

Remaking of the Baptist Association



Redesigning for the Twenty-First Century

Remaking of the Baptist Association

Redesigning for the Twenty-First Century

"I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work" (Neh. 2:18, NIV).

North American Mission Board
Associational Strategy Team
David Howard

Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Scripture quotations marked NIV is taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from *The New King James Version*. Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

Scripture quotation marked NRSV is from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

© 1999, North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Alpharetta, Georgia

All rights reserved. Associations may reproduce this publication in limited quantities for associational use. All inquiries should be addressed to: Editorial and Design Manager, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Pkwy., Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176; or call (770) 410-6292; or fax (770) 410-6006; or e-mail permissions@namb.net.

Table of Contents

Part I: Before You Change a Thing

Chapter 1:	What is Structure?	2
Chapter 2:	First Things First	4
Chapter 3:	Purpose of the Association	7
Chapter 4:	Choose a Base	9

Part II: Time to Build

Chapter 5:	Structural Principles	11
Chapter 6:	Flexibility	12
Chapter 7:	Streamlined Decision-Making	13
Chapter 8:	Fruit-Bearing	15
Chapter 9:	Harmonious Structural Elements	16
Chapter 10:	Outcome Based Planning	17
Chapter 11:	Organized for Action	19
Chapter 12:	On Mission	20
Chapter 13:	Relevant Training	21

Part III: Key Element of an Association

Chapter 14:	Key Structural Elements	22
-------------	-------------------------	----

Footnotes	26
------------------	----

Appendixes	27
-------------------	----

Reading List	28
Collaborators	30
Where Do You Stand?	31
Core Values Audits	37
Readiness for Change Inventory	39
Restructuring Checklist	42
Model Associations	43

Introduction

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV)! From this passage, we are given the freedom and responsibility to seek freshness from regeneration. I believe this passage also reveals that we are gifted with a creative force from the Holy Spirit who endows power to effectively present the gospel to a world that has not stopped changing since creation.

The purpose of this work is to present information and ideas about how one can structure an association to operate effectively in a changing environment. This is not to say that every association needs change. Change is neither good nor bad—it is simply necessary or unnecessary. Therefore, as you explore your unique circumstance under God's leadership, I hope these words will prove valuable, if for no other reason than to confirm that you are exactly where you should be.

An important point about this work is that it does not come solely from the minds of academicians or theorists. When assigned the task of aiding associations with their structure and organization, I determined that it had to be a collaborative work presenting the shared wisdom of practitioners across the North America. Towards that objective, I related to more than 75 associational leaders, state convention leaders, or other church leaders to discover what God has revealed to them about associational work. From the largest to the smallest, in all regions of North America, I sought those with the qualifying knowledge and experience to teach us about associational structure. Most of them have hands-on experience in associational redesign. They have traversed the "less traveled road," stepping outside of their comfort zones for the sake of Christ and His church. Many of these pioneers had little instruction in organizational theory, and few resources in terms of books or training. Rather, they relied on their Holy Spirit-inspired intuition and the trials by fire that usually precede innovative discoveries.

I hope you find the results of their toils beneficial. From their sacrifice, I gleaned structural principles that address the changing needs of our modern world.

My desire is, first and foremost, for the health and wellbeing of the local church! Christ died for the church. I understand that churches are capable of surviving quite well without a thriving association. However, based on my understanding of the biblical principles of unity, stewardship, fellowship, and the Great Commission (also known as the Great Co-mission), I think these are best expressed when churches cooperate with one another, in lockstep with the will of God. In our present structure, the association is usually the best way to accomplish this goal.

I must confess, I am both excited and overwhelmed. I am excited because associations are in the best place to serve the local church! Therefore, through serving associations, I serve the local church. On the other hand, the enormity of producing something that will have value to 1,200 associations of varying sizes and contexts is more than one person can handle. Fortunately, I did not have to produce it alone!

With God's help, and the patient, understanding, sacrificial gift of time and advice from many others who share my love for churches and the fellowships they form, I offer this collaborative work as one of many resources for helping local churches be all they can be in Christ. Towards that goal I make this humble offering.

Part I: Before You Change a Thing

Chapter 1: What is Structure?

At its very best, organizational structure is hidden from view. An association's structure should be one of many tools used for achieving goals. Unfortunately, many organizations discover that their structure has become the object of their existence.

