

# Church Planting in Myrtle Beach's Wave of Growth



## *Overview*

With Myrtle Beach being the fastest-growing city in the country, church planting efforts in the Grand Strand are a top priority for SCBaptist's Start Team.

Tom Gore, Church Planting Strategist at SCBaptist, explained that the Grand Strand has seen massive growth in recent years. The allure of the area comes from a mild climate, job opportunities, and relatively low cost of living compared to the national average. "The result has been our region becoming the fastest growing in the United States for the third year in a row," he said.

With an average of 50 people moving daily to the area, "The Grand Strand is the most significant area in the Palmetto State for our churches to reach every life," Gore said.

## *Challenges and Opportunities*

Jeff Gaskins was a pastor in the area for 16 years before joining the Waccamaw Baptist Association (WBA) as the Associational Mission Strategist. He explained that there are 78 churches in the WBA, which contains about 19,000 church members. "For reference, the equivalent of the entire membership of our Association moved here in one year, and that's just increasing," Gaskins said.

The area presents some challenges for church planters specifically. First, many transplants come from the Northeast, bringing a Catholic or completely unchurched background with them. Jordan Gandy, pastor of Coastal Life Community Church, recently baptized an 84-year-old man and his 80-year-old wife. "That's unheard of for many churches, but they had a fresh hunger for the truth because they had never heard it," Gandy said.

"Like any area that's growing, there is a microcosm of issues and sin that come with that, like drug addiction, alcoholism, and trafficking," Gaskins said. "That's not happening someplace else; that's happening right here." Though these issues are not unique to the Grand Strand, they do pose a challenge in the area.

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