

CONSTITUTION

Of the

EASTERN LOUISIANA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Association shall be the Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association (referred to as ELBA), cooperating with the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE II. MISSION

In order to serve God, the Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association will involve and assist churches in a cooperative fellowship to do missions, evangelism, leadership, and ministry support to build the Kingdom of God.

ARTICLE III. ARTICLES OF FAITH

The ELBA Statement of Faith shall be the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be composed of messengers elected by and representing the churches affiliated with this body. Messengers approved by the Association shall be seated and entitled to participate in the affairs of the body. Qualifications for membership and messenger representation are outlined in the ELBA Bylaws, Section 1.

ARTICLE V. AUTHORITY

This Association shall never attempt to exercise any power or control over any church, but may offer counsel founded upon Biblical principles. Although the Association recognizes and affirms the autonomous nature of each church, ELBA is an autonomous body and therefore reserves the right to determine its own policies and direct its own business.

ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS

Officers of this Association must be members in good standing of churches within the Association, and be recognized for their loyalty to Southern Baptist doctrines. At the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association the following officers shall be elected to serve for a one-year term beginning at the close of the next Associational Annual Meeting:

1. Moderator, who shall serve as Chairman of the Executive Team, and President of the Corporation; the Moderator shall be limited to two consecutive terms.
2. Vice-Moderator, who shall serve as Vice-Chairman of the Executive Team, and Vice-President of the Corporation.
3. Clerk, who shall serve as the Secretary of the Executive Team and Secretary of the Corporation.
4. Treasurer, who shall serve as Treasurer of the Executive Team and Treasurer of the Corporation.

Other officers and committee chairpersons may be elected by the Executive Team, or by the Messengers at the Associational Annual Meeting as needed by the Association. Selection and service of these officers are outlined in the ELBA Bylaws, Section 2.

ARTICLE VII. TRUSTEES

The Trustees of the Association shall be the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Associational Mission Strategist.

ARTICLE VIII. EXECUTIVE TEAM

The Association shall have an Executive Team consisting of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, and representatives from churches from different regions of the Association to attend to all matters of the Association between sessions and carry out all directions given by the Association. Selection and service of this Team is outlined in the ELBA Bylaws, Section 3.

ARTICLE IX. EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Association shall have an Executive Board consisting of one pastor (or his designee) and one lay member from each church or mission. The Executive Board will meet on the first Monday of May to hear reports and attend to any recommended actions from the Executive Team or directions given by the Association. Selection and service of this board is outlined in the ELBA Bylaws, Section 6.

ARTICLE XI. MEETINGS

The Association Annual Meeting shall be held in the month of October. The Executive Team shall recommend the exact time, date, place, and preacher for the annual session as outlined in ELBA Bylaws, Section 8. Special associational meetings may be held as are deemed wise for the promotion of its work. The Executive Team shall have the power to change the stated time and place of these meetings in case of emergency or necessity. The Executive Team can direct that a video-conference format be used for a meeting.

ARTICLE XII. COMMITTEES

Standing committees deemed necessary for the work of the Association shall be nominated by the Executive Team and shall be elected by the Association at the Associational Annual. Any ad hoc or special committee deemed necessary shall be named by either the Executive Team or Moderator. Committees of the Association shall function as outlined in the ELBA Bylaws, Section 8.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

The Constitution may be amended at any regular session of the Association by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the messengers present. Notice of such changes shall be published twice in the Associational newsletter prior to such meeting, presented at the beginning of the annual meeting, and then voted on before the close of the meeting.

BYLAWS **Of the** **EASTERN LOUISIANA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

SECTION 1. MEMBERSHIP

A. MESSENGERS

Each church shall be entitled to three (3) messengers for the first fifty (50) members and one (1) additional messenger for each twenty-five (25) members, up to a maximum of fifteen (15) messengers. This Association may refuse to seat messengers who are not in fellowship or doctrinal agreement with this body. It may also refuse to seat messengers whose church is not in fellowship or doctrinal agreement with this body.

