



**Kentucky State Missions Emphasis  
Master Article  
By Diana Derringer**

*“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself,  
if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received  
from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”  
Acts 20:24 ESV*

**Introduction**

Although located in the Bible Belt of the United States, Kentucky’s degree of lostness would probably surprise many of her residents. A long, hard look at statistical reality reveals extensive spiritual needs and urgency for church plants throughout the state, particularly in the eastern region.

A close look also uncovers schools in need of material, social, and prayer support; homeowners unable to complete simple repairs; children and families who lack the basic necessities of food and clothing or who own few childhood games and toys.

That reality sounds a call to action among many across the state. They give of themselves – time, talent, resources – so others may know God’s grace in a personal way. They minister to physical and emotional needs as a means to share the gospel. Church plants, disaster relief ministry (both in and outside the state), school adoptions, home repairs, Christmas backpack projects, and evangelism training all give credence to the faith they proclaim.

Following the example of the apostle Paul, they speak courageously of their faith in Christ and testify to the gospel, no matter the cost. As Paul said, “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24 ESV).

These faithful followers challenge all Kentucky Baptists to testify of their faith in Christ and support ministries which share the gospel. The Eliza Broadus Offering, sponsored by Kentucky WMU in cooperation with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, helps fund many of these mission efforts.



## Lostness in Kentucky *By the Numbers, From the Heart*

Never say never. Like many others, Jason Lowe learned that lesson ... twice. When he left his Pikeville home for college and later for seminary, he pledged he would never move back. God had other plans.

With a degree in statistics, Jason returned in 2003 as a statistician/data analyst for Pikeville Medical Center. Following God's call to ministry, he and his wife moved to Louisville in 2006, where he completed his Master of Divinity degree.

In 2013, Jason said, "God began to break my heart over the vast spiritual and physical challenges facing eastern Kentucky." His family returned to Pikeville where he serves as the Director of Missions for the Pike Association. In that role he works with the 25 churches "to reach eastern Kentucky and the world for Christ." They seek to strengthen, mobilize, and plant churches.

With a statistics background, Jason was drawn to the 2012 KBC report, "Lostness Indicators For Kentucky."<sup>1</sup> It "indicated that only 51.6% of Kentuckians are identified with any religious group, and only 13.9% of Kentuckians attend a religious gathering on a regular basis. While these results were troubling enough, the county-by-county breakdown revealed that the percentages in some Kentucky counties were far worse," particularly those in the east. Jason began his own research to test his observations.

He examined the state based upon percentages and populations. (The 2012 report covered only percentages.) He explained, "While two counties may have a similar percentage of lostness, one ... may have a much larger population of lostness simply because it has more people ... In order to identify potential areas of priority for evangelism and church planting efforts, both metrics are valuable." He focused on regional differences and shared these in a report entitled "As Far As the East Is From the West: An Analysis of the Spiritual Differences Among the Geographic Regions of Kentucky."<sup>2</sup>

Since Jason published his report in 2016, some information may not be current. Nevertheless, it offers insight into the regions of greatest need for evangelism and church planting. His initial observation proved accurate. Nineteen out of the top 25 most lost counties (based upon percentage) are located in the East region. Although the third largest in population, the East region has the fewest KBC churches and church plants. The entire state reveals significant spiritual needs, but that holds especially true in the East.

Jason discovered several other significant differences among the six regions, including these three:

- The Central and North Central regions are much more densely populated (home to the largest Kentucky cities). They also have a higher KBC church to population ratio. Although the North

### **Spiritual Landscape of Kentucky**

The 2015 population estimate for the state of Kentucky is 4,425,273 residents. Of these nearly 4.5 million Kentuckians:

- 51.6% identify as adhering to some type of religious group (2,282,048 Kentuckians)
- 33.8% identify as being a member of a religious congregation (1,497,925 Kentuckians)
- 13.0% identify as regularly attending religious worship services (575,911 Kentuckians)

In light of these numbers, it should be noted that there are currently 2,503 Kentucky Baptist congregations across the state seeking to reach the millions of lost Kentuckians with the gospel of Jesus Christ. To put it another way, there is one Kentucky Baptist church for every 1,768 residents in Kentucky.

Central region is the second most populated region it has the second fewest number of KBC churches. Significant church planting efforts are underway in both regions.

