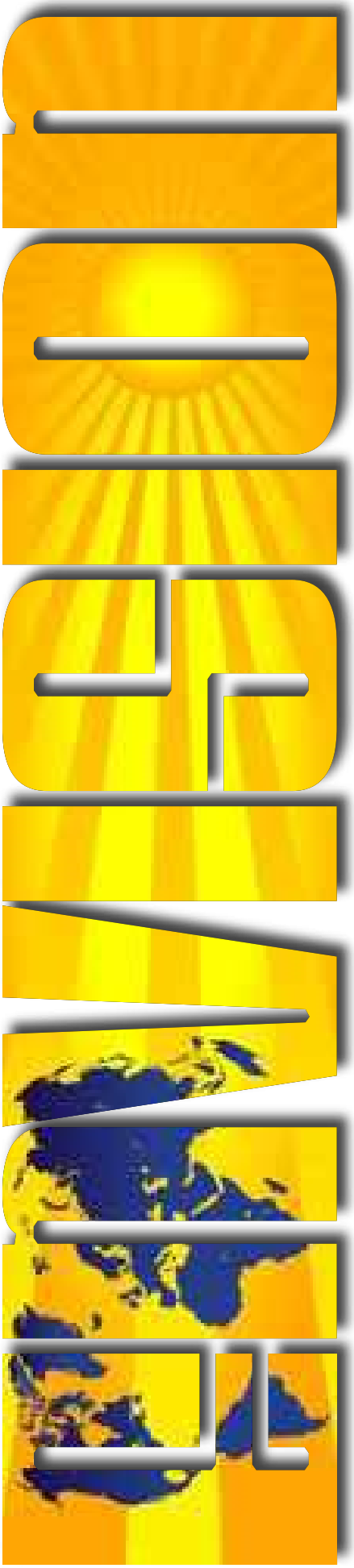

VISION 2020

Phase II, Data Gathering

A report to the Association

from the Planning Team

Larry Thomas, Chairman

WELCOME TO THE BLUE RIVER-KANSAS CITY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
EVALUATION TEAM REPORT, APRIL 23, 2009

We are in the midst of an Envisioning and Strategy Planning process for our Association. Phase 1 was the formation of an Evaluation Team and determining its objectives and process.

Phase 2 was a three-part study and evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Team. It consisted of county level community studies, pastor interviews, and a church member survey. This Evaluation Team Report contains the data along with findings and limited analysis of these three sources of input. It is not intended to contain strategic recommendations, but rather to give us all a snapshot of the state of our churches, our communities and our association. This report concludes phase 2.

Phase 3 of our strategic planning process will consist of further interaction with our pastors following up on their specific input regarding their churches and the Association. We will also hold two other report and discussion sessions about the Evaluation Team Report. Recognizing that not everyone can make the Executive Board Meeting, we will have report and discussion sessions open to any who would like to attend on May 12 (at Faith Baptist Church in Harrisonville) and another on May 13 (at the Associational office in Lees Summit). Both of these meetings will begin at 10 a.m.

Phase 3 will also consist of the formation and work of a Strategy Planning Advisory Group. Made up of strategic thinking pastors representative of the diversity of the Association, this group along with associational staff, will study the evaluation report, envision the future of our association, and come up with recommendations for the Association's consideration. They will work from May to mid-June then break for the summer. Further feedback from members of the Association will be sought during this time as well.

Phase 4 of our strategy development process will occur from September to mid-October of 2009. On September 3 we will have a one-day strategy planning retreat open to everyone. The Strategy Planning Advisory Group along with staff will take their ideas and study of the evaluation report, together with the recommendations and work from the planning retreat, and compose a proposed master ministry plan for the Association. This master ministry plan will be presented for adoption at our Annual Meeting, October 11. This will conclude phase 4 of our association's 2008-2009 strategy planning process.

I am very grateful to the Evaluation Team, led by Larry Thomas, for their diligent and excellent foundational work. This report and the data and feedback gathered provide a significant resource for envisioning the future ministry of the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association.

Welcome again to this report and thank you for your partnership in the gospel.

Rodney Hammer

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Summary Report

PURPOSE

The Vision 2020 Evaluation Team first met for an organizational meeting on November 24, 2008. The Evaluation Team was given the responsibility for developing the process and tools to evaluate the ministry of the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association, assess the current state of the Association and its churches, and to study the demographics and growth trends of the cities and towns in Cass and Jackson Counties. This was phases 1 and 2 of the Association's current "Envision" Strategy Development Process.

