

Northshore Probe 2011: Summary

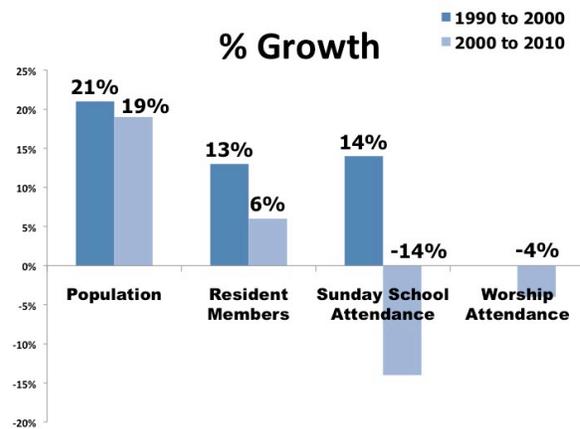
By Lane Corley



The Northshore Baptist Association Probe was completed on April 1st and the results and findings are indeed a call to action. In preparation for the PROBE our office conducted the following research: a 30-year statistical summary of our churches, a study of multi-housing on the Northshore, and zip-code demographic studies for every community in the NSBA area. On Friday, April 1st, a group of pastors and laymen came together to conduct an area-wide windshield survey looking for opportunities for ministries and potential church plants. The teams identified 25 areas for potential church planting and ministry development. Here is a summary and some highlights from our findings:

The numbers

The Northshore Baptist Association covers approximately 1,800 square miles, from Springfield/Albany to Slidell, LA. In 2010, the population is approximately 343,794 people, which is a 19% increase since 2000 and a 36% increase since 1990. In the 91 Southern Baptist Churches in the region, membership has grown to a 2010 total of 24,076 resident members, a 6% increase from 2000 and 18% increase since 1990. Baptisms and Bible Study Attendance experienced double-digit percentage increases from 1990 to 2000, but both dropped by 14% from 2000 to 2010. 11,220 people worshiped on any given Sunday in 2010 at NSBA churches, which represented a decline of 4% from 11,691 in 2000. Every financial category has increased since 1980, including missions giving, with over \$3.5 million being given to mission causes by NSBA churches in 2010.



Of our three major population centers, two out of three reported declines from 2000 to 2010. The 49 NSBA Churches in the Tangipahoa and Livingston Parish area, where population is 105,927, reported a 14% decrease in both baptisms and Bible Study attendance and a 10% decrease in Worship attendance. In West St. Tammany Parish, where population is 122,848, the 24 NSBA churches reported a 7% increase in baptisms, 8% increase in worship attendance, and only a slight decrease in Bible Study attendance. However, the increases there did not keep up with the growth in population, which was 23% from 2000 to 2010. In East St. Tammany Parish, where the effects of Hurricane Katrina were felt most severely in August of 2005, the 17 NSBA churches reported a 12.5% decrease in resident membership, 43% decrease in baptisms, 31% decrease in Bible Study attendance, 7% decrease in worship attendance, while the population in the region grew 16% to 114,145.

While God has used his churches on the Northshore, we must admit that our growth has not kept up with population increases. As a matter of fact, population is growing 3 times as fast as resident membership, with every other significant measurement for growth currently used on the Annual Church Profile showing an overall decline. Comparing the numbers to the population demonstrates the urgency of this moment in our history: resident members of NSBA churches make up only 7% of the population, small group attendees make up only 1.9% of the population, and only 3.3% of the population of the Northshore attend NSBA churches on any given weekend. These percentages are at historic lows. We cannot continue as we are.

The reasons for the steep declines are various and could be subjects for future pastors conferences and coffee shop meetings, but for certain the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina have played a huge role. Many people left our region, and new people have moved in from less evangelical population centers. With the shift in population, shifts in strategy are needed to more effectively reach new people for Christ.

The Opportunities

Along with the statistical research, seven teams of pastors and lay leaders in NSBA churches participated in a one-day windshield survey across the region to identify needs, potential sites for new churches, and potential ministry opportunities for churches in the region. The Church Multiplication Team will be working with the NSBA Staff and LBC Missions and Ministries Division to set priorities and strategy utilizing all of these findings. Here is a summary of the work of our seven teams:

Team #1: West Hammond & Ponchatoula/Springfield/Killian

At least four opportunities noted: 1) Significant outreach possible at Terry Harbor in Killian, such as Block Parties, resort type ministries, or some type of Sunday AM ministry to campers and boaters. 2) Significant outreach at Carter Golf Community for growing resident population and golfers, such as Sunday AM or weekday Bible Study at the Clubhouse. 3) Potential Church Plant in the Baptist/Rufus Road area. 4) Potential Church Plant on the West side of Ponchatoula.

