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# ***THE JOURNAL OF FLORIDA BAPTIST HERITAGE***

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Donald S. Hepburn, Managing Director

Penny Baumgardner, Administrative Ministry Assistant

PO Box 95, Graceville, Florida 32440/Phone: 850.360.4179

Email: Society1@FloridaBaptistHistory.org

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The Florida Baptist Historical Society is a Cooperative Program-funded ministry of the Florida Baptist Convention.

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Beginning with a single missionary-oriented Baptist association of churches organized in 1843, until the end of the twentieth century, as many as 60-plus associations have organized in Florida. The cover map features those associations that were cooperating with the Florida Baptist Convention and the association's geographical alignment with the state's 67 counties. Since then, as local Baptist associations have redefined their mission and ministry, some have merged with other associations, changed their name, or disbanded.

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## PREFACE

### **The Legacy of the Baptist Association Movement in Florida**

The emergence of the Baptist association of churches in America had its genesis in the Philadelphia Baptist Association that was organized in 1707. Benjamin Griffiths (b. 1688; d. 1768), a Philadelphia minister, presented the defining purposes of America's Baptist association, when he wrote in 1749, that: "The purposes of associations include the drafting of sound doctrine and the disowning of erroneous teachings, the sending of representatives for consultation, and the making of decisions to withdraw from defective or disorderly churches."

Contemporary Baptist Historian Walter Shurden has noted the primary purposes of Baptist associations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were four-fold: (1) promote fellowship among the churches; (2) maintain uniformity in faith and practice among the churches; (3) give counsel and assistance to the churches; and (4) promote an organizational structure through which churches could cooperate in their broader ministries.

At the heart of the ministry of the local Baptist association is undergirding and assisting in a variety of ways, local churches as they seek to fulfill the Acts 1:8 directive to go into their "Jerusalem (local communities), all Judea (surrounding counties) and in Samaria (Florida), and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Recognizing the important role of the Baptist association movement, this issue of the *Journal* seeks to highlight how Baptist associations emerged in Florida beginning in 1821. In addition to providing a basic history summary of the role and purposes of the Baptist association, the significance of the autonomy of the local church is presented.

—Continued next page—

## **PREFACE - *Continued***

Additionally, the legacy history of Florida Baptist church affiliation with Baptist associations is featured. And there is a history profile of Florida's first missionary-oriented association of churches – the Florida Baptist Association.

Finally, this issue of the *Journal* provides a significant history summary of every Baptist association that was ever organized in Florida – including those that have disbanded, merged or continue to be on mission within Florida. These history summaries represents one of the most extensive and comprehensive research projects ever under taken by the staff of the Florida Baptist Historical Society.

D.S.H./editor

## 2023 Baptist Heritage Award



**The Florida Baptist Historical Society, for the past 27 years, has recognized an individual for their effective preservation and promotion of Florida Baptist history. The Society's Board of Directors is pleased to announce that their selection as the recipient of the 2023 Baptist Heritage Award is Linda G. Demott of Monticello, Florida.**

The Baptist Heritage Award seeks to recognize and honor those Florida Baptists who have exhibited rare and unusual dedication to the cause of Florida Southern Baptist history by having made a significant impact through such means as researching and writing Baptist history, teaching Baptist history, preserving Baptist history, and/or promoting the importance of Florida Southern Baptist history.

Linda Gramling (Mrs. Herbert) Demott of the community of Elizabeth in Jefferson County, Florida, was presented the 2023 Baptist Heritage Award for “her visionary and yeoman efforts to preserve, record and publish the history of the Elizabeth Baptist Church, Monticello, Florida,” according to the Florida Baptist Historical Society Managing Director Donald Hepburn.

Mrs. Demott, age 84 this year, is a lifelong member of the Elizabeth Baptist Church, Monticello, who has worked diligently since the early 1990s to collect, organize and develop material for a history book on the church that was established in 1831. Mrs. Demott made it a goal to write and publish a church history book, making it the first narrative of its type for the congregation. Publication of the book occurred in August.

In 2022 a special project Mrs. Demott undertook was the planned creation of a bronze plaque containing a replica of the church's original constitution handwritten in nineteenth century English alongside a contemporary language translation. She single-handedly raised the necessary funds to have the bronze display produced by a third-party vendor. The plaque was dedicated by the church members during the May 21 morning worship service.

As the Elizabeth Baptist Church-designated historian since the 1950s, Mrs. Demott has prepared church anniversary observance material each year including the development of skits to "bring to life" the church's historical leaders and events. Additionally, to promote the church's history and to educate current members, Mrs. Demott enlisted other volunteers to establish a designated history display of early information and memorabilia about the Elizabeth Baptist Church. This task required the identification and collection of material for preservation.

In her committed volunteer service to the church, Mrs. Demott, since 1955 also has served as the volunteer music leader and pianist. Her high level of interest in music resulted in her being enlisted year-after-year as the associational music director for the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Additionally, for many years she was enlisted by the Church Music Department, Florida Baptist Convention, to serve as a leader of specialty conferences designed for the small church music leaders. For 25 years Mrs. Demott taught piano at the Aucilla Christian Academy.

Throughout her married life Mrs. Demott was a committed spouse, fulltime homemaker, and a mother of four children. Because of her interest and abilities in music, at middle-age, Mrs. Demott pursued formal



academic training in music at the North Florida Junior College and the Florida State University School of Music.

Twenty-six individuals, since 1997, have been conferred the Baptist Heritage Award by the Florida Baptist Historical Society. These persons represented a broad range of Florida Baptists including pastors, denominational workers, college and seminary professors, and laypersons, all of whom had an interest and commitment to researching and publishing Florida Baptist history.

**The following individuals are former Heritage Award recipients:**

1997 – Earl Joiner	2011 – Jack Dalton
1998 – Adolph Bedsole	2012 – James C. Bryant
1999 – Joe Bamberg	2013 – David Elder
2000 – Ruth Bagwell	2014 – Mark Rathel
2001 – John Hillhouse	2015 – No recipient
2002 – Martha Trotter	2016 – David Lema and Roger Richards
2003 – Wiley Richards	2017 – Jerry M. Windsor
2004 – E. B. Browning, Sr.	2018 – Sid Smith
2005 – E. H. Rennolds, Sr.	2019 – Thomas A. Kinchen
2006 – Harry C. Garwood	2020 – L. David Cunningham
2007 – Pope Duncan	2021 – Donald S. Hepburn
2008 – John L. Rosser	2022 – Carolyn L. Calhoun
2009 – Doak Campbell	
2010 – Judith Jolly	

## **Our Mission:**

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## **Serving Churches**

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In fulfilment of our Mission to research, preserve and promote the Legacy of Florida Baptists, the Society assists leadership of Florida Baptist churches and associations in a variety of ways:

- ◆ the research of local church and association histories;
- ◆ the research of pastoral leader biography;
- ◆ provide resources for publishing a history; and
- ◆ encourage and assist churches and associations to celebrate their respective heritage and anniversaries.

## **We Are Fa-mi-ly! The Historic Role and Purpose of the Baptist Association**

*by Joel Breidenbaugh, PhD  
Lead Pastor, Gospel Centered Church  
Apopka, FL*



Have you ever gone to a family reunion? I have been privileged to attend at least two family reunions that I remember, at least one for my family and one with my wife's family. Even with my own family, there were more family members I didn't know than I knew. But I learned how they were part of the family. Some were born into the family. Others married into the family. I've always been encouraged that the weirdest family members had married into the family – they weren't really blood relatives!

I enjoy time with extended family members more than family reunions, because I know them better and see them more often. I see them at holiday gatherings and special occasions, like birthdays, anniversaries, and funerals of family members.

Yet the family members I love the most are my immediate family members – my wife and kids and their (growing) families. I even love the in-laws (and soon-to-be in-laws), but they can be a bit weird! Several years ago, we were traveling in our minivan and the song by Sister Sledge, "We Are Family," came on the radio. Our oldest child was around seven years old and sang out, "We are fa-mi-ly! I got all my siblings with me!" We laughed at her creativity and she was right – siblings make us family.

Every time I attend the Southern Baptist Convention, I'm reminded we have some family members that are pretty weird! When I find out some of them came from other denominations, I am encouraged – they haven't been Baptists their whole life! I occasionally meet a few fellow Florida Baptists at our state convention and wonder about them. But the closest connections I have are in my church and my local association. I see fellow Baptist pastors and some of their members several times a year. We've gotten to know each other and our love for each other is far greater than our connection at the state or national level.

Because of this family connection in Baptist associations, I want to look at what a Baptist association is and the reasons for them. I also want to consider the purpose of Baptist associations and how they can continue to be useful going forward.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is a Baptist Association?**

A Baptist association is a voluntary network of Baptist churches in a particular geographical area that have agreed to connect with each other for the purpose of mission, fellowship, and doctrinal fidelity. Such association of Baptist churches began both in England and America a few decades after the (modern) Baptist church movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Unlike mainline denominations that promote a hierarchy, no such thing exists in Baptist life. Churches and associations are autonomous, determining what members and churches rightly belong to them. The association has legitimate power as an autonomous Baptist body, including “(1) the right of determining membership, (2) the right of

investigating membership, (3) the right of excluding from membership, (4) the right of working on behalf of membership, and (5) the right of regulating annual meetings.”<sup>2</sup> While more about the purpose of the association falls below, another question is more pressing.

### **Why Associate with Local Baptist Churches?**

Many pastors and their churches wonder why they should consider joining an association. They often think in terms of practicality, but there are other reasons. I believe there are biblical, theological, historical, and practical bases for Baptist associations.

#### **Biblical Basis**

Baptists have been called “People of the Book” since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So how does one justify Baptist associations from the Bible? The most natural passage is the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Jack Keep writes, “The most frequently quoted passage of Scripture given in support of associations – both in colonial American and in England – was Acts 15. It was not claimed that the Jerusalem Council was an association or even a prototype, but that it was an example of the propriety of interchurch cooperation and council.”<sup>3</sup> Keep continued, noting elements of the Jerusalem Council were “worthy of imitation. One of these aspects was the inter-relationship, the care of churches for one another. At Jerusalem, doctrinal issues were discussed, debated and decided.”<sup>4</sup>

**At Jerusalem,  
doctrinal issues  
were discussed,  
debated and  
decided.**

While reading through the New Testament, it seems evident several churches cooperated with one another. Not only did the leaders who met with the Jerusalem church help provide instruction to other churches, but the churches in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia sent aid to the Jerusalem church (see 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9). Also, the church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul (Paul) as missionaries to take the gospel into Asia Minor and Europe. Paul made regular visits and updates to the churches he planted, promoting something of a cooperative spirit (see Paul's journeys in Acts 14:21-23; 15:36-16:5; 18:22-23; 20:1-2, 17-38).

When the Savannah Baptist Association was forming in 1802, Charles O. Screven preached Ephesians 4:4-6 as Scriptural support of associations. Commenting on the message, Walter Shurden observed, "Screven believed that the Apostle Paul's emphasis on one body, one spirit, and one faith was applicable to the founding of a new association."<sup>5</sup>

### **Theological Basis**

Baptists are right to stress the importance of the local church; after all, there are around 113 uses of the word "church" in the New Testament and at least 109 of those occurrences refer to the local church. But that doesn't mean there isn't a concept of a universal church, even if it is much less common in Scripture. The universal church, consisting of faithful believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, stretches around the globe. Shurden observed that the local church consists of Christians who "voluntarily agreed in [the] doctrine and practice" of a certain church, concluding "The sense of Christian unity articulated in the concept of the universal church and the doctrinal restrictions

placed upon membership in the local church provided the theological footing for Baptist associations.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Historical Basis**

Not only are there biblical and theological bases for Baptist associations, but history serves as another element to the foundation of associations. Donald Hepburn commented:

By the time Baptists in Florida and parts of South Georgia determined in 1835 to form their own association of Baptist churches, the association movement in America was already 128 years old. Yet the Floridians’ desire to organize an assembly of churches seemed to embrace the same fundamental need for fellowship which propelled the colonial American association movement begun on July 27, 1707. . . This organization was likely patterned after one of several early Baptist associations organized by Particular Baptists in England between 1653 (in Somersetshire) and 1655 (Midland), and later organizations in 1692 at Bristol and Frome.<sup>7</sup>

While the purpose of Baptist associations would develop more fully in time, the original goal of the Philadelphia Baptist Association was “to meet at the yearly meeting to consult about such things as were wanting in the churches, and to set them in order.”<sup>8</sup> This initial function of Baptist association life was effective, by the sheer fact it influenced other associations to form. Later decades in the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed Baptist associations form in “Charleston (1751), Sandy Creek (1758), Kehukee (1760), Ketocton (1766), Warren (1767), Stonington (1772), Redstone

(1776), and Shaftsbury (1780).”<sup>9</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Baptist associations came to blanket the landscape of America.

**By the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Baptist associations came to blanket the landscape of America.**

### **Practical Basis**

Baptist associations began with a focus on mission, fellowship, and doctrinal concern. Jack Dalton’s dissertation on Florida Baptist history is invaluable. He commented that the Florida Baptist Association aimed:

to promote acquaintance and fellowship among neighboring churches, to give advice to perplexing problems of doctrine and discipline, to aid in erecting houses of worship, to point out imposters, and finally, to counsel in all matters pertaining to keeping orderliness in the churches. Later, the associations sought to encourage Sunday schools and to aid ministers in securing education . . . Missionary work beyond associational boundaries was encouraged and promoted.<sup>10</sup>

Looking to sister churches in the association gave Baptists opportunities to learn and clarify doctrine, fellowship together, and support missions.

James Sullivan observed, “The continuing high place of the association in the denomination is most significant. It needs encouragement and ardent support on the part of churches and the people, and



its services are indispensable if our Baptist witness is to reach its highest potential in any given locality.”<sup>11</sup>

Nowadays, the sky is the limit when it comes to thinking of ways an association can help its churches. Most pastors and churches look to their director of missions (DOM) for pulpit supply, but the association can offer so much more than that. There are experts in preaching, leadership, evangelism, discipleship, audio-visual, ministries for men, women, youth, children, special needs, and more! Solo church pastors, bi-vocational pastors and active laypeople often benefit from regular fellowship and encouragement.<sup>12</sup>

### **Purpose of Baptist Associations**

Having addressed the various reasons or bases for Baptist associations, there is still a need to look more closely at the purpose of Baptist associations. The original purposes for them in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were four-fold, namely to “(1) promote fellowship among the churches, (2) maintain uniformity in faith and practice among the churches, (3) give counsel and assistance to the churches, and (4) provide an organizational structure through which churches could cooperate in their broader ministries.”<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, Baptist associations “depended on one another for encouragement and exhortation, including aid in maintaining discipline in ethics, moral, and doctrine. Frequent resolutions proposed funds for education and missionary support in conjunction with other associations.”<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of Baptist associations can be thought of as faith, family, fellowship, and function.

## **Baptist Faith**

A church's doctrine is foundational to what it teaches and how it practices the faith. Historically, the most important feature of Baptist associations is to promote and protect biblical doctrine. The Philadelphia Baptist Association began with a few churches and used the confession of faith developed by Elias Keach, son of Benjamin Keach, to settle doctrinal disputes.

Many Southern Baptists have benefitted from a larger body's adoption of Baptist doctrine, whether it be the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833) or the *Baptist Faith & Message* (1925, 1963, 2000). Prior to these statements of faith, many Baptists borrowed from the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742), which was taken directly from the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689), with a couple of more articles.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association adopted a confession of faith that became the standard for later Baptist confessions. William Lumpkin traced the dependence of the modern *Baptist Faith & Message* on the *New Hampshire Confession* (1833), which was adapted from the *Philadelphia Confession* (1742).<sup>15</sup> Thus, Baptist associations, starting with the one in Philadelphia, have directly contributed to a doctrinal standard in most Southern Baptist churches today.

Having a Baptist faith was absolutely essential to cooperating with a local Baptist association. As associations considered welcoming new churches, they "would not admit churches unless they had adopted an orthodox confession."<sup>16</sup> And they "refused fellowship with other associations that had unsound

confessions.”<sup>17</sup> A church could not have fellowship or be considered Baptist family without having a Baptist faith.

**Having a Baptist faith was absolutely essential to cooperating with a local Baptist association.**

### **Baptist Family**

At the end of the day, the Baptist association that functions best is a local family of Baptist churches who serve on mission together to take the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to their surrounding area as they agree together on matters of faith and fellowship. But, as noted previously, Baptist associations would not call other churches part of the family without holding to clear Baptist doctrine. Baptist associations protected their family and would not let just any church join them. Much like a father grilling a young man wanting to ask for his daughter’s hand in marriage, Baptist associations rightly question the beliefs and practices of potential new churches and of existing churches that may stray from Baptist belief.

### **Baptist Fellowship**

Only after a Baptist church has been tested about the faith can it be welcomed as family. As members of the family, they can have fellowship among their pastors and members. Sullivan noted:

New churches or existing ones desiring fellowship and participation in local associations are carefully screened by the association involved to make sure that they will fit into the Baptist way of doing things, as well as that they hold to the basic doctrinal beliefs of Baptists. The

association is an appropriate point for any screening of churches done within the entire denomination because of the proximity of the other churches making these judgments. Such evaluations are apt to be more accurate from close range.”<sup>18</sup>

Of course, an association that welcomed churches through the front door via doctrinal fidelity and mission interest could also be shown the back door for failing to uphold Baptist principles.

Fellowship did not come easy for Baptist associations. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there arose a struggle between the Missionary Baptists and Primitive (Anti-Mission) Baptists. The Missionary Baptist spirit argued for local church authority without associational influence. But the Primitive Baptists “insisted that associations had authority in matters of discipline.”<sup>19</sup> While associations had no control over what individual churches believed or practiced, they could decide whether one fit their own criteria for partnership.

Moreover, if an individual touted religious liberty over Baptist confessions or creeds, they could be disciplined by the association, but the association normally left such discipline up to the churches. For instance, “when John Leland, the most famous Baptist exponent of individual autonomy, exercised his right of private judgment in scripture interpretation, his association disfellowshipped him. Baptists opposed this kind of individualism. Conscience was not supreme.”<sup>20</sup>

Because protecting doctrine was essential to the Baptist family that associated together, associations were right to guard their fellowship. Associations provided mutual oversight of one another's churches and could give

counsel or warning to churches which were straying from Baptist standards.

Wills noted,  
"Offending

churches that ignored the advice of councils could expect disfellowship."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, "churches could not retain membership in the association while they deviated from orthodoxy . . . [claiming] 'if you will pursue a course contrary to that which we conceive the scriptures prescribe, you must pursue it alone.'"<sup>22</sup>

**Associations provided mutual oversight of one another's churches . . .**

To be clear, when a Baptist association disfellowshipped a church, it did not like to use the word "discipline," because only the local church was given the authority to carry out discipline in accordance with the New Testament. Thus, when Baptist churches separated from an association, they employed various terminology, including "excluding" churches; "dropping" churches from the association's records; and "withdrawing fellowship" with churches.<sup>23</sup>

**Baptist Function**

While fellowship and doctrinal unity are a big part of Baptist associations, greater stress has been placed on mission. The Charleston Association in 1755 wanted to reach "the unevangelized condition of many places in the back country in neighboring provinces" and

procured “the services of a missionary to take the gospel to these places.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet Baptist associations were not merely concerned for their own area’s need for the gospel, for “from the time William Carey went to India, many of the associations became concerned over the matters of foreign missions.”<sup>25</sup> Baptist associations largely supported the work of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice, until some associations joined the anti-mission movement.<sup>26</sup> That anti-mission spirit was, thankfully, in the minority as most churches and associations favored the evangelization of the lost.

As Baptists developed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the formation of national and state conventions, associations began to take on a new role. They largely focused on cooperation and promotion of the larger denomination.<sup>27</sup> J.C. Bradley pointed out the association’s shift in role “from a doctrinally-based fellowship of churches to an implementing agency of the denomination.”<sup>28</sup> This implementing role included the promotion of missions and missions education, promotion of Sunday school and other educational programs, and fund raising for missionary and benevolent causes.”<sup>29</sup> By the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Baptist associations kept churches aware of convention programs, offered annual instructions from the Annuity Board (now GuideStone), and promoted associational mission partnerships between associations in the southern states and those in the northern and western states.

Other mission and ministry causes have occupied Baptist associations focus. Sauls wrote:

the associational mission responsibility is as large and as varied as the need which the association faces. In some areas there are numbers of military personnel who need to be integrated into the life and work of the local church. In others there are minorities who can be helped by Christian influence and special training. In all areas there are social problems – such as juvenile delinquency, broken homes, liquor, gambling, and crime – which need to be dealt with, either by the association and the churches themselves or by church members as informed and interested citizens. In either case the association provides leadership and encouragement to the actions of its constituency.<sup>30</sup>

The mission and ministry aim of most Baptist associations have helped them communicate the practical nature of their work. They want the churches who have a Baptist faith to join the Baptist family so they can fellowship and function together.

### **Concluding Observations**

Many pastors face feelings of resignation on Monday mornings at some point in their ministry. One particular Monday morning, I was wondering how I was going to make it in my church. I had been chewed out the day before by a church member who did not like my sermon. It made me feel as though everyone was mad at me. I certainly did not feel like driving to another associational meeting, but I had a responsibility to be there. I traveled there and saw the DOM and many of the same pastors I always saw. I heard some of their stories, a couple of which were far

worse than my encounter. As they encouraged each other, I was encouraged. I was reminded that I was not alone. Not only was the Lord on my side, but the Baptist pastors in my association were on my side. They were praying for me and offered to be a listening ear just when I needed them most!

I drove back home from that two-hour meeting with my spirits lifted. I continued to serve my church and in that association for a couple of more years. I was able to do so because I was reminded that we, Baptists who associate in a common mission, “we are family!”

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the work of Donald S. Hepburn and his article “The Baptist Association: Role and Purpose” in *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 9 (2007): 7-17. While I urged Don to reprint his work, he favored a fresh look. I have taken a slightly different approach. The reader will note several similarities between the Hepburn article and mine.

<sup>2</sup> Walter B. Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America: 1707-1824* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 128 as summarized by Hepburn, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Keep, *What Is a Baptist Association?* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1989), 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> Shurden, 77-78.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> Hepburn, 7.

<sup>8</sup> A.D. Gillette, editor, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707 to 1807* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 29.

<sup>9</sup> E.C. Routh, “Association, the District” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 87.

<sup>10</sup> Jack P. Dalton, “A History of Florida Baptists,” PhD diss., (University of Florida, 1952), 51.

<sup>11</sup> James L. Sullivan, *Baptist Polity: As I See It* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 98-99.



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<sup>12</sup> For a few values of the association, see Matt Henslee, “Why You Should Be Involved in Your Local Association,” <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/why-you-should-be-involved-in-your-local-association/> accessed 29 June 2023. I have personally been encouraged to fellowship with area pastors whether it be weekly (like some associations) or monthly or quarterly.

<sup>13</sup> Shurden, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, Vol. 2 Beginnings in America* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications), 177.

<sup>15</sup> William Lumpkin also notes that the *Philadelphia Confession* is a slight modification of the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689), which depended on the *Westminster Confession* (1646), see his *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, revised ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 348-353, 391-392.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 109.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Sullivan, 99.

<sup>19</sup> Wills, 32. For additional information on the beliefs, practices, and differences between Missionary and Primitive Baptists, see Joel Breidenbaugh, “The Theological Contrasts between Missionary and Primitive Baptists, *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 23 (2021): 35-47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 102. For other examples of churches getting disfellowshipped, see *ibid.*, 101-102.

<sup>23</sup> Shurden, 130. See also Hepburn, 12.

<sup>24</sup> H.S. Sauls, “Associational Missions” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 88.

<sup>25</sup> James Clark, “Associations Before 1845” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 90. For additional information on the anti-mission movement, see Nettles, 221-247.

<sup>27</sup> Shurden, 108-109.

<sup>28</sup> J.C. Bradley, “Trends in Association Life in the Twentieth Century,” *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol. 17, no. 2 (April 1982), 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hepburn, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Sauls, 88-89.

# **Florida Baptist Church Affiliation with Baptist Associations Between 1821 and the mid-1850s**

*by Donald S. Hepburn  
Managing Director  
Florida Baptist  
Historical Society*



In the first four decades of the nineteenth century the earliest Baptist churches established in the Florida Territory (until statehood was granted in 1845) had limited choices to affiliate with the growing world of Missionary Baptist churches, organized as Baptist associations. As a result, those early Florida Baptist churches affiliated with associations in Georgia, Florida, Alabama and even Connecticut.

The Baptist association had its genesis as early as 1642 – 1643 among English Baptists “for counsel and correspondence.”<sup>1</sup> In the American colonies, the Philadelphia Association was organized in 1707. “Prior to that date general meetings, without any formal organization, had been held for discussion of matters of faith, polity, discipline and evangelism,” Baptist Historian E. C. Routh wrote.<sup>2</sup> During the ensuing 70 years in the eighteenth century, Baptist churches and associations were organized as the American population migrated. Subsequently the earliest Baptist associations organized were: the Charleston, S.C., (1751); Sandy Creek, N.C., (1758); Kehukee, N.C., (1760); Ketocton, Va., (1766); Warren, Rhode Island, (1767); Stonington, Connecticut, (1772); Redstone, Pennsylvania, (1776); and Shaftsbury, Vermont, (1780).

