

## **A Brief History of Gasconade Valley Baptist Association**

The Dixon Baptist Association was organized as a “missionary association” in 1874 by five churches in Phelps, Pulaski, and adjoining counties. Their first annual meeting was held in Dixon in October 1875. In 1879 there were 13 churches in the association with 429 members. One hundred years later in 1979 the association consisted of 22 churches with 4,222 members. The association changed their name to Gasconade Valley Baptist Association in 2007. At the close of 2017, the association included 25 churches with 4,029 members. At the close of 2021, the association included 24 churches with 4,028 members.

Today, only one of the churches listed by the association in 1879 is still a part of Gasconade Valley Baptist Association. That church is Pilot Knob in Osage County near Belle. Currently all of the churches of Gasconade Valley Association are located in four counties - Osage, Maries, Cole and Gasconade.

In 1901 the association reached an all-time high of 27 churches, but this number gradually declined for a few years. Part of this was due to restructuring of some associations. For example, in 1907 Phelps County Association was organized from seven churches formerly in the Dixon Baptist Association. In 1904 there were only 24 churches, in 1918 only 18 churches and by 1920 there were only 12 churches. There has been a gradual increase in the number of churches and missions since 1924. This is in spite of the loss of a few rural and small village churches. By 1924 the number of churches had increased to 14 and by 1953 to 15. Three Osage County churches - Useful, Mint Hill, and High Point - listed in 1924 are no longer in existence. The church at Useful was established in 1888. It seldom reported to the association after 1954 and was not listed in the Association's Annual after 1961. Mint Hill was established in 1894 and disbanded on November 19, 1970. The High Point Church was organized in 1901 and in 1959 it relocated in Linn and reverted to mission status. The remaining members became charter members of High Point Mission in Linn. The mission was sponsored by Pilot Knob Church. In 1960 the High Point Mission ceased to exist, and First Baptist Church of Linn was constituted. A church at Lane lasted only four years from 1945 to 1949.

In 1954 the association consisted of 15 churches - Belle First Baptist Church, Beulah, Bland First Baptist Church, Broadway, College Hill, Crossroads, High Point, High Gate, Lane, Mint Hill, Mt. Zion, Owensville First Baptist Church, Pilot Knob, Solid Rock, and Useful.

There has been notable growth in the number of churches since 1954. In 1954 First Baptist Church, Owensville started a mission at Hermann and in 1955 a mission at Gasconade. Liberty Church, Owensville, joined the association in 1959. A mission was started at Chamois in 1960 by First Baptist Church, Owensville. In 1960 Mt. Pleasant, Vienna First, Union Hill and New Salem had all been a part of the association. Union Hill united with the association in 1969 and New Salem in 1970. Liberty, Mt. Pleasant, Vienna First, Union Hill and New Salem had all been a part of the Bourbois Missionary Baptist Association which ceased to exist after 1969. Vienna First Baptist Church had been organized in 1936. “On October 3, 1936, the Little Flock Baptist Church dismissed 29 members in good standing and full fellowship to form an independent church at the Terry Schoolhouse, approximately five miles from Vienna off Highway 28.” The Terry Baptist Church moved to Vienna in 1959 and the name was changed to First Baptist Church. In 1972 the mission at Chamois became First Baptist Church and in 1973 the mission at Hermann also constituted to become First Baptist Church of Hermann.

In 1975 Faith Baptist Church, Belle became a part of the association. It was formed by some members from First Baptist Church, Belle. Faith had been established as a church in 1973. In 1975 Little Flock Church, Vienna, another former Bourbois Association church, joined the association. The mission at Gasconade became First Baptist Church in 1976 and united with the association in 1977. In 1983 Maranatha Baptist Church, located six miles out of Chamois on Highway 89, united with the association. It was established by some of the members from First Baptist Church, Chamois. In 1983 Liberty Road Baptist Chapel, Taos, was started as a mission by First Baptist Church, Linn. The chapel was constituted as a church in 1992 and joined Concord Baptist Association (Cole and Moniteau counties). The church became a member of the association in 2000. In 1996 Pin Oak Baptist Church joined the association. In early 2021, Beulah Baptist Church closed their doors and donated memorabilia to be on display at the Missouri Baptist Convention office in Jefferson City. College Hill also ceased to hold services in 2022, but the association voted to restart the church in Spring 2023.

As of September 2023, the following 24 churches are active members of Gasconade Valley Baptist Association:

Belle FBC	Linn FBC
Bland FBC	Little Flock
Broadway	Maranatha
Chamois FBC	Mt. Pleasant
College Hill (closed Dec 2023)	Mt. Zion
Crossroads	New Salem
Faith	Owensville FBC
Gasconade FBC	Pilot Knob
Hermann FBC	Pin Oak
High Gate	Solid Rock
Liberty	Union Hill
Liberty Road	Vienna FBC

The Gasconade Valley Baptist Association office, the director of mission's home, and camp are located about six miles south of Bland on Highway B. The property was purchased in 1959. The camp was constructed first. In 1973, the association's executive board authorized the building of a home and an office for the director of missions. In 2009, the association began a building program that has added four new cabins and several other improvements. In April 2022, Campers on Mission came to camp and replaced the siding and windows for the dining hall. They also constructed a large shop building.

In the last 20 years the associational budget has grown from \$63,169 to \$115,365, and the total income from \$65,965 to \$144,327. The association has been debt free since 1991.

Woodrow Holzschuh served as the Director of Missions from 1965 to 1981; Terry Lamberth from 1982 to 1989; Gerald Jeffries from 1989 to 2000. Phillip Rector became Director of Missions in April 2000 and retired in April 2021. Trent Young was hired as Director of Missions in July 2021.

Gasconade Valley Baptist Association continues to exist as a "missionary organization." It provides opportunities for the member churches to have fellowship, engage in local missions, promote every area of mission work, receive worker training, and provide summer camps for children and youth.