



GOING DEEPER

PILOT MOUNTAIN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

2020 VISION

I PRAY THAT YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH US IN THE FAITH MAY BE
EFFECTIVE IN **DEEPENING** YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF EVERY
GOOD THING WE SHARE FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6, NIV



Each day we are bombarded by a cacophony of messages. This ceaseless stream of images and sound bites occur from the time we wake up till the moment we lie our heads down to sleep. The problem is not just the sheer number of them, but the fact that they are not innocuous, neutral points of random data. They are appeals to access our attention and our resources, and heeding these messages shapes our lives.

For instance, we get enticements to buy the newest version of something that in actuality we really don't need. We are told that these things are necessary for a meaningful or productive life. Yet if the truth be told, it is often the novelty of newness that initially captures our imagination. Possessing something new makes us feel better about ourselves. We think that somehow, we are renewed by them. But a new car smell only lasts for so long. In a similar fashion, the latest smart phone can only boost your multi-tasking capacities to a certain degree in a life that is already jammed pack with activities.

In other scenarios we get invitations to participate in opportunities that offer greater satisfaction or increased effectiveness. We think, “This could be the key thing that gets me what I am looking for.” Unfortunately, these promises are never quite fulfilled in the way we hoped. The restlessness to matter and to do things that make a difference seem to always haunt us, leaving us more frustrated and confused.

Organizations, in similar fashion, are macro-reflections of the strengths, weaknesses and longings of a collective group of individuals. There is no doubt that great good can be done and creative enterprises can be established through a unified effort of people who are centered on the same objective. We have a myriad of examples, especially over the last sixty years, of how successful organizations leverage the ingenuity of their people to create and innovate that are oftentimes breathtaking.

However, if you ask any truly responsible leader about the challenges of collaborative work, they will tell you that there is constant pressure to make ensure that they help an organization not get ossified in past successes. A good leader has to walk the high wire of organizational effectiveness by balancing the executions of its mission today while keeping their eyes on the horizon for the next opportunity. That is one of the reasons why leadership is not for the faint in heart nor the lazy.

As you can see, all of the aforementioned realities of modern life are why it is easy in our age to become overwhelmed with the ceaseless stream of unending information; feel pressured about how to respond to the changing landscape of culture; or end up being jaded by unfulfilled promises and untapped potential. Thoreau was quite prophetic when he stated over a century ago, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.” Perhaps part of that desperation is being so overwhelmed that we don’t know what to do next.

But the good news that followers of Jesus possess is that we have been freed from the obsession to make life make sense (Gal. 5:1). The pressure to perpetually redefine and reengineer our lives in order to feel worthwhile has been removed. In Christ, we have been given every good thing we need to live a meaningful life (2 Pet. 1:3). This freedom enables us to gain an ever-increasing appreciation of what really matters. When we grasp this, we can focus on what is most important.

As our partners in the gospel, you have been a part of this kind of reclarification for the PMBA. Over the last three years we have rebuilt the Association around the mission of “helping member churches build lifelong followers of Jesus Christ.” To realign the PMBA around this mission we had to refine our strategies, refurbish our ministry structures and recalibrate our finances.

We do not claim any type of flawless execution on our renewed mission. We have made a few mistakes, missed some opportunities and at times not maximized what God has given us to do the work He has called us to fulfill. But we have been intentional, and positioned ourselves to be a learning mode so that we can make adjustments and shifts to embrace the mission of making more and better disciples of Jesus. This has thus far enabled us to do the following:

- Helped five local churches and one in Calgary, Canada get started
- Replanted one church and worked with others that are dying
- Provided resources to help churches intentionally and strategically look into ways they could revitalize through conferences, consultations & coaching
- Boosted our support of pastors and their families by providing heavily subsidized marriage conferences; free counseling; and initiated pastor appreciation banquets
- Increased greater ministry collaboration between churches by establishing Impact Groups for pastors throughout our diverse footprint
- Added eight new congregations to our network
- Assisted with two different mergers which resulted in healthier congregations
- Launched new prayer initiatives
- Expanded the Toy Store ministry to include new regions
- Increased our services to inner-city communities through growing our presence at multi-housing sites
- Contributed over \$50,000 to ministry needs across our state

We've seen in very tangible ways how our faith in God has led to multiple manifestations of his favor and blessing. These blessings have also highlighted for us how to more acutely focus our energies and resources to do an even better job in facilitating, encouraging and partnering with our churches in the primary mission of making disciples. This requires that we not necessarily diversify our approach, but rather go deeper in the following key areas.

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a prayer position. The hands are light-skinned and the background is dark, creating a high-contrast, intimate feel. The fingers are interlaced, and the thumbs are pressed against the palms.

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PRAYER

Years ago, one sage said that “Prayer is as essential to the Christian life as research is to science.” In other words, without prayer we are aimless, reckless and ill-equipped for the work before us. It is that important. For example, prayer was a core focus of how Jesus operated while he was here in earth. His life and ministry were fueled and shaped by his time with the Father (Mk. 1:35-39; Jn 17:2-26). He did nothing without the direction of God (Jn. 5:17).

