



Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer
Sept. 8-15 missionillinois.org

Blessed to bless others



Our neighbors
need to know Jesus Christ.

Our children and teens
need to grow in their faith.

Our churches
need strong leaders and
clear vision.

Our communities
need a gospel witness—
because in many places
there is none.

This is a once-a-year opportunity to support missions that are especially important to people in Illinois.

Through your missions gifts, IBSA is able to help churches make disciples. The 2019 Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer features three churches engaging their communities with the gospel. Your gifts will provide encouragement and equipping by IBSA missionaries. Together, we will train the next generation of leaders, plant new churches, and share Christ everywhere He is needed.

From Chicago to Cairo, East St. Louis to Westville, and points in between, IBSA churches are being equipped and strengthened to share Christ, baptize new believers, and make disciples.

Because Baptists in Illinois have been so blessed by God, we are able to bless others.

**[Please pray about your
missions offering.]**

Illinois Baptist State Association

Give them the gospel

A new ministry reignited this church's passion

Outside the white wooden First Baptist Church building, Atwood is quiet on Wednesday evening. A few parents stroll babies on the sidewalks, and a group of teen boys walks toward the school gym, basketball in hand. This community of just over 1,000 people is minutes from Illinois' Amish country.

From the church parking lot, though, the thump, thump, thump of a bass line played over stereo speakers gets louder at the door. Inside the darkened auditorium, children and teens swing their arms and stomp their feet—matching the motions of a worship leader onstage.

This is Ignite, FBC Atwood's year-old ministry for kids and students. On this Wednesday night, Pastor **Lanny Faulkner** will baptize 17 young people who came to Christ through Ignite or another of the church's ministries for kids and teens. (The church baptized 15 people total last year.)

His church understands the statistics, Faulkner said. Most people that come to faith in Christ do so at a young age.

"If we're going to change the world, we have to change Atwood," said Faulkner, who has led the church since 2006. "If we're going to change Atwood, we have to reach children and young families."



FAULKNER

Braving a new world

The generation coming of age now has experienced the world in a completely different way than the adults leading them at church, said **Jimmy Hammond**, an IBSA associate who facilitates student ministry around the state.

"For us, the challenge is learning how to see things from their perspective, so we can find meaningful ways to connect to them," Hammond said. Throughout the year, IBSA sponsors camps and conferences for kids of all ages, and training opportunities specifically tailored for children's and youth leaders.

Those events are possible because of the Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer. Collected in September in churches across Illinois, the Offering

helps provide missions and ministry that address critical needs in the state. MIO also supports IBSA personnel like Director of Next Generation Ministries Jack Lucas.

As IBSA and church leaders partner together to reach the next generation, they recognize the window is narrow. A 2004 Barna study found that 43% of Americans who profess faith in Jesus do so before they turn 13, and 64% before their 18th birthday.

The next generation presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for church leaders. They see the problems in the world around them, Hammond said, but they're not content to sit idly. They want to be involved; they want to make a difference. "But they're just not sure how to do that.

"We know the answer to that: the gospel's the way to make the biggest, most meaningful change in the world."

In the world, and in Atwood. Every Wednesday at the beginning of Ignite, attendees read or recite a 30-second gospel summary. Ignite leaders say they've heard kids sharing the gospel summary at school. And Faulkner recently baptized an entire family that came to Christ after the children heard the gospel every week. The parents, sitting at the back of the auditorium, heard it too, and responded in faith.

Finding what works

For 25 years, FBC Atwood church hosted a successful Wednesday night children's ministry that depended on many teachers. When the number of available teachers dwindled, the church had to get a new vision for the ministry. They tweaked the structure so that fewer teachers are required. The church saw an average of 120 young people every Wednesday during Ignite's first year.

Some things are the same, though. Faulkner still rides the church bus on Wednesday nights as it picks up a dozen or more children from neighboring communities. The pastor serves as bus captain (or monitor); the driver is a deputy sheriff who has been transporting kids to and from the church for 25 years. His wife, who recently passed away, started the original kids' ministry in Atwood. Together, Faulkner said, the couple is responsible for hundreds of kids coming to know Christ.

On Wednesday nights in Atwood, the message is also the same as it always has been.