A good definition of structure is: “an entity containing individual elements that affect one another by the relationships they form.” In this, we understand three things about structure. First, structure is an entity with form, purpose, and character; therefore, it can be impacted through our efforts. Next, structure is composed of individual elements. Like cells in a body, structural elements exist with unique abilities and purposes that shape the whole organism. Finally, structure includes the relationships formed between these individual elements. Staying with the analogy of a living organism, the different cells and organs do not operate in a vacuum, they relate to one another as they function.

“...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Rom. 12:5-6a, NIV).

The Bible beautifully illustrates the church as the body of Christ. Each Christian is called and gifted with talents and abilities, initiated by God, to work in concert for the good of the whole body. So, as we discuss organizational structure, remember it is not something exclusively defined by an organizational chart. Rather, your association's structure contains a variety of elements that together influence how it operates. Finally, we should never forget that the most important structural element of a Christian organization is its head, the person of Jesus Christ. Not only is this the most important and influential element, but it is the component that makes the whole more than the sum of its individual parts.

All associations seeking structural redesign enter the process with a mental image about structure. Unfortunately, this mental image is often only two-dimensional. In this model, associations believe that by simply moving boxes and lines on an organizational chart, the association has been reorganized. Other structural elements like relationships, lines of communication, authority, and accountability are left unchanged with a two dimensional view.

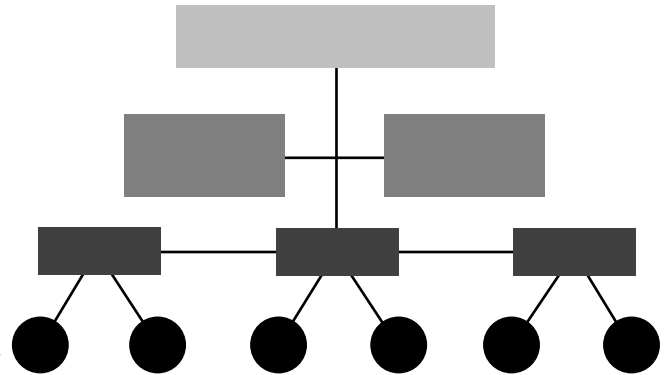
To better illustrate this point, below is a chart with examples of structural elements. As structural elements, they must be intentionally, not randomly, designed.

Structural Elements	Examples in the Church and Association
Individual elements	Committees, boards, departments, churches, messengers
Lines of communication	DOM to churches; committees to other committees
Reporting structures/accountability	Executive board supervises DOM, DOM oversees staff
Mission & purpose	How you conduct business; what business you are in
Stakeholders & relationships	Church members, pastors, state conventions
Guiding documents	Constitution, bylaws, manuals
Values	Evangelism, consistency, quality, accuracy

You may not agree in calling each of these components structural. In fact, it is not even necessary (or helpful in some cases) to discuss them in terms of being part of a structure. What you call them is less important than being intentional about how they are placed in your association. If you are not intentional, they will establish their own path and direction—sometimes in conflict with your desired outcome.

How did we get the structures we have?

A close look at many of our present organizational structures reminds us of the mega-corporations of the past. With multiple layers of complicated hierarchies and positional specialists, associations adopted the appearance of U.S. Steel, the FBI, or the Teamsters Union. Organizational charts reflect these structural dimensions with the familiar pyramid shape of an ever-widening series of sticks and boxes cascading down from top to bottom.



There are a number of opinions for why many of our churches (and associations) are structured as they are. Some use generational descriptions, others see it as a cultural issue. Two possible explanations are worth examining. First, according to some, Baptists once had a distinct "competitive advantage" that had to be protected during a time of rapid expansion in a relatively homogeneous society. Therefore, a "slow-to-change" structure was preferred.

Second, and possibly in conjunction with the first, it was familiar and fulfilling for Christians of a previous day to take their place in an institution where they could serve as one small part of larger organization—sort of like an assembly line. Those in this camp point to heightened capabilities among the laity and cultural changes in the secular workplace as reasons this structure is no longer appropriate.

As we consider how to respond to a rapidly changing world, I believe our task is to view these cultural changes in terms of our association's structure. Before we try to make organizational changes, we must consider several critical prerequisites.