As Baptists moved south and established churches, associations of Baptist churches also began to organize in Georgia. Three associations existed in Georgia before 1800: Georgia (org. 1784), Hephzibah (org. 1794), and Sarepta (org. 1798), according to Georgia Baptist historians. “During the first decades of the nineteenth century twenty-four missionary associations were organized, nineteen Primitive, and one non-missionary Piedmont . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Benjamin Griffiths (b. 1688; d. 1768), a Philadelphia minister, presented the defining purposes of America’s Baptist association, when he wrote in 1749, that, “The purposes of associations include the drafting of sound doctrine and the disowning of erroneous teachings, the sending of representatives for consultation, and the making of decisions to withdraw from defective or disorderly churches.”<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary Baptist Historian Walter Shurden has noted the primary purposes of associations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were four-fold: (1) promote fellowship among the churches; (2) maintain uniformity in faith and practice among the churches; (3) give counsel and assistance to the churches; and (4) promote an organizational structure through which churches could cooperate in their broader ministries.<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of the ministry of the local Baptist association is the tasks of undergirding and assisting, in a variety of ways, local churches as they seek to fulfill the Acts 1:8 directive to go into their “Jerusalem (local communities), all Judea (surrounding counties) and in Samaria (Florida), and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

## **ALABAMA**

Much of the early church development in the far regions of West Florida was the result of missionary efforts initiated by Missionary Alabama Baptist associations. Benjamin Riley, in his history of Alabama Baptists, noted that the effectiveness of many state and association-appointed missionaries were a “ministerial force unsurpassed by the ministry of any other state in the South.” He went on to observe, “In the maintenance of the [missionary] cause in upper Florida in the planting of churches in that new and growing region, because of its proximity, the three adjoining associations on the Alabama side, the Bethlehem, Salem, and Tuskegee, were united in a common effort to care for the evangelistic interest of that quarter.”<sup>6</sup> However, due to the limited availability of the historic records for the Salem (org. 1839) and Tuskegee (org. 1846) associations, little is known about possible Florida church affiliation.

For the purposes of this article, the records of two other associations that did report Florida church affiliation, specifically the Bethlehem Association (org. 1816) and the Chattahoochie [sic] River Association (org. 1825), are noted.

### **Bethlehem Association organized 1816**

Before the creation of the state of Alabama, an association of Baptist churches was formed in 1816. Originally called the Bigby Baptist Association, it was comprised of a few churches in Washington and Clarke counties located at the southwestern corner of the state near Mobile Bay. Within six years the association, which changed its name to Beckbe, grew with the addition of 17 Baptist churches located in the Alabama counties of Conecuh, Monroe, Covington, as well as the original two counties. In 1827, the

association again changed its name, referring to itself as the Bethlehem Baptist Association. Until 1847 this was the only surviving association of Baptist churches along the Alabama and Florida boundaries stretching from Georgia to Mississippi.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most esteemed ministers of the day, Alexander Travis (b. 1790; d.1852), was a driving force within the association. Born in the Edgefield District of South Carolina August 23, 1790, Travis made a profession of faith in 1809 and immediately began preaching to sinners to turn to God and live. Tradition contends that while his clothes were still wet from the baptismal waters, he delivered a “warm sermon.”<sup>8</sup>

Demonstrating such a fervent call to be a preacher, the Addiel (SC) Baptist Church licensed Travis as a preacher of the gospel on October 24, 1810. On July 13, 1813, he was ordained into the gospel ministry by the Cambridge (SC) Baptist Church.<sup>9</sup> Travis joined the exodus of South Carolinians who migrated to South Alabama in 1817. The following year, after settling in Conecuh county, he drew together a group of Baptists to form the Beulah Baptist Church. But Travis was not content to being a farmer and part-time preacher. His missionary zeal motivated him to travel 15 to 20 miles a day by foot to preach the gospel of Christ wherever he could find a settlement of people.<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1830s, a few destitute churches on the Conecuh River and the Florida border took up yearly collections and sent them to the Bethlehem Association in the hopes the association would send a preacher their way. Messages sent with the funds noted that many of the young people in the respective

**“What sort of a thing is a preacher?”**

areas had never heard a sermon. One person was reported to have asked, “What sort of a thing is a preacher?”<sup>11</sup>

These “Macedonian” calls led a group of individuals to act independent of the association to form the Bethlehem Baptist Domestic Missionary Society in 1835. Heading the group were Baptist ministers Alexander Travis, Keidar Hawthorne, and J. H. Schroebel.<sup>12</sup> Until the society could afford to employ a missionary, Travis and Hawthorne assumed the missionary tasks. Their missionary journeys followed the Conecuh, Yellow and Escambia rivers that flowed south into the Florida Territory, particularly Pensacola and Mobile Bay.<sup>13</sup>

Travis probably held brush arbor meetings wherever he found settlers who would listen to his message of salvation and hope. This would have been a great evangelistic opportunity inasmuch as Pensacola’s religious community had been controlled by Roman Catholics from 1781 to 1821. As a result of British influence, in 1824 the Episcopalians established a mission. An 1827 religious census was conducted by a missionary of the General Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America. Pensacola’s total population of 2000 yielded “twelve communicants of our church [Episcopal], ten Methodists, two Presbyterians and two Baptists.”<sup>14</sup>

Among the four West Florida churches that were embraced by the Bethlehem Association, as reflected in its *Minutes*, reveals the first inclusion of a Florida church in 1840. That report denotes the affiliation of the Yellow River Baptist Church in then Walton county, West Florida. This was followed by the

Escambia River Baptist Church, which was admitted to the association in 1841.

The Milton Baptist Church was added in 1845, reporting 54 members. And then

the Pensacola Baptist Church, reporting 77 members, was admitted in 1847.<sup>15</sup> The following are brief highlights of their respective organization.

**. . . four West  
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Association, . .**

**Yellow River Church, Okaloosa county, 1840**

In 1840, Keidar Hawthorne (b.1797; d. 1877) was employed as the Bethlehem Baptist Domestic Missionary Society's field missionary. That same year Hawthorne reportedly traveled 3,000 miles on horseback preaching the gospel along the way and baptized 106 persons. He found a group of Baptist settlers in what is now northern Okaloosa county, Florida, and organized the Yellow River Baptist Church.<sup>16</sup> When it affiliated with the association the church reported having 48 members, including 18 baptized the prior year.<sup>17</sup> This was one of the earliest Baptist churches (that continues to exist today) organized in the western end of the Florida Panhandle located in what was then Walton county. The church thrived as a monthly meeting church until 1916, when its members migrated and the church became inactive. The church reportedly revived in August, 1938, and continued holding monthly services.<sup>18</sup>

**Escambia River Church, Escambia county,  
1841**

Another church organized by Keidar Hawthorne in 1841 and who served as pastor was the Escambia River Baptist Church, as reported in the *Minutes* of

the Bethlehem Association.<sup>19</sup> As noted previously, the church reported 38 members in its first year. By 1842, membership had increased to 62, with 22 of those by baptism. Its last report to the association was made in 1844. Subsequently the association appointed a delegation led by Alexander Travis to visit the church and assess its status. “It was reported in 1850 that the church had become extinct, and it was ordered erased from the list of member churches.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Milton Church, Santa Rosa county, 1845**

Another Bethlehem-appointed missionary, L. W. Lindsey, may have been responsible in 1845 for organizing a church at Milton, located northeast of Pensacola. The 1845 *Minutes* of the Bethlehem Association noted receipt of petitioner letters from the “newly constituted churches of Evergreen, Milton, Blakely, Pineville and Stockton.”<sup>21</sup> Delegates from the Milton Baptist Church were J. Savel and A. S. Cobb who reported that 16 had been baptized that first year and there were 32 Anglo members and 16 African-descendant members.<sup>22</sup> The First Baptist Church, Milton, continues serving to the present day.

### **Pensacola Church, Escambia county, 1847**

The “Pensacola Baptist Church of Christ,” as it was called, was established May 2, 1847. Elder Alexander Travis and Elder Joseph Mitchell, missionaries of the Bethlehem Baptist Domestic Missionary Society, served as the constituting presbytery. The seven charter members were Aaron and Mary Hendrix, Henry and Jane Maulder, Joseph and Jane Steele, and W. L. Jamison. Within a short time, the congregation had grown to 245 members, composed of 123 Anglos and 122 African-descendants. Five years later the church changed its name to the Pensacola Baptist Church.<sup>23</sup> The now called First Baptist Church, Pensacola, observed its 176th anniversary in 2023.



### **West Florida Church Affiliation Options**

Florida Baptist churches in the western portion of the Panhandle, were affiliated with Alabama associations into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century until Florida-based associations could be established. As a result, Florida churches were members of one of at least four associations, including the Bethlehem up until 1870; the Alabama-based Elim Association (including churches within Escambia and Baldwin counties, Alabama, and the Florida counties of Escambia and Santa Rosa) organized in 1872; Pensacola Bay (exclusively Escambia county, Florida), organized 1887; and the Santa Rosa (exclusively Santa Rosa county, Florida) organized in 1907.<sup>24</sup>

### **Chattahoochie [sic] River Association organized 1825**

This Alabama Association covered a geographical area along the southeastern border of Alabama where then Covington and Henry counties were located. It was adjacent to the northern Florida Territory's Jackson county established in 1822. Although the Alabama association was organized in 1825, it became extinct by 1840. By 1837 it reported 13 cooperating churches, including eight in Alabama, two in Georgia and three in Florida.<sup>25</sup> Leading to its demise was the development of a position of being "violently opposed" to missions, Bible societies, and sabbath schools, led by early leaders Jeremiah Kimbass and James Cattenhead. Several early cooperating churches were missionary in emphasis, but soon withdrew to join other associations.<sup>26</sup>

### **Bethlehem Church, Campbellton, Jackson county, 1825**

The only known Florida church affiliated with the Chattahoochie [sic] River Association was the singular pioneer Baptist church in Jackson county, the

Bethlehem Church, in Campbellton. The church was organized March 12, 1825 with 19 charter members, by a presbytery comprised of Elders Jeremiah Kimble and Elijah H. Callaway. The church called as its first pastor Elijah H. Callaway (b. 1789; d. 1837) who had been an itinerant preacher from Alabama. Soon after its organization, in the following November, the church submitted a letter requesting affiliation with the Chattahoochie [sic] River Baptist Association in Alabama.<sup>27</sup> Little is known about the church's early history other than it began to fall on hard times according to a later report to the West Florida Association. The report noted that after its organization, "for a time increased in influence; passing periods, however, saw her glory measurably depart, and Ichabod written on her history."<sup>28</sup>

By 1844, the Bethlehem Church, likely at the encouragement of then pastor Joshua Mercer, became affiliated with the Florida Baptist Association.<sup>29</sup> Three years later, the church hosted the November, 1847 organizational meeting of the West Florida Baptist Association. In 1859 the church changed its name to the Campbellton, First Baptist Church. The church continues to function in the present day.

## CONNECTICUT

### **Stonington Union Association organized 1772**

The founding and developing of Baptist work in the extreme southern end of the Florida peninsula at Key West was the result of efforts by laymen and pastors from North Stonington, Connecticut. The South Florida community of Key West was settled in 1823 by merchants who came from Rhode Island, Virginia and North Carolina to develop – among other things – a lucrative salvage business. The first known Baptist minister to travel to Key West was Charles C. Lewis

(b. 1807; d. 1864), a sea captain who had been converted in 1842 in Connecticut and came to Key West the same year.<sup>30</sup>

### **Key West Church, Monroe county, 1843**

Lewis saw a great need for a Baptist work in Key West and exchanged the title of “Captain” for that of “Reverend.” Going from house-to-house Lewis led a number of people to make professions of faith that resulted in a baptism service being held on Sunday, Christmas Day, 1842. From this nucleus of new Christians, as well as laymen and pastors from the Second and Third Baptist Churches of North Stonington,

Connecticut,<sup>31</sup> Lewis soon assembled a congregation to be constituted as the Key West Baptist Church on March 11, 1843. The six persons who constituted the new church were J. H.

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Breaker, Ben Sawyer, O. T. Braman, J. A. Wolfe, Asa Sawyer and Elim Eldridge. The congregation then called Lewis as pastor. By April, the congregation had 23 members.<sup>32</sup> However, the ill health of Lewis’ wife caused the couple to return to Connecticut.<sup>33</sup>

Back in Connecticut Lewis continued as a member of the Third Baptist Church of Groton, Connecticut.<sup>34</sup> To his credit, Lewis sought to have his Key West congregation affiliate with the Stonington Union Association (org. 1772), inasmuch as there were no Florida associations with which to affiliate. The Key West petitioner’s letter for membership in the Stonington Union Association of Connecticut was presented and approved during the June 21 – 22,

1843, annual meeting.<sup>35</sup> Lewis subsequently accepted a pastoral call to a church affiliated with the Warren (Rhode Island) Baptist Association (org. 1767).<sup>36</sup>

G. G. Tripp became the Key West Church's pastor for six months beginning in November 1843, and during the first quarter of 1844, he organized one of the earliest Sunday schools in Florida. Tripp led an effort to construct a church building and decided to go to Connecticut to raise funds. He met with little success in the fund solicitation effort, abandoned the work and never returned to Key West. Without leadership, the Sunday school died, and the church struggled to survive.<sup>37</sup>

In October 1845, Horace D. Doolittle (b. 1806; d. 1880) – as an appointed missionary of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society – brought together the scattered Key West flock, consisting of Anglos and African-descendants. He observed better discipline and faithfulness among the African-descendant members than among the Anglos. Prior to Doolittle's arrival, while the church was without a pastor, the African-descendant members continued to hold prayer meetings each week and heard preaching by Austin Smith, a slave who earlier had been licensed and ordained to preach by Charles C. Lewis. With the help and support of those faithful African-descendant members, Doolittle, with about 100 members, reorganized the church's Sunday school in 1845.<sup>38</sup>

Doolittle continued to report on the Key West Church and solicit financial support from the member churches of the Stonington Union Association. Another American Baptist Home Missionary Society-appointed missionary James Henry Breaker (b. 1820; d. 1897) was assigned to continue the ministry at Key West. However, within four years, Breaker had been

assigned to minister to and follow the migration of Cubans who had left Key West to work in Tampa.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, during the 1846 annual meeting of the Stonington Union Association, a committee was appointed to study and report to the association “in regard to the existence of slavery in our sister church at Key West (Florida).”<sup>40</sup> The record was clear that the Key West Church had members who were both slaveholders and slaves. With no status report made during the 1847 annual meeting, another study committee on the slavery issue was appointed.<sup>41</sup> The following year the committee’s report was presented and the delegates participated in what the official *Minutes* described as, “a somewhat protracted discussion (though in a Christian spirit).” The debate resulted in a resolution being drafted and presented. That resolution affirmed that, “we have no fellowship with the sin of American slavery,” which effectively had the association withdraw fellowship from the Key West Church.<sup>42</sup>

The Key West Church continued to struggle and to function during periods without pastoral leadership – and no association affiliation – until 1876 when it joined the distant (central Florida area) South Florida Baptist Association.<sup>43</sup> Nine years later, in 1885, the Key West Church became a member of the Manatee (Peace River) Baptist Association.<sup>44</sup> In 1909, when the Miami Baptist Association was organized, the Key West Church was one of the eight charter member churches that were in Dade, Broward, West Palm Beach and Monroe counties. Finally in October, 1968, the Florida Keys Baptist Association was organized comprised of six churches, including the Key West Church, that existed along the 220 miles of Monroe county’s island chain. The contemporary descendant of the Key West Church – renamed the Eaton Street

Baptist Church during the years 1905 to 1920 – is the Hispanic White Street Baptist Church.<sup>45</sup>

## **GEORGIA**

### **Piedmont Association organized 1815**

Of the earliest Georgia associations, Piedmont was the only one close enough in distance to accept Florida churches as contributing members. The association was comprised of six churches primarily in Tattnall (org. 1801) and Liberty (org. 1777) counties, Georgia. These side-by-side counties were bordered on the north by the Canoochee River, the Altamaha River to the south, and South Carolina to the east. The Piedmont Association was established in October, 1815 at the Little Canoochee Meeting house. Moses Westberry (b. 1807; d. 1887) was elected moderator. Careful attention was given to preparation of a constitution and rules of decorum in the first two years,<sup>46</sup>

During the formative year of the association Isham Peacock (b.1742; d. 1850) and Fleming Bates (b. 1771; d. 1840) assumed influential roles. Peacock served as moderator (1819-1824 inclusively), and Bates was appointed as annual preacher, advisor and elected as moderator in 1825 and 1827. Peacock, who was considered the “father” of the Piedmont Association <sup>47</sup> served as moderator during a pivotal 1819 annual meeting. Delegates were presented with and unanimously approved a revision to their Decorum document stating that the association would “have nothing to do with missionaries.”<sup>48</sup>

At the heart of that anti-missionary position was a disdain for money-based mission boards, Sunday schools, Bible and Tract Societies and seminaries

which were considered non-scriptural. Those who opposed those non-scriptural institutions became known as Old School or Primitive Baptists. Isham Peacock was the primary doctrinal source authority for

**At the heart of that anti-missionary position was a disdain for money-based mission boards . . .**

Baptist theology, faith and practice during the early 1800s for many churches and associations within the Southeast Georgia Wiregrass, according to Primitive Baptist Historian John Crowley.<sup>49</sup>

### **Pigeon Creek Church, Nassau county, 1821**

The first Baptist church to organize in the Florida Territory was the Pigeon Creek Church located in Nassau county. Several families – the Knight, Prevatts and Dixons who previously had been members of the Sardis Church in Camden county, Georgia – met January 7, 1821, to organize as a church.<sup>50</sup> Serving as the presbytery to hear each individual's testimony of Christian faith and to examine the doctrinal integrity of these persons were Elders Isham Peacock and Fleming Bates. As part of organizing the church, the founding members followed Elder Peacock's direction in drafting and approving documents that included the Constitution, Articles of Faith and a Decorum.<sup>51</sup> Bates, who also was a founding member of the church, was elected as pastor.

Toward the end of the year, on October 13, 1821, delegates from Pigeon Creek Church requested membership in the Piedmont Association. Following doctrinal examination and confirming the church supported the Piedmont Association's anti-missionary

position, the church's appointed delegates were "received and invited to a seat."<sup>52</sup> Of the eleven churches in the association that year, Pigeon Creek was among the smallest with fourteen members.

Pigeon Creek hosted the 1825 meeting of the association, and Fleming Bates was elected moderator. At that time committees were being formed to study some of the smaller churches and consider dissolving them.<sup>53</sup> In August, 1835, the church voted to affiliate with the newly organized Florida-based Suwannee River Association.<sup>54</sup> By 1847, the Pigeon Creek Church had affiliated with another anti-missionary group, the Alabama River Association (org. 1842) of Georgia. The Pigeon Creek Church continues to the present day as a Primitive Baptist congregation.

### **New River Church, Brooker, Columbia county, 1850**

It was nearly three decades later before another Florida church sought affiliation with the Piedmont. When a call was made for petitionary letters at the 1850 Piedmont annual meeting, one was received from New River Church in East Florida. The church's delegate, Moses Dees, was received and asked to pray during the session. A presbytery of Moses Westberry and L. W. Bryan met with Dees and another gentleman, Thomas Doyal, to consider ordaining them to the ministry. New River, one of thirteen churches in the association, claimed fifty members.<sup>55</sup>

The following year, the church's membership remained at fifty, although it had baptized sixteen believers of the thirty-five new members reported for that year.<sup>56</sup> In 1854 the membership had dropped to thirty. The association authorized the clerk to prepare a letter of dismissal for the church which sought



withdrawal from the association.<sup>57</sup> The church continues to function in the present day as a Missionary Baptist congregation.

### **Ochlocknee Association organized 1827**

The Ochlocknee Baptist Association was organized at Bethel Church in Lowndes (now Brooks) county, Georgia, on November 17, 1827, with seven churches that secured dismissal from the Piedmont Association. Serving as the organizing presbytery were Matthew Albritton (b. 1785; d. 1849) and Fleming Bates. Bates was elected as the association's first moderator and served for the next three years.<sup>58</sup>

The six churches that took part in the formation of the new entity, included two Florida churches: Hephzibah in Gadsden county and Mt. Gilead in Jefferson county. Within six years the Ochlocknee Association grew to 35 cooperating churches with a combined membership of 1,010. That growth prompted the association to extend its boundaries to touch the Piedmont Association on the east and the St. Johns River to its southeast and proceeded west along the Georgia-Florida territorial boundary. That area encompassed churches located in six North Florida Territorial counties that abutted South Georgia.

During the association's early years, at least sixteen Florida churches secured affiliation and included: Alachua county's New Zion church; Columbia county's churches, Newington, Shiloh, New River, Sheloh and Providence; Gadsden county's churches, Hephzibah and Hebron; Hamilton county's Concord Church; Jefferson county's Ebenezer, Mt. Gilead, Mt. Mariah and New Providence churches; Leon county's churches included Salem, Myrtle Springs, Indian Spring [sic] and Humility at Snell Point.<sup>59</sup> With the announced 1835 formation of the Florida-based

Suwannee River Baptist Association, three Georgia churches and five Florida churches, noted later, were issued letters of dismissal from the Ochlocknee Association.

**... Ochlocknee Association went on record opposing the “missionaries” who were considered “far from God” ...**

Given the influence of anti-missions’ proponent Isham Peacock and his disciples Matthew Albritton and Fleming Bates, it was only a matter of time before the Ochlocknee Association went on record opposing the “missionaries” who were considered “far from

God” in doctrinal integrity.<sup>60</sup> In 1833, the association approved Matthew Albritton’s “Circular Letter,” in which he expressed distain over the growing missionary movement. He objected to societies which “the Savior never called or spoke of; it is man’s plan.” Albritton further decried what the Primitive Baptists also believed to be a heresy of preaching man-devised plans of “temperance and morality and call it righteousness.”<sup>61</sup>

During the 1843 annual meeting, the Ochlocknee Association voted to reaffirm their 1833 stated objection of “opposing the missionaries” who were considered “far from God” in doctrinal integrity.<sup>62</sup> Delegates approved a revision to rule number 19 of the Decorum’s rules of order, that declared the association would not have fellowship with any church that supported “any modern Missionary, Bible, ... Sunday school Union Societies,” theological training school or related benevolent groups.<sup>63</sup> The

association also changed its name to the Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association.

## FLORIDA

### **Suwannee River Association organized in 1835**

In 1834, a recommendation was made to re-align the Ochlocknee Association by creating a new entity. This need grew out of the two realities that the number of Florida churches and their distance from the Georgia churches was making the association unwieldy.

During the 1834 annual meeting, the Ochlocknee Association delegates voted to issue letters of dismissal to eight churches – including five churches in Florida – to permit them to organize Florida's first Baptist association, the Suwannee River Baptist Association. The new association's organizational meeting was scheduled to be held on the first weekend in December, 1834, at the Concord Church in Hamilton county. Unfortunately, the appointed presbytery of ministers failed to attend. A subsequent meeting was held at Providence Church, Columbia county, September 1835, with Melus Thigpen (b. 1782; d. 1839) and William A. Knight (b. 1778; d. 1859) serving as the constituting presbytery.

Significantly, Knight was appointed in 1833 by the Ochlocknee Association to ensure newly constituted churches and the Suwannee River Association's governing documents, were orthodox and conformed to the Primitive Baptists' biblical theology, faith and practice.<sup>64</sup>

The earliest available records of the Suwannee River Association are the 1838 *Minutes*, that identifies the following four Florida churches to be among the 12 cooperating congregations: New Zion, Alachua county; New River and Providence churches in

Columbia county; and Concord Church, Hamilton county.<sup>65</sup>

The Second Seminole Indian War (1835 – 1842) had a debilitating effect upon the young association and its ability to grow in the number of cooperating churches. During its first five years the association only added four new churches. The territorial unrest prevented some churches from sending delegates to the annual meetings which were held in the safe haven of Georgia.<sup>66</sup>

Although the Indian conflict slowed the growth of the association, it did not slow down the growing anti-missionary sentiment. Within ten years after the association was established, the Missionary churches, including most of the original churches, had already left or were excluded. Those that left were prompted by an 1840 declaration against missions made during the association's annual meeting:

This Association is in favor of preaching the gospel, the circulation of the scriptures, and the advantages of education, and recommends temperance and morality in general, but to her members in particular; notwithstanding she is opposed to all modern institutions of men such as missionary, Bible, tract, and Sunday School societies, together with Baptists state conventions and theological schools and such life because their connection with the Church of God is unauthorized in scriptures. As such we cannot fellowship them or admit to our church privileges any person who is therewith connected in anywise, believing all such to be speculative in their nature and fruitful source for corrupting the church.<sup>67</sup>

The remaining pro-missionary church delegates were excluded during the annual meeting of the Suwannee River Association in 1844 by a revised rule (#21) added to the Decorum.<sup>68</sup> Upon arriving, delegates were surprised to discover that the anti-missions Primitive Baptists had arrived first with a majority of delegates, and the Missionary Baptists were refused recognition, according to the *Minutes* of one church.<sup>69</sup>

As previously noted, under the influences of Pastor-Elders Peacock, Bates, Albritton and Knight, who led the growing minority of Baptist churches in Georgia's wiregrass region, the anti-missions cause was nurtured. Their churches became known by various names including "Old School," "Regulars," "Hard Shell," and as "Primitive Baptists." In 1847 the association changed its name to the Suwannee River Primitive Baptist Association. It continued to function into the twentieth century.