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation," Faulkner says. "It's not preaching ability, teaching ability, how exciting the music is. The thing that brings people under conviction, the things that bring them to repentance and faith, is the gospel."

▶ Watch the 2019 MIO video on next gen ministry at MissionIllinois.org

▶ Also download a mission study for children.

Day 1: Sunday, Sept. 8

Evangelism

Pat Pajak has a heart for the state of Illinois, where at least 8 million of our 13 million neighbors don't know Christ. IBSA's associate executive director of evangelism encourages use of NAMB's "Who's your one?" prayer focus and "Three Circles" witnessing tool as he trains hundreds of churches in faith-sharing each year.



PAT PAJAK

Pray for the evangelism team and churches across Illinois as we continue to take on the great lostness in our state. Pray for evangelistic zeal for all our churches. And pray for your "one" person who needs to hear the gospel, perhaps for the first time, from you.

Day 2: Monday, Sept. 9

Grand calling

IBSA aids Illinois Baptists in reaching their "one" by equipping churches to share the gospel and baptize new believers. More than 700 people were baptized throughout the month of April. Called "One GRAND Month," this statewide evangelism outreach was a continuation from last year's "One GRAND Sunday," when more than 400 people were baptized on the same Sunday.

Pray for those who were brave enough to stand up during One Grand Month to share how their lives were changed by new-found faith in Christ. Pray for IBSA churches to reach unbelieving people with the gospel throughout the year.

Day 3: Tuesday, Sept. 10

Church Planting

Everyone Hears is a new initiative from IBSA to saturate the state of Illinois with the gospel of Jesus Christ, starting with concentrated efforts in places without a gospel witness. Church planting director **Eddie Pullen** uses this initiative to train churches to give every man, woman, and child multiple opportunities to hear the gospel. Many of those *Everyone Hears* churches will help start a new church in their target community.



EDDIE PULLEN

Pray for the IBSA and NAMB church planting catalysts who are committed that everyone hears the gospel in Illinois.

Day 4: Wednesday, Sept. 11

Our largest mission field

About two million people who now call Illinois home were born outside the U.S. Second-generation church planting catalyst **John Yi** and strategist **Jorge Melendez** work with churches in Chicago-land, reaching families who have migrated to the bustling region.



JOHN YI



JORGE MELENDEZ

These newer residents may not speak English, but their children are quickly becoming assimilated. Both men work with families and new churches so everyone can hear the gospel in their heart language.

Pray for IBSA's church planting team who are uniquely fitted to reach generations of families that others may not.

Day 5: Thursday, Sept. 12

Next Gen

IBSA helps churches reach children, youth, and college students through VBS, missions events, Youth Encounter, and summer camps at Lake Salateeska and Streator conference centers. Children attend these events to learn more about Christ, while teens are given avenues to grow in Christ while serving others throughout the year. With 1.5 million families in Illinois and 3 million children and teens, this is a big missions responsibility.



JACK LUCAS

Pray for next gen director **Jack Lucas**, camp managers **Philip Hall** and **Mike Young**, and their ministry teams as they lead churches and train up the next generations for Christ.

Day 6: Friday, Sept. 13

Missions Mobilization

Mission trips are once-in-a-lifetime experiences, every time you go. Whether a trip is near or far, those who go are given the chance to witness God at work in ways they never could have planned. As IBSA's director of women's ministry and church missions, **Carmen Halsey** has seen God move time and again on mission trips. Part of her job is to train volunteers to share Christ in new environments, which will then help people share Christ more in their daily life at home.



CARMEN HALSEY

Pray for IBSA mission mobilizers. Pray for 22,000 Illinois Baptists who serve in long-term and short-term missions. Pray about your personal commitment to missions nearby and far away.

Day 7: Saturday, Sept. 14

Leaders and vision

Nate Adams and the IBSA leadership team guide ministry to revitalize churches, plant new churches, and advance the gospel in Illinois. Nate has served as executive director since 2006. Like others on the team, he travels the length and breadth of our vast mission field, encouraging church leaders. In 2015, IBSA launched the zone consultants, who train leaders in 10 regions. And with a renewed focus on revitalization, IBSA is helping churches grow strong even as bringing a gospel witness in the current culture becomes more challenging.



