
MISSIONAL INITIATIVES

Monthly Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2024

As we enter into the fall ministry season that often feels full of excitement and fresh starts, the Missional Initiative Team is excited to continue journeying alongside our NAB churches and leaders with some new initiatives, along with others that have had a deep impact across our NAB family. Our team will be offering various trainings online and in person over the next few months, and we would invite you to join us in praying specifically for the 2024-25 Blue Ocean cohort and our first Year of Equipping Group.

BLUE OCEAN

Blue Ocean cohorts have been running since the fall of 2016, and we are looking forward to taking another group through the training this October. The 2024-25 cohort is composed of fifteen ministry leaders from various types of church leadership roles (pastors, board members, NAB mission partners, etc.), and they'll be traveling from across both Canada and the USA to our in-person gatherings. Their first gathering will take place in Vancouver, British Columbia, October 20-23.

YEAR OF EQUIPPING

For the first time, we are offering a year-long cohort for younger and emerging leaders called the Year of Equipping. The Year of Equipping cohort will follow a similar theme and structure as our Blue Ocean group, with the exception of additional calls and homework in between gatherings. Wayne Stapleton and Cam Roxburgh will be working together to provide learning opportunities for the thirteen women and men who have stepped into being part of this group. They come to this group from across the USA and Canada, with various levels of ministry experience, and we are excited to see them learn and grow together. Their first in-person gathering will also take place in Vancouver, British Columbia, October 22-25.

As these two groups gather, our hope for them is that this year will be one that encourages them and challenges them. Our prayer is they will learn or be reminded of the missionary nature of our God; they will have space to reflect on the importance of caring for their souls and the importance of that for their congregations; and they will feel equipped to take the things they have learned and share it others on their leadership teams and in their congregations. Would you join us in praying for these twenty-eight women and men as they prepare for the first gathering?

We thank David Williams (president of Taylor Seminary), Deb Judas (Missional Initiatives Team), Wayne Stapleton (VP of Cross Cultural Engagement & Emerging Leaders) and Cam Roxburgh (VP of Missional Initiatives) for leading within these two cohorts this year.

ARTICLE

[Contributed by Dr. Luke Miller, lead pastor at Sunrise Community Church in Sacramento, California; chairman of the Northern California Baptist Association; and member of the NAB Missional Initiatives teaching team.]

In 2006, Sara and I stepped off a plane in Tel Aviv and made our way to our new home in Jerusalem, where we would spend the next three years. Coming from a small town of 500 in Saskatchewan, we found ourselves on the other side of the planet for school. Those three years were transformative, filled with friendships that would last a lifetime and moments where the Bible came to life like never before. We had countless visitors join us as we gave tours of Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. One of our greatest joys was witnessing the same spiritual transformation in others as they stood where Jesus taught and read Matthew 5–7, walked the Valley of Elah where David and Goliath battled, or spent a Sabbath praying in front of the Temple Mount. Passages they had studied their whole lives experienced a renaissance in their own spiritual formation. At the early part of the 20th century, Herman Gunkel introduced the phrase *Sitz im Volksleben* or ‘setting in the life of the people,’ which later evolved into the widely known *Sitz im Leben*, meaning ‘situation in life.’ While I hope you’re impressed by my recall of academic German, these concepts are what truly bring the Scriptures to life for those visiting Israel. Understanding how the first readers of The Word understood Jesus’ teachings gives us great insight into his ministry and work. At the NAB, we’ve worked hard to train pastors and church leaders to understand the context of their neighborhoods and discern how God is using them and the local church. Our Blue Ocean training helps pastors over the course of a year to discern what a church on mission with God looks like in their own *Sitz im Leben*.

The NAB has a deep commitment to training pastors and churches to see them succeed in their ministry context. This is one of the reasons why I am thrilled to announce NAB Study Tours. In November 2025, we will launch Blue Ocean Israel, incorporating our Blue Ocean training throughout the Holy Land. Blue Ocean Israel will build on this foundation by providing a unique setting for learning and growth. It is more than a tour; it is an immersive experience/training designed to deepen your understanding of the Bible by exploring its historical context firsthand. Participants will have the chance to walk in the footsteps of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, gaining a richer appreciation of the scriptures. Picture yourself standing on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, visualizing Jesus calming the storm or walking on water, or reflecting on his teachings at the Mount of Beatitudes. These experiences make the Bible come alive in ways like never before, while also gaining insight into how Jesus viewed his ministry.

Blue Ocean Israel will be open to pastors and their spouses, church leaders, and key ministry individuals. We’ve scheduled the trip for November 2025 to give churches ample time to budget and individuals to save for this invaluable ministry training. Israel’s geography and culture provide invaluable insights into the lives and events of the Bible, and our goal is not only to see the Bible come to life in new ways as God reveals himself in our own spiritual formation but also to help us view our ministries through the same lens as Jesus as we join God on his mission. Sara’s and my time in Israel transformed our understanding of the Bible and helped deepen our faith. Visiting Israel is about experiencing God’s presence uniquely, connecting with the land and people, and understanding the Bible’s cultural and historical context. It’s an opportunity to grow spiritually, be inspired, and be transformed. I hope you will join us on this journey.

If you are interested in Blue Ocean Israel or other NAB Study Tours, please contact me at lukem@sunrise.church or visit nabconference.org/events. Join us for an unforgettable journey that will deepen your faith and transform your ministry.



UPCOMING EVENTS

REFRAME: EQUIPPING YOUR CONGREGATION FOR EVANGELISM

NORTH
AMERICAN
BAPTIST
CONFERENCE

4-WEEK ONLINE TRAINING



WEDNESDAYS,
STARTING OCT. 30
1-2:30PM (EST)

FACILITATOR



REGISTER NOW

Merv Budd
Missional Initiatives Team
Evangelistic Equipping

- How well equipped is your congregation for the ministry of evangelism?
- How do you evaluate your church's health in that regard?
- How would you identify equipping gaps in your congregation's evangelistic faithfulness?

This training will provide an evaluative framework to help you assess your evangelistic equipping efforts. It will help you to recognize gaps you may need to fill and distortions you will want to correct and provide a clearer path forward towards helping your church become more evangelistically faithful.

This online training consists of four sessions that will be 90 minutes each.

Dates: Oct. 30, Nov. 6, 13, 20

Time: 1:00–2:30 p.m. (Eastern)

Register by **Monday, October 28** on the NAB website. Training is free for NAB ministry leaders.