

ILLINOIS IN SIGHT Youth who worship

“We’ve got snacks.”

Chaperone Libby Morecraft stands in the doorway of Judson University as members of the All-State Youth Choir stream past her. They’ve just arrived at the next stop on their annual tour, towing suitcases, musical instruments, and lots of peanut butter and crackers.



Photo by Tim Starnier

Young musicians have to keep up their energy, after all.

Every year, the choir of high schoolers from around the state jumps on a charter bus and heads out on tour. They’ve sung in Oklahoma, Florida, Pennsylvania, and lots of churches here in Illinois.

And it all starts with a week of school—kind of. At Summer Worship University, held at Hannibal-LaGrange University just before the tour, the choir prepares for their travels with breakout sessions and corporate worship. Students hone their vocal and instrumental skills during the classes, which also include drama and visual art. In the evenings, they worship together, led by a team of students in the

Worship Leaders track.

Junior highers and others not in the choir also join in the week-long camp, which ends with a concert.

Then, it’s back on the road as the choir heads out on what has morphed over the years into a “music and missions” tour, said Steve Hamrick, IBSA’s director of worship and music ministries. “Instead of riding many miles in a bus, setting up and presenting a concert, packing up and traveling to the next venue, our strategy is to use music as a tool to share the gospel.”

That’s why Hamrick makes it a point to schedule some stops that aren’t churches, like a theme park or a fast food restaurant.

The All-State Youth Choir has a long history of developing Baptist leaders in Illinois. Bourbonnais pastor Chad Ozee is one example of a choir member who’s now serving in full-time ministry. Tim Sadler, IBSA’s director of evangelism, is another.

“Graduates include full-time and bivocational worship leaders, senior pastors, church planters, music teachers, concert performers, missionaries, students leading worship in their local churches, and others who now participate on their church’s worship team,” Hamrick said.

A leadership force trained in technical music skills and biblical worship—peanut butter and crackers are a small price to pay for that.

Clip and Share B-101 with

- Pastors
- Church staff
- Discipleship leaders
- Missions leaders
- New members

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 attendees. Or download the PDFs at 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 10th in our 20-part series. That means 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 the first half 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



Church planting brings leaders back home

Sometimes, God’s call doesn’t take you very far from home.

Steven Helfrich grew up in Godfrey, Ill., about six miles north of the town where he has planted The Bridge Church. Born in the neighboring community of Alton, Helfrich and his family went back there and started the church last year.

“I sensed that my call to ministry would lead me away from Alton/Godfrey, never to return,” Helfrich says on the “Meet the Pastor” page of his church’s website. “God has a sense of humor!”

Helfrich and The Bridge are part of a church planting effort in Metro St. Louis known as “SEND St. Louis.” A partnership between the North American Mission Board and state and local partners, SEND has a goal to plant numerous new churches over the next several years to reaching the growing, diverse population on both sides of the Mississippi River.

The river may divide Illinois and Missouri, but the city dynamics of Metro St. Louis extend far past its iconic arch.

“When you think about St. Louis, most people don’t think about our side of the river,” said Van Kicklighter, IBSA’s associate executive director for church planting. But it’s all there: suburbs, college campuses, impoverished neighborhoods, and a growing population.

Metro St. Louis, including the Illinois communities that are part of “Metro East,” is home to 123 people groups that represent 110 countries and speak 38 languages. And they need churches. That’s why Helfrich and dozens of other planters are hard at work in the city and its suburbs.

Jarvis James is another pastor who didn’t have to travel far from home to start a new church.



We serve in ... Metro St. Louis

Pins on a map indicate some of the dozens of St. Louis communities in need of a new church.

“My whole childhood was in the city,” said the pastor of The Body of Christ Church, which goes by “T-BOC.” James grew up on the Missouri side of the river, but he and his family have moved east to start a church in a city best known for signs of urban decline. East St. Louis is marked by high crime rates, a stalled job market, and a shrinking population.

But James was intentionally looking for the “worst of the worst,” he said. “Wherever they say ‘these people can’t be reached,’ that’s where we want to be.” His church building, a former medical clinic, was renovated with the help of volunteer mission teams.

“St. Louis... Man, this is my city,” James said. “We love it. We love the city, we love the people. Because God was here first before we got here, so since He loved the people, we gotta love them too.”

— Meredith Flynn

WORSHIP, CITY-STYLE



On the day of Pentecost, people who had nothing in common but Jesus came together in worship. Paul affirmed that “there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). But two millennia later, the diversity of the early church yielded to what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called “the most segregated hour in America.”

That’s still true in about 80% of U.S. churches, but it is beginning to change. And much of the change is coming in the cities. Young people reared in the same schools, speaking the same language, listening to the same music become more likely to worship together.

Worship brings us to the cross.
Worship brings us to Christ.
Worship brings us together.



Pray for a new church

Location: Belleville, St. Clair County

Focus: Ethnically and economically diverse singles and families

Characteristics: Belleville is the biggest city in the Metro East St. Louis area, with a population of around 45,000.

Pray: For new church plants to help reach people in this metro area with the gospel.

— From the IBSA Church Planting Team



WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... THE LORD'S DAY

Read Article 8 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)* at www.IBSA.org/B101.

When I was growing up, Sunday church attendance was non-negotiable for my family. Gathering with God's people every week was as automatic as breathing. After service we had a family meal, followed by my parents passing out on the couches for a nap.

In the early years we would even go back for Sunday evening service. This regular rhythm was a hugely formative practice for me.

Times have changed. Very few churches have a Sunday evening service anymore. And faithful Sunday morning attendance has declined significantly even among those who identify themselves as strong Christians. There have long been cultural Christians who only show up on Christmas and Easter, but now even the "committed" are periodic in their participation. Sunday isn't as special anymore.

