



Diversity broadens gospel outreach possibilities

Acre upon acre of cornfields, as far as the eye can see. Multi-storied office buildings vying for space on a busy downtown thoroughfare.

A tall-steepled church with more than 2,000 members and a faithful reputation in its community. A handful of believers praying about the people their new church plant will reach.

Newcomers to our country huddled together, reading the Bible in their native dialect. Young adults raising their collective voices in contemporary praise music.

A broad landscape of diversity in Eastern Nebraska Baptist Association rallies Southern Baptists there to make a great impact with the Great Commission. The association is diverse in its geography – from declining rural counties to growing suburbia and includes Nebraska’s three largest metropolitan areas. It is diverse in its constituency – with an ever-growing ethnic population and the largest Sudanese community in America. It is diverse in its membership, from long-established churches to small start-up congregations.

The association, encompassing 25 counties in the Cornhusker State, exists to help its 48 member churches, missions and Bible study fellowships as they “radiate the Light of the World across the heartland and around the globe,” according to director of missions Mark Elliott. In a state where Southern Baptists make up only 1.1 percent of the population and total evangelical church membership is less than 8 percent, the need abounds.

The role of the association in addressing that need, says Elliott, is to “equip and resource pastors and other church leaders to do what God has called them uniquely to do.”

“If the association can empower and encourage pastors and church leaders, then the gospel will be shared.”



“Quiet revival” lays foundation for great impact

A “quiet revival” is stirring in Vermont, where, 50 years ago, Southern Baptists first established a presence and later formed the Green Mountain State's first and only association.

Southern Baptists established a presence in Vermont, the last state to have Southern Baptist work, in the 1960s. Some 20 years later, the Green Mountain Baptist Association was formed, covering the entire state.

Today, Southern Baptist work in the association, which was “slow in the early days,” according to director of missions Terry Dorsett, is “experiencing a quiet revival.” In 2001 the association had 17 small churches. By 2009 the association had more than doubled in size, growing to 37 churches with additional missions planned for 2010.

Young in years, Green Mountain Baptist Association has a mature understanding of its role in denominational life. “We believe God has called the local church to do outreach,” explains Dorsett. “We encourage each church to find one thing it can do that serves a need in its community and also intentionally shares the gospel. Then the association does whatever it can to help each church accomplish what God has called it to do.”

Green Mountain Association relies on partnerships with other state conventions, associations and churches to help meet its churches’ needs. The association also emphasizes prayer-walking, particularly with its church starts. Additionally, several Mission Service Corps missionaries, individuals who raise their own financial support as they serve as full-time missionaries, “help the association serve the churches more effectively,” Dorsett says.

The young association’s multi-faceted approach, he believes, will result in a great impact for the Great Commission.