

## AZSBC TOP BAPTIZING CHURCHES REPORT

Compiled in 2015

Church Life Team members and the facilitators of the AZSBC were asked to call our top baptizing churches for 2014. The purpose of the call was to discover what commonalities, if any, unite top baptizing churches {TBC'S}. The call list included the Top 25 churches in baptisms and the Top 25 churches in baptism-to-worship-attendance ratio. Five churches made both lists. We wanted to hear from as many churches as possible to strengthen the accuracy of the results.

As a result, 23 out of 25 top baptizing churches responded and 18 out of 25 Top churches in baptism-to-worship-attendance ratio. So, 41 churches or 91% responded out of a possible 45 churches from both lists, because 5 churches made both categories. 11% or five of the TBC's are church plants.

Information was gathered primarily through phone interviews. A few interviews were face to face and two interviews were completed through email and texting, as they both were our deaf churches, Silent Hope Baptist and Deaf Church at Royal Palms.

The interviewers were not looking for particular answers and simply asked the provided questions and listening with potential follow-up questions. We wanted to discover how our top baptizing churches are reaching people and leading them to the waters of baptism.

### Questions Asked During The Interview

- How are you reaching people and leading them to baptism? [Listen to them and let them tell us what they are doing]
- Do you have a plan or method? [Listen again]
- How has your connection within the community helped evangelism efforts if any? [Listen]
- Thank you for your time and how can I pray for you? [Pray with them]

The commonalities are order of responses. It is important to note that not all top baptizing churches have the same order. And, not all TBC's practice everything in the list of commonalities, but most do.

### **Commonalities of TBC's** (Placed in order of their responses)

#### 1. TBC's Appear to Leverage Worship as Their Front Door

- They have an inviting culture and their members consistently invite. Members have invited many first time guests in worship. Inviting people to worship still works!
- They work to make worship and the campus experience welcoming.
- A few TBC's shared that their front door is connecting within the community and not worship.

Interesting Idea: One TBC trains people as conversationalists. They train people to communicate with guests and walk them to where they need to be. Particularly, they walk with young families knowing they have one shot at them returning. This is a very good idea!

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### 2. TBC's are Approaching Baptisms as a Celebration Time!

- They intentionally preach/speak about, teach about and plan for baptisms. TBC's reach people for baptism follow-up through their worship, small groups, new member classes, website signups and personal follow-up.
- A number dedicate a day for baptisms and they baptize in a community place or outside. Baptisms occur at the worship center, community pool or a members pool, portable tanks and horse troughs. As a result, they typically baptize more than one on that day. TBC's are known to baptize in batches, though not all, and invite family and friends to attend. They provide baptism t-shirts, towels and a great meal with desserts.
- We noted that a number called for spontaneous baptisms on the spot. They check to make sure the person knows Jesus as Lord and Savior and baptize them.

Interesting Idea: Some TBC's name their baptism day with names like "Dunk and Dine" or the "Baptism Bash". One churches members hold hands around the swimming pool and when the baptism is over, they all jump in together and shout! Now that's what I call festive!

### 3. TBC's Are Making Intentional Community Connections that Build Relationships

The church connects where the community connects and desires their church to be one of the connecting points.

- Attractional community events reaching "creators" work, when strategically planned both in church space and community space. Churches found that hosting events on their property works, and taking events off their property into the community works as well to reach people and for building relationships.
- Intentional service projects help by meeting needs in the community. The entire church mobilizes, or small groups or a selected ministry group's carry these through. Some TBC's expect their small groups to adopt a community need and meet the need. Relationships and trust are built, and Christians live the Christ-centered life in the community meeting needs.
- A number of TBC's host a food distribution for the community building relationships.
- Social media is helping to build an online community. We did not hear a lot of chatter about connecting with people online and this is bit surprising.

#### Interesting Ideas:

The church goes to where the community connects as they bring an event off campus. For example, ministry with classic car shows happen at the race track; feeding school teachers takes place at the local school; a library project had one local church volunteer to put together all the new bookshelves! One TBC gathers Sunday nights for a community soccer game. Members bring their families to model family principles and refreshments are provided and relational connections are built.

