

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

The Alabama Baptist State Convention and its entities have been and will continue to partner with Baptist associations. They will assist the associations and churches to fulfill the Great Commission. The State Board of Missions promotes Alabama Baptist evangelistic, missionary, educational and benevolent causes. The philosophy is to "field service" churches through the associations.

The Office of Associational Missions & Church Planting gives particular attention to associations and state cooperative concerns. The purpose of this office is to encourage and enable associations and churches to fulfill their call to missions and ministry with these priorities:

- Relationships
- Church Planting
- Ministries
- Resources

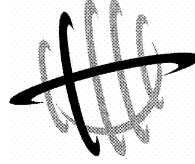
through the following services:

1. Associational Missions
2. Church Planting
3. Black Church Relations
4. Language Missions
5. Church and Community Ministry
6. Church Building Services

THE ASSOCIATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

The association that is seeking to understand and do God's will and is creatively addressing church needs will be valuable to the churches in the 21st Century. It will be focused and streamlined. A primary focus will be on identifying and serving the needs of individual churches. Church expectations of the association will continue to heighten. Challenging leadership training models for ministers and church leaders will be envisioned. Hands on mission experiences for church members through the association will be welcomed. Increased personal involvement in and financial support for the association will follow.

The associational missionary's role as a strategist is key. Strategy implies partnership. An effective associational missionary for the 21st century will be a strategist who leads churches to do more Great Commission ministry together than they could alone.

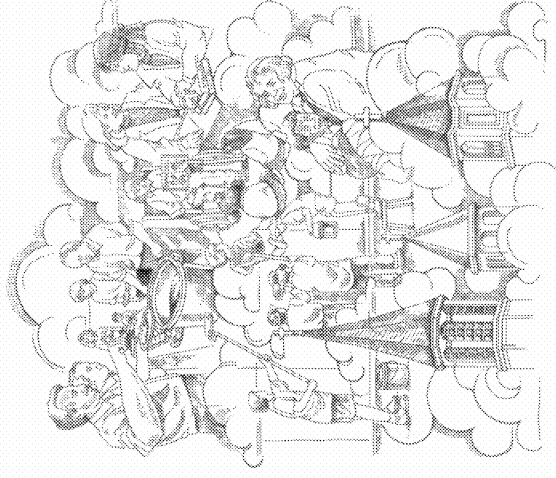


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State Board of Missions
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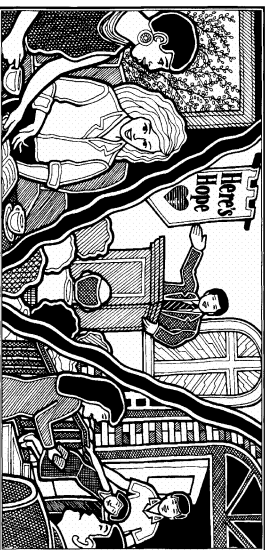
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The Baptist Association in Alabama



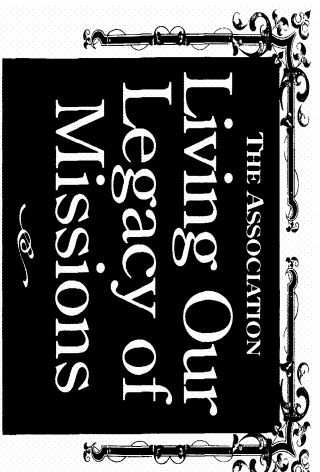
THE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION IN ALABAMA

The association holds a unique position in the historical and contemporary life of churches. It is the closest denominational unit with an intimate understanding of and continuous involvement with the churches. It is rooted in the Bible in the concept of interrelationships and in the beginning of the New Testament churches in the concept of cooperation and partnership.



BIBLICAL

In the New Testament, the book of Acts contains several examples of the churches coming together to seek solutions to a variety of situations which were causing concern. Acts 11:1-18 is concerned with Peter's efforts to take the Gospel to Gentiles (evangelism). Acts 11:19-26 is concerned with the spreading of the Gospel to the Greeks in Antioch (missions). Acts 11:27-30 tells about the Antioch church sending famine aid to their Judean brothers (ministry). The Jerusalem Council is presented in Acts 15 to resolve a conflict between Jewish and Greek Christians (fellowship and doctrine). The issues of New Testament churches are still the issues of today.



HISTORICAL

Baptist associations were informally begun in England. As early as 1624, five General Baptist churches took joint action to oppose Memmonite views. The first Baptist association in America was founded in 1707 as the Philadelphia Association. The first association to include Alabama Baptist churches was founded in 1814 as the Flint River Association of northern Alabama and adjoining southern Tennessee. The early growth of south Alabama in Washington and Clarke counties was such that the Beckbe Baptist Association (now Bethlehem) was organized in 1816 as the first association on Alabama soil with only Alabama Baptist churches.

Associational work in Alabama took a significant leap forward in 1945 when the State Convention voted to strengthen their relationship with associations. It became obvious to Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, Executive Secretary, after five years of earlier travel throughout the state, that if mission work with churches was expanded in Alabama, it must be done with and through the associations. Consequently, the more than 3200 Baptist churches in Alabama have over the years formed 75 associations. They believe that they can do more together than they can alone.

THE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

In Alabama, the Baptist association is a self-governing fellowship of Baptist churches sharing a common faith which engages in mutual support/fellowship and mission/ministry activities. Each association customizes its structure to meet the needs for ministry and administration. J. C. Bradley, *A Baptist Association: Churches on Mission Together*, describes the functions of the association as:

1. Nurture harmony in faith and practice.
2. Nurture fellowship among churches, church leaders, and members.
3. Call the churches to be on mission.
4. Provide resources and services to churches and leaders.
5. Train, develop, and encourage church and associational workers.
6. Provide opportunities for working together in missions, ministry, growth, and evangelism.
7. Establish and maintain appropriate communication and relationships with the community and the denomination.
8. Govern the association under the lordship of Christ.
9. Plan the association's program and manage its resources.
10. Provide information about the churches to the denomination.

Most Alabama Baptist associations employ an associational missionary whose three main functions are as follows:

1. Mission strategist
2. Minister to churches and church leaders
3. Administrative leader