- The West region population is the second lowest but boasts the largest number of KBC churches, with a KBC church to population ration of nearly half the Kentucky average. It also has the second most funded KBC church plants.
- The East region stands in stark contrast to the West. The East is the third-most populated region, yet it has the fewest KBC churches by far. While the East region has 71,404 more people (15% difference) than the West, it has less than half the number of KBC churches. At the time of the report, the East region had only one KBC-funded church plant. Since the report, Jason has seen renewed interest and activity for church planting in the East. (See the Multiply East Kentucky article.) Creekside Church has also been planted in Pike County.

At the time of Jason’s report there was one Kentucky Baptist church for every 1,768 residents in Kentucky. New churches and revitalized churches are needed everywhere. However, the greatest needs appear to be in the East Region.

Jason encourages people to review his 2016 report<sup>2</sup>, discover areas most in need of new churches, and pray about how God might use them and their church. He concludes, “The needs are vast, and it is going to take all of us working together to penetrate the lostness in our state with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

**Prayer Requests:**

- \* "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2 ESV).
- \* That people “from Pikeville to Paducah, and everywhere in between” would answer God’s call to share the gospel, plant new churches, and work together to witness a mighty spiritual movement.

<b>Top 25 Counties in Need of Church Planting Efforts</b>		
Ranking/County/Region		
1	Campbell	North Central
2	Jessamine	North Central
3	Bullitt	Central
4	Rowan	East
5	Pike	East
6	Carter	East
7	Floyd	East
8	Johnson	East
9	Kenton	North Central
10	McCreary	South
11	Boone	North Central
12	Breathitt	East
13	Knott	East
14	Montgomery	North Central
15	Oldham	Central
16	Greenup	East
17	Martin	East
18	Morgan	East
19	Lawrence	East
20	Laurel	South
21	Lewis	East
22	Madison	South
23	Perry	East
24	Grayson	South Central
25	Magoffin	East

<sup>1</sup><https://jasonalowe.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/glenmary-lostness-in-kentucky-report-2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://jasonalowe.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/2016-kentucky-regional-lostness-report.pdf>



## Multiply Eastern Kentucky An Evangelistic and Church Planting Partnership

Eastern Kentucky, larger than western Kentucky geographically and in population, has 250 churches compared to western Kentucky's 500. Eastern Kentucky's church attendance averages about ten percent of the population compared to western Kentucky's twenty percent. According to a 2015 study by Jason Lowe "the East region is home to 15 of the top 25 counties with the worst KBC church to population ratio" in the state. In addition, "the East region contains the majority of the most lost and unchurched counties in Kentucky."

Multiply East Kentucky formed as "a catalyst for an evangelistic and church planting movement across the eastern Kentucky region." It partners the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Evangelism/Church Planting Team with East region pastors, prospective church planters, directors of missions, and other interested individuals. Goals and plans include:

- Activate ten church planters across the region this year
- Host at least three vision tours across the region this year
- Raise awareness of the spiritual needs across the region
- Coordinate evangelistic efforts with the 2018 KBC annual meeting in Pikeville
- Develop a leadership pipeline to discover, develop, and deploy regional church planters
- Identify key eastern Kentucky church leaders to lead these efforts

Creekside Church, formerly Island Creek Baptist, demonstrates the possibilities. After Island Creek closed, a church planter began Creekside in the same location. Their first service drew more than 250 people. After six weeks, Creekside averaged well over 100 in attendance. Such results take cooperative efforts and hard work. Creekside's partnership includes Jason Lowe, Director of Missions; Jason Johnson, church planter; and John Lucas, Senior Pastor at First Baptist Church (FBC) of Pikeville (sending church) and Church Planting Team Leader for the Pike Association. Creekside's the first Southern Baptist church planted in Pike County in nearly 20 years.

Jason Johnson was born in Pikeville. As a child, he attended the mission that previously met on Creekside's property and grew up about two miles away. Johnson said that "eliminates a huge barrier of getting to know the people and building trust with the community."

Because of the "incredible drug epidemic" and resulting child neglect, plus other spiritual strongholds, Johnson requests prayer for their community outreach. He

### Eastern Region Statistics:

- The fewest number of churches of any KBC region (159 lower than second fewest [North Central region])
- 19 out of the top 25 most lost counties based upon percentage of lostness
- 4 out of the top 25 most lost counties based upon population
- 16 out of the top 25 most unchurched counties based upon percentage
- 2 out of the top 25 most unchurched counties based upon population
- Ranked #1 out of the 6 KBC regions on the Church Planting Priority Index



said people in the community “need a safe and welcoming place where there is hope.” A woman in her 50s told Johnson a funeral was the only church service she had ever attended before going to Creekside. She wanted to hand out candy at a fall festival the evening after her first service. She accepted Christ during the festival.