NATE AND BETH ADAMS

Pray for Nate and his wife, **Beth**, and the IBSA leadership team, as they travel, train, and minister to Baptists in every corner of Illinois.

Day 8: Sunday, Sept. 15

Giving day

Today, and perhaps for the rest of the month, churches will collect the Mission Illinois Offering. This annual collection supports ministries in Illinois that are important to the people of Illinois. And they are funded particularly by Baptists in our state. Just as Lottie Moon gifts support International missionaries, and Annie Armstrong gifts support North American missionaries, the Mission Illinois Offering supports missionaries right here at home. Discipling kids at camp, training the next generation of leaders, reaching newcomers and long-time residents who don't know Jesus, churches in need, and strong mission partners sharing Christ. That's all because you give.

Pray for the missionaries and staff of IBSA, that God may give favor to their work and open doors for the gospel. Pray for Illinois Baptists who support their work, that they may give generously today.

EVANGELISM

A box of names

The gospel reaches from jailhouse to church house

Jared Sexton was pacing back and forth in his jail cell. "I was like, 'Man, I don't know why I keep doing this... I don't even want to live this way. I know not to live this way. I keep doing it over and over and over and over again.'"

His cellmate handed him a King James Bible and told him, "You need to read Romans 7." In the complex passage, Paul complains about committing sins that he hates. Sexton had a hard time understanding the Apostle's words, but, "I was like, 'OK, well this sounds exactly like what I was just saying.'" He wanted to know more.

He began drinking at a young age. "I was always in trouble, in and out of jail, and rehabs, boot camps, prison—I've been to every one of them....I was literally at a point where the only thing I could do is look to God." That was the point when he found himself in a jail cell with four other inmates, one of whom had just returned from a Bible study of Romans 7.

When Sexton bonded out of jail, he went home and found a Contemporary English Version Bible someone had given him. "I read it and it just blew my mind...I read the Bible [before] and nothing ever clicked. This time was completely different. It was like everything was jumping out at me.

"For the first time in my life I took a real look at what sin meant in my life...I wanted to know more what that meant. And so, I knew the perfect place to go; that was church."

Sexton went to Metropolis First Baptist Church where his boss is a member and his grandparents had taken him a few times as a child. There, Sexton met **Cliff Easter**, the church's youth and missions pastor, and gave his life to Christ.

Metropolis First is deeply involved in evangelism and missions through local outreach ministries, international mission trips, and church planting mission trips to Chicago. Easter said, "It's not complicated. It's just, 'Go, reach somebody.' We've incorporated that into some of our discipleship training that we've just begun in our church."

That's my 'one'

IBSA's Pat Pajak led an evangelism training in the local association, as he does across the state, sharing the "Who's Your One" evangelism concept in which members pray for the people they know to find salvation in Christ. Three times in the past two years, Pajak has urged churches to dedicate one Sunday or a month of Sundays to a baptism emphasis, and baptisms in Illinois increased almost 7% last year.

The Metropolis church keeps cards at the front of the auditorium for members to write the names of people who need Christ. The cards are an important part of the evangelism effort. "Every Wednesday night at our prayer meeting, we distribute every single one of those cards, and as a church we pray over them," Easter said. "There are hundreds of names in the box.

"The idea is, if you put someone's name on a card in the box, you're praying for them, and you're looking for opportunities to share the gospel with them."

The first name Sexton put in the box was his childhood friend, **Dakota Stevens**. "We all began praying for Dakota," Easter said. "You could tell that God was at work in him, and sure enough Dakota came to repentance and faith in Christ."

"I don't know when he put my name in there, or what date it was, but it obviously worked.... The power of prayer does work. It'll move anything in front of you," Stevens said.

Sexton, as a Christian and member in good standing at Metropolis First, had the privilege of baptizing his friend. "I came up out of the water... I was like, it's a helping hand that he's always had," Stevens said. "He's good about that. If he cares about you that man will help you no matter what."

Sexton knows he is blessed to bless others to share the gospel, especially his old friends. "I'll try to say some things related to the Word that are happening in my life. Whether it be with prayer, or a blessing God has shown me...I just pray...that something that they heard, something catches their attention that just breaks a little bit of the resistance away from them."



EASTER



- ▶ Watch the 2019 MIO video on evangelism at MissionIllinois.org
- ▶ Also download a mission study for teens.

