

## ILLINOIS IN SIGHT

### There when you need them

Most organizations have a calling card—a way to recognize who the members are and what they do. In Southern Baptist life, and particularly in places reeling from natural disasters, the color yellow is a symbol of help, hope and relief. Disaster Relief, to be precise.

Known as “yellow hats” or “yellow shirts” by some, DR volunteers often drop their everyday responsi-

bilities to travel wherever they’re needed: to Pilger, Nebraska, where twin tornadoes wreaked havoc in June 2014. Or New York and New Jersey, where a long-term relief effort is still ongoing following 2013’s Hurricane Sandy. Volunteers even went all the way to the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.

And those are just Illinois volunteers. Other Baptist state conventions also send volunteers across the country and around the world. Disaster Relief is a national initiative facilitated by the North American Mission Board, but Baptist state conventions and local associations also support local expressions of the ministry. That means Illinois has a state chapter, led by IBSA’s Rex Alexander. Some of the state’s local associations also have their own volunteer bases and house equipment, such as mobile kitchens and chainsaw trailers. To-



gether, they cooperate to respond to numerous disasters each year.

Once on the scene, volunteers cook meals, provide childcare, cut down and remove damaged trees, clear out water-logged basements, and a host of other projects. In 2013 alone, Disaster Relief volunteers from across the country served more than 46,000 volunteer days and prepared more than 460,000 meals. They also saw 363 people come to Christ.

Their focus on spiritual help and healing is one thing that sets Disaster Relief apart from some other aid organizations. Some volunteers serve as chaplains, talking with shocked homeowners about the peace that comes through Jesus. Teams often stay in churches that open their buildings to people who have come to help. It can be an opportunity to further the ministry of the local church, Alexander said after the response in Pilger.

“We can come in and stay in a church, operate out of that church, and that church becomes known in the community as a church that cares about the community.”

Illinois Disaster Relief offers regional training sessions three times a year for potential volunteers. For more information about upcoming training opportunities, go to [www.IBSA.org/dr](http://www.IBSA.org/dr).



### ABOUT B-101

This is a 20-part study on the basic beliefs and missions of our denomination. It is designed for new believers, new Baptists, and those who want a refresher. Clip it out of the newspaper, fold into a four-page leaflet, and share with the people who would benefit from the information. You might even lead a study. B-101 can be used for:

- New members classes
- Study on missions in Illinois and around the world
- Exploration of doctrines in *The Baptist Faith & Message*

Make as many photocopies as you need for study groups, church members, and worship attenders. Or download the PDFs at [www.IBSA.org/B101](http://www.IBSA.org/B101).

Produced by the editors of the *Illinois Baptist*: Eric Reed, Meredith Flynn, Lisa Sergent. Designed by Kris Kell.

### Look for B-101 in every issue!

### What are you doing on Wednesday nights?

This is the 16th in our 20-part series. That means more than half the essays on *The Baptist Faith & Message* are ready for use in a new members class, small group, or doctrine study. Look online and download the set. We’ve bundled them for easy printing and distribution.

By the way: If you need copies of *The BF&M (2000)*, they can be downloaded too, or IBSA will provide them for your new study group. [LisaSergent@IBSA.org](mailto:LisaSergent@IBSA.org)



## Rebuilding houses and lives in Haiti

When Tracy Smith and his wife, Renee, were deciding where to go to celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary a few years ago, they considered places like Italy and Germany before eventually picking a rather unlikely location.

“God kind of placed it on my heart that instead of spending all this money to do something like that, let’s do something to bring glory to God,” said Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church in Mt. Zion.

There happened to be an IBSA-facilitated mission trip to Haiti already scheduled during their anniversary. The Smiths went on that trip in November 2012, and have since mobilized others from their congregation to work alongside Christians and churches in the impoverished island country.

Since a massive earthquake rocked Haiti in January 2010, Illinois Baptist volunteers have traveled there numerous times to help re-build structures and strengthen churches. In a neighborhood of Port-au-Prince called Bigarade, three consecutive mission groups—including the Smiths’ first team—built a church that also serves as a school.

The work in Haiti isn’t all construction-oriented.



We serve in ... Haiti  
Pastor Tracy Smith from FBC Mt. Zion, Illinois, (left) prays for a couple in Haiti who just accepted Christ.

Renee was concerned about the amount of building she’d be able to do on their trip, her husband said. But she found an important role: She and another woman stayed up one night hard-boiling eggs they’d bought, so that they could feed children the next day.