When John Lucas left for seminary, he never intended to live in Pikeville again. He said ten years later “God showed me His wisdom and keen sense of humor as He not only called me back to Pikeville, but to my home church (FBC).” He served six years as youth pastor and is now senior pastor.

Lucas said FBC “has a rich history in church planting, having launched close to a dozen mission churches/plants in her 114-year history.” Island Creek mission “never grew into an autonomous local church,” so Lucas began to pray for “a healthy church in that community.” Six months after Jason Johnson joined the FBC staff as a church planter, his launch team held Creekside’s first worship service. Lucas prays for more church plants from FBC and Creekside in the next five to seven years. He invites others to “come and plant their lives to reach lost people in the mountains of eastern Kentucky.”



Creekside accepts donations for community physical needs such as food, toys, and clothing. They partner with other KBC churches and remain open to additional partnerships for prayer, mission trips, or finances. With only one bus to transport more than 30 children to Church, they must make multiple trips. A van donation would enable them to expand their outreach. To partner with Creekside, contact Jason Johnson at Creekside Church, PO Box 2732, Pikeville, KY 41502 or 1576 Island Creek Road, Pikeville, KY 4150. Web site:

[www.creeksidechurch.net](http://www.creeksidechurch.net). Email: [pastor.creeksidechurch@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.creeksidechurch@gmail.com). Phone: 606-433-0498.

### Prayer Requests

- \* Ten church plants
- \* Salvation for 359,000 lost people
- \* Sending churches
- \* Financial partners
- \* A church planter pipeline

To join the Multiply Eastern Kentucky efforts, contact Jason Lowe at (606) 432-2660 or [dom.pasb@gmail.com](mailto:dom.pasb@gmail.com).

### Go Further

**Hope for the Mountains** is a one-day evangelistic event scheduled for November 11 at the East Kentucky Expo Center in Pikeville. Hope for the Mountains will feature evangelist Jon Reed, the Jason Lovins Band, and other special guests as we seek to reach the lost. Kentucky Baptist churches from all over the state are encouraged to attend, bring their unreached and unchurched friends and to serve in various capacities during the event.

Learn more about this event and register to pray and help in other ways!



[kybaptist.org/hope](http://kybaptist.org/hope)



**Disaster Relief Ministry**  
***Striking Back when Disaster Strikes***

In a recent 12-month span, trained volunteers with Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief responded to needs in Kentucky; West Virginia; Louisiana; North Carolina; Illinois; Florida; Texas; Virgin Islands; Madagascar; Lesotho, South Africa; and Zimbabwe. They provided in excess of 317,000 meals, 7,800 showers, and 500 loads of laundry in North America. They assisted more than 1,500 families with flood recovery, fire clean-up, chainsaw work, and roof tarping. Famine stricken areas in southern Africa received more than 1.2 million meals. Disaster Relief leaders also assisted South Africa with training to begin their own disaster relief ministry.

While they did all that, they shared their faith. In addition to personal testimonies through casual conversation, they exceeded 10,000 ministry contacts and 3,500 chaplain visits. As a result, close to 100 people made decisions for Christ.

Major damage from 2017's hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in Texas, Florida, and the Caribbean Islands kept teams busy with clean-up efforts, meals, and chaplain visits. Hurricanes may have hit those areas hard, but disaster relief volunteers struck back. Through their words and actions, thousands learned about the power of God's light in the darkest circumstances.

As Coy Webb, Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief Director, said, this ministry seeks "to bring practical help, healing grace, and the hope of Christ to those affected by disaster. We are living out the truth of God's word, which instructs us: 'Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.'"<sup>1</sup>



Kentucky Baptists partner with other state conventions, the North American Mission Board, the International Mission Board, and Baptist Global Relief. A far cry from its 1984 birth with hardly any volunteers or resources, today's 5,000-plus trained Kentucky volunteers and 45-plus mobile disaster relief units stand ready to serve when and where needed. As part of the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief network, it's "one of the three largest disaster relief entities in the United States, along with the American Red Cross and Salvation Army." Often some of the first to arrive and last to leave, they provide "mass feeding, damage assessment, chainsaw assistance, flood and fire clean-up, roof tarping, chaplaincy, water purification, laundry and showers, and emergency child care."

