

DESOTO-TATE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

A SOUTHERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

CONSTITUTION



Article 1: Name

The name of this network of churches shall be the DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association: A Southern Baptist Association.

[In cases of ministry in hostile countries or regions, the Association may be referred to as the DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association, hereafter referred as DTBA, (previously known as XMN, X-tended Network, or X-tended Missions Network). In publications, the name may be abbreviated for space or for fluidity, yet in local publications the full name will appear in a conspicuous location and may be abbreviated throughout the remainder of the publication for space and ease of reading.]

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of the DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association shall be to Magnify Jesus by Mobilizing, Multiplying, Maturing and Ministering to churches.

Section 1: Mobilization

The DTBA shall strive to reach the nations for Christ and will therefore continually seek needy people groups and nations where the Lord directs it to work.

Section 2: Multiplying

The DTBA shall strive to maintain church planting movements both locally and globally, realizing that new church plants are necessary for sustained mission advance in unchurched areas and that new life cycles must be fostered in churching nations to maintain a Christian influence from generation to generation.

Section 3: Maturing

The DTBA shall strive to work together to promote quality education, discipleship, evangelism and church health development within its churches.

Section 4: Ministering

The DTBA staff, as directed by its AMD, will provide confidential encouragement, training, arbitration, and Biblical guidance to any church's membership, staff or senior pastor as requested by such entities — as time permits.

[In cases of conflict resolution or arbitration see section on AUTHORITY, Article V.]

Article III: Articles of Faith

The articles of faith, which shall be the basis of fellowship and cooperation of the association are those set forth in the statement of faith of "The Baptist Faith and Message" as amended June 2000.

Article IV: Membership

Section 1: Like Doctrine and Mission

The membership of this association shall be composed of messengers elected by cooperating Baptist Churches who affirm our articles of faith, and will not be comprised of any church, entity, association of churches, or denomination not in full agreement with the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

Section 2: Association "Member-Status" (Full Membership)

The membership of the association shall be composed of messengers elected by cooperating Baptist churches who contribute to the association. Each Church shall elect their pastor and, according to its own method, elect one messenger for the first 50 members and one additional messenger for each additional 50 resident members, not to exceed 10 messengers in total. These churches shall be known as "Association Members".

2.1 Expectations

Each church will submit an ACP (annual church profile) to the association with the guidelines suggested by the association office and will contribute regularly to the association.

2.2 Representatives at the Annual Meeting

Any member of a DTBA church may attend the annual meetings and are encouraged to do so; however, preferential seating shall be provided to duly-elected messengers to the meeting. In the case that overcrowding becomes an issue, churches may be asked to pre-register their attendees in addition to their messengers, to fairly distribute seats proportionally. If overflows occur, elected messengers will not be asked to wait outside. Only elected messengers and associational staff will be allowed to address the Association from the floor or platform. Each church shall be granted 2 messengers to the annual meeting, and 1 additional messenger for every 50 resident members for the prior year, with a maximum of 10 messengers.

2.3 Voting

Each elected messenger will be provided with a voting lanyard or ID, to be held in the air when votes are taken, or they may be given ballots for votes that require their name, church, and response.

2.4 Geographic Restriction

Membership shall be restricted to only those churches within the United States of America, due to the problems connected with international accounting and money exchange.

2.4.1 Local Members (DeSoto, Tate)

It is the intention of this Association to respond to a wide variety of needs for those churches deemed local. Church consultation shall be available, yet not restricted, to these churches as time may permit.

2.4.2 Area Members (Marshall, Panola, Shelby, Tunica)

The DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association staff shall not seek out churches from surrounding SBC associations for membership. Recognizing the autonomy of the local church, the DTBA shall be open to request from churches of other associations, however should a SBC church that currently partners with another Baptist association seek to become full members within the DTBA, the AMD of the DTBA shall contact the other AMD to explain what is transpiring. Should churches in our area, yet outside Tate and DeSoto Counties, desire membership, it is the intention of the association to network with these churches in all phases of network missions. Yet regular events will not begin to occur on an ongoing basis in their areas until participating church population density, and staffing at the DTBA warrants such scheduling.

2.4.3 Regional Members (N. MS, W. TN and E. Central AK)

It is the intention of this Association to provide large venues for training and development, church planting aid and strategy, and provide global mission strategy and training for regional churches. "In Church" consultation will likely not be a possibility unless Association growth provides for additional staffing.

