

Gulf Coast Baptist Association Missional Strategy Plans

Introduction:

“Remember the good ‘ole days. . . I wish we could go back. . . Remembering the ‘good ole days’ is important; but too often we try to relive those days in hopes to return - believing that what once worked to reach people will work in today’s world. Nostalgia keeps us bound to our past successes preventing us from moving forward; thus creating our present and future failures. The world today is not the world of 1991 or even 200.

Dwelling on the way things used to be or thinking that ‘we never done it that way’ creates a spiritual blindness in us. It prevents us from perceiving the new things that our Father is doing and the plans that he has for us. In Isaiah 6:9, God told Isaiah that the children of Israel were ever hearing, but never understanding; and ever seeing, but never perceiving. Behold, God is doing a new thing in our world – do you not perceive it?

After reminding the Israelites of His mighty works that He had done for them, God instructs Israel to forget the past – to let go of it. He states in Isaiah 43:18-19, “Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up’ do you not perceive it?”

In order for the church to be relevant, then the methods and strategies must change to meet the needs for the times. Like the sons of Issachar, it requires us to be aware of the signs of the times and perceive the direction that God is guiding us to take. Therefore, in the spring of 2010 the association selected a group of pastors and key lay leaders to serve on a strategy planning team was selected and led by Margaret Slusher, the president and consultant with Lead Plus, to seek God’s will and develop a plan for the accomplishment of His vision. The following are those who devoted their time and talents to serve on the following teams:

Community: Betty Parsons, Raymond Grabert, Charley Ray, Robert Lawrence

Prayer: Jay Rustin, David Barker, Rhonda White

Missions: Matt Middlecamp, David McKenzie,

Associational: Don Blackwell, John Bullen

The Staff: Steve Mooneyham, Linda Kitrell, Dione Williams

Our world has changed drastically during this past decade. We have experienced terrorism in our nation with the tragic events of 9/11, increased bombings throughout the world, and the war on terror. We have had tragedy with the swine flu epidemic, the gulf oil spill, and of course natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Economically our world is crumbling. Yet, although our world is changing God remains the same with the Gospel message of hope and love. He expects us to be his messengers. In order to be effective in sharing His good news, we must be aware of the changes and discover ways to adapt the way we present God’s message to this changing world

Looking back over the past decade we have seen other subtle local changes as well. Below are some of the ways that our world has changed and continues to transition.

1.) Demographic Change:

In the three counties that comprise the Gulf Coast Baptist Association, two-thirds of the housing is owner occupied and one-third will be renter dwellings. The average income of \$48,933 will very slight increase from to \$48,973 over the next 5 years. Racially, the predominant race is 93% white, and it is projected not to change.

Currently, English is the predominant language spoken. Less than 3.5% of the population speak Spanish. There is a small segmentation (1.5% of the population) who speak Vietnamese in Harrison County. In Hancock County there is a very small percent who are French-speaking (0.86%). The only other somewhat significant language spoken is German - less than 0.55% is. Harrison has a few other languages spoken, but all of them are less than a half of percent.

The population of the association is shifting. Below the maps indicate that that the populations is moving towards the north along the Highways 49, 605, and 67 corridors.

2.) Aging Population:

The population within the 3 counties will continue to rise from the median age of 34.7 in 2000 to 37 by 2015; and the percentage of preschoolers, children, and teens is expected to show a decline. Although the largest age group is the 25-34, percentage-wise they will decline somewhat. The largest percent of the population are the white sun seeking seniors between the ages 75-84 who have or are about to retire. They represent the largest increase numerically and biggest percentage of the population.

These Senior Sun Seekers tend to take car trips and stay at reasonably priced hotels. When dining out they eat at family restaurants and fast-food establishments. They are well-insured and consult with a financial advisor about their finances. They invest time and some funds in home improvement projects. They enjoy gardening landscaping. They tend to do charity work as well.

Part of their daily routine is watching Satellite television, such as, news programs, games shows, sitcoms, home improvements, classic movies, and golf tournaments. They also read fishing and hunting magazines, rent comedies on DVD, and occasionally listen to country radio. They tend to play bingo, visit theme parks, fish, and hunt as well.