Webb first became involved with this ministry during Hurricane Katrina while he was pastor of First Baptist Church in Monticello. He accepted the role as director of Kentucky Disaster Relief in 2008. His responsibilities include training, coordinating, and mobilizing volunteers. His greatest joy comes from serving in "a role that fulfills both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission." It also includes "the privilege of serving beside the faithful and wonderful volunteers from Kentucky Baptist churches who love the Lord and who have a passion to serve." At the same time, he constantly faces the challenge of "making decisions when and how it is best to respond and to do this in short windows of time during crisis events. Disasters come without notice and often leave a trail of devastation behind." Few people realize the challenge, chaos, and complexity of responding to major disasters. "It is never easy to wade into the pain and suffering of others." Yet that remains God's call on Webb's life.



Consistent disaster relief needs include fervent volunteers and the resources to go wherever and whenever a crisis occurs. Gifts through the Cooperative Program and Eliza Broadus Offering for State Missions, plus partnerships with Kentucky Baptist churches, keep this ministry running and ready.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer can register for training and learn more about disaster relief at <http://www.kybaptist.org/dr/>. Volunteer requirements include basic orientation to disaster relief (provided at regional training events in different parts of the state) and a background check. All volunteers receive photo IDs.

Although not everyone can go as a volunteer, everyone can pray.

### **Prayer Requests**

- \* Pray for God to use Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief to bring help, healing, and hope to those suffering in times of disaster.
- \* Pray for God to use Kentucky Baptist volunteers to sow Gospel seeds as they respond to physical needs.
- \* Pray for those affected by crisis events to be reminded of God's love and care as volunteers minister in the aftermath.
- \* Pray for God to continue to call volunteers for training and service.
- \* Pray for God to continue to provide resources that enable teams to respond effectively when disasters strike.

**[www.kybaptist.org/dr](http://www.kybaptist.org/dr)**

<sup>1</sup>John 3:18 Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



## Schools *Adopting Schools: Opening Doors*

God adopts people. Parents adopt children. Kentucky churches adopt local schools. How school adoption looks varies from church to church and year to year.

Todd Robertson, Director of Missions, Louisville Regional Baptist Association (LRBA), encourages school adoption by every LRBA church in order to open doors for the gospel. He asks churches to focus on four key areas: Prayer, Relationship, Intentionality, and Action. If churches don't know what to do, they can pray for school administration, faculty, staff, students, and families. He said prayer "should lead to opportunities to engage in relationships as long as [churches] are intentional about their pursuits to connect. Ultimately, we want churches to have clear action plans for serving the school and to show the love of Christ" to children and their families. Several LRBA churches connect through FCA and Youth for Christ."

One church that has led the way in LRBA is **Bethlehem Baptist Church**. About 15 years ago, a group of Bethlehem's women wanted to do something for Indian Trail Elementary, their neighborhood school. Pat Reaves, WMU Director and Mission Friends leader, said they began by prayer walking around the school. They sought prayer requests from the principal. His list filled an entire page. Many of those issues, such as single parent homes, physical needs, and learning disabilities, still exist. The women left notes of encouragement on doors for teachers.

As a result of these ministries, Bethlehem receives invitations to open houses and to pass out information about Wednesday night children's programs, basketball ministry, fall festivals, and Easter activities. They try to build family relationships through those contacts. Rather than scheduled prayer walks, the church now encourages individual and "drive-by" school prayers.

For years Bethlehem provided a meal and school supplies for several students. They now work through the Family Resource Coordinator, who distributes the supplies. Last year, men from Bethlehem worked on the school's softball field. Pat and her husband, Dudley, volunteer in a classroom each Friday. She said, "We know many of these kiddos need to have an adult friend or two. We try to be faithful to go each week so they, as well as the teachers, know they can depend on us."



