

## **SALT LAKE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION FUTURE DIRECTION TASK FORCE REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

For 50 years the Salt Lake Baptist Association (SLBA) has had a partnership with the North American Mission Board (NAMB, formerly HMB). This relationship predates the existence of the Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention (UISBC). Turning their focus towards the Great Commission Resurgence, NAMB has determined to limit their cooperation to Church Planting. In place of helping associations with Directors of Mission, they are focusing on Church Planting and all NAMB dollars will go to support a Church Planting Catalyst.

While SLBA agrees with the need to plant new churches, the mission of the association has two other purposes; strengthening existing churches, and partnering with churches to do ministry and have fellowship. The new NAMB policy has very little if any room for an associational director to lead out in these areas.

The future is somewhat cloudy. We don't know exactly what it will look like. After consulting with pastors and lay persons, our current Director of Missions recommended we be proactive in determining the future of the association. In concert with the director, the Executive Board passed a resolution<sup>1</sup> calling for the association to continue and to become self-supporting if possible.

In December 2011 the Executive Board, in a called business meeting, authorized the establishment of a task force to set the direction of SLBA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is the report of that task force.<sup>2</sup>

### **INTRODUCTION**

Baptist associations have existed almost as long as Baptist churches. English Baptists formed the first association in 1653. The second association was formed in 1655 and continues to exist today.<sup>3</sup> Pastors and laypersons have found associations very helpful. Historically they served as a monitor of doctrinal issues, advised churches on Baptist practices, served as a clearing house in personnel matters, promoted benevolent work among the churches including missions and new church starts, provided fellowship for lonely Baptists, and modeled preaching for young and inexperienced pastors.

The mission statement of the Salt Lake Baptist Association divides the work of the association into three areas; helping existing churches, starting new churches, and cooperating with churches in ministry and fellowship.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I *Association Resolution May, 2011*

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix II *Task Force*

<sup>3</sup> Vedder, Henry C. *A Short History of the Baptists* (Valley Forge, Judson Press) 1907 p.239

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix III *Association Vision and Mission Statement*

With the new partnership announced by NAMB and the UISBC, their partnership will be primarily in the one area of starting new churches. Members of the association felt responsible to determine how the other two areas of ministry would be met.

The Task Force established in December 2011 and assigned to study this issue began meeting January 5, 2012. We met for two hours every week to study the questions presented by the resolution. The meeting time doubled as work time as we divided into work groups to answer the assigned questions. This report is the attempt to provide answers and to set a direction for the association.

## QUESTIONS

A careful reading of the document approved by the Executive Board motion establishing the Task Force produced seven questions that needed an answer. Those questions follow in the order we attempted to answer them, not in the order they appear in the document.

1. Is the Salt Lake Baptist Association relevant to our churches in their mission and vision? If it is no longer relevant, how should it be redirected or should it just be eliminated?
2. Does the vision statement of the Salt Lake Baptist Association adequately express who the Salt Lake Baptist Association should be?
3. Does the current mission statement adequately state the mission of the Salt Lake Baptist Association? Is this the proper focus for the next 10 years as best as we can see and understand at this time?
4. Do we need to amend the constitution to define "cooperating church"?
5. Do we have an effective financial plan to become financially independent?
6. What leadership, facilities, and equipment do we need to accomplish the mission?
7. Do we have an effective policy and procedure to direct our mission focus? Is the policy in writing and easily communicable to our cooperating churches, partners, and potential partners?

## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Question 1. Is the Salt Lake Baptist Association relevant to our churches in their mission and vision? If it is no longer relevant, how should it be redirected or should it just be eliminated?**

The task force decided early that the association remains relevant for the churches as it has for the last 359 years. While every church is not totally involved, and some churches believe the performance of the association could be improved, the association is important. If the Salt Lake association did not exist, churches would replace it with another association or an association-like organization.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix IV; Report from the Personnel Workgroup of the SLBA Taskforce

**Question 2. Does the vision statement of the Salt Lake Baptist Association adequately express who the Salt Lake Baptist Association should be?**

**Question 3. Does the current mission statement adequately state the mission of the Salt Lake Baptist Association? Is this the proper focus for the next 10 years as best as we can see and understand at this time?**

We began discussing the vision and mission statements and concluded that, while it may be advisable to tweak a word here or there, rethink a phrase, or perhaps add or subtract a word, basically they speak to the work of the association. We recommend that, should the Executive Board desire, they choose a process for re-visioning but we don't believe that falls under the scope of this task force.

