

CONSTITUTION—BYLAWS—MANUAL OF OPERATION

WABASH VALLEY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

PREAMBLE

We, the Southern Baptist Churches of the Wabash Valley Baptist Association, do hereby establish these principles and guidelines for our Association. We recognize our interdependence and dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ as we voluntarily cooperate in strengthening and encouraging one another in the proclamation of the gospel and in building healthy and strong autonomous congregations.

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of this body shall be “The Wabash Valley Baptist Association, Incorporated,” as specified in the charter granted by the Superior Court of Tippecanoe County, Indiana, and is hereinafter referred to as the Association.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE

The Wabash Valley Baptist Association exists to serve and assist individual churches in working together.

ARTICLE III—MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Wabash Valley Baptist Association is (1) to create and sustain a fellowship of Christ-like Southern Baptist churches and missions, (2) to strengthen each other in evangelism, worship, discipleship, ministry, and missions, (3) to work together in advancing God’s kingdom in a unity of faith, and (4) to practice the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40).

ARTICLE IV—AUTHORITY

This Association is a self-determining body under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It determines its own membership and program, but has no authority over churches affiliated with it. However, the Association may, upon invitation from a church, advise that church. It may also withdraw fellowship from a church considered by the Association to be out of harmony in doctrine or conduct.

ARTICLE V—MEMBERSHIP

Section 1—Messengers to the Annual Meeting

Churches of this Association shall be entitled to be represented by three (3) messengers for the first fifty (50) members or less, in addition to the pastor and the pastor of any mission sponsored by the church. For each additional fifty (50) members or major fraction thereof, each church shall be entitled to one additional messenger provided that no church shall have more than ten (10) messengers. Officers and members of the Associational Council will be counted toward a church's maximum number of messengers.

Section 2—Affiliation

Any church desiring affiliation with this Association shall have already shown good faith by having supported both the Associational program and the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention with their attendance and financial contributions, for a period of six (6) months. If said church has not been constituted for a long enough period of time to allow for this, it shall be placed on probation for a period of time to prove their good intentions. They shall also present to the Credentials Committee, at least 30 days prior to the date of the Annual Associational Meeting, a petitionary letter stating forth the facts of its organization, articles of faith, and the names of the duly elected messengers. If favorably recommended by the Credentials Committee and upon a two-thirds majority vote of messengers present, the church's messengers shall be given the hand of fellowship by the moderator and seated as accredited messengers, unless they are placed on probation.

Section 3—Doctrine

The doctrinal statement "Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention of 2000 shall be considered the ground of common faith and practice for the Association.

Section 4—Covenant of the Association

Having been led by the Spirit of God to organize the Wabash Valley Baptist Association in 1962, we do now seriously and joyously affirm the principles of our basic covenant common among many Southern Baptist churches as a fellowship of like-minded congregations and church-like missions.

With the Bible as our guide and the Holy Spirit's power, we covenant to walk in love and mutual respect of the autonomy of each church; to strive for the strengthening and growth of each fellowship of believers; to pray for one another; and, to encourage authentic worship, biblical evangelism, devoted discipleship, Christian ministries, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We agree to watch over one another in kindly grace; to rejoice in each church's prosperity; to sympathize with one another in times of trial and testing; to avoid backbiting and judgmental criticism; to be slow in taking offense and always ready for reconciliation; to attend meetings that enhance our maturity; and, to give financially for missionary causes.

We moreover engage to associate in fellowship with like-minded churches and associations in our state, nation, and world as we labor for the extension of the kingdom of God and pray for “God’s kingdom to come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven” as we wait and serve until our Lord’s return.

Section 5—Dismissal

Should any church disqualify itself by failure to support the Association, State Convention of Baptists of Indiana, or the Southern Baptist Convention through Cooperative Program giving or attendance; or have doctrines and/or conduct contrary to those of the Association; or fail to send an Annual Church Profile and/or messengers for one year; the Credentials Committee will scripturally seek to influence the congregation to faithfulness in these expectations. If efforts fail, the Committee may recommend withdrawal of membership. A two-thirds majority vote in the annual session shall be required for such action.

