



Illinois Baptist State Association
3085 Stevenson Drive
Springfield, Ill. 62703

Report to our Ministry Partners • Fall 2020

The year 2020 will be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic—people coped with life-threatening disease, businesses closed, school children learned at home, and churches discovered new ways of doing ministry when their doors were shuttered.

For the Illinois Baptist State Association, 2020 will be remembered for the word “pivot.” This is the year all our missionaries and ministry staff quickly turned from our planned equipping and training work to new and innovative ways of serving IBSA member churches. As church leaders explored new technologies and ways of gathering people for worship and Bible study online, IBSA’s ministry teams were there, adapting rapidly and serving as guides into new, uncharted territory.

Through webinars, online town hall meetings, and downloadable resources, IBSA sought to provide valuable information to our ministry partners. We addressed issues concerning health information and religious freedom, as government limitations restricted ministry. Disaster Relief volunteers added distribution of protective equipment and cleaning supplies to their responsibilities. And chaplains prioritized care for people struggling spiritually during the pandemic.

Most important, our team of missionaries and staff was ready to help pastors so that no church or leader would feel alone. Together, we learned the value of our network. This statewide network comprises almost **1,000** Baptist churches, church plants, and mission congregations in Illinois. This is the supportive and encouraging network that we in Illinois call our big Baptist family.

In this annual report, IBSA reports the vital signs of our churches from previous year’s Annual Church Profiles (ACP). In the church year 2019, Illinois Baptists gave **\$6,205,953** to missions through the Cooperative Program, an increase of **3.6%** over 2018. The annual Mission Illinois Offering was up **10.5%** to **\$386,057**.

Morning worship attendance increased **1.5%** to **67,851** attenders. Sunday school attendance, however, was down by about **4.2%** to **39,600**.

Across Illinois, **3,553** people were baptized in IBSA churches last year. The total is down **3.3%** from the year before, but 2018 saw an increase of more than 200 baptisms after several years of decline. The Illinois numbers mirror recent trends in the Southern Baptist Convention, which has also reported multiple years of baptism declines.

In 2019, **16 churches** affiliated with Illinois Baptists at the November Annual Meeting held at Cornerstone Church in Mt. Vernon. And the IBSA Church Planting Team reported **11 church plants** were started across Illinois.

In many ways, 2019 set up IBSA and Illinois Baptist churches for the opportunities anticipated in 2020. For example, after seven years in a row of significant increases in the numbers of camp weeks offered and students in attendance, IBSA’s camps at Lake Sallateeska and Streator were prepared for their best year yet in this string of ministry successes, until the pandemic forced cancellation of summer activities. The closure caused notable loss of income, but both camps and leaders are preparing for a comeback in 2021.

As we lean in to 2021—with all its uncertainties and challenges, but also with its many opportunities for rebuilding ministry after the pandemic—we hope you, your church, and your association will continue to be active partners of our Baptist network here in Illinois. Our kingdom work will be multiplied—many times over—and your church need never feel you’re going it alone.