PROCESS

The Evaluation Team determined that information needed to be gathered from many different sources, in order to assess the current reality of the state of the association. The Evaluation Team agreed that the best way to get the necessary information was through hard and soft data. This involved a county- level study of our communities, pastor interviews and church surveys. The church survey was mailed to pastors, laymen, Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association Executive Board members, and others leaders in the association. The survey was also posted on the association web site for those who preferred to use the web to fill out the survey.

On March 10-12, 2009 sixty- eight pastors, from churches all over the association, were interviewed by a team from the North American Mission Board, as a part of the Vision 2020 Strategic Planning Process. The purpose of the interviews was to allow pastors to share their opinion of the ministry of the association and how their churches relate to the Blue River-Kansas City Association, as well as gain a current snapshot of the ministry of each church. The summary results of the interviews are found later in this report.

DEMOGRAPHIC SOURCES

We utilized the free services of the Missouri Baptist Convention for demographics of Cass and Jackson Counties. The information garnered from the demographics will be helpful for future planning by the Strategic Planning Team. The demographics of the counties along with other information is also found in the appendix of this report.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS

Even though the number of completed surveys was not as great as we had hoped, the Evaluation Team believes that we have secured sufficient hard and soft data to project what changes can be expected over the next few years. It is clear that we need to broaden our base of involvement of pastors and laymen in the ministry of the association. Many church members are not informed, and are not involved in the ministry of the Blue River- Kansas City Baptist Association.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Evaluation Team would like to thank all of you who filled out the church survey, and who participated in the interviews conducted by the North American Mission Board. We also want to thank Lisa Dye, Loren Hutchinson, and Dr. Rodney Hammer for the many hours of assistance to help us accomplish our task.

The Vision 2020 Evaluation Team

Larry D. Thomas, First Baptist Church, Raytown
Jeff Logsdon, pastor, South Kansas City Baptist Church
Lorraine Powers, First Baptist Church, Blue Springs
Jo Anne Ruble, Strasburg Baptist Church
Chane Hutton, pastor, AZ-U-R Church
Gary Jones, pastor, U Church
Anthony Andrews, pastor, Church of Faith International

CHURCH MEMBER SURVEY
Questions Related to the Churches

The "Vision 2020 Church Survey" was started by 81 individuals. Seven of those who started the survey failed to complete it. Forty of those who indicated their relationship to the church checked "ordained minister". Ninety percent of those who indicated their age were over 35. Fifty-two of the 74 respondents were male. Approximately 50% of the respondents were from churches with 100 or fewer in Sunday morning worship and another 35% were from churches with between 100 and 400 in Sunday morning worship.

The results of the "Vision 2020 Church Survey" are not a scientific sample. We are not aware of the standard deviation in each question. However, we did receive 40 responses from ordained ministers which is a statistically significant sample. The staff and laity answers generally were consistent with the ordained minister responses. Where they were significantly different will be pointed out in our findings. Based on this information we can say with reasonable certainty that the findings are at least directionally accurate.

The evaluation team noted some areas of concern.

Approximately 25% of respondents (19 persons) indicated that in working with the Association, they thought other churches or Christians had motives beside that of helping their church. Of those, over 75% (13) indicated they would be at least somewhat less likely to work with the Association in the future. The good news is that only one respondent indicated that he is "significantly less likely" to work with the Association in the future. While there has been some damage done by what has been perceived as improper motives, it seems to be repairable.

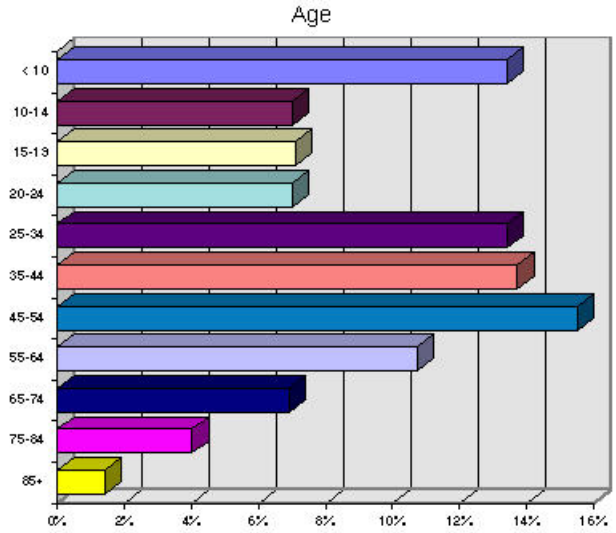
There is an apparent unwillingness to partner in church planting. Almost 50% (36) of respondents have some reservation or do not think that "every church should help plant new churches." Because currently one of the Association's most active methods of evangelizing Cass and Jackson Counties is in planting new churches, the fact that almost 50% of respondents have some reservation or do not think that "every church should help plant new churches" is disconcerting. Two positive notes are that a larger number (61) of respondents think that their church should "partner with other churches for Kingdom purposes."