Why change your structure?

No one can speak for your association, but others felt it was necessary to reorganize their association because:

- A significant reduction in churches participating in associational events.
- Fewer church members were accepting leadership positions within the association.
- Giving declined.
- There was a high percentage of declining churches (in some cases as high as 80%).
- No new churches had been planted in decades.
- Few baptisms within the association.
- A severe lack of unity and fellowship among member churches.
- Inspiration from God that the association was heading in the wrong direction.
- The association was not achieving its stated purpose or objectives.
- Member churches were not contextually relevant for their communities.
- Declining enthusiasm for kingdom work.

While these circumstances may not always indicate the need for organizational change, directors of missions across North America said that these factors motivated them to change. Please do not be misled to believe that "just any change" will do! It must be a God-inspired, Holy Spirit-led change, or the results will be just as dysfunctional and ineffective as the former condition. No amount of skill, cleverness, or enthusiasm can replace change inspired by God Himself.

Chapter 2: First Things First

Before you start rearranging boxes and lines on an organizational chart, you have to ask these six important questions:

Who are you?

Who are you as a fellowship of churches? What are your constituent churches' purpose, vision, and ministry? Do the churches even know the association exists and what it does? These are just some of the factors that contribute to your association's context as a fellowship of local churches.

After an inward examination, you have to look outside of yourself to your ministry area or mission field. What does your community look like? Who lives there? What are they like? It is not enough to simply know about the churches that make up your association. You must become familiar with the world in which God has placed you. Having an honest, realistic perspective about your association's context is the first step in a quality redesign.

“Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command” (1 Chron. 12:32, NASB).

What are you supposed to do?

This question speaks directly of your purpose and mission. Again, there are multiple areas of investigation related to what you are supposed to do.

First, you must begin with God's Word. Although there are no direct references to associationalism in the Bible, there is much written about the role of the Church. Since one of the ways we describe associations is as a fellowship of local churches, the purposes for the church should also indicate the purpose for an association. I will treat this issue more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

After you have answered this question from a biblical perspective, you must consider contextual issues. What is your constituent churches' mission? What is your state convention's mission? Although neither can speak for you, they provide important insights to where you may fit in a broader, kingdom perspective.

Where are you going?

The answer to this question is a prerequisite for redesigning the association, because it speaks of your vision or, more specifically, God's vision for your association. Vision is an important structural element and may even serve as your base. Simply stated, you have to know where you are going before you can design an organization to get you there.

In Proverbs 29:18, God says that without a vision the people will perish. Directors of missions across North America provided these statements regarding how important vision is to their work:

- The foundation for a Christian community should be both Christ-centered and future-oriented. A vision is an excellent source for such a foundation. In our association we base our entire organization and structure around the vision God has given us for this community.
- Discovering God's vision has to involve the local church. At some level, their “buy-off” is required. In many cases, local churches will need to participate from the beginning of the discovery/development process.

- Without vision, all we have to talk about is our problems.
- Technically, vision is the “ideal future state” of an organization. It clearly says where we want to be, when we want to get there, and what impact we expect to have along the way.
- It is difficult to overstate the importance of rallying God’s people behind His vision. No strategy, no mission, nor any statement of purpose can replace the excitement of Christians working together behind a common anticipation of God exhibiting His power through them.
- Although a vision can be inspiring, understandable, expressive, ubiquitous, and motivational for the church, it is first from God. Do not over-think it!
- I’ve heard some people say that vision and mission are synonymous, but they are not. Vision speaks of a future state of being, while mission relates general approaches and actions. They are related, even interdependent, but different.
- Although a vision must be realistic and attainable, that’s not to say that it shouldn’t contain elements that would be difficult to attain without supernatural assistance. After all, we are God’s church.
- One aspect of vision that I was not prepared for was the time it took to discover. I thought it should come in a moment of inspiration; however, in my case it was a lengthy, gradual process of education and discovery.

When will you get there?

It is not enough to simply have vision. That vision must have a time frame. If you do not establish when a goal is to be achieved, the likelihood that it will happen is substantially handicapped. Early in my professional life, I was taught that any worthy objective has to be "smart." The word "smart" represents an acronym for the essential components of any objective. The acronym means that a "smart" objective is Stated, Measurable, Actionable, Recorded, and contains a Time limit. Without timing, you miss opportunities for evaluation, confirming direction, encouragement, or adjusting tactics.

