

SECTION 4: CONNECTIONS

The Background

Kitty Hawk Baptist Church (KHBC) is a Southern Baptist church located on the Outer Banks (OBX) of North Carolina. While blessed with beautiful beaches on its oceanside and outstanding fishing and water sports on both ocean and sound sides, KHBC also faces a number of challenges due to its location. Because the OBX is considered a resort area, its population fluctuates widely between the tourist season and the off season. In resident members KHBC is a small church; but we welcome numerous tourists, many of them yearly visitors, as they join us for worship during the summer months. At the same time, however, many locals work two jobs in this busy season, which often interferes with their abilities to participate in many church activities during those months. Unlike a traditional church with a set congregation, ours tends to shift with the seasons. Because of that, we feel KHBC has a rather unique dual mission: we shepherd our local congregation and also provide a temporary church home for our visitors. The very transiency of our population has led us to form important connections with other religious groups, both within our denomination and beyond its boundaries.

The Connections

In 1623 the English poet John Donne stated that “no man is an island.” Donne pressed the point that all of mankind is connected to each other and that we are all connected to God. That same truth is evident in KHBC today. We are, first of all, connected to our Lord as we teach His Word and attempt to follow His commands in our attitudes and our actions. We connect through preaching, teaching, and prayer – all of which are necessary for Christian growth. Our church family connects with each other with Bible studies, Sunday School, last Sunday-of-the-month luncheons, Women on Mission, youth activities, children’s church, Wednesday night dinners, and participation in numerous other activities. We also come together to help those within our church family who have special needs due to accidents or illnesses.

We also connect to our local community, seeing this as our immediate mission field. Numerous people within the community have found KHBC to be a source of assistance: sometimes with money, sometimes with manual labor, and sometimes with just an encouraging word when needed. We’ve not only drawn on our own resources, but we’ve reached out to help those in need connect with other organizations that might be better equipped to help them, such as our Beach Food Pantry, the Interfaith Community Outreach, the Outer Banks Relief Foundation, Creative Choices, Dare Challenge, and the Hosea House. And we, in turn, also support these other ministries with money and/or volunteers. Additionally, we have two major outreaches which allow us to connect to our community, especially to the children. The first one is our

Vacation Bible School, and the second is our Fall Festival. One of our local businesses hosts a Bike Week each year, and our church has been an active participant in that as we've met both local bikers and those from as far away as Canada. At all these events, the gospel is presented because, as we connect, we desire to share Christ with our community and all those who come into it.

We are not isolationists, trying to connect only with our immediate neighbors, however. Because we are also connected to our denomination, we are able to move beyond the Outer Banks in ministry. For example, although we have held joint events with some of our sister churches here, we are also part of the Chowan Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention North Carolina, and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This has allowed us to connect with missionaries both here in North America and throughout the world. We support them with money given through the Cooperative Program of the SBC: North American Mission Board (NAMB) and International Mission Board (IMB). And some in our church have even gone on short term mission trips for even more connections. We use the SBC also for teaching literature for both adults and children.

As a resort area, it has been good for us to connect to our local denominational association, the Chowan Baptist Association. They have helped financially support both our Bike Week ministry and our Fall Festival, and they have often attended our events, lending their support and seeking to have a better understanding of our rather unique situation. They have been a good resource for us to use when we've encountered new situations and when we have wanted to revamp some old programs. At the state level, we have connected with the North Carolina Baptist Association in several ways. Some of us have attended workshops they offer to help with various programs, such as music, children, and youth. We have also connected with them through the North Carolina Baptist Relief effort with volunteers going to help after tornado, flooding, or hurricane disasters.

We also connect with groups outside our denomination both to grow in our own faith journeys, but also to share the love of Christ with a hurting world. Some of these are Mission Encounters, Christ in Action, and the Walk to Emmaus.

KHBC is a small church in number, less than 100 people; but we have large hearts. Maybe it's because we come from so many different areas ourselves and have experienced God's many blessings in our lives. We recognize the strength that is drawn from being connected to others, both locally and beyond. And we have learned the great joy that comes with service. Staying connected takes work; KHBC is working.