

Wright Word December 2015 – February 2016
Brother Thomas Wright

“For We Cannot Stop Speaking About What We Have Seen and Heard.”

Acts 4:20 (HCSB) shows the importance of sharing the Truth of Christ. The conversion testimonies of former devout Muslims was one of the most encouraging parts of the recent team to SE Asia. A common theme was their dissatisfaction with religious ritual. Each of them desired to know the Creator God. God answered their prayers; sometimes miraculously through a dream or vision of Christ. Our testimony is an important witnessing tool. Of course, there has to be a clear conversion for a testimony to be possible. Those of us with a testimony of God’s grace and salvation from sin need to share it often.

Annual Missions Celebration

Thank you to the 220 people representing 30 churches that joined us to celebrate Associational Missions. The reports are available on our webpage. Airport Boulevard Baptist Church was a wonderful host.

We introduced a new condensed format, elected Dr. Charlie York as Moderator, Wayne Gautney as First Vice-Moderator and Jeff Gardner as Second Vice-Moderator. We welcomed Hope of the Nations Church as a full member of the MBA, and two churches under watchcare: New Vision and Relevant.

Bro. Charles Gibbs was appointed to chair a committee to examine the format and content of future Annual Missions Celebrations. Please share with him your suggestions and observations.

Children’s Mission Madness February 17, 2016

Plans are underway for the Children’s Mission Madness. Please save the date, Wednesday, February 17, 2016 from 5:45 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Please bring your AWANAs, GA’s and RA’s to Woodridge Baptist Church. We will enjoy a fun introduction to associational missions.

Future Focus Committee Update

Continue to pray for Dr. Roy Stebbins and the committee as they implement the vote of the Annual session. Please continue to help your people see the need and the process to sell and combine our aging International Ministries building and the MBA office building. The committee has preliminary designs for streamlined and efficient use of the combined facilities in a new, central location. The design *decreases* facility size *and costs* by 4,501 sq. ft. The design *increases* meeting space, office space, work space, volunteer housing and Disaster Relief response capability. Obviously it is impossible without the Lord’s intervention. It will require the active involvement of cooperative-minded, missions-oriented people. The minimum needed facility cost, currently at \$1.4 million, exceeds the possible \$1.1 million we might receive from the sale of the two facilities.

We will need the donation of at least 3.5 *buildable* acres in a location accessible to our churches and centrally located for effective seafarer ministry. This means quick access to I-65 or I-10. We recognize this is considered prime location requiring fervent prayer and generous donor(s). We will need the donation of materials, furnishings, labor and money. It is definitely a God-sized challenge that has been accepted through careful research and stewardship considerations.

Sabbatical

Thank you for including a sabbatical in the personnel policies of the MBA. This benefit was added years before I arrived and the MBA does not pay any of the sabbatical expenses. Donna and I completed part one serving with IMB workers in several cities in India. The training with pastors and church leaders was very rewarding. We completed part two in Israel at the (IMB) Baptist Village near Tel Aviv. Part three included training among Zulu and South African churches in Durban, South Africa. Each adventure was filled with spiritual and physical lessons for reaching the nations.

Personnel Committee Report

Dr. Bobby Morton was elected in the September Executive Committee meeting as the new Part-Time Director of International Ministries and Church Planting.

The loss of the \$29,000 NAMB/ALSBOM supplement is a significant challenge. As you recall, we lost the NAMB subsidy for Buddy at the same time we lost the subsidy for Chuck. Our ALSBOM partners agreed to cover the subsidy for Buddy as long as he stayed in this position. His departure ended this agreement. We continue to face challenges absorbing Chuck's \$26,000 supplement into our Budget. At the moment, it is not possible to absorb an additional \$29,000.

We are looking for three Mission Service Corp volunteer couples or individuals to serve with Bro. Bobby in International Ministries. They would assist him with the International Language School, the Seafarer Ministry and International Church Planting.

Teams to Holy Land

There are many options for teams of 2 to 20 to serve with IMB workers in the Holy Land. Team length can vary from 10 days to three months (or longer). Every conceivable skill is needed from construction, yard work, painting, VBS, ESL, host/guide at sites and campus evangelistic ministry. Housing varies from the floor in a church, dorms, shared apartments and four star hotels. Teams can be based in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beersheva, or Tel Aviv. Contact Bro. Thomas to craft a team based on your time frame, skills and budget. All 10 day teams include 3-4 touring days to gain incredible insight into the events and personalities in the Old and New Testaments. Per person costs will be about \$2,800 including airfare, housing and meals.

Church Changes, New Pastors and Churches Seeking Pastors

Please pray for the churches seeking a pastor and please let us know when their statuses change: Azalea, Cedar Creek, Dauphin Way, Faith (Mobile), Gulfcrest, Lafitte, Manor, Seven Hills and Trinity. Welcome to Jeremy Smalley as new pastor of FBC Bayou La Batre.

Recommendation for Missions Tithe

In 2014, 80 MBA churches (out of 109 churches and 7 "cells") completed an Annual Church Profile (ACP). Those 80 churches reported a total income of \$43,621,130. Their total giving to Cooperative Program (CP) was \$ 1,522,369 (which is 3.49%). Those 80 churches gave to the MBA \$395,046, up from \$368,030 in 2013 (which was an increase of 3.91%).

The SBC has long recommended that churches give a Cooperative Missions tithe of 7% to CP and 3% to the local association. Recent adaptations have recognized some churches wish to give 2% to additional missions' options, 5% to CP and 3% to the Association.

If MBA churches were to give 3% of total income, the MBA would double our budget. Please present this giving formula to the church Finance Committee for consideration. Following this giving formula will allow the MBA to meet staff, facility and new work needs.

Denominational Changes

The denomination as a whole is facing decline in baptisms, attendance and missions support. The philosophical change from cooperation to radical autonomy/societal missions is biblically inconsistent and dangerous to cooperative missions. The North American Mission Board, International Mission Board, State Conventions and Associations are feeling the fallout from this philosophical change. As concerns grow about the work of NAMB, keep in mind that the missions tithe is still biblical and the MBA continues to be relevant and effective in making an eternal difference in Mobile.

Orientation Guide for Church Staff and Churches Exploring MBA Membership

Please visit mobilebaptists.org for a copy of the Orientation and Membership Guide. It presents an overview of MBA ministries, staff, philosophy and strategy. It also includes a membership application for churches wishing to explore membership with the MBA. Please download a copy for your staff and share a copy with potential members.

Multi-housing Ministries Missionary

We are already seeing tremendous results from our partnership with ALSBOM to provide a part time missionary for Multi-housing evangelistic ministries. Nearly every MBA church is within a 5 mile radius of an apartment complex, trailer park, dormitory, retirement home or condominium. From 'down and out' to 'up and out' these complexes provide opportunities for evangelistic ministry and new units that reach people. You probably have church members, or family members in, Multi-housing complexes. Contact Janice Austin to learn how your church can effectively reach Multi-housing complexes.