

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Yes, I know the sun is beating down and it is about 95-degrees in the shade. I know that the crops are barely in the ground, much less ready for harvest. I know that everybody is headed-off to the beach for summer vacation and not thinking about “over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother’s house we go.” I know I can’t find a good football game on any channel on any television, digital or not. And, yes, I know it is June and not November! Nonetheless, it is time for Thanksgiving in the Mid-South Baptist Association! Scripture reminds us, “*It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your loving kindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night. For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.*” (Psalm 92:1-2; 4, NKJV) As we reach the midpoint of 2009, it is a good time and a good thing for us to pause and give thanks to God for “the works of His hands” in the Mid-South Baptist Association! And we say, “Thank you, Lord...”

For new churches... The first half of 2009 has seen the establishment of four new Southern Baptist church plants in the Mid-South Baptist Association. We praise God for the parent churches, church planters, core group members, and partners who have committed themselves and invested themselves in God’s work through new churches in Southaven, Binghampton, Eads, and Cordova. In addition to the new starts, we have welcomed Temple of Praise Baptist Church (South Memphis), Oak Grove Missionary Baptist Church (South Memphis), and Circle Cross Cowboy Church (Cordova) into the membership and fellowship of the Mid-South Baptist Association. These new church starts and new associational affiliates represent the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of our city and demonstrate the commitment of our churches to reach all “peoples” with the glorious, life-changing message of the Gospel. We are grateful to God for the “work of His hands” in new churches!

For Great Commission consistency... In a couple of weeks the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky. The “hot topic” for that meeting will likely be the introduction of “The Great Commission Resurgence Declaration” which calls for a re-focusing of the SBC upon the Great Commission and the work of the church as the foundation for all that we do at every level of Southern Baptist life. I look forward to hearing that discussion and seeing the results. I am grateful that our Convention leadership has called us to consider a “Great Commission Resurgence,” but even more grateful for the “Great Commission Consistency” so evident in the work and ministry of so many churches in the Mid-South. We consistently hear reports of how churches in the Association are reaching into their neighborhoods and reaching out to the nations to preach the Gospel and make disciples. The “Impact Memphis” initiatives of February and April, which involved more than 600 participants in discovering and deploying strategies for reaching the city, are just one example of the Great Commission effectiveness and consistency in the churches. In even greater numbers, our churches are discovering and developing exciting methods and approaches for proclaiming the timeless Gospel message. Please pray for all of our churches as they “engage” the Gospel and “engage” the world through VBS, mission trips, summer camps, evangelistic crusades, and countless other activities this summer. We thank God for the “Great Commission Consistency” that compels and propels them to do so!

For new opportunities... The first half of 2009 has been filled with new fellowship, learning, and ministry opportunities for the churches of the Mid-South Baptist Association. It has also been filled with new opportunities for MSBA to support and encourage the work of the churches with a variety of human, material, and financial resources. Your faithful financial contributions, in difficult economic times, allow the Association to provide that support and are a testimony to both God’s goodness and your faithfulness. For this year, in a challenging economic environment, MSBA total receipts are slightly ahead of last year and slightly behind budgeted expectations. I am grateful for staff and elected leaders who have provided the management and guidance to balance the budget and to keep our focus on the needs of the churches. We are grateful to God for your faithfulness and look forward to additional new opportunities for ministry support in the second half of this year. Our God is good! His mercy endures forever! We are grateful to Him! HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Bro. Mike