

Bay Area Baptist Association Operations Manual

Purpose – The BABA Operations Manual outlines routine policies established by the Association.

Implementation and Amendments – Unlike matters addressed in the Constitution, matters in the BABA Operations Manual can be implemented or superseded by majority vote at a Regular or Special Business Meeting/Executive Board Meeting. Between Annual Business Meetings, the BABA Operations Manual may be modified by the Executive Board, with modifications to be final unless changed by a vote of the Annual Business Meeting.

Organization and Functions – The principle duties and functions of key Individuals, Committees and Organizations are outlined within this manual.

Section One (1) – BABA as Sole Sponsor of Chapels and Missions

Section Two (2) – Decision-Making Permission Between Executive Board Meetings

Section Three (3) – Ministry Leader Position Descriptions

Section One (1) – BABA Sponsorship of Chapels and Missions

I. **INTRODUCTION.** Article IV (Purpose) of the BABA Constitution states that “the promotion of missions” is a primary purpose of the Association. That purpose is accomplished through various means and various agencies. The Association encourages participating churches to support the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. Through Cooperative Program giving, cooperating churches support missions through the work of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, the North American Mission Board (SBC), and the International Mission Board (SBC). The Association strongly encourages cooperating churches to directly sponsor new missions/chapels. This document addresses those circumstances when the Association must serve as the sole Mission/Chapel sponsor.

NOTE: Per Article VII, Section 4 of the BABA Constitution, “churches desiring to become a cooperating church in the Association must petition through the Credentials Committee” and are beyond the purview of this document (see VI.). The standards established in Section One (1) for elevation of a Chapel/Mission to formal recognition as a “Church” are binding upon Chapels/Missions, but considered advisory to the Credentials Committee.

II. **DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions do not presume to be all-encompassing, nor necessarily binding upon BABA Cooperating Churches or upon the conscience of the members of Cooperating Churches. They merely set forth a common frame of reference for discussion and for the organization of Chapels and Missions. For BABA purposes, the following definitions apply:

A. **Church:** Per the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) adopted by the SBC on June 14, 2000, “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation

operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation, each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

NOTE 1: The BFM does not address the minimum size of a church. For purposes of this document, a church will be considered to require a minimum of three (3) members, one of whom has been elected as pastor/elder. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20); “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

NOTE 2: While Scripture could be interpreted to establish a minimum threshold of two (2) believers with Christ in their midst, the State of Michigan requires a minimum of three (3) “Directors” to establish an “Ecclesiastical Corporation.” Hence, BABA will require a minimum of three members to apply to the Credentials Committee for recognition as a Cooperating Church.

NOTE 3: The terms “Chapel;” “Mission;” and “Church Plant” are not found in Scripture. The Apostles planted “churches” and ordained elders to lead those churches (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). There is little discussion about any “intermediate phases” in the process. Most likely, an Apostle or one of his assistants (Timothy, Titus) stayed and provided the necessary leadership until elders could be appointed and the church began autonomous governance.

- B. Mission:** A Mission is hereby defined as a group of believers who gather at least weekly for the purposes of establishing a new Southern Baptist church in their community. A Mission may or may not have their own building. A Mission may meet in a local business, library, or home. A Mission is more than a Bible Study, see below. A Mission remains under the authority of the BABA Mission Board.
- C. Chapel:** A Chapel is hereby defined as a group of believers who gather at least weekly for purposes of establishing a new Southern Baptist church in their community. To be considered a Chapel, rather than a Mission, the congregation must meet in a building that they either own or rent by lease. A Chapel remains under the authority of the BABA Mission Board.
- D. Church Plant:** Either a Chapel or Mission as defined above.
- E. Bible Study:** A Bible Study is a group of believers gathered together for the purposes of studying the Scriptures. Bible Studies can be led by individual believers on their own initiative, or as a ministry of a local church. While the Association encourages churches and individuals to sponsor Bible Studies, the Association will not equate such with a “Chapel” or “Mission.” Existing Bible Studies that wish to obtain BABA Sponsorship may petition the BABA Mission Board to become a Mission/Chapel.