B. AFFILIATION

1. CHURCH AFFILIATION

1. Church Actions

Any church seeking affiliation with this Association which is not a mission sponsored by a member church of this Association, shall take the following steps:

- 1) Present a letter of petition to the Executive Team at least 90 days prior to the annual meeting.
- 2) Provide a copy of the minutes of the church business meeting in which the vote to pursue affiliation is recorded.
- 3) Provide information concerning the manner by which the church was constituted and provide a copy of the church's governing documents, budget, and ministries.
- 4) Submit a copy of the minutes of the church business meeting in which the vote to adopt the Baptist Faith and Message, year 2000, is recorded.
- 5) Provide evidence of the church's commitment to both support Associational activities and provide regular and systematic financial support. (i.e. statement concerning intent to promote Associational events within the church, statement of anticipated financial support to the Association and Cooperative Program [explain Cooperative Program if needed]).

- 6) Provide evidence of the church's commitment to support and attend the Associational Annual Meeting (i.e. statement of intent to elect messengers to the Associational Annual Meeting).
- 7) Commit to providing reports to the Association each year in a timely fashion using the Annual Church Profile.

b. Association Actions

- 1) Letters of petition seeking Associational membership shall be referred to the Credentials Committee, which shall make a recommendation at the Associational Annual Meeting.
- 2) The Credentials Committee shall guide the petitioning church through the affiliation process.
- 3) Petitioning churches shall be taken under watchcare of the Association for one year. While under watchcare the petitioning church will be invited and encouraged to participate fully in Associational activities, but will not be seated as messengers at the Associational Annual Meeting. Members of said church will not be allowed to be elected to positions of Associational leadership. At the conclusion of the year of watchcare, at the next Associational Annual Meeting, the Credentials Committee shall make the recommendation to either accept or reject the petition.

2. MISSION AFFILIATION

a. Mission Actions

A mission that has constituted, having been sponsored by a local ELBA church, shall be considered for admission into the Association as a church upon meeting the following requirements:

- 1) Present a letter of petition to the Executive Team at least 90 days prior to the annual meeting.
- 2) Provide a copy of the minutes of the church business meeting in which the vote to pursue affiliation is recorded.
- 3) Provide information concerning the manner by which the church was constituted and provide a copy of the church's governing documents, budget, and ministries.
- 4) Submit a copy of the minutes of the church business meeting in which the vote to adopt the Baptist Faith and Message, year 2000, is recorded.
- 5) Provide evidence of the church's commitment to both support Associational activities and provide regular and systematic financial support. (i.e. statement concerning intent to promote Associational events within the church, statement of anticipated financial support to the Association and Cooperative Program [explain Cooperative Program if needed]).
- 6) Provide evidence of the church's commitment to support and attend both the Associational Annual (i.e. statement of intent to elect messengers to the Associational Annual Meeting).
- 7) Commit to providing reports to the Association each year in a timely fashion using the Annual Church Profile.

b. Association Actions

- 1) When a letter of petition is received by the Association, the Credentials Committee shall guide the petitioning church through the affiliation process.
- 2) The one-year watchcare period shall be waived.
- 3) The Credentials Committee shall make a recommendation at the Associational Annual Meeting to either accept or reject the petition.

C. CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP OF AFFILIATED CHURCHES

One of the purposes of an Association is to maintain biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical integrity among Baptists. While the Association cannot tell a church what its beliefs and practices should be, the Association can insist that any member church meet certain standards that define a Baptist church. Credential requirements and a screening committee are necessary for associational churches to maintain relationships with churches of like faith, order, and practice. Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association extends membership only to churches that meet Associational standards for faith, order, and practice. Any member church that no longer meets these standards will be subject to dismissal.

