



Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer

Mission Study Guide and Plans for a Prayer Gathering

2020 has been like no other year, and the annual **Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer** is following suit. To help your church continue to promote state missions amid the challenges of virtual or limited in-person gatherings, we've created a simple mission study plan that can be used for groups of all sizes, and participants of all ages. Adapt this curriculum for your online small group, socially distanced prayer meeting, or family devotion time.

- Suitable for home, church, or Zoom meetings.
- Adaptable for all ages.
- **Materials needed: Bible for each participant**
- **MIO video, "Crazy Times," available at MissionIllinois.org**
- **In addition to the prayer session plan outlines here, a prayer guide can be downloaded from MissionIllinois.org.**

Thank you for being a champion for missions and ministry in Illinois!

► Introduction

The 2020 Mission Illinois Offering emphasis is different than other years. Rather than sharing missions and evangelism stories, we're focusing on the response of Illinois Baptists to the COVID-19 crisis. Over the last several months, IBSA and churches across the state have made ministry "pivots" to continue reaching their communities despite challenging circumstances.

The spiritual need in Illinois is great: In a state of almost 13 million people, more than 8 million people don't know Christ as their Savior. IBSA's Church Planting Team has identified 200 places in need of a new church. In addition to that, everyone is experiencing the stresses related to COVID-19 and periodic isolation. It's a lonely, trying time; and people need spiritual encouragement.

That's our mission right now.



▶ Read and discuss: Psalm 121.

How is God near people who need him?

How have we experienced his care for ourselves or for others during the COVID-19 pandemic?



▶ Watch

“Crazy Times” video at [MissionIllinois.org](https://www.missionillinois.org).

▶ Brainstorm

What ministry pivots did you note in the video we just watched? What ministry pivots has our church made over the past few months to maintain effective ministry, or create new outreach opportunities? What pivots might be needed next?

▶ Prayer Focus

This year’s Week of Prayer is focused on **innovation**, **revitalization**, and **transformation**—all things that are necessary for ministry in this crisis season, and all things God can do despite challenging circumstances.

Pray with your small group or family through these three concepts. Ask different people around your room or table to pray for each request.

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. Thank God for technology that has enabled new ministry this season, and pray for IBSA missionaries, church planters, and pastors who are constantly reinventing ministry to meet today’s needs.

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, we found revitalization works even when church meetings are limited. Pray for churches across the state working to engage their communities with creative, redemptive ministry that points to Jesus.

Transformation. Despite the global pandemic, **churches have seen real change in their communities**, for the better. Over meals handed out and drive-in worship services, they’ve forged new connections with people. Disaster Relief volunteers have traveled across Illinois to deliver vital supplies. Thank God for the opportunities to serve; and ask him to show our church the places in our community he wants to transform.

► **Brainstorm**

How can our church be a champion for state missions? Consider these options:

- **Set a goal** for the 2020 Mission Illinois Offering
- **Share short devotions** on social media during the Week of Prayer, Sept. 13-20
- **Designate a time to pray** through each day of the prayer guide
- **Promote MIO** with online small groups and classes
- Your own ideas: _____

► **Plan ahead for our next mission mobilization project**

Most mission teams were forced to postpone their 2020 trips and projects due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **But now is a perfect time to plan for 2021 and beyond.** Plus, as many mission volunteers in Illinois have proved this year, there are always ways to reach out with the love of Christ.

Spend a few minutes dreaming about our church's mission strategy for next year.

Or start planning how your family will intentionally engage people with the gospel. It may be helpful to sketch out your plan using the Acts 1:8 model:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

How will we serve our—

- **Jerusalem** (near our church): _____
- **Judea** (state of Illinois): _____
- **Samaria** (North America): _____
- **The ends of the earth** (International mission fields): _____

Another way to start planning:

- **Look at our church or small group.** What skills, interests, and abilities are represented here?
- **What needs are you aware of in our community** that our church is especially equipped to meet?

► **Closing Prayer**

Conclude your study with a prayer for missions and ministry in Illinois, for Giving Sunday Sept. 20, and for your personal missions commitment.