**Question 4. Do we need to amend the constitution to define "cooperating church"?**

One work group had the task of examining the constitution to answer this question. They looked not only at our constitution but at relevant passages from the constitutions of other associations. The relevant section in our constitution is Section 1.

**Section 1 Membership**

The Association shall be composed of cooperating churches, the doctrinal beliefs of which shall conform to *The Baptist Faith and Message* by statement and practice. A cooperating church will contribute financially to the Association, contribute to the Cooperative Program, participate in Executive Board meetings and/or the annual meeting of the Association, and submit statistical information in a timely fashion when requested.

The work group thought that our constitution is sufficient in this area but the policy needs to be strengthened so as to make the meaning of Cooperating Church clear. We recommend the following addition to the policy of the association.

***In order to be a Cooperating Church of the Salt Lake Baptist Association, a church must:***

- 1. Make a regular monthly contribution to the Association or an annual contribution of not less than \$200 in each calendar year.*
- 2. The church will contribute to the Cooperative Program a sufficient amount to remain a church in good standing with the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.*
- 3. The church will participate in at least one Executive Board meeting per year or in the Association Annual meeting.*
- 4. The church will submit a completed Annual Church Profile each year.*

***As a result of being a cooperating church, a church will be able to:***

- 1. Use the Salt Lake Baptist Association owned vehicles,*

2. *Use all available Salt Lake Baptist Association equipment according to the schedule of fees designated for Salt Lake Baptist Association churches,*
3. *Have voting privileges in Executive Board meetings, seat messengers at Annual meetings, and be included in special polling situations.*

NOTE: A minority report maintains that the constitution should be changed to require a church to attend at least one executive board meeting before being seated as a voting member at the annual meeting. This would require a constitutional change. If this is a widespread feeling, a constitutional revision committee should be formed.<sup>6</sup>

**Question 5. Do we have an effective financial plan to become financially independent?**

With adjustments already made, the association can function through 2012. We will need to make further adjustments for 2013 and following if we are to keep our Director of Missions and become self-supporting.

It is our belief that our association must become proactive in discovering funds to allow it to become self-supporting and keep our DOM.

We have five recommendations.

Recommendation 1. We recommend a publicity campaign to inform churches of the change in the financial structure of the association to give them the opportunity to increase giving to the association. Our churches and people need to be aware of the change in partnership terms between NAMB, UISBC, and the association.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the association begin to realign the properties it owns. The association owns six properties.

- (1) The Association Office Building in Draper.
  - (2) The Missionary in Residence House in West Jordan.
  - (3) The Church Property in Wendover.
  - (4) The Church Property on 4<sup>th</sup> East in Salt Lake City
  - (5) The Salt Company House on 13<sup>th</sup> East in Salt Lake City.
  - (6) The Reach Salt Lake Property on California Ave. in Salt Lake City
- a) We list The Salt Company House for sale immediately. The Missionary in Residence house is obligated until the end of 2012. After the obligations are met, we will list it for sale.
  - b) We recommend offering the two church properties for sale to the churches that occupy them now. If they are not interested in purchasing them, we list them on the market.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix V; Change to Constitution and Policy Manual

- c) The association (see recommendation 5 below) must keep an eye on the office building. There are three options. 1- Continue to use it as is; 2-List it for sale; 3-Lease it. Which of these options we eventually choose is dependent on the results of the other properties.
- d) Keep the RSL property to carry out the ministry that happens there. Possibly use it in the future for association office space.

In dealing with the properties, the goal is to invest the proceeds from any sale. The association will use the income from investments for ministry while saving the principal for the future.

Recommendation 3. We recommend the Properties and Trust Committee investigate ways to use the proceeds from the current trust to finance associational ministry.

Recommendation 4. We encourage our ongoing ministries to expand their sources of income.

Recommendation 5. The Executive Board needs to take an active hand in helping the association to meet the previous four recommendations. We suggest the creation of an Association Stewardship Committee to work with financial issues.

**Question 6. What leadership, facilities, and equipment do we need to accomplish the mission?**

In determining the personnel we need as an association, we recognize a great value in the position of a DOM for the SLBA. At this time, we do not see that the Church Planter Catalyst position would allow us to maintain the current level of church support and ministry.

