

Orientation and Membership Guide

Mobile Baptist Association

An Orientation for New Staff and
Prospective Member Churches of
Mobile Baptist Association, SBC

“Serving Together to Make
an Eternal Difference in Mobile County”

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“Emphasizing Biblical Prayer, Evangelistic Ministries, Church
Development, Church Planting, and Partnership Missions”



The leaders and churches of the Mobile Baptist Association (MBA) are very pleased the Lord is leading you to serve with Mobile Baptists as we seek to make an eternal difference in Mobile county. We are committed to reflecting the image of Rev. 7:9 where every tribe, tongue and nation will be represented here as they will be around the throne of Jesus.

For more information please visit mobilebaptists.org or follow us at facebook.com/mobilebaptistassociation and/or twitter.com/mobilebaptists.

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP

1. What is the Mobile Baptist Association (MBA)?

The MBA is a voluntary association of more than 121 Southern Baptist Churches and missions who have committed to work together financially and strategically to reach Mobile County. Our motto is “Serving Together to Make an Eternal Difference in Mobile.” We cooperate with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (ALSBOM, alsbom.org) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC, sbc.net).

- a. **Membership** is voluntary and is entered when theologically similar congregations believe that their philosophies and strategies are consistent with the philosophies and strategies of the MBA, ALSBOM, and the SBC. We are actively seeking additional congregations to accomplish more effectively what we can do collectively rather than working individually.
- b. **Consulting** - Our staff serve as consultants to our churches on the ministries listed below and on a wide range of church growth, new work, staffing, Disaster Relief and crises management.
- c. **Funding** - The MBA staff and ministries are funded through our affiliated congregations including us in their missions tithes and offerings. The SBC has long encouraged churches to give 3% of their undesignated offerings to their local association and 7% to the Cooperative Program as a “missions tithe.” In recent years, the SBC Great Commission Resurgence noted a goal for churches to give at least 5% to CP, 3% to associational missions and 2% to other “Great Commission” missions opportunities. We also sponsor a yearly “Impact Mobile” special offering.

2. What do Mobile Baptists Believe?

Baptist historic beliefs include the authority of the Scripture, the priesthood of the believer, the autonomy of the local church, regenerate membership by immersion, separation of church and state (not church *from* state), eternal security of the believer, and the importance of evangelistic ministry/missions.

The MBA is consistent with the historically conservative beliefs of Southern Baptists. Our leadership affirms the *Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M)*. (See sbc.net/bfm for an online copy.) This booklet summarizes the biblical bases for our beliefs about the Scriptures, God, Man, Salvation, God's Purpose of Grace, The Church, Baptism and The Lord's Supper, The Lord's Day, The Kingdom, Last Things, Evangelism and Missions, Education, Stewardship,

Cooperation, The Christian and The Social Order, Peace and War, Religious Liberty, and Family.

3. How are Southern Baptists Different from other Baptists?

The Southern Baptist Cooperative Program, for doing missions and evangelism, is the primary distinctive from the more than 300 autonomous Baptist denominations worldwide. For more information see alsbom.org/cp or cpmissions.net, and the Cooperation chapter in the *BF&M*.

4. Who is on the MBA Staff?

The MBA staff exists to serve our churches and lead in cooperative evangelistic ministries that result in church growth.

Our Executive Director of Missions (EDOM) is **C. Thomas Wright, Ph.D.** (dom@mobilebaptists.org) He came to us in January 2005 and has been serving in Home and International Missions since 1976. He has been a Church Planter, Seminary Professor, and is a conference leader and author. He and Donna have two married children involved in ministry. He likes being called Brother Thomas and considers himself your Associational Missionary.

Rev. Chuck Davis (cdavis@mobilebaptists.org) is our Church Development Director. Chuck brings a wealth of experience and a heart for evangelistic ministry and church growth. He has been serving Mobile Baptists since March of 1990. He and Becky have three grown children.