The basic theological and ecclesiastical order expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message is our test for membership. All member churches will subscribe to or affirm the current Baptist Faith and Message as our

doctrinal standard. Other, more specific criteria used to measure like faith, order, and practice include the following:

- The Bible is our sole authority of faith, order and practice.
- A Baptist church is a body of baptized believers.
- Baptism is by water immersion upon confession of faith in Christ.
- The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Christ, causes us to remember the cross, and helps us to anticipate his second coming.
- Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association encourages churches to cooperate with the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Scriptural officers of a church are pastors and deacons. We believe that churches are pastor-led, deacon-served, and congregationally-governed, all under the headship of Christ. Scripture directs that the office of pastor shall be reserved for men.

D. DEFINITION OF A CONTINUING COOPERATING CHURCH

A cooperating church in the Association shall be defined as one which does the following:

1. Maintains faith, order, and practice consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message.
2. Contributes financially to support the work of the Association.
3. Reports to the Association each year in a timely fashion using the Annual Church Profile.
4. Elects messengers to the annual meeting of the Association.
5. Participates in cooperating ministries.

Failure to maintain meaningful participation through these means for a period of two years in succession shall invite inquiries from the Credentials Committee as to the church's future intentions regarding participation in the Association.

E. CHURCHES ON PROBATIONARY STATUS

When a serious question has been raised about a member church's faith, order, or practice, the Association or Executive Team, by a majority vote, shall ask the Credentials Committee to investigate the charges and bring a report of its findings at the next meeting of the Association.

- The Credentials Committee shall investigate and present a recommendation that the church be: 1) Absolved of the charges, if based on erroneous information; 2) Restored, if the church has corrected the problem; 3) Placed on probationary status for a period of one year, in hopes the problem can be corrected. Two-thirds vote of the messengers present shall be necessary to place a church on probation.
- Messengers from a church that is under scrutiny by the Association shall not be allowed to vote on matters to come before the body until the church has been cleared of the charges made against it. This prohibition includes matters related to its own status in the Association.
- Should a member church be placed on probationary status, the Credentials Committee shall continue to dialogue with the church and encourage renunciation of the aberrant faith, order, or practice.
- Upon completion of the probationary period, the Credentials Committee shall recommend that the church be restored to membership in the Association along with any necessary contingencies or dismissed from the Association because of aberrant faith, order, or practice.

F. REMOVAL

The Association shall be at liberty to withdraw its affiliation from any church, which has failed to evidence doctrinal soundness, spiritual unanimity, accord, and cooperation with the Association. The following action shall be taken: The Executive Team shall refer such actions to the Credentials Committee for review and recommendation at the next Associational Annual Meeting.

G. WITHDRAWAL

Any church may withdraw from cooperation with the Association by providing the following:

1. A copy of the business meeting minutes of the church as evidence of the church's desire to withdraw.

2. A written notice of the intention to withdraw from the Association and the effective date of the withdrawal to be presented at the Associational Annual Meeting.

SECTION 2. OFFICERS

Officers of this Association must be members in good standing of churches within the Association, and be recognized for their loyalty to Southern Baptist doctrines. Duties of the officers shall be as follows:

The Moderator shall call to order and preside over the meetings of the Association and the Executive Team in an orderly manner and Christian spirit. He may have other officers of the Association to preside on such occasions as he may see fit. The Moderator may appoint ad hoc or special committees as necessary to accomplish the work of the Association. The Moderator shall be limited to two consecutive terms. Upon vacating the office at the end of a second term, he may not succeed himself for the period of one year.

The Vice-Moderator shall assist the Moderator and preside at his request or in his absence. The Vice- Moderator may, if the Moderator so directs, preside over sessions of the Associational Annual Meeting.

The Clerk shall keep a full and accurate record of all proceedings of the Associational Annual, and the Executive Team. He/she shall provide all minutes of previous meetings in written form, and at all meetings, have on hand, minutes from the previous year.

The Treasurer shall receive all funds of and for the work of the Association and shall disburse them in accordance with the instructions of the Association. The Treasurer is to be an *ex-officio* member of the Executive Team and the Finance Committee. He/she shall:

- keep an accurate record of all monies received, with their sources and designations
- review vouchers for compliance to financial policy and approve/disapprove payment
- be authorized to sign checks according to financial policy
- review the monthly financial report
- make quarterly reports to the Executive Team and the Associational Annual Meeting for approval
- be responsible for the filing and payment of quarterly taxes.