Subsequently, Missionary Baptists in the North Central area of the Florida Panhandle agreed to organize the Suwannee Baptist Association in 1873. It was primarily comprised of small rural churches in Suwannee, Alachua and Hamilton counties.

### **Florida Association organized in 1843**

As previously noted, the Ochlocknee Association delegates voted to withdraw fellowship from churches that were sympathetic and supportive of the missionary cause after the association revised its rules of order.<sup>70</sup> That action caused Florida Missionary Baptists to set about the task of creating a pro-missions association of churches. Representatives from the six Florida churches formerly affiliated with the Ochlocknee Association as well as several persons from a few churches that had not been affiliated with any association, agreed to discuss the interest and

feasibility of organizing a Missionary Baptist association. The meeting was held at Leon county's Shilo [sic] Baptist Church on October 22, 1842.<sup>71</sup> With agreement to proceed with the formation of a new association an organization date was set for the following year. Thomas Lang, pastor of Shilo Church, wrote a letter to the churches along Florida's Panhandle and sent a letter to *The Christian Index*. Those letters invited interested pastors and church representatives to participate in the organization of a new association. The organizational meeting was held Thursday, March 2, 1843, Leon county's Indian Spring [sic] Baptist Church.

In attendance were delegates from 17 Florida churches that met at the rural Indian Spring [sic] Baptist Church. Represented at that meeting, were delegates from the ten original churches that participated in the March meeting: Concord, Madison county; Aeon, Leon county; Sharon, Madison county; Elizabeth, Jefferson county; Shilo [sic], Leon county; Monticello, Jefferson county; Indian Spring [sic], Leon county; Hebron, Gadsden county; Hickstown, Madison county; and Ebenezer, Jefferson county.<sup>72</sup>

Also present were delegates from seven additional churches that were received into the Florida Association, and included: Ocilla, Jefferson county; Liberty, Thomas county, Georgia; Apalachicola, Franklin county; Bethpage near Monticello, Jefferson county; Providence, Gadsden county; Hopewell, Jefferson county; and Little River later renamed Troupville, Lowndes county, Georgia.<sup>73</sup>

The seventeen churches reported a combined membership of 670. During the prior year those

churches had baptized and received 138 new believers.<sup>74</sup>

A separate article detailing the establishment of the Florida Baptist Association is included within this issue of the *Journal*.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> E. C. Routh, "The District Association," *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptist*, Vol. 1, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Robert G. Gardner, Charles O. Walker, J. R. Huddleston, and Waldo P. Harris, III, *A History of The Georgia Baptist Association, 1784 – 1984*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (College Park, GA.: N&R Printing, Inc., 1996), 138.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Brackney, *The A to Z of the Baptists*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Walter B. Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America: 1707 – 1824*, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 103.

<sup>6</sup> B. F. Riley, *A Memorial History of the Baptists of Alabama*, (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1923), 102.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh C. Bailey, "History of the Bethlehem Baptist Association, 1826 – 1976," unpublished manuscript, Special Collections Department, Samford University Library, no date, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; Supplemental material from Claudia Mae Huston, "A History of the Early Baptist Churches in Alabama," master of arts thesis for the University of Alabama, 1960, Special Collections Department, Samford University Library, 57.

<sup>10</sup> Huston, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Bailey, 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Lelia Abercombie, "Early Churches of Pensacola," *The Florida Quarterly*, Vol.37, Number 3 and 4 (combined issue), 1959, 451.

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, Appendix Table D – Churches Admitted to the Association, 1826 – 1879, Bethlehem Baptist Association.

<sup>16</sup> *The Alabama Baptist*, December 24, 1847.

<sup>17</sup> Bethlehem Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1841.

<sup>18</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida, Okaloosa Baptist Association*, Civilian Works Administration, Appendix, n. p. Also see Sharon D. Marsh, editor, *Yellow River Baptist*

*Church: Membership Records and Chronological History, 1840 – 1950*, (Brewton, AL: Sharon D. Marsh publisher, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Bethlehem Baptist Association *Annual*, 1841.

<sup>20</sup> Judith Richbourg Jolly, “Escambia River Baptist Church,” *The Heritage of Santa Rosa County, Florida*, (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publishing Consultants Inc, 2003), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Bethlehem Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1845.

<sup>22</sup> Joe M. Bamberg, *The History of First Baptist Church of Milton, Florida, 1845 – 1996*, (Milton, Florida: Culpepper Printing, 2000), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Abercrombie, 458.

<sup>24</sup> Bobby J. Musselwhite, “Santa Rosa Baptist Association,” *The Heritage of Santa Rosa County, Florida*, (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publishing Consultants Inc, 2003), 32.

<sup>25</sup> Alabama Baptist Convention *Annual*, 1837, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Blount E. Davidson, “Alabama Associations/Extinct,” *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Vol. 1*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 13.

<sup>27</sup> “A History of the Campbellton Baptist Church,” an undated typewritten manuscript with no author identification, held in the files of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, Florida, 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> West Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1849, “Circular Letter.”

<sup>29</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1844.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists*, (Jacksonville, FL: Convention Press, 1972), 27.

<sup>31</sup> Stonington (Connecticut) Union Association, *Minutes*, 1844, 284.

<sup>32</sup> Jefferson B. Browne, *Key West: The Old and the New*, (St. Augustine, FL: The Record Company, 1912), 43.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Lewis’ correct pastoral service was with the Third Baptist Church, Groton, Connecticut, as recorded in the Stonington Union Association, *Minutes*, 1843. That official record corrects the published history of the Key West Church recorded in Jefferson Browne’s book and several Florida Baptist history books that previously incorrectly stated that Lewis served the Second Baptist Church, North Stonington, Connecticut.

<sup>35</sup> Stonington (Connecticut) Union Association, *Minutes*, 1843, 276.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1846, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Donald S. Hepburn and E. Earl Joiner, *Favored Florida: A History of Florida Baptists, Volume One: 1784 – 1939*, (Gainesville, FL: StorterChilds Publisher, 2013), 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



- <sup>39</sup> J. H. Breaker, *Report of American Baptist Home Mission Society*, May, 1846, 46. Also see Breaker's letters in *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal*, September, 1850; 90, 94 – 90 .
- <sup>40</sup> Stonington (Connecticut) Union Association, *Minutes* 1846, 9.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1847, 8.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1848, 9.
- <sup>43</sup> South Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1876, 1.
- <sup>44</sup> Manatee Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1885, 1.
- <sup>45</sup> Key West Baptist Church history files maintained by the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, FL.
- <sup>46</sup> John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 24.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>48</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1819.
- <sup>49</sup> Crowley, 22.
- <sup>50</sup> Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church, *Minutes*, January 7, 1821.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1821, 3<sup>rd</sup> item of business.
- <sup>53</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1825, 20<sup>th</sup> item of business.
- <sup>54</sup> Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church, *Minutes*, August 15, 1835.
- <sup>55</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1850, 1-2.
- <sup>56</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1851, 7.
- <sup>57</sup> Piedmont Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1854, 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Crowley, 31.
- <sup>59</sup> Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1833 and 1834, "State of the Churches" Appendix.
- <sup>60</sup> Crowley, 55.
- <sup>61</sup> Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1833, "Circular Letter."
- <sup>62</sup> Crowley, 55.
- <sup>63</sup> Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1843, 5.
- <sup>64</sup> "Knights Come to Lowndes County, Ga.," article on website at <https://raycityhistory.com/wordpress/tag/William-A-Knight>, accessed August, 2023.
- <sup>65</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1838, "State of the Churches" Appendix.
- <sup>66</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1839, item 23.
- <sup>67</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1840.
- <sup>68</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1844, "Decorum," newly added rule 21.
- <sup>69</sup> New River Baptist Church *Minutes*, July 26, 1845.
- <sup>70</sup> Crowley, 83.
- <sup>71</sup> *The Christian Index*, December 13, 1844, 1.
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<sup>72</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1843, “State of the Churches” Table, n. p.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, “State of the Churches” Appendix, n. p.

# **Local Church Autonomy and the Role of Associations Defined by America's First Baptist Assembly**



*by David T. Crum, PhD  
Assistant Professor of History  
Truett-McConnell University, Georgia*

The body of Christ comprises believers from different denominations, traditions, and cultures. The invisible church, often called the “original” Catholic Church, not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church, consists of any genuine believer in Christ (Philippians 3:20). Doctrinal positions and theology separate the various traditions. Nevertheless, all Bible-believing churches maintain they are part of the extended body of Christ and often have no issues fellowshiping with those outside their practices.

While all traditional, evangelical sects of Christianity acknowledge the invisible church, differences in theology, doctrine, and church polity exist. Although not a salvation issue, the contrast in church autonomy is essential for many denominations. Typically, a church falls within one of three branches of a church structure, the Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational model. Historically, Baptists pride themselves on being devout Congregationalists. Baptists historically affirm that the church’s power is found within the congregation. Such ideas protect their churches from the single, one-person role experienced by the Roman Catholic Church, from whom the Reformers departed.

While the period of the Protestant Reformation shaped the future of Evangelical Christianity, focusing mainly on *Sola scriptura* or Scripture alone, the Reformation also paved the way for a departure from Roman Catholic rule, where the Pope maintained the ultimate authority in church affairs, both locally and universally. Freedom within the church government provided religious liberty, which was lacking for centuries within the faith. The colonists, too, mainly from Great Britain, experienced persecution and suffering at the hands of the King and the structure enforced by the Church of England, very similar to the makeup of the Roman Catholic Church.

Baptists, like other early denominations, arrived on the scene directly from the original Reformation around the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. While the Southern Baptist Convention formed later in 1845, the model of the denomination's church polity or autonomy remained primarily influenced by the Philadelphia Baptist Associations' 1749 annual meeting. Within this meeting, Benjamin Griffith presented an essay that reaffirmed and established the importance of the church's autonomy for generations to come.

### **America's First Baptist Association**

In order to properly analyze the role of the church and the first Baptist association, it is crucial to evaluate how and why the earliest confederation formed. The English colonies in the New World provided a unique opportunity for believers of Christ. Regardless of their denominational background, religious freedom separated North America from other parts of Europe. More specifically, the Quaker-founded Pennsylvania served as the standard for embracing the notion of freedom of religion. Within the colony, Philadelphia served as a "primary location for Baptists within the

region.”<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvanian Baptists formed the first Baptist church in Pennepek.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by Baptist churches forming in nearby New Jersey, establishing a group of like-minded Christians within the newly constructed colonies.<sup>3</sup> Baptist Historian H. Leon McBeth wrote:

It (Philadelphia Baptist Association) was the first organized Baptist association in America. In 1742 that association adopted a confession destined to shape Baptist theology in America for more than a century and in 1749 issued a carefully reasoned explanation of the power and limitations of an association. By 1770 this association had founded a Baptist college (in Rhode Island), sent out home missionaries, provided a cohesive center for Baptist life throughout America, and was entertaining plans for a Baptist organization to cover the entire country.<sup>4</sup>

The recently formed association undoubtedly set the model for Baptist churches and traditions. While the Baptist churches embraced the idea of local church autonomy and prided themselves as fervent Congregationalists, the early Baptist Americans knew an association assisted their churches and themselves in a unified mission focused on the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Two particular elements of the original association held great importance. First, as churches continued to form, many congregations lacked a permanent preacher; the association, therefore, provided an opportunity for pastors to notice such needs and assist in pulpit supply. Further, a mission-focus agenda solidified the association's early years. James L. Clark wrote, “The early missionary outlook of this body was concerned with domestic evangelization only. This remained true for many years after its organization. In 1770 Morgan Edwards

proposed that this body appoint an evangelist to travel and preach in the colonies.”<sup>5</sup>

In the heart of the Great Awakening, denominations differed in their positions and thoughts of revivalism in America. Baptists, particularly those affiliated with the Philadelphia Association, strongly supported the revivalist movement.<sup>6</sup> By the early eighteenth-century, Baptist churches had formed in the southern colonies of South Carolina, Virginia, and North

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Carolina. With many churches forming, a partition of beliefs separated Baptists too, most notably a separation of “cultural variation and

worship style.”<sup>7</sup> Further division grew in the southern colonies between Regular and Separate Baptists.

While Baptists agreed on most issues within their theological beliefs and distinctions, each church, pastor, and Baptist often differed, leading to some distinct views. It was within the Philadelphia Baptist Association that the churches of the surrounding area could affirm their doctrinal stances on the probing questions of the day. One such issue was the local church’s authority and the association’s role in church government and practice. Perhaps unknowing of it at the time, Benjamin Griffith’s essay presented in the annual meeting of 1749 laid the foundation for church autonomy for generations to come and continues to be analyzed today. Though a reasonably concise

document, Griffith's essay underscored the importance of the local church and highlighted the role of the association or general assembly.

### **Benjamin Griffith's 1749 Essay on Church Autonomy**

Griffith, a pastor from Montgomery Baptist Church of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, had the opportunity and privilege to present his essay on the role of the local church and association.<sup>8</sup> All delegates of the annual meeting signed his work, affirming his positions.<sup>9</sup> In reality, Griffith's essay became a standard, largely used today on the importance of local church government within the Baptist tradition. Likewise, the brief yet decisive analysis also exemplified the importance of the association of churches, a standard seen today within the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and other state Baptist conventions.

Well aware of the importance of polity organizational standards, Griffith wrote, "An Association is not superior judicature, having such superior power over the churches; but that each church hath a complete power and authority from Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup> Clearly, in line with the most critical parts of the Protestant Reformation, Griffith placed the church in Jesus Christ's hands. Like the Reformers before him, Griffith embraced *Sola scriptura* and knew the Lord reigned over His sheep (Ephesians 5:23-27). Simply, the standards needed to be the Savior's teachings and principles. Southern Baptist Robbie Trent wrote the following on the historical position of the church: "The word *ecclesia*, translated 'church,' was a common one to people of Jesus' day. Among the Greeks it meant the assembly of the citizens of a free city or state, called together by a herald blowing a

horn. Among the Hebrews it meant the congregation of Israel called together before the tabernacle in the wilderness by the blowing of a silver trumpeter.”<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on freedom of worship and assembly underscored the role of the local church.

Historically, churches composed of voluntary community members united together in fellowship and worship to praise the Lord and Savior. Trent alluded to Jesus being the foundation of any church:

Jesus it was who began a new kind of *ecclesia* or church. It was composed of those whom he had called apart and had made into a new kind of people. This group of people he termed “my church.” That adjective “my” gives Christian meaning to the church as an institution.<sup>12</sup>

This summary supported Griffith’s foundational remarks – that the church’s root must be Jesus Christ. The association delegates also knew a united group of Baptists could likewise assist churches from trouble, perhaps from past or future heresies similar to those experienced in the ancient church. The confederation may be best described as a consultive assembly, as noted in Griffith’s writing:

The Baptist Association, therefore, arrogates no higher title than that of an Advisory Council, consistent with which epithet it ought ever to act, when it acts at all; without intruding on the rights of independent congregational churches; or usurping authority over them.<sup>13</sup>

Robert Torbet expanded on the role of the first association: “The Association was regarded as both an advisory council in matters of local concern and an expression of the larger church through which the mind of Christ might become known. It was therefore



looked to for decision and guidance in matters both trivial and important.”<sup>14</sup> Honoring and respecting the individual and authority of each congregation remained the most crucial part of the established churches. Torbet continued, “A reading of the minutes from year to year indicates that the various churches relied upon the Association for advice and even the settlement of disputes.”<sup>15</sup>

On respecting the individuality and independence of the local church, joining a “confederation” or the association was strictly optional. Griffith wrote, “Where Providence gives them their situation, convenient, may and ought, for their mutual strength, counsel, and other valuable advantages, by their voluntary and free consent, to enter into an agreement and confederation.”<sup>16</sup> Careful analysis of his writing underlines the complete control of each local church. Joining the association was voluntary, and never to be forced upon congregations. However, a united Baptist front provided benefits and commonality, strengthening the leaders and members as one body in Christ.

Nonetheless, not everyone could join, the prospective churches needed to adhere to the basic foundations of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, underlined in the doctrine and practice of existing Baptists. Position statements and later agreed-upon confessions underscored such standards. H. Leon McBeth explained the core tenets:

First, the association served as a doctrinal monitor. In time, most of the associations adopted a confession of faith, and some made adherence a condition of affiliation. Churches that departed significantly from Baptist doctrines were to be dealt with by the association and excluded if they did not recant.

Second, the association advised on Baptist practices.

Third, associations served as clearing houses in personal matters. Churches seeking pastors and pastors seeking settlement often worked through the associations.

Fourth, the associations promoted benevolent work, primarily in three areas of Christian education, the struggle for religious liberty, and home missions.

Fifth, associations provided fellowship for lonely Baptists.

Sixth, the associations provided models for preaching. Preaching was always a major feature of association meetings, and churches put forward their best preachers.<sup>17</sup>

While the original association maintained just a few official statements, necessary future declarations, including an order of discipline, developed. Member churches were required to send delegates that represented the local church. The delegates maintained power and representation, signing off on crucial assembly decisions. Griffith elaborated:

We are of the opinion, that an Association of the delegates of associate churches have a very considerable power in their hands, respecting those churches in their confederation; for if the agreement of several distinct churches, in sound doctrine and regular practice, be the first motive, ground and foundation or basis of their confederation.<sup>18</sup>

**. . . the foundation  
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It remained crucial to respect each church and affirm the differences that separated the

respective congregation. While minor anomalies could separate churches, the foundation was the theological doctrine of Christ and the overall Baptist position. As such, the association held power to remove churches from the federation if a church did not adhere to position statements agreed upon by the member delegates.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, each congregation could leave the association freely if it so chose.

The confederation was essential in protecting its churches and members from “ungodliness.” Though a loaded term, the association feared the heathens of the day as well as individuals misusing the Scriptures, those often referred to as false prophets (Matthew 7:15). Griffith explained, “The delegates of associate churches may exclude and withdraw from defective and unsound or disorderly churches or persons.”<sup>20</sup> Comparing the idea to the early church councils, he continued:

The practice of after ages is found in chap. Xvi 4 (Acts). Consistent therewith, the practice of after ages is found to be; when, because they had no council, synod, or association to convene, of course they called a council in order to make head against any error or disorders, when in any particular church, such things grew too big for a particular church peaceably to determine, as the case about circumcision was at Antioch.<sup>21</sup>

The original Baptists knew well that even a minor fraction in a local church could destroy a

congregation. Therefore, having the ability and duty to step in and intervene in such situations laid the foundation to protect both the church and its members. The logic was quite simple; the church maintained complete autonomy, though if a severe or un-Biblical issue arose, the association had the duty to protect the congregation by relying on the Bible as the standard for any decision. Summing up the purpose of the association, Griffith concluded:

An Association of the delegates of confederate churches may doctrinally declare any person or part in the church, who are defective in principles or disorderly in practice, to be censurable, when the affair comes under their cognizance, and without exceeding the bounds of their power and duty to advise the church that such belong unto, how to deal with such, according to the rule of the gospel discipline; and also to strengthen such a church, and assist her, if need be, by sending able men of their own number to help the church in executing the power vested in her by the ordinance of Jesus Christ, and to stand by her, and to defend her against the insults of such offending persons or parties.<sup>22</sup>

The association strongly supported the local church, adhering to the congregationalist view of local church autonomy. However, the delegates and member churches knew heresy and false teachings could affect any physical church body. Here, the association took a firm stance and vehemently agreed to defend member churches from such potential scenarios. Likewise, when a church needed help, whether by a pastor filling the pulpit or providing other resources or counsel, the association united to care for its

churches. Torbet wrote on the focused power of the association, “It should not be concluded, however, that the Philadelphia group had no defined powers.”<sup>23</sup> He added, “The author (Griffith) made it quite clear that the Association had considerable power over its member churches in cases of defection from generally accepted doctrine and practice. It was allowed that such power might manifest itself in the exclusion of such a church from the fellowship of the Association.”<sup>24</sup>

While the original association was small in numbers at inception, it set a principle that did not go unnoticed, one that soon formed in the southern colonies too. James L. Clark wrote, “This essay (Griffith’s) began to exert a strong influence upon other associations in this country soon after its adoption by the Philadelphia Association. The Charleston Association when organized in 1751 at Charleston, South Carolina, at that time also concluded that Griffith’s essay should be inserted in their Book, as judging it most expressive of the Power and Duty of an Association.”<sup>25</sup>

It remains important to note, the Philadelphia Baptist Association would be one of many found within the colonies. However, it started a standard and stood apart as the prime example for Baptist associations and fellowship. Interestingly, delegates from the Philadelphia Baptist Association later maintained a voice in political discourse when urging liberty from English rule, exemplifying their own standards and practices as the standards. Torbet wrote:

In 1757 it had a membership of twenty-five churches which were situated in the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Virginia, and Maryland. The statistics on

membership were not recorded until 1762, when there were twenty-nine congregations with 4,018 members. The significance of the association cannot be overemphasized, for without violating Baptist church autonomy, it provided a source of guidance and unity at a critical period of organization in the denomination.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps not known to the region's Baptists of the day, their organization, meetings, and this essential essay compiled in 1749 laid the groundwork for modern-day associations and conventions and underscored local church autonomy. Likewise, it played a role in further discussions on religious freedom and liberty. Historians today still study the impact of the Great Awakening and religious freedom movements of the day in conjunction with the American Revolution. The original Baptists clearly played a role here.

### **Conclusion**

A rather brief, simple essay composed in 1749 set the foundation of Baptists for future generations. While Baptists of the past and present are proud Congregationalists, most affirm the need for some form of counsel and agree that a united group of churches protects their congregations and members from outside controversies and heresies.

**...the Protestant  
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Churches, run by humanity, are sadly too prone to a rapid departure from Scripture. A study of church history provides such an understanding. Arguably, the Protestant

Reformation set the original standard relying on the Scriptures alone and underlining that salvation is by faith alone. The Reformation paved the way for later councils and associations. Griffith's essay underscored that the individual church held power and laid its foundation on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Philadelphia Baptist Association started small yet provided a standard in church autonomy that influenced Baptists from their beginning until today. Their makeup and position on liberty also spread through the colonies, assisting in the formation of other associations and even playing a part in the American Revolution.

Their view was simple: the church has ultimate control, though the association existed to support the local church, provide help when and where it could, and protect its members from false ways and teachings. The latter is the most monumental part of the association. The Lord Himself promised false teachers existed, and Christians today know this remains the case. A united association of Bible-believing churches helped combat such false teachings and highlighted the importance of the body of Christ versus the idea of following one man, who, like any human being, was a fallible creature.

Baptists historically rejoice in their formation, focusing on church autonomy, yet rightly acknowledging the importance and usefulness of a united front of churches within an association. The position provides individuality yet also protection from heresies. Griffith's essay laid the foundation for such principles for generations to come.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 211.
- <sup>2</sup> James L. Clark, *To Set them in Order: Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of America to 1814*, (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 7.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas S. Kidd & Barry Hawkins, *Baptists in America: A History*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2015.
- <sup>7</sup> McBeth, 223.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert R. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1950), 213.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> A. D. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, from A. D. 1707 to A.D. 1807: Being the First One Hundred Years of Its Existence*, (1749; reprint, London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 61.
- <sup>11</sup> Robbie Trent, *The Faith We Share*, (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1947), 86.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Clark, 133.
- <sup>14</sup> Torbet, 212.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.
- <sup>16</sup> Gillette, 61.
- <sup>17</sup> McBeth, 244-246.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> McBeth, 244-246.
- <sup>20</sup> Gillette, 62.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> Gillette, 63.
- <sup>23</sup> Torbet, 213.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> Clark, 128.
- <sup>26</sup> Torbet, 214.



## **The Missions' Legacy of the Florida Baptist Association**

*by Donald S. Hepburn  
Managing Director  
Florida Baptist  
Historical Society*



The Florida Baptist Association was the first Missionary Baptist association of churches established in the Florida Territory in 1843. As noted elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*, Florida Baptist churches sought affiliation with Baptist associations outside the Florida Territory as early as 1821.

The first Florida-based association was the Suwannee River Baptist Association organized in 1835 with five churches formerly affiliated with the increasingly anti-missionary Georgia-based Ochlocknee Baptist Association. Consequently, like the Ochlocknee, the Suwannee River Association by 1845 had officially assumed their growing stance to “oppose all modern institutions of men such as missionary, Bible, tract, and Sunday School societies.”<sup>1</sup> By then the few remaining Missionary Baptist churches had already withdrawn fellowship.

As a result of the evangelistic efforts of itinerant missionaries sent into the Florida Panhandle, the organization of new churches soon followed. Those isolated church members sought to have fellowship with other Baptists of like faith and practice. In those early years the distance between churches made it difficult to easily communicate let alone have fellowship. Joining with other churches into an

association would be a continuation of the biblical mandate to carry the gospel message of Jesus Christ beyond their “Jerusalem,” of the local settlement. And cooperating as a Baptist association they could fulfill the Acts 1:8 directive to go into “all Judea (the surrounding counties), and in Samaria (throughout Florida), and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

In a move to establish an association that was missionary in spirit and commitment, leadership of a handful of Florida Baptist churches prayed and acted to organize the first truly missionary Baptist association within this state. Those actions in 1842 and 1843 resulted in the establishment of the Florida Baptist Association that continues to function 180-years later in 2023.