<http://www.esri.com/library/brochures/pdfs/tapestry-segmentation.pdf>

3.) Increased Spiritual Lostness:

As the world shifts, the spiritual warfare is intensifying, especially within the United States. "Satan is not going to simply roll over and relinquish the kingdoms of the world." (Rankin) Our world has become hostile toward Christianity. The greatest threat, though, is spiritual apathy. The church believes that if we build it, then they will come. Unfortunately, that is not the case and even if it were, we are not prepared for the growth, nor could we afford the money or time to reach the lost. Jesus gave us a command to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), not to wait for them to come. The number of lost is growing all around us. The following table supports the need for us to think of new strategies to reach folks with an ageless message of God's love.

Gulf Coast Baptist Association
3 Counties: Hancock, Harrison, Stone

Population in 1990 = **207,875**
Population in 2000 = **246,190**
Population gain or loss from 1990 to 2000 = **+38,315**; percentage = **+18.4%**

Affiliates in all Religions in Congregations in 1990 = **125,573**
Affiliates in all Religions in Congregations in 2000 = **159,322**
Affiliates gain or loss from 1990 to 2000 = **+33,749** percentage = **+26.9%**
Percent (%) of Affiliation Gain/Loss when Compared to Population Gain = **8.5%**

Total Congregations in All Religions in 1990 = **236**
Total Congregations in All Religions in 2000 = **258**
Congregational Gain/Loss Percent in All Religions = **22 = 9.3%** gain with affiliate losses
Average Numerical Congregational Gain/Loss per Year within decade = **2.2** a Year
Average Affiliations per Congregation in 1990 = **532**
Average Affiliations per Congregation in 2000 = **618**
Unclaimed Population in 2000 based upon "All Religions" comparison = **86,868**
Unclaimed Percent Total Population in 2000 by "All Religions" = **36.3%** of total pop

Congregations Needed (All Religions) based on avg. members per cong. **141**
Years it will take based upon growth in all religions from 1990-2000 = **64** Years

Evangelical Members (Affiliation) in 2000 = **57,702 = 23.4%** of 2000 Population
Unclaimed Population in 2000 based on "Evangelicals" Totals: **188,488**
Congregations (Churches) Needed (Evangelical only) based on aver.= **305**

Congregations (Churches) Needed (Evangelical only) **based on 100 Members per new Congregation (Church) = 1,885** new congregations
Cost of Evangelical Congregations needed @ \$2 Million per New Congregations (Churches)
(Providing land, building and professional staff) = **\$3,770,000,000**

Based on 40 Members per Lay-Led Ethnic or Neighborhood Indigenous Congregations
(Churches) = **4,712** new indigenous lay-started and led congregations

Approximate Number of Lay "Men of Peace" or Lay Pastors Desiring On-Site (Non-Residential)
Theological and Methodological Mentoring = **4,712** plus individuals

Orality- Literacy Status (Based upon 1990 NALDs study):

Illiterates:	Hancock 11%	Harrison 12%	Stone 13%
Functional Illiterates:	Hancock 23.9%	Harrison 27.3%	Stone 29.6%
Total (Levels 1 & 2)	Hancock 34.9%	Harrison 39.3%	Stone 42.6%

Population in 2010 = **239,720**
Population gain or loss from 2000 to 2010 = **- 6,470**; percentage = **2.7%**

Concept Prepared by: Dr. Jim Slack: Missiologist, Church Planting Movements Assessments & Consultant IMB, SBC: Global Research Department of Office of Overseas

The survey of the unchurched within the association revealed that most of them have had some experience with church. When asked why they believe that most people in this community do not attend church, they replied that the people in the church do not listen; and thus, they feel unaccepted and disconnected with church folks. Some indicated that the worries and business of life have overcome their need to go to church.

On the other hand, the church people surveyed within in the community, for the most part thought that the reason people did not attend church was because they were lazy. They also suggested that unchurched people believed the only thing that the church cared about was money. A church wanting money was never used by the unchurched, and only one unchurched persons questioned felt the reason people do not go to church was due to laziness. For the most part, there seemed to be a lack of understanding and knowing the unchurched folks and their needs by the church people.