Most of the efforts that our churches are using to impact others for the Kingdom of Heaven center around these four methods: outreach, preaching/teaching, discipling members, and partnering. Thirty-two respondents indicated some sort of outreach directly intended to reach their community. Over 70% of respondents said their churches open their doors to groups outside of their church. The level of success that these ministries have in eventually impacting the Kingdom of Heaven is a matter that should be further studied. Twenty-six respondents indicated that the preaching/teaching ministry of their church was impacting others for the Kingdom of Heaven. Ten respondents each indicated that discipling members or partnering with other churches was impacting others for

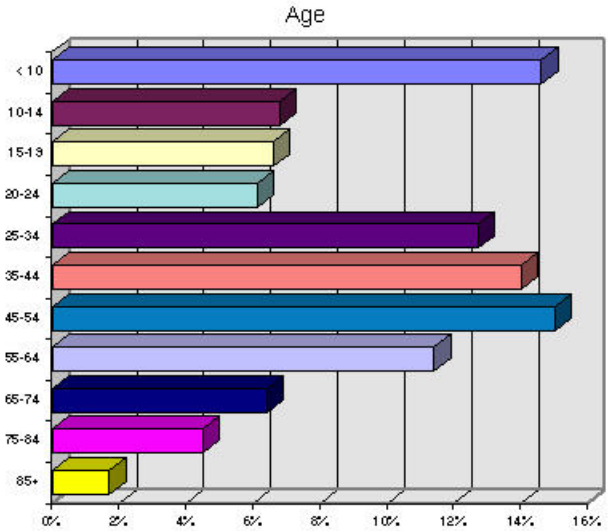
the Kingdom of God. Nine respondents said that their churches were having little or no impact on the Kingdom of Heaven. That, along with answers to other questions indicates an unfortunate level of despondency among a small but significant number of respondents. Interestingly, only five respondents indicated that they were impacting the Kingdom of Heaven through the Cooperative Program and none indicated that they were impacting the Kingdom of Heaven through Associational giving. Because more than that are probably giving, we are not effectively communicating the impact giving has on the Kingdom of Heaven.

DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

The Vision 2020 team has acquired data from both Jackson and Cass Counties to determine the ministry effectiveness of the BR-KC Association. This is a fairly large sample and does not reflect specific communities to



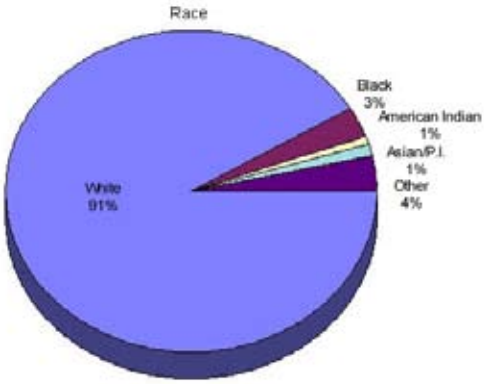
Cass County



Jackson County

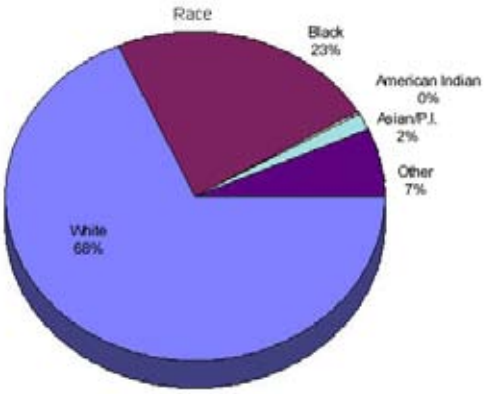
the same degree it reflects the two counties as a whole; however, the U.S. Mosaic Profile does provide information on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis. The data raises some questions regarding the reach of churches in Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association.

