

Illinois Missions Week of Prayer Adult Mission Study

Prepare

Determine the best place to conduct the study, remembering you may need appropriate equipment to show a video. Display a large map of Illinois to remind your group members that the focus of the study and the Offering is the Illinois mission field. You may want to have a chalkboard, whiteboard, posterboard or chart paper available and markers.

Welcome and Introduce the Program (10 minutes)

Greet people as they arrive. Welcome the group and have an opening prayer for the study, for each participant, for those in Illinois who do not know Jesus and for the churches and missionaries in the state who are telling others about Him.

Remind church members of this year's Illinois Missions Offering and Week of Prayer. Call attention to the \$360,000 goal and to your church's goal. Briefly highlight any special activities planned for the remainder of the week or the state missions observance.

Explain that the purpose of the study is to highlight the ministries and missionaries supported by the Illinois Missions Offering and Week of Prayer. It's estimated that over 8.2 million people in Illinois do not have a saving relationship with Jesus. More than 1,000 Southern Baptist churches in Illinois work together through The Illinois Baptist State Association to share Christ with them.

Teach (20 minutes)

If you have the Mission Offering video DVD that was sent to IBSA churches and you have a DVD player, show the first video entitled "The Reason We Are Here." (A VHS version is available from IBSA by calling 217-391-3116.) Introduce the video by saying:

"I'd like to begin our study by showing you a heartfelt message from IBSA's new Executive Director, Nate Adams. Dr. Adams is a native of Illinois, and some of you may have known his father, Tom Adams, who was a pastor and Director of Missions in Illinois. In the video, Dr. Adams talks roles the state Association and the Illinois Missions Offering play in reaching Illinois for Jesus. Listen for four specific things the State Association does for and with IBSA churches."

After the video, discuss IBSA's four priorities that Dr. Adams outlines using the questions below. Write the four priorities on the board or paper as members respond, and discuss how the State Association might help your church in each of the four areas.

Possible discussion questions include:

- Strengthening Churches: What are some ways IBSA might help our church be stronger in reaching our community? (training in evangelism, teaching, VBS, music and

worship, reaching youth, etc.) Pass around the copy of the IBSA Calendar and Directory, and ask members to read through the Services and Directory section to find areas where IBSA might help your church.

- **Starting Churches:** Has anyone here ever been involved in starting a new church? Tell us about it. Are there groups of people in our community or somewhere else in the state who do not have a Bible believing church they would feel comfortable attending? (For instance, a church with services in a language other than English, or a church that meets on Friday or Saturday evening, or a church that appeals to a cowboy culture, or a church that meets in an apartment complex.)

- **Sending People to the Mission Field:** How is our church involved in missions in our own community? Where could our church serve and witness to people in our community? Who has been on a mission trip outside our community? Tell us about it. Where could we go in Illinois to do missions? (Contact IBSA's Missions Team for more information at 217-391-3138.)

- **Stimulating Sacrificial Giving:** Do you think our church gives sacrificially to missions? How could we give more to our Association, Illinois Missions Offering, and the Cooperative Program?

If you are unable to show the video, recruit a volunteer before the study to read the following message from Dr. Adams as members listen for the IBSA's four priorities, then review the discussion questions above:

Dr. Nate Adams: Illinois has over 12 million people, and we estimate that about 8.2 million of them are lost, don't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And so Illinois is our mission field. The reason we're here is help a thousand Southern Baptist churches cooperate together to reach the lost people of Illinois for Christ.

There are four primary things we're seeking to do as the churches of the Illinois Baptist State Association. First, we're here to strengthen churches. We'll train more than 17,000 leaders next year. We'll do more than a hundred church health consultations. We'll do, probably 150 evangelistic strategy consultations to help churches strengthen and improve areas that will help them reach the people in their communities.

Second, we're here to start churches. Our goal is to start at least 35 churches throughout Illinois next year among multiple people groups, multiple generations, using all kinds of church leaders. We need to reach new people with new churches.

The third thing we want to do is to help the churches of Illinois send their people into the Acts 1:8 mission fields of the world. Every church has a local Jerusalem, as well as a Judea, a Samaria, as well as the ends of the Earth, that they're responsible for.

And finally our job is to challenge churches to give sacrificially. There are missionaries throughout the world and throughout North America, and almost a hundred of them right here in Illinois, who are full-time in their mission service because the people of our churches give sacrificially to missions.

And so these are the four simple things that we do as the Illinois Baptist State Association. We strengthen churches, we start churches, we send Christians to the mission fields, and we challenge churches to give sacrificially so that others can do that too.

I also want to say a heartfelt thank you to the churches of Illinois for their generosity in giving through the Illinois Missions Offering. Because I believe in what we're doing as the Illinois Baptist State Association, we don't apologize for asking churches, "Could you give a little more so that the missionaries can do a little more, so that we can start a couple of more churches." And the Illinois Missions Offering is what helps us do that.

Our pledge is that every dollar that's given through the Illinois Missions Offering will be well spent on the mission of God here in Illinois.

Pray (10-20 minutes)

There are four missionary stories in the Planning Guide mailed to IBSA churches and on the Illinois Missions Offering website (www.IBSA.org). Copy and distribute one or more of the missionary stories to everyone in the group or distribute a different story to small groups of 3-6 people. Ask one person to read the story aloud while others listen for possible prayer needs for the missionary. Share those prayer needs and have someone lead in prayer for that missionary as well as all of Illinois' missionaries.

Distribute the Week of Prayer Guide and point out that it includes seven days of guided prayer for Illinois Missions. Encourage participants to use the prayer guide in their personal or family devotions during this week of emphasis.

Also, distribute Illinois Missions Offering envelopes and remind members of your church goal and specific dates when the church will be collecting your special state mission offering.

Optional activity: If you have the mission videos, show "Pray for Illinois Missions" and ask participants to write down four key ways we can pray for Illinois missions and missionaries. Discuss those prayer requests and have someone lead in prayer.

Closing (5 minutes)

Thank the group for coming and close with prayer for each person in attendance and their efforts to help reach Illinois for Christ.