Stated
Measurable
Actionable
Recorded
with **Time limits**

Why do you do ...?

Why you do what you do depends on your values. Behind every behavior, both personal and organizational, lies a set of values.

Conflicting Values:

A primary source of organizational difficulty arises when values conflict. This is not new. There is always the potential for conflicting values when people work together. Look in Acts 15 as a case in point. Paul and Barnabas had just returned from their first missionary journey for which stories of Gentile conversions preceded them. This caused great consternation among the Jewish Christians who believed that Christianity was exclusive to ethnic Jews.

In this passage, we rightly see a testimony to the inclusiveness of the gospel. At another level, this passage shows us how conflicting values can harm the church.

Imitated Christian Values:

Both at the secular and religious level, organizations are realizing that if they do not adopt appropriate values, they face an uncertain future. In the church, this never used to be a problem. Christian values were a

clearly understood line of demarcation between God’s community and the world. However, corporations are recognizing their employees’ needs for deeper meaning, and the church is losing its competitive advantage (in the eyes of the world) as the sole keeper of the truth. As this happens, people are believing that they have a variety of “truth” options.

Organizations are adopting value systems that look like Christian values. They realize that to increase productivity and profits they need more than the physical presence of their customers and employees—they need their hearts and minds (participation versus commitment).

Values and Reorganization

We must focus on how values relate to reorganization. Many good authors have written on this subject. In Appendix 1, you will find resources among which are several fine books on values. For our purpose, let’s focus on why values must be considered in any reorganization.

In a reorganization process, values are important in at least two ways. First, you must have a realistic understanding of your association’s values. Many associations think they know what their values are, when in fact they are only fooling themselves. Knowing your values is important when attempting organizational change. If the changes you recommend conflict with your core values, the likelihood of success is seriously diminished. On the other hand, if in a wise change process you position changes in harmony with your association’s core values, your efforts will be more successful. In either case, you must know what your values are.

To help you discover your associational values, I have listed several resources in Appendix 4.

Next, you must be sure that your values are from God. You have to be sure that your values are the ones given in Scripture, and not values we simply believe or think are good. In our imperfect humanity, we continually face the possibility of drifting back into our previous nature. This fact is most apparent in our system of values. It is imperative that you know your association’s values.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets itself against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another. . .”
(Gal. 5:16-17, NASB).

How are we going to get there?

This final question speaks of having a solid associational strategy. It is possible to redesign an organization without having a sound strategy, but the results may not be very good. If your association does not have a good strategy, call your state convention or the North American Mission Board for assistance.

Chapter 3: Purpose of the Association

How does one begin a conversation about the purpose of associations? The Bible says little about them. On the other hand, in Baptist life, associations were our first cooperative expression. For that reason, some think it is almost blasphemous to look discriminately or seek justification for the association's existence. Blasphemy or not, the question is being asked by many churches, so it is essential for us to do the same.

Numerous church leaders were asked what they believed was the purpose for an association. Following are several answers that consistently emerged. In Baptist life today, churches expect associations to be some of these things.

New work strategist: Among the most common themes that describe the purpose of the association/director of missions is that of a new work strategist. Churches see that the most important reason to cooperate is to start new congregations. Individual expressions may vary. In some associations, the director of missions is a church planter; in others, he helps churches start churches. Whatever the case, it is clear that starting new work and the local association are inseparably linked.

Church health/growth strategist: The next most common purpose ascribed to associations is related to church growth. Churches across the land have plateaued or are declining, and they are looking to the association for help. This can be difficult because church growth programs are many and varied. The director of missions, therefore, may have to be the facilitator acquiring help from outside sources rather than be the sole provider of church health/growth services.

Mentor/guide/confidant to the pastor: This used to be called "pastor to the pastors." In an earlier time, the director of missions may have served as perpetual church staff (filling pulpits) or as mediator for churches in conflict. Today, the director of mission's role is more appropriately described as a mentor or coach. For other pastors, he may also serve as a collaborator with whom ideas can be shared. In short, "pastor-to-pastors" may still be used, but in a different sense.

