

Missional church reaches out through health care

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (ABP)—Mission Frankfort Clinic is a godsend for an average of 40 to 50 uninsured patients who come through its doors between 6:30 and 8:30 on Wednesday nights to see a doctor or dentist or to get a prescription medicine.

Mission Frankfort Clinic director Pat Hinson (right) goes over charts with Benjamin Honeycutt, volunteer doctor, at the start of a shift.

First Baptist Church of Frankfort, Ky., first opened a dental clinic in October 2002 with a single dentist. Last year, medical professionals from throughout the community volunteered after hours to see more than 800 patients last year. Pastor David Hinson estimates it at half a million dollars in free medical care.

“Persons of all denominations come here and help us in ministry,” he said. “We do not put up artificial barriers of being a member in order to work in our clinic.”

Pat Hinson, the pastor’s wife and a registered nurse, serves as the clinic’s health services coordinator. She described the clinic as a “real community effort involving the social services, medical and faith communities.

“You have the local health department. They have the indigent people

already," she said. "You have the local hospital. They see so many people through their emergency room, because the emergency room for many of these folks is their medical home. And that's the wrong way to have a medical home. It's expensive for everybody. So, the hospital has been a tremendous helper, and they understand the value of this free clinic and helped us with dollars as well. So, I see us in a triangular relationship and then all these other people trickle in, community members who have professional abilities to be here. I think it's a nice combination."

The clinic is not equipped to handle acute care. The focus is on helping patients with chronic health problems like hypertension and diabetes get treatment that keeps them out of the emergency room.

One important part of that is education. A lot of the patients are obese, Pat Hinson said, and many are smokers—conditions that can contribute to their health problems. Hinson, who has experience in both health care and social services and has a degree in psychology, tries to change those behaviors through programs like nutrition, managing diabetes and smoking-cessation classes.



Larry Hadley, a member of First Baptist Church and a pharmacist, fills prescriptions in the Mission Frankfort Clinic's free pharmacy.

"We have people coming here with very compromised lungs, already using

oxygen, still smoking," she said. "It just doesn't make sense. So, we just try to lay it on the line for them, with no apology. We're always kind, but no excuses and no apologies for our expectation that they begin to change those behaviors."

The clinic is just one of a number of innovative missions programs at First Baptist Church. A historic downtown congregation that celebrates its 200th anniversary in 2012, First Baptist shatters the stereotype that such churches are mired in tradition and resistant to change.

"It's outside the box for normal church life," said Mark Howell, minister of missions at First Baptist Church. "It's great to have people coming here to the church building and having church members show hospitality."