

# **Pastor Craig Tuck's Address to the Charleston Baptist Association**

## **My Story**

Since 2003, Charleston has been home for my wife and four children - now young adults - and I have been blessed to serve within Charleston Baptist Association (CBA) churches since our arrival. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have served at East Cooper Baptist Church and to have planted Centerpoint Church.

This journey of seeing the church serve and reach the city began for me at First Baptist Church Woodstock in 1991. Through their support, I planted a church in Atlanta area in 1997 to impact more people with the gospel and make disciples who make disciples. On March 5, I have privilege to go back and speak at the 20th anniversary of this church that is thriving in mission and expanding their current site through a young man I disciplined and called to succeed me.

For the past four years I have been serving with the South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) as a regional leader to help connect resources and relationships to serve and strengthen church planting in Greater Charleston. I have also served as the Hub Director - I have been serving to connect, coach and collaborate.

Over the past few years I have been amazed to see leaders and congregations embrace the call to reach every man, woman and child. We have seen many leaders and members of churches meet at tables for training, building partnerships and leveraging resources to reach into their geography. This call to mobilizing people and leaders for the gospel and the great commission is rooted deeply in me - to give every man, woman and child repeated opportunities to see, hear and respond to the gospel.

In 2014, alongside of leading the Hub - the call to plant a church in Greater Charleston - Centerpoint Church has been a member and supporter of CBA and SCBC .

Looking back - I'm thankful for the shaping influences in my life: my grandmother, uncles and aunts. In the Florida Baptist Convention, my uncle served as pastor, DOM and leader in the state convention. Serving in my home church in South Florida, to serving churches and church planting in Atlanta to serving and planting here in Charleston - I am a practitioner at heart.

## **Movement in Greater Charleston**

Through the dual role I have had in the city by pastoring a church and coaching / connecting churches together for Kingdom impact - we planted Centerpoint Church in the city not just to have a church in the city for our church but to have a church in the city for the city. Leaders have allowed me to strengthen churches, leaders and church plants.

There is movement in Greater Charleston - 45 people a day are moving into the tri-county area many with no faith background or life in the church. There is also movement in Greater Charleston churches - as I have been working for the state convention I have a view to other regions in our state - the things that stand out about the work of the Spirit here is a willingness and intentionality of churches coming together for the sake of advancing the Gospel and collaborating for the mission of making disciples.

There is movement within our historic association - I have had the privilege of sitting at the table as a member of the study team to study our history and lead our association toward a renewed vision from where we started: Strengthening churches, leaders and planting churches.

This renewed vision aligns with what I see God doing in Greater Charleston and a compelling desire to lead the association toward a position of strength in making disciples and reaching every man, woman and child with the gospel.

Should this position be granted to me today by your affirmation, I will leverage our legacy - I believe in our historic influence and gospel origins were meant to be succeed generations because they were rooted and grounded in the great commission. My hope is to lead the way on reversing the trend of the declining church and testimonies of churches that have been strengthened, are being strengthened and being planted and re-planted in Greater Charleston .

## **The Legacy of the Charleston Baptist Association**

I recently read the address given by the son of Richard Furman, James C. Furman, at the 100th annual meeting to the CBA in November 1851 who spoke from this passage: Deut. 32:7 "Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations."

CBA founder, Oliver Hart, was a native of Pennsylvania and at the age of 18 trusted in Christ for salvation under the preaching of the evangelist, George Whitefield. Five years later was licensed to preach and was ordained in October 1749. Oliver Hart became pastor of FBC Charleston in February 1750.

He quickly began cultivating relationships with ministers, deacons, and elders in Baptist congregations across the South Carolina low-country, enabling him to garner support for the founding of a centralized church organization similar to the Philadelphia Baptist Association (1707).

He had been settled at the Charleston Church hardly more than a year and a half before he had arranged to meet representatives from the Ashley River, Euhaw and Welsh Neck churches to establish the Charleston Association. Under Hart's vigorous religious leadership, the Charleston Baptist Association emerged as an increasingly powerful institutional force for sustaining and expanding Baptist growth in the Lower South. For three decades the association continually grew in both size and influence, extending its membership to include churches in both North and South Carolina.

At first the principal functions of the associations were to provide a larger fellowship and to allow counsel concerning common problems facing the churches. By common understanding, associations had no authority over the churches which affiliated with them.

Our founder had a deep sense, a conviction that no one church could accomplish the Great Commission by themselves and that a truly cooperative effort was the means to doing so. It was evident that this was not only a necessity, but it was to be part of the DNA of all churches that would follow: willing collaboration among churches that shared a common vision and common theology to reach and make disciples of every man, woman and child.

"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Hebrews 13:7

## **The Renewed Vision of the Charleston Baptist Association**

### **1. STRENGTHENING CHURCHES**

Realizing that each church is unique in its composition, strengths and challenges, we believe churches may be strengthened by partnering with other churches to share resources, strategies and encouragement with the CBA serving as a liaison for that partnership. The individual need of each church would be determinative of the resources employed to strengthen it.

### **2. STRENGTHENING PASTORS and CHURCHES**

In much the same way the strengthening pastors and/or church leaders would be realized. The Strengthening Pastors and Churches Team and the Executive Director will function as a Connector for pastors and/or church leaders to Leadership resources, people, or other churches that could assist in their Kingdom work.

### **3. CHURCH PLANTING**

Since success in Kingdom purposes involves ever increasing numbers of new disciples, the need for new churches will grow in the same way as the revitalization of existing churches. They will both be needed. The Church Planting Team and the Executive Director will function as the catalyst and connector for new church plants in the Charleston Association connecting potential church planters with partner churches, processes, and resources available.

Success:

- When Strengthened churches strengthen other churches
- When Strengthened leaders strengthen other leaders
- When Planted churches plant churches

If an epistle was written by the Spirit to us - may this be true:

*Colossians 1:3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.*