

Executive Summary

2008 IBSA Church Needs Survey

March 3, 2009

In October, 2008, the Illinois Baptist State Association, for the third year, mailed a four-page questionnaire to Illinois Baptist pastors and directors of missions, and for the first time, included more than 2,200 lay church leaders. A “very healthy” 31% were returned to the research firm yielding a significant amount of information about our churches and their needs, how they perceive IBSA and how we can assist them. Following is a summary of observations from those results.

A. IBSA Effectiveness

1. Nearly one-half of IBSA’s pastors believe IBSA is effective – up from 42% in 2006. One-third are not sure and one-fifth say IBSA is not effective.
2. Church Leaders were much more positive than pastors with 70% indicating IBSA is effective and only 4% saying we are not effective.
3. The area pastors believe IBSA is most effective is in their contact with our staff, followed by helping them send believers to the mission field and starting churches, strengthening churches and stimulating stewardship. Those rankings were mirrored by the church leaders, although their ratings were 10 to 20 points higher than the pastors.
4. The most significant finding, however, is the increase in every area from 2006 to 2008. IBSA’s effectiveness in Church Starting increased 8 percentage points. Sending Believers increased 11 points. Stimulating Stewardship increased 11 points. And, our effectiveness in Strengthening Churches increased 17 percentage points in just two years!

B. Communication

1. Pastors told us, as they did in both previous years, that the best way to communicate with them is through the Illinois Baptist (74%) and email (62%).
2. They said the best way to communicate with their church members is through bulletin inserts followed by the Illinois Baptist.
3. Church leaders said the state paper was the best way to reach them (the least effective was email)

C. IBSA Resources

1. 91% of pastor indicated they receive the Illinois Baptist, 80% get the Illinois Missions materials, two-thirds have been to an IBSA training event, and half have been exposed to Youth Encounter.
2. Also asked if these resources are useful, and the most useful were the paper (75%), IMO materials (62%) and training events (53%).
3. The largest increase in ‘useful’ rating was Youth Encounter which grew from 18-20% in ’06-’07 to 39% last year!
4. Church leaders expressed similar satisfaction as pastors.

D. Areas of Most and Least Need

1. We asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much assistance their church needs from IBSA in 17 different areas. The number one area of need, mentioned by 59% of pastors, is Spiritual Renewal. Renewal was closely followed by a need for help with evangelism mentioned by 54% of pastors.

2. Discipleship was 52%, closely followed by Strategy Planning, Men's Ministry and Student Ministry.

3. Areas that pastors said they need the least help from IBSA were Building and Facilities, Budget and Finance, Women's Ministry, Prayer Ministry, Stewardship Development, and Music and Worship.

4. Church Leaders were less sure what they needed, but agreed that Spiritual Renewal was number one followed by Men's Ministry. Church Leaders also agreed with their pastors that the areas where they need the least assistance are in Buildings and Budgets.

E. Self-Evaluation of Church Effectiveness

1. We asked the respondents to rate their church's effectiveness in eight areas and according to more than half of the pastors and two-thirds of the lay leaders their churches "enjoy close relationships characterized by selfless Christian love."

2. Pastors rated their worship services as the second most effective area of their church, followed by Bible Study, Leadership, Meeting Others Needs, and their members having a Committed Relationship with Christ.

3. Lay Leaders were similar to the pastors, although they were even more positive, especially on "a committed relationship with Christ" which was 20 points higher.

4. Throughout most the questionnaire, the directors of missions' responses tracked very closely with the pastors', except on this question where they rated their churches' effectiveness much lower in every category – some by as much as 40 percentage points.

5. The area where all respondents agreed was that the churches are least effective in their 'structure.'

F. Church Starting

1. 4 out of 5 pastors and church leaders believe starting churches in Illinois each year is important, while only 7-8% believe it is not important.

2. However, as in years past, 51% do not believe it's important to start churches each year in their own Association – a 30 point difference. As you might expect, three-fourths of respondents in Southern Illinois do NOT feel they need more churches in their Association while four out of five in Northern Illinois believe they DO need more churches in their Association.

G. Awareness of Lostness

1. We asked pastors and lay leaders how many of Illinois' 12.8 million residents they would "estimate do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ" and gave them six choices ranging from 1.2 million (10%) to 10 million (80%), and even included "I have no idea" as an answer. IBSA uses 8.2 million which is about two-thirds while others, including NAMB, use 80% which would be 10 million, so we would accept either one – and 75% of our pastors gave one of those two answers.

2. However, 12% of our PASTORS said they have “no idea” how many people in Illinois are lost and an additional 13% indicated one-third or less are lost which means one fourth of our pastors don’t know that the vast majority of Illinois is a mission field.

3. Lay Leaders were even worse with only 55% providing an acceptable answer and nearly half having no idea that most people in Illinois need to know Christ.