The missions' legacy of the Florida Association is reflected in its: significant leaders; on-going faithfulness to the biblical mandate to evangelistically reach out to the spiritually desolate places across the Florida peninsula and establish Baptist churches; and encourage and develop additional Missionary Baptist associations.

### **Responding to the Anti-missions Doctrine**

During the 1842 annual meeting, the Georgia-based Ochlocknee Association voted to reaffirm their 1833 decision and action “opposing the missionaries” who were considered “far from God” in doctrinal integrity.<sup>2</sup> Delegates approved a revision to rule number 19 of the rules of order, that declared the association would not have fellowship with any church that supported “any modern Missionary, Bible, . . . Sunday school Union Societies,” theological training school or related

benevolent groups.<sup>3</sup> The association also changed its name to the Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association. That action caused Florida Missionary Baptists to set about the task of creating a pro-missions association of churches. Representatives from the six Florida churches formerly affiliated with the Ochlocknee Association, as well as several persons from a few churches that had not been affiliated with any association, agreed to discuss the interest and feasibility of organizing a Missionary Baptist association. They met at Leon county's Shilo [sic] Church on October 22, 1842.<sup>4</sup>

With agreement to proceed with the formation of a new association, an organization date was set for later that year. Thomas Lang (ca. 1800 – 1880) Pastor-Elder (at the time ordained leaders were referred to as Elder) of Leon county's Shilo [sic] Church and Aenon Church, was selected to write a letter to the churches along Florida's Panhandle and invite them to participate in the organization of a new association. The organizational meeting was set for Thursday, March 2, 1843, to be held at Leon county's Indian Spring [sic] Baptist Church. Lang apparently sent a copy of the November 26, 1842, dated letter to the Georgia *Christian Index* which printed the announcement February 3, 1843. The Lang communication stated:

**. . . the interest  
and feasibility  
of organizing a  
Missionary  
Baptist  
association . . .**

*Dear Brethren and Sisters:  
In consequence of a recent separation of several  
of the churches from the Ochlocknee Association  
a meeting was held at Shilo Church to take into*

*consideration the propriety of forming a new Baptist Association of the churches who wish to be allowed the liberty of conscience.*

*It was resolved that the new association be convened at the Indian Spring Church, Leon County, Florida, on Thursday before the first Sabbath in March next and that a letter of invitation be given to the churches favorable to this association. The churches will please send two delegates with a letter containing the wish of the church to become members, also a statement of the number in full fellowship and the time of holding their meeting.*

Your Brother in the Gospel,  
Thomas Lang, Sect'y Pro Tem.”<sup>5</sup>

As the newly called pastor of the Madison county's Concord Church, Richard Johnson Mays (b. 1808; d. 1864) received a copy of the Lang invitational letter. Mays presented the letter to the Concord congregation during their January 15, 1843, church conference. The letter was recorded verbatim into the church *Minutes*. More importantly, the church members understood and agreed with Pastor-Elder Mays' pro-missionary position. They voted to accept the invitation to join the new association and elected Elders Richard J. Mays and H. S. Linton as delegates to the planned association's organizational meeting.<sup>6</sup>

In that same February issue of the Georgia news journal, another letter from Lang reported that, “Several of the churches in this section have held meetings and united in the determination to form a new Association; and for this purpose, have appointed

Thursday, the 2nd day of March, 1843, to meet . . .” Noting that several Georgia Baptist pastors had offered to help organize the association, Lang went on to express the hope that “our brethren that have promised will remember their promises.”<sup>7</sup>

On Thursday, March 2, 1843, delegates from ten Florida churches, representing nearly 200 Florida Baptists, met at the rural Indian Spring [sic] Baptist Church. Lang had anticipated as many as ten pastors from Georgia’s Bethel Baptist Association (a pro-missions’ group) to be in attendance for the organization of the Florida entity, but only one out-of-state preacher came. He was 76-year-old Edmund Talbot of Columbia, Henry county, Alabama.<sup>8</sup>

Several months later Thomas Lang reported to *The Christian Index* on the organizational meeting. He was not only most appreciative for Talbot being present, but Lang assigned the unofficial name to the newly organized association. Lang wrote, referring to Talbot, “His counsel and his preaching was indeed like the coming of Titus to the churches of old, for we greatly needed one of his years and experience in the formation of a new association; and I think I may say that the Florida Association will long remember the last sermon delivered by this time-honored servant of God.”<sup>9</sup>

A subsequent brief notice by Editor Joseph S. Baker in the October 6, 1843, issue of *The Christian Index*, with the headline “Florida Association,” announced the first official annual meeting of the Florida Association being scheduled. It would be held near Monticello in the Ebenezer Baptist Church October 14 – 17, 1843.<sup>10</sup>

In attendance at that October meeting were delegates from 17 Florida churches. Those present were delegates from the ten original churches that participated in the March meeting at the Indian Spring Church: one Gadsden county church, Hebron; three Jefferson county churches, Elizabeth, Monticello, and Ebenezer; three Leon county churches, Indian Spring [sic], Aenon, and Shilo; as well as three Madison county churches, Concord, Sharon, and Hickstown.<sup>11</sup>

Also present were delegates from seven additional churches that were received into the Florida Association as newly cooperating churches, and included: three Jefferson county churches: Ocilla, Bethpage near Monticello, and Hopewell; Gadsden county's Providence Church; Franklin county's Apalachicola Church; and two Georgia-based churches: Liberty in Thomas county; and Little River later renamed Troupville (present day Valdosta), Lowndes county.<sup>12</sup>

The seventeen churches reported a combined membership of 670. During the prior year those churches had baptized and received 138 new believers.<sup>13</sup>

### **First Annual Meeting**

That first annual meeting convened on Saturday (October 14) with a sermon delivered by Richard J. Mays, of the Concord Church, Madison county. The attendees elected John Broome, part-time pastor of both the Ebenezer Church, Monticello, and the Sharon Church, Madison county, as moderator. Pastor-Elder Samuel C. Craft of the Bethpage Church, Monticello, was elected clerk. This was followed by preliminary organizational matters that included receiving delegates from the cooperating churches. Additionally, committees were appointed to prepare reports to be

made during the ensuing meeting days. The next day, being a Sunday, was “wholly devoted” to preaching services, two sermons in the morning and two in the evening.<sup>14</sup>

The Monday session consisted of discussing and approving a proposed constitution, a confession of faith, a “decorum” (the rules of order for the annual meeting). Although the *Minutes* did not record any discussion, but noted “after due deliberation” the several documents were “unanimously received.”

The several documents had been developed and presented by a committee comprised of Pastor-Elders

H. S. Linton, Richard J.

Mays and W. B. Copper;

plus, two laymen, S. H.

Butler and J. S. Hart. It is

likely sample documents

from other associations were

used in drafting the Florida Association’s governing

documents. However, within two years the

association’s articles of faith would be questioned for its

orthodoxy by the Georgia Baptist Convention, and

subsequently revised by the association, as noted later

in this narrative. A circular letter was read and

approved, that was to be sent to all the cooperating

churches and sister associations.<sup>15</sup>

**. . . within two  
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### **Appointing and Sending Missionaries**

Sending itinerant missionaries to preach the gospel in the isolated settlements across the Panhandle, with the goal of starting Missionary Baptist churches, was one of the priorities, purposes and goals of the Florida

Association. Such an endeavor required the financial support of its small band of several dozen churches. And in the first several years that funding was realized.

### **RYAN FRIER**

On the final day of the first annual meeting, the association voted to employ a missionary.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, **Pastor-Elder Ryan Frier** (also spelled Fryer and Friar) (b. 1800; d. 1890) was enlisted to minister in East Florida. Born in the year 1800 in Bulloch county, Georgia, Frier married October 9, 1819, to Sarah Peacock, daughter of Primitive Baptists' advocate Elder Isham Peacock (b. 1742; d. 1850). Frier was ordained to the ministry February 9, 1833, by Union Church in Lowndes county, Georgia, following a review made by an ordination presbytery composed of anti-missionary proponents Pastor-Elders Melus Thigpen (b. 1782; d. 1839), William A. Knight (b. 1778; d. 1859), and Matthew Albritton (b. 1785; d. 1849).<sup>17</sup> Despite the influences of the Primitive Baptists upon his early life, Frier became a Missionary Baptist of distinction.

Within a year of his 1843 appointment by the Florida Association, Frier was concurrently serving as itinerant pastor to two Columbia county churches: Columbia and South Prong; and two Hamilton county churches: Beulah and Concord.<sup>18</sup> As was typical of the day, Baptist preachers were not paid for their ministerial duties, but had to either farm or perform another job to support their family. The small stipends paid by an association barely covered travel expense.

As the associational missionary, Frier started several Missionary Baptist congregations in Florida, as well as starting churches in the Georgia counties of Lowndes



and Echols. In addition to the church starting, he was an evangelist and encourager to the association's congregations across the frontier. Frier reported that in his first year of being an itinerant preacher, he had travelled 4,079 miles on horseback and preached 170 sermons and baptized 38 persons.<sup>19</sup> Frier subsequently moved his family to Central Florida, near Plant City, where he lived the last twenty years of his life before dying at age 90.<sup>20</sup>

### **JAMES McDONALD**

The following year of 1844, to assist Frier in this ministry in East Florida, the association's executive committee announced the appointment of **Pastor-Elder James McDonald** (b. 1798; d. 1869) as another itinerant missionary. McDonald's service was to commence once his missionary contract commitment had expired with the American Baptist Home Mission Society.<sup>21</sup>

**“ . . . We are all  
most  
destitute of  
preachers.”**

Born in Scotland of distinguished ancestry in 1798, James McDonald came to America in 1818 at the age of 20 and settled in Burke county, Georgia. It was there that McDonald was led to Christ and baptized by the Baptist church. He later was licensed to preach by the Richland Creek (Ga.) Baptist Church. Beginning in 1832, McDonald was appointed by the Georgia Baptist Association to serve as a missionary to Burke county and eventually was appointed as an itinerant missionary by the Sunbury Baptist Association. While traveling his ministerial itinerary, McDonald read an article that appeared in the July 7, 1836, issue of *The Christian Index*. A Baptist layman, Edwin Hart,

appealed to preachers of the gospel to come to Florida. "If there is any country in these United States that stands in need of preaching, it is Florida. We are all most destitute of preachers." It was as if the Spirit of God had issued a "Macedonian" call. In quick order McDonald secured the approval of the Sunbury Association for him to extend his missionary travels into East Florida beginning in April, 1837.<sup>22</sup>

McDonald, in 1838, along with Ryan Frier, served as the organizing presbytery of the Bethel Baptist Church of Jacksonville out of which evolved the First Baptist Church.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, his most enduring service was nearly ten years as Pastor-Elder of the Sharon Baptist Church in Nassau County, a congregation he started in 1841. During the 1845 meeting of the Florida Association, McDonald, as Pastor-Elder, represented four churches: Sharon and Bethel churches, as well as Columbia county churches New River and Providence; all of which presented petitioners' letters to join the association.<sup>24</sup>

### **JOSHUA MERCER**

Also in 1845, the association agreed to appoint another missionary. This person was to be a "discreet and acceptable minister, to travel and preach in the destitute places in this association and adjacent neighborhoods." The association's executive committee employed **Pastor-Elder Joshua Mercer** (b. 1788; d. 1869) to serve as "domestic missionary" to West Florida for an annual salary of \$245.<sup>25</sup> Mercer, who served as Pastor-Elder of Jackson county churches Bethlehem and Sardis, had been among the founding pastors of the Florida Association. However, in 1846 when the Florida Association authorized the dismissal of churches to organize the West Florida Association,

Mercer became the leader and missionary to that new missions' entity.

A Wilkes county, Georgia, native Joshua Mercer was born June 10, 1788. As a young man Joshua was baptized by his brother Jesse into the Bethesda (GA.) Baptist Church.<sup>26</sup> Years later, in God's providence, Joshua Mercer surrendered to the call of the preaching ministry at age 42 – old age by the standards of the day. He was licensed to preach in 1830 and two years later he was ordained to the ministry by Pastor-Elders Joseph Ross and Travis Everett.<sup>27</sup> Although Joshua supported his family by farming, for five years he served as a pastor and church starter in southwest and central Georgia, as well as a domestic missionary for the Georgia Baptist Convention.<sup>28</sup> His itinerant preaching circuit took him into Jackson county, Florida, where he assumed regular preaching at the Bethlehem Church (later called Campbellton) and the Sardis Church (now known as Shady Grove). In March, 1843, a notice in the *Georgia Christian Index* reported Mercer had moved from Baker county, Georgia, to Marianna, Jackson county, Florida.<sup>29</sup> At his new home, Mercer continued farming to support his family. On March 16, 1845, he and Thomas Lang served as the presbytery at the organization of the Union Academy Church (later called Greenwood). He served a total eight years as pastor of the church: 1845 to 1848 and 1851 and 1854.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, during these years Mercer was leading the West Florida Association, discussed later in this article.

### **ADDITIONAL PART-TIME MISSIONARIES**

During the fall 1846 meeting held at the Monticello Church in Jefferson county, the Florida Association's executive committee reported the total employment of five missionaries. Assigned to the West was Pastor-

Elder **Thomas J. Bowen** (b. 1814; d. 1875) of Gadsden county. Assigned to Middle Florida were Pastor-Elder **Zachariah G. Wheeler** (b. 1811; d. 1872) of Columbia county and Pastor-Elder **Samuel C. Craft** (b. 1813; d. 1878) of Alachua county. And continuing their assignments in Duval and Nassau counties of East Florida were Pastor-Elder Ryan Frier and Pastor-Elder James McDonald.<sup>31</sup>

Underscoring the association's missionary commitment to share the gospel and start churches along the known Panhandle, the contingent of missionaries was a partial fulfilment of an association-approved action taken in 1845 to increase the total missionaries to three each in west and east Florida. Additionally, the association's pastors, were urged to set aside one month each year devoted to doing church starting.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, within two years, the aggressive missionary outreach ended. The appointed missionaries were relieved of their duties due to the lack of financial support from the churches to fund the missionaries' meager salaries.<sup>33</sup>

**The appointed  
missionaries  
were relieved of  
their duties . . .**

### **Affiliation with Georgia Baptists**

Having recently organized a uniquely Florida-oriented association, Florida Baptists realized it would be some time before there would be a large enough number of churches to organize a state convention. Consequently, some leaders began discussing the value and possibilities of joining with the Georgia Baptist Convention. Obviously, such affiliation could provide needed bonds of fellowship and inspiration. More importantly, perhaps financial and personnel resources

could be cooperatively provided to attack the spiritually destitute areas of Florida. During the 1845 meeting of the Florida Association, delegates approved a petition for membership being submitted to the Georgia Baptist Convention. Pastor-Elders James McDonald, John Broome and Thomas Lang were appointed to deliver the affiliation petition.<sup>34</sup>

The request presented to the Georgia Convention caused a “protracted debate” during the 1846 state convention gathering.<sup>35</sup> At issue were two concerns. One dealt with whether or not the Georgia Convention’s Constitution permitted accepting for membership a group that was not within the geographical boundaries of Georgia.<sup>36</sup> This was subsequently resolved when the Convention amended its Constitution provision governing membership.<sup>37</sup> A second issue revolved around the association’s supposed adherence to the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* as reflected in the association’s articles of faith approved in 1843. Baptist Historian John Crowley observed that the Florida Association, “freed from the restraints imposed by their former anti-missionary connection, adopted the liberally Calvinistic New Hampshire Confession which emphasized, ‘the freeness of salvation,’ and downplayed, without denying, election and predestination.”<sup>38</sup>

James McDonald assured the Petitioners’ Committee of the Georgia Convention that the association was not Arminian in theological practice, but Calvinist.<sup>39</sup> The association had evidently adopted the New Hampshire Confession because it was easily at hand in the *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, not because the founding church leaders embraced or tolerated Arminian doctrine.<sup>40</sup> With the two stumbling blocks for

membership cleared, the Georgia Convention agreed to accept Florida as a cooperating member.

The following October, the association delegates, upon learning of the difficult reception its representatives experienced at the Georgia Convention, agreed to adopt articles of faith “of a different phraseology.” In contrast to the detailed 14-point statement of faith previously embraced, the revised statement was very simplified. The new statement of faith with 12 parts – which were considered “one by one” by the Florida Association’s delegates – more clearly reflected Calvinistic doctrine.<sup>41</sup>

**... agreed to  
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Ironically, the issue of having articles of faith that conformed with then-prevalent Baptist orthodoxy, was a matter addressed by the Florida Association during their 1853 meeting.

In considering three churches seeking affiliation, one church was denied fellowship. The Summerhill Church, Thomas county, Georgia, was “rejected in consequences of their defective confession of faith, it being what is usually termed, ‘The New Hampshire Confession of Faith.’”<sup>42</sup>

The question of continued cooperation with Georgia Baptists was considered by the Florida Association delegates during the October 1846, annual meeting. They agreed, “that the appointment of messengers to the Georgia Baptist State Convention, be indefinitely postponed.”<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, without explanation, Florida Association delegates were appointed infrequently to attend the Georgia annual meeting, as reflected in Georgia records. As an example, in 1850,

1851 and 1854, Floridians David Porter Everett, Wiley Blewitt, and B. S. Fuller were registered as single delegates for the respective years.<sup>44</sup> By 1853, leaders of the Florida Baptist Association were developing plans to organize their own state convention.

### **Organizing a Florida State Convention**

Within a few years following the problem encountered with the Georgia Convention, Florida leadership made the major step to organize their own Florida-based state convention. Florida Baptist Historian John Rosser reported that oral tradition credited Concord Church in Madison county as the place where the idea first emerged.<sup>45</sup> The suggestion that a Florida Baptist State Convention be organized was first officially made in the Florida Association annual meeting on November 19 – 22, 1853, at Olive Church, then located in Thomas county, Georgia, (now in Jefferson county, Florida).

During the Monday morning session, a resolution was approved which called for the organization of a Florida Baptist State Convention. Such a statewide organization of Florida Baptist churches could more effectively commit its personnel and financial resources to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ within the state, as Acts 1:8 would characterize as our “Samaria.”

**In quick order the  
Florida Association  
voted to join with the  
Alachua and  
West Florida delegates . . .**

Delegates also appointed committees to contact the other two associations to determine their interest in the venture.

William B. Cooper and Wiley J. Blewett were asked to contact the West Florida Association, and S. W. Baker and W. H. Goldwire were to contact the Alachua Association. Both delegations were to report at the next annual session of the Florida Association, if there was consent to organize a state convention.<sup>46</sup>

A year later, the Florida Association met in the Concord Church several miles north of the town of Madison, from Saturday, November 18 through Tuesday evening, November 21, 1854. The 40 to 50 church delegates and visitors heard the reports from the committees that had been assigned to contact the Alachua and West Florida associations. The two reports noted the respective associations were supportive of organizing a state convention and indicated that messengers from the sister associations were “fully authorized to go into an organization . . . to be consummated immediately.”<sup>47</sup> In quick order the Florida Association voted to join with the Alachua and West Florida delegates to organize a convention. They took a ballot to elect their ten delegates to the organization meeting set for the next evening.<sup>48</sup>

Later that Monday evening at 8:00 p.m., November 20, the seventeen delegates from the three associations assembled across the road from the Concord Church and up the hill in the parlor of Richard Johnson Mays' home – Clifton Mansion – to organize the convention.

The seventeen delegates who participated in organizing the state convention, grouped by their association representation, were: three men from the West Florida: Joshua Mercer, David Porter Everett, and G. W. Underwood; four delegates from the Alachua: Jeremiah M. Hayman, Daniel Edwards, J. H. Breaker, and



William Connell; and the ten men from the Florida: Richard Johnson Mays, William B. Cooper, B. S. Fuller, W. H. Goldwire, Wiley J. Blewett, D. G. Daniels, H. Z. Ardis, Samuel C. Craft, T. W. Terrell, and John Cason.<sup>49</sup>

Richard J. Mays was asked to preside over the organization meeting, and D. G. Daniels was appointed recording secretary. After a reading from the scriptures, a season of prayer likely sought the leadership of God's spirit as the group undertook its task. A major item of business was the adopting of a constitution. No doubt it is likely that copies of the Georgia Baptist Convention Constitution and the Southern Baptist Convention Constitution had been brought to provide guidance to the organizing group. Interestingly, the Florida convention's original governing document did not provide for local church membership to participate in the annual state convention meeting. Similar to the Georgia and S.B.C. constitutions, delegate participation was primarily for Baptist associations. Other delegate options included "auxiliary" societies that made \$50 annual contributions to the state convention, as were individuals who made a \$10 contribution annually to the convention.<sup>50</sup>

The group then elected officers for the new convention: Richard J. Mays, president; D. G. Daniels, recording secretary; Samuel C. Craft, assistant secretary; and layman John Cason as treasurer.<sup>51</sup> Then they elected the following as an executive committee to manage the organization's affairs between the annual convention meeting: H. Z. Ardis, Samuel C. Craft, William B. Cooper, B. S. Fuller, W. H. Goldwire, and Wiley J. Blewett.<sup>52</sup> The final action was to set the next meeting

for November 30, 1855, at Union Academy Church, Jackson county.

### **Providing Churches to Start Six Associations**

As a result of its missionary actions, the Florida Association, helped spread the gospel across the state. Their steadfast efforts included evangelizing the spiritually lost, starting churches and releasing member churches to directly support the organization of as many as six associations – Alachua, West Florida, Middle Florida, Apalachee, Gadsden County and Wakulla/Big Bend. Several of those associations, responding to the spread of Baptist churches, in turn sponsored the start of other associations across the state.

The vast distances made it impossible for far-flung churches from having fellowship with other churches, let alone easily

**. . . the Florida convention's original governing document did not provide for local church membership . . .**

participate in the association's annual meeting. During its fall 1846 meeting the Florida Association authorized the dismissal of churches that wanted to participate in the creation of two new associations and appointed presbyteries to affirm the orthodoxy of the participating Baptist churches and oversee their organization as a Baptist association.<sup>53</sup> The friendly departure of a total 12 churches – nine to the East and three to the West – temporarily reduced to 22 congregations remaining in the Florida Association.<sup>54</sup>

## **ALACHUA /NATURE COAST ASSOCIATION- 1847**

Those churches east of the Suwannee River and south into the north central region of the peninsula that organized into a new Baptist group subsequently took the name Alachua Baptist Association. The Florida Association's appointed presbytery was comprised of Pastor-Elders Richard J. Mays, W. B. Cooper, Ryan Frier, B. S. Fuller, and Samuel C. Craft.

Originally called the Alachua Missionary Baptist Association, this entity was established April 16 – 17, 1847, during a meeting of church delegates held at the Fort Clarke Baptist

**Since 2006  
this historic  
Baptist association  
has been  
known as  
Nature Coast.**

Church (later called Gainesville's First Baptist Church).<sup>55</sup> The association's geographical coverage started at Alachua county and continued south to Hillsborough county, and spanned the state from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.

The 13 constituting congregations (that included four previously unaffiliated congregations), grouped by their county location, included: Mt. Pleasant Church and Ft. Clarke (Gainesville) Church in Alachua county; Benton (later called Hernando) county churches of Bethesda, Eden, Bethlehem; Columbia county churches of Columbia, Providence and South Prong; Bethel Church in Duval county; Marion county churches of New Hope, Fellowship, and New Providence; and Sharon Church in Nassau County.<sup>56</sup>

Missionary James McDonald was elected moderator and Thomas J. Prevatt was designated as clerk. Also present were itinerant missionary John Tucker and Elder J. M. Hayman who represented the Eden Church.<sup>57</sup> Since 2006 this historic Baptist association has been known as Nature Coast.

The Alachua Association contributed churches to the organization of at least six other associations, including: Santa Fee River Missionary (now called North Central Florida) (1857); South Florida (1867); Beulah (now called North Florida) (1879); Marion (1885); Lake County (1924); and Sumter (1992). A separate article in this issue of the *Journal* provides a brief historical summary of those associations.

### **WEST FLORIDA ASSOCIATION-1847**

Another group of churches, located west of the Chattahoochee River, that subsequently organized called themselves the West Florida Baptist Association.<sup>58</sup>

This missions' organization encompassed the Panhandle counties of Jackson, Holmes, Washington, Walton and Calhoun. The Florida Association-authorized presbytery was comprised of Pastor-Elders N. M. Havens, Thomas Lang, H. S. Linton, and J. W. P. McCall.

At the called meeting, held on the second Saturday in November 16-17, 1847, in Jackson county's Bethlehem Church (later renamed Campbellton), representatives from 14 Florida and Alabama churches were present to discuss the formation of an association. The churches represented included: Walton county's New Hope Church; Holmes county's Bethel Church; Washington

county churches of Econfina, Harmony, Holmes Creek, Holmes Valley, Liberty Hill, and Rehobeth; Jackson county churches of Mount Pleasant, Sardis, Union Academy (later called Greenwood) and Bethlehem; Also participating were delegates from three Henry county, Alabama churches: Big Spring, New Hope and Woodville.<sup>59</sup>

**Joshua Mercer was selected as  
moderator beginning in 1850 . . .  
for the next ten years.**

The newly organized association adopted the “Articles of Faith with Scripture References” from the Tuskegee (AL) Baptist Association, with “one or two amendments” not specified.<sup>60</sup> Inasmuch as there was no state convention in Florida with which to affiliate, the newly formed association agreed to affiliate with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. This affiliation apparently was easily accomplished because, prior to the formation of the association, many of the West Florida churches were affiliated with the Tuskegee Association that provided indirect affiliation with the Alabama Convention.