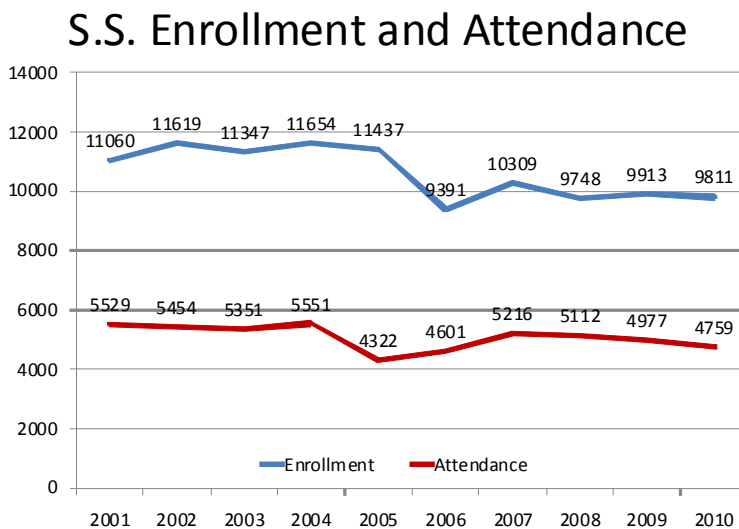
According to those surveyed the most pressing critical needs in our community are hope (rebuilding), homes, jobs, and family and parenting relationships. There seems to be a family breakdown. Responding to how the church could help meet those needs, the unchurched replied to continue to help folks rebuild and find employment. Several suggested to spend more money so that the local economy would improve.

When asked “if you could ask God just one question and get a direct answer; what would you ask,” most wanted to know, “what’s my purpose for being?”

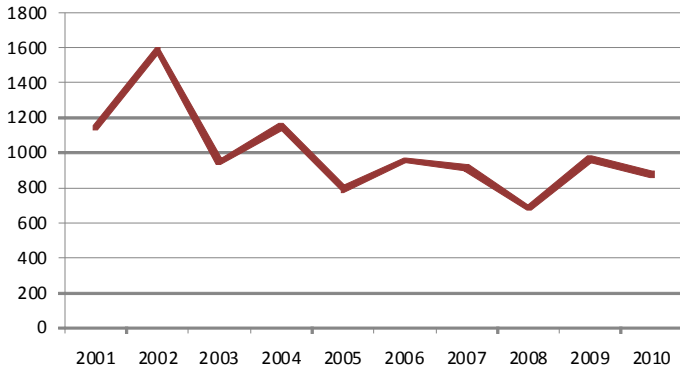
Only one person had visited a church within the past 6 months and it was to Petal Ashbury Presbyterian. If they were looking for a church, they predominatly want to find a place where they were authentic Christians who were engaging, help people and where it feels comfortable.

Our Churches:

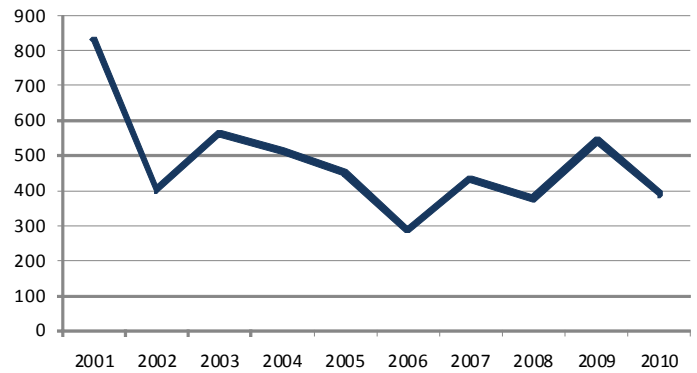
Though our churches have been very involved in doing missions and offering church services and activities, we have become plateaued and slightly declining. Sunday School enrollment and attendance have been on the decline since 2004. Our missions’ organizations have also shown dramatic decline which is reflect in the decline of mission giving by the churches even though the giving to churches has increased. It is small groups that keep people assimilated.



