

MARBC Strategic Initiative

Unity, Partnership, Enrichment



*with one mind striving together
for the faith of the Gospel
Philippians 1:27*

The following is a preliminary prospectus regarding a comprehensive church development strategy for the Michigan Association of Regular Baptist Churches (MARBC). This report is preliminary and will no doubt be revised and improved in the months ahead.

1. The MARBC Purpose.

Church planting is a declared and implied part of our mission and vision as an association of churches:

- **MARBC Mission:** “The MARBC, compelled by the Word of God to reflect the glory and grace of Jesus Christ, exists to foster the mutual unity, partnership, and enrichment of our churches.
- **MARBC Vision Statement:** “We are the MARBC, an association of autonomous local congregations with a commitment to stand together for the Faith and thereby impact our world with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This commitment requires cooperation among us in the planting, nurturing, and strengthening of local churches.
 - *Church planting (CP):* conceiving and birthing new MARBC churches.
 - *Church nurturing (CN):* providing assistance and support to MARBC churches in need.
 - *Church strengthening (CS):* providing resources and opportunities to all MARBC churches.”

2. General Considerations.

The following is a general summary of MARBC church planting goals:

- a. Make **prayer for evangelism and church planting a regular focus** of the MARBC leadership and constituency.
- b. Establish an **MARBC church planting fund / endowment**.
- c. Co-ordinate **church planting efforts through the MARBC regional fellowships**.
- d. Seek **assistance from church planting experts**.
- e. **Communicate our vision and determination for church planting** consistently.

3. Specific Proposals.

Out of the general considerations listed above in point #2 come a series of initiatives underway within the MARBC:

- a. The MARBC shall **develop effective partnering relationships between existing churches in the association**. The **“CPR Initiative”** (Church Partnering Relationships) has been designed to help accomplish this important first step. Nurturing a meaningful partnership between member churches will move us closer to our greater mission goal of church planting.
- b. The MARBC shall **research reasons for the decline and closure of some of its churches**. What are the underlying reasons and what can be done to avoid such issues in the future? The Association itself must adjust its mentality about its perceived purpose. We cannot exist merely to perpetuate our heritage or the status quo. Additionally, perceptions regarding the role of “state representative” must be adjusted. This is part of the reason for the change in the MARBC of this title to “Executive Director.” His role must move from being perceived as a “pastor to pastors” to being a “leader to leaders” and “discipler of disciplers.” The Executive Director must help lead the C-15 in the creation of systems that help develop leaders.
- c. The MARBC shall **develop healthy churches through the development of healthy church leaders**. This includes the development of practical regional seminars dedicated to Biblically educating and equipping pastors and ministry leaders. An emphasis upon Biblical church health will be an essential first step in reaching the ultimate goal. Much of the church’s health will be based upon competent pastoral leadership. MARBC pastors must “own” the vision of church planting. Church planting will not happen if the pastor does not have the burden for it. The MARBC must work to create peer accountability through out its constituency at the state, regional, and local levels. This shall be accomplished through a strategic training process.

Scholarships are being developed by utilizing current MARBC escrow funds to **encourage the next generation of MARBC ministry leaders** to pursue quality seminary education. The MARBC will partner with like minded seminaries in establishing scholarships for young men (typically third year seminarians) who have a desire to pastor in an MARBC church or, better yet, plant a church in the MARBC. The scholarship opportunity will be communicated at state TFC events and through MARBC literature.

Sponsoring MARBC churches will be equipped to **conduct internships** in cooperation with the MARBC and the seminary in order to prepare the prospective pastor to launch a church plant. The **church plant** location would be determined through the **joint partnership** of local churches, regional fellowships, and the MARBC.

Endowments should be developed from escrow funds to **provide continuing education for current pastors**. Special emphasis should be given to helping pastors in small churches who cannot afford to travel to college or seminary campuses. Providing computer and internet access for pastors so that they can be involved in online education is essential. Several of our pastors have expressed interest in this. The MARBC shall develop a relationship with individuals and groups who can help provide these resources in a reasonable manner.

Develop a strategy to **give consistent encouragement and assistance to MARBC bi-vocational pastors** and their churches.

- d. The MARBC shall **develop and implement an effective and practical church planting strategy**. This strategy is tentatively titled, **“CSI” (Church Strategic Initiative)**. It shall take the principles developed through **“CPR”** and promote the partnership of MARBC ministries in regional church plants.

Part of this strategy shall be to **proactively approach church planting with an intercultural perspective**. Our goal will be to reflect the cultural diversity of the various regions of our state by developing leaders who are effective in planting and leading intercultural ministries. We are not content with reaching only one segment of the diverse Michigan culture. We believe that Christ has commanded the MARBC in the Great Commission to endeavor to reach all people groups, including those in our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

Current research is being conducted to **identify churches and individuals within the MARBC constituency who are involved in multi and intercultural ministry**. This includes four MARBC churches working with Hispanics in West Michigan. These works are supported by several MARBC ministries. The MARBC will seek to support these ministries through special gifts and CPR support groups. Other regions of the state are currently being studied to find groups effectively accomplishing this type of church development.

Towns and regions of the state that have little or no conservative gospel witness are being targeted for church planting. These areas will be prayerfully considered for church planting once the programs outlined in #3c are effectively operational.

The MARBC Executive Director and Council of 15 will **study and implement the research done by C-15 member Steve Ayers** in his D. Min. dissertation for Baptist Bible Seminary entitled, “Three Communication Tools Designed to Promote Cooperative Church Planting Partnerships and to Assist in Recruiting Church Planters in the Michigan Association of Regular Baptist Churches.”

Key churches and pastors within the MARBC shall be identified and recruited to help in “CSI” development. Areas of involvement will include parenting, partnering, and funding. An “anchor church parent” or “anchor church partnership” should be comprised of 500-1,000 in attendance.

Special funds, matching grants, and endowments will be funded through special offerings and gifts given to the endeavor. Preliminary thoughts:

- **Matching grants** could work in promoting church planting endeavors.
 - ✓ The association will offer an amount of funding that the church planting group will match.
- Ask **established church plants to tithe back** what was received from the association for their project to be used for future church plants.
 - ✓ Each church plant tithes back what they received from the MARBC as a part of their first missions support so that funds can be reinvested into another work. I.e. If \$30,000 is given to the church plant, they should pay a percentage of that back each year in a tithe.
 - ✓ Tithe the resources of an established church plant. I.e. Literature, equipment, etc.
 - ✓ Encourage churches currently in capital campaigns to give a percentage of their building fund towards church plants.
- **Don’t use a standardized, cookie cutter approach** to church planting.
 - ✓ Each church plant is unique based upon geographical setting, cultural climate, and economic conditions.
 - ✓ Financial considerations will differ depending upon the context of the church plant.

To be continued, until He comes! (KF, 10/09)

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