

Connections Transition Team Report

Flat Springs Baptist Church
4148 Deep River Rd.
Sanford, NC
Feb. 2024

The connections team's assignment is to identify and assess Flat Springs Baptist Church (FSBC's) current connections and make recommendations for the future based on our findings.

First, the term "connections" refers to all relationships built outside the church itself. Beginning with our denominational connections at a local, state, and national level, extending to our community connections which may be ministries or organizations we support financially, or by mobilizing volunteers or resources to partner with them.

In this report, we will give a short summary of each connection, how FSBC supports them, how each aligns, or does not align with FSBC's core values and mission statement reviewed by the transitional mission team. Lastly, our recommendation to the future team for each unique connection. We understand these connections are a vital part of guiding our search for the right pastor, and providing clarity for who we are as a church body, and what we support.

We also found it will be important to review the connections periodically. We recommend after 1 year following up with denominational changes, then at least every 5 years going forward.

Denominational Connections

1. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) is a network of churches, individuals, and partners inviting each other into deeper community, equipping each other for ministry and seeking the transformation of God's world. The CBF was formed in Atlanta in 1991 in response to the growing fundamentalist views (strict, literal interpretation of Scripture) of the Southern Baptist Convention. CBF takes a modernist/liberal religious view (more freedom in interpretation of Scripture) they believe current cultural issues can influence interpretation of previously interpreted Scripture. CBF reports having a deep respect for freedom, diversity, and equality. Their understanding of Baptist faith and practice is expressed by emphasis on freedom in biblical interpretation and congregational governance, the participation of women and men in all aspects of church leadership and Christian ministry, and religious liberty for all people. Their core values include Soul Freedom, Bible Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom. These highlight the priesthood of believers, the authority of Scripture but freedom in individual interpretation and application. Autonomy of local church and the freedom to ordain whomever they perceive as gifted for ministry, freedom of religion, for religion, and from religion are also highlighted.

Our committee also noted there are nine “Networks” or ministries as a part of CBF, one of which is called the Affirming Network. According to the description it acknowledges the place of LGBTQ individuals and their allies within the CBF’s community in a capacity never recognized before. The Affirming network will create a foundation from which LGBTQ church members and leaders can speak to their own experiences and advocate for full inclusion at CBF’s national level, they state this is where heart change occurs- eroding the us vs. them mentality of hetero-exclusivism. (cbf.net) We also found churches, part of the CBF, pastored by openly homosexual people, one is co-pastored by a lesbian couple.

FSBC is aligned with and currently supports CBF with \$5,000 per year.

Recommendation: After much research and prayer our committee doesn’t feel the views of the CBF are aligned with the members at FSBC, or our core values, 1,2, 9. (Gen 1:27-28, 2 Timothy 3:16, Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 7:23-24, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

2. Southern Baptist Convention

Southern Baptist Convention is a collection of like-minded churches working in cooperation with one another to impact the whole world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since their inception they have had one main mission-fulfilling the Great Commission. The cooperative program provided fuel for this mission of reaching every person with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their views are outlined in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 which was amended in June 2023 by action of the SBC (article VI. Church) It states that while both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of Pastor/Elder/Overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. 1 Timothy 2:9-14 and other scripture listed. (Sbc.net; bfm.sbc.net) SBC has an important session and vote in June 2024 about possibly removing churches from their convention who have female lead pastors. All giving is done through the Convention Cooperative Program (see below).

A. Baptist State Convention Cooperative Program

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists’ unified plan of giving through which cooperating Southern Baptist churches give a percentage of their undesignated receipts to support the Baptist State Convention of NC and the Southern Baptist Convention missions and ministries. These gifts are used by SBC entities to send and support missionaries, train pastors, and assist other ministry leaders.

FSBC currently gives \$4,200 to the cooperative program yearly. These funds are divided among national and state conventions, and can be designated to only state if we wish.

Recommendation: We recommend watching closely for SBC’s vote and decision in June 2024 and revisit this issue.

I. Baptists on Mission

Baptist on Mission (BOM) exists to Glorify God by involving churches and Christians in meeting human needs in Jesus’ name. There are 19 ministries of

Baptist on Mission, including Agriculture, Aviation, Baptist Builders, Baptist Educators, Church Renewal, College Missions, Compassion Ministries, Disaster Relief, Family Foundations, International Missions, National Missions, Prayer Support, Children's Missions, Student Mobilization, and more. They believe all Christians are called, gifted, and sent.

FSBC currently gives \$5,000 annually to Disaster Relief, formerly called NC Baptist Men

Recommendation: Continue this connection as their work aligns well with our mission statement and core values.

II. **Student Mobilization- Deep Impact**

Deep Impact Missions weeks are pre-packaged weeklong mission experiences. Middle and high school students are provided with the opportunity to share God's love by helping others through word and deed. Youth get the opportunity to participate in a variety of missions including construction, VBS, sports, evangelism, prayer walks, and more. Evening worship each night helps students reflect on their lives and commit themselves to serving others in their communities in Christ's name.

