

Mission Illinois

Young church reaches neighbors in need

Grace Family Church launched in 2019 to reach Rogers Park, one of Chicago's most diverse neighborhoods and a hub for immigrants and refugees. Led by Pastor Jorge Rodriguez, this is one of many new churches across Illinois, where more than 8 million people do not know Christ.

There are 81 nationalities represented in Rogers Park, Rodriguez said, and 41% of homes are led by single parents. There is vast educational disparity and ethnic diversity, and the neighborhood is transient, with people moving in and out all the time.

Near the end of its first year, Grace Family Church was reaching almost 60 people through weekly worship services and Bible studies. Then, just after their first anniversary, Chicago shut down amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges of 2020 "amped up" the need for Christ in the community, Rodriguez said, and exacerbated some ongoing urban struggles. There has been an increased sense of desperation and anxiety, he said. Their neighbors are looking for tangible hope. At Christmas, the church built on existing community partnerships to provide care boxes for dozens of families.



Church planter **Jorge Rodriguez** (left) and Grace Family Church are engaging Rogers Park on Chicago's north side.

"God's stubborn grace and mercy has providentially planted Grace Family Church at this unprecedented time in a community with these present needs," Rodriguez said. "It will also be his grace which will grow us and propel us into mission, as Christ continues to call our lost brothers and sisters back home."

Most years, IBSA helps start 15 or more new churches in Illinois, from Chicago to Cairo, among demographic and language groups of all kinds. And it's possible because your church gives faithfully and systematically to missions through Cooperative Program.

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missions

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Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program is the most effective missions funding system in history. Through it, Illinois Baptists give about **\$6 million** each year for **missions, evangelism, church revitalization, and leadership development** in our home state. Plus, we support student ministry through IBSA's two camp facilities and on campuses.

Together with all Southern Baptists, we give **\$190 million** annually to support **6,648** missionaries sharing the gospel globally.

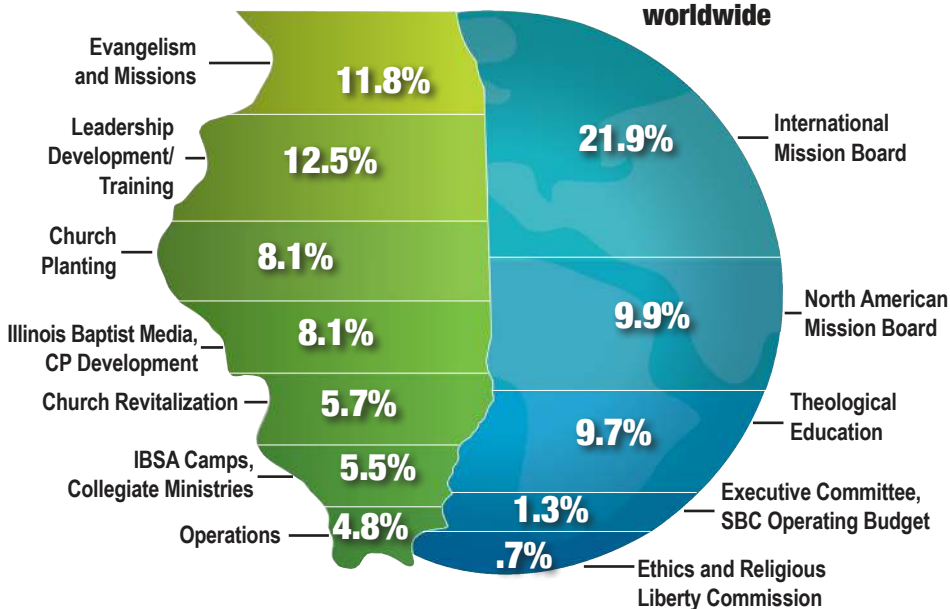


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