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### 4. Equipping People to Share Jesus

A number of TBC's offer a way to equip their faith family to share Jesus. A key idea learned from one pastor is that "Our people must learn to think like missionaries in today's culture." TBC's offer the following approaches:

- Sharing your story or crafting your personal salvation story preparing to share what Jesus has done and is doing in your life. People are learning to share their story where they live, work and play. These particular TBC's are equipping their people to invite their friends, family members and co-workers to worship with them as well.
- TBC's are using various tools: Faith by Lifeway, 3 Circles by NAMB, Sharing Jesus Without Fear, Solarium Story Cards and Bible and tract give away in their communities.
- Vacation Bible School is working to reach children and their families!

Interesting Ideas: Who's your top 3? Top 3 is a list of people that need Jesus. Leaders are encouraging members to invite their top 3 three to a worship series or a particular message on a given day. Also, interesting, not all TBC's practice a formal or traditional invitation time. TBC's use response cards, prayer rooms, personal visits and technology to guide people making spiritual commitments. And, their variety of approaches are working!

### 5. Got Prayer

Not all the TBC's mentioned prayer during the interview. In fact, only 24% of the pastors talked about prayer. This does not mean the remainder are not praying churches. However, no mention of the discipline may indicate that prayer is not prominent in the life-blood of their ministry. TBC's talking about prayer brought the topic up in the conversation.

- We listened to a number of stories in which schools and community homes were prayed for. After prayer, the Lord opened up the church to have favor, or a greater favor with the school. People living in the community started to attend worship and have come to know Jesus personally. Children from specific classes prayed for started to attend church.
- TBC church members gather to pray outside of the church property.
- TBC churches are also fasting and praying. One fellowship is engaging in a 40 day fast and prayer plan.

Interesting Idea: One TBC began texting messages with prayer requests sent at the same time daily. Texting prayers help their people to stay connected through prayer. They pray briefly as they have a break at work, or at their desk, or in their trucks.

The TBC's mentioning prayer, value the discipline as foundational to their ministry. For example, they pray for their worship services and have planned prayer times within their worship. They have prayer groups that meet to pray during the week. Listening, you get the sense that prayer times are not only organ recitals, but praying for those far from Jesus. TBC's want their people to develop the discipline of praying together and to be united in prayer for Kingdom expansion.

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In Summary

Top Baptizing Churches appear to thoughtfully leverage worship services for maximum impact. Most TBC's are viewing worship as the front door to their faith family.

They are preaching and teaching and talking about baptism consistently, and many have a baptism series or baptism emphasis yearly.

TBC's are training their people to be inviters. The leaders seem to exegete the community and lead their people to connect where the community connects. They are desiring to be intentionally and relationally connected with their community. The greater the connection, the easier it appears to invite people. The opposite may be true as well.

TBC's are offering ways to equip their faith family to share Jesus. A key idea learned from one pastor is that, "Our people must learn to think like missionaries in today's culture." The culture we live in today demands that we ponder this pastor's comment!

The TBC churches mentioning prayer during the interview, seemed to experience a greater presence of God's hand in their midst. Also, these leaders sensed that the Lord is accomplishing His work through their fellowship. At least that's what it sounded like on the listening end.

Closing it Up

Interviewing TBC's is one of the most rewarding projects in which I have participated. I appreciate the leaders that helped with this project, because it took plenty of extra time on their full schedules. Thank you friends for your help.

Additionally, we have a group of humble leaders that love the Lord, are faithful to His word and sharing Jesus. Some of our leaders did not realize that their churches were on the list. Every leader wants to do better at leading and reaching their community!

Let me leave you with a theme I heard more than once. "We are learning that reaching people who don't know Jesus is messy. You have to get comfortable dealing with the messiness of life." I could not say this better!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Edward Pearson  
Co-Facilitator: AZSBC Church Life Team