NOTE 4: In the interest of clarity and truth in advertising to the general public, Chapels/Missions may not use the term “church” until formally constituted as a Church. This includes “Doing Business As” citations under Michigan law. This does not preclude using ecclesiastically generic terms like “Midland Baptist Fellowship” as

the DBA name rather than “Mission” or “Chapel” if so desired. While Cooperating Churches may choose to not use “Baptist” in their name, BABA-only sponsored Missions will incorporate “Baptist” in their name.

- III. BABA MISSION BOARD:** Empowered by the Executive Board to oversee sponsored Missions and Chapels by implementing the items listed in **IV – Expectations of Sponsorship**. The Board will consist of three (3) to five (5) ordained pastor/elders from Cooperating Churches. The Chair of the BABA Mission Board will be the Associational Mission Strategist.
- IV. EXPECTATIONS OF SPONSORSHIP.** The decision to sponsor a Mission/Chapel requires expectations of both the sponsored Mission and the BABA. A mother-child relationship will exist between the Association and the Mission as explained below. This relationship is intended to allow for the maximum freedom for the mission with proper safeguards.

Prior to establishing or sponsoring a Mission, BABA will accomplish the following tasks and/or answer the following questions:

- (1) Prayerfully consider if the Holy Spirit is leading the BABA to start or sponsor a Mission and in what location.
- (2) Conduct a survey of the local community to be served by the new Mission to determine if there is another Christ-centered, Bible-preaching, doctrinally sound Baptist church serving the area. **NOTE:** “Not having a Southern Baptist ‘work’ in the area” will not be a sufficient reason to undertake a new mission.
- (3) Identify a God-called, Licensed and/or Ordained, Southern Baptist man ready to serve as Pastor/Elder to the new Mission. **NOTE:** If BABA cannot find such a man, no new mission will be undertaken unless the decision is made that the Associational Mission Strategist will serve as the initial Pastor/Elder for the new work.
- (4) Determine if BABA has sufficient funds on hand, designated for new work, to support the new mission as outlined herein.
- (5) Determine if the BABA churches have the commitment to support a new work as outlined herein.

Upon founding and/or sponsoring a Mission, BABA will provide Personnel/Financial Support.

- (1) A Pastor/Elder to perform all pastoral functions and serve as the Elder to lead the church. **NOTE:** The Pastor/Elder must be prepared to undertake an intentional bi-vocational/tentmaker ministry.
- (2) A Treasurer to oversee Mission Finances to include: receiving weekly offerings and depositing them in the BABA account established for the Mission; receiving and paying all bills and debts incurred by the Mission; developing and adhering to a budget. **NOTE:** The BABA Mission Board can appoint a member of the Mission to be Treasurer. The timing for this appointment is left to the discretion of the BABA Mission Board following a background check for the nominee. BABA will provide appropriate training prior to appointment and, eventually, these functions will be transitioned to the Mission over time as qualified members are identified and trained.
- (3) A Clerk to maintain Mission records to include Minutes of Meetings, Membership Records, and other correspondence as needed. **NOTE:** The BABA Mission Board can appoint a member of the Mission to be Clerk. The timing for this appointment is left to the discretion of the BABA Mission Board. BABA will provide appropriate training prior to appointment and, eventually, these functions will be transitioned to the Mission over time as qualified members are identified and trained.
- (4) Sufficient financial support to allow the pastor and mission to operate. Financial support will be provided for three years, after which it will be withdrawn. **NOTE:** For the first three months, financial support will be sufficient to support the pastor as he seeks bivocational employment. The BABA

Mission Board may extend this level of support to sixth months if the pastor has trouble finding suitable bivocational employment. **NOTE:** The sooner the mission pastor becomes bivocational, the less likely the mission will fail for financial reasons. For the remainder of the three-year planned support, the amount of BABA financial support will be reduced as the church offerings increase. **NOTE:** This retains funds for future missions.

