

Prayer guide inside



Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer September 13-20, 2020



The pandemic demands a fresh approach to state missions.

Together,
we're doing it.

The second week of September is the time each year that we ask for prayer for state missions, and receive a special offering for our work together as Illinois Baptists. This year, the Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer looks different, because this year is different.

Rather than sharing missions and evangelism stories from across the state, we thought we should focus on response to the pandemic. Nothing like this has happened in our lifetimes. And nothing has had a more dramatic impact on churches and on ministry, demanding the best from all of us.

This year, IBSA has turned our ministry to meet the urgent needs of churches during this time. We have used the word

“pivot” often since March. With church facilities closed and worship services severely limited, our missionaries and staff turned to problem solving and ministry innovation to help churches find new ways to serve. We have found churches resilient and eager to learn and adapt. We have all grown stronger during this time of crisis.

2020 is the year we all leaned into this significant challenge. And this was possible because Illinois churches gave generously to support state missions. Thank you, and we welcome your continued prayers and support.

Nate Adams
IBSA Executive Director



Ministry innovation



Community transformation



Church revitalization

The Week of Prayer September 13-20 (or any week you choose)

Day 1: Sunday, Sept. 13

Crisis

It is in crisis that our faith is tested. And it is in testing that our preparation is proven. The work of all our churches was tried in the pandemic that closed our buildings and demanded new ministries. IBSA continues to find new ways to equip leaders, revitalize churches, and encourage sharing the gospel on our Illinois mission field. Illinois Baptists stand ready to share the life-giving gospel—because we have been prepared. By turning to face the need and altering our work to fit the situation, our churches and state association prove ready to minister.

Pray for the IBSA Executive Team to lead effective ministry that empowers churches to share Christ, even as the recovery continues.

Day 2: Monday, Sept. 14

Innovation

The immediate response of our churches to the pandemic was to develop new ways of teaching and gathering online. IBSA created multiple webinars, videos, and downloadable resources to assist in shepherding even when our church members are apart. Our ministry teams brought pastors together with experts to offer fresh insight. Through innovation, Illinois Baptists turned crisis into opportunity. We helped churches reshape their ministries; we encouraged and explained available technologies. Together we found new ways to share Christ, expanding our witness to the more than 8 million people in Illinois who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior.

Pray for IBSA missionaries, church planters, and pastors who are constantly reinventing ministry to meet today's needs.

Day 3: Tuesday, Sept. 15

Leadership

Everything rises and falls on leadership, pastor John Maxwell says. In a trying season, leaders rise to the challenge. But many pastors tell us their number-one need in the local congregation is effective leaders. IBSA is equipping church leaders through peer groups, learning cohorts, training nights across the state, and webinars. Our teams lead training in evangelism, discipleship, missions, and worship, for all age groups. Plus, IBSA zone consultants meet in person on request to engage pastors in personal development and help churches see their ministry needs.

Pray for the Leadership Development Team and consultants in 10 Illinois zones who share insight on site to encourage churches and pastors.

Day 4: Wednesday, Sept. 16

Transformation

For communities in need, transformation looks like chaplains ready to assist first responders. It's Disaster Relief volunteers distributing masks and disinfectant. It's zone consultants organizing prayer meetings and support for pastors and local association leaders in hard hit areas. It's Illinois Baptists mobilized to deliver groceries and hot meals. It's pastors surveying damage on the front lines, and standing strong for the gospel where it is so desperately needed. Transformation is the kingdom coming to earth, to Illinois, through the work of our churches and state association, living the reality of the gospel in the crucible of crisis.

Pray for the Mobilization Team, including leaders in missions and campus ministries across Illinois.