Section 3: Association Partner - Status (Partial Membership)

Any Baptist church who does not give to the associations general budget, but who elects to give to either Leadership Development, Church Planting or Local/Global Missions, may elect 2 non-voting messengers to the annual meeting or executive team and may have members nominated or appointed to a priority team upon the request of both the administrative team and AMD where their funds are directed. These churches shall be known as "Association Partners".

3.1 Regional Partners

It is the intention of this Association to provide specific strategy, leadership and training for Regional Partners who desire to partner in international missions or church planting.

3.2 National Partners

It is the intention of this Association to create strategic partnerships with other churches and associations, contributing strategy, leadership and training to accomplish major international mission projects, which might limit any single organization.

Section 4: Association "Project Partner" Status (Participants)

Any Baptist or Independent Evangelical church or members therein who desires to partner in a mission project may join with the expressed approval of the AMD. These churches shall be known as "Project Partners". Project Partners may not adhere to the Baptist Faith and Message but must be deemed Evangelical (accepts the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary atonement for sin, Christ's deity, the fallen nature of man, the closed canon of scripture, and the Trinity). This will allow the association to occasionally participate in wider kingdom work.

Section 5: Membership Qualification (Full and Partial)

5.1 Churches shall be duly constituted, independent bodies, which are scriptural in belief and practice.

5.2 Churches shall have two ordained offices, pastor/elder/overseer/bishop and that of deacon.

5.3 Churches shall be pastor led and congregationally ruled. Although pastors Biblically rule; they do so only under the authority and affirmation of the gathered congregation. The ultimate power in Association churches shall rest in the congregation.

5.4 Churches shall not knowingly take action to affirm, approve, or endorse immorality, adultery, perversion, homosexual behavior, or any other behavior that deviates from the Biblical standard.

5.5 Churches are encouraged to associate with Southern Baptist State Convention/s so long as they remain doctrinally and responsively pure.

Section 6: Guidelines for accepting "Association Members"

6.1 The autonomy of the local Baptist church is duly recognized by the DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association.

6.2 The association seeks to be of assistance to all churches in their fellowship and ministry and does not seek control.

6.3 The association will lead in locating new church plant sites locally, regionally and globally.

6.4 A church shall make application to the administrative committee one month before any executive committee meeting where they will discuss and will meet with selected members of that team for review; however, if the church has been planted by and accountable to the DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association in their development as a church plant, the administrative team may choose to wave review and recommend directly to the annual meeting or executive committee for approval.

6.5 With the joint recommendation of the administrative team and AMD, the executive committee may vote to accept the requesting church.

6.6 With the recommendation of the administrative team, the annual meeting may vote to accept the requesting church.

6.7 In either case, a written report will be forwarded to the annual meeting.

Section 7: Responsibilities

7.1 Keep the association informed by submitting an annual status in the form of the ACP (Annual Church Profile).

7.2 Contribute at least annually.

7.3 Inform the association should the church begin to operate in a fashion inconsistent with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, or alter its church government or stated doctrine in contradiction to the same.

7.4 Maintain a regenerate church membership and exercise church discipline over its body.

Article V: AUTHORITY

The DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association claims no jurisdiction over member churches and shall exercise no authority over them, nor shall it act as counsel in the adjustment of a church in trouble or dispute of any kind without the invitation of the church body, deacon body, team or pastor.

The DTBA is an independent fellowship of churches, and like its autonomous churches, is not controlled by the State Convention, or Southern Baptist Convention. It is not a church. It is a missional association under the control of its member churches' duly authorized voting representatives. Though its ministry staff should meet the character qualifications of the New Testament's office of Elder/Overseer/Bishop/Pastor-Teacher, its structure is quite different from a local church.

The Association Director has no authority within the local bodies themselves, outside that of the influence and the example he sets before the local churches. However, when an associational event or mission project takes place; he and his staff shall have authority and leadership over such projects, as they are joint ventures.

In some cases the Director may delegate his authority to a pastor or Association member when necessary for a project or mission trip. They will be publicly assigned the role of "DTBA Project Manager" and will represent the association in a specific joint venture.

Section 1: **Conflict Resolution**

Any church, ministry team, committee, board, staff member/s, or pastor may seek assistance from a staff member of the association at any time.

Section 1.1 **Invitation by a senior pastor.**

Since we recognize that God calls a pastor to lead his flock and Shepherd them, a pastor's request for aid will be given serious consideration. Therefore, any staff member, with the AMD's approval, may respond to a request to meet with a pastor and any other group or person that he may be meeting with upon his request. Any DTBA staff member may decline that request due to the climate of the conflict or if he feels that his presence may be counterproductive or if he feels inadequate to be of aid in a specific circumstance.