Team #2: North East Hammond/Robert

At least four opportunities noted: 1) Multi-housing ministry & significant outreach to multi-housing communities in the city of Hammond, including the SELU campus. Potential for churches to cluster to sponsor this project. 2) Potential Church Plant or Church Revi project in the area around River Road and Hwy. 190. 3) Potential Church Plant and/or Church Revi project north of Robert. 4) Potential Church Plant in East Hammond in the area of Airport Rd. and Hwy. 190.

Team #3: Ponchatoula/Bedico

At least two opportunities noted: 1) Potential Church Plant in the growing area East of Ponchatoula around Sisters Rd.-Hoover Rd.-Dunson Rd. 2) Significant outreach to Mobile Home Parks off of Hoover Rd. & Dunson Rd.

Team #4: Covington/Madisonville/West Mandeville

At least five opportunities noted: 1) Significant outreach or church planting opportunity in new mixed income multi-housing development in Covington called the Groves. Will be completed this summer, with more mixed income housing to be built around the complex in the coming months. 2) Potential ministry at the St. Tammany Jail, such as Bible Study, ministry to inmate families, ESL/Literacy tutoring, GED tutoring, etc. 3) Potential Church Plant in the West 30's area of Covington which is currently being revitalized by the city. 4) Chaplaincy opportunities at the St. Tammany Parish Hospital and industries such as Trinity Marine. 5) Significant ministry opportunities or Church planting in the areas around Lake Ramsey Estates to Covington High School.

Team #5: East Mandeville/Abita Springs

At least three opportunities noted: 1) Potential for a new church or significant outreach in the area between Hwy. 190 and Hwy. 59, south of Abita Springs. 2) Potential for a new church in the Greater Abita Springs area. 3) New Church needed in the next 2-5 years in the area around the Hwy. 1088/Interstate 12 interchange.

Team #6: North Slidell/Pearl River

At least four opportunities were noted: 1) At least eight large multi-housing facilities are in this region including mobile home parks, apartment complexes, and retirement/assisted living facilities. These present opportunities for churches to reach out to unchurched people. 2) With the growth in population there is the potential for a traditional church plant in the North Slidell/Pearl River area. 3) Alton Elementary off of Hwy 11, is one of St. Tammany's most underprivileged schools. A church or cluster of churches could minister to this community by adopting the school and providing resources and mentoring. 4) The team noted the growth of Hispanic families, especially in the multi-housing areas, so a Hispanic Church plant may be considered for this area.

Team #7: Slidell, south of Interstate 10/12

At least three opportunities noted: 1) Potential church plant on the West side of Slidell between Thompson Road and Hwy. 11 around Hwy. 433 and Hwy 190. 2) Potential Church Plant in South Slidell at Oak Harbor, Eden Isles, and Old Spanish Trail. 3) Significant outreach to multi-housing units in the city of Slidell. Great opportunity for churches to cluster for this project.

These are potential ministries and churches based off a windshield survey, not the official strategy of the Northshore Baptist Association. Priorities will be set and partners/leaders developed prior to launching any of these ministries.

Meeting the Challenge

Over the next ten years the Northshore is projected to continue to grow at a rate of 22%, which would bring our population to over 419,000 people. 22% growth for our churches would mean adding 5,296 new members in ten years. This still would mean that only 7% of the population would be members of NSBA churches. The real challenge is to increase the

percentage of people attending NSBA worship gatherings and Bible Studies. Currently 3.3% of the population attends worship in NSBA churches. If we wanted to double that to 6.6% of the population in worship attendance over the next ten it would mean adding 16,434 worshippers. Currently 1.9% of the population attends Bible Study in NSBA churches. If we wanted to double that to 3.8% over the next ten years it would mean adding 9,304 people to our Bible Study rolls. Daunting numbers considering our current decline. How could we do this? And is it even possible?

Four suggestions to meet the challenge: First, we need some of our churches to breakout. Second, we need healthier and riskier church planting. Third, we need to partner to help churches in need of and willing to engage in revitalization. Fourth, we need a discipleship revolution.