Mrs. Carol Henderson (chenderson@mobilebaptists.org) is the Administrative Assistant to Brother Thomas and Financial Secretary. She has served Mobile Baptists since 1991. She has been married to Kenneth since 1966. They have two children and multiple grand and great-grandchildren.

Ms. Kelly Jones (kjones@mobilebaptists.org) is our Receptionist and Church Development Assistant for Rev. Davis. She is a native of Mobile and a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Kelly served as a Missionary to the Philippines and began serving the MBA in August 2007.

Mrs. Carolyn Battle (disasterrelief@mobilebaptists.org) is our Disaster Relief Coordinator. Carolyn joined us in 2016 to help provide disaster relief preparation, training and response. Please visit dr.mobilebaptists.org for more information. Please download the church preparation manual and register with us the availability of your facility for use after a disaster event.

Mrs. Vicki Willis (vickaroo70@yahoo.com) serves as our Children and Family Ministries Consultant. She helps churches to develop and use excellent children's ministries that help the church reach out to the entire family. She and Bo have two grown children.

Mrs. Janice Austin (christ_injan@yahoo.com) serves in a new position as our Multi-housing Ministries Missionary. She assists churches to begin Outreach Bible Studies and worship opportunities in multi-housing complexes. She and Edley are members of Highpoint Baptist Church.

Ronnie Connell (ronnieccwp@gmail.com) serves as the Interim Director of Camp Whispering Pines (CWP). Ronnie served as director of building and grounds from 2012 to 2015. He became Interim Director in 2015 and has focused needed attention on facility upgrades and repairs. Please visit campwhisperingpines.com for information about using the camp and updates on the improvements.

Mrs Beverly Davis (beverlycwp@gmail.com) has served as CWP Office Manager since June 2004. Her ministry includes bookkeeping, office management and supervision of office staff.

Dr. Bobby Morton (bmorton@mobilebaptists.org) became the Part Time Director of International Ministries and Language Church Planting in March 2015. He has served churches and the Association in many roles, including moderator and interim director of CWP. He and Mary are lifelong residents of Mobile.

Mrs. Kim Wilson (kwilson@mobilebaptists.org) began as the volunteer coordinator for the International Language School, within our MBA International Ministries, in March 2016. She recruits students and trains teachers and site leaders. She also schedules locations, classes and curriculum. She and her husband Doug are active in church and ministry. They have 6 children and 1 grandson

Rev. Harold Reagan serves as our volunteer Mission Service Corps missionary (MSC) for International Ministries. He serves full-time at the International Ministries Center (IMC) where he assists with ministry to seafarers, language churches, and building maintenance.

Mr. David Seymour is a volunteer Port Chaplain serving full-time at the IMC. He assists by transporting and ministering to seafarers and building maintenance.

Rev. Jerrod Brown (jbrown@alsbom.org) is a state missionary serving cooperatively with the MBA as Baptist Campus Minister. He has served Mobile Baptists since 1996. Jerrod brings experience in local church ministry, missions and campus ministry. Jerrod has a heart for sharing the gospel in relevant ways and mobilizing students to be on mission. He and Shalon have four children.

Mrs. Beth Gardner (egardner@alsbom.org) serves as a Baptist Campus Minister with ALSBOM Baptist Campus Ministries. Beth and her husband, Jeff, are members at First Baptist Church, Saint Elmo where he serves as pastor. They have 2 children.

The Lord has blessed us over the years through many **Volunteers** and **Missions Service Corp (MSC)** missionaries serving in our office. Please visit a18c.org/msc for more information about MSC self-funded missionary specialists.

Vacant - Volunteer/MSC evangelistic ministries coordinator(s). This individual or couple helps to manage the Evangelistic Ministries emphasis of the MBA. He/She/They serve with the evangelistic ministries committee to reach the lost in Mobile County and manage the three Evangelistic Party Trailers (EPT).

Vacant - Volunteer/MSC Partnership Missions Coordinator(s). This individual or couple assists our churches to work with our evangelistic ministries committee to participate in local, state, national, and international missions projects.