Section 1.2 **Invitation by the church.**

Since we recognize the autonomous authority of the local assembled body, their request for aid will be considered mission critical. Therefore, any staff member, with the AMD's approval, may respond to a request to meet with any group or persons upon the request of the church body when voted on in a general business session of that church. Any DTBA staff member may decline that request due to the climate of the conflict or if he feels that his presence may be counterproductive or if he feels inadequate to be of aid in that specific circumstance.

Section 1.3 **Invitation by the deacon body.**

Since deacons were created primarily to keep down grumbling among the flock, their request for aid will be given serious consideration. Therefore, any staff member, with the AMD's approval, may respond to a request to meet with the deacon body and any other group or persons that they may be meeting with upon their request. Any DTBA staff member may decline that request due to the climate of the conflict or if he feels that his presence may be counterproductive or if he feels inadequate to be of aid in that specific circumstance.

Section 1.4 Invitation by a ministry team or committee.

In the event that a committee or ministry team has internal conflict or dispute over direction, and in order to aid the pastor and staff, a staff member may be permitted to attend a meeting to lead an objective viewpoint. In no cases shall an XMN staff member attend such meeting without the pastor or his associate being informed prior to that meeting. In such case they have no official power, they lead by example and influence.

Section 2 General Assistance

When serious conflict resolution isn't the issue, and the purpose is planning, teaching, training, advising or encouraging, any associational staff member may meet with any pastor, church, committee, board, team, or staff members at will unless restricted by the AMD with an invitation from an applicable church member or staff.

Section 3: Alienation

The DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association reserves the right to refuse to recognize representatives from any church which persists in practices contrary to the purpose and doctrinal statements held by the DTBA.

3.1 In the cases of anticipated alienation.

The administrative committee shall attempt to meet with the pastor and executive committee member of that church to understand clearly the issues of debate. If they feel the situation warrants removal, they shall report to the executive committee their findings.

3.2 Actual Removal

The associational office shall send each church notice 1 month prior to any Executive Committee (see Article VII Section 3) meeting if a discussion concerning alienation will appear on the agenda of the next meeting in order that churches may realize the importance of the meeting and plan to adjust schedules accordingly.

If the Executive Committee finds the concerns unworthy of action, the matter shall not be reconsidered unless additional information is rediscovered.

If the violation is a gross departure from widely held Baptist belief, polity or behavior, then the Executive Committee may immediately suspend them from fellowship, and refer the issue to the upcoming annual meeting.

If the Executive Committee finds the report of the administrative team to warrant removal, but the matter is assessed to be reasonably debatable, the executive committee or administrative team will present its findings at the annual meeting of the association where the church may respond in its defense. The messengers shall vote by simple majority to accept or reject the executive committee's recommendation to remove.

Article VI: Meetings**Section 1. Annual Meetings**

The DTBA shall have an annual meeting held at such time and place as it desires. The administrative team will approve the location. The AMD will be afforded at least one 30-45 minute address to the association. The administrative team will approve the agenda and order.

Section 2. Quarterly Meetings

The DTBA shall have Quarterly Meetings that may be scheduled by the Executive body. The date and time shall be announced to all churches no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled meeting.

Section 3. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Moderator upon written request from the Executive committee, search team or administrative team. Notice shall be provided to all churches no later than 30 days prior to the called meeting.

Section 4. Order

All official meetings of the DTBA shall abide by the guidelines set forth in Roberts Rules of Order, unless stated otherwise herein.

Section 5 Quorums

A quorum shall consist of all properly elected representatives that arrive for any official meeting, unless a quantified quorum is defined within this document for certain types of meetings or issues. A simple majority of votes shall rule in all meetings unless defined otherwise herein.

Article VII: Organization

Section 1.

General Officers

The DeSoto-Tate Baptist Association shall have in office a Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer. All officers shall be elected by a popular vote at the annual meeting and shall serve a term of one year. Nominations for the various offices may be made by administrative team and by the AMD *while* nominations will be accepted also from the floor of the annual meeting.

Director:

The director shall be the principal officer of the DTBA and will have the option to function as an ex-officio member on all committees and teams.

Moderator:

Presides over the annual meeting of the association.

Presides over the quarterly meeting of the Executive Committee.

Calls and presides over special meetings of the Executive Committee.

Is ex-officio on the administrative team.