Source of missional opportunity: The need for the individual Christian to be on mission is undeniable. Unfortunately, some churches do not have the resources to provide mission opportunities, so the association must get involved. Whether mission trips or starting new churches, the association must provide missional opportunities for their constituents. For larger churches that can do this on their own, the association may serve as one of their local expressions, their "Jerusalem" so to speak (in the Acts 1:8 sense).

Network facilitator: At one level, the role of networker is not new. Directors of missions frequently serve as facilitators or brokers for churches receiving denominational services. Today, this task has been broadened and complicated with improved technology, communications, and a significant increase in the number of organizations that offer help to the local church. The need remains, the solution is just more complex.

Understanding your purpose is the first step; communicating it is the second. Look below at examples of how some associations express their purpose or mission:

- [Our] association is a missionary enterprise of cooperating congregations committed to furthering the cause of Christ through a shared vision of fellowship, mutual care, Christian ministry, and the creative use of resources.
- Our mission is to be a partner with churches of Baptist heritage to help them effectively engage in the community ministry, shared learning, and cooperative missions.
- Purpose statement: As a group of Baptist churches working together, we will focus on the ministry and missions needed to exemplify the presence of Christ in our growing metropolitan area.
Mission Statement: (A) To assist churches to identify and accomplish their mission. (B) To involve people in ministry.

- [Our] association exists to enable our churches to minister individually and jointly in fulfilling the Great Commission. The association will purpose to encourage each participating church to support and finance the mission efforts of the association and Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- To be Baptist churches in association who utilize prayer, evangelism, and volunteerism as overarching resources to proclaim the gospel. The association shall encourage and enhance the work of the local churches and missions, further cooperation, promote fellowship, and enable the churches to do together what they could not do alone for the glory of God.
- Jesus' purpose was clear: "But he said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent'" (Luke 4:43, NIV). Paul told the Corinthian church, "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you, and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10, NIV). Ideally, our churches in voluntary association with each other will be united in the same mind and the same purpose. The purpose of [our] association must be equally as clear.
- The purpose of this association is to encourage and enable churches to fulfill their purpose as it falls within the parameters of this association's statement of faith.
- The purpose of the [association] shall be to develop and support a Baptist expression of the Christian mission in [our] metropolitan area, seeking to strengthen and expand God's kingdom through the individual and united ministries of its member churches.

In summary, redesigning an association is more than simply moving boxes and lines on an organizational chart. Much work has to be done before you can even begin to think about the structural elements you have or need. Now, you are ready to take your first step in redesigning your association: choosing a base.

Chapter 4: Choose a Base

Having met the prerequisites for an associational redesign, you must now choose/discover your base.¹ A proper foundation is critical for any building; this is equally true for associations. What you base your association on will impact its flexibility, orientation, and effectiveness. No base is better or worse than another. The only bad foundation is one that is not right for the structure it must support.

Associations typically use one of six foundations. Unfortunately, often a base is allowed to evolve rather than being intentionally chosen.

The six foundations or bases on which most associations stand are: programs, processes, people, values, purpose, and vision.

Base	Illustration	Orientation*
Programs	An association's structure is based on programs like Sunday School, children's ministries, and Women's Ministry Union (WMU). Typically, most structural elements, and many relationships, are organized to support and promote programs.	Past
Process	This structure focuses on church based process such as, fellowship, worship, instruction, or evangelism. In this case, structure supports many of the same processes as the program base. Still, their orientation is often facing back because the focus is on how something is done rather than the desired outcome.	Past
People	In this case, structural decisions for the association are organized around individuals like key pastors, DOMs, or committee leaders.	Past
Values	In a values-based structure, organizational elements center on values like excellence, empowerment, fellowship, or compassion. This structure recognizes the organization's present core values and attempts to organize around them. Of course, if some of the core values are "aspired," then there will be a future-based component of this structure.	Present
Purpose	Your association's purpose drives its structural definition. This structure identifies a purpose, then attempts to structure itself accordingly. Many times an association's purpose will appear similar to processes. However, in a true purpose-based structure, its organizational focus is on the outcome rather than the process.	Present
Vision	In this configuration, your association's structure will focus on its vision. All of its structural elements, relationships, aspired values, and lines of communication seek to service where they believe God wants them to be. Although this base choice ideally "pushes" an organization towards its future, it has the potential for lessening its service to the present. Depending on your constituents' tolerance and will, this might be a wrong choice.	Future

* The orientation is what is typical among associations (if the word "typical" can be used). No base choice, or orientation for that matter, is better than others. The correct foundation is the one that is right for your association.

