

New Orleans Conference President's Address

Thank you for being a member of SBCAL and for taking the time out of your busy schedule to spend this time with your peers. SBCAL is a grassroots network of associational leaders who come together to equip, encourage, and network for greater effectiveness and fruitfulness in God's kingdom. In my role, I operate somewhat like an air traffic controller – offering direction, resourcing, and networking at your service. For example, just a few weeks ago, I received a call from Hawaii. I was able to connect them to an AMS in New York state who had a similar situation. He was happy to offer assistance to a volunteer associational leader in Hawaii. As AMSs, we know more about what we do than anyone else.

Our Conference theme is “Leading with Integrity and Skill,” based on Ps. 78:72: “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands” (NASB). Both integrity and skill are needed to lead our associations in godly, wise ways. SBCAL is here to help you do both.

Our Priorities are Leadership Equipping, Associational Advocacy, Development Pathways, and Succession Planning. Today I want to focus on two of those.

Leadership Equipping – In April, we had a great Midwest Regional Conference. This coming year, we will explore the possibility of offering regional training in the West. In addition, we will see if there is enough interest to offer a two-day SBCAL Retreat in early March, 2025. There are a number of AMSs who love what we do, but for various reasons are unable to attend this annual conference each June. Therefore, we will see if there is interest in partnering with some state conventions and SBC entities to offer a retreat in addition to our annual conference on a trial basis.

I look forward to offering more Virtual Conferences (webinars) on helpful topics after becoming full-time July 1. Plus, I would love to attend as many of your state AMS gatherings in person or by Zoom as I can. I want to listen and get to know you and your peers in your state – your challenges and your opportunities – and offer encouragement and be a help to you any way I can.

Second, Development Pathways – We see a need to offer professional development pathways. One area we are already offering is coaching - specifically Gospel Coaching. If you have not been to this training, I encourage you to do so. We have a partnership with Tom Wood and Church Multiplication Ministries that offers a 20% discount on Gospel Coach training.

A new pathway I am excited to initiate this fall will be SBCAL AMS Cohorts. These will be small groups of AMSs meeting for approximately an hour a month by Zoom for iron sharpening iron times across state lines about issues we face, studying helpful resources, and experiencing times of prayer, fellowship, and encouragement. Be on the lookout for more on this in the July Encourager newsletter.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would add me to your prayer list. I want to glorify Christ and represent you and this association of associational leaders well. I want to serve you to the best of my ability. Thank you for allowing me to serve you part-time for 8 years. I am excited and looking forward to being able to do so full-time beginning in July.

Dr. Ray Gentry
President/CEO
SBCAL