FSBC youth have taken part in these mission trips in Red Springs, and Oak Island (Caswell) Planning to take part in international trip with Deep Impact in summer of 2025. They also offer half weeks for children in grades 1-5, FSBC took part in a children's mini week in Sophia, NC (Mundo Vista) in 2019. (Youth & Children's committee)

Recommendation continuing to take part in these mission experiences as much as we are able.

III. **Baptist Children's Homes of NC**

Baptist Children's Homes of NC (BCH) offers hope and healing to children and families in crisis. For more than 130 years the heart of BCH has beat with a rhythm of hope that extends to children, families, and adults throughout NC and beyond. For each specific need they offer a unique ministry ready to help. BCH serves all 100 NC counties with locations in 30 communities throughout NC, SC, and Guatemala.

FSBC participates in BCH food roundups, donate non-perishables and paper goods, give donations. (Stephanie Bridges)

Recommendation continuing this connection to BCH as their work aligns well with our mission statement and core values.

3. **Sandy Creek Baptist Association**

Their purpose is to partner with churches locally providing assistance, training, resources, mission opportunities, and more as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord in

their communities. As a mission's mobilization center, we help provide ways to be involved in missions both abroad and at home. The SCBA is a network of over 50 Baptist churches in Chatham and Lee counties.

FSBC contributes \$4,700 annually to Sandy Creek BA.

Recommendation remain in partnership with Sandy Creek as they align with our mission statement and core values.

Community Connections

1. Reachout Pregnancy Center

Reach Out Pregnancy Center is a local, non-profit, life-affirming, Christ-centered ministry. They provide a safe environment for the spiritual, emotional, and practical well-being of any woman in an unplanned pregnancy. Reaching out in the love of Christ with accurate information, they hope to end the tragedy of abortion. Reach Out exists to empower women and men facing unplanned pregnancies with accurate information about all their pregnancy options, practical help, connection to community resources and community referrals. They offer "Earn While You Learn" classes, an amazing parenting curriculum designed to equip moms and dads for the task of raising happy, healthy children. They also offer the message of forgiveness and hope to post-abortive women through Surrendering the Secret Bible Study. Contact at Center: Denise Godley

FSBC gives \$2,200 per year financial support. We also volunteer for yard workdays, cleaning and organizing the center's offices and boutique, and throwing generic baby showers with all gifts going to support the center's needs. We collect items off their needs list monthly and have individual members who regularly volunteer. (WMU, Hands & Feet)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns well with our mission statement and core values.

2. Bread of Life Ministries

Bread of Life Ministries is a non-denominational community outreach committed to impacting our neighborhood by demonstrating God's love to all people. They firmly believe it is their responsibility to serve our fellow man. Their purpose is to help and listen when needed, teach those who need it, provide positive role models, feed the hungry, clothe those who lack, encourage the downcast, and walk alongside neighbors until they can walk on their own by being a consistent friend. Their vision is to see lives renewed, to remove the dark cloud of despair that has gripped the lives of so many- to restore hope, joy, peace, purpose, and fulfillment through the practical and hands-on demonstrations of God's love. Contact: John Paschal

FSBC gives \$2,500 per year financial support. We also provide volunteers for workdays as needed, our outreach committee sponsors meals quarterly for their Saturday meal program. (Outreach)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns well with our mission statement and core values.

3. **Chrisitan United Outreach Center**

The purpose of this organization is to provide the basic needs of food, clothing, or spiritual guidance as appropriate during crisis situations to residents of Lee county. In February of 2003 members of Jonesboro United Methodist church clearly saw a need in the community for a food pantry and other services that would meet a person in crisis at their points of need and would be a faith based cooperative effort from all churches in Lee county.

Contact: Elizabeth Colebrook

FSBC gives \$3,300 per year financial support. We also collect canned goods at least 1-2 times per year and have held at least two "Purse Parties" where used purses are collected and stuffed with hygiene items and donated for giving out to women in crisis. (WMU, Hands & Feet)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns well with our mission statement and core values.

4. **Crossroads Kentucky Ministry**

Crossroads Community Baptist Church is a ministry in Stearns, KY that is active in a variety of outreach ministries, including The Lord's Café (food ministry), and The Light Community (housing). The Lord's café serves free lunches to the community and The Light Community is a homestead-based ministry composed of tiny homes for individuals and families needing a landing spot rough times in life. Residents are involved in spiritual discipleship, financial training, family support, job training, and mental health services. Contact: Grant & Gina Hasty

FSBC gives \$1,500 per year financial support. Previously sent groups to help with Thanksgiving meal at the Lord's Café, haven't been able to do that in the last several years, but still open to another trip. (contact: Louanne Griffin)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns with our core values and mission statement.

5. **Samaritans Purse- Operation Christmas Child**

The mission of OCC is to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world. Through this project, Samaritan's Purse partners with the local church worldwide to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples of the nations.

FSBC partners by providing packed OCC shoe boxes every year, by our members, and shipping cost for each one. (WMU, Stephanie Bridges)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns with our mission and core values.