In like manner, the early church flowed in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3-7; 2; 3:23-31; 5:1-11; 9:17; etc.). A quick study of Spiritual Awakenings throughout history reveals that prevailing prayer was the key to seeing God do supernatural, transformational work. All of these reasons are why the Association cannot afford not to bathe everything we do in prayer.

In order to help facilitate a disciple-making movement, we want to deepen our offerings for personal and corporate prayer. The Church Health Focus Team is planning on doing this by continuing to expand our “Spring Pastors Prayer Retreat.”

Added to this, we will be increasing our offerings of “Personal Prayer Retreats” for church leaders through the help of The Barnabas Center and Energize Ministry. This will be one-on-one guided time where a leader can receive refreshment and accelerated guidance from the Lord. We will also encourage all of our churches to get plugged into such resources like “Bless Every Home,” (see www.blesseveryhome.com), an application that enables you to pray for your neighbors by name. Finally, we are looking into offering a corporate prayer event for all of our churches to participate later in the Fall of 2020.

The background of the slide is a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a blue surface with a white grid pattern. Several colorful pushpins (red, yellow, and blue) are pinned to the grid lines. The text is centered over this image.

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REGIONAL APPROACH

When you have ninety-four churches in six counties, trying to lead a centralized approach to collaborative ministry is extremely difficult. It would be like seeking to have one outfit to wear for all occasions and all climates. Not only would this not work, it would create great frustration for the person trying to make it happen. In the same way, instead of taking a “one size fits all” angle, we want to contextualize ministry so points of commonality lead to greater collaboration.

We have sought to facilitate this regional approach by launching “Impact Groups” made up of pastors in eight areas. Justin Jones has done a solid job over the past two years to help us to establish some initial relational connections between pastors. The PMBA would not be in the position to take the next step without his dedicated service. We are now looking at going deeper by simplifying our structure and having the Executive Director work with the Church Health Focus Group to make this aspect of our Association a more central part of all that we do.



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COMMUNITY IMPACT & CHURCH PLANTING

Coupled with that is having our Community Impact Focus Group deepen its emphasis of engaging brokenness through the love of Christ by accessing this regionalizing tactic to get churches more effectively plugged into their areas.

This is already happening with our “Toy Store Ministry.” For over thirty years the PMBA has ministered to financially challenged families during Christmas by proving free toys for their children. As this ministry has grown, we have partnered with local Elementary Schools in different areas to obtain names of families in need. This has provided a greater opportunity to build relationships with these folks rather than simply relying on a yearly transactional process.

Based on this, over the next few years we are planning to not only expand our Toy Store offerings, we are also going deeper into our service of the communities within our footprint. This means that we will first help our churches build ongoing relationships with Elementary Schools within their areas. Some of you already are doing this. That is fantastic! What we want to do is help to get more churches on board since one church can’t possibly do all that is needed.

This will also mean we will either launch or partner with existing food pantries and connect them to the needs of children and their families in local Elementary Schools. Many already know that children in Forsyth County from

preschool to third grade are some highest ranked children in our entire country that are suffering from food insecurity. Children in other areas of our footprint aren't faring much better. Partnering with food pantries and schools will help make a difference, and Jesus will be lifted as we do this in his name.

But we are not just interested in important transactional ministries of blessing the marginalized. We know if there is no transformation of lives, patterns of brokenness will continue. We also know this can only happen as people become followers of Jesus. This is why we want to go deeper into ways through which we can connect the important work of helping people in need to pointing them to the source of true sustenance (Jn. 6:35; 7:38).

This means first a diversification of efforts. Over the last several years, David and Kathy Parsons have ministered to some of the poorest of the poor here in our footprint. But with the advent of new churches like Rise and Kingstree, and adding more churches that are getting involved the Parson's ministry to multi-housing units is changing from sustaining to initiating.

Part of this new focus is an opportunity for David to reach high-risk kids at a local high school. He has been given an invitation by a principal to mentor these young people using such materials as "The Purpose-Driven Life." They would continue their ministry in multi-housing, but more of it would be geared towards handing it off to others.

Another aspect of diversifying our regional impact is to minister to fathers of kids within Elementary Schools. One avenue for doing this is investigating a new partnership with "Mentor and Serve," a ministry to fathers of children in our communities started by former career educator and administrator Dr. Robert Landry. At its heart, this is a disciple-making ministry where churches bind together to

minister more effectively in the marketplace. Greg Mullis, Senior Pastor of Goodwill Baptist Church, is already plugged into this ministry and helps others in serving those that have children attending Pine Hall Elementary School.

Along these same lines, to help us execute on these expanded initiatives we have hired Craig Clayton to our new Community Missions Catalyst starting January 2020. Over the past year, David Parsons and Joe Maye have helped as part-time contract employees and have done admirable work in our communities. We have concluded that in order to expand our capabilities, we need a full-time person to help coordinate these efforts.

One-half of his responsibility will be to work with the Community Impact Team to accomplish our goal to get every church in our network more deeply involved in their communities. This will involve more integrated partnerships with our ethnic congregations; enhance our local ministry partnerships that are already working very well; and oversee our plans to add to what God is already blessing.