Vacant - Volunteer/MSC Church Planting Coordinator. This individual will work with ALSBOM and the MBA Church Planting Committee to assist churches to sponsor new work in Mobile County.

Vacant - Volunteer/MSC Sports Evangelism Coordinator(s). This individual or couple will create a sports evangelism strategy and lead churches to reach out through sports evangelism events for Mobile County.

Vacant - Volunteer/MSC African American Liaison. This individual serves to assist African American churches with the unique challenges of evangelistic ministries, training and church planting in the African American Community. This individual also encourage like-minded congregations to join the MBA.

Volunteers are an important part of our office work and every week we have church members helping with mail-outs and answering phones. Please encourage your members to come help us.

We also have numerous Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE) Certified **Vocational Evangelists** in the MBA. They provide evangelistic ministry to churches here and worldwide. They are listed with contact information on our website.

5. What are the MBA Ministries?

Our Evangelistic Ministries Include:

a. **Camp Whispering Pines (CWP)** - The camp has beds and meeting space for up to 225 people, water sports, free range paintball, and a certified Ropes Course. The mission of CWP is to support the churches of the MBA and other Christian organizations by utilizing the facilities to enable young people and adults to know and grow in personal relationships with Jesus Christ. In 2012 more than 400 decisions were registered at the Camp. This ministry is made possible by volunteer workers and the financial sacrifice of member churches to the cooperative budget of Mobile Baptists. Please visit campwhisperingpines.com for more information. Ronnel Connell is Interim Director.

b. **International Ministries (IM)**- The MBA International Ministries includes *seafarer ministry, language church planting* and the *International Language School*. Seafarer ministry occurs at the International Ministries Center (IMC), located at 605 Texas Place near downtown Mobile. The IMC provides a facility for volunteers and staff to share Jesus with seafarers, refugees, local residents, students and provides follow-up ministries to more than 68 language and culture groups living in Mobile. IM has the goal to begin churches or cultural ministries for every language-culture group in Mobile County. In 2014 more than 277 decisions were registered at the IMC. This effective outreach is made possible by cooperating churches sending volunteers and funds to support the MBA. Please visit imc.mobilebaptists.org for more information.

c. **International Language School (ILS)** - Every week more than 15 volunteer teachers help over 80 Mobile Internationals learn English in this intentionally evangelistic ministry. There are currently eight language school sites. Teacher training is held throughout the year. Students are able to study because of scholarships and the annual Walk For Bibles and International Ministries (WFBIM) as well as the annual International Ministries Benefit Golf Tournament. Please visit ils.mobilebaptists.org for more information.

d. **Church Development** - This extensive ministry area includes leadership and personal development, Church Health and Growth, Christian Spiritual Growth, Discipleship & Family Ministries, Men's/Boys' Ministries, Disaster Relief, Mobile Baptist Builders and other church building teams, Children, Youth, and Senior Adult Ministries, Sunday School/Bible Study Ministries, Woman's Missionary Union/Women's and Girls' Ministries. Practical consultation and training are available to each member church. Rev. Chuck Davis is Director. For more information please visit mobilebaptists.org/church-development-2

e. **Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM)** - Baptist Campus Ministries is responsible for programs of evangelism, missions, spiritual growth, and outreach ministries on campuses at University of South Alabama, Spring Hill College and Bishop State Community College. One goal of BCM is to help each congregation to provide effective evangelistic ministries for collegians. ALSBOM provides the staff and facility in partnership with the MBA. The MBA budget provides the program funds needed to reach these students. Member churches are welcome to visit and join this work. Jerrod Brown provides leadership. southalabama.edu/BCM

f. **Scholarships** - The MBA has three scholarship programs for members of cooperating churches. The MBA Scholarship is for ministerial students, the second is for African-American ministerial students, and the third is for International ministry-related ministerial students. Contact the chair of the Scholarship Committee for more information.

g. **Ministers' Conference/Fellowship** - The officers of the Ministers Conference plan weekly ministers lunches and other sessions for fellowship, encouragement and ongoing education. We meet every Monday from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., usually at Government Street Baptist Church above the gym. Officers include a president, vice president and secretary.

