

# Johnny Hunt Encourages Evangelism — Despite Social Distancing

by Timothy Cokes

ZOOM STATEWIDE CALL



The SBC of Virginia hosted a series of statewide zoom calls about evangelism during a pandemic, including a call featuring Johnny Hunt of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) on Thursday (June 18).

Hunt, senior vice president for evangelism and pastoral leadership at NAMB, spoke to more than 80 church leaders about the necessity of evangelism even during this time of social distancing. Hunt emphasized themes such as sharing personal testimonies and pastors emulating the type of missional living they would like to see from their congregations.

“Whatever is important to the leader is what will be important to the people,”

Hunt said. “There is no such thing as an evangelistic and missional church with a non-evangelistic or non-missional pastor. If I’m a pastor, I’ve got to emulate what I’d like to see modeled in my people’s lives.”

Among the things Hunt advocated church leaders emulate to their congregations was the sharing of personal testimonies in order to encourage not just pastors, but all believers to fulfill the Great Commission.

“Often the missing piece for evangelism is inspiration,” Hunt said. “We need to inspire people through the stories and experiences that God has given us to tell. I’ve been inspired before by hearing stories of other people sharing the Gospel, and in my early days of

knowing the Lord all I had was my story and a changed life. You have to have a passion for the lost and have to pray that God would break our hearts for what breaks His.”

Other topics Hunt touched on included the [Annual Church Profile](#) report, how racial reconciliation can play a role in evangelism, the recently released ‘[It’s on Me](#)’ video related to a decline in baptisms, and the “[Who’s Your One?](#)” initiative launched last year.

Hunt said Who’s Your One is a reason to be hopefully optimistic about the future of evangelism and baptisms in the SBC.

“I would like to think that the 27,000 names that are on our big board at the North American Mission Board office are going to make a difference and be an encouraging mark,” Hunt said.

SBC of Virginia’s evangelism director, Steve Bradshaw, said NAMB’s Who’s Your One initiative “fits hand-in-hand” with the state convention’s evangelism strategy, “Bless Every Home,” a web-based resource aimed at praying for and developing relationships with neighbors in the communities surrounding SBCV churches.

Bradshaw said Virginia was one of the last state conventions to host a Who’s Your One rally before the national social distancing guidelines were put in place. The convention also was promoting Bless Every Home through in-person events before these guidelines.

After social distancing guidelines came into effect, Bradshaw worked with David Wheeler, professor of evangelism at Liberty University, to create a list of practical and contextualized service and evangelism ideas to go along with Bless Every Home. Wheeler formerly served as the state evangelism director for both Ohio and Indiana.

Wheeler and Bradshaw then organized several Zoom calls throughout the month of April talking through these ideas with pastors in different regions of the SBCV.

Bradshaw said the results of the regional Zoom calls were highly encouraging.

“We generate more participation by Zoom calls than even when we were promoting Bless Every Home in person,” Bradshaw said. “It’s convenient and people are able to use the chat room to submit questions, which resulted in quite a bit of dialogue. It was very interactive overall.”

Wheeler later partnered with the SBCV to create a downloadable PDF, “[Outreach During Covid-19](#),” listing all of the different ideas for serving and witnessing to neighbors during the current pandemic. The document was endorsed by Hunt and is available for free download on NAMB’s website.

Bradshaw said he believes many of the ideas listed will be applicable even after the pandemic ends, and he hopes these evangelism Zoom calls with Wheeler and Hunt helped church leaders remember that “Evangelism is not a choice for believers; it is a mandate, even during a pandemic.”

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*Timothy Cokes is a freelance writer and graduate divinity student at Liberty University.*

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#### RESOURCES:

*For more information or to download the following resources, visit:*

##### Annual Church Profile report



[tinyurl.com/ACPreport](https://tinyurl.com/ACPreport)

##### It’s On Me video



[tinyurl.com/itsonme-video](https://tinyurl.com/itsonme-video)

##### Who’s Your One?



[tinyurl.com/namb-whosyourone](https://tinyurl.com/namb-whosyourone)

##### Outreach During COVID-19 (PDF document)



[www.namb.net/resource/outreach-during-covid-19](https://www.namb.net/resource/outreach-during-covid-19)