The association’s first moderator, Elder David Porter Everett (b. 1814; d. 1879), pastor of the Orange Hill Church, was re-elected until 1849, during the entity’s third annual meeting. Subsequently, Joshua Mercer was selected as moderator beginning in 1850 and was continuously re-elected for the next ten years. Pastor-Elder Joseph H. Wombell was employed as the first domestic missionary in 1849. His service concluded after one year when the Southern Baptist Domestic

Missions Board sent him to Brownsville, Texas, to do mission work.<sup>61</sup>

The West Florida Association, on at least five occasions, issued letters of dismission to permit groups of its cooperating churches to organize new associations and their organization date: the Sandy Creek (1871) that later was re-named Geneva; Rocky Creek (1888) that dissolved by 1925; churches in Holmes county (1906) withdrew to organize the Bethel, that later was re-named the Holmes County Association; and in 1926 the churches of Jackson county withdrew and organized as the Jackson County Association, later renamed the Chipola;<sup>62</sup> and in 1934 assisted in the formation of the Northwest Coast.<sup>63</sup> A separate article in this issue of the *Journal* provides a brief historical summary of those associations.

#### **MIDDLE FLORIDA ASSOCIATION-1900**

At the turn of the century, in 1900, another group of 11 churches sought dismissal from the Florida Association to form the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Those churches primarily were located in Madison county, including Hopewell, Live Oak, Macedonia, Midway, Mt. Mariah, Pine Grove and New Hopewell. The other cooperating churches included: Lafayette county's Brewer Lake Church and Pleasant Grove Church; and Taylor county's Pleasant Grove Church and Triumph Church.<sup>64</sup> Upon convening the messengers elected T. J. Farnell, pastor at Day, as moderator. Also elected were Pastor J. L. Rutherford of Madison, as clerk, and layman F. B. Williams of Madison, as treasurer.<sup>65</sup>

In an interesting contrast to other associations, the messengers approved a constitution that was a combination statement of faith and organizational protocol. A separate Decorum or rules of order also was

adopted. The association clearly defined its purpose: “to conduct the work of missions, colportage, sabbath schools and other work that will tend to the spread of the Gospel.” Additionally, reflecting a cultural perspective of the times, the Article 2 stated the association, “Shall be composed of white members chosen by the respective churches in its union . . .”<sup>66</sup> During the 1913 annual meeting, “a motion that the word ‘white’ be stricken from the constitution was unanimously carried.”<sup>67</sup>

### **APALACHEE ASSOCIATION-1950**

By the 1950s, the Florida Association had grown to 40 churches scattered over eight counties in the eastern half of the Florida Panhandle that stretched from the Georgia-Florida state line south to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Those counties included Leon,

Jefferson, Gadsden, Taylor, Franklin, Liberty and Wakulla.

Only eight of the churches existed in cities, the remaining churches were located in what were classified as rural (14), village (10), and towns (8).<sup>68</sup>

**. . . the Apalachee  
Association  
presented  
to the Florida  
Association a  
written  
request for letters  
of dismissal . . .**

An organizational meeting was held on February 20, 1951, at the Providence Baptist Church with 11 churches from Calhoun, Gadsden and Liberty counties and initially was named Gadsden Baptist Association<sup>69</sup> (not to be confused with the Gadsden County Baptist Association which was organized in 1961). During the October 11, 1951, annual meeting of the Florida

Association, Pastor Forrest May, of the Greensboro Church, as the elected moderator of the Gadsden Association, presented to the Florida Association a written request for letters of dismissal for the six churches that had formed the new association. Five unnamed churches plus the following six churches which withdrew from the Florida Association formed the new association: Bristol, First; Flat Creek; Greensboro; Lake Mystic; Santa Clara; and Wilma.<sup>70</sup>

On October 10, 1955, the association changed the name to Apalachee Baptist Association.<sup>71</sup>

#### **GADSDEN COUNTY ASSOCIATION— 1961**

The first meeting to discuss the plans for a Gadsden County Association was held in Gretna on March 7, 1961, with 48 present.<sup>72</sup> On May 17, 1961, a meeting was held in the Gretna Church and 12 churches reported they had voted in favor of forming the new association.<sup>73</sup> The First Session of the Gadsden County Baptist Association was held on October 23, 1961, at the Thomas Memorial Baptist Church, Quincy.<sup>74</sup> The following churches from the Florida, Apalachee and Rocky Creek associations were charter members of the association: Antioch; Chattahoochee; Concordia; Flat Creek; Greensboro; Gretna; Little Sycamore; Mt. Zion; Providence; Quincy, First; Santa Clara and Thomas Memorial.<sup>75</sup> The Rev. L. B. Thomason was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>76</sup>

#### **WAKULLA COUNTY/BIG BEND ASSOCIATION- 1983**

The fifth association established using churches formerly affiliated with the Florida Association occurred in 1983. Church leadership from primarily Wakulla and southern Leon counties raised the



prospect of establishing their own association. The Florida Association during its 1983 annual meeting agreed to issue letters of dismissal to those eleven churches that wanted to participate in the newly organized Wakulla Baptist Association.<sup>77</sup> On March 1,

**In 1988 the  
Wakulla  
changed its  
name to the  
Big Bend Baptist  
Association**

1984, an organizational meeting for the new association consisted of representatives from Sopchoppy First Church; Panacea First Church; St. Marks First Church; four Crawfordville churches: First, Lake Ellen; Pioneer; and Shady Sea; and four churches from Tallahassee: Mount Elon, Riverside, Riversink, and subsequently the Haywood Cates Church. In 1988 the Wakulla changed its name to the Big Bend Baptist Association.<sup>78</sup>

During the next several years, the new association attracted several additional churches, but it became evident that the association could not financially support a missions' program. In 1999 the Big Bend Association's messengers approved the "studying the feasibility of our association merging" with the Florida Association.<sup>79</sup> Subsequently, the Florida Association, during its 2000 annual meeting, received a report from the association's executive director welcoming "the nine churches joining us from the former Big Bend Baptist Association of churches."<sup>80</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The year 2023 marks 180-years since the organization of the Florida Baptist Association. Since its founding, the association has remained steadfast to its constituting commitments of: promoting fellowship

among the cooperating churches; providing advice and counsel to the churches; aiding in starting new churches; appropriating monies for missionary endeavors; and ensuring orthodoxy to Baptists' biblical faith and practices.<sup>81</sup>

From those original 17 churches spread over much of north Florida, the association has decreased its geographical footprint. Yet, it has enhanced its missionary outreach through the starting and nurturing of other Baptist churches and associations. Despite releasing dozens of churches over the years to establish those new associations, the contemporary ministry effectiveness of the Florida Association is reflected in the 51 congregations that today continue to be beacons of gospel hope to the spiritually lost.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1840.

<sup>2</sup> John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), 83.

<sup>3</sup> Ochlocknee Primitive Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1842, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *The Christian Index*, December 13, 1842, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, February 3, 1843, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin B. Browning, Sr., *History of the Concord Baptist Church*, (Madison, FL: Concord Baptist Church, 1976), 14 – 15.

<sup>7</sup> *The Christian Index*, February 3, 1843, 74.

<sup>8</sup> James C. Bryant, *Indian Springs, The Story of a Pioneer Church in Leon County Florida*, (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1971), 39.

<sup>9</sup> *The Christian Index*, June 16, 1843, 373 – 375.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph S. Baker, "Florida Association," *The Christian Index*, October 6, 1843, 632.

<sup>11</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1843, "State of the Churches" table, np.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, "State of the Churches" Appendix, np.

- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.  
<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.  
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.  
<sup>17</sup> Folks Huxford, *Pioneers of the Wiregrass Georgia, Vol III*, (Pearson, GA: Atkinson County Citizen Press, 1957, reprinted 1975), 100.  
<sup>18</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1844.  
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1845, 7.  
<sup>20</sup> Huxford, *Pioneers, Vol. III*, 100.  
<sup>21</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1845, 2, item 34.  
<sup>22</sup> James C. Bryant, “James McDonald: Missionary to East Florida,” unpublished manuscript, presented to the Florida Baptist Historical Society annual meeting, May 5, 1984, 2 – 3.  
<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.  
<sup>24</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1845, 1, and 8, “State of the Churches” table.  
<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1845, 7.  
<sup>26</sup> Robert G. Gardner, Charles O. Walker, J.R. Huddleston, and Waldo P. Harris, *A History of The Georgia Baptist Association, 1784 – 1984*, (Washington, GA: Wilkes Publishing Company, 1988), 108.  
<sup>27</sup> “Joshua Mercer, The Pioneer Baptist Leader of Florida,” Unpublished paper, no author, no publication date, 6; held in the Special Collections of Baptist and University Archives, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.  
<sup>28</sup> “Georgia Baptist Ministers, 1800s – Early 1900s,” and “Georgia Baptist Leaders, 1788 – 1840,” resource files held in the Special Collections of Baptist and University Archives, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.  
<sup>29</sup> *Christian Index*, 1843, 518.  
<sup>30</sup> Union Academy Baptist Church, *Minutes*, Greenwood, Fl.; March 16, 1845, August 20, 1846, and September 1, 1855.  
<sup>31</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Minutes*, 1846, 4-5.  
<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>33</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1848, item 27.  
<sup>34</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1845, item 32.  
<sup>35</sup> Georgia Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1846, 4.  
<sup>36</sup> Samuel Boykin, *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia, Vol. I*, (Atlanta: Harrison and Company, Printers and Publishers, 1881), 212.  
<sup>37</sup> Georgia Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1846, 4.  
<sup>38</sup> Crowley, 81.  
<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>40</sup> Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Freedom, Religion, Authority and Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785 – 1900*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 110.
- <sup>41</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1847, item 36.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1853, item 2.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1846. Item 22.
- <sup>44</sup> Georgia Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1850, 5; 1851, 5; 1854, 4.
- <sup>45</sup> John L. Rosser, *A History of Florida Baptists*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1949), 36.
- <sup>46</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1853, item 30.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1854, item 16, 2.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, item 16, 3.
- <sup>49</sup> Florida Baptist State Convention *Proceedings*, November 20, 1854, recorded in the Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1854, 14 – 16.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1846, item 23.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, “State of the Churches” table, np.
- <sup>55</sup> *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal*, Vol. II, No. 5, October, 1847, (Richmond, Virginia), 123.
- <sup>56</sup> Alachua Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1848, “Statistical Report;” also see Doak S. Campbell, *The Florida Baptist Association, 1842 – 1942*, (Tallahassee: Executive Committee of the Florida Baptist Association, 1943), 4.
- <sup>57</sup> Alachua Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1848, 1.
- <sup>58</sup> Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1846, item 8.
- <sup>59</sup> West Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1849, 7-8; and *Minutes*, 1900, 22.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1849, 4.
- <sup>61</sup> Jack P. Dalton, “A History of Florida Baptists,” a doctor of philosophy dissertation for the University of Florida, February, 1952, 81.
- <sup>62</sup> West Florida Baptist Association, *Annual*, 1947, 16.
- <sup>63</sup> Northwest Coast Baptist Association *Annual*, *Minutes*, 1935, 4.
- <sup>64</sup> Middle Florida Baptist Association *Proceedings*, 1900, 5.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 1913, 12.
- <sup>68</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1950, Table “A” Church Membership.
- <sup>69</sup> “Baptist Association Formed in Gadsden,” *Tallahassee Democrat*, March 18, 1951, 28.

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- <sup>70</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1951, 13.  
<sup>71</sup> Apalachee Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1955, 11.  
<sup>72</sup> Gadsden County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1961, 32.  
<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.  
<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.  
<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 1983, 15.  
<sup>78</sup> Wakulla Baptist Association *Annual*, 1988.  
<sup>79</sup> Big Bend Baptist Association *Annual*, 1999, 2.  
<sup>80</sup> Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 2000, 50.  
<sup>81</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1843, Constitution, item 11.

## **A Historical Summary of Florida Baptists’ Cooperating Associations**

*by Penny Baumgardner  
Freelance writer  
Graceville, Florida*



The movement within Florida for churches to cooperate as Baptist associations are discussed in other articles that appear within this issue of the *Journal*. At the heart of this effort was the need to be affiliated with other Baptists of like faith and practice. This desire for affiliation grew out of several needs, not the least of which was fellowship and inspiration.

Initially the association took on the role of mediator of disputes within and between Baptist churches and helped define appropriate church discipline for wayward members. Gradually, the association discontinued the practice of making judgments on personal lifestyle issues, delegating to local churches the responsibility for church member discipline.

The association soon became the motivating force for evangelism and church starting primarily within their respective geographical region. Much of the growth of the Baptist movement within Florida can be attributed to the sending of itinerant preachers and missionaries into settlements across the Florida Territory.

As noted in a separate article in this issue of the *Journal*, the first Florida-based association was established in 1835 with a handful of churches dismissed from the Georgia-based Ochlocknee Baptist

Association. That first association was called the Suwannee River Baptist Association.

Within ten years after the Suwannee River Association was established, the Missionary churches, including most of the original churches, had already left or were excluded. Those that left were prompted by an 1840 declaration against missions – considered “modern institutions of men . . . unauthorized in scriptures.” – made during the association’s annual meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The actions by both the Ochlocknee and Suwannee River Associations to no longer have fellowship with pro-missionary churches caused Florida Missionary Baptists to set about the task of creating a pro-missions association of churches within the Florida Territory. Beginning in 1843 and continuing to the present-day, Florida Baptist churches have organized and aligned as Baptist associations that generally, but not always, follow the geography of county boundaries.

**The following is an abbreviated history of the associations organized in Florida. The listing is organized chronologically. These brief history summaries include associations still functioning in the present day, as well as those associations that organized, but in time, disbanded or merged.**

### **1843 – FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

The Florida Baptist Association holds the distinction of being the oldest continuously functioning Missionary Baptist association in Florida. On October 14, 1843, the first annual session of the Florida Association was held at Ebenezer Baptist Church,

south of Monticello, Jefferson county, Florida,<sup>2</sup> with 10 churches in Jefferson, Leon, Madison, Gadsden, Duval, and Jackson counties.<sup>3</sup> Originally it included all missionary Baptist churches in Florida and a few in Georgia from Thomas and Brooks counties, but the last Georgia church withdrew in 1877.<sup>4</sup>

The following 17 churches were charter members of the Florida Association: Concord; Aenon; Sharon; Elizabeth; Shilo [sic]; Monticello; Indian Spring [sic]; Hebron; Hickstown (now Madison, First) and Ebenezer, all of which had withdrawn from the Ochlocknee Association. Other churches including Ocilla, Liberty, Apalachicola, Bethpage, Providence; Hopewell and Little River, affiliating as new churches.<sup>5</sup> The Rev. John Broome was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>6</sup>

The Florida Association subsequently cooperated in releasing member churches to directly support the organization of six new associations that occurred frequently into the twenty-first century. Beginning in 1846 it issued letters of dismission to member churches east of the Suwannee River and those west of the Chattahoochee River, the former group organizing the Alachua Association and the latter the West Florida Association.<sup>7</sup> In 1900, eleven churches were dismissed to organize the Middle Florida Association.<sup>8</sup> In 1951, six churches were released from the Florida Association to organize the Apalachee Association.<sup>9</sup> In 1961, Florida Association released churches to aid in the organization of the Gadsden County Association.<sup>10</sup> And finally, in 1983, a group of churches that were released to organize the Wakulla Association, subsequently returned in friendly cooperation with the Florida. The brief



histories of those associations are noted within this article.

In 1854 the Florida Association co-operated with the Alachua and West Florida associations to organize the Florida Baptist State Convention.<sup>11</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Florida Association had a membership of 51 cooperating churches and Sean McMahon was the missions' director. A more detailed article on the history of the Florida Association is included in this issue of the *Journal*.

The following association, that Florida helped to organize, is no longer functioning in Florida:

**1984-1988 Wakulla/1989-1999 Big Bend**

In 1983, eleven churches from the Florida Baptist Association organized the Wakulla Baptist Association. The organizational meeting was held on March 1, 1984 at First Baptist Church, Crawfordville.<sup>12</sup> In 1988-89 the Wakulla Baptist Association changed the name to Big Bend Baptist Association.<sup>13</sup> In 1999 the Big Bend Association appointed an ad-hoc committee of pastors, for the purpose of studying the feasibility of the association merging with the Florida Baptist Association.<sup>14</sup> In 2000 the churches of the Wakulla/Big Bend Association reunited with the Florida Baptist Association.<sup>15</sup> The Rev. Charles E. Morris was elected to serve as the first moderator of the Wakulla Baptist Association.<sup>16</sup>

## **1847 – ALACHUA/2006 – NATURE COAST ASSOCIATION**

On April 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 1847, a meeting was held at the Fort Clarke Baptist Church, (now Gainesville), to organize the Alachua Missionary Baptist Association.<sup>17</sup> Eight churches in North Florida east of the Suwannee River were granted letters to organize a new association by the Florida Association.<sup>18</sup> The following 13 churches in Alachua, Duval, Columbia, Benton (later called Hernando), Marion and Nassau counties, were the charter members of the new association: Mt. Pleasant; Ft. Clarke (Gainesville); Bethesda; Eden; Bethlehem; Columbia; Providence; South Prong; Bethel; New Hope; Fellowship; New Providence; and Sharon. The Rev. James McDonald was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>19</sup>

In 1854 it co-operated with the Florida and West Florida associations to organize the Florida Baptist State Convention.<sup>20</sup>

As the association grew in the number of cooperating churches, it would come to serve as a missionary association in providing member churches that withdrew to establish other associations: 1857 Santa Fe River (with former Suwannee River Association churches);<sup>21</sup> 1867 South Florida;<sup>22</sup> 1879 Beulah (with Santa Fe River churches);<sup>23</sup> 1885 Marion;<sup>24</sup> 1924 Lake County (with Wekiwa and Seminole churches);<sup>25</sup> and 1992 Sumter.<sup>26</sup>

The 2006 annual meeting reported the association, approved a name change to Nature Coast Baptist Association, serving churches in Citrus, Hernando and Sumter counties.<sup>27</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Nature Coast Association had a membership of 45 cooperating churches and Joe Maddox was the missions' director.

### **1847 – WEST FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

On November 13, 1847, an organizational meeting was held at the Bethlehem Baptist Church, (now Campbellton), to organize the West Florida Baptist Association.<sup>28</sup> Eleven churches located west of the Chattahoochee River, from the Florida Association were granted letters of dismission in 1846.<sup>29</sup> The new association included 11 churches in Florida and three in Alabama. The following churches from Franklin, Holmes, and Washington counties were charter members of the new association: Bethel; Econfina; Harmony; Holmes Creek; Holmes Valley; Mount Pleasant; Sardis; Union Academy; Bethlehem; Liberty Hill and Rehobeth. Also present were delegates from three Alabama churches: Big Spring, New Hope and Woodville.<sup>30</sup> The first known moderator of the West Florida Association was Elder Davis Porter Everett in 1849.<sup>31</sup>

As the association grew in the number of cooperating churches, it served as a missionary association in providing member churches that withdrew to establish other associations: 1871 (1876) Sandy Creek (now Geneva);<sup>32</sup> 1888 Rocky Creek;<sup>33</sup> 1906 Bethel now Holmes County;<sup>34</sup> 1926 Jackson County now called Chipola;<sup>35</sup> and 1934 Northwest Coast.<sup>36</sup>

In 1854 it co-operated with the Florida and Alachua associations to organize the Florida Baptist State Convention.<sup>37</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the West Florida Association had a membership of 15 cooperating churches and Caleb Duncan was the missions' director.

The following associations, that West Florida Association helped to organize, are no longer functioning in Florida:

**1871; 1876 – Sandy Creek/1876 - Geneva**

In 1871 (or 1876 given the official records are apparently lost to history), five churches located in Alabama withdrew from the West Florida Association to organize the Sandy Creek Baptist Association.<sup>38</sup> The following churches were members of the new association in 1877: New Hope; Limestone; Spring Creek; El Bethel; New Prospect; Sandy Creek; Pitman Creek and Mt. Pleasant.<sup>39</sup> The eleventh annual session was held with Friendship Church October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1887. At that session a resolution was adopted changing the name from “The Sandy Creek Association,” to the “Geneva Association.”<sup>40</sup> The Rev. J. E. Albritton was elected to serve as the moderator at the first session in 1877.<sup>41</sup>

The Geneva Baptist Association was organized in the same year as Sandy Creek, 1876. It was another one of the associations which contained churches in Alabama and in Florida.<sup>42</sup> By 1891 only two Florida churches remained: Limestone and New Hope.<sup>43</sup> The Geneva Association is now a member of the Alabama State Baptist Convention.

### **1888 – Rocky Creek**

The Rocky Creek Baptist Association organized in December, 1888 with six churches from the West Florida Association and two from Jackson County Association.<sup>44</sup> The group met at Sardis Baptist Church, (Jackson county) to organize the Rocky Creek Association.<sup>45</sup> It disbanded in 1925, making no report to the Florida Baptist Convention after that date.<sup>46</sup> The six churches from the West Florida Association were: Providence; Sardis; Mt. Olive; Dellwood; Snead's and Magnolia.<sup>47</sup> The Elder John Stewart was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>48</sup>

### **1857 – SANTA FEE RIVER/ 2014 – NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

The new missions' entity, originally called the Santa Fee River Missionary Baptist Association, (Fee changed to Fe in 1867) was constituted at the Wacahoota Baptist Church, 1857.<sup>49</sup> The organizational meeting was comprised of 32 churches from the Alachua Association and from the original Suwannee River Association (which became anti-missionary in 1845).<sup>50</sup> The new association represented the northeast Florida counties of Nassau, Duval, Clay, Putnam, Columbia, Hamilton, Alachua, Baker, Bradford, and Lafayette.<sup>51</sup>

As the association grew in the number of cooperating churches, it served as a missionary association in providing member churches that withdrew to establish other associations: 1873 Suwannee;<sup>52</sup> 1879 Beulah (with Alachua churches), Harmony and Jacksonville;<sup>53</sup> 1872 New River;<sup>54</sup> 1877 North St. Johns River (now St. Johns River).<sup>55</sup>

No minutes from the first annual session in 1857 are available. The first available record of a moderator was in 1862 when the Elder W. Johnson was re-elected to serve.<sup>56</sup>

In 2014 the association's name was changed to North Central Florida Baptist Association.<sup>57</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the North Central Association had a membership of 44 cooperating churches and Jeffrey Haglund was the missions' director.

### **1867 – SOUTH FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

The South Florida Association developed when a group of churches, primarily from the Alachua Association, convened at Shiloh Baptist Church, June, 1867, to consider the organization of a new association. The first official meeting was held December, 1867.<sup>58</sup> The following twelve churches located south of the Withlacoochee River<sup>59</sup> were granted letters of dismission to organize a new association: Alafia; Bethel; Mt. Hartsaff (now Wauchula, First); Lake Harris; Maple Branch; Midway; Peas Creek; Salem; Shiloh; Spring Branch; Tampa and Tenotassa.<sup>60</sup> The Rev. Samuel C. Craft was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>61</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the South Florida Association had a membership of 70 cooperating churches and Richard Williamson was the missions' director.

The following association, that South Florida Association may have helped to organize, is no longer functioning in Florida:

### **1879 – Midway**

Organized before 1879, the Midway Baptist Association is mentioned in the 1879 and 1881 *Minutes* of the South Florida Association.<sup>62</sup> However, no other historical record has been identified to provide further details.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During the 1881 South Florida Association meeting a resolution was approved that noted, “Nearly, or quite, all the churches of this association have requested prayers to be made for them, that the good work of the Lord be revived with them; and whereas, our former Moderator, Elder S. Walden, has sent special request that prayers be made that he be restored to health” which resulted in business being suspended, and the association messengers engaged in “fervent prayer for the two objects named,”

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### **1870 – WEKIWA /1978 – GREATER ORLANDO ASSOCIATION**

The Wekiwa Baptist Association held its first meeting in 1870 with only two known churches; Oviedo and Apopka.<sup>63</sup> The name Wekiwa is a Creek Indian word, meaning “spring of water.”<sup>64</sup> The first recorded annual meeting of the Wekiwa Association was held at the home of J. R. Tucker under a large sugar shelter around 1875, with six churches in the association.<sup>65</sup> The first recorded moderator was Elder Jeremiah H. Hayman.<sup>66</sup>

The Wekiwa Baptist Association voted in 1978 to change the name to Greater Orlando Baptist Association.<sup>67</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Greater Orlando Association had a membership of 161 cooperating churches and Tom Cheyney was the missions' director.