- (5) Upon founding or becoming sole-sponsor of a Mission, the BABA will provide a Draft Constitution and By-Laws to guide Mission operations.
- (6) Mission Treasurers and Clerks respectively will keep records of receipts and expenditures and minutes of meetings. Copies of the monthly reports on each of these will be filed with the Associational Mission Strategist/BABA Mission Board.
- (7) The BABA will make sure the building/property of the Mission is insured, safe, and taken care of.
- (8) The BABA will inform Cooperating Churches of news, events, and prayer needs for the Mission.
- (9) The BABA will encourage Cooperating Churches to participate in events of the Mission and will encourage members of the Mission to be involved in events of BABA Churches.
- (10) The BABA will strive to provide encouragement, coaching and accountability to the Mission Pastor and congregation.

Prior to being certified as a Church, the Mission will accomplish the following:

- (1) Adopt a Constitution and By-Laws and have the membership sign a Church Covenant. **NOTE:** The Constitution and By-Laws must adopt the Baptist Faith and Message (June, 2000) as its confession of faith.
- (2) Obtain a Federal IRS ID.
- (3) Obtain recognition as an Ecclesiastical Corporation by the State of Michigan.
- (4) Commence regular giving to the Cooperative Program and/or other Southern Baptist causes.
- (5) Fill the following key positions with members: Pastor/Elder; Treasurer; Clerk; as well as those positions required for an Ecclesiastical Corporation.

V. CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

- A. When the Mission has accomplished the above noted tasks, the BABA Mission Board will vote to authorize the Mission to constitute itself as an autonomous Church. **NOTE:** The BABA Mission Board retains the authority to withhold such a recommendation, however, once the church has been established as an autonomous Ecclesiastical Corporation, it has the legal right to conduct its own affairs in the eyes of the civil law.
- B. Following the vote of the BABA Mission Board, a Special Meeting will be held by the Mission for the Mission to constitute itself as an autonomous Church. At the Special Meeting, the membership of the new Church must accomplish the following:
 - 1. vote to adopt the Constitution and By-Laws
 - 2. vote to retain the mission pastor as pastor of the new church
 - 3. vote to petition the Credentials Committee for membership in the BABA. **NOTE:** Per Article VII, Section 4 of the BABA Constitution, "The one (1) year watchcare rule may be waived for a chapel or mission of a cooperating church." The same rule is hereby incorporated for a BABA sponsored mission/chapel.

VI. CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE: At the next BABA Annual Meeting, the Credentials Committee will report on the application of the newly constituted church, with an anticipated vote to accept the Church as a full-fledged Cooperating BABA Church. **NOTE:** In the highly unlikely event that the

BABA does not vote to receive the new church into fellowship, the church is free to go forward as an Independent Baptist Church or to seek fellowship elsewhere.

Section Two – Decision-Making Permission Between Executive Board Meetings

Sometimes a decision needs to be made between Executive Board meetings within a time period that doesn't allow for a special called meeting of the Board. In the April, 2018 Executive Board meeting, a policy was approved to allow the Associational Mission Strategist to consult with BABA Officers and one at-large board member to make quick decisions on financial expenditures up to \$1000.00. These expenditures would be reported upon at the next Executive Board or Annual Meeting.

Section Three – Ministry Leader Position Descriptions

Evangelism Leader – will keep association churches/pastors informed of opportunities for evangelism training, outreach, and new resources. He will also collect and share reports from churches about their evangelistic efforts and baptisms so that we may all rejoice and be encouraged. He will promote and plan evangelism training in the Association as needed.

Prayer Leader – will regularly keep association churches/pastors informed of specific prayer needs among our churches and leaders. He/she will organize prayer for Associational events and offer training/equipping in prayer methods/strategies.

VBS Leader – will encourage churches to plan and conduct a Vacation Bible School each year. He/she will keep churches informed of the variety of VBS resources available and of opportunities for training. He/she will be aware of current trends and problem areas in VBS and will be available to assist Association churches in planning and promoting VBS.

Men's Ministry Leader – will encourage churches to organize ministries specifically tailored to men. He will keep Association churches informed of the variety of Men's Ministry resources that are available and of opportunities for training. He will be aware of current trends and problem areas in Men's Ministry and will be available to assist churches in planning and promoting Men's Ministry. This will involve starting, promoting, involving, training, and strengthening. As the complement to WMU, the Men's Ministry leader will involve men in missions projects in the Association and beyond including the promotion of Disaster Relief.