ARTICLE VI—ORGANIZATION

Section 1—General Officers

The general officers of the Association shall be the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be elected from the floor at the annual meeting. All other officers shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee. Any vacancies shall be filled by election at any Executive Board Meeting. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. Election to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a first term. The term of service shall be for one year and begin at the close of the meeting in which they are elected.

The general officers of the Association shall be recognized as the trustees of the Wabash Valley Baptist Association, Inc. with authority to sign authorized deeds, notes, contracts, and agreements. The Moderator shall sign as President, the Vice-Moderator as Vice-President, and the Secretary as Clerk/Treasurer. The signatures of any two officers named above shall be binding on the corporation upon approval of the Executive Board.

Section 2—Executive Board

- a) Membership: Churches shall be entitled to be represented by three (3) executive board members for the first fifty (50) members or less, in addition to the pastor and the pastor of any mission sponsored by the church. For each additional fifty (50) members or major fraction thereof, each church shall be entitled to one additional member provided that no church shall have more than ten (10) Executive Board Members. Officers and members of the Associational Council will be counted toward a church’s maximum number of members.
- b) Officers: The general officers of the Association shall be the officers of the Executive Board and members thereof.
- c) Authority: The Executive Board shall have the authority to act for the Association between sessions, except as limited by the Constitution, the annual budget and other policy limits so set by the annual session.

- d) Meetings: The Executive Board shall meet at least tri-annually. Special meetings may be called by the Director of Missions, Moderator, or Associational Council provided written notice is sent to all members. Church elected members of the Board should be listed in the Annual Church Profile. Each member is expected to attend all meetings. Absence from two consecutive meetings without notification will be considered a dismissal from the Board and the church will be asked to elect replacements.
- e) Actions: Any action taken by the Executive Board must have two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of members present.

Section 3—Associational Council

The Council shall be composed of the general officers of the Executive Board and leaders of associational programs, ministry teams, and committees as set forth in the Manual of Operations. The Director of Missions shall serve as chairman and the clerk or administrative assistant as the secretary. The Council shall meet regularly as agreed upon by the members. The Council shall be advisory in nature and shall have no authority over the program organizations, ministry teams, or committees. It shall recommend plans, coordination, and evaluation of the work of the Association to the Executive Board and/or the Association.

Section 4—Staff

The Wabash Valley Baptist Association shall elect staff leadership that is essential to fulfill the purpose of the Association. The Executive Board may elect a Director of Missions, Baptist Collegiate Evangelist/Minister, Administrative Assistant, and other staff as the Association approves. Staff titles, responsibilities, and support will be recommended by the Associational Council. Staff members shall be accountable to the Executive Board and are expected to report their activities as requested. Staff members are to serve under the administrative leadership of the Director of Missions.

ARTICLE VII—SESSIONS

Section 1—Sessions

The Association shall meet annually in September. The time, place, and length of such session shall be set at the prior annual meeting. In case of emergency, the Associational Council is authorized to change these arrangements.

Section 2—Special Session

The Executive Board or Associational Council, upon majority vote, may call a special session, provided that a fourteen (14) day notice has been given in writing to the churches stating the purpose of the session.

ARTICLE VIII—AMENDMENT

Proposed amendments to this Constitution must be presented in writing and copies thereof distributed to the members present at any regular session of the Executive Board. Each proposed amendment, when moved, shall be subject to debate and amendment. That regular session shall, if approval is given by a two-thirds majority vote, hold the proposed amendment over to the next regular session. At such second session, the motion shall be subject to debate and to amendment as to form, but may not be amended as to substance. If approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members present, the amendment shall become effective at the end of that regular session.

BY-LAWS

1. Each meeting of the Association shall be opened and closed in prayer.
2. Guests invited to seats in a regular session shall have the privilege of speaking in debate but not of voting.
3. Each individual who speaks in debate or has any communication to make to the Association, shall address the Moderator and, when finished shall sit down.
4. When an individual is called on a point of order, he/she shall sit down until the Moderator has determined whether that individual is in order.
5. When the Moderator shall desire to be heard in debate or to be temporarily absent, the chair may be taken by the Vice-Moderator, or someone approved by the body.
6. Any questions not provided for by the foregoing rules shall be decided according to Robert's Rules of Order.
7. The foregoing rules may be altered or amended at any regular session by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the messengers present.

