



Seabrook: Small Church - Big Sending

By Jonathan Brooks

"The missing story in missions is the underfunded community church; any church that commits to missions, God provides. Our amazing story is just one of many across the country!" said Rob Purdy, pastor of First Baptist Church Seabrook (Seabrook), in response to how a church with a weekly average of 160 consistent attenders can raise \$107,333 for missions projects in just 16 months.

Purdy notes that missions funding is the heartbeat of the church. Separate from the budget funds. It is raised through sacrificial giving of Seabrook's members and gifts from other Christians and churches around the country.

"The bulk of our missions giving is by people and churches from around the country," said Purdy. "We recently received a check for \$7,777 from a donor in Buda, Texas, who believes in what we do. The enclosed note encouraged, 'Keep doing what you are doing.'"

Other gifts have come as a result of Seabrook's local ministry to the residents of the Regal Estates retirement home. Residents recently decided to sponsor a men's soccer team in Mbour with their weekly offering.

"You should see the excitement this has generated among the residents," said Rob. "We provide the residents with pictures of the men in the uniforms that their gifts have provided. Knowing that their gifts help us build relationships with men in Mbour has changed the tone of the ministry at Regal Estates and they feel part of our missions program."

The impetus for such generous giving began in August 2006, when Seabrook accepted the Acts 1:8 challenge. Purdy noted that instead of just sending money for others to do missions, Seabrook accepted the challenge to do missions themselves.

After sending its first team to Mbour in November 2006, ministry efforts intensified in 2007 when Seabrook rented a house to use for ministry. Seabrook hired a Senegalese Muslim background believer, locally known as the "lion of Jesus," to live in the house full time as a ministry partner.

The house was named *Keru Naan*, "House of Prayer" in Wolof. Nearly 100 kids gather each Sunday and Wednesday for Bible study and programs. The ministry also reaches out to Talibes, young boys sent to a Mosque for religious instruction. "Talibe, who are also poor children, are forced to beg for money to



meet a quota that is given to their mosque leaders," stated Rob. " *Keru Naan* feeds, clothes, bathes, and teaches God's Word to over 120 Talibes. Their leader has also begun listening to our teaching about Jesus."

During the past 16 months, Seabrook missionaries have made 8 trips to Mbour including one during which Purdy's wife Gerda lived in the Mbour house for six weeks learning the Wolof language which she now teaches to each mission team travelling to Mbour. Rob and Seabrook member Brodie Cooper helped to lead the first service of their new church plant. During Christmas, two Seabrook women ministered to over 300 people. This spring over 60 women attended a "Proverbs 31 Woman" conference led by Gerda, Karen King, and Ronda Cannon.

Seabrook's missions vision extends beyond its own congregation to partnering with other churches. In January, Rob led a teams comprised of members from Seabrook, First Baptist Church of Falfurrias, Texas, (Falfurrias), Fishersville Baptist Church in Virginia, and Hyde Park Baptist Church of Lumberton, North Carolina. During this trip, the first three known baptisms among Labou believers in Mbour occurred in a kiddie pool in the courtyard of *Keru Naan*.

Purdy and Jerry Barker, pastor of Falfurrias, had previously partnered to do a Backyard Bible Club in Falfurrias. Barker became interested in the Mbour missions.

While FBC Falfurrias is the center of ministry in this economically impoverished area and reaches out to minister to the community in a variety of ways, Barker believes that January marked the first time that the church was involved in doing missions in another country. "Our involvement in the trip to Mbour is the fulfillment of what other churches have invested in us," said Barker. "We have seen the blessings we have received and now we get a chance to pass that along. When we receive, we want to give back."

According to Barker, Seabrook has helped Falfurrias fulfill the Great Commission. "People at our church now look at local ministry differently. God has used our partnership to stir in us a spirit of ministry."

Through Falfurrias' partnership with Seabrook, Barker suspects that they are just beginning to see what God can do. The two churches are also working together to start a church in a local community where there is no Baptist work. "When God opens doors for ministry, we run through them," said Barker. "He will provide the resources and people. The more you say, 'Yes!' the more doors He opens. I am excited about what He will open for us tomorrow!"

Barker says, "I would encourage churches that are doing things like Seabrook to look for churches who cannot do it themselves and ask them to be partners."

Rob Purdy, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Seabrook, Texas, can be reached at 281.474.3281. You can also learn more about the congregation and its acceptance of the Acts 1:8 challenge at <http://www.fbcseabrook.org>