Executive Team



Nate Adams
Executive Director



Barb Troeger
Executive Assistant



John Carruthers
Church Engagement
Coordinator



Mark Emerson
Associate Executive
Director

Leadership Development Team



Carmen Halsey
Leadership
Development Director



Ben Jones
Leadership
Development Director



Jack Lucas
Leadership
Development Director



Tammy Butler
Ministry Assistant



Linda Darden
Ministry Assistant



Aubrey Krol
Ministry Assistant

Camps



Brock Vandever
Manager
Lake Sallateeska
Baptist Camp



Jacob Kimbrough
Manager
Streator
Baptist Camp

Zone Consultants



Nathan Carter
Zone 1



Bryan Price
Zone 1



Joe Oliver
Zone 2



Pat Pajak
Zone 3



Brian McWethy
Zone 4



Joe Gardner
Zone 5



Cliff Woodman
Zone 6



Bob Evaul
Zone 7



Larry Rhodes
Zone 8



Steve Neill
Zone 9



Ashby Tillery
Zone 10

Prayer Guide

Day 5: Thursday, Sept. 17

Priority

When Coronavirus caused cancellation of the Priority Women's Conference, the leadership team took the meeting online and participation grew dramatically. When the state government limited meeting sizes, IBSA communicated the needs of our churches to the governor's office. When churches were faced with balancing public health and religious freedom, IBSA held online town halls to help pastors with their own response. And our Communications Team multiplied their reporting of news, resources, and encouraging words. The pandemic has shown that skillful church leaders can be nimble, wise, and strong. By working together as an association, our churches reach more people more effectively. And our Illinois Baptist voice is heard, in Springfield and across Illinois.

Pray for our women's ministry leaders and Communications Team who give hands, feet, and voice to the missions work of Illinois Baptists.

Day 6: Friday, Sept. 18

Revitalization

2020 has put Illinois Baptist churches to the test. The same is true for IBSA's new team focused on church revitalization. With 80% of SBC churches plateaued or declining, revitalization is an important specialized ministry to help pastors and leaders turn congregations in the right direction: upward and outward. While Coronavirus caused most congregations to shut down, IBSA's missionaries offered training for new ministries through webinars and other content. We found the skills of revitalization can be learned online. And the activities of revitalization work even when church meetings are limited.

Pray for the Church Revitalization Team and churches that tackle renewing growth in a declining culture.

Day 7: Saturday, Sept. 19

Mobilization

Most years, IBSA helps churches mobilize 20,000 or more volunteers on local and global mission fields. This year, the pandemic prevented sending teams abroad or even across the state. Instead, our state missionaries focused on aiding Disaster Relief workers with COVID-19 response and connecting frontline responders with trained Southern Baptist chaplains. Our teams engaged churches in virtual mission trips and prayer events. And planning for the next round of missions continues, just as soon as it's possible to put boots on the ground.

Pray for future mission teams as they develop relationships with new, unreached people groups; pray for Illinois Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers, and SBC-endorsed chaplains in healthcare facilities throughout the state.

Day 8: Sunday, Sept. 20

Giving

Today is Giving Sunday for State Missions. Your offering supports all the work of IBSA in ordinary times and in crisis times. While some state conventions are scaling back ministries and selling camps facilities due to pandemic-related financial difficulties, IBSA is able to move forward with ministries that meet current needs. We hired two new managers in anticipation of reopening our camps and resuming discipleship events for students and adults. Please consider the effective ministry your generous offering makes possible.

Pray for the Operations Team who handle the business ministry of the state association; pray for managers and staff of IBSA Camps who lead life-changing experiences at Lake Sallateeska and Streator Baptist Camps.

Communications Team



Eric Reed
Administrative
Director



Meredith Flynn
Content Manager



Kris Kell
Production
Manager



Lisa Misner
Social Media & Public
Policy Manager



Leah Honnen
Administrative
Assistant

Revitalization Team



Scott Foshie
Revitalization Director



Tammy Ratsch
Ministry Assistant

Mobilization Team



Brad Lovin
Administrative
Director/Missions



Eddie Pullen
Church Planting
Director



Kevin Jones
Church Planting
Director



Butch Porter
Disaster Relief



Ken Wilson
CP – Catalyst
Central, Southern Regions



John Yi
CP – Catalyst
Northeast Region



Tim Bailey
CP – Catalyst
Northeast Region



Jorge Melendez
CP – Catalyst



Kim Ayers
Ministry Assistant



Debbie Muller
Ministry Assistant

Operations Team



Jeff Deasy
Administrative
Director



Carole Doom
Administrative
Coordinator



Drew Heironimus
Information & Technology
Services Director



Kendra Jackson
Bookkeeper



Ashley Parsons
Accountant



State missions turns to pandemic

Necessary 'pivot' is focus of annual missions giving and prayer week

Illinois | His church's shutdown during the COVID-19 pandemic was hard on Pastor **Autry Watkins**. "I love everything that has to do with gathering as a church body," said the pastor of Transformation Church in South Chicago Heights.

But like nearly every other pastor in the U.S. and across the world, Watkins halted in-person gatherings to help stop the spread of Coronavirus. He missed his church, he said, but the time away served as a valuable training ground for the pastor, aided by resources and connections provided by IBSA.

The state association pivoted early on to help churches navigate the COVID-19 crisis. Watkins called it "leg work." During the shutdown, IBSA missionaries worked behind the scenes to guide his church and others toward new ministry opportunities and to prepare for the future—whenever and whatever that future is.