We recommend we assume the financial responsibility of our DOM and that we cooperate with NAMB in their desire to plant new churches in our association area.

We further recommend that we direct our DOM and our Personnel Committee to fill such positions as we have need for and can provide for in our budget.

We recommend we allow the DOM in concert with appropriate teams and ministries to make decisions regarding the disposal and storage of equipment as he determines is best for the association.

**Question 7. Do we have an effective policy and procedure to direct our mission focus? Is the policy in writing and easily communicable to our cooperating churches, partners, and potential partners?**

As with every organization, policy manuals are flexible and changing. Our current manual is out of date in some areas and will become even more outdated and in need of change as we make the adjustments called for in this report.

3/15/2012

Our recommendation is for the Executive Board to initiate a team to review and update the policies of the association.

## **Conclusion**

The task force believes that this report represents a significant milestone in the life of Salt Lake Baptist Association and, if approved, will free the association to minister as an autonomous body. While we want to remain a cooperating association of cooperating churches, we also want to grow up into an adult association responsible for our own ministry direction.

The reader should not understand anything in this report as a call for the association or the churches to break fellowship with the Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, or the North American Mission Board. Our desire is not to be disrespectful or to challenge their call to reach our great nation. We will continue to work with them in the vision they have for reaching North America.

We understand the magnitude of this decision for the future of our association. Our hope and prayer is that by standing on our vision of ministry for our association we will be able to effectively minister to our communities and to our churches for many years to come.

Respectfully Submitted,

2012 Task Force of the SLBA

Rodger Russell, Chairperson

Members, John Prim, Glen Apgar, Tina Pelton, Gary Lowe, Brian Ratlif, Mike Pless, Mark Burgess, Buck Buchanan, James Gomez,

Dan Walker, Director of Missions

Debbie Ward, Executive Assistant

## Appendix I

### RESOLUTION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE SALT LAKE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

MAY 2011

**Whereas the Salt Lake Baptist Association** desires to direct its own ministry and mission focus, and

**Whereas the Salt Lake Baptist Association** desires to become free from outside financial obligations, and

**Whereas Baptist** polity historically calls for autonomous churches, autonomous associations, and autonomous conventions, and

**Whereas the North American Mission Board** has announced a change in its support structure for state conventions, associations, missionaries, and their programs, and should they continue this course;

**Therefore be it resolved:**

That the Salt Lake Baptist Association will be a relationship of cooperating churches, and be it further resolved,

That the Salt Lake Baptist Association will be self-supporting; and be it further resolved,

That the Salt Lake Baptist Association will partner with other organizations to carry out its mission; and be it finally resolved,

That the Salt Lake Baptist Association will determine the allocation of all financial contributions.

## **Appendix II**

### **Task Force**

December 11, 2011

#### **Appointment and Focus of Task Force**

Dan will appoint a task force to operate from now until the end of March, to put together a long term directive. In April 2012, the report of the Task Force's recommendation will be made public, and then the report can be acted upon in the May 2012 meeting. Dan has appointed:

Property and Trust team: Mike Pless, Mark Burgess, Glen Apgar;

From the Personnel Team: John Prim, Tina Pelton, Buck Buchanan;

Four at large: Rodger Russell to serve as chairperson, Gary Lowe, James Gomez, and Brian Ratlif

### **Appendix III**

#### **Association Vision and Mission Statements**

##### **Vision**

“Effective Churches working together reproducing a living faith in Christ”

##### **Mission**

The mission of the Salt Lake Baptist Association is to work together as Southern Baptist Churches to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission by:

- Strengthening Existing Churches
- Starting Effective New Churches
- Serving in Ministries of Cooperation and Fellowship

## Appendix IV

### Report from the Personnel Work Group of the SLBA Task Force

Group Members: Tina Pelton, Buck Buchanan, James Gomez

The task of our work group was gathering information from pastors in the Salt Lake Baptist Association.

We gathered the names of all pastors currently serving within our association, divided the list amongst the three of us and began making contact, either via email or through personal discussions. We did not receive an overwhelming response, even after “reminders.” We recognize that our pastors have many responsibilities and we attempted to make this as easy as we could so as not take up more of their time than necessary.