WMU

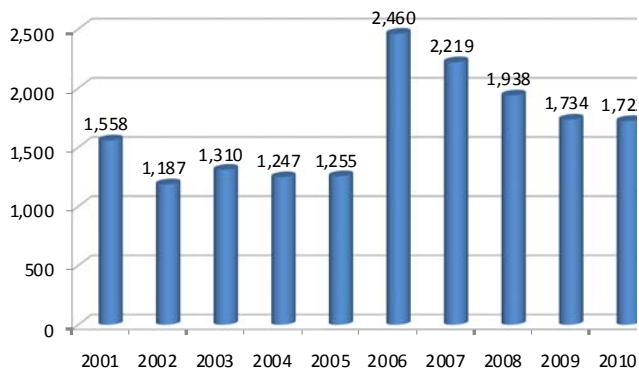


Brotherhood

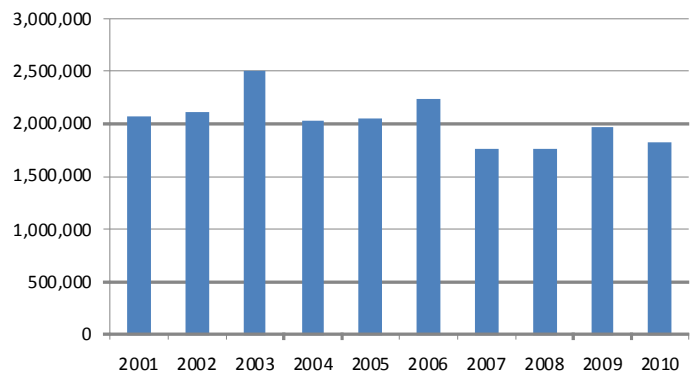


The per capita giving has increased. Some of that is due to the giving from outside sources to aid in the rebuilding after Katrina and Rita. Our churches giving to mission efforts has dropped over the past several years.

Per Capita Giving

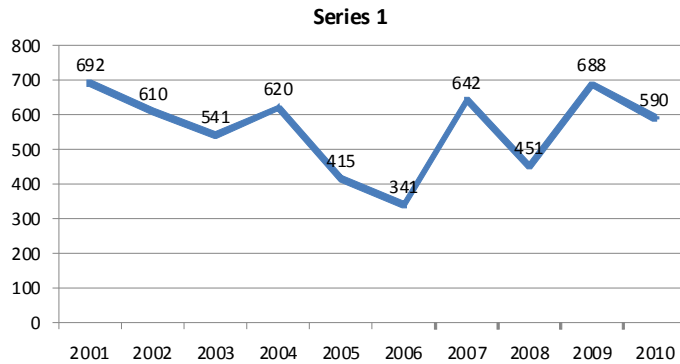


Mission Giving

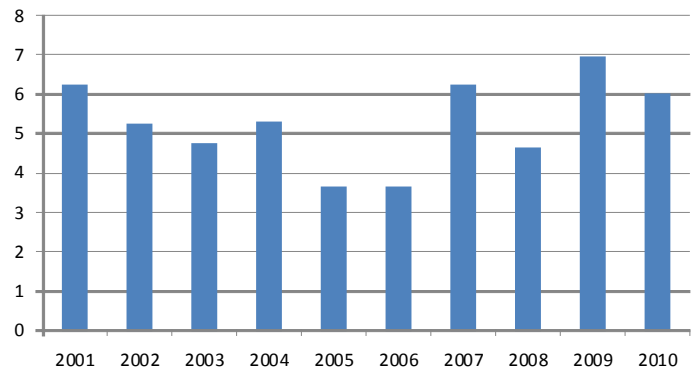


The number of baptisms have fallen off since 2001. It takes about 100 people to reach six people for Christ. Another way to say it is: it takes almost 17 people to reach one person within one year.