(1) Do our churches reflect the population in age distribution?



Cass County

One demographic that is fairly consistent in both Cass and Jackson Counties is age. Roughly 6% to 7% of the population is in each 5 year range from birth through 54 years. This begins dropping with 55-64 year olds and drops substantially



Jackson County

after age 65. The disparity in raw numbers between those under 55 and over 55 is only slightly more pronounced in Cass County. Do our churches reflect the population in age distribution?

(2) Are we reaching people from all races in the BR-KC Baptist Association?

Twenty-three percent of the residents in Jackson County are black. Seven percent are Hispanic. Another 6.5% are multi-racial or other. The numbers are drastically different in Cass County, but there are roughly 3% from each of the groups mentioned above in Cass County. Even though the percentages are even smaller in both counties for some races, there are thousands of American Indians, Asians, and Pacific Islanders in the metropolitan area.

(3) Are our churches aware of and organized to minister varying lifestyles?

When looking at the U.S. Mosaic Profile for both Cass and Jackson Counties, it is immediately obvious that Cass County is more homogeneous than Jackson County. However, even Cass County is home to people with many different lifestyles.

(4) Do our churches reflect the communities where they are located?

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In Cass County, the U.S. Mosaic Profile lists two lifestyle clusters well above the national average. These are also the two most predominate lifestyles in Cass County. We should have several churches ministering to "Small Town Success" and "Metro Fringe" households. At the same time, that only accounts for 55.4% of the population of Cass County.

In Jackson County, the two most predominate lifestyle clusters are also well above the national average. The disparity between the number of these two lifestyle clusters and the national average may not be as great as in Cass County, but may be cause for greater concern. "Metro Fringe" and "Aspiring Contemporaries" make up almost 38% of the population. The "Metro Fringe" group in Jackson County is made up heavily of "Steadfast Conservatives". The "Aspiring Contemporaries" group in Jackson County is made up of "Minority Metro Communities", "Stable Career", and "Young Cosmopolitans". Jackson County is far more diverse than Cass County so questions raised about Cass County churches being aware and organized to reach lifestyles is only magnified when applied to Jackson County.

When asked to identify the significant barriers to reaching the community within a two mile radius (of their churches) for Christ, about a third of those surveyed said that the biggest barrier to reaching the lost is Christians. Through apathy, lethargy, or poor leadership, the church seems to be in the way of the Church reaching our communities for Christ. In a later question, 19 respondents indicated that their church could not overcome the barriers to reaching their community, or that they were not sure whether their church could overcome the barriers, unless a radical change occurred in the hearts of the Christians in the churches. In another related question,

concerning the greatest need as a church, 32 respondents stated people. Some thought they needed more people; some thought they needed more leaders; many thought they needed more commitment and growth from the Christians who were already at their churches. This underlies the fact that God's greatest resource is those who have been redeemed by His Son. If we can provide manpower to help or encourage or excite the Christians in the Kansas City metropolitan area, God might use that to overcome any barrier to reaching the lost in our community.

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To the question, regarding the significant barriers to reaching the community within a two mile radius for Christ, the second largest response was from the 14 people who indicated that transitioning communities were their biggest barriers to reaching people for Christ. We should do further work to determine how well our churches reflect the surrounding communities.

When asked how the BR-KC Association might help our churches impact the Kingdom of Heaven, there were several answers. Manpower (6) and financial concerns (2) were mentioned, but paled in comparison to the three top needs. The primary need is communication. Eleven respondents said that they did not know or were not sure. Eight others responded that the Association should communicate needs, ministry opportunities, what we do, and how effective we are by God's grace. The fact that 25% of respondents need more information to answer a question is highly significant. Further study should be done to determine what we can do to more effectively communicate the various ways the Association can help our churches. Training was a second need mentioned; it was followed closely by coordinating ministry efforts and partnerships among various churches. Ten to fifteen percent of our respondents find training and coordination to be specific needs.

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Though it's understood that the Association is a group of churches working together, some people view the Association as a separate entity from a group of sister churches. The different answers to these two questions partially confirmed that thought.

Two primary answers emerged to how sister churches might help overcome barriers that hinder us from impacting the Kingdom of Heaven. Manpower (12 responses) was number one followed closely by ideas (9 responses). What churches need manpower to do is varied, but about 15% of respondents feel that they need people to help. Over 10% of respondents would like churches which have walked similar paths and had similar struggles to share ideas.

