



SBAOC Weekly Update

NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

If you have any news, prayer requests, or events that you would like to have included in this update, please email the information to spurgeonassociation@gmail.com or call us at 785-456-8513.

SUNDAY GATHERINGS ARE GONE – NOW WHAT?

By Dhati Lewis

If you're a church leader right now, I'm guessing you were never given a course about shepherding your people during a global pandemic. I wasn't either. And while caring for people looks very different than it did a few weeks ago, the principles remain the same.

A powerful and important part of a pastor and church planter's strategy — the Sunday gathering — has been taken away. So how will our churches continue to encourage one another in the faith and ensure the mission continues if we can't meet together for Sunday services (or at all in person)?

INCREASING OUR CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Over these last few weeks, the leaders at Blueprint have focused on decreasing the spread of COVID-19 (the new coronavirus), but increasing our care for one another. We want to decrease the spread of the virus but increase our ability to be neighborly — even if virtually!

Whenever I'm training church planters or walking through changes with our staff, we always look at our pillars and platforms. Pillars are our core values and platforms are the environments we can use to move people toward our values. Every platform has unique advantages and disadvantages.

Before the coronavirus, we were maximizing the advantages of Sunday

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PURPOSE STATEMENT:

We unite as an association of Southern Baptist churches in order to manifest the glory of God above all. We purpose to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. We covenant to strengthen and support one another, motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

“If there is no church... should you not commence one?” C. H. Spurgeon

COMMENTS ON OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

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“I could not bear, my brethren, to see you in the highway to destruction, and none to bring you back. It was love to your souls; it was a desire to see Christ formed in you, which brought me into the fields, the highways, and hedges, to preach unto you Jesus, a crucified Jesus as dying for you. It was charity, indeed it was charity to your souls.”

George Whitefield

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS

*** We hope to have an update on the status of SBFYC next week. ***

2020 Saved By Faith Youth Camp—June 15-19. Webster Conference Center, Salina, Kansas. <https://www.sbfyckansas.com/>

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gatherings and City Group gatherings to foster personal connection. For now, that option is no longer available, but our media platform now has a lot of new strengths and opportunities it didn't have before.

Media is now the primary way for our people to stay connected and for us to care for one another. I'm doing daily Facebook Live chats, and I love the ability this platform gives me to respond to real-life questions and issues in real time. Not only can I talk about very current issues, but I can also answer questions as people post them. It's also been a great place to invite staff members and other guest speakers to join and share helpful encouragement for our church family.

On Wednesdays we do a Bible study and a mini-sermon with one of our pastors, and Fridays are "Feelings Friday" where we talk about emotions. The other days of the week are flexible as I talk with people and learn more about current needs in our family.

Our staff sends digital resources to parents, our leaders are calling every member they're responsible for, we are posting sermons online and our City Groups are meeting virtually.

A NEW WAY OF THINKING

So many times, we say, "the church is not about Sunday." And yet, it always seems like over 80% of our staff hours and over 80% of our budget are aimed at Sunday.

A few years ago, I was at a workshop with some of my staff, and I asked what percentage of their time was spent solely on the Sunday gathering. Most of their responses were close to 90%. I was deeply grieved and honestly, very angry.

How did we get to this place where our church was defined by time and space? Gathering as a family has always been important. We see in the Bible how churches sometimes gathered weekly and sometimes they gathered daily. Sometimes they gathered in the temple, sometimes in homes and sometimes by the riverside.

Yet it seemed as if our church focus was limited by the time and space of our Sunday gathering instead of focusing on the holistic needs of our family. We knew in that moment that God was calling us to recalibrate

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our focus. Well, less than two months later, the ceiling in our sanctuary collapsed, forcing us to meet in homes for almost 12 weeks.

Those weeks forced our members and our staff to think about church differently. We were reminded that being the church is our identity — not a program we pull off on Sundays.

My prayer is that during this time we would refocus again, and that church leaders and Christians all across North America would shift their mindset. I pray we would repent of our “Sunday Christianity” and that we would live every single day as a people who have been adopted, chosen and sent out to do good works.

I pray that when history tells the story of these days, the people of Jesus are known for the way they loved their neighbor, for the way they defended the marginalized and for the way they cared for the elderly and the orphan. I pray we learn new ways to care for one another as family (truly as family, and not simply people we see once or twice a week). I pray that what the enemy has intended for evil, God will supernaturally work for good.

MOVING FORWARD

My encouragement to you would be to look at your own values and the platforms available to you. How can you maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages in order to shepherd and disciple your church family through this time?

My second encouragement is to cast vision and call people towards this new way of doing ministry and thinking as our Sunday services are temporarily removed. Your church is not on a break (after all, the church is a people, and we don't ever stop being who we are).

A lot has changed, of course. Your rhythms are different. People's capacities are different — some have more, some have less. Your resources have changed.

But your identity is the same. Your responsibilities to care for one another, to pray for one another, to love your neighbor — none of that changed because of the spread of the virus.

Remind your people of these truths regularly and often. Unleash your creatives to think outside the box and come up with new ways to care for people holistically without compromising anyone's physical well-being.

Finally, I encourage you to extend grace to your leaders, your staff, your people and yourself. Don't compare yourself to other pastors. If you do, you'll end up being like David trying to wear Saul's armor.

Everyone is new at this. Everyone will respond differently. No one will do it perfectly, and there will be enough grace for each of us and our churches in the days and weeks ahead.

Dhati Lewis is the Vice president of Send Network for the North American Mission Board and Lead Pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned his Master of Arts in Cross Cultural Ministry from Dallas Theological Seminary and most recently received his Doctorate of Ministry in Great Commission Mobilization from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dhati has seven beautiful children and is married to Angie, a discerning woman who empowers and encourages him to live fully in his identity in Christ. He is the author of both the Bible Study and book, *Among Wolves: Disciple Making in the City*.

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PRAYER MEETINGS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church in Onaga, Kansas—5:00 pm on Sundays
- Trinity Baptist Church in Wamego, Kansas—8:00 pm on Saturdays

The Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches is an association of Southern Baptist Churches that are united to manifest the glory of God above all. We set out to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. As an association of churches we are bound in mutual covenant to strengthen and support one another - motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture - by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

We are a non-geographic association seeking to include any like-minded body of believers so that together we might better fulfill the great commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our intent is to lean on His instruction and not our imaginations so that He is honored in all that we do. We welcome churches who adhere to the confessions of faith accepted by Southern Baptists throughout their history, including, but not limited to, the Second London Confession (1689) and the Baptist Faith and Message.



Baptist Association of Churches