Baptisms for the Association



Baptism Rate Number of persons baptized for every 100 enrolled in Sunday School



New Directions:

New Directions:

During this process the team researched the demographics, surveyed the community, prayed for the lost and the churches, and invited all the pastors to a day of planning. After many hours of praying, researching, listening to people in the community and church leaders, and identifying the critical issues, the team felt led by God, to go in a new direction in which they perceived Him to be leading and where He was already at work.

Penetrating lostness for kingdom growth became the rallying prayer and cry of the team. Their desire was to avoid anyone else from perishing without the hope of Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is our responsibility to reach the lost and make disciples of all peoples. As God encouraged Isaiah to be a light unto the nations, He is now encouraging us to reach the lost.

“And now,” God says, this God who took me in hand from the moment of birth to be his servant, To bring Jacob back home to him, to set a reunion for Israel—What an honor for me in God’s eyes! That God should be my strength!

*He says, “But that’s not a big enough job for my servant— just to recover the tribes of Jacob, merely to round up the strays of Israel. **I’m setting you up as a light for the nations so that my salvation becomes global!**”*

Isaiah 49:6 (The Message)

A Renewed Commitment:

Proclaiming the Gospel, penetrating lostness, and discipling for reproduction is the focus of the renewed commitment. We are calling for a renewed commitment for the building of God's Kingdom.

Purpose Statement

The Gulf Coast Baptist Association is Southern Baptist churches cooperating for Kingdom growth.

Vision Statement

By 2016, Gulf Coast Baptist Association will have disciplined church leaders who have developed **reproducing** disciples and churches.

Priorities and Goals

Developing a Passion for Lostness

Goals:

- Create "lostness" lab (virtual and physical) by June 2012 and utilize social media to promote awareness of lostness
- Create an awareness of lostness by including information about the unchurched of the gulf coast in all the association materials by January 2012
- Utilize website to promote awareness of lostness by January 2012
- Train people to start spiritual conversations by fall 2013
- Conduct annual prayer emphasis beginning 2013 focused on
- Conduct association wide prayer walks/draw by 2014
- Promote church ministries (VBS) across the association using various media outlets.

Equipping leaders to make disciples

- To develop at least 6 interchurch discipleship groups of church leaders by Jan. 2012
- To replicate the discipleship groups process within the local church by Aug. 2012
- To develop an evaluation tool of the process by the fall annual meeting of 2012
- To provide a report of group results to be used in the annual meeting of Oct. 2012
- To develop new set of discipleship groups of church leadership by Jan. 2013 (Repeat)

Assisting Churches in disciple-making and vision casting

- Provide assistance through testimony, one-to-one consultation, and or team multilevel discipling by Summer 2012
- Provide prayer cards/guides available through email updates about what is happening in GCBA by January 2012
- Celebrate God's work through an event including testimonies by fall 2012
- Provide sharing your faith workshops by Summer 2012

Assisting churches in starting new works

- Provides resources that will assist in starting new works such as: community needs locations, people groups, etc.
- Provide assistance to obtain funding and personnel to start new works through generous and sacrificial giving
- Facilitate annual workshop for starting new works and church revitalization

Celebrating

- Develop a reporting form that reflects disciple-making (mentoring/coaching) along with new works.
- Include a recognition of priority/goals accomplishments at the fall meeting beginning 2012
- By 2013, transition the Spring meeting into a celebration of the association's purpose/vision and accomplishment of priority /goals
- Use interactive social media, such as email and newsletter, for periodic celebration of God's work

Commitment Card

*"I'm setting you up as a light for the nations so that my salvation becomes global!"
Isaiah 49:6 (The Message)*

Believing that God has given our association of churches the vision to ***disciple church leaders who have developed reproducing disciples and churches by 2015 . . .***

I promise to commit myself to the accomplishment of the following priority (ies)"
(Please check the area that you sense God calling you to serve:

- Developing a Passion for Lostness
- Equipping leaders to make disciples
- Assisting Churches in disciple-making and vision casting
- Serving as a resource center to assist in the disciple-making process
- Educating and equipping for disciple-making
- Assisting churches in starting new works
- Celebrating
- Pray as an individual for the accomplishment of the vision that God has given our association.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____