We asked for feedback on three general questions:

#### ***1. What does your church expect from an association?***

- \*Associations give opportunities for local churches to work together and minister to the community in ways we could not do on our own.
- \*An association should provide intentional, proactive support, encouragement, and service minded help for local churches.
- \*A valuable association encourages and supports the pastors, guards the doctrinal integrity of the churches through an ordination process, and unites churches to serve together in their mission.
- \*Assistance with access to resources that we are not capable of financially securing on our own.
- \*Support and encouragement to the pastors. Fellowship.
- \*The association should be an information source for the churches, helping pastors and churches to know where to find the information they need.

#### ***2. What should be the minimum standards/requirements for a church to be considered a participating/cooperating church within the association?***

- \*A cooperating church should be involved in the association.
- \*The standards are a statement on the part of doctrinally like-minded churches of a desire to be part, as well as financial participation, in the association as they are available.
- \*Give to the association yearly. Agree to a theological statement of faith. Participate in the united mission/vision of the denomination.
- \*There should be some guideline or determining factor in regards to a financial contribution.

**3. Do you see value in an association; if so, what is that value?**

\*I see value in the association for the smaller churches, if indeed they feel supported and encouraged.

\*I think I used to see value, but I don't anymore. I have slowly changed my mind.

\*In the current scheme of things, I do not. If the association provided the type of benefits listed under #1, I would then see a value. That value has not been my experience in my dealings with Southern Baptist life.

\*I see value in having an association of churches. It provides fellowship and partnering opportunities.

\* Yes, we need participation to accomplish our agenda mission statement. This participation should be more than financial.

\*There is value only if it meets the local churches and the community's needs. If we are running the SBC's programs then we might as well close down

***Additional Comments Received:***

\*When we plant a church too close to an existing one, with the thought that they have a different worship style so they will attract a different crowd then we are pretty much applying what we will eventually get with NAMB.

\*I like the idea of an association taking responsibility for its mission. I think we could do a much better job of intentionally contacting the churches/pastors and encouraging them to be part. I think many are unaware of what is available to them.

\*Based on my understanding of the desire to self-fund for the purpose of being able to have greater direction over the function of a local association, I would say I feel this is a decision which affects not only the current association with the SBC on a national level, but also affects any effectiveness of future DOM's. This is a decision that could have a rather permanent impact on how local associations would be funded.

\*I see this as something of an effort on the part of the employees of dictating how the corporation should be run. If there is going to be an association with the national SBC and the national SBC is saying they think they are being led in a particular direction, to withdraw support from that direction for the purpose of setting up one's own goals is, it seems to me, contrary to the spirit of "cooperating churches." This seems a rather strong departure from the mentality of "Dance with the one who brung ya," which seems to be used as a bargaining chip or reasoning point with churches in the local association who might be heading in a direction other than what the local association might approve of.

## Appendix V

### Minority Report from the Task Force\*

#### Proposed Constitution Change

##### Section 1 Membership

The Association shall be composed of cooperating churches, the doctrinal beliefs of which shall conform to *The Baptist Faith and Message* by statement and practice. A cooperating church will contribute financially to the Association, contribute to the Cooperative Program, participate in *at least one* Executive Board Meeting *each year*, ~~and/or participate in~~ the annual meeting of the Association, and submit statistical information in a timely fashion when requested.

Words in italics to be added to current constitution.

Crossed through words to be deleted from current constitution.

#### Proposed Policy Change

In order to be a Cooperating Church of the Salt Lake Baptist Association, a church must:

1. Make a regular monthly contribution to the Association or an annual contribution of not less than \$200 per calendar year;
2. Contribute to the Cooperative Program, a amount to remain a church in good standing with the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention;
3. Participate in at least one Executive Board Meeting per year;
4. Participate in the annual meeting of the Association;
5. Submit a completed Annual Church Profile to the associational office each year.

As a result of being a cooperating church, a church will be able to:

1. Use the Salt Lake Baptist Association owned vehicles;
2. Use all available Salt Lake Baptist Association equipment according to the schedule of fees designated for Salt Lake Baptist Association churches;
3. Have voting privileges in Executive Board Meetings, seat messengers at Annual meetings and be included in special polling situations.

\*Minority report is a report that has not been approved by the task force but is deemed important by a minority of the task force. It is presented here for information.