

# Church planting candidates discern calling at 242 Network assessment

*By Chloe Newton*  
*Staff Writer*

Church planting has played a vital role in church history. After all, “every church was once a church plant.” In order to help shepherd the next generation of church planters, the 242 Network held its biannual church planter assessment on Sept. 9 at Morrison Heights Church, Clinton. The church plant organization aims to assess, train and support those who are called to plant churches in the state of Mississippi.

“We believe in the work of God. We believe regardless of whatever the outcome of this assessment is, God is using you and has a plan for you and we want to help you. So partner with us as we seek to do that. All we want to do is help you understand what God is doing in your life,” said Bryan Cirlot, Mississippi Coast Hub Leader, to kick off the first day of assessment.

Over a two day period, church plant candidates were assessed and interviewed by pastors and hub leaders from across the state. The goal of the assessment is not to validate or invalidate a call but to discern if couples and individuals are ready to take the next steps.

“I think of David in the Old Testament,” said Cirlot. “David gets this vision in his heart that he wants to build a house for the Lord. He presents the idea and Nathan, the prophet, hears it and immediately [says] ‘That’s a great next step, go do that.’ But then, Nathan goes and hears from the Lord, comes back and tells David, ‘No, it’s actually not your calling.’ And maybe at first I would probably be disappointed if the

Lord had told me, 'No, you don't get to build me a house.' But what actually happened in that passage is the Lord built a house for David, and that's where we see the Davidic covenant promised. We see the line of Christ established. What we might've interpreted as a red was only a red for a particular path, but there was a green for a different path."



A 242 Network representative talks to a couple interested in a church planting during a biannual church planting assessment on Sept. 9 at Morrison Heights Church, Clinton. (Photo credit: Tanner Cade)

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As an organization whose primary aim champions the tagline for Mississippi Baptists to “unify and multiply the local church,” 242 Network continually serves alongside Mississippi Baptists to make this a reality. Maxey and his team work to encourage local churches and Mississippi Baptists to support, through a variety of means, the planting of new churches.

Mississippi is known for its well-established Baptist churches. It’s a part of the state’s culture and it’s prime Bible belt location with churches on every corner. At the same time, Mississippi is set apart for its church planting efforts. However, one may ask, ‘Why does Mississippi need more

churches?’

“Last year, we closed more churches than we planted,” stated Maxey. “We want to revitalize churches, but we also need to plant more churches. We want to make sure that we have the most qualified church planters to make sure that three or five years down the road, [they’re] vibrant. We don’t want to see a church plant fail. As much as we can do on the front end, the better.

“There’s lost and dying people in Mississippi that desperately need to know Jesus Christ as their savior. And so for them to have a burden and a passion when times get rough – and they will get rough – that they’ll have a distinct call to be able to say ‘look I’m planting this church because I know, number one God’s calling me, but number two, there’s a lost and dying community that God’s called me to reach.’”

“What we would like to see the established church do is value the multiplication of new churches,” said Andy Boles, Senior Pastor at Embrace Church, Forest, and East Mississippi Hub Leader. “Every church that is established was once a church plant. We believe that church plants are necessary to reach the next generations that are to come. One of the great things about church planting today is each church in its own DNA has a specific direction of ministry that they’re going after. I would just encourage the established church to love church plants like a parent would a child and encourage and support that church plant.”

“I’m just grateful for Mississippi Baptist. They’re supportive of cooperative program, and the Margaret Lackey State Mission offering provides the resources necessary to see new church plants and planters succeed,” concluded Maxey.

To learn more or to give to the Margaret Lackey State Mission offering, contact your local church or visit <https://www.margaretlackey.com>.