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

I. Power of the Association

1. The Association may act as an Advisory Council.
2. The Association shall inquire as to the cause for failure of churches to represent themselves in the Association.
3. The Association may appoint any member or members, with their consent, to transact any business necessary.
4. The Association may adjourn to any place deemed necessary.
5. The Association may censure any member church or messenger who refuses to abide by established rules of order.
6. The Association may withdraw fellowship from any church in the Association when fully satisfied that such church has become corrupt in doctrine or practice; or, should they cease to contribute to the mission programs of the Association, the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, and the Southern Baptist Convention; or, refuse to support the work of the Association; or, fail to submit an Annual Church Profile to the Association.
7. The Association shall follow Robert's Rules of Order in its parliamentary procedures.

8. The program of the annual Association meeting shall be arranged by the Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, Host Pastor and Director of Missions.
9. The Association disclaims any power to control or infringe upon any of the internal rights of the churches.
10. Churches may withdraw from fellowship with the Association by giving written notice to the Association.
11. Any changes in the Manual of Operations shall be recommended by the Associational Council and approved by the Executive Board.

II. Program Organization Ministries, Ministry Teams, and Committees

In addition to Associational leaders mentioned in the Constitution, the WVBA will fulfill its mission, purpose, and objectives through church leaders and members who consent to serve. The Nominating Committee will enlist, inform, and recommend persons to the Executive Board for approval. Persons will consent to one year of service with the opportunity of being re-elected. Opportunities for ministry will be through (1) Program Organizational Ministries, (2) Ministry Teams, and (3) Committees. Each entity of ministry will have a Chair Person, Associate Chair Person, and Secretary. Minutes of meetings shall be submitted to the Administrative Assistant.

Program Organizational Ministries

1. Worship Ministry—Objectives are to (1) assist in the worship at Associational meetings, (2) help pastors and worship leaders to have authentic worship in their churches whether it is traditional, contemporary, or blended, (3) provide names for pulpit supply and musicians who can serve local churches, and (4) plan and promote training opportunities.
2. Bible Teaching Ministry (Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Small Groups)—Objectives are to (1) provide assistance to churches in helping develop and improve the organization and leadership involved in Bible teaching and outreach, (2) inform of denominational opportunities for training, (3) conduct clinics as needed in the Association, and (4) assist local church leaders in having healthy and growing Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible Schools, and Small Groups.
3. Discipleship Ministry—Objectives are (1) to assist churches in new member orientation and assimilation, (2) leadership training, (3) teaching our members in doctrine, Christian and Baptist history, Christian life and ethics, and Baptist policy and organization, and (4) to provide guidance to advanced training in the state and denomination.
4. Men's Ministry (Brotherhood, RA's, Men's Fraternity)—Objectives are to (1) provide opportunities for men to grow as family, church, and community leaders, (2) assist local churches in planning and developing strong men's ministries, (3) enlist and encourage involvement in Disaster Relief on the associational, state, and national levels, and (4) lead laymen to become partners in ministry with pastors and staff members.

5. Women's Ministry (Women's Missionary Union, GA's, Acteens)—Objectives are to (1) provide opportunities for women to use their gifts, talents, and experiences as family, church, and community servant-leaders, (2) lead and organize women in local churches in planning and developing a strong women's ministry, (3) enlist and equip women to be involved in Disaster Relief on the associational, state, and national levels, and (4) influence women to be God's instruments in spiritual awakening through prayer, witnessing, and charitable services.

