

Hundreds come to faith in Christ during Crossover events

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ST. LOUIS (BP)—Southern Baptist volunteers reported more than 350 professions of faith in Jesus Christ during Crossover events throughout metro St. Louis, held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

One man who made a commitment to Christ had been considering suicide just a few days earlier, Eloy Rodriquez said. Rodriquez, a longtime Crossover volunteer, is pastor of the Hispanic congregation at Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla.

Rodriquez noted his team knocked on the door of the man's house and asked if they could pray with him. The man told the team about a friend who was struggling with cancer. As they were preparing to pray, the man then opened up about his own struggles.

"Last Sunday, he closed his eyes while driving," said Rodriquez, who has been bringing teams of volunteers to share their faith in Christ during Crossover since 1999.

"He was willing to have whatever happen to him, happen—suicide basically. Then he opened his eyes, he was in the other lane, but there was no one else there. He pulled over and just cried—not because he was about to kill himself but because he realized he could have killed someone else."

Rodriquez prayed with the man to receive Christ—one of more than 50 gospel conversations that took place through the ministry of Sterling Baptist Church in Fairview Heights, Ill., during the week leading up to its June 11 outreach efforts. Sterling Baptist also sponsored a block party, a

zip line, free food and a soccer tournament.

☒ Abbey DuVall, 10, from First Baptist Church Bolivar, Mo., writes a sign announcing a block party at Canaan Baptist Church June 11, scheduled as part of Crossover St. Louis. (Photo / Chris Carter) Southern Baptists have sponsored a weeklong evangelistic emphasis in the host city of the Southern Baptist Convention since 1989. The local Baptist association and the SBC North American Mission Board sponsor events.

Despite heat above 100 degrees in some locations, hundreds of volunteers from scores of churches participated in Crossover events throughout metro St. Louis June 11. At least 22 host churches and event sites were included.

Volunteers from Longview serve in Eureka

Volunteers from Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview helped a new congregation in Eureka, Mo., Alive Church, introduce itself to the community. Fifty volunteers from Mobberly Baptist joined 80 volunteers from Alive Church to host a two-day block party at Legion Park in Eureka.

“We’re really hoping that in one, three, five years from now, the community of Eureka just kind of wakes up and says, ‘We’re really thankful that Alive Church is a part of our community,’” said Mike Lee, Alive Church’s outreach pastor. “Our hope is that we’re reaching people, serving the community and ultimately seeing people respond to the gospel.”

Jim Breeden, teaching pastor at Alive Church and executive director at St. Louis Baptist Association, said he hopes that as area churches partner together to proclaim the gospel during Crossover, it will strengthen their desire to work together.

“I hope all of our churches—nationally, in our state and in our association—stop and say: ‘We’re on the same team. We’re doing this together,’” Breeden said. “And obviously, I want to see a harvest of souls. I

want to see a lot of people come to know Jesus.”

‘Leave a good testimony’

Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd expressed his hope that through Crossover, Southern Baptists will “leave a good testimony and a good experience for those people who don’t know the Lord.” The work done during Crossover will help local churches have a better testimony in their communities, he added.

“The most important thing is that we see people come to faith in Christ,” Floyd said.

Involving laity in missions

Through Crossover outreach activities, many local Southern Baptist laypeople get involved in missions and begin to see their communities as mission fields, he added.

Churches like First Baptist Church of Mascoutah, Ill., saw this happen firsthand. The church’s students engaged in a variety of outreach activities throughout the week, including painting several pavilions and foot-bridges at a local park. They also shared the gospel door-to-door throughout the community.

“One of the things that came up over and over among the youth this week is, ‘We had no idea there were so many lost people in our community,’” said Bonnie Bodiford, a high school Sunday school teacher at First Baptist in Mascoutah. “They said it over and over again: ‘I had no idea I could pray with people in my own neighborhood. I had no idea I could share the gospel with people I work with or go to school with.’ Previously, they always thought of missions as going somewhere.”

Youth and worship pastor Matt Burton noted one 11-year-old girl who

participated in the outreach efforts wouldn't talk to anyone early in the week, but by the end was active in sharing her faith and passing out invitations to church.

The church ended the week with an evangelistic block party that included games, free food, face painting and balloon art.

Crossover also coincided with the launch of Send Relief, a compassion ministry initiative of the North American Mission Board aimed at helping churches deepen their connections with the community. First Baptist Church of Ferguson, Mo., hosted the debut of Send Relief. The event included the use of a mobile dental clinic and a mobile medical clinic. The units are available for churches to use for their own Send Relief events.

Dan Sigler, pastor of North Park Baptist Church in Evansville, Ind., brought a volunteer team from his church to help Parkway Baptist Church in St. Louis lead a block party and other outreach efforts. Sigler noted he appreciated the opportunity to serve as part of the larger Southern Baptist family in St. Louis, adding the experience echoes what he has been teaching his church on its role in local, national and global missions.

"Our church is more than our little hundred. We're a part of millions around the world serving Jesus," Sigler said.