Breakout Churches

A breakout church is defined by Thom Rainer in his book by that title as a church that reaches at least one person for Christ every two weeks or 26 persons per year, has a conversion ratio of 20:1 or 1 conversion for every 20 members per year, has tenured and consistent leadership, and the church makes a clear and positive impact on its community.¹ In our area, FBC Covington would be an example of a breakout church. In 1980, FBC had 322 in Sunday School and baptized 32. Dr. Waylon Bailey became pastor in 1989 and from 1990 to 2000, Sunday School attendance grew from 417 to 1,137. From 2000 to 2010, FBC relocated into a new facility, sponsored a new church on the Northshore which added 100+ members in its first five years, and today FBC has over 1,700 worshippers each week. And, since 1990, 1,745 people have been baptized through the ministry of FBC Covington. Bedico Baptist is another church that has broken out with tenured leadership. Leo Miller became Pastor in 1994. In 1995, Sunday School averaged 76 weekly attendees at Bedico. In 2000, that was up to 141, 2005 to 232, and Bedico has recently broken the 400 barrier. And since 1994, 537 have been baptized at Bedico. Others are poised to breakout across the Northshore. The momentum of growing churches breaking out will help us catch up with population growth and move past a season of decline.

Healthier and Riskier Church Planting

Healthier church planting means church planting that is led by churches with a heart to multiply and reproduce themselves for the sake of kingdom expansion. So, what's needed for healthier church planting is healthy mother churches with a heart to reproduce. As Bob Roberts says in his great book *The Multiplying Church*, "The future of faith in America (and anywhere in the world, for that matter) is not tied to planting more churches, but in raising up of mother congregations of every tribe, tongue, denomination, and network that are reproducing... The hope is in pregnant mother churches."²

Riskier church planting would be multiplication that targets hard to reach areas and unchurched pockets of our population. Missiologist Alan Hirsch suggests that current church models are reaching out to smaller and smaller segment of the population, with

¹ Rainer, Tom. *Breakout Churches*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005.

² Roberts, Bob. *The Multiplying Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008.

possibly as much as 60% of America untargeted by our evangelistic and outreach efforts.³ Our probe identified multi-housing residents as one potential segment that is underserved. Others may be those in their early 20's with very little understanding of religion in any form. We need some church plants that go beyond planting a worship service that looks similar to others in the community, but will ask the question "Where is the church not?" and go there with the gospel. We need some church plants that have different scorecards and different expectations, but will faithfully deliver the message of Christ to unchurched people.

Partners in Revitalization

Church revitalization is needed to turn momentum around for congregations that are not effectively reaching their communities. This is already happening in a variety of ways on the Northshore, with Grace Memorial Baptist Church in Slidell becoming the sponsor of Covenant Baptist Church, which was in steep decline and in danger of shutting the doors. Also, with Woodland Park Baptist Church merging and taking on the assets and liabilities of New Life Church in Hammond, which was in steep decline, and now they are looking to plant an additional campus of Woodland Park on the site. And FBC Hammond working through a self-assessment with the NSBA Staff to begin a process toward revitalization. Churches are needed who are willing to adopt or sponsor or merge with existing congregations for the glory of God. And churches are needed who are willing to admit there in need of coming under the wing of a benevolent parent church or work with a church wanting to help then in a revitalization effort.

A Discipleship Revolution

Call it revival, lay renewal, or awakening, what we need is a revolution of discipleship that will lead Northshore Christians to multiply themselves spreading the Gospel like a sneeze to their neighbors, classmates, coworkers, and beyond. In his book *Church 3.0*, Neil Cole observes, "we have lowered the bar of what it means to be a Christian, such that simply showing up to the weekly one-hour event with some regularity and a checkbook is all it takes."⁴ We must refocus on making disciples who will reproduce themselves by telling others, inviting others, and discipling others.

Conclusion

As we think about our region, beyond the numbers are people who are going through cancer diagnosis without a church family to pray and care for them, people who are trying to break the scourge of addiction without a prayer and support network, families facing financial problems and crisis without the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and people facing death without the assurance of eternal life through Christ. And above all, a God who longs to know them and to receive glory and honor from their lives. We must work together for God's glory and the lives of the people of the Northshore.

³ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/alan-hirsch-church-model-reaching-only-40-percent-of-americans-47500/>

⁴ Cole, Neil. *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.



30-Year Statistical Summary of the Northshore Baptist Association

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Churches⁵	72/53 reporting	73/69 reporting	83/76 reporting	91/76 reporting
Resident Members	16,285	19,720 (17.4%+) resident members make up 9% of population	22,624 (12.8%+) resident members make up 8.1% of population	24,076 (6%+) resident members make up 7.0% of population
Baptisms	732	758	1,077 (29.6%+)	921 (14%-)
Sunday School Average	5,599	6,618 (15.4%+) Small Group Attendees make up 3% of population	7,689 (13.9%+) Small Group Attendees make up 2.7% of population	6,618 (14%-) Small Group attendees make up 1.9% of population
Worship Attendance			11,691 Worship attendees make up 4.2% of the population	11,220 (4%-) Worship attendees make up 3.3% of population
Receipts	\$3,811,632	\$8,419,960	\$17,791,426	\$22,353,616
Property Values				\$106,291,179
CP Giving	\$323,039	\$602,452	\$1,074,693	\$1,335,653
Associational Giving	\$43,629	\$83,753	\$149,757	\$301,643
Other Missions Giving			\$1,116,023	\$1,894,363
VBS	6,687	8,172	10,301	8,300
Population⁶	N/A	219,820 1 church/3,011 residents	278,446 (21%+) 1 church/3,355 residents	343,794 (19%+) 1 church/3,777 residents