How will they hear?

New initiative aims for gospel saturation in dry places

Shawn and Paige Ruffino live in Sesser, a small town of about 2,000 people in far south Franklin County. Sesser is Paige's hometown, and Shawn says he has come to love it as his own. That's why he's concerned for the spiritual future of the people who live there.

Likewise, the leaders of the church where the Ruffinos are members, Immanuel Baptist Church in nearby Benton, are continually growing in their concern for lost people in Benton and Sesser, and throughout their county. "We've been praying at Immanuel for many years for the 26,000 who are lost in our county," Pastor **Sammy Simmons** said. "I desperately want everyone to hear the gospel."

Simmons has led Immanuel Church to join a new IBSA initiative called *Everyone Hears*. In our state of nearly 13-million people, at least 8-million don't know Jesus as their personal savior. In many places lostness seems especially great. And there are pockets of hope, where churches are focused on sharing the gospel with everyone who will listen. *Everyone Hears* aims to organize those efforts, with an evangelism cycle that begins with prayer, and moves through specific activities to demonstrate caring, sharing the gospel, baptizing new believers, and where there is an emerging core group, starting new churches.

"The purpose of *Everyone Hears* is that every man, woman, boy, and girl in a certain region can hear the gospel multiple times in ways they can understand," said Eddie Pullen, IBSA's church planting strategist who is leading the initiative. So far, 25 IBSA churches across the state are participating in *Everyone Hears*, targeting their own communities, or areas nearby.



RUFFINO



"How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Romans 10:14-15).

Immanuel Baptist is seeking to reach their county, and Benton and Sesser in particular. At Easter, the church cancelled events at their campus and took worship services outdoors in both communities. About 200 people attended in Sesser, and at least 60 of them had no church affiliation.

The church has engaged in other activities, including praying for lost individuals by name on many occasions, giving away groceries, working to improve the park, hosting opening ceremonies for local ball teams. Bible distribution and a social media campaign are next steps on their outreach list.

"The idea of gospel saturation really hit my heart," Simmons said. "It's not just the idea that we want somebody to hear the gospel once and think that's good enough. Surveys say sometimes it takes seven times where somebody hears the gospel before they make a decision for Christ. And so we want to saturate our area with the gospel such that you can't miss it."

Immanuel Church is engaged in international missions, spreading the gospel in Uganda through 12 trips in eight years. But, the pastor said, "we can't ignore the reality that there are people who have never heard in our own backyard."

Shawn Ruffino agrees. "We believe it can happen right here; gospel saturation can start right here." That's why Ruffino is leading outreach in Sesser. He chokes up as he says, "Jesus changes us, and he can save us, and he can use us no matter what we've been through."

Or where we live.



- ▶ Watch the 2019 MIO video on Everyone Hears at MissionIllinois.org.
- ▶ Also download a mission study for adults.

Share the stories of missions in Illinois

IBSA helps churches **share Christ, make disciples, develop leaders, and start new churches**. These videos show some of the work supported by Mission Illinois Offerings.



Next-Gen Ministries

IBSA trains ministry leaders for students, from pre-K through college. This story from FBC Atwood shows a church that successfully focuses on reaching young people with the gospel, in ways both old and new.



Sharing Christ

At least 8-million people in Illinois don't know Jesus as their Savior, but when churches train members to share their faith, great things happen. As in this story featuring a former convict and FBC Metropolis.



Everyone Hears

Many Illinois places have no evangelical witness. IBSA helps churches, such as Immanuel Baptist in Benton, saturate their communities with the gospel, to reach new people and start new churches.



Illinois Focus

State missions is about ministry and gospel advance right here. **Nate Adams** tells how IBSA missionaries develop leaders, mobilize volunteers for missions, and equip churches to share Christ. And it's possible because churches, like yours, partner with IBSA to bless Illinois.

These stories are on the 2019 DVD. Download the videos and additional resources at MissionIllinois.org

- ▶ **Prayer guides** for use in the Sunday bulletin
- ▶ **Mission studies** for children, teens, and adults
- ▶ **Promotion materials** for the Offering & Week of Prayer

Order additional free materials at MIO@IBSA.org.

Pray about your gift to State Missions in September



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