Discovering the right base for your association (i.e., intentionally choosing a base) is vital to your structure. However, there are other connections that are not within your control, but must be considered, namely, the relationship the church sees between itself and the association. The association may be able to choose its structural foundation, but it cannot speak for individual churches about "why" they fellowship.

Although this can get complicated, it is important to recognize why the churches in your association associate. Knowing their expectations will greatly impact your organizational decisions. As you view the chart below, you will notice that there are certain historic and traditional elements of these foundational choices. For more information about the history of associationalism, see the book by J. C. Bradley listed in the reading list. These six foundations for fellowship, along with their inherent strengths and potential weaknesses (strengths pulled out-of-balance) should provide help to you as your association makes decisions about its foundation.

As you read these categories, you will notice that many churches in an association base their fellowship on a combination of these. Whatever the case, these must be researched and understood as part of an association's redesign process.

Foundation	Strengths	Strengths out-of-balance
Shared Resources	Mutual accountability/support; an interest in each other's welfare; Christian charity; good stewardship, obedience.	Unhealthy dependency or competition; hurt feelings over limited resources; accusations of unfair distribution.
Accomplishment	Shared mission and purpose; focus on the task at hand rather than problems; team mentality.	Underdeveloped care giving (tasks more important than people); overemphasis on return-on-investment.
Heritage	Strong feelings of historic validation; continuity of a Christian presence in community.	Inflexibility; the "old ways" are the "only ways;" difficulty in accepting new members into the "club."
Geography	Shared context; efficient for administration purposes; ease of networking.	Us versus them attitudes; unhealthy competition; ignoring individual uniqueness; out of step with community realities.
Doctrine	Properly "yoked" body; shared teaching and worship opportunities; healthy collaboration; biblical.	Splits over minor doctrinal points; judgmental, legalistic attitudes; less acceptance and tolerance.
Fellowship	Brotherly love; fun; Christian hospitality; broad acceptance/mutual care.	Self-focused; little evangelism; cloistered mentality; difficulty accepting new groups.

Part II: Time to Build

Chapter 5: Structural Principles

To create an association for the coming century, you must implant the following principles. This is different from earlier methods of organizational redesign. In earlier models, you would find examples of organizational charts and job descriptions that would supposedly make for a better association. In this work, by contrast, we begin with the principles because they are the critical paths to success. In fact, the "form" your organization takes is insignificant relative to these principles. Almost any organizational structure will be moderately effective if these principles are applied. By contrast, no matter how innovative an organization structure looks, if these principles are absent the new structure will not improve effectiveness.

On the other hand, although these principles will improve almost any organization, there are structural configurations that work better than others. There are some designs in which these principles could never fit. In most cases, applying these principles usually works best in conjunction with a redesign.

Since organizational development is an ongoing, ever-changing process, this is not a definitive work. Rather, as new principles are uncovered, updates will be published. Following are principles identified as most pressing in our present environments.

The effective association:

- Is flexible.
- Streamlines its decision-making process.
- Bears fruit.
- Builds harmony into its structural elements.
- Plans with an outcome in mind.
- Is organized for action.
- Is on mission.
- Offers relevant training.

The next eight chapters discuss these principles in detail.

Chapter 6: Flexibility

Our world is changing at a neck-breaking speed. Whether in the field of technology, biochemistry, genetics, or agriculture, the rate of change has increased astonishingly. To illustrate this point, it has been reported that the average life span of an education in technology is six months. This means that a degree in computer science will be obsolete in less than one fourth of the time it took to acquire it!