h. **Bi-vocational Ministers' Fellowship** – Bi-vocational Ministers and wives meet the first Friday night of the month for a dinner fellowship.

i. **African American Fellowship** - African American ministers provide culturally relevant training, fellowship and communicate the purpose of associational missions. The MBA has a goal of having at least 25% of church membership from African American churches to reflect the population of Mobile County.

j. **Language Ministers' Fellowship** - The ministers from our language/culture congregations meet quarterly. Our goal is to provide culturally relevant congregations for each of the language culture groups in Mobile County.

6. What are the MBA Emphases? The MBA Executive Committee voted in 2005 to lead our churches in these five proven emphases for church growth:

a. **Biblical Prayer**, Luke 18:1, 1 Tim. 2:1-4, Our goal is for each congregation to have a Prayer Coordinator and effective Biblical Prayer Committee. We know that any effective outreach and growth comes through effective, biblical prayer. The associational Biblical Prayer Committee sponsors training, encouragement and events.

b. **Evangelistic Ministries**, Luke 4:18-19, Luke 19:10. Our goal is to pray for and share Jesus with every one of the 415,000 people in Mobile County. Our Evangelistic Ministries Committee offers training to help churches enlist an Evangelistic Ministries Committee and lead the congregation in effective outreach.

c. **Church Development/Growth**, Acts 16:5, Rev. 7:9. Our goal is to help every church to grow and reach their communities with the Good News of Jesus. The MBA Church Development Committee helps provide training, consultations and events to equip local church members to minister to the needs of local churches and their members and to share the life changing message of Jesus' love in their communities.

d. **Church Planting**, Acts 2:46-47, Eph. 5:25-27. Our goal is to provide a culturally relevant church for every person in Mobile county. If we had 1,200 people in every evangelical church then we would be a church county. We have a long way to go. We need additional Anglo, African American and Language churches to reach our county.

e. **Partnership (in local, state, national and international) Missions**, Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 13:2-4. Our goal is for every church to send at least one person, or one more than ever before, in local, state, national and international missions opportunities. The MBA has partnerships and mission trips available through our churches. Philosophically, our trips always undergird the work of IMB or NAMB missionaries to ensure excellent preparation and follow-up.

7. What are the MBA Committees?

We have 13 committees that are very active in leading, implementing and helping the emphases and ministries of our association. We seek to provide service opportunities for all of our church members, pastors, and staff through these committees. The 13 committees are: Annual Session Planning, Budget and Finance, Camp Whispering Pines, Campus Ministries, Church Development, Church Planting, Enlistment, Evangelism/Missions, International Missions, Membership, Personnel, Resolutions, and Student Scholarship. Please respond with committee member recommendations when contacted by our Enlistment Committee. Please let us know which committees you would like to serve for a three year term.

8. What are the Administrative Processes and who are the General Officers for the MBA?

Our officers are elected at the October Annual Meeting. They include a Moderator, 1st Vice Moderator, 2nd Vice Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer (the EDOM), and Assistant Treasurer.

The moderators assist the Associational Missionary with planning, direction and response to issues in the association. Each position may serve for a two year term.

Our Executive Committee has overall responsibility for the directions and processes of the MBA. It is composed of the general officers of the association, the executive officer of each of the several associational programs, the chair of each standing committee, **the pastors of the churches** and one lay member of each church in the association having a membership of up to and including 100 and one additional member for each additional 100 members or fraction thereof, providing that no church shall have more than a total of four members. These shall be duly elected by the church of which they are members, and their election certified by the clerk or pastor of said church. The Executive Committee meets quarterly in January, April, July, and September. The Annual Session meets in October. Additional meetings are called when necessary.

The MBA has a Constitution and By-laws in addition to a Policy and Procedure Manual. These documents govern day-to-day responsibilities. Member churches can receive a copy of these documents upon request.