The Historian shall make a record of the current events and provide a printed annual report at the Associational Annual Meeting for adoption.

Other officers and committee chairpersons may be elected by the Executive Team or by the Messengers at the Associational Annual Meeting as needed by the Association.

SECTION 3. EXECUTIVE TEAM

Composition: The Executive Team is composed of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, and representatives to be nominated by the Nominating Committee, and approved by the Association from the four designated areas of the association (Northeast-1, Northwest-2, Southwest-2, Southeast-1). The number of representatives are recommended as needed by the Executive Team and approved by the association in its annual meeting. The Associational Mission Strategist, Associate Associational Mission Strategist, Clerk, and Treasurer are *ex-officio* members. The members shall be elected each year, but can serve for up to three (3) years before being off the Team for at least a year before being eligible again to serve on the Team.

Responsibilities: Executive Team meetings will be held to discuss office matters, programs, and procedures for resolving problems that may arise. The Team is responsible for recommending program objectives, goals, and schedules for association emphases. The Team recommends the salary for the Associational Missions Strategist and for other staff, which are forwarded to the Finance-Stewardship Committee. The Team reviews and approves budget recommendations as provided to them by the Finance-Stewardship Committee. The Executive

Team will set the agenda for the annual meeting securing locations for these meetings.

The Executive Team reviews worker assignments, approves any new staff positions, and hires new personnel to fill vacancies. The Team provides oversight to program service needs, worker assignments, publication of related materials, budgeting, teamwork, and promotion among and motivation of the churches and missions of the Association. The Executive Team recommends those who will be added to serve on the Nominating Committee each year.

Meetings: The Executive Team will meet the first Monday of February, April, and August to care for the business of the association between the Annual Meeting.

SECTION 4. TRUSTEES

The Trustees will perform the execution of the Association's legal documents as required by law in effectuation of direction given by and only with the prior approval of the Association's messengers or Executive Team between sessions. The Trustees shall have no authority or powers except those explicitly granted to them by the Association's Articles of Incorporation. The messengers may delegate authority to officers or committees; however, the Trustees shall be accountable to the messengers as provided in the Association's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

SECTION 5. ASSOCIATIONAL MEETINGS

This Association shall meet annually in the month of October. The exact time, date and place shall be recommended by an Associational Annual Meeting Arrangements Committee and approved in the annual session.

Special meetings of the membership of the Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association may be called by the following: 1) Executive Team; 2) Moderator/Chairman; or in his absence, 3) Vice-Moderator/Vice-Chairman; or in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, 4) Clerk/Secretary; 5) or any three members of the Executive Team.

Notice of all regular and special meetings of the membership and the Executive Team shall be given by email or written notice at least seven days prior to such meetings. The purpose of special meetings shall be included in the written notice.

SECTION 6. MINISTRY TEAMS

This Association shall maintain such ministry teams as may be deemed necessary to achieve its mission and that of its member congregations. Ministry Team Leaders shall be nominated by the Executive Team and presented in the Annual Meeting and assume the responsibility of their respective positions immediately following the Associational Annual Meeting. Ministry Team Leaders may appoint team members as needed in order to assist them in carrying out the team tasks. A list of Ministry Team and Job Descriptions shall be reviewed annually by the Executive Team and published in the Annual Book of Reports. The Executive Team shall recommend to the Messengers of the Annual Meeting between sessions the following: (1) addition of Ministry Teams; (2) deletion of non-functioning Ministry Teams; (3) or modification of Ministry Team structure.