1990 to 2000 – Added 10 churches. Membership grew by 12.8%. Membership to Population ratio dropped from 9% to 8%. Small Group Attendance to Population ratio decreased from 3% to 2.7%. Baptisms increased by 30%. Population grew by 21%.

2000 to 2010 – Added 8 churches. Membership grew by 6%. Membership to population ratio dropped from 8% to 7%. Small Group attendance to population ratio dropped from 2.7% to 1.9%. Baptism decreased by 14%. Population grew by 19%.

Observations: The Northshore Baptist Association is experiencing a decline. The population is growing 3 times faster than resident membership.

⁵ All data taken from LBC Annual Church Profiles.

⁶ Population data taken from www.census.gov reports for Zip Codes 70401, 70403, 70443, 70446, 70454, 70455, 70462, 70466, 70711, & St. Tammany Parish



30-Year Statistical Summary of the Northshore Baptist Association, Tangi-Livingston (70401, 70403, 70443, 70446, 70454, 70455, 70462, 70466, 70711)

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Churches⁷	33/31 reporting	44/43 reporting	46/45 reporting	49/44 reporting
Resident Members	8,954	11,039	11,289 (2%+) resident members make up 13% of population	12,241 (7.8%+) resident members make up 11% of population
Baptisms	401	387	516	443 (14%-)
Sunday School Average	2,792	3,268	3,524 (7.2%+) Bible Study Attendees make up 4% of population	3,032 (14%-) Bible Study Attendees make up 2.9% of population
Worship Attendance			5,855 Worship attendees make up 6.7% of population	5,269 (10%-) Worship attendees make up 5% of population
VBS	3,632	3,923	4,769	3,802
Population⁸	N/A	N/A	87,178 1 church/1,895 residents	105,927 (17%+) 1 church/2,162 residents

⁷ All data taken from LBC Annual Church Profiles.

⁸ Population data taken from ESRI Business Analyst Report for area Zip Codes.



30-Year Statistical Summary of the Northshore Baptist Association, West St. Tammany area (70420, 70431, 70433, 70435, 70437, 70447, 70448)

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Churches⁹	13/13 reporting	16/16 reporting	20/15 reporting	24/19 reporting
Resident Members	3,286	4,056	5,588 (27%+) resident members make up 5.9% of population	6,743 (17%+) resident members make up 5.4% of population
Baptisms	136	128	312	336 (7%+)
Sunday School Average	1,206	1,409	2,328 (39%+) Bible Study Attendees make up 2.5% of population	2,324 Bible Study Attendees make up 1.9% of population
Worship Attendance			3,453 Worship attendees make up 3.7% of population	3,741 (7.7%+) Worship attendees make up 3% of population
VBS	890	1,586	2,682	2,798
Population¹⁰	N/A	N/A	94,250 1 church/4,712 residents	122,848 (23%+) 1 church/5,118 residents

⁹ All data taken from LBC Annual Church Profiles.

¹⁰ Population data taken from ESRI Business Analyst Report for Zip Codes 70401, 70403, 70443, 70446, 70454, 70455, 70462, 70466, 70711, & St. Tammany Parish



30-Year Statistical Summary of the Northshore Baptist Association, East St. Tammany area (70445, 70452, 70458, 70460, 70461)

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Churches¹¹	10/7 reporting	9/9 reporting	10/9 reporting	17/14 reporting
Resident Members	4,018	4,625	5,747	5,026 (12.5%-) resident members make up 4.4% of population
Baptisms	195	243	249	142 (43%-)
Sunday School Average	1,601	1,941	1,839	1,262 (31%-) Bible Study attendees make up 1.1% of population
Worship Attendance			2,383	2,210 (7.3%-) Worship Attendees make up 1.9% of population
VBS	2,165	2,663	2,850	1,700
Population¹²		81,392	96,133	114,145 (16%+) 1 church/6,714 residents

¹¹ All data taken from LBC Annual Church Profiles.

¹² Population data taken from ESRI Business Analyst Report for Zip Codes 70401, 70403, 70443, 70446, 70454, 70455, 70462, 70466, 70711, & St. Tammany Parish