Two questions proved to yield answers of little value. "Are there any activities that you would like for your church to do, but your church has not undertaken them primarily because you lack the manpower or expertise to execute them? If so, what?" There were several answers given, but no recognizable trend was evident. The question about the greatest need in your community had a definite trend. Jesus! Of course, that is mankind's greatest need. We should have asked the question differently. We should have asked, "Other than salvation, what is the greatest

need in your community." Most respondents probably answered the first thing that came into their minds. We appreciate that. Unfortunately, what we were trying to get at was how to meet felt needs to gain an opportunity to tell people about their greatest need. We apologize for the poor wording. We did notice that money and family issues seem to be a trend. While common sense tells us there may be something to this, the sample size is too small to say these answers are directionally significant.

Questions Related to the Association

Several questions were aimed at the prevailing sentiment toward the work of our Association. Again, we recognize that the Association is really the churches working together, however many responses given indicated that people view the Association as a building in Lee's Summit and the activity that occurs therein.

When asked about the main purpose of the Association, resources for churches was by far the most common response. Thirty-one respondents felt the Association should help them to have the means to do the work God has called them to do. Networking was mentioned by 13 respondents. Working together to either plant churches, evangelize, or to do missions was mentioned by another 13 respondents. Training was mentioned by five respondents.

Generally, people see the Association as being in a position to help 125 disconnected churches to be more united, and therefore more effective, in reaching our communities for Christ. Those are great goals, so how are we doing? Not very well if you look at the results. We will not list all of the words and phrases used to describe the Association in our findings, but there were many. Of the 64 responses, seven were neutral or contained some positive and some negative components. Answers such as "a sleeping giant" and "interested, but distant" characterized these responses. Of the remaining 57 responses, 29 were positive and 28 were negative. About as many people who responded to an Associational survey had negative feelings for the Association as those who had positive feelings.

When asked what our church members value about the Association, twenty-eight respondents answered "nothing, not much, don't know, or not sure." This is the same number who had a negative opinion about the Association in the question referenced above. On a more positive note fourteen people did say that they value the willingness of the staff to help, ten appreciate the resources provided for the churches, and four mentioned the value of the training the Association does.

Three questions designed to see how the Association could be stronger provided little value. "How can the Association partner with you?", "How can the Association better serve your church?", and "What specific ministries has the Association neglected?" provided no trends. The only recognizable way to narrow down the feelings of the respondents seems to be that the Association is not neglecting the churches nearly as much

as we are neglecting the lost. However, it might be advisable to further study whether and how the Association has neglected the churches to see whether specific patterns might emerge, especially in light of the significant amount of negative opinions which were expressed toward the Association regarding that topic.

Only 52% of respondents attend Associational meetings and of the 48% who don't attend, four primary reasons emerged. Failing to see their value (9 respondents), time constraints (8 respondents), not knowing about the meetings (7 respondents), and others in the church attending and reporting (5 respondents), were the top four reasons.

Various specifics about the Association were addressed. Sixty-seven people read the monthly newsletter. Fifty-four read the Online NEWS e-mails. Twelve respondents do not believe the Association practices good stewardship for various reasons. Twenty-eight people responded that their church has reduced its giving in recent years. Again, a variety of reasons were mentioned, but 35% feel that their mission dollars could be better spent elsewhere. The most significant difference between pastor and laity responses occurred on this question. Twice as many laity or staff as pastors said giving to the Association has decreased because giving in their churches has decreased.

Fewer than 50% of respondents checked the top two levels of satisfaction with Associational leader training, church planting, immigrant ministries and urban initiatives. The only ministries with over 50% satisfaction in the top two categories were disaster relief and caring ministries with 58%.

Even though resources the Association provides was a significant need and a positive aspect of the Association for many respondents, approximately 25% to 50% of respondents did not know that six of the ten resources listed on the questionnaire were available to the churches. On a more positive note, four of the resources are well known and well used. The ministry newsletter, online e-mail newsletter, consultation with staff, and block party trailer are all valuable resources that churches are using well. It is good to know that while the availability of some resources is not well known, those resources tend to be stuff rather than staff.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Determine the level of success that opening our churches to groups outside the church has in eventually impacting the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. Determine how well our churches reflect their communities.
3. Determine what we can do to more effectively communicate how the Association can help our churches.
4. Determine what, other than salvation, are the greatest needs in our communities.
5. Determine how the Association's emphasis on church planting can be more effective, given the findings on church planting importance and readiness.