SECTION 7. COMMITTEES

Standing Committees shall be organized with at least a chairperson and secretary. Standing committee members are elected for three-year rotating terms so as to provide continuity in the work of the committee. The chairperson may serve two years of a three-year term. Each committee shall maintain written records and minutes of all meetings. These records are the property of the Association and will be passed on to subsequent committee leaders and filed at the Association office.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Historian. In addition, they shall nominate team leaders with the help and assistance of the above nominees as outlined in Article VII, ELBA Constitution. The Nominating Committee shall nominate members for the Finance Committee

(3), Credentials Committee (3), and Scholarship Committee (3). They shall also nominate Baptist Collegiate Ministry Representatives (2) and Living Waters Baptist Assembly Trustees (4).

The Finance Committee shall consist of six members nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Association to serve rotating terms. They shall oversee the general financial policies and procedures for accountability. They are to prepare the annual budget for the Association, seeking the input of the Executive Team. Quarterly, the Finance Committee and Treasurer shall review the financial report and present it to the Executive Team and at the Annual Meeting. This Committee is to promote appropriate Associational stewardship emphases. The Committee shall call for an annual financial review from a qualified Association member. This Committee shall be assisted by the Associational Treasurer.

The Credentials Committee shall consist of three members nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Association to serve rotating terms. They shall: 1) examine petitioning documents, 2) meet with petitioning congregations to orient them to the purposes and work of the Association, and 3) provide them with Associational information (i.e. most recent Associational Minutes Book, Budget, Constitution and Bylaws, Calendar, Leadership, Ministry Teams, etc.). This Committee shall also investigate matters concerning membership referred to it by the Association.

The ELBA Scholarship Committee shall consist of three members nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Association to serve rotating terms. The Committee shall have sole authority in granting the two Associational scholarships and report the names of the recipients at the Annual Meeting and shall be awarded to students attending or desiring to attend either Louisiana Christian University or New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary according to the adopted scholarship policies.

Ad Hoc and Special Committees shall be appointed for the duration of the task. Special committees are appointed for a task that recurs annually. Each committee shall maintain written records and minutes of all meetings. These records are the property of the Association and will be passed on to subsequent committee leaders and filed at the Association office.

Annual Meeting Arrangements Committee. The Executive Team will appoint a committee prior to the present year's annual meeting for the purpose of recommending the time, place, and preacher and planning the program for the Associational Annual Meeting of the following year. The Committee shall provide the information to the Executive Team in time for the proposed time, place and preacher to be printed in the Book of Reports and the Annual Minutes Book. This committee shall be made up of the pastor and minister of music of the host church, the Associational Mission Strategist, and one member of the Executive Team.

Living Waters Baptist Assembly (LWBA) Trustees shall be nominated by the Executive Team. Four members are elected to serve on the LWBA Board of Trustees for three-year terms on a rotation system and to act as a liaison between the Assembly and the Association.

Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) Representatives shall be nominated by the Executive Team. Two members are elected to serve for three-year terms on a rotation system. They assist in providing direction in the administration of the BCM ministry and act as a liaison between the BCM and the Association.

SECTION 8. MISSIONS AND MINISTRY CENTER AND CHURCH INCUBATOR

Associational Missions and Ministry Center shall be used for the following purposes: 1) Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association Offices; 2) Disaster Relief Chain Saw Unit; 3) Associational Volunteer Builders Team; 4) Associational Party Trailer; 5) Future ministry units or teams may be added as opportunities present themselves. Additionally, these facilities shall be used as a Church Incubator for new mission church starts. All terms of agreement between the new mission and the Association are covered in the Church Incubator Policies and Procedures Manual.

SECTION 9. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

This Association shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2020).

SECTION 10. FISCAL YEAR

This Association's fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31 inclusive.

SECTION 11. RECORDS

Records of the Association shall be protected from fire, theft, and other damages with regard to the importance of such records, and shall be open for public review by members of the Association upon written request and authorized by the Association and/or the Executive Team.

SECTION 12. REPORTS

All Associational Ministry Teams and standing committees shall provide written reports at the regular meetings of the Executive Team. Ad hoc and special committees shall provide written reports to the Executive Team as deemed necessary or as requested by the Moderator.

SECTION 13. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by a simple majority of messengers present at the Associational Annual Meeting provided notice of change has been given as stated in Article XII of the Constitution.