6. **Salvation Army of Lee County**

The Salvation Army is an international movement, an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God, and its mission is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. They assess the unique needs of each community, locally, while working to understand obstacles and challenges in each area, next they build the programs needed to offer short-term care, and long-term growth in the areas that will benefit the community. Then they offer local programs that will invest in optimizing spiritual, physical and emotional health within a community. Some of these programs include Holiday Giving, Rent and Utility Assistance, Homeless Shelters, Food Pantries, Disaster Relief, Job Training, Veterans services and more.

FSBC partners with Salvation Army of Lee Co. each year participating in their Angel Tree ministry, also many groups have been bell ringers for the “red kettle” Christmas collections. (Kim Harris)

Recommendation continuing this connection as their work aligns with our mission and core values.

7. **Haven**

Haven is a non-profit organization committed to providing safety to victims and survivors of domestic violence and rape/sexual assault. Supported by state and federal grants, United Way of Lee Co., foundations, churches, and the generosity of community members Haven works to create violence free relationships and a violence free community.

FSBC has partnered with Haven providing needed items such as hygiene kits, women’s care kits, children’s activity kits when needed, or for holidays. (WMU, Stephanie Bridges)

Recommendation continuing to partner with Haven as their work aligns with our mission and core values.

8. **Outreach Mission of Sanford NC**

Outreach Mission Inc. is operated by a board of directors that oversee the Men’s and Women’s homeless shelters. OMI has 4 paid staff members, 2 case managers, and 2 supervisors at each shelter. They work to link clients with needed services and job openings to lead them on a path to successful permanent housing. Average length of stay is 30-60 days, occupancy at each shelter is 18 beds. OMI helps people turn their lives around by giving them hope and a desire for better quality of life 365 days a year. (WMU, Hands & Feet)

FSBC has partnered with OMI collecting needed items with groups like Hands & Feet WMU.

Recommendation Continue support as their work aligns with our mission and core values.

9. **Stevens Center**

Provides a variety of services and programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities. From one-on-one support services to summer programs, to relationship building activities they are committed to building a culture of community inclusion for the population they serve. Many programs are offered through the center including NC Innovations, a Medicaid funded program, that provides a variety of services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities avoiding institutional care and promoting independence, control, and community integration.

FSBC supports the center by providing youth volunteer servers for their biggest fundraising dinner of the year. Last year this dinner helped raise more than \$10,000 for the center, our youth have also volunteered at some of their “First Friday” game nights. (Youth, Laura Marks)

Recommendation Continue to provide volunteer support as their work aligns with our mission and core values.

10. **Global Outreach International**

Interdenominational missions sending agency that partners with the church in the sending of cross-cultural missionaries. Their vision is to see the Good News go to every nation this generation, and their mission is showing and sharing God’s love. Their missionaries meet tangible needs in order to open doors to meet spiritual needs.

FSBC had been supporting financially when Jon & Jess Bridges (Jon grew up at FSBC) were serving with GOI in Ethiopia.

Recommendation We propose continuing to support international missions through **The Forsaken Children: Bringing lasting Hope to Ethiopia** a foundation that Joe Bridges (brother to Jon, also grew up at FSBC) founded while on mission in Ethiopia. Their work rescues Ethiopian children from the streets, restores them to family, school, and rebuilds young lives through education and the Gospel. They understand the landscape, and complex issues surrounding child homelessness, and deep poverty. TFC partners with the best teams doing the best work on the ground for children in Ethiopia, they are the hope for true change in the lives of these children. Some of these partners include “Make your Mark” who runs 2 boys and 1 girls center where kids can find a safe place off the streets to bathe, wash their clothes, eat healthy, receive biblical teaching, play games, and receive counseling. “Wraps” who helps provide washable, reusable sanitary pads for girls as well as education about their bodies. With lack of basic hygiene supplies and basic instruction, the development of a menstrual cycle can keep young ladies home up to one week of every month, often causing them to them drop out altogether. Education is key to success throughout life and remaining in school deters many children from ever leaving home for a life on the streets. This simple help of washable, reusable pads is a game changer for these sweet girls, helping restore them to school and success. “Arise Global” reaches young women working (many trafficked) in the sex trade in Ethiopia, focusing on girls 16-24

who are among the least reached in this type of rescue work they strive to break the cycle that sees young women exploited for sex work.

In Ethiopia's capital city tens of thousands of children, some as young as 7 or 8 years old, are living on the streets without family, food, or shelter, living on medians, under bridges, and in dark alleyways, alone. Many turn to drugs to numb the pain and fear, some are forced into sex trafficking with the promise of survival. TFC is a safety net for these precious souls, no one's child should live this way. Contact: Joe & Karen Bridges

**** Connections Team suggestions for Future committee/Finance Committee to allocate \$5,000 removed from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.**

- 1. Baptist Childrens Homes of NC \$1,500 per year**
- 2. Outreach Missions of Sanford (Trying to build a new building) \$1,500 per year**
- 3. The Forsaken Children (Providing an International connection that is "connected" to home. \$2,000 per year.**

Bible References

Matthew 22:37-40

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 25:35-40

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"

Matthew 28:19

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

Mark 16:15

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.'"

1 Peter 4:10

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."