Bethlehem now includes the school in their budget to help with school supplies and gifts for teachers. Their outreach also includes:

- First of the year bags of goodies, supplies, and notes of appreciation and assurance of prayer for teachers
- Gifts for Teacher Appreciation Week – usually gift cards with notes
- New pencils, pre-sharpened, for spring testing week
- Treats three or four times a year for children invited to the Accelerated Readers party (Sunday school classes sometimes help with this expense.)
- Special ministry efforts between the school's Family Resource Coordinator and the church's clothes closet and food distribution







To help with school ministries, Kentucky WMU has provided **Eliza Broadus Offering** grants to several churches and Kentucky Baptist Convention missionaries who minister to children including **Kentucky Sacks of Love in Benham**. Director Judy Caulder said she and her co-director husband, Frank, took part in a mission trip from South Carolina to Harlan County, Kentucky, in 2006. They learned many students did not have food for the weekend. Teachers told them the students could not stay awake in class due to hunger.



The Caulders now work through eight school Family Resource Youth Service Centers to provide weekend food, school supplies, hygiene items, shoes, clothing, and Christmas gifts. They also receive donations from individuals and churches. They have permission to include faith-based material such as tracts and Bibles in the food bags. In 2016, they used their EBO grant to give students Slip Disc Frisbees with the plan of salvation. They know of at least 33 salvations from that year's work.

As churches focus on ministry to schools, some prepare students to share their faith with friends and other students through witnessing training. Such training helps young people live out their beliefs through their conversations and behavior. Plus, students can share with students in ways adults cannot.

“Evangelism training is a regular part of Kentucky WMU’s Creative Ministries Festival and Kentucky Changers,” says Joy Bolton, executive director. “We encourage churches to train students in how to share their faith. Our children and youth have access to schools in ways that we do not. Believing students can prayerwalk the halls, live out their faith in the classroom, and also share the gospel with others at school.”

Kentucky WMU would be happy to work with your church to assist with evangelism training for children and students. Suggested tools for student evangelism include tracts, bracelets in colors representing parts of the gospel message, marked New Testaments, learning the Romans Road, and learning how to share a personal testimony.

Like Benham and Bethlehem, any church can offer local school ministry. Project possibilities include:

- Distribute paper hands with first names of students to encourage year-round praying.
- Distribute cards with school personnel names and positions for prayer.
- Prayerwalk around the school.
- Volunteer as tutors or in other needed positions.
- Help with school maintenance and enhancement.
- Send notes of encouragement to school personnel.
- Provide refreshments for school activities.
- Prepare backpacks with school and/or food supplies for children in need.
- Equip church students to be witnesses.
- Meet other personal or school needs as they arise.

### **Pray for:**

- \* Local students, families, teachers, and personnel
- \* The drug epidemic and economic needs that impact students in every school
- \* Your church’s role in meeting school needs
- \* Statewide school efforts



**Kentucky Changers**  
*Repairing Homes, Building Servants, Changing Lives*

Do you need a pre-packaged in-state mission trip for eighth-grade through college-age students, plus adults? Do you want to learn how to carry out the Great Commission with hands-on mission work? Kentucky Changers fits the bill.



Kentucky Changers provides the labor to repair 20-30 homes in each of four locations every summer for homeowners who need help. Changers partners with Baptist associations, local government agencies, and schools in the communities where they work. Adults skilled in construction supervise exterior work such as roofing, siding, painting, decks, handicap ramps, concrete, landscaping, and window/door replacement. According to Peggy Murphy, “Changers teaches students how to show the love of Jesus in a tangible way so they can get their foot in the door to share Jesus with the lost.”

Kentucky Changers began in Hopkinsville in 1994, after a man returned from World Changers with a passion to do the same in Kentucky. The first project drew 80 participants. Kentucky Changers now offers four teen projects each June and July plus two adult spring and fall projects. Close to 1,000 people participated in 2017.



Because of her passion for missions and teens, Kentucky Changers makes a perfect fit for Peggy. As coordinator, she organizes all the projects; finds the locations; works out the logistics; enlists adult volunteers; and works with associations, county agencies, and schools. She handles adult volunteer and team member training, promotion, and church presentations. In addition, she goes to and oversees each project.

Peggy faces the challenge of building multiple partnerships to insure quality repairs. She must also build trusting friendships with homeowners and communities in order to share the Gospel. All that effort pays off when “students come to Changers, learn new skills, learn how to share their faith, and leave confident and on fire to share Jesus.”

Joe Ball, called Papa Joe to distinguish him from Joe Ball, Jr., has served with Kentucky Changers since 1997. He said, “Once you get in and work with those kids, it gets a hold of you. The majority of people, if they go once, will go back.” Papa Joe loves to see “a boy or girl who never held a hammer or tape measure” be able to “do it all” by the end of the week. Not only do they learn a new skill and help others, they get to be the hands and feet of Christ.”