### **1872 – NEW RIVER ASSOCIATION**

The New River Baptist Association was organized in 1872. Its oldest records are lost to history, but at its ninth annual session, 1880, it reported 13 churches, some of them previously members of Santa Fe River Association. In 1880 most of the association's affiliated churches were in Bradford county, with a few in Columbia and Alachua counties.<sup>68</sup>

The earliest recorded minutes are from 1880, the annual meeting was held at Antioch Baptist Church, Alachua county, and Rev. L. W. Kickliter of Kingsley Lake Baptist Church served as moderator.<sup>69</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the New River Association had a membership of 26 cooperating churches and Jonathan Rodriguez was the missions' director.

The following association, that the New River Association may have helped to organize, is no longer functioning in Florida:

### **1903 – New Santa Fe/1906 – Central**

The New Santa Fe Association was organized in 1903 with six churches, four from New River Baptist Association in Alachua county. In 1906



the name was changed to Central Baptist Association. In 1925 the association disbanded after losing several of its stronger churches.<sup>70</sup>

### **1873 – SUWANNEE ASSOCIATION**

On October 13, 1873, the following churches from the Santa Fe River Missionary Baptist Association (after 1867 name change) asked for letters of dismission to unite with other churches in constituting the Suwannee Association: Antioch, Clay Land, Cypress Lake, Mount Zion, Macedonia and Wayfair.<sup>71</sup> Suwannee's early history is obscure, due to loss of records, but it is not to be confused with the original Suwannee River Association, organized in 1835, which became anti-missionary in 1845.<sup>72</sup> The 1885 *Minutes* record articles of faith, including foot-washing, which "should be observed immediately after the Lord's Supper." This practice had its roots in the Primitive Baptist movement of the 1830s and 1840s. In 1891, the provision for foot-washing was amended to clarify that "in no case, shall this article be so construed as to make it a test of fellowship." After 1911 this article had been removed from the articles of faith.<sup>73</sup>

There are no complete *Minutes* available prior to the turn of the twentieth century. The first available record of a moderator was in 1862 when Rev. B. D. Harrell was re-elected to serve.<sup>74</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Suwannee Association had a membership of 37 cooperating churches and Andy Jordan was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

The Suwannee Baptist Bible Conference was organized in 1933 by the First Baptist Church, Live Oak, led by Pastor John W. Evans. The goal was to provide a refresher course in theological studies with inspiration and fellowship for pastors in the immediate and adjoining associations of Baptist. Some pastors described the conference as one of the most unique and helpful meetings ever provided for them. The Suwannee Association *Annual* reported, many pastors said it was a “Little Seminary with big blessings for pastors.”

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### **1876 – MANATEE MISSIONARY/1897 – PEACE RIVER ASSOCIATION**

On October 26, 1876, delegates from churches in Manatee and Hillsborough counties met at the New Zion Church and organized an association naming it the Manatee Missionary Baptist Association.<sup>75</sup> The following six churches withdrew from the South Florida Baptist Association to become charter members of the new association: New Zion; Mount Moriah; Mount Pleasant; Friendship; Alafia and Benevolence.<sup>76</sup> Rev W. F. Norris was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>77</sup>

During the 1897 meeting of the Manatee Missionary Baptist Association, a motion by R. C. Hendry to change the name of the association from “Manatee” to “Peace River.” The *Minutes* specifically noted that the words “Formerly Manatee” be written in brackets just after, so as to preserve the history of the association.<sup>78</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Peace River Association had a membership of 26 cooperating churches and Mike Lowry was the moderator.

The following associations, that the Manatee Missionary/Peace River Association, may have helped to organize, are no longer functioning in Florida:

### **1892 – Manatee River**

In 1892 the following six churches requested dismissal from the Manatee Missionary Baptist Association to organize the Manatee River Baptist Association: Friendship; Benevolence; Mount Pisgah; Orange Grove; Braidentown [sic] and Chicora.<sup>79</sup> The request was granted with the suggestion that they assume some other name than Manatee River as it would lead to confusion on account of the similarity of names.<sup>80</sup> In 1902 in a report by the Manatee River Association; “after prayerful consideration we have disbanded the Manatee River Association, realizing that we were too poor financially, and too weak in members to cultivate the field as it should be for the good of the Master’s cause . . .”<sup>81</sup> disbanded and its churches returned to South Florida Association.<sup>82</sup>

### **1916 – Caloosa**

On October 20, 1916, a meeting was held at the Fort Myers Baptist Church, Lee county, for the purpose of organizing a new association.<sup>83</sup> It was believed that the formation of a separate organization would strengthen the small churches along the Calooshatchee River.<sup>84</sup> The

following six churches which withdrew from Peace River Association served as the charter members of the Caloosa Baptist Association: Alva; Bonita Springs; Fort Myers; Immokalee; LaBelle and Olga.<sup>85</sup> The Rev. A. M. Bennett was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>86</sup>

In 1918 the churches of the Caloosa Baptist Association could not meet due to the prevalence of the Spanish Influenza. The association concluded its member churches should return to the Peace River Baptist Association.<sup>87</sup>

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

In 1882, the Manatee Missionary Association adopted a motion that stated: “WHEREAS, The condition of the Indians of South Florida, in their heathen and savage state, is such as to excite our deepest sympathy, and believing as we do, that by proper efforts upon [sic] the part of the Government these Indians can now be civilized, therefore,

*Resolved*, That a committee of two from this and two from South Florida Association be appointed to prepare and present to Congress a suitable memorial in behalf of these Indians.” The Moderator appointed as such committee T. J. Sparkman, J. W. Hendry, L. J. Simmons and S. Walden.

### **1877 – ST. JOHNS RIVER ASSOCIATION**

The St. Johns River Baptist Association originally was organized in 1877 as the North St. Johns River Baptist Association by seven churches in Clay and Putnam counties which withdrew from the Santa Fe River Baptist Association.<sup>88</sup> Churches in St. Johns and Volusia counties were added later; the present name was adopted in 1881.<sup>89</sup> The earliest set of *Minutes* available are for 1879, where the association had its third annual session at the Shiloh Baptist Church, Clay county, October 18, 19, 20. The following churches were represented: Bethesda; Beulah; Bethlehem; Clear Water; Decoy; Enon; Gadara; Hickory Grove; Osceola; Penial; Paran; Sardis; Shiloh; and St. Johns.<sup>90</sup> The Rev. E. B. Timmons, pastor of four churches in the new association, was elected to serve as moderator of the third annual session.<sup>91</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the St. Johns River Association had a membership of 50 cooperating churches and Asa Greear was the missions' director.

### **1879 – BEULAH/2016 – NORTH FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

The Beulah Baptist Association was organized in 1879 by a group of churches from Santa Fe and Alachua associations in north central Florida.<sup>92</sup> Beulah was the 12<sup>th</sup> Missionary Baptist association to be organized in Florida and extended from the North Florida state line to the Gulf Coast.<sup>93</sup> It included Columbia, Hamilton, part of Suwannee, Gilchrist, Dixie, part of Levy and Alachua counties.<sup>94</sup> Its first meeting was held in 1879 at Lane's Branch Church<sup>95</sup> with the following three churches from the Santa Fe River Association and four unnamed churches from the Alachua Association as

charter members of the Beulah Baptist Association: Bethlehem, Elim, and Lake City. The Rev. R. F. Rogers was elected as the first moderator.<sup>96</sup>

In 2016, the Beulah Baptist Association voted on a name change to the Beulah Baptist Association d.b.a. North Florida Baptist Network (“Where we are: North Florida, Who we are: Baptist, What we do: Network”).<sup>97</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the North Florida Association had a membership of 35 cooperating churches and did not have a missions’ director.

The following associations, that the Beulah/North Florida Association, may have helped to organize, are no longer functioning in Florida:

### **1882 – Hamilton**

The Hamilton Baptist Association was organized in 1882, with eight churches, three of them in Georgia. The Suwannee Association approved its organization. In 1901 the Hamilton Baptist Association sent correspondence to the Beulah Association recommending the consolidation of the Hamilton, Suwannee and Beulah Associations.<sup>98</sup> Beulah responded by letter in 1902, “In view of the fact that the churches of the association have made noted progress in mission and spiritual work during the past year, it was voted that the Beulah Association does not deem it expedient and beneficial to the Lord’s cause to consolidate with the Hamilton and Suwannee Associations at this

time.”<sup>99</sup> Hamilton disbanded in 1905 after losing churches to other associations.<sup>100</sup>

### **1914 – Little River**

The Little River Association was organized in 1914 by four churches which withdrew from the Beulah Association due to disagreement over “Biblical principles.” The association’s churches accepted an invitation to rejoin Beulah Association in 1916 and ceased to exist as an independent Baptist association.<sup>101</sup>

### **1879 – HARMONY ASSOCIATION**

On October 31, 1879, a gathering of pastors representing churches in Levy and Alachua counties, assembled at Pine Grove Baptist Church for the purpose of organizing Harmony Baptist Association.<sup>102</sup> The following eight churches originally from the Santa Fe River Baptist Association were charter members of the Harmony Baptist Association: Concord, Corinth, Pine Grove, Elizabeth, Franklin, Jonesville, Spring Grove, and Union.<sup>103</sup> The Rev. Simeon Sheffield was elected as the first moderator.<sup>104</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Harmony Association had a membership of 27 cooperating churches and Jamie Brock was the missions’ director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During the 1896 annual meeting of the Harmony Association, Mrs. M. A. Tucker recommended, “that pastors encourage woman’s work in all their churches, urge upon their female membership the necessity of being actively engaged in the work of the Master, remind them of their great influence and point out to them the wonderful success that ever has, and ever will, attend their earnest efforts. To them properly belongs the lead in missionary work and we trust and pray that the ladies of all our churches will become aroused and go to work more earnestly on the various lines where their labor is so necessary and so helpful.”

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### **1879 – ST. MARYS RIVER/1901 – JACKSONVILLE ASSOCIATION/ 2012 – ENGAGAGEJAX/2022 – FIRST COAST CHURCHES**

On November 21, 1879, an organizational meeting for the St. Marys River Baptist Association was held at the Hebron Baptist Church, Camden county, Georgia.<sup>105</sup> Four churches entered into the organization at this meeting; Hebron and New Providence in Camden county, Georgia, and Mt. Olive and Mt. Zion in Nassau county, Florida.<sup>106</sup> These churches were located in Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida, in counties (Nassau and northern Duval)<sup>107</sup> adjacent to the St. Marys River.<sup>108</sup> The Rev. E. A. McWhorter was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>109</sup>



At the 24<sup>th</sup> annual session of the St. Marys River Baptist Association, which met at the Moniac Baptist Church, Charlton county, Georgia, October, 1902, Dr. W. A. Hobson of Jacksonville, made a motion to amend the Constitution changing the name to Jacksonville Baptist Association.<sup>110</sup>

In the fall of 2012, the Jacksonville Baptist Association started operating under the d.b.a. wordmark “engagejax.” This new identity was based upon three priorities of: church planting (Expand), church revitalization (Equip), and community ministry (Engage). The overarching goal was to make it easier to do each priority in Jacksonville and harder to do it alone!

In 2022 the Jacksonville Baptist Association began operating as First Coast Churches. Like the other name changes in their history there was a missional reason for the change. The association’s mission field was growing. Churches well beyond Duval county and Jacksonville were finding value in pastors being able to share together emphasis and resources. The association network is composed of churches and church plants in rural, urban, suburban and beach communities giving them a unique opportunity to work together as gospel partners.<sup>111</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the First Coast Churches Association had a membership of 169 cooperating churches and Bob Bumgarner was the missions’ director.

### **1885 – HERNANDO/1888 – PASCO ASSOCIATION**

On May 20, 1885, an organizational meeting<sup>112</sup> was held by nine churches from the South Florida Association to organize the Hernando Baptist Association.<sup>113</sup> The following churches were charter members of the Hernando Baptist Association: Anclote; Arkana; Bethany; Double Branch; Emaus; Hebron; Seward Lake; Sardius; Midway and New Hope.<sup>114</sup>

On November 2, 1888, during the fourth annual meeting of the Hernando Association, held at Dade City Church, Pasco county,<sup>115</sup> a resolution was approved that the name of the association be changed from “Hernando” to “Pasco.”<sup>116</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Pasco Association had a membership of 36 cooperating churches and Tally Wilgis was the missions’ director.

### **1885 – MARION ASSOCIATION**

On January 3, 1885, a meeting was held at the Wakahoota Baptist Church for the purpose of considering the “propriety” of organizing a new association.<sup>117</sup> The following 13 churches from the Alachua Association<sup>118</sup>, were enrolled: Wakahoota; Fellowship; New Mt. Arnon; Orange Creek; Pleasant Hill; Cedar Keys; Lochbie; Micanopy; Citra; Fort McCoy; Hickory Springs; Ocala and Stafford’s Pond.<sup>119</sup> On motion by Brother N. A. Bailey, it was unanimously agreed to organize a new association.<sup>120</sup> And a subsequent motion by Brother James Witherspoon, the name Marion Baptist Association was adopted.<sup>121</sup> The first annual meeting of the new

association was held later that year on October 7, 1885, at the Fellowship Baptist Church, Marion county.<sup>122</sup> The Rev. John Cordero was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>123</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Marion Association had a membership of 72 cooperating churches and Mark Weible was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During the 1896 annual meeting of the Marion Baptist Association a written inquiry from a member church was read and the recommendation of a committee was adopted: In response to the question, "Have the female members of our churches the right to make motions or second motions, in business meetings?" We answer, that it is the unanimous opinion of the committee, that female members of Baptist churches have the right to either make or second motions made at church business meetings."

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### **1889 – INDIAN RIVER/2003 – TREASURE COAST ASSOCIATION**

On November 22, 1889, the Indian River Baptist Association met at the Titusville Baptist Church<sup>124</sup> and was organized<sup>125</sup> with six churches from Wekiwa and St. John's River associations in Brevard and Volusia counties.<sup>126</sup> The following churches were charter members of the Indian River Baptist Association: Titusville; Merritt Island; Lake Ashby; Oak Hill; Bethlehem and Eau Gallie.<sup>127</sup> Brother D. L. Gaulden,

deacon of Titusville Baptist Church,<sup>128</sup> was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>129</sup>

At the annual meeting of the Indian River Baptist Association on October 20, 2002, a motion to change the name of the association to Treasure Coast Baptist Association, Inc., was made and adopted by a unanimous vote of the elected messengers.<sup>130</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Treasure Coast Association had a membership of 60 cooperating churches and Tim O'Carroll was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During the 1922, Indian River Baptist Association annual meeting Brother R. E. Hamrick made a motion to furnish Rev. E. M. C. Dunklin, associational missionary, "a better means of conveyance on his field. \$125.00 was suggested as sufficient to purchase a horse suitable for the service desired."

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### **1887 – PENSACOLA BAY ASSOCIATION**

On September 1, 1887, a group of Baptist churches located in the extreme West Florida area, primarily churches in Pensacola and Milton, which at the time were members of the Elim Association in Alabama, met to discuss the options for a separate organization of Florida churches.<sup>131</sup> The churches convened at the First Baptist Church, Pensacola.<sup>132</sup> The focus of the discussion was about organizing an association within Florida, "to be in union with our state [convention]

work and churches, and also with work of the Southern Home [Mission] Board.” The resulting approved resolution by G. W. Curtis, agreed to “advise our churches to withdraw from their present association, and to elect or appoint messengers to meet at Pensacola, Fla., Friday before the second Sunday in November, 1887, (Nov. 11, 1887) at 3 P. M. and there and, then organize a new association.”<sup>133</sup> The Rev. F. H. McGill was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>134</sup>

The following churches initially reported, with their messengers present, and were duly enrolled: Milton; Union Hill; Mitchell Creek; New Macedonia; Pensacola and Canoe Bluff.<sup>135</sup> Florida Baptist Historian Harry C. Garwood noted that all the Baptist churches in Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties were invited to co-operate in the new association, “but Florida churches of the Elim Association located in Alabama did not respond at this time, and efforts failed to persuade Graves Association” to merge with the Pensacola Bay.<sup>136</sup> Brother W. S. Brown is credited with proposing a name for the new missions’ entity, which he said would have world-wide recognition: “Pensacola Bay” Baptist Association.<sup>137</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Pensacola Bay Association had a membership of 54 cooperating churches and Brian Nall was the missions’ director.

The following association, which enlisted non-affiliated churches in West Florida prior to the organization of the Pensacola Bay Association, is no longer functioning in Florida:

### **1872 – Elim**

In the fall of 1872, Rev. J. L. Bryars, Rev. G. W. Miller, Rev. S. C. Johnson and Rev. H. G. B. Ray, met at Elim Church (Roberts, Alabama) and organized the Elim Baptist Association which was part of the original Bethlehem Association of Alabama. The new association these men organized took in all of Escambia and Baldwin counties in Alabama and Santa Rosa and Escambia counties in Florida.<sup>138</sup>

“In 1902 the Alabama churches pulled out of the association and left the churches of the two Florida counties in the Elim Association.”<sup>139</sup> It flourished until 1909. The Pensacola Bay Association in Florida and the Escambia County Association in Alabama soon took its respective cooperating churches, and in 1909 [or 1914] it disbanded.<sup>140</sup>

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

The Pensacola Bay Association *Minutes* of October 31, 1889, contain the following report: “The brethren were asked to put five cents in the Lord’s treasury every time they smoked a cigar. Some made the sacrifice right then, and \$1.10 was raised. What a sacrifice and what a sum,” the clerk recorded.

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### **1890 – GRAVES/1988 – WALTON COUNTY ASSOCIATION**

A meeting was held at Ponce De Leon Baptist Church, on November 22-23, 1890, for the purpose of organizing an association. The boundaries were from

the Choctawhatchee River to the Yellow River, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Florida-Alabama state line.<sup>141</sup> When organized the association was designated as the Graves Baptist Association, named for the controversial “Landmark” Baptist leader, J. R. Graves.<sup>142</sup> The following seven churches comprised the charter members of the Graves Association: Alaquá; DeFuniak Springs; Pilgrim’s Rest; Pleasant Ridge; Ponce De Leon; Providence; and Sandy Creek.<sup>143</sup> The Rev. J. H. Parmalee, DeFuniak Springs Baptist Church, was elected as the first moderator.<sup>144</sup>

In 1988, the association’s name was changed from Graves to Walton County Baptist Association, denoting the physical location of the association’s cooperating churches.<sup>145</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Walton County Association had a membership of 27 cooperating churches and John Lovelady was the missions’ director.

### **1891 – LAFAYETTE ASSOCIATION**

On December 4, 1891, a meeting of pastors was held at Hart Hammock Baptist Church, Lafayette county, for the purpose of organizing a new association in Lafayette and adjoining counties. The Articles of Faith, adopted in 1891, made foot-washing an ordinance of the churches which had its origins in the Primitive Baptist movement of the 1830s. The practice remained in the statement of faith until 1927.<sup>146</sup>

The following nine churches were charter members of the Lafayette Baptist Association: Alachua county churches at Rock Sink, Picket Lake, Hatch Bend and

Nebo; and Lafayette county churches at Half-moon Lake, Mount Pisgah, Pleasant Hill, Midway and Hart Hammock.<sup>147</sup> The Rev. D. F. Ward was elected moderator of the organizational meeting.<sup>148</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Lafayette Association had a membership of 25 cooperating churches and Brett Patterson was the missions' director.

### **1900 – MIDDLE FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

The first session of the Middle Florida Association convened at the Macedonia Baptist Church, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900.<sup>149</sup> The following 11 churches from Madison, Lafayette and Taylor counties<sup>150</sup> were the charter members of the association: Brewer Lake; Hopewell; Live Oak; Macedonia; Midway; Mt. Mariah; New Hopewell; Pleasant Grove, Lafayette county; Pleasant Grove, Taylor county; Pine Grove and Triumph.<sup>151</sup> The Rev. J. T. Farnell was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>152</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Middle Florida Association had a membership of 29 cooperating churches and David Garrett was the missions' director.



## HISTORY FOOTNOTE

In an interesting contrast to other associations, the messengers to the Middle Florida Association's 1900 organizational meeting, approved a constitution that was a combination statement of faith and organizational protocol. The association clearly defined its purpose: "to conduct the work of missions, colportage, sabbath schools and other work that will tend to the spread of the Gospel." Additionally, reflecting a cultural perspective of the times, the Article 2 stated the association, "Shall be composed of white members chosen by the respective churches in its union . . ." During the 1913 annual meeting, "a motion that the word 'white' be stricken from the constitution was unanimously carried."

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### 1907 – SANTA ROSA ASSOCIATION

In 1907 the Santa Rosa Baptist Association was organized when a group of Baptist churches convened for a Fifth Sunday meeting, which was held at the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Baker, June 28-30.<sup>153</sup> The first annual meeting was held on November 1-3, 1907, at Wellman Baptist Church, Blackman, with the following six churches from Elim and Pensacola Bay associations<sup>154</sup> as charter members: Magnolia; Pilgrim Rest; Pleasant Hill; Pleasant Home; Wellman and Yellow River.<sup>155</sup> The Rev. C. C. Eiland was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>156</sup>

In 1913 the Santa Rosa Baptist Association and the Smyrna Baptist Association merged together to become the New Santa Rosa Baptist Association.<sup>157</sup> In

1915 the Association name was expanded to New Santa Rosa Missionary Baptist Association.<sup>158</sup> In 1948 the Association went back to being called the Santa Rosa Baptist Association.<sup>159</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Santa Rosa Association had a membership of 38 cooperating churches and Jim Waters was the missions' director.

The following association, that the Santa Rosa Association, may have helped to organize, is no longer functioning in Florida:

**1912 – Smyrna**

Organized in 1912 by the following nine churches from Pensacola Bay Baptist Association: Calvary; Cora; Bethel; East Bay; Milligan; Milton; New Hope; Shady Grove and Smyrna.<sup>160</sup> In 1913 Smyrna Baptist Association joined the churches from Santa Rosa Baptist Association to organize the New Santa Rosa Baptist Association.<sup>161</sup>

**1909 – MIAMI ASSOCIATION**

On January 30, 1909, a conference was convened at Miami, for the permanent organization of a new Baptist association, with Rev. W. E. Stanton as temporary chairman.<sup>162</sup> Among the several names considered for the new association included: S. E. Association; Biscayne Bay; Miami River Association; and Miami Association, with the latter name being chosen.<sup>163</sup> The Miami Association extended from Stuart to Key West.<sup>164</sup> The following seven churches from Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties<sup>165</sup> were charter members of the new association: Miami; West

Palm Beach; Lemon City; Dania; Fort Lauderdale; Pioneer and Silver Palm.<sup>166</sup> The Key West Church in Monroe county also was a charter member church.

The Rev. W. E. Stanton was elected to serve as the first moderator for the November 19-21, 1909, first annual meeting. However, Stanton died in his home on October 26, 1909, before the annual meeting.<sup>167</sup> The Rev. B. B. Tatum was elected to replace Dr. Stanton as moderator.<sup>168</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Miami Association had a membership of 271 cooperating churches and Rick Martinez was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

The Miami Association, during its October, 1969, meeting welcomed to its fellowship the Glendale Missionary Baptist Church, Miami, led by Pastor Joseph Coats. The church had become affiliated with Southern Baptists through their affiliation with the Florida Baptist State Convention. The *Minutes* noted the Glendale Church as the first all-black congregation to affiliate with the Florida Baptist Convention since its organization in 1854.

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### **1911 – TAMPA BAY ASSOCIATION**

On October 11, 1911, during the 45<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the South Florida Association, at the Hopewell Church, Hillsborough county, delegates from eighteen churches presented a letter requesting letters of dismissal. The churches were seeking to organize a

new association, believing “two associations can do more work than one; [noting] that greater convenience in attending our gatherings and other influences.”<sup>169</sup> The following churches were charter members of the Tampa Bay Baptist Association: Palm Avenue; Sarasota; Largo; New Hope; Oak Hill; St. Petersburg, First; Manatee; Tampa, First; Palmetto; Clearwater; Terra Ceia; Grace, St. Petersburg; Concord; West Tampa; Clark Memorial; Bradentown (now Bradenton); Six Mile Creek; Boyett and Port Tampa.<sup>170</sup> The Rev. A. J. Beck was elected to serve as the first moderator and served for 13 years.<sup>171</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Tampa Bay Association had a membership of 143 cooperating churches and Mike Kahn was the missions’ director.

### **1913 – BLACK CREEK ASSOCIATION**

On October 22, 1913, the Black Creek Baptist Association was organized at Sunnyside (now Penny Farms), Clay county, with six churches.<sup>172</sup> Those six churches were: Black Pond; Black Creek; Salem (all from the St. Johns River Baptist Association); Evergreen, Hickory Grove; and Highland.<sup>173</sup> The Rev. J. E. Black served as the first moderator.<sup>174</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Black Creek Association had a membership of 31 cooperating churches and Joe Hutcheson was the missions’ director.

### **1914 – SEMINOLE/2021 – EAST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION**

On November, 12, 1914, an organizational meeting was held at the First Baptist Church, Sanford at which

the Seminole Baptist Association was organized.<sup>175</sup> Of the eighteen churches originally organizing the Seminole Association, 13 were from the Wekiwa Association, three from Indian River and one from St. Johns River. The remaining church, Seabreeze, having been constituted in 1914, had not previously affiliated with any association.<sup>176</sup> The following churches were charter members of the Seminole Baptist Association: Altoona; Chuluota; Geneva; Lake Gertrude; Lockwood; Oviedo; Pine Grove; Sanford; Sorrento; Tavares; Umatilla; DeLand; Enterprise; and Longwood from the Wekiwa Baptist Association. Titusville; Lake Helen; and Osteen from the Indian River Baptist Association. Daytona from the St. Johns River Baptist Association and Seabreeze.<sup>177</sup> The Rev. G. W. Holmes served as the first moderator.<sup>178</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the East Central Association had a membership of 73 cooperating churches and Glenn Rogers was the missions' director.