The 2020 Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer is focused on the vital partnership between IBSA and Baptist churches in the state—a collaboration that has been key in navigating this uncharted territory. These challenging times have reinforced the need for consultation, advocacy, and connection in a state where more than 8 million people do not know Christ.

The shifts required by the global pandemic have demonstrated the importance of the training and equipping work IBSA does every day—in "normal" times. The Mission Illinois Offering supports developing church leaders for evangelism, discipleship, and worship. And the offering makes possible additional missions and church planting, beyond the regular Cooperative Program channel.

Illinois Baptists give about \$350,000 through MIO most years. As all churches and ministries face financial challenges right now because of COVID-19 limitations, IBSA needs more generous support to sustain missions and advance kingdom work.

The pandemic has tested our ability to adapt ministry to take on a crisis. MIO gives all our churches an opportunity to prove our continued commitment to the salvation and transformation of Illinois.

Pastors seek input for crisis ministry

As the global pandemic began to affect churches in Illinois, reliable information was hard to come by, said Pastor **Don Hannel**. With so many unknowns and the news changing daily, or hourly, First Baptist Church in Pleasant Hill needed resources they could trust.

IBSA's Church Helps webinars, which launched as most churches stopped meeting in-person, were a valuable resource for his church, Hannel said. "We were just grabbing hold of those, because we needed something with some stability."

Even as IBSA staff pivoted to working remotely, Hannel said the Association found its niche with online resources. "One of the things I appreciate about IBSA is they were coming alongside us, and they transitioned so quickly into helping churches with this new crisis that we were facing."

A Church Helps webpage became an online repository for resources on virtual worship, online giving, pastoring from a distance, and outreach opportunities. As the pandemic's early weeks stretched into months, webinars and resources helped churches know how to make their own pivots, from regular summer programming to socially distanced or virtual options.

Along with the webinars, IBSA also hosted online prayer gatherings and two virtual town hall meetings to help churches with challenges relating to reopening and relaunching ministries. **Denver Ayres**, pastor of Logan Street Baptist Church in Mt. Vernon, said the pandemic-related resources helped his church navigate competing priorities in the reopening process.

As his church has tried to balance what is practical and what is right, Ayres said, resources from IBSA have helped settle his heart.

"We've been trying to find the right time to come back and the right way to come back," he said. "That's where IBSA has been such a blessing."

IBSA missionaries deliver information and care

Hannel's church relocated five years ago to a new facility they built on the edge of town. IBSA has been with his church through the process of leaving their century-old downtown building,



and discovering new ways to reach their community.

"They have always been there for us, to encourage us and equip us, and help us to meet the challenges of growing in a transitioning and a relocating church."

Watkins, too, said he benefited from partnership with IBSA even before COVID-19. The state association has provided him with resources to grow as a pastor, he said. Sometimes, those resources came in the form of conferences like the state and regional leadership summits hosted by the state association. Watkins said he can also rely on guidance from John Yi, an IBSA church planting catalyst in Chicagoland.

The long-time ministry leader has a knack for identifying issues or areas of challenge, and following up with help and support. "He's just someone who is always open and always available to help with resources," Watkins said.

Yi and other church planting strategists serve across the state, as do IBSA zone consultants who stand ready to resource churches and local associations. In the COVID era, zone consultants have kept in touch with churches, relaying needs, challenges, and best practices.

At Watkins's church, the congregation is in transition mode as normal operations continue to be affected by the pandemic. They've always strived to be a Monday through Saturday church that gathers on Sunday for worship, the pastor said. The pandemic has pushed the church to evaluate its reliance on the Sunday morning gathering, and make adjustments for the future.

IBSA has been there, and will keep on being there—ready to provide resources to help churches pivot toward more effective ministry.

"They are an organization that seeks to help pastors," Watkins said.



AUTRY WATKINS



DON HANNEL



DENVER AYRES

Be a champion for state missions.

Please encourage your church to participate.

- ▶ Order posters, prayer guides, offering envelopes, and DVDs at MIO@IBSA.org
- ▶ Download additional materials, including online memes and clip art, videos, and mission studies at missionillinois.org



Illinois Baptist State Association
3085 Stevenson Drive • Springfield, IL 62703

This Mission Illinois special section is a supplement to the *Illinois Baptist* newspaper, published by IBSA and provided free of charge for IBSA church members through Cooperative Program giving. Additional copies of this special section are available for distribution in IBSA churches to promote prayer and missions giving. Contact MIO@IBSA.org or call (217) 391-3119 to order MIO materials.