Summary of Pastor Interviews Conducted by North American Missions Board

The following pages contain a summary of the relevant data taken from interviews with the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association pastors. This summary is not by nature exhaustive, but shows broad trends among the churches in the Association along with enough specific data to assist pastors and churches in the association.

Within this section you will find

- an introduction that both summarizes what the section contains and makes some initial observations about the data that follows.
- a summary of data gathered from the interviews and interviewer reports.
- a summary of pastors' answers to the questionaire.

Observations from Pastor's Interviews

Not only does a report of this nature highlight points of strength, it also highlights opportunities for growth and greater Kingdom impact.

Our focus will be on the 4 key indicators as essential elements of health: Baptisms, Worship Attendance, Giving to both C.P. and Association, and Church Planting and other Partnerships. There are certainly other factors that contribute to church health, but for this process we are using these four as the "top-line" indicators.

1. Baptisms

Of the pastors interviewed, the average baptisms were 12.6 baptisms per church. 57% of the reported total came from 10 churches.

Number of Churches	Range of Baptisms
10 (16%)	0
18 (28%)	1 - 5
13 (21%)	6 – 10
22 (35%)	11 – 124

2. Worship Attendance

10 churches accounted for 63% of the total weekly worship attendance.

Number of Churches	Attendance
22 (35%)	have 50 or fewer in worship
13 (21%)	51 – 100
15 (24%)	101 – 200
13 (21 %)	201 or more

3. Giving

In terms of CP, the top 10 giving churches contributed 74% of the reported total. In Association giving, the top 10 giving churches gave 68% of the total receipts. These figures correspond to those in the tables above highlighting the fact that churches who baptize more people also have more people in worship. Those who have the larger number in worship also were the ones who gave the most to mission causes. The interesting thing about that is the fact that the numbers are almost equal across the board in each category. The conclusion drawn from that is the churches that reach people for Christ are also teaching them about stewardship and missions.

4. Church Planting and Other Partnerships

The purpose of this item is to discover those churches that have a propensity to partner with others in Kingdom endeavors. In Blue River-Kansas City thirty-six of the churches stated they were in a partnership or would welcome one for their church.

The pastors expressed that church planting is important to them with 81% stating it as a 4 or 5 on a 1-5 scale. Of equal importance is the fact that 51% of the churches interviewed indicated that they were at a 4 or 5 on a 1-5 scale relating to their readiness to partner in a church planting effort. This is a significant number and should be seen as a very key part of this report.

Additional Observations

1. Requests for Assistance

The greatest number of requests for assistance from the churches came in the areas of Outreach/Evangelism; Sunday School/Discipleship; Community/Family/Social Issues; and Leadership /Vision. There were also a significant number of requests related to Financial/Economic issues as well as facility needs and churches in transitional communities.

2. Tenure of Pastors

The overall tenure of Pastors interviewed is 6.5 years. Seventeen of the pastors have served their churches for more than ten years while thirty-eight others have served less than five years. For those who have served less than five years the average tenure is 2.36 years. Twenty have been serving less than two years.

3. Confidential Questionnaire

This piece gives us the opportunity to get honest and unfettered opinions and insights from the pastors. It is not specific in nature but shows broad heartfelt trends. On a scale of 1-5, the pastors perceive themselves to be strongest in Leadership Perception (3.0) and Strategic/organization (2.8) while rating Spiritual Strength (2.65) and Collaboration Skill (2.7) the lowest rated areas.

Also from the Confidential Questionnaire, the Pastors rated the overall effectiveness of the Association 3.0, Pastors understanding the associations purpose a 2.7, the Association effectively pursues its purpose and usually achieves its objectives a 2.9 while rating “my church benefits greatly from membership in the Association” a 2.6.

Appendix

The appendices are located in the Excel and PDF files that are part of the VISION2020.zip file and contain the data from the demographic studies of Jackson and Cass Counties. The Mosaic Profile pages contain labels that are fully defined in a document too large to include in this booklet. The full 28 page set of definitions is also included in the VISION2020.zip file as a PDF file.

In addition, the full set of Church Member Survey results are available online. You may access them from a link at www.blueriver-kansascity.org which will take you to the survey at www.surveymonkey.com.

Look for the link "VISION 2020 Survey Results" on the home page.