Vice Moderator

Fills the duties of the Moderator in his absence.

Replaces the Moderator in cases of resignation, death, or move from a DTBA church.

Clerk:

Records minutes of the annual meeting.

Records minutes of the executive meetings.

Treasurer:

Approves (determines if money is in that account) and signs all checks written by the secretary.

Makes monthly reports to the administrative team and executive meetings.

Disperses funds as needed by the DTBA and oversee other elected non-officer disbursements.

Section 2: State Board Members

State board members will be nominated annually for a 3-year term, consisting of 1 member from Tate County and 1 member from DeSoto County. They may serve 2 consecutive three-year terms.

No member shall be able to serve more than two terms until an interval of at least one year shall have lapsed.

Section 3: **Executive Committee Members**

Membership: Shall consist of general officers, RSC/AMD, MMC, Director of Education, Associate AMD, Administrative Team, Priority Teams, State Board Members, and 2 members elected as representatives from each Associational Member church (Pastor or his elected representative and 1 other member of the church as elected by the church body). Function: The Executive Committee shall act for the association between session, except:

1. A Change in the Constitution.
2. A matter involving general controversy.
3. A matter requiring evidence of general support.

For Quorum see Article VI section 5.

Section 4: **Administrative Team Members**

There shall be 11 members of the administrative team, 5 Priority team Chairmen and 6 men elected in pairs at the annual meeting. Each of the 5 Priority teams shall elect a 3-year chairman that will serve on the administrative team. The DTBA shall also elect 2 new administrative team members annually (6 total) who will also serve 3-year terms each.

The administrative team will be expected to offer 2 nominees for the position and the annual meeting floor will also be open for nominations.

Ballots will be provided to each messenger to the annual meeting and the results will be tabulated by AMD appointees. Anyone may serve an unlimited amount of terms, but may never serve 2 terms in succession except when the association is without an AMD. Chairman of Priority Teams are exempt from the succession exception.

Article VIII: Trustees

The Trustees of the association shall consist of the Moderator of the association as president of the Trustees, the Chairman of the Administrative Committee as Vice-President, and the Clerk as Secretary. The Trustees shall represent the association of all affairs concerning physical properties in keeping with the provisions of the Association's Charter of Incorporation.

Article IX: Administration

The administrative team shall meet as they deem necessary. It is expected that they will meet at least once between executive team meetings and are encouraged not to meet more than monthly except in crisis.

Section 1: **Financial Review**

The association shall be provided a financial update, at least quarterly, to be published in the associational newsletter when an issue is released (some less-active months may have no newsletter to save expenses). Any Executive team member shall have free access to financial information. The Administrative Team shall have free access to financial information and be regularly updated by the AMD, Treasurer, and EBTC Director. Their role is not to approve expenditures within budget, but to ensure, along with the treasurer, that there is positive cash flow and correct reporting and accounting.

Section 1.2: **Budgeting**

The Administrative Team, under the direction and coordination of the AMD, will present a tentative budget to the executive body before the Annual meeting for review and

suggestions. They may form a Budgeting Team should they choose to delegate this authority; such team will dissolve after the budget is approved at the annual meeting.

Section 1.3: Budgeted Expenses

Any monies previously budgeted and approved by the annual meeting may be spent as needed by the associational staff. Expenditures over \$5,000 will need to be released by the AMD.

Section 1.4: Out of Budget Expenditures

The AMD may make expenditures that do not exceed 1/2% of the budget, and must report the expense to the next administrative team meeting. The Administrative Team may make out of budget expenditures that do not exceed 2% of the overall budget, but must report to the next executive team meeting. The Executive Body may make expenditures that do not exceed 10% of the annual budget and will report to the annual meeting, however a quorum of 10 representative churches will be required for such a vote. A special meeting of the DTBA will be called for any expenses over 10% of the annual budget.

Section 1.5: Mission Trip Expenses and related Designated Funds

Any monies collected from churches or individuals for specific purposes or trips will be categorized separately and not be considered as budgeted or non-budgeted items, but will be classified as designated. Consequently, the AMD or Missions Mobilization Coordinator may release these funds, at will, to the related trip or project expenses.

Section 2: Personnel and Search Team

The administration team will function as a personnel body unless they elect to delegate this responsibility. The administrative team may delegate personnel issues or an individual issue to an ad-hoc team, a personnel ministry team, or to a sub-team as they deem appropriate for smooth operation. They will have the authority to dissolve such team at any time.