The other half of this role involves in expanding our Church Planting efforts. We have been blessed over the past three years to see new, diverse and healthy congregations established. We believe that having a staff member dedicated to helping congregations plant more congregations in strategic ways in partnership with other entities will help us to further impact lostness in our communities.

A close-up photograph of several small green seedlings with two leaves each, growing out of a brown, textured seedling tray. The background is dark and out of focus.

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REVITALIZATION & REPLANTING

As we seek to help churches more fully embrace the call to make disciples, we want to do all we can to boost this movement. Over the last year, we have sponsored several learning events to facilitate learning along these lines. Just this past March, we had the privilege of having over one-hundred-fifty people attend our first Annual “RENNOVATE!” Conference with Mark Clifton from the NAMB and Dove-Award winning singer Steve Green. Some have commented that this was one of the most uplifting experiences they’ve had in years.

Along with this, we have continued to help people attend such conference as “9Marks” at SEBTS, and sponsored key “Lunch-n-Learn” events that address particular needs. This November, we are offering a one-day event called “The Honest Conference” with Scott Davis and his training team that directly addresses the administrative needs pastors listed three years ago as some of their most pressing in their day-to-day duties. All of these events demonstrate our unwavering commitment to help our churches do all that they can to contextualize and fulfill God’s calling for them.

This coming year we are planning to go deeper in these efforts by doing four major things. First, by offering a follow-up on our past year’s success by offering another REVITALIZE! Conference focusing in on how disciple-making fits hand-in-glove with church revitalization. While last year was designed to expose people to the biblical foundations for revitalization, this year’s conference will go deeper into the nuts and bolts of how leaders can more fully align everything they do with building lifelong followers of Jesus. We are in the planning process of this event and you will be hearing more details in the coming events.

Second, we are not only offering another six-month cohort of our foundational training process called “ReFocus”

this coming January to June, we are also going to offer a Three-Day-Intensive Training of the same materials in the Fall. We know that the more we get churches to clearly, directly, prayerfully and strategically address their need for revitalization the more we will see the Lord help churches become more effective in following the Great Commission.

Third, this past June we added our Stuart Eaton to our staff as our “Revitalization Intern.” Stuart has already served as a wonderful re-connector to our African-American congregations. He has been learning a great deal about various models of successful planting, revitalization and replanting models here at the PMBA, and will be further assisting our Executive Director in helping the PMBA assess congregational health across our footprint.

Finally, based on several requests he has received, the Executive Director is writing some discipleship materials that can help get the ball rolling for churches as they want to go deeper in the lifelong journey of helping people become more fully committed disciples. This twelve-week resource is going to be called “The Path: Following Jesus in the Journey of Love.” This will be a self-published resource that will be available during the first quarter of 2020 at cost for members of our churches.



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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Over the past few years we have concentrated on ways in which we can encourage leaders in our congregations. The two main ways we have sought to do this is through large events. The first is our “Marriage Enrichment Retreat.” This has been hugely successful. But because there is always room for improvement, we are looking for ways to boost this offering. We are planning to move the event from a Friday night through Sunday morning format to a Thursday to Saturday morning set up. We hope to get more folks on board with this adjustment.


Our second major event is the “Fall Pastor’s Appreciation Banquet.” This is always a fun highlight. Over the last two years it has grown in attendance. Relationships have been forged and strengthened as a result of this time together. We are constantly looking for ways to reach more people, and believe that this year we will top the one-hundred mark in attendance.

In addition to these stellar offerings, we want to expand our free counseling services to ministers and their family members through our partnership with The Barnabas Center. This past year we have helped over on-half dozen pastors with some counseling needs. Next year we want to deepen our commitment to this by offering up to three “Marriage Check-Up Visits” to pastors and their spouses. While we still desire to offer just in time services to people when they need it, we setting aside funds to do just that for 2020.

Finally, we are looking into creating some “Leadership Development Training Modules” for next year, with the desire to launch at lease one new effort in 2020. We know that pastoral leadership has its own unique opportunities and pressures. It is our desire to be able to offer training that will add great dividends to a minister’s capacity to lead. We will be sharing more in the future as to what that looks like early in 2020.

The background is a full-page underwater photograph. It shows a deep blue ocean with sunlight filtering down from the surface, creating a series of bright, shimmering rays and a dappled light effect. The water has a slightly rippled texture, and there are some small, dark particles or bubbles visible in the lower part of the frame.

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An underwater photograph showing sunlight filtering through the surface of the water, creating a shimmering effect with many small, bright spots of light scattered throughout the deep blue water. The light rays are visible, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

When you put all of this together you begin to see a picture of how the PMBA can make good things better under the overall purpose of helping our churches facilitate a disciple-making movement. God is at work in the PMBA in some very encouraging ways. The Leadership Team of the Association believes that we are poised to see some tremendous expansion in our overall Kingdom impact. Please pray for our collective wisdom; give generously to increase partnership in the Gospel; and plug into these upcoming incredible events and chances to serve for the glory of Jesus Christ.

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