The following association, that merged with the Seminole Association as the East Central Network, is no longer functioning independently:

### **1957 - Halifax**

On October 10, 1957 an organizational meeting for the Halifax Baptist Association was held at New Smyrna Beach.<sup>179</sup> The first annual session of the Halifax Association was convened at the Flomich Avenue Baptist Church, Holly Hill, on October 16 and 17, 1958.<sup>180</sup> The following 14 churches from the Seminole Baptist Association and two newly organized churches<sup>181</sup> were charter members of the

Halifax Baptist Association: Calvary; Central; Douglas Park; Daytona, First; Magnolia Avenue; Silver Beach; South Peninsular; Edgewater; Holly Hill, First; Flomich Avenue; New Smyrna Beach; Oak Hill; Port Orange; Samsula; South Daytona; and Ormond Beach.<sup>182</sup> The Rev. M. D. Jackson, pastor of Edgewater Baptist Church, served as the first moderator.<sup>183</sup>

After several decades of study of a proposed merger and consideration of working together, on October 3, 2021, the Halifax Baptist Association merged with the Seminole Baptist Association and organized the East Central Baptist Network.

### **1923 – OKALOOSA ASSOCIATION**

The organization meeting of the Okaloosa Baptist Association was held with the Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, near Baker in 1923.<sup>184</sup> The association was originally known as the Okaloosa County Baptist Association; the word county having been dropped in 1927.<sup>185</sup> There was no official action recorded for the name change, however in the 1927 minutes, under "Constitution," item one, states that "This body shall be known by the name of Okaloosa Baptist Association."<sup>186</sup>

The following churches from the Santa Rosa and Graves Baptist Associations were the charter members of the Okaloosa Association: Baker; Beaver Creek; Magnolia; Milligan; Pilgrim's Rest; Red Oak; New Hope; Silver Springs; and Blackman (from the Santa Rosa Baptist Association). Crestview; Ebenezer; and Laurel Hill (from the Graves Baptist

Association). Canoe (formerly Canoe Bluff) previously belonged to the Pensacola Bay Baptist Association.<sup>187</sup> The Rev. E. P. Webb served as the first moderator.<sup>188</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Okaloosa Association had a membership of 27 cooperating churches and Eugene Strickland was the missions' director.

### **1924 – HOLMES COUNTY/2005– HOLMES ASSOCIATION**

In 1924, the organizational meeting of the Holmes County Baptist Association was held at the New Hope Baptist Church,<sup>189</sup> with 18 churches in Holmes county, 14 from Bethel Association which became extinct<sup>190</sup> and four from the Graves Baptist Association. The following four churches were charter members from the Graves Association: Ponce DeLeon; Sandy Creek; New Hope and Hurricane Creek.<sup>191</sup> The following 14 churches from the Bethel Association were charter members: Shiloh; Bethsaida; Pleasant Grove; Rose Hill; Bethany; Shady Grove No. 2; Unity; Union Hill; Esto; Shady Grove No. 1; Gully Springs; Noma; New Zion; and Bethel. The Rev. W. H. McIntosh was elected as the first moderator and served as moderator until 1930.<sup>192</sup>

In 2005, the Holmes County Baptist Association dropped the word 'County' from its name due to several churches from outside of Holmes County joining the association.

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Holmes Association had a

membership of 28 cooperating churches and Kent Lampp was the missions' director.

The following association, that developed prior the organization of the Holmes County Association, is no longer functioning in Florida:

**1905 – Bethel/1909 – New West Florida/1911 – Bethel**

The proposed Bethel Baptist Association met at the Bethel Baptist Church on Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1905.<sup>193</sup> The following 13 churches from Holmes and Jackson counties were the charter members of the new association: Bethel; Bethany; Damascus; Ephesus; Mt. Olive; Mt. Calvary; Noma; New Home; Orange Hill; Pilgrim's Rest; Pleasant Grove; Union Hill and Unity.<sup>194</sup> The Rev. W. H. McIntosh was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>195</sup>

The name of the Bethel Association was changed to that of the New West Florida Baptist Association at its 1909 annual session held at Orange Hill.<sup>196</sup> In the 1910 annual session the name was changed back to the Bethel Baptist Association.<sup>197</sup> The Holmes County Baptist Association was organized in 1924, and by 1925, the majority of the churches that organized the Bethel Association had withdrawn and joined the new Holmes group.<sup>198</sup> The Bethel Association disbanded in 1925 and the churches joined the Holmes County Association or the Jackson County Association.<sup>199</sup>



### **1924 – LAKE COUNTY ASSOCIATION**

The organization meeting of the Lake County Baptist Association was held in the public-school auditorium at Tavares, October 19, 1924, with churches in Lake county, formerly cooperating with either the Wekiwa, Seminole, or Alachua Baptist Associations. The charter members of the Lake County Association were: Ferndale; Groveland, First; Clermont; Astatula and Montverde. Churches from the Wekiwa Association included Altoona; Tavares, First; Umatilla, First; Eustis; and Mount Dora. Churches from the Seminole Association included Leesburg, First; Lady Lake; Okahumpka and Whitney, from the Alachua Association.<sup>200</sup> The Rev. J. L. Jenkins was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>201</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Lake County Association had a membership of 45 cooperating churches and Tim Burdick was the missions' director.

### **1925 – JACKSON COUNTY/1946 – CHIPOLA ASSOCIATION**

The Jackson County Baptist Association was organized by churches that secured letters of dismission from the West Florida Baptist Association.<sup>202</sup> The organizational meeting was held in Malone October 23, 1925.<sup>203</sup> The present name, Chipola, was adopted in 1946.<sup>204</sup> The following 26 churches were charter members of the Jackson County Association: Altha; Antioch; Bethlehem; Cottondale; Campbellton; Damascus; Ephesus; Friendship; Graceville; Greenwood; Hickory Level; Harmony; Hasty Pond; Lovedale; Malone; Macedonia; Mt. Olive; New Home; New Salem No. 1; New Salem No. 2; Piney Grove; Pilgrims Rest;

Providence; Round Lake; Sneads; Shady Grove.<sup>205</sup>  
The Rev J. W. White was elected in 1925 and continued to be re-elected as moderator until 1933.<sup>206</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Chipola Association had a membership of 39 cooperating churches and Coba Beasley was the missions' director.

### **1925 – SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ASSOCIATION (Disbanded 2018)**

At the Fifth Sunday meeting of the Manatee-Sarasota District of the Tampa Bay Association, held at Gillett in August, 1924, it was proposed that the churches of that geographical area withdraw from the Tampa Bay Association and organize a new association.<sup>207</sup> On October 10, 1924, responding to a call sent out by a committee previously appointed, a number of Baptist churches, comprising Manatee and Sarasota counties, assembled at the Baptist church in Bradentown (now Bradenton) for the purpose of organizing a Baptist association.<sup>208</sup>

The following 15 churches, ten represented by delegates and four by letter, were charter members of the Southwest Florida Baptist Association: Bethany; Bradentown (now Bradenton); Ellenton; Friendship; Manatee; Mill Creek; New Hope; Oak Hill; Palmetto; Sarasota; Terra Ceia; Bee Ridge; Fruitville; Osprey and Wimauma.<sup>209</sup> The Rev. A. J. Beck was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>210</sup>

In January of 2018, after over a year of prayer and discussion, the Southwest Florida Baptist Association voted to cease operation and formally disband as an association.<sup>211</sup> With the dissolution of the association

some churches chose to cooperate with the state convention as a church-at-large.<sup>212</sup>

### **1932 – ORANGE BLOSSOM ASSOCIATION**

In 1932 a group of churches located in the Peace River Valley and the Ridge section of Hardee, Highlands, Manatee, and Polk counties met at Avon Park on August 20.<sup>213</sup> Nineteen churches were represented and participated in the discussion of a new association. A subsequent meeting was held in Wauchula on September 22 at which plans were presented for reconvening in Wauchula on October 13, to create the Orange Blossom Baptist Association.<sup>214</sup> Letters of dismissal from the Peace River Association and South Florida Association authorized the creation of this new Association.<sup>215</sup>

The following churches were charter members of the Orange Blossom Baptist Association: Athens; Avon Park, First; South Side; Bethany; Bethel; Dry Prairie; Dundee, First; Frostproof, First; Fort Meade, First; Fort Green; Lake Placid; Lake Buffum; Lake Dale; Limestone; West Side; New Hope; Ona; New Zion; Sebring; Wauchula, First; Zolfo Springs; Venus.<sup>216</sup> Dr. W. K. McClure of Avon Park was elected moderator.<sup>217</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Orange Blossom Association had a membership of 40 cooperating churches and Robert Roberts was the missions' director.

### **1932 – PINELLAS COUNTY/1987 – SUNCOAST ASSOCIATION**

On June 16, 1932, a preliminary meeting was held in the Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, to organize the Pinellas County Baptist Association. The

following churches from the Tampa Bay Baptist Association were represented by their pastors: Ozona; Safety Harbor; Largo; Dunedin, First; Fifth Avenue; Northside and Pine City of St. Petersburg; and Calvary of Clearwater.<sup>218</sup> The Rev. J. T. McNew was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>219</sup> In a letter to the Tampa Bay Baptist Association the case was made that the new association was being organized with “the aim of promoting greater cohesiveness among the churches in Pinellas county and because of a desire to eliminate the considerable expense involved by bridge toll over Tampa Bay.”<sup>220</sup>

The organization session was held at the Largo Baptist Church, Pinellas county, October 6, 1932, with all churches previously represented at the preliminary meeting, except Northside.<sup>221</sup> In 1949 the association adopted the revised name of Pinellas Baptist Association.<sup>222</sup> In the October 12, 1987, annual meeting it was voted that the name Pinellas Baptist Association be changed to Suncoast Baptist Association<sup>223</sup>.

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Suncoast Association had a membership of 66 cooperating churches and Drew Grubbs was the missions’ director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During the 1932 Pinellas Association annual meeting, messengers voted for the association to purchase and give a cow to the Arcadia Children's Home and call it Lady Pinellas. A layman also committed to donate a second cow to the Children's Home.

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#### **1934 – NORTHWEST COAST ASSOCIATION**

The Northwest Coast Baptist Association was organized in 1934 by churches situated in Bay and Gulf counties, as well as that portion of Calhoun county lying south of Blountstown.<sup>224</sup> The organizational session was held on October 18, 1934, at the Wewahitchka Baptist Church.<sup>225</sup> The new association was organized with 10 churches which withdrew from the West Florida Association. The following 10 churches were charter members of the Northwest Coast Baptist Association: Broad Branch; Millville; Lynn Haven; Panama City; Port St. Joe; St. Andrew; Southport; Wetappo; Wewahitchka; and Youngstown.<sup>226</sup>

The first order of business was the selection of a name for the association. There were two names suggested by the presiding officers: The Gulf Coast and the Coastal. Three other names were suggested by several messengers: Northwest Coast, Bay and Twin Bay. After some discussion, a vote was taken and the name Northwest Coast Baptist Association was selected.<sup>227</sup>

The Rev E. D. McDaniel pastor of First Baptist Church, Panama City served as the first moderator and served until 1940.<sup>228</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Northwest Coast Association had a membership of 44 cooperating churches and Troy Varnum was the missions' director.

### **1938 – NORTHEAST FLORIDA ASSOCIATION**

On April 5, 1938, a group of interested pastors, laymen and women met at Callahan Baptist Church, Nassau county, to discuss the advisability of organizing an association of churches in the northeastern corner of the state.<sup>229</sup> The following churches were represented: Baldwin; Beverly Hills; Brandy Branch; Callahan; Dismore; Ephesus; Fernandina; Hillard; Live Oak; Norwood; Ocean Way; Pine Grove; Riverview and Yulee.<sup>230</sup> Several other meetings were held between June 16 – September 13, 1938 to discuss the proposed new association and its purpose. A final organizational meeting was held on October 25, 1938, at the Callahan Baptist Church, Callahan.<sup>231</sup> The following nine churches located in Nassau and Duval counties, requested dismissal from the Jacksonville Baptist Association to organize the new association: Callahan; Dinsmore; Fernandina; Hillard; Live Oak; Ocean Way; Pine Grove; Yulee and Mt. Olive.<sup>232</sup>

Rev. Vernon D. Thomas was elected to serve as the first moderator until permanent action was taken by the body.<sup>233</sup> Rev. J. D. Poindexter was elected to serve as the moderator for the first annual session in 1939.<sup>234</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Northeast Florida Association had a membership of 38 cooperating churches, but did not have a missions' director.

### **1938 – PALM-LAKE/2010 – PALM BEACH ASSOCIATION**

On October 24, 1938, representatives from the following Palm Beach county churches convened: Northwood; West Palm Beach, First; Okeechobee; Canal Point; Pahokee, First; Belle Glade; South Bay and Moore Haven. The meeting was held at the Canal Point Baptist Church to consider the advisability of organizing a new Baptist association.<sup>235</sup> The First Baptist Church, Lake Worth was represented by a letter which “expressed sympathy with the movement.”<sup>236</sup>

Most of the churches represented at this meeting had previously taken action expressing a willingness to enter the proposed organization, thus it was unanimously decided to set up a tentative organization as a basis for a permanent organization.<sup>237</sup> The permanent organization of the Palm-Lake Baptist Association was affected November 29, 1938, at the First Baptist Church, Lake Worth by representatives from seven churches from the Miami Baptist Association.<sup>238</sup> Those included:, Boynton, First; Lake Worth, First; Northwood, West Palm Beach; Canal Point; Pahokee, First; Belle Glade, First and South Bay. Two other churches from the Peace River Association joined the new association: Clewiston, First, a new church and; Moore Haven.<sup>239</sup> The Rev. William Marion Sentell of Belle Glade was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>240</sup>

In September, 2010, the Palm-Lake Baptist Association began doing business as the Palm Beach Baptist Network.<sup>241</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Palm Beach Association had a membership of 111 cooperating churches and Steve Thomas was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

In 1968 the Palm-Lake Association sponsored as a missionary organization the Palm Beach Atlantic College, making it the first association in Florida to sponsor an institution of higher learning. Jess Moody, as college president, reported an enrollment of 235 in the day and evening sessions.

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### **1948 – GULF STREAM/2023 – BROWARD ASSOCIATION**

In January, 1946, an informal gathering of pastors of Baptist churches in Broward county and the coastal section of Palm Beach county met at the First Baptist Church, Pompano.<sup>242</sup> The pastors present agreed that in the best interests of the denomination and the churches involved, all would be better served by a new and smaller associational organization.<sup>243</sup> More meetings were held over a two-year period to prepare for the creation of a new association. On April 29, 1948, “messengers of Broward county Baptist churches met to begin the organization” of the association, although the churches were urged to



remain in their current associations until the new body could be created.<sup>244</sup>

On May 30, 1948, a Fifth Sunday meeting of the temporary association was held at First Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale. A committee recommended the name Gulf Stream Baptist Association, which was unanimously adopted.<sup>245</sup> The first annual session of the Gulf Stream Baptist Association met November 9, 1948, at the First Baptist Church, Pompano. The association was founded by nine churches: two from Palm-Lake Association: Boynton Beach and Delray Beach; as well as, seven churches from the Miami Association: Dania, First; Dania Heights; Deerfield Beach, First; Fort Lauderdale, First; Immanuel; Hollywood, First; and Pompano, First.<sup>246</sup> The Rev. Hoke Shirley, Sr., Fort Lauderdale, First was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>247</sup>

In 2022, the Gulf Stream Baptist Association began doing business as the Broward Baptist Association.<sup>248</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Broward Association had a membership of 133 cooperating churches and Arthur Conner was the missions' director.

### **1950 – SHILOH ASSOCIATION**

The organizational meeting of the Shiloh Baptist Association was held October 21, 1950, at the Bethany Baptist Church, Plant City.<sup>249</sup> The association was organized by the following 12 churches, 10 from the South Florida Baptist Association, one church, West Thonotosassa, from Tampa Bay Baptist Association<sup>250</sup> and Valrico, First, a newly organized church. The South Florida Association churches included: Cross

Roads; Sydney; Midway; Eastside, Plant City; Northside, Plant City; Lebanon; Youmans; Turkey Creek; Bethany and Springhead.<sup>251</sup> The Rev. D. C. Crawford was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>252</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Shiloh Association had a membership of 36 cooperating churches and Dr. Maxie Miller was the missions' director.

### **1951 – GADSDEN/1955 – APALACHEE ASSOCIATION**

An organizational meeting was held on February 20, 1951, at the Providence Baptist Church with 11 churches from Calhoun, Gadsden and Liberty counties and the proposed association initially was named Gadsden Baptist Association<sup>253</sup> (not to be confused with the Gadsden County Baptist Association which was organized in 1961). Five unnamed churches plus the following six churches which withdrew from the Florida Association organized the new association: Bristol, First; Flat Creek; Greensboro; Lake Mystic; Santa Clara and Wilma.<sup>254</sup> The Rev. E. Forest May was elected to serve as the first moderator of the Gadsden Baptist Association.<sup>255</sup>

On October 10, 1955, the association's messengers voted to change the name to Apalachee Baptist Association.<sup>256</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Apalachee Association had a membership of 13 cooperating churches and Darreyl Duggar was the missions' director.

### **1953 – BREVARD ASSOCIATION**

Prior to May 22, 1953, all pastors of Missionary Baptist churches in Brevard county met to consider “the organizational and promotional needs of their respective churches. . . The fundamental need was for shorter distances required for travel to and from associational meetings. . .” Previously, during April and May 1953, every cooperating church in Brevard county took formal action to approve the organization of the Brevard Baptist Association and their respective withdrawal from the Indian River or Seminole Associations effective October 1, 1953.<sup>257</sup>

An organizational meeting was held October 15, 1953, at the First Baptist Church, Cocoa, with the following 11 churches from the Indian River and Seminole associations<sup>258</sup> as charter members of the Brevard Baptist Association: Mims; Titusville; Orsino; Merritt Island; Cocoa, First; King Street Chapel Mission; Eau Gallie; Melbourne, First; Park Hill; June Park and Palm Bay Missions.<sup>259</sup> The Rev. James Sawyer, pastor First Baptist Church, Cocoa, was elected moderator.<sup>260</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Brevard Association had a membership of 60 cooperating churches and Jerry Thornton was the missions’ director.

### **1954 – BIG LAKE ASSOCIATION**

On October 29, 1954, the churches around the Lake Okeechobee region met at the First Baptist Church, Moore Haven, to discuss organizing a new association.<sup>261</sup> Churches from the Peace River, Palm-Lake, and Indian River Associations made up the eight charter members of the proposed Big Lake

Baptist Association.<sup>262</sup> The following churches were charter members: Big Cypress; Brighton Indian Mission; Clewiston, First; Clewiston South; LaBelle; Moore Haven; Okeechobee and South Bay.<sup>263</sup> The Rev. L. T. Fagan, pastor of First Baptist Church, Clewiston, was elected moderator.<sup>264</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Big Lake Association had a membership of 21 cooperating churches and Tom Pasquarella was the missions' director.

### **1954 – RIDGE ASSOCIATION**

A special meeting was held on March 3, 1954, at the First Baptist Church, Haines City, for the purpose of discussing the possibility of organizing a new association to be composed of churches from the South Florida Baptist Association in the Ridge area.<sup>265</sup> An organizational meeting was held October 26, 1954, at the Waverly Baptist Church, during the annual meeting of the South Florida Association meeting.<sup>266</sup>

With the blessings of the South Florida Baptist Association, the following 20 churches comprised the charter membership of the proposed Ridge Baptist Association: Auburndale, First; Davenport; Dundee, First; Eagle Lake; Eloise; Haines City, First; Eastside; Inman Park; Inwood; Lake Alfred; Lake Wales, First, Central Avenue, Westside, West Scenic Park; Loughman; Oak Hill; Waverly, First; Wahneta and Winter Haven, First.<sup>267</sup> The Rev. Albert L. Carnett, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Winter Haven, was elected moderator of the association for the ensuing year.<sup>268</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Ridge Association had a membership of 59 cooperating churches and Michael Petty was the missions' director.

### **1957 – TAYLOR ASSOCIATION**

On October 18, 1957, the following eleven churches were granted letters of dismissal from the Middle Florida Baptist Association to organize a new association: Athena; Burton; Friendship; Lakeside; New Home; Oakland; Perry, First; Pisgah; San Pedro; Southside and Steinhatchee.<sup>269</sup>

The first annual session of the Taylor Missionary Baptist Association was held on October 16, 1958, at the New Home Baptist Church, Perry.<sup>270</sup> The Rev. Odis Murphy was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>271</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Taylor Association had a membership of 17 cooperating churches and Henry Cannington was the missions' director.

### **HISTORY FOOTNOTE**

During first annual meeting of the Taylor Association held in 1958, messengers unanimously approved several recommendations on the Cooperative Program, specifically: That every church in the association include the Cooperative Program in the budget on a percentage basis; that all the association's churches increase gifts to world missions through the Cooperative Program by at least one percent per year; and that, where possible, careful consideration be given to increasing the percentage this year by 2 percent in cooperation with other churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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### **1958 – CHOCTAW/2009 – EMERALD COAST ASSOCIATION**

On August 3, 1958, seven of the nine churches in Okaloosa county met at the First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach, to discuss the possibility of organizing a new association.<sup>272</sup> The organizational session for the Choctaw Baptist Association was held on October 28, 1958, at the First Baptist Church, Destin, with the following churches as charter members: Destin, First; Fort Walton Beach, First; Ocean City, First; Valparaiso, First; Niceville, First; Wright; Central and Cinco.<sup>273</sup> The Rev. R. G. Bloodworth was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>274</sup>

In the annual meeting of the Choctaw Baptist Association March 15, 2009, the association voted on

a name change to Emerald Coast Fellowship of Baptist Churches.<sup>275</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Emerald Coast Association had a membership of 26 cooperating churches and James Ross was the missions' director.

### **1958 – ROYAL PALM ASSOCIATION**

On March 5, 1957, a group of pastors met at the First Baptist Church, Punta Gorda, to discuss the possibility and advisability of organizing a new association to be composed of some churches from the Peace River Baptist Association.<sup>276</sup> On October 17, 1957, a group of churches from the southern portion of the Peace River Baptist Association met to organize the Royal Palm Baptist Association. The meeting was held at Riverside Baptist Church, Fort Myers, and the following nine churches and five missions comprised the charter members of the new association: Bonita Springs; Immokalee; Fort Myers, First; North Fort Myers; Naples, First; East Naples; Pine Island; Russell Park; Riverside; Estero; Everglades; Ft. Myers Beach; Olga Chapel; and Copeland.<sup>277</sup> The Rev. E. S. "Andy" Anderson, pastor of Riverside Baptist Church, was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>278</sup> The first annual session was held October 21, 1958.<sup>279</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Royal Palm Association had a membership of 95 cooperating churches and Mark Gonzales was the missions' director.

### **1961 – GADSDEN COUNTY ASSOCIATION**

The first meeting to discuss the plans for a Gadsden County Association was held in Gretna on March 7,

1961, with 48 pastors and laity present.<sup>280</sup>

Subsequently, on May 17, 1961, a meeting was held in the Gretna Church and 12 churches reported they had voted in favor of organizing the new association.<sup>281</sup>

The first session of the Gadsden County Baptist Association was held on October 23, 1961, at the Thomas Memorial Baptist Church, Quincy.<sup>282</sup>

The following churches from the Florida, Apalachee and Rocky Creek Associations were charter members of the new association: Antioch; Chattahoochee; Concordia; Flat Creek; Greensboro; Gretna; Little Sycamore; Mt. Zion; Providence; Quincy, First; Santa Clara and Thomas Memorial.<sup>283</sup> The Rev. L. B. Thomason was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>284</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Gadsden County Association had a membership of 20 cooperating churches and Dr. Jerry Chumley was the missions' director.

### **1968 – FLORIDA KEYS ASSOCIATION**

On October 23, 1968, nine churches from the Miami Baptist Association met at the First Baptist Church, Marathon, for the purpose of organizing an association of Baptist churches and missions located primarily in Monroe county's Florida Keys.<sup>285</sup> The following churches comprised the charter members of the Florida Keys Baptist Association: Big Coppitt Mission; Big Pine Mission; Islamorada Mission; Key Largo, First; Fifth Street, Key West; Key West, First; White Street, Key West; Layton Mission; Marathon, First.<sup>286</sup> The Rev. Carl Hunter was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>287</sup>



As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Florida Keys Association had a membership of 11 cooperating churches and Charles Rosenbalm was the missions' director.

### **1978 – MANATEE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION**

A decision was made October 20, 1977, at the First Baptist Church, Palmetto, when the assembled messengers for the 54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Southwest Florida Baptist Association, voted to “participate with favor and zeal in the expansion of Christ’s work by the organizing of a new Manatee Baptist Association.”