Should it be? Is Sunday church a biblical necessity? Could the warning of Hebrews 10:25 about not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together be just as well obeyed by a Sunday morning tee time with another believer or cinnamon scones at Starbucks on Saturday with some Christian friends?

It becomes clear when we look at the New Testament that there was at least a regular meeting of the disciples on the first day of the week (see 1 Cor. 16:2). On one of his missionary journeys Paul

stayed with the believers in Troas over the span of seven days and we read that "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7) they all assembled for fellowship, preaching, and the Lord's Supper.

Early Christian literature confirms this picture and shows that the first day of the week (Sunday) came to be known as "the Lord's Day" (cf. Rev. 1:10). It does not belong to us to use however we feel. It is a day set aside especially to honor the Lord and focus our worship on him together with his people.

Enshrined in the moral law of the Ten Commandments is the principle that one day in seven is to be set apart from the other six. It is the Sabbath. Jesus took issue with sinful applications of this law (see Matt. 12:1-12, for example), but he never nullified it. He honored it as it was intended. In fact, in Luke 4:16, we see that it was his regular custom to go to the synagogue every Sabbath day. The shift from seventh day observance to the first day of the week is tied to the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead on a Sunday (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke. 24:1; John 20:1).

At this stage in redemptive history, we still need a weekly day of remembrance and rest that orients us to the eternal Sabbath to come (Heb. 4), but something has changed. The greatest event to remember now is no longer creation (Ex. 20:11) or redemption from

Egypt (Deut. 5:15), but the beginning of the new creation and redemption from sin. And the logic of the gospel tells us that we don't have to work so that we can then rest; rather, we are to rest in Christ first and then we can go to work from there.

Our doctrinal statement, *The Baptist Faith & Message*, stands in a long line of Baptist confessions that acknowledge the Lord's Day as "a Christian institution for regular observance."

Its wording carefully avoids legalism, while presenting a needed challenge to our present nonchalance: "Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ," Article 8 states.

In our modern economy, it is often hard to get Sundays off, and some professions rightly require employees to work on Sundays. (What would happen to the patients if hospital employees refused to work on Sundays?) But I've generally found that if people desperately want to honor the Lord's Day, it can be done.

We must be willing to sacrifice, limit our travel, see ourselves as part of a community, plan ahead, and resolve not to miss church unless physical health makes it absolutely impossible. In such habits, true spiritual health is revealed and flourishes.

Nathan Carter is pastor of Immanuel Baptist in Chicago.



The Gateway City

Famed for its arch, renowned zoo, and the world champion Cardinals, **Metro St. Louis is home to 2.8 million people.** living in **80** distinct neighborhoods and communities.

52% of residents aren't affiliated with any church, and less than **15%** are part of an evangelical congregation.

With one Southern Baptist church for every **7,000** people, the Send St. Louis initiative has identified **87** sites where new churches are needed, including **41** on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River.

When your church gives through the Cooperative Program, you support church planting and missions in **metro St. Louis**. And the Gateway City becomes a gateway for the Gospel.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT A BURDEN FOR CITIES

Big cities can be seriously intimidating. Bustling, busy and crowded, our nation's urban areas are home to hundreds of people groups and languages. There is often great wealth in big cities, separated by just a block or two from poverty, crime, and brokenness.

Southern Baptists historically have made it a priority to take the Gospel to urban areas. Missions pioneer Annie Armstrong helped establish Woman's Missionary Union to reach disenfranchised people in her home city of Baltimore and others like it. In 1917, Baptists decided to establish a seminary in New Orleans. The school "would be planting the siege guns at the enemies' gates," wrote Baptist newspaper editor P.I. Lipsey. "It would rally the Baptists

and put heart into them and equip them for their work as nothing else could."

Modern city-reaching efforts have focused on two "p's"—partnership and planting. In the second half of the 20th century, Southern Baptists' domestic missions agency focused on key metropolitan areas in need of a boost, kind of a "shot in the arm" for ministry that was already happening in the city.

The urban mission initiatives had different names over the years, but similar principles: Come alongside churches and local associations in the city, and help people from outside catch a vision for how their churches could partner in the work.

Several of these "focus cities" saw growth in missions involvement and church planting. In the decade after 9/11, for example, 45 new Southern Baptist churches were started in New York City, accord-

ing to numbers from the North American Mission Board.

"SEND North America" began in 2011 as a new city emphasis with a strong focus on church planting in 32 urban areas, including Chicago and St. Louis. And partnership is still a big part of the process. Churches from around the country sign up to support a church planter in one of the cities by praying for them, sending mission teams, or providing the financial resources needed to start a new church in an expensive place.



Leaders in SEND cities host "vision tours," where potential partners can meet church planters and see areas of need up-close. The tours help turn "faceless locations" into places where churches can see themselves investing time, energy and resources.

"When they think about our side of the river," Charles Campbell said of Metro East St. Louis, "they think about these church planters they've met. And that's huge."

—Meredith Flynn

Think about it:

1. What connotation does the word "city" have for you? What experiences have shaped your thinking about urban areas?

2. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14. How could this passage guide your personal ministry involvement in the closest city? What about your church?

CONSIDER THIS For personal study or group discussion



- 1 What does your regularity (or lack thereof) in Sunday church attendance say about your heart? Are you a Pharisee? Has the Lord's grace captured your heart so that you desire to honor and obey him?
- 2 How have worldly cultural trends affected the way you view the Lord's Day? What events, plans, or conditions would trump gathering with your local body of believers on a Sunday?
- 3 What is it that you do normally throughout the week? How can you discipline yourself not to do those things on Sundays, such as homework, e-mail, or laundry? Why should you? (See Ex. 16.)