

FROM THE STATES: Florida Baptist Convention reduces budget; North Carolina church serves nurses

by Staff, posted Tuesday, March 24, 2020 (one month ago)

Florida Baptist Convention reduces budget

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) -- Florida Baptist Convention leaders announced a budget reduction in response to the COVID-19 crisis via a statement on the convention's website.

The full statement follows:

God has richly blessed the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention. During this time of international crisis, we must focus our attention to our finances to ensure that ministry continues to go forward. In 2015, Florida Baptists made a strong commitment to reach the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by forwarding 51 percent of giving through the Cooperative Program to the Southern Baptist Convention. "Now is not the time for that to change -- reaching the nations must remain a priority. However, just as churches are making financial adjustments, we, as a convention, must proactively make adjustments as well," said Dr. Tommy Green, executive director-treasurer, while speaking via videoconference with the Administrative and Finance Committees of the State Board of Missions.

The Florida Baptist Convention is committed to our cooperative partnership and the stewardship of our churches' offerings through the Cooperative Program. Under the leadership of Dr. Green, along with the approval of the Administrative and Finance Committees of the State Board of Missions, the Florida Baptist Convention is initiating adjustments to our expenses in response to the coronavirus crisis with the expectation of its impact on giving through our local churches. Stating to committee members, Green commented; "As the steward of the Cooperative Program partnership in Florida, it is imperative that I lead in making budget adjustments in response to this crisis."

The following reductions have been approved:

-- Compensation to both salary and benefits for all Florida Baptist Convention staff reduced immediately.

-- All Florida ministry-related budget line items reduced by 30 percent to include the convention's contributions to the Cooperating Ministries of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

These immediate adjustments are designed for the utilization of resources which allows the convention to continue to be 'right beside' our local churches. This includes the following programs established for financial relief to Florida Baptist churches in financial crisis:

-- Interest free COVID-19 emergency loans to churches as bridge loans to aid them in meeting immediate financial obligations over the next two months.

-- A two-month moratorium on payment on all current loans administered through the Florida Baptist Convention for the months of April and May.

Additionally, convention leadership affirmed its continued promise to funding, without reduction, church planting efforts through SEND Network Florida.

The leadership of the Florida Baptist Convention remains committed to support, strengthen and encourage our local churches and pastors. As this crisis continues to develop and the financial implications are further understood, additional budget adjustments will be evaluated.

For more information about the Florida Baptist Convention visit flbaptist.org.

N.C. church serves local nurses

CONCORD, N.C. (BP) -- Friendship Southern Baptist Church in Concord, N.C., is serving those on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 by sending care packages to emergency departments at four nearby hospitals where some of their own serve as nurses.



Friendship Southern Baptist Church volunteers put together care packages for area nurses on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis.

Submitted photo

Because some medical centers do not allow drop-offs, nurses from Friendship plan to take the packages to work with them. This allows hospital staff to have a point of contact with the church, Friendship's lead pastor Jesse Watkins told the Biblical Recorder in a phone interview March 20.

"Our purpose is to encourage people and to serve people as the church," Watkins said. "But we do want to connect that with someone who is part of our church community that can be a source of spiritual encouragement to the rest of the people there."

Watkins, whose wife and sister are nurses, said he was especially sensitive to the challenges health care providers are facing. Since posting on Facebook asking medical personnel about their most urgent needs, the church has received donations from members and non-members alike.

The funds allowed them to assemble packages that include snacks, coffee, toiletries and devotionals. The church was also able to purchase about 200 N95 masks to donate. Watkins said nurses also asked for hand lotion because the increased hand washing and sanitizing have made their skin dry. Nurses told him that snacks were more helpful than gift cards because they don't have time to take lunch breaks or order food.

Watkins told the Recorder he has focused not only on staying connected with church members but finding ways to reach others outside the church during a time of crisis.

"We also need to be thinking, 'How can we minister to those not in our church who are also fearful?'" he said. "They don't have the hope we do. So our prayer is that people working in the ER or wherever will see that there's some people that love them and are praying for them."

Friendship also broadcasts daily children's devotions on Facebook.

"We want to engage the children on a daily basis," he said. The devotions are streamed online Monday-Friday at 1:30 p.m. Eastern.