

## Rejoice! God is at Work During the Pandemic

By

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Pastors, staff, and lay leaders in CMBA were asked in a recent survey to share where they see God at work in and through their congregation during the pandemic. Here is a paraphrase of 10 selected responses. Rejoice in the Lord always! Pray for and rejoice with your sister and brother congregations.

- Our eyes have been opened even more to the fact that life is short. We all have an expiration date and it's moved us to gear ourselves more toward intentional evangelism. We have had a large number of baptisms. We have also seen many new people come to church during the pandemic because they are hungry for togetherness and find it in our faith community.
- God has fostered an eagerness for community and renewed our congregation's desire for deeper gospel community and not just programmatic consumption.
- God has provided for our needs and allowed us to minister to others during the pandemic. We found new ways to encourage those sick, homebound, bereaved and those experiencing life transitions.
- One of our children's ministry leaders has done exceptional ministry in connecting with and resourcing her group members for Bible study. She created boxes of craft supplies and activities and delivered them to the home of each child. Her creativity and perseverance have inspired many, including me, to find opportunities in these difficult times.
- I have seen our congregation connect virtually better than I had ever dreamed. I also am excited that our folks seem to be very excited to regather in person. We have seen people rely on God in greater measure during the past year. I am confident that will translate into folks being deeper people of faith as we discover the new normal.
- In partnership with a local ministry, we began a feeding ministry. It started at around 50 hot meals served every week. Now, we regularly serve around 300 meals. This has created new relationships and trust in our community that has led to some new opportunities with our town and local schools. We praise God for this! Also, recently our meals-to-go team suffered a COVID outbreak. We thought we'd have to close it down for a few weeks but, because of partnerships with other believers from different denominations, the ministry continued. It was a beautiful picture of the Kingdom of God.

- I love the fact that our homebound members who previously had not been able to attend worship services are now able to do so thanks to their receiving user-friendly devices. We have several Bible Study groups whose membership has increased because they are having Zoom meetings and folks can attend even if they are out of town. Some groups even have new members who live out of town or out of state.
- There is one significant issue that has spoken to our folks - our faithfulness in giving. Although our church is debt-free, there are obligations that must be met, and we surprised ourselves at the continued high level of giving week after week. We have not made even one appeal to the people to increase their giving. This giving silenced the critics who were certain we would not make it. We have made sure to compliment our folks and thank them for their faithfulness to their church.
- I have seen God work among the hearts of members who were once complacent or apathetic regarding worship. Now, there is a yearning for fellowship. I have also seen my congregation embrace service and outreach to the community. Due to the overwhelming amount of needs our community is facing, many in my congregation have been awakened to those needs and have been moved to act in selfless ways.
- Our congregation is currently involved in a process with CMBA to discover God's future for us. The first step of 10 weeks of prayer and discernment has led to God granting our church a good, positive spirit. The congregation is experiencing an amazing sense of unity. We are hopeful and excited about the future toward which God is leading us.

**Note:** When the more complete survey results are compiled and summarized, they will be shared in our newsletter, on our website, and on Facebook. Thank you to the people who responded so that all CMBA congregations might be blessed by this sharing. It is part of what it means to be a family of Baptist congregations in the Midlands of South Carolina.