Ministry Teams

1. Baptist Collegiate Ministry Team—This team will (1) assist our Baptist Collegiate Evangelist in fulfilling the mission and purpose of the BCM, (2) build a strong relationship between the churches, the Association, and the BCM in serving together, (3) strengthen and enlarge the witness of the BCM in the Association, state, and nation, and (4) pray diligently for our outreach at Purdue and other institutions of higher learning in the Association.
2. Fellowship Ministry Team—This team will (1) provide opportunities for our Association to bond together through meals and refreshments at Associational gatherings when needed, (2) assist local churches in building strong relationships of love and unity, (3) pray for the unity of our denomination, state convention, Association, and local churches, and (4) lead us to have joy and fun while serving the Lord.
3. Missions Team—This team will (1) lead and encourage our churches and the Association to be involved in mission trips, (2) assist churches who start and sponsor missions or a new church plants, (3) evaluate, motivate, and educate our churches in missions giving and involvement as Southern Baptists, and (4) build relationships and use our leadership in the state as we look at locations for church-like missions for the future.
4. Evangelism Team—This team will (1) assist churches in evangelistic outreach in their community, (2) promote church revivals and evangelistic training of the membership, (3) inform leaders and church members of opportunities outside the Association for training and development, and (4) motivate the local church to fulfill its potential in winning and baptizing the lost.
5. Youth/Children Ministry Team—This team will (1) assist churches in the development of a strong youth ministry involving middle and high school students in evangelism, discipleship, and camps, (2) assist churches in building a strong ministry to elementary school children in the community, (3) assist churches to establish healthy ministries for preschool children and parents, and (4) provide opportunities in the Association for youth, children, and preschoolers to connect.

COMMITTEES

1. General Committees—The Moderator and Director of Missions will be ex-officio members of all committees and will be notified of meeting arrangements. The Treasurer will be an ex-officio member of the committee of budget and finance.
2. Annual Session Committees—The time and place committee and the resolutions committee will serve during the annual session and will consist of three persons on each committee appointed by the Moderator at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.

General Committees

1. Nominating Committee—This committee will consist of persons appointed by the Moderator in consultation with the Vice-Moderator and the Director of Missions at the Annual Meeting or Executive Board Meeting and will (1) search out personnel for leadership established by the Association, (2) nominate for approval by the Executive Board, (3) inform and train regarding responsibilities, (4) fill vacancies by presenting to the Executive Board in-between annual sessions, and (5) with the exception of paid staff, any position being filled by the nominating committee may also receive nominations from the floor during the Executive Board meeting in which the nominations are presented for vote.
2. Budget, Finance and Stewardship Committee—This committee will (1) plan and recommend to the Executive Board a ministry-action budget expressing the Association's objectives for the new year, (2) monitor the income and expenditures on a monthly basis, (3) communicate the importance of Associational giving and challenge the churches to give faithfully, and (4) assist churches in stewardship development of tithers and contributors in their congregations.
3. Properties Committee—This committee will (1) oversee the existing properties of the WVBA, (2) recommend the purchase of new properties to the Executive Board, (3) maintain an inventory of properties and be knowledgeable of such things as insurance, maintenance, improvements, etc., and (4) lead the Association in being good stewards of what God has entrusted to us.
4. Credentials Committee—This committee will (1) examine churches requesting admission into the Association regarding their doctrine, operations, denominational relationship to missions and churches, and covenant, (2) explain to the church the expectations regarding support, missions giving, and participation in associational activities, (3) secure proof of a church's affirmative action to join the Association, (4) recommend to the Executive Board our acceptance of the church into the Association, and (5) verify validity of messengers.
5. Heritage and History Committee—This committee will (1) accumulate, organize, and preserve pertinent memorabilia regarding the origin and development of the Association, (2) encourage local churches to value their own history and ministry, (3) share our testimony of how God has blessed and used us, and (4) inform and briefly memorialize at the annual meeting of the Association the lives of those within our churches who are "absent from their body and our body of believers and are present with the Lord and their loved ones in heaven."

Adopted at Annual Session, October 20, 1979, and as amended through 1983 Annual Meetings.

Brought up to date at 1985 Annual Meeting

Updated at April, 1993 Semi-Annual Meeting

Updated October, 1994 Annual Meeting

Updated June 1998 Executive Board Meeting

Updated September 2002 Annual Meeting

Updated September 2003 Annual Meeting

Updated January 2007 Quarterly Meeting