

**How Your Church Can Support the 2023 State Fair Ministry**

The South Carolina State Fair is a fall tradition for many individuals and families who go to enjoy fun rides, entertainment, and legendary food. For many years, CMBA has partnered with the Lexington Baptist Association (LBA) to offer several strategic ministries to workers setting up the fairgrounds and to fair-goers throughout the 10-day event. LBA Missions Strategist Lee Butler works closely with CMBA’s primary contact, Pastor Dan Griffin, to coordinate many aspects of the joint ministries that build relationships and often lead to faith conversations.

“Every component of planning and ministry are all a part of the larger purpose of sharing Christ’s love,” Butler explains.

These ministries begin as the fairgrounds come alive in the days leading up to the fair’s opening to the public. The lifestyle of fair workers can be tough – many are employed year-round and often work extremely long hours. Recognizing this, CMBA and LBA churches have regularly provided hygiene kits, simple meals, and other basic-needs services, like access to Baptist Nursing Fellowship volunteers, to workers arriving in advance to assemble the attractions. As a result, South Carolina has a reputation for being one of the workers’ favorite stops around the country.

According to Butler, many long-time state fair volunteers share stories about relationships built with returning workers, including “testimonies of having performed marriages, just one example of this being important to folks who remember them.”

Church volunteers are essential to the pre-fair ministry that happens on the Monday and Tuesday before the fair begins on Wednesday. Each of those mornings, teams prepare sandwiches for the lunch bags that are then loaded into golf carts and distributed around the Midway. Volunteers also provide a hot dog supper for the fair workers one night before the fair officially begins. Butler appreciates church volunteers from both associations that provide individually-wrapped baked goods also served with these meals.

Trained state fair “chaplains” provide another aspect to this dynamic ministry. These men and women are scheduled to serve at least one day circulating among the workers or with the public during the fair. Chaplains are trained to engage in friendly conversations and relationship building, and are open to prayer and gospel conversations if that opportunity arises.

There will be a new online presence for the state fair ministry this year. Video presentations of the gospel will be recorded in English and Spanish and specifically with workers in mind. These will be promoted through signs and banners with QR codes that send the user directly to the webpage. Butler plans to update chaplains with any responses he receives through the website so they can make personal contact. Separate QR codes will be posted throughout the fairgrounds for the general public to access gospel content as well.

The [2023 South Carolina State Fair](https://www.scstatefair.org/) will take place October 11-22 and, while many needs are already met, CMBA churches are encouraged to participate in several ways:

* **Provide individually-wrapped baked goods -** CMBA is collecting individually-wrapped baked goods (cake slices, cookies, brownies, etc.) to include in Monday’s bagged lunches and at the supper that evening. Fair workers get excited about homemade goodies, but bought items may be individually-wrapped for these meals as well. Please contact **Dan Griffin** at **803.609.7742** to be added to the list of churches providing individually-wrapped items. Items may be dropped off through Gate 1 at the fairgrounds on Monday, Oct. 9, between 8-10 a.m.
* **Prayerwalk fairgrounds –** The SC State Fair is allowing churches to prayerwalk the fairgrounds during specific times on: Sunday, Oct. 8; Monday, Oct, 9; and, Tuesday, Oct, 10. Contact **Lee Butler** at Lee@mylba.org or **803.351.2284** to sign up and receive more information.
* **Pray virtually** – Pray for volunteers and chaplains to have meaningful opportunities to engage the lost with the life-giving hope of the gospel, and pray for safety for the state fair operations, the workers and their families.