



A Kingdom-Focused Church

by Don Cockes, Church Health Strategist, Southeast Region



first baptist
NORFOLK

love God, love others, live the mission™

A kingdom church is one that is mobilized: sending missionaries, those called to ministry, and mission teams around the world. First Baptist Church of Norfolk (FBC) is becoming just such a church.

Even before he became the minister of missions mobilization at FBC a year and a half ago, Curt Breland had a heart for missions. An FBC member for more than a decade, he was actively involved as a volunteer, coordinating mission trips, inspiring others to go, and joining mission teams himself. He didn't need a

pastor's title to be on mission. As a faithful volunteer, Curt witnessed first-hand how the church's missions transformation took place: "Twelve years ago, our church sent out

one mission team

a year. One mission [team] a year grew to about twenty-two mission teams going out this year. It has been an amazing transformation." FBC now sends groups of all ages—senior saints to middle school students—to impact the nation and the world with the message of the Cross. FBC's vision is to have church members serving on all six continents and have mission trip teams departing every month.

The church has even received newspaper publicity for its Big Serve ministry. Big Serve, which takes place multiple times each year, dedicates one day to "being the Church" outside the walls of the church building. Big Serve is a bold local missions project where Bible study groups, families, and other teams set out to reach the Hampton Roads

area with the Gospel. During a Big Serve Sunday, the church family does not gather for corporate worship in the morning; instead, church members deploy to serve the community. They then gather to celebrate and worship in the evening. As Curt explains, "the DNA of [FBC] has been changed."

How did this heart for the world develop? The church had a passion for missions, and the senior pastor, Eric Thomas, took it to a new level by casting a world-sized vision. In fact, the pastor is vital to making a difference in any church's perspective. Individuals in the church stepped up with a passion to reach beyond the church walls. Furthermore, leaders began to influence people to join them in outreach.

Benefits to a world-sized vision are tangible in a church:

- Church members are better equipped to share the Gospel locally.
- The passion is contagious.
- Giving increases.
- Church members pray more for missionaries.
- Doors to spiritual conversations open.
- Growth becomes exponential.

For FBC Norfolk, its theme has become "Live the Mission!" Curt is convinced that "Not one church is unable to do missions. One person can make a difference." Who will be that one in your congregation?



Curt Breland sharing the Gospel during a Ukraine mission trip



RESOURCE

Website:

www.sbcv.org/maturing
www.firstnorfolk.org

SBCV Contact:

Call 888-234-7716 for details from your region's missionary.

Steps to becoming a Kingdom-focused church:

1. The senior pastor must be committed to and must cast a vision for missions.
2. At least one individual must have a passion to reach beyond the church walls.
3. A leader must step up to influence others to join him/her in the vision.