



Taking a Lead Role in NAME Strategy

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SUFFOLK

Over the last several years, the SBC of Virginia has pursued strategic opportunities to reach with the Gospel the affinity known as North African and Middle Eastern (NAME) peoples. The strategy entails reaching NAME peoples in their native countries and also identifying cities in Europe and North America where there are pockets of NAME populations. To date, connections have been made in places like Washington, DC, Barcelona, Montreal, and Greece. This is still a developing strategy that will be pursued for years to come.

The SBCV is working with churches around Virginia to reach each of the nine global population affinities. Under the leadership of Pastor Thurman Hayes and in coordination with SBCV’s Missions Mobilization Team, **First Baptist Church of Suffolk** has recently taken the lead as an affinity catalyst for NAME peoples. The goal is to help SBCV churches engage with each other and the International Mission Board (IMB) to strategically reach NAME peoples. This work includes helping plan an affinity summit and helping connect churches with each other and mission field personnel.

Missions engagement is nothing new for First Suffolk. Since Hayes became pastor in 2012, the church has done work in Thailand, Romania, Haiti, Cambodia, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, India, France, Guatemala, and Burkina Faso. Hayes, who is currently serving a three-year term as a trustee with the IMB, is quick to point out that First Suffolk was a missions-minded church long before his tenure as pastor began. Having grown up at First Suffolk, Hayes says, “Our engagement with international missions is nothing new. Growing up there as a child, I can remember missionaries calling on the telephone and being piped through our sound system on Sunday morning

to speak to the congregation! Giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is always a highlight.” First Suffolk exceeded its 2017 Lottie Moon goal of \$62,000!

The affinity catalyst role in SBCV’s NAME strategy was a good fit for Hayes and First Suffolk. “I have a long-time interest in this part of the world. Before I came [here] as pastor, I had done three trips to Morocco and had traveled extensively in Jordan, Israel, and the Arabian Peninsula. After coming to First Suffolk, I was excited to learn about our special relationship with *Nathaniel, who has become one of my dearest friends in the world.” Nathaniel is a missionary who engages in strategic discipleship of Muslim-background Christians, most of whom are from North Africa and the Middle East. First Suffolk and several other churches support him financially. Nathaniel’s work is so dangerous, his name has been changed in this article for his protection. Through their relationship with Nathaniel and their ongoing relationship with the SBCV and the IMB, First Suffolk is leading a cohesive Acts 1:8 strategy to reach NAME peoples here in Virginia and to the ends of the earth.

**Name has been changed for security reasons*

TALK TO US	If you or your church is interested in reaching NAME peoples and partnering with other SBCV of Virginia churches, email mobilizing@sbcv.org .
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