Following the vote to create the new association, the messengers separated into two groups, to begin the process of forming the organization for two associations – the existing Southwest Florida Baptist Association and the proposed association for the churches in Manatee county.<sup>288</sup> The messengers voted to call the new association “Manatee Southern Baptist Association,”<sup>289</sup> and organized with 19 churches from Southwest Florida Baptist Association and two churches from the Orange Blossom Association.<sup>290</sup>

The following 21 churches were charter members of the Manatee Southern Baptist Association: Bayshore; Behtany; Bradenton, First; Braden River; Dry Prairie; Ellenton, First; Elwood Park; Gillette, First; Island; Manatee; Mill Creek; Oneco; Palmetto, First; Palma Sola Bay; Palm View, First; Parrish; Samoset; Southside; Tenth Street; Terra Ceia and West Bradenton.<sup>291</sup> The Rev. C. N. Bryan was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>292</sup> The first annual session was held on October 19, 1978.<sup>293</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the Manatee Southern Association had a membership of 29 cooperating churches and Cliff Mattox was the missions' director.

### **1992 – SUMTER ASSOCIATION**

On March 22, 1992, a meeting was held at the First Baptist Church, Lake Panasoffkee, for the purpose of organizing a new Southern Baptist association.<sup>294</sup> Brother Claude McAdams shared that the desire for a new association to become a reality had been “discussed for at least 30 years and now the time has come.”<sup>295</sup> The following eight churches from Sumter county indicated their desire to cease affiliation with Alachua Baptist Association at the annual meeting in 1991<sup>296</sup> and became the charter members of the Sumter Baptist Association: Bushnell, First; Center Hill, First; Coleman, First; Lake Panasoffkee, First; Linden, First; Oxford, First; Webster, First and Pleasant Hill, Bushnell. The Rev. Lamar Harris was elected to serve as the first moderator.<sup>297</sup>

As of August, 2022, the All-Church Profile (ACP) report noted the association had a membership of 14 cooperating churches and Randy Alonso was the moderator.

### **1996 – CHURCH-AT-LARGE AFFILIATION**

Historically, a church would automatically be considered in friendly cooperation with the Florida Baptist State Convention if the church's theology, faith and practice had been approved and accepted into cooperation with a Florida-based Baptist association. Additionally, the church had to make a minimal financial contribution through the Cooperative Program.

The Church-at-Large category was established by the Florida Baptist State Convention in 1996 when it approved the addition of a new Bylaw 2 to the State Convention's Constitution and Bylaws. The Bylaw, which was referred to as "Baptist Cooperation," defined how a church and/or association cooperates/affiliates with the State Convention, among other issues.

The new Bylaw 2 defined how a church, that chose not to cooperate with a local Baptist association, could still affiliate with the state convention. Guidelines were defined by which a petitioning church must submit documentation that explained the church's statement of faith and practice on a host of theological issues. Upon favorable review by the State Board of Missions a recommendation would be made during the annual meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention for final approval for affiliation.

In 1997-98, it was determined that twelve churches were informally cooperating with the state convention and which were not affiliated with any local Baptist association. The 12 churches were invited to participate in the process to officially apply for Church-at-Large status.<sup>298</sup> By November, 1999, only two churches chose to follow through on the application process.<sup>299</sup> Subsequently the State Convention approved the two congregations for Church-at-Large status. These were the Boca Raton Community Church, Boca Raton, and the Hillside Baptist Chapel, Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands.<sup>300</sup>

As of August, 2022, the state convention's designation of church-at-large had a membership of 51 cooperating churches.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Suwannee River Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1840.
- <sup>2</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1843, n. p.
- <sup>3</sup> H. C. Garwood, "Florida Associations/Extant," *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. I, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 441, hereinafter referred to as Garwood.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1843, n. p.
- <sup>6</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1843, n. p.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1846, item 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Middle Florida Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1900, 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1951, 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Gadsden County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1961, 32.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1854, item 16.
- <sup>12</sup> Wakulla Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1988, 3.
- <sup>13</sup> There are no minutes to confirm the name change only the fact that the 1989 Big Bend Baptist Association minutes contain information from the ten churches from Wakulla Baptist Association.
- <sup>14</sup> Big Bend Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1999, 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 50.
- <sup>16</sup> Wakulla Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 31.
- <sup>17</sup> *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal*, Vol. II, No. 5, October, 1847, (Richmond, Virginia), 123.
- <sup>18</sup> Garwood, 441.
- <sup>19</sup> *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal*, Vol. II, No. 5, October, 1847, (Richmond, Virginia), 123.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1854, item 16.
- <sup>21</sup> Garwood, 443.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> [https://floridabaptisthistory.org/association-minutes-2/Santa Fe River](https://floridabaptisthistory.org/association-minutes-2/Santa_Fe_River); accessed 9/26/2023.
- <sup>24</sup> Garwood, 442.
- <sup>25</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida; Baptist Bodies, #12. Lake County Baptist Association*; (Federal Works Agency – Work Projects Administration; The Historical Records Survey Project, Florida); May, 1940, 1.
- <sup>26</sup> Sumter Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1992, 19.
- <sup>27</sup> Nature Coast Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 2006, 1.
- <sup>28</sup> West Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1849, 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1846, item 8.

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- <sup>30</sup> West Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1849, 3.  
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1947, 16.  
<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1888, 8.  
<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1947, 16.  
<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>36</sup> Northwest Coast Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1935, 4.  
<sup>37</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1854, item 16.  
<sup>38</sup> West Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1947, 16.  
<sup>39</sup> Sandy Creek Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1877, n. p.  
<sup>40</sup> Holmes County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1938, 17.  
<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.  
<sup>42</sup> Gordon Crawford Reeves, "A History of Florida Baptists," Master of Arts thesis for Stetson University, June, 1938, 72.  
<sup>43</sup> Geneva Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1891, 9.  
<sup>44</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>45</sup> Rocky Creek Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1888, n. p.  
<sup>46</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>47</sup> West Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1888, 9.  
<sup>48</sup> Rocky Creek Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1888, n. p.  
<sup>49</sup> Florida Baptist Convention Annual, *Minutes*, 1860, 28  
<sup>50</sup> Garwood, 443.  
<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>52</sup> Santa Fe River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1873, 8.  
<sup>53</sup> [https://floridabaptisthistory.org/association-minutes-2/Santa Fe River](https://floridabaptisthistory.org/association-minutes-2/Santa-Fe-River); accessed 9/26/2023.  
<sup>54</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 443  
<sup>56</sup> Santa Fe River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1862, n. p.  
<sup>57</sup> <https://www.ncfba.net/about/> accessed 10/04/2023  
<sup>58</sup> South Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes* 1903, 28  
<sup>59</sup> Garwood, 443.  
<sup>60</sup> Alachua Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1867, 8.  
<sup>61</sup> South Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes* 1903, 28.  
<sup>62</sup> Garwood, 442.  
<sup>63</sup> Greater Orlando Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1995, 51.  
<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>66</sup> Greater Orlando Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1995, 51.

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- <sup>67</sup> Wekiwa Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1977-1978, 5.  
<sup>68</sup> Garwood, 442.  
<sup>69</sup> New River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1880, 1.  
<sup>70</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>71</sup> Santa Fe River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1873, 8.  
<sup>72</sup> Garwood, 443  
<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 443-444.  
<sup>74</sup> Suwannee Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1925, 34.  
<sup>75</sup> Vivian Norwood, *History of Peace River (Formerly Manatee) Baptist Association 1876-1975*, 1.  
<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Historical Table, n. p.  
<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1897, 7.  
<sup>79</sup> Manatee Missionary Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1892, 8.  
<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>81</sup> South Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1902, 15.  
<sup>82</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>83</sup> Caloosa Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1916, n. p.  
<sup>84</sup> "The Caloosa Association," *News-Press* (Fort Myers, Florida), October 20, 1917, 4.  
<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>87</sup> Peace River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1918, 12.  
<sup>88</sup> Garwood, 443.  
<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>90</sup> Edward M. Straner, *A Century for Christ: A History of the St. Johns River Baptist Association, Inc. 1879-1979*, 26.  
<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>92</sup> Beulah Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1978, 49.  
<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 2016, n. p.  
<sup>98</sup> Hamilton Baptist Association Annual *Minutes* 1902 n. p.  
<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>100</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>101</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>102</sup> *History of Harmony Association Since Organization*, 1. (Compiled by I. S. C. Sheffield, Graham Carter, W. S. Yearty and W. H. Tucker). No publication date.  
<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

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- <sup>105</sup> Jacksonville Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1942, 43.  
<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>107</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida, Baptist Bodies, #17*. Northeast Florida Baptist Association, (Federal Works Agency – Work Projects Administration; The Historical Records Survey Project Florida), 1.  
<sup>108</sup> Jacksonville Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1942, 43.  
<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1902, 11.  
<sup>111</sup> <https://firstcoastchurches.com/history/>; assessed July 20, 2023.  
<sup>112</sup> Hernando Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1885, n. p.  
<sup>113</sup> Garwood, 444.  
<sup>114</sup> Hernando Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1885, 8.  
<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1888, 3.  
<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.  
<sup>117</sup> Marion Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1885, 3.  
<sup>118</sup> Garwood, 442.  
<sup>119</sup> Marion Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1885, 3.  
<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.  
<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>124</sup> Indian River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1889, cover.  
<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1889, 1.  
<sup>126</sup> Garwood, 442.  
<sup>127</sup> Indian River Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1889, 13.  
<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.  
<sup>130</sup> Letter from the Indian River Baptist Association to Amendment Section Division of Corporations, Tallahassee, Florida, dated October 24, 2002.  
<sup>131</sup> Garwood, 443.  
<sup>132</sup> Pensacola Bay Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1887, 1.  
<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>134</sup> Pensacola Bay Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1887, 2.  
<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.  
<sup>136</sup> Garwood, 443.  
<sup>137</sup> *History of the First Decade of the Pensacola Bay Baptist Association, September 1, 1887 to October 1, 1896*, 4.  
<sup>138</sup> *Echoes*; Newsletter and Journal for the Escambia County (Alabama) Historical Society; March, 2014, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1. Hereafter referred to as *Echoes*.

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- <sup>139</sup> Garwood, 444.
- <sup>140</sup> *Echoes*; March, 2014, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2.
- <sup>141</sup> *History of Churches in Walton County Baptist Association; 1890-1990*, 1.
- <sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>146</sup> Garwood, 442.
- <sup>147</sup> Lafayette Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1891, 3.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>149</sup> Middle Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1900, n. p. (1900 *Minutes* read 1901 as year, however since 1901 had not begun it is more likely the 1900 date)
- <sup>150</sup> Garwood, 442.
- <sup>151</sup> Middle Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1900, n. p.
- <sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>153</sup> *Santa Rosa Baptist Association 100 Year History, 1907-2007*, Richard Fox, 2. Published by the Santa Rosa Baptist Association, 2007.
- <sup>154</sup> Garwood, 443.
- <sup>155</sup> *Santa Rosa Baptist Association 100 Year History, 1907-2007*, Richard Fox, 2.
- <sup>156</sup> Santa Rosa Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 2000, 84.
- <sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>160</sup> Pensacola Bay Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1912, 1.
- <sup>161</sup> Garwood, 444.
- <sup>162</sup> *Minutes of the First Annual Session of the Miami Baptist Association, 1909*, n. p.
- <sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>164</sup> *A Brief History of the Miami Baptist Association, 1909-2009*, 21.
- <sup>165</sup> Garwood, 442.
- <sup>166</sup> *Minutes of the First Annual Session of the Miami Baptist Association, 1909*, n. p.
- <sup>167</sup> *A Brief History of the Miami Baptist Association, 1909-2009*, 21.
- <sup>168</sup> Miami Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 19.
- <sup>169</sup> *A Century of Witnessing in the South Florida Baptist Association, 1867-1967*, 18.
- <sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



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- <sup>171</sup> Michael L. Moore, “Faithfulness” *Tampa Bay and Beyond: The Story of the Tampa Bay Baptist Association*, (United States: Xulon Press, 2006), 35.
- <sup>172</sup> Black Creek Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1982, 51.
- <sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>175</sup> Seminole Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1914, 2-3.
- <sup>176</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida; Baptist Bodies, #30. Seminole Baptist Association*; (Federal Works Agency – Work Projects Administration; The Historical Records Survey Project, Florida); May, 1940, 1.
- <sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>178</sup> Seminole Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1914, 3.
- <sup>179</sup> Halifax Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1957 69 (located in the Seminole Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1957, 69.
- <sup>180</sup> Halifax Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1958, 8.
- <sup>181</sup> Earl Joiner, “Florida Associations,” *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Vol. III*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1971), 1697.
- <sup>182</sup> Halifax Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1958, 2.
- <sup>183</sup> Seminole Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1957, 64. (the Halifax Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1957 are located in the back of the Seminole, *Minutes*, 1957).
- <sup>184</sup> Okaloosa Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1927; ‘Historical Table of the Okaloosa Baptist Association,’ n. p.
- <sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.
- <sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘CONSTITUTION,’ n. p.
- <sup>187</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida; Baptist Bodies, #19. Okaloosa Baptist Association*; (Federal Works Agency – Work Projects Administration; The Historical Records Survey Project, Florida); May, 1940, 1.
- <sup>188</sup> Okaloosa Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1933, 16.
- <sup>189</sup> Holmes County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1929, 16.
- <sup>190</sup> Garwood, 442.
- <sup>191</sup> Graves Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1924, 8.
- <sup>192</sup> Holmes County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1990, 55.
- <sup>193</sup> First Annual Session of the Bethel Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1905, 3.
- <sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>196</sup> New West Florida (Bethel) Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1909, n. p.

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- <sup>197</sup> Bethel (New West Florida) Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1910, 6.
- <sup>198</sup> Florida Baptist Annual, *Minutes*, 1924, 149.
- <sup>199</sup> Jerry M. Windsor, "Chronological Listing of Select Baptist Associations With Florida Churches," *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, (2007), 141.
- <sup>200</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida; Baptist Bodies, #12. Lake County Baptist Association*; (Federal Works Agency – Work Projects Administration; The Historical Records Survey Project, Florida); May, 1940, 1.
- <sup>201</sup> Lake County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1924, 1.
- <sup>202</sup> "Jackson County Baptist Association," *Florida Baptist Witness*, October 31, 1946, 4.
- <sup>203</sup> *Minutes of the Organization of Jackson County Association*, 1-2.
- <sup>204</sup> Chipola Baptist Association Annual *Minutes*, 1946, 21.
- <sup>205</sup> *Minutes of the Organization of Jackson County Association*, 1-2.
- <sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>207</sup> *Florida Baptist Witness*, December 8, 1927, 11, 22.
- <sup>208</sup> *Constitution, Rules, and Minutes of the Southwest Florida Baptist Association*, 1924, 5.
- <sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5
- <sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>211</sup> Florida Baptist Convention – State Board of Missions/August 23-24, 2018, 113.
- <sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>213</sup> Orange Blossom Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 7.
- <sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>215</sup> Jack P. Dalton, "A History of Florida Baptists," a doctor of philosophy dissertation for the University of Florida, February, 1952, 286-287.
- <sup>216</sup> Orange Blossom Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1932, n. p.
- <sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, n. p.
- <sup>218</sup> Pinellas County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1932, 5.
- <sup>219</sup> Pinellas County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1932, 1.
- <sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-8.
- <sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.
- <sup>222</sup> Pinellas Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1949, 2, 18.
- <sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 1987, 47.
- <sup>224</sup> *Inventory of the Church Archives of Florida, Baptist Bodies, 18. Northwest Coast Baptist Association*, (State Library Board, Tallahassee, FL, October, 1940), n. p.

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- <sup>225</sup> Northwest Coast Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes* 1935, 4.
- <sup>226</sup> 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1934-2009, Northwest Coast Baptist Association, "An Historical Perspective," 5.
- <sup>227</sup> Northwest Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1935, n. p.
- <sup>228</sup> 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1934-2009, Northwest Coast Baptist Association, "An Historical Perspective," 5.
- <sup>229</sup> Northwest Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1938, 14.
- <sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-16.
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>235</sup> Palm-Lake Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1939, 4.
- <sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>238</sup> Palm-Lake Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes* 1939, 6.
- <sup>239</sup> Miami Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1938, 17.
- <sup>240</sup> Palm Lake Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1939, 2.
- <sup>241</sup> <https://www.corporationwiki.com/Florida/West-Palm-Beach/palm-lake-baptist-association-inc-5002966.aspx>, accessed 9/28/2023.
- <sup>242</sup> Gulf Stream Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1948, 5
- <sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>244</sup> John C. Hillhouse, Jr., *We Came From Many Nations, A Fifty-Year History of South Florida's Gulf Stream Baptist Association*, (Graceville, FL: Hargrave Press, 1998), 12
- <sup>245</sup> Gulf Steam Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1948, 8
- <sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 14
- <sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 21
- <sup>248</sup> *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, October 26, 2022. C6.
- <sup>249</sup> Organizational Meeting of the Shiloh Association of Florida Baptists, *Minutes*, cover.
- <sup>250</sup> Florida Baptist Convention Annual, *Minutes*, 'Tampa Bay Association,' n. p.
- <sup>251</sup> South Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1950, 14.
- <sup>252</sup> Organizational Meeting of the Shiloh Association of Florida Baptists, *Minutes*, n. p.
- <sup>253</sup> Baptist Association Formed in Gadsden,' *Tallahassee Democrat*, March 18, 1951, 28.
- <sup>254</sup> Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1951, 13.

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- <sup>255</sup> Baptist Association Formed in Gadsden,' *Tallahassee Democrat*, March 18, 1951, 28.
- <sup>256</sup> Apalachee Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1955, 11.
- <sup>257</sup> Brevard Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1953, 1.
- <sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>261</sup> Big Lake Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1955, 27.
- <sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>265</sup> Ridge Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1954, 5.
- <sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 1966, 43.
- <sup>269</sup> Middle Florida Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1957, 23.
- <sup>270</sup> Taylor Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes* 1958, cover.
- <sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes* 1958, 2.
- <sup>272</sup> *Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Choctaw Baptist Association*, 1958, 15-16.
- <sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>275</sup> *Florida Baptist Witness*, April 9, 2009, 4.
- <sup>276</sup> Royal Palm Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1958, 20.
- <sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23, 32.
- <sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.
- <sup>280</sup> Gadsden County Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1961, 32.
- <sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>285</sup> Florida Keys Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1968, n. p.
- <sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, n. p.
- <sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, n. p.
- <sup>288</sup> "Local Southern Baptists Form New Group," *The Bradenton Herald*, October 29, 1977, 6.
- <sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>290</sup> Joiner, 2201.
- <sup>291</sup> Manatee Southern Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1978, 16-21.
- <sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

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<sup>294</sup> Sumter Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1992, 19.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> Alachua Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1991, 82.

<sup>297</sup> Sumter Baptist Association Annual, *Minutes*, 1992, 19.

<sup>298</sup> Florida Baptist Convention Annual, *Minutes*, 1998, 67, item 44.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 1999, 64, item 31.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**Associations with Florida Baptist Church Affiliation**  
**Chronological List by Organization Year**

- 1772 – Stonington, CT
- 1815 – Piedmont, GA
- 1816 – Bethlehem, AL
- 1825 – Chattahoochie [sic], AL
- 1827 – Ochlocknee, GA
- 1835 – Suwannee River
- 1843 – Florida
  - 1984-1988 Wakulla/1989-1999 Big Bend (merged)
- 1847 – Alachua/2006 – Nature Coast
- 1847 – West Florida
  - 1871; 1876 – Sandy Creek/1876 – Geneva (extinct)
  - 1888-1925 – Rocky Creek (extinct)
- 1857 – Santa Fee River/2014 – North Central Florida
- 1867 – South Florida Association
  - 1879 – Midway (extinct)
- 1870 – Wekiwa /1978 – Greater Orlando
- 1872 – New River
  - 1903 – New Santa Fe/1906-1925 – Central (disbanded)
- 1873 – Suwannee
- 1876 – Manatee Missionary/1897 – Peace River
  - 1892-1902 – Manatee River (merged)
  - 1916-1918 – Caloosa (merged)
- 1877 – St. Johns River
- 1879 – Beulah/2016 – North Florida
  - 1882-1905 – Hamilton (disbanded)
  - 1914-1916 – Little River (extinct)
- 1879 – Harmony
- 1879 – St. Marys River/1901 – Jacksonville/
  - 2012 – Engagejax/2022 – First Coast Churches
- 1885 – Hernando/1888 – Pasco
- 1885 – Marion
- 1889 – Indian River/2003 – Treasure Coast
- 1887 – Pensacola Bay
  - 1872-1909 – Elim (extinct)
- 1890 – Graves/1988 – Walton County
- 1891 – Lafayette
- 1900 – Middle Florida
- 1907 – Santa Rosa
  - 1912-1913 – Smyrna (merged)

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1909 – Miami  
1911 – Tampa Bay  
1913 – Black Creek  
1914 – Seminole/2021 – East Central  
1957-2021 – Halifax (merged)  
1923 – Okaloosa  
1924 – Holmes County/2005 - Holmes  
1905-1925 – Bethel/1909 – New West Florida/  
1911 – Bethel (extinct)  
1924 – Lake County  
1925 – Jackson County/1946 – Chipola  
1925 – Southwest Florida Association (disbanded 2018)  
1932 – Orange Blossom  
1932 – Pinellas County/1987 – Suncoast  
1934 – Northwest Coast  
1938 – Northeast Florida  
1938 – Palm-Lake/2010 – Palm Beach  
1948 – Gulf Stream/2023 – Broward  
1950 – Shiloh  
1951 – Gadsden/1955 – Apalachee  
1953 – Brevard  
1954 – Big Lake  
1954 – Ridge  
1957 – Taylor  
1958 – Choctaw/2009 – Emerald Coast  
1958 – Royal Palm  
1961 – Gadsden County  
1968 – Florida Keys  
1978 – Manatee Southern  
1992 – Sumter  
1996 – Church-At-Large

FOOTNOTE: There were two associations, that are no longer in existence, but are history footnotes. They are: 1860 – Concord the only record found in the Florida Baptist Convention Annual, *Minutes*, 1860, 28, organized with 12 churches from Florida and Georgia. The second footnote was in: 1900 – Mt. Olivet, according to historian H. C. Garwood, *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. I, 444, the minutes of its organization being the only record of its existence. It was never reported to the Florida Baptist Convention.

## APPENDIX 2

<b>Missions Director/ 2023</b>	<b>Year Established/ Year Re-named</b>	<b>Association Name [current/original]</b>
Alonso, Randy, moderator	1992	Sumter
Beasley, Cobra	1925/1946	Chipola [Jackson County]
Brock, Jamie	1879	Harmony
Bumgarner, Bob	1879/1901/2022	First Coast Churches [Jacksonville/ St. Mary's River]
Burdick, Tim	1924	Lake County
Cannington, Henry	1957	Taylor
Cheyney, Tom	1870/1978	Greater Orlando [Wekiwa]
Chumley, Jerry	1961	Gadsden County
Conner, Arthur	1948/2023	Broward [Gulf Stream]
Duggar, Darreyl	1951/1955	Apalachee [Gadsden]
Duncan, Caleb	1847	West Florida
Garrett, David	1900	Middle Florida
Gonzales, Mark	1958	Royal Palm
Greear, Asa	1877	St. Johns River
Grubbs, Drew	1932/1987	Suncoast [Pinellas County]
Haglund, Jeffrey	1857/2014	North Central Florida [Santa Fe River]
Hutcheson, Joe	1913	Black Creek
Jordan, Andy	1873	Suwannee
Kahn, Mike	1911	Tampa Bay
Lampp, Kent	1924	Holmes (County)
Lovelady, John	1890/1988	Walton County [Graves]
Lowry, Mike, moderator	1876/1897	Peace River [Manatee Missionary]
Maddox, Joe	1847/2006	Nature Coast [Alachua]
Martinez, Rick	1909	Miami



## APPENDIX 2

<b>Missions Director/ 2023</b>	<b>Year Established/ Year Re-named</b>	<b>Association Name [current/original]</b>
Mattox, Cliff	1978	Manatee Southern [Manatee]
McMahon, Sean	1843	Florida
Miller, Dr. Maxie	1950	Shiloh
Nall, Brian	1887	Pensacola Bay
O'Carroll, Tim	1889/2003	Treasure Coast [Indian River]
Pasquarella, Tom	1954	Big Lake
Patterson, Brett	1891	Lafayette
Petty, Michael	1954	Ridge
Roberts, Robert	1932	Orange Blossom
Rodriguez, Jonathan	1872	New River
Rogers, Glenn	1914/1957/2021	East Central [Seminole/ Halifax merger]
Rosenbalm, Charles	1968	Florida Keys
Ross, James	1958/2009	Emerald Coast [Choctaw]
Strickland, Eugene	1923	Okaloosa
TBA	1879/2016	North Florida [Beulah]
TBA	1938	Northeast Florida
Thomas, Steve	1938/2010	Palm Beach [Palm-Lake]
Thornton, Jerry	1953	Brevard
Varnum, Troy	1934	Northwest Coast
Waters, Jim	1907	Santa Rosa
Weible, Mark	1885	Marion
Wilgis, Tally	1885/1888	Pasco [Hernando]
Williamson, Richard	1867	South Florida

# Index to the 2023 Journal

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Church names are selectively included in this Index. A church associated with a significant person or event is included. Churches involved in the organization of a new association are not indexed, but can be found in the respective narrative associated with an indexed association.]

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