For the past twenty years, Papa Joe has typically served with two youth Changers plus the spring and fall adult Changers. He admitted that about a week or two before events, he thinks “I’m not really doing this again, am I?” However, once he gets there, he knows why he keeps going. He shared the joy of seeing young people go through Changers and then return as chaperones or crew chiefs.

On the last day of Papa Joe’s first year with Changers, a young man gave his testimony. He told the team, “No one where I came from is a Christian, not my family or friends or anyone I know.” He said he knew he would have trouble when he returned home. Papa Joe stayed in contact with him several years, offering a listening ear and words of encouragement.

Sydney Amos, a member of Valley View Baptist Church’s youth group in Vine Grove, emailed Peggy to thank her for the salvation bracelets Changers used to share the gospel. Sydney said the bracelets “provided me with so many opportunities to share the gospel on and off the job site! They are great to share God’s word and love with people of all ages, but they are especially great to share with children!” She led her youth group to use the bracelets as they witness in their school and community.



Although active in Kentucky for several years, Kentucky Changers remains an unknown for many individuals and churches. Peggy hopes to change that. She wants others to discover the joy of hands-on mission work that transforms lives and communities. Anyone interested in becoming involved can contact her by email or telephone.

Peggy.Murphy@kybaptist.org  
502-489-3457

#### **Prayer Requests:**

- \* Additional adult volunteers to teach construction skills
- \* New work locations
- \* More churches to send their teens to Changers

**[www.kywmu.org/changers](http://www.kywmu.org/changers)**



## Operation Give Hope Rockcastle Association Offers Hope while Meeting Needs

What can unite 15-17 churches in a Baptist association, Celebrate Recovery participants, a Christian church, Catholic Church, local school system, plus a variety of other groups and individuals? Ask Teresa Parrett, Missions Mobilization Coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and Katheryn Pope. They can tell you all about Operation Give Hope, sponsored by the Rockcastle Baptist Association and coordinated by Katheryn, a Mission Service Corps Missionary. They hold the event in a middle school cafeteria and gymnasium. Celebrate Recovery participants give testimonies. Individuals and groups sing. They serve food and give away backpacks, toys, coats, and blankets to children in need.



Director of Missions, Randy McPheron, had a vision for a county-wide event where every child would be ministered to and receive a new toy. Operation Give Hope was born and has grown every year.

One of many **Christmas Backpack Project** events, Rockcastle Association has it down to an art. However, Teresa and Katheryn will also tell about the tremendous amount of work required. As Katheryn said, "Even though I know God's got this, the enormity of it all overwhelms me at times." Katheryn was commissioned as a MSC Missionary in April, 2015 but her work actually began in 2011. She led 15 people from Rockcastle Association on a mission trip to Romania. After their trip, they recognized the local need for outreach events similar to those they did abroad. They formed a Community Mission Team with Katheryn as coordinator. They have done a variety of outreach projects including several backyard Vacation Bible Schools and winter soup kitchens, as well as Operation Give Hope, initially called "Love in a Box."

In the last two years, Rockcastle association has served approximately 1,500 children with Christmas backpacks, coats, blankets, and toys. They have also seen many decisions for



Christ. Other events Katheryn coordinates at the Community Outreach Center in Brodhead include the Summer Feeding for Kids, Celebrate Recovery, Back to School Bash, women's Bible studies, and Feeding the Flock Food Pantry.

### What is the Backpack Project?

- The Christmas Backpack Project began in 2001 by a GA Leader with North Lanier Baptist Church in Georgia. They prepared shoe boxes for children in need.
- In 2012 the project changed to backpacks rather than shoe boxes to distinguish their program from Samaritan's Purse.
- Bill Barker, former Director of Appalachian Regional Ministry, and now with Appalachian Mountain Ministry and the Georgia Baptist Convention, was instrumental in spreading the backpack project across the Appalachian Regional Ministry and Mississippi River Ministry areas.
- Along with backpacks filled with necessities, gifts, and goodies, children receive a copy of the Christmas story. They can also join the Mailbox club, an age-appropriate Bible study by mail.
- In 2016, 2,144 churches distributed 53,589 Christmas backpacks. They saw 1,531 salvation decisions made. The 2017 goal was 65,000 backpacks.

