships with the leadership of the churches in their association. Out of these relationships the AM is able to visit with the leadership of a struggling or declining church and lead them through a process of rediscovering their purpose and rediscovering the community surrounding them.

In my early days as a Southern Baptist pastor, it was two such AMs that impacted my life and shaped my pastoral ministry. My first pastorate was with a congregation that had a long history of decline while struggling with a series of pastors who had serious failures resulting in multiple church splits. The church had turned inward and become defensive. My AM had the relationship with the church leadership and took time to build a relationship with me. He invested in my life and ministry and got to know me and my family. During my first three years of pastoring, we averaged less than twenty persons in attendance each week. My AM connected me and the church with another stronger, vibrant church and they invested time and leadership development in us. At the end of five years we had 125 to 150 in worship attendance each week.

The second AM selected five churches that were declining and invited the pastors to a meeting at his office. One of the pastors was me. He also invited five pastors who were called to declining or struggling churches and had successfully turned them around, and he invited five retired pastors who had been successful in working with declining or struggling churches. Over the next year we met weekly for prayer, Bible study, and leadership development. During the process the declining, struggling churches were partnered with healthy churches, and as they coached us we all began to experience growth both numerically and spiritually. In both cases the AM was the key.

Helping the declining, struggling church is just part of the solution. The other part is helping them to find a partnering church. Here the role of the AM is critical, and it is out of his networking relationship with his neighboring AMs, that sister churches can be approached and asked about partnering with a church that is issuing the “Macedonian Call.”

The role of the AM continues to be critical as the terms of the partnership are developed, demographic data is gathered, leadership development is provided, and the respective churches in the “Macedonian Call” partnership have questions or concerns.

Like the physician prescribing a cure to a sick patient, the AM knows that not every church will follow his advice and some will eventually die. Yet, his role is to be there, loving, encouraging, praying, and helping the churches in the association reach their respective communities for Christ, and when and where possible helping churches with the “Macedonian Call.”

- Bill Barker, National SBC Missionary (NAMB) to Appalachia

CONTRIBUTOR BIO:

Dr. Joe Wright is a native of East Tennessee where he attended the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Clinical Psychology. He then attended and earned a Master of Divinity Degree with a minor in Biblical Languages at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Dr. Wright has done numerous post-graduate studies including the Doctor of Ministry curriculum in Pastoral Leadership at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and also further received the Doctor of Ministry Degree from the Reformed Theological Seminary of Jackson, Mississippi. He has pastored churches in Tennessee, North Carolina and Mississippi and currently serves as the Director of Missions for the Dyer Baptist Association located in northwest Tennessee, a position he has held for over fifteen years. He and his wife Teresa, have two sons, Andrew and Micah. Andrew, wife Laura and grandson Everett, reside in Dyersburg, Tennessee. Micah and his wife Samantha, reside in Ely, Great Britain where Micah serves in the United States Air Force. Dr. Wright splits the majority of his time between serving the churches of Northwest Tennessee and spoiling his first grandson! He enjoys hunting, fishing and many other outdoor sports.



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