II. Why Should your Church Join and Support the MBA?

Because Serving Together is Biblical. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says that “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion, but woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (NKJV). New Testament examples of early churches cooperating include Acts 11:1-18, Acts 15:1-35, Gal. 2:1-10, 1 Cor. 16:1-4, and 2 Cor. 9:1-5

Serving Together is Historically Proven. The first cooperative entities for Baptists were local associations of churches. The earliest Baptist associations began by the mid 1600’s and Associations were the only form of denominational life for more than 100 years. Churches realized that associations could be helpful with doctrine, direction, encouragement, and greater impact.

Because Mobile County has More than 200,000 Lost People. Research indicates that 33% (133,000) of the 415,000 people living in Mobile County are not affiliated with any church, cult or denomination. We know that the number of lost people in denominations and false religions can easily reach another 75,000 people, bringing our total lostness to half the population of Mobile County.

Because Cooperative Missions is Good Stewardship. **Research shows that churches that model the tithe receive more tithes from their members.** Through cooperative missions giving your church is able to help support the goals and emphases of the MBA as well as over 5,000 International and almost 5,000 North American missionaries (Including the missionaries at our IMC). Imagine the cost of postage to send all of them just a Christmas card! It was through

cooperating SBC churches that we received the tremendous financial help after Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina.

III. Membership Process

We gladly help interested church leaders to work through this process.

1. Receive a copy of this Membership and Orientation Guide and a copy of the MBA Constitution and By-laws and Policies and Procedures. (Available at the MBA office.)
2. Determine if your theology and practice are consistent with Southern Baptists.
 - a. Read and affirm the *Baptist Faith and Message* (See sbc.net/bfm).
 - b. Read *Meet Southern Baptists* (See sbc.net/aboutus).
 - c. Read about the *Cooperative Program*. (See alsbom.org/cp or cpmissions.net).
3. Pastor meets with the Membership Committee Chair or EDOM/Associational Missionary to review the membership guidelines. Other leaders and members may attend.
4. Pastor leads members to understand the advantages of serving with other MBA churches in Mobile County. The MBA staff is available to meet as needed.
5. Pastor and leaders determine if members are interested in joining the MBA, ALSBOM, and the SBC. This process may take some time and the MBA staff and Membership Committee are available to help you.
6. Complete the last page of this Guidebook and mail or email to MBA **with a copy of your Constitution and By-laws**. MBA staff will help create or revise your documents if you wish.
7. Pastor (and leaders if needed) meet with the Membership Committee to review the beliefs, practices, and agree upon financial support of the MBA. Churches are encouraged to “tithe to missions” since research has shown that churches that model the tithe, receive more in tithes from their members.
8. Membership Committee recommends membership of the church in the MBA under watchcare. Watchcare is for a minimum of 6 months and maximum of 18 months. Churches must present their application for watchcare to the Membership Committee at least 6 months before the Annual Meeting. During watchcare the pastor and another church member will be welcome at all Executive Committee meetings as non-voting members.
9. Church votes to become a member of the MBA. MBA member churches become a member of ALSBOM and SBC. All ALSBOM Committee members are from churches that are members of a local association.
10. Church determines amount of mission gifts it will send to MBA. The SBC has long encouraged churches to give 3% of their undesignated offerings to their local association and 7% to the Cooperative Program as a “missions tithe.”
11. Church elects a member to serve with the pastor on the MBA Executive Committee.
12. Church elects messengers to the MBA Annual Meeting. Usually held the first Thursday in October.
13. Church elects messengers to the ALSBOM State Convention meeting. For more information visit alsbom.org/convention/messengers.