When you talk to Haitians, Tracy said, they mention relief groups that have come and gone. When he was there, some people he worked with asked, “Are you coming back? We want to see you again.” He will soon take his fourth trip there;

this time, he’s bringing two members of his church on their first trip to Haiti.

He also helped mobilize his local association—Central Baptist—to fund a wall-building project at an orphanage in Port-au-Prince. The project, led by IBSA’s short-term missions coordinator Bob Elmore, was completed in 2014.

Smith said of Haiti, “When you get down there, you fall in love with those people, you fall in love with those children, and you fall in love with serving alongside them, and just demonstrating God’s love in as many ways as you possibly can.”

—Meredith Flynn

### LIGHT OVERCOMES DARKNESS

Among Cherenfant Evens’ first orders of business as pastor of Blanquette Baptist Church was to take down and burn a cross said to house an evil spirit. Then, he cut down a large tree used for voodoo ceremonies, right in front of the church gate.

A vast majority of the people in Evens’ rural Haitian community practice voodoo. After Evens’ actions, the people threatened him with legal action and physical harm; they told him they’d kill him and put him in the hole left by the cross he’d taken down. Before a scheduled meeting with the voodoo practitioners, “God spoke to me, said don’t be afraid,” said Evens (right). “I’m with you. I hear his voice speaking to me. Don’t be afraid, Evens, I am with you.”

Since that time, many have turned from voodoo to faith in Christ. The prayer for spiritual awakening—in Haiti, in the U.S., around the world—is prayer for God to shine his light into dark places, whether a nation, an island, a building, or a human heart.

As Paul wrote, “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves” (Colossians 1:13).



### Pray for a new church

**Location:** Fulton, Illinois

**Focus:** New families and individuals moving into the area

**Characteristics:** A new prison is under construction in this town in northwest Illinois. There will be many new businesses and people moving into the area as employment opportunities arise.

**Pray:** For prayer partners and church planters to help reach Fulton.

—From the IBSA Church Planting Team



## WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... COOPERATION

Read Article 14 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)*, “Cooperation,” at [IBSA.org/B101](http://IBSA.org/B101).

Across the centuries, biblical confessions and statements of faith have often addressed the same broad, biblical topics, including God, the Scriptures, the nature of man, salvation, and the church. Among those lofty subjects, “Cooperation” may at first seem a minor, even obscure doctrine.

Yet cooperation is present not only throughout the Bible, but in the very nature of God, who reveals Himself from the beginning as three-in-one. When God prepares to create mankind as the pinnacle of His creation (Gen. 1:26), He says, “Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness.” Within God’s own nature and character, and in perfect unity and love, He cooperates to create what is good. And He expects us to do the same.

Anyone who has ever worked on a group project knows that there are both challenges and tremendous benefits to cooperation. On one hand, you have all the challenges of working together, such as communication, accepting leadership, unique personalities, role clarity, scheduling, various styles and approaches, and a hundred other differences that sometimes make you feel you could do better on your own.

Yet working together can bring tremendous benefits. Certainly

“many hands make light work,” and the efficiency of working together is undeniable. We can do more together than any of us can do on our own! But more importantly, incredible joy, satisfaction, and deep relationship can grow as we work together on something worthwhile. Laboring together as a fellowship of God’s people, under His leadership and doing something eternally valuable—that’s biblical cooperation.

We see this kind of cooperation demonstrated consistently throughout the Bible, though sometimes more successfully than others. The often-dysfunctional families of Genesis relentlessly banded together, just to survive. The ragamuffin tribes of young Israel pulled together to invade the Promised Land. Judges like Deborah and Gideon were successful only when they united the people in renewed obedience to God.

David mobilized God’s people for war. Solomon organized God’s people to build a temple. Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt God’s people in order to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall.

In fact, the Bible says we as God’s people are put together, joined together, built together, members together, heirs together, fitted together, held together, and that one day we will be caught up together! Whether God’s people are building a temple, going to war against all odds, surviving foreign oppressors, or taking the gospel to the world, we are designed to co-

operate, and to do it together.

As a Baptist family today, there is no more important expression of this than our commitment to cooperative missions. While one church might be able to help send one or two or even ten missionaries to the world, together cooperating Southern Baptist churches send more than 10,000 missionaries. We support six world-class seminaries and several national ministries, as well as more local ministries like state conventions that help churches grow stronger and multiply and become even more effective in our cooperative work of taking the gospel to the world.