Although Operation Give Hope consumes tremendous amounts of time and energy, Teresa and Kathryn love it. The smiles on children's faces, gratitude of parents, and cooperative efforts among the churches and missionaries make all their work worthwhile. Kathryn said, "Nothing surpasses the joy of knowing people are getting saved because of our efforts."

If you want to help with Operation Give Hope, needs include new toys and new and gently used blankets and coats. You can contact Kathryn Pope at 606-308-3099 or the Rockcastle Baptist Association office at 606-256-4571.

You can also participate in the **2018 Kentucky Christmas Backpacks Project** by collecting backpacks filled with requested items. Use your state missions emphasis as a kick-off time for the project with all backpacks collected by the end of September. Visit the Kentucky Baptist Backpack Project web page for information on collection sites.

As you share the Backpack Project in your church, please pray for each ministry which will distribute the backpacks and share the gospel. As Kathryn said, "The greatest thing anyone can do for the backpack ministry is pray."

#### Prayer Requests:

- \* Pray that children and adults hear the gospel, the true meaning of Christmas.
- \* Pray that many accept the Christ of Christmas as their personal Savior and Lord.
- \* Pray that God will be glorified.

#### Go Further

Will you:

- \*Pray?
- \*Participate?
- \*Partner?

Visit the Christmas Backpacks Project web page, download all needed information, and start planning how your church will participate.

[www.kybaptist.org/backpacks](http://www.kybaptist.org/backpacks)



#### Kentucky's Backpack Project

- Kentucky's first statewide Backpack Project began in 2017 as a *partnership with the North American Mission Board and Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union*. Churches, associations, and other ministries host backpack outreach events.
- With the retirement of Bill Barker from NAMB, we now partner with Appalachian Mountain Ministry and the Georgia Baptist Convention in the Christmas Backpack Project.
- Activities at the Backpack Project sites may be as simple as a birthday party for Jesus with cake, punch, the Christmas story, and backpack distribution. Larger ones include Cedaridge Ministry's in Williamsburg that reached 2,000 children and families.
- Teresa Parrett is the Kentucky Baptist representative for Appalachian Regional Ministry and Mississippi River Ministry.
- In February Teresa sends backpack applications to churches, associations, and ministries that reach out to needy families and children in Kentucky. She forwards completed applications to Bill Barker who matches churches filling backpacks with those requesting them.
- With a 2017 goal of 5,000 backpacks, Kentucky Baptists collected over 8,000. The goal for 2018 is 10,000!.
- Backpacks must be delivered to associational collection sites between October 15-19, 2018.
- Be sure to read the new instructions for 2018.



## Personal Evangelism Training *Engaging People with the Gospel*

In Todd Gray's 11 years as pastor of Oak Grove's First Baptist Church, the church baptized more than 500 people and received 600 members by transfer of letter or statement of faith. As with any military church, they experienced constant turnover. However, the church, "located outside the gates of Fort Campbell," grew from about 80 people in 2001 to almost 400 by 2012.

With a heart for and experience in evangelism, Todd began work as West Region consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention in 2012. In 2016, he began leading the Evangelism, Church Planting, and Campus Ministry Team. Responsibilities include 50-plus training events each year, developing and providing resources, and helping leaders think evangelistically.

In 2017 Todd introduced **3 Circles training** across Kentucky. More than 450 Kentucky Baptist leaders took part in 27 Train the Trainer events across Kentucky. Participants learned to use the 3 Circles training kit and received kits (partially funded by Eliza Broadus State Missions Offering gifts) for use in their churches. Todd estimates that 2,000-plus people have learned to use 3 Circles to share Jesus with others. Joy Bolton, executive director of Kentucky WMU, used her training to share with students during 2017 Kentucky Changers events.



David Little, pastor of Dexter Baptist Church, has taught 3 Circles twice at his church since his training. He described it as an "awesome way to turn everyday conversations into gospel conversations." Dexter Baptist averages 68 to 70 on Sunday mornings. However, they baptized 14 people in about a six-week period after their training. They have used this tool in prison and Job Corps ministries as well as community contacts. David explained, "It's not the only way to share the gospel, but it's one people are comfortable with." He added it "only takes about three minutes to share, unless people have a lot of questions." He plans to train the church's new members soon.