14. Church elects messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting. Churches request their messenger recommendation cards at sbc.net.
15. MBA Executive Committee votes to include the church under watchcare by two-thirds majority vote.
16. After 6 months to one year, the Membership Committee recommends appropriate action for churches under watchcare. Churches that have demonstrated cooperation in attendance and giving during the watchcare period will be invited to become full members. Churches may extend watchcare an additional year as they work toward demonstrating active participation and cooperation.
17. Executive Committee, upon recommendation from the Membership Committee, votes the watchcare church into full membership by two-thirds majority vote at the Annual Meeting in October.
18. Church requests a membership number through ALSBOM which is then used to help track their gifts and give access to ALSBOM and SBC resources. You should receive a username and password for the online data management system within four weeks. Your church clerk or pastor can visit al.sbcworkspace.com/account/login.
19. Church automatically receives monthly financial gift reporting forms from ALSBOM.
 - a. The church treasurer will indicate on that form the amount of the church contribution that should be designated to the MBA, the Cooperative Program, and any other MBA or ALSBOM ministries (some churches or members choose to give to a ministry in addition to the MBA budget. This option provides additional support to Camp Whispering Pines, International Ministries, International Language School, WMU offerings, etc).
 - b. It is the best accounting that all gifts to the MBA and its ministries go through this cooperative accounting system. This process provides a record of all income and ensures that all missions tithes are allocated appropriately.
20. The MBA compiles a monthly year-to-date receipts report to help churches keep track of their contributions to the MBA budget. It may take up to four weeks for the funds sent through ALSBOM to be applied to the monthly MBA report.

IV. WITHDRAWAL PROCESS

Membership (also called affiliation) is voluntary and churches may choose to withdraw affiliation at any time by voting as a congregation to withdraw and then sending a letter of intent to the MBA office.

Article V. D. of the Constitution and By-laws states “Should any church disqualify itself by practices or doctrines contrary to those of the association, or fail to send an Annual Report and/or Messengers for three consecutive years, or otherwise show a non-participatory spirit, the Membership Committee will, upon failing to reconcile such church, recommend the church be returned to watchcare status or disaffiliation. A two-thirds majority vote of the members and voting in Annual Session shall be required to withdraw fellowship from a church.”

V. MISSION STATUS

MBA churches are involved in beginning new congregations in Mobile County. Mission congregations may choose to become members of the Association by virtue of being a mission of an MBA member church. The Mission congregation is under the supervision of the sponsor church to assist with the process of becoming an autonomous congregation as quickly as leadership, finances, outreach and facilities can be self sustained. In some instances language-culture congregations may have insufficient population to sustain a separate congregation. They may choose to permanently share facilities.

VI. CONCLUSION

We welcome new staff members to serve in MBA churches and alongside us in our Jerusalem. The MBA exists to help our churches make an eternal difference. Please let us know how we can help. Please let us know when staff changes occur.

We are praying for the Lord to continue to lead like-minded churches to join us in reaching Mobile County. We look forward to serving with you, learning from you, and seeing the Lord use each of us to make an eternal difference in Mobile County.

© November 2008, Mobile Baptist Association. Written by C. Thomas Wright. Revised January 2017

VII. MBA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete and mail or email to Dr. Thomas Wright with a copy of your Constitution and By-laws.

1. Our Church would like to investigate becoming a member of the Mobile Baptist Association. Please indicate level of interest:
 - a. ____ We are just beginning the process and need more information
 - b. ____ We anticipate joining in _____(Date)
 - c. ____ We are a Mission of _____ Baptist Church (MBA Member)
 - d. ____ We are ready to join MBA. Church voted on (date) _____
 - e. ____ We wish to be jointly aligned with MBA and _____ Association.

2. Pastor Name: _____

3. Church Name: _____

4. Address: _____
Mailing address (if different than physical):

5. Phone Numbers: Church: _____ Pastor's Home: _____

Pastor's Cell: _____

6. Email Addresses: Church: _____

Pastor: _____

7. Current Affiliation or Denomination: _____

8. Our Constitution and By-laws are attached: Yes _____ No _____

9. We accept the current *Baptist Faith and Message*: Yes _____ No _____

10. We agree to give monthly to the General Operation Budget of the MBA: Yes _____ No _____
 - a. Monthly amount of church "missions tithe" committed to the MBA _____% which is approximately \$_____
 - b. Monthly amount of church "missions tithe" committed to to SBC/ALSBOM/Cooperative Program _____% which is approximately \$_____