There are also times when we as Baptists are called upon to cooperate as part of the larger Christian community. Problems like poverty, hunger, abortion, and the growing moral decays of our culture give us many common platforms for joining with other Christians to be saltier salt and brighter light than we could be alone.

Many times we, as Baptist believers, we must stand apart from the culture, or from other religions. There are even times when we must stand apart from other Christian groups. But when there is an eternally valuable cause that calls us together under God’s leadership and demands that we cooperate for His glory and purposes, we should joyfully and resolutely do so.

*Nate Adams is executive director of the Illinois Baptist State Association.*

### What’s your story, IBSA?

**391** voting members were present for IBSA’s organizing meeting in 1907 at the Baptist Church House in Pinckneyville.

**226** churches endorsed the new organization.

IBSA’s early support was centered in southern Illinois.



**Benjamin Franklin Rodman** was IBSA’s first “financial secretary” (now known as the executive director).

Today, IBSA encompasses more than **950** churches and missions across the state.

From Rockford to Cairo  
Quincy to Danville

Together, those churches gave **6.1 million** dollars last year through the Cooperative Program, for missions and ministry in Illinois, North America and the world.



The IBSA story is a missions story.

still ✓

— With info from “Harvesttime on the Prairie” by Myron D. Dillow

## CP WORKS



### CONSIDER THIS For personal study or group discussion

- 1 Besides those noted above, what other biblical examples do you see of God’s people cooperating under His leadership for a worthwhile cause?
- 2 What significant challenges to working together with others have you experienced? How did you overcome them?
- 3 When have you experienced the greatest joy in Christian cooperation? How can your church increase its cooperation with other Baptists, in order to accomplish more?



*Our denomination’s statement of faith is called “The Baptist Faith & Message.” It was updated in 2000 and adopted by elected messengers who attended the SBC’s annual meeting that year. Adopting the BF&M is the voluntary choice of each local church.*

## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

### IBSA FOUNDED IN 1907

The first Baptist church in Illinois was established in a pioneer’s cabin (right) in New Design, just south of Waterloo. But that was more than 100 years before the founding of the state’s longstanding network of Southern Baptist churches—the Illinois Baptist State Association.



As it probably is with many new organizations, the idea for IBSA arose out of a divide between people who thought similarly on some important things, and very differently on others. In this case, there were several divides, writes historian Myron Dillow in “Harvesttime on the Prairie.”

Baptists in Illinois at that time cooperated with one another as the Baptist General Association, and things seemed to be going well in the early 20th century. “But underneath the seeming harmony, there was smoldering discontent and distrust,” Dillow says. Disagreements over how resources were distributed across the state, as well as cultural differences between the north and south, contributed to the growing divide.

Theology also separated the state’s regions: northern Baptists were more open to different views and shared their pulpits with ministers of other denominations. In the south, Baptists were influenced by Landmarkism, which Dillow defines as “the method by which many Baptists convinced themselves that theirs were the only true churches and that all others mere human societies.” Landmark thinkers didn’t like practices like open communion, and they favored a narrow definition of what a Baptist church should be.

That mindset was personified in William Throgmorton, who founded the *Illinois Baptist* newspaper in 1905. He

would soon use its pages to rally Baptists toward the creation of a new organization, one “based on strict Baptist principles.”

The Illinois Baptist State Association was officially established January 31, 1907, at First Baptist Church in Pinckneyville. They joined the Southern Baptist Convention in 1910, after abandoning an attempt to join a movement of Landmark Baptists in Arkansas.

As the dust settled from its somewhat tumultuous early days, IBSA leaders recognized the importance of turning its focus toward missions, Dillow notes. The number of churches giving toward state missions increased from 389 in 1908, to 474 the next year. They gave more than \$14,000 in 1910, whereas in the days of the Baptist General Association, average total gifts were \$1,500.

“It is not a question whether as an association we will survive or not,” reads IBSA’s 1908 annual meeting board report, “that question is forever settled, and that which demands our attention now is, how shall we best carry on the Lord’s work.”

— With info from “Harvesttime on the Prairie” by Myron D. Dillow

#### Think about it:

1. What organizations or ideas do you know that have arisen from conflict?
2. Pick three leaders from the Bible who had to manage conflict. How were their styles similar or different?