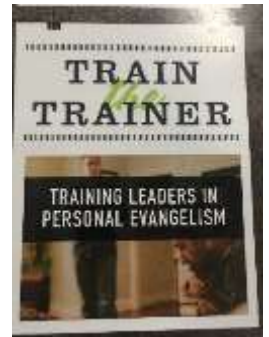
Ken Davis, Pastor of Bethel Church in Berea, told of a man who "struggled with substance abuse issues for years." Although the man rejected previous witnessing attempts, at the end of the 3 Circles presentation, he said, "This makes more sense to me than anything that I have heard about God before." Training in 3 Circles is one of Bethel's 2018 priorities.

Todd said, "Knocking on doors with pastors and watching them experience a renewed desire to engage lost people with the gospel ... is by far the most enjoyable aspect of my ministry. Door knocking is not the only way to share the gospel but in Kentucky it is one of the easiest and most readily available ways to engage lost people with the good news."

"To build on the 3 Circles training offering in 2017, **ReachKY.Today**, was developed to help the large percentage of believers who currently aren't sharing their faith with anyone, to begin having gospel conversations by telling the story of how they were saved. ReachKY.Today is a non-threatening personal evangelism training tool helping people learn how to leverage their salvation story to point far from God people to Jesus. The training includes clear instructions to make an audio or video recording of their story at the website, [www.reachky.today](http://www.reachky.today). A 4-session training kit is available which provides everything a pastor or leader needs to train their members. Training Kits are available by contacting the KBC Evangelism Team.



ReachKY.Today was introduced through Train the Trainer sessions offered in 24 locations during 2018, with four events in each of the six KBC regions. To aid bi-vocational leaders, half of the Train the Trainer events were offered in the evenings and half during the day. The Eliza Broadus offering allows Todd and others to provide regional promotion, training on how to use the material, equip people for personal evangelism, and supply a training kit for each church represented. He said, "EBO touches every single thing we do in terms of training, providing resources, and Crossover." The Baptist associations provide meeting space, a light meal, and local promotion.



Anyone interested in becoming involved in **2018-2019 personal evangelism events** can:

- Request the training schedule from Todd's assistant, DeAnna Terry, at [deanna.terry@kybaptist.org](mailto:deanna.terry@kybaptist.org).
- Volunteer for Crossover 2018. The Saturday before the Pikeville annual meeting will probably include a door knocking campaign, campus outreach at University of Pikeville, a basketball clinic, and a possible medical clinic. A one-night Harvest Crusade is planned for the Sunday night before the annual meeting.
- Encourage pastors and church members to make a gospel conversation pledge through [GCCChallenge.com](http://GCCChallenge.com). The KBC Evangelism team would like to see more than 100 KBC churches make the pledge.

### Prayer Requests:

- \* People to set their smart phone alarms for 10:02 each day to pray for laborers (Luke 10:2)
- \* For 2500 fired up, Spirit-filled, soul-winning pastors and church planters to fill the pulpits of the 2500 KBC Churches and Church Plants in KY
- \* Kentucky Baptist pastors, planters, DOM's, student leaders, and denominational leaders to lead the way in evangelism
- \* High attendance for the 50-plus evangelism equipping events in 2018
- \* The long-term goal of 20,000 baptisms in Kentucky in one year (Current baptisms run between 13 and 14,000.)
- \* Kentucky Baptists to have a renewed desire to be a soul-winning denomination
- \* Kentucky Baptists to have a renewed desire for daily gospel conversations
- \* Renewed efforts to help student pastors become more intentionally evangelistic and for Andy McDonald who leads this team effort

### Go Further:

- Watch a six minute video that explains the Three Circles evangelistic initiative at [namb.net/video/3-circles-life-conversation-guide](http://namb.net/video/3-circles-life-conversation-guide).
- Learn more and/or order at [namb.net/resources/3-circles-life-conversation-guide-2](http://namb.net/resources/3-circles-life-conversation-guide-2)
- Record your testimony at: [ReachKY.today](http://ReachKY.today)







# Testify!

With eyes wide open to widespread physical and spiritual deprivation, may all Kentucky Baptists reach out in Jesus' name, sharing the gospel by whatever means necessary. May all testify to friends, family, and neighbors throughout the state of God's love by demonstrating God's concern for their every need.

Will you pray? Will you give? Will you go?

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24 ESV).

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Diana Derringer is author of *Beyond Bethlehem and Calvary: 12 Dramas for Christmas, Easter, and More!* She writes for several publications and serves with her husband as a friendship family to international university students. Visit her at [dianaderringer.com](http://dianaderringer.com)