AMD Search Team

In the event of the absence of an AMD, the Administrative Team shall nominate 8 members to form a Search team. A special meeting of the Executive Committee shall vote, by ballot, for 4 of the 8 named persons with the 4 highest totals demonstrating the will of the association. The Administrative Team will also elect 2 from its own body to serve on the search team, following the executive committee vote. This team of 6 shall constitute an AMD search team.

When the AMD search team is ready to present a candidate to the executive committee, the association shall have a minimum of 4 weeks advance notice. The search team shall advise the moderator that a candidate is to be presented and the moderator shall ensure that all churches have been contacted with the notice of such meeting. When a vote is taken the candidate must receive a 2/3 majority to be confirmed.

Article X: Ministry Teams

Ministry teams may be created numerous ways. The administrative Team may create and dissolve teams as necessary. The AMD may create and dissolve teams as necessary. Any team may create within itself sub-groups. The Administrative Team may dissolve any ministry team at any time with appropriate cause or if a team fails to accomplish its task in a timely manner. The creating body may dissolve a ministry team, and the administrative team may dissolve any ministry team.

Section 1: Standing Ministry Teams

There shall be a ministry team assigned to the following areas, Church Planting, Missions, Leadership Development and Local Church Ministry.

These teams will work with the AMD or his representative liaison to help plan, budget, deploy and execute the missional work of the association.

Section 1.2 Church Planting

Staff Liaison: AMD

Focused on the development of church planting primarily within, but not limited to, our region.

Section 1.3 Missions

Staff Liaison: AMD or MMC

Focused on the development of North American and International Missions.

Section 1.4 Leadership Development

Staff Liaison: AMD

Focused on the development of Bi-vocational and Full-Salaried Professional Staff and Pastors within our region.

Section 1.5 Local Church Ministry

Staff Liaison: AME

Focused on the development of local churches and their lay leadership.

Section 1.6 EBTC

Staff Liaison: EBTC Dir.

Section 2 Placement

The Administrative Team, Executive Committee, the AMD, or his representative, shall together, slate nominees for each Priority Team annually. These nominations shall be brought to the annual meeting for approval where additional nominations may be entertained. The number of members per team will be determined by the AMD based upon need, but must have a minimum of 5 members and may not exceed 50. Quorums will consist of all members who arrive for scheduled meetings.

Anyone may serve an unlimited number of terms, but no one may be permitted to serve 2 terms in succession except in the absence of an AMD or in an unusual strategic circumstance. (Should an individual possess extraordinary skill in an area, with the unanimous consent of the administrative team and AMD, a person may serve in succession, if approved by the annual meeting — but the annual meeting must be advised of this exception prior to the vote.)

Article XI: Amendments

Section 1 Proposals

Any proposed amendment to the constitution shall be presented to the administrative team before their May Team Meeting in writing. It shall be mailed to all executive team members prior to the upcoming executive team meeting. The amendment may be discussed in upcoming executive team meetings, special called meetings, and will be discussed at the October annual meeting afternoon session, and shall be voted on in the evening session. A majority of 2/3 of the voting messengers of the annual meeting will be required for ratification.

Bylaws

Article I: Policy Manual

Section 1.1 Maintenance

The policy manual will be maintained by the AMD with updates mailed to each administrative team member. Either the AMD or Administrative team may change policy as necessary. Human Resource Management, Financial Policy, Procurement, Missions Strategy, Church Planting Strategy, and various other policies and procedures shall be collected for smooth operations and accountability.

Section 2.1 Master Manual

The Secretary to the AMD will maintain a master copy of all policies and procedures, sending updates to the appropriate parties as changes are made. Any changes made by the AMD or Administrative Team shall be sent to the secretary as soon as possible. Each Policy manual shall be numbered and accounted for, being turned in to the association office as members roll off of their team assignments.

Section 2.2 Change Order

The AMD or Administrative team shall issue a written policy to the AMD secretary, signed and dated by either the AMD or Administrative Team Chairman (or Vice Chair). The written policy will then become part of the policy manual until updated, replaced or modified.

The Administrative team shall have ultimate authority over the AMD if there is a policy debate concerning finances or personnel issues, yet he may appeal to the executive committee in crisis cases. They shall have no such authority over missions strategy, this will be the responsibility of the AMD, and staff under the accountability of the appropriately related Priority Teams.

Section 2.3 Purpose

The Policy manual will function as a guide, and may be changed regularly depending upon the current climate of operations. It is not intended to cover overall operations and exists to help staff and lay communication. Its purpose is to eliminate confusion.