Two contributing factors to the increased pace of change are technology and communications. New ideas speed across cyberspace so fast that in some cases total knowledge doubles every two or three years. This means that associations must be able to change as its mission field changes. We can no longer depend on evolutionary or incremental advancement. We would never catch-up. The answer is to build flexibility into our organizations so that adjustments are simpler and quicker. Following are some practical steps that other associations have taken to increase flexibility:

- First, remove structural components from guiding documents. In one flexible association, the only positions required in the bylaws are an executive board, administrative body, and director of missions. All other positions, ministry teams, or committees are listed elsewhere.
- Choose a base. As you probably know, some bases are more flexible than others are. Typically, future-oriented and present-oriented bases are more flexible than past-oriented ones.
- One association indicated that structural complexity contributes to flexibility. Admittedly, this idea is counter-intuitive, but you can see it for yourself in model number one in the appendix.
- Remove "gate keepers." These are legislative bodies that make decisions about other groups (i.e., facility or finance committees). When one group is organized to make decisions about the activities of another, they are gate keepers.
- Place the authority with those who do the work. This enhances speed and flexibility.
- Allow frequent formation of ad hoc, temporary lateral structures (like task forces or matrix teams). It is common for an organization to structure itself vertically along the lines of specialties (worship, on mission, Bible study, etc.); however, there are many associational activities that require a variety of gifts. For those activities, lateral structures are best suited to do the job.

Finally, flexibility is a state of mind. To be a flexible organization, members cannot fear change. They must have a firm, mature grounding in God's Word. They must have God's vision for their community and seek to reach the lost, even if it means wandering outside of their own comfort zone. This is where the association's vision and an honest appraisal of values are important.

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2, NKJV).

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22, NASB).

Chapter 7: Streamlined Decision-Making

Over time, structural elements evolve. Sometimes they remain beyond their period of optimal usefulness. One unfortunate outcome is the tendency to grow into cumbersome bureaucracies where decision making must travel through multiple layers of hierarchy. In a rapidly changing environment, decision-making has to be streamlined. Opportunities for growth or benefit do not often reveal themselves in time to allow for lengthy legislation. Add to this the fact that people want to have more control over the outcome of their service. You can see how we have to train our associational leaders to make good decisions, then allow them the authority to do so.

Speed is not the only reason to streamline the association's decision-making process. Giving others the authority over their own processes is both biblical and consistent with new cultural realities. Take a look at the following (humorous and sadly, true) illustration.

A civic group asked the youth committee to help sponsor a Memorial Day cookout. Since it was early January, and there was plenty of time for planning, they tentatively accepted the offer.

At their next meeting, the youth committee decided what activities they wanted to have, and developed a proposal with a budget. They mailed their proposal to the DOM who agreed that it would be an excellent evangelistic opportunity, and passed it on to the ministries committee.

The ministries committee meeting was scheduled for February. At that meeting, someone pointed out that there wasn't an existing budget for this proposal so it would have to be approved by the budget committee. So with their approval, the proposal went on to the budget committee.

The budget committee concluded that there was certainly enough money to sponsor such a worthy event; however, had the other relevant committees been notified? [By now you know where I'm going.] So with their approval, this proposal cycled through the evangelism committee, volunteer mobilization, men's ministries, community relations, publicity, purchasing, and the inter-committee relations committee. Finally, the proposal was authorized and returned to the youth committee on June 17th, three and one half weeks AFTER Memorial Day.

"And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5, RSV).

"With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:37-38, NIV).

Checks-and-balances need to be built in; however, when these safeguards inhibit kingdom work they must be reconsidered and perhaps reconfigured. Below are changes other associations have made to push authority up the food chain.

- When a new structural element is created, give it an "expiration date" or a specific time when its service will end, unless further action by the association is taken. This will help reduce bureaucracy and avoid unnecessary gatekeepers.
- With improvements in technology and layperson capabilities, some tasks that formerly required their own committee may now be grouped together in one. For example, many associations are moving finance, facilities management, personnel, and nominating into a singular structural element called an Administrative Team.
- Reduce the number of committees whose purpose is legislative and give as much decision-making authority to groups that directly touch the lives of churches and members.
- Make sure each committee is clear about its purpose and strategies for attaining its purpose.

- Rather than organize committees, use "task forces" or "ministry teams" which more aptly describes their role as "doers" rather than "voters."
- Give authority to the director of missions, moderator, executive board, or associational council to unilaterally organize or dissolve certain types of teams as needs arise.
- Depending on your association's structural base, organize task forces behind strategic priorities or individual components of your vision. In this way, as the base changes, so will these structural elements.

Christians today want to have direct control over their service. It is frustrating for them not to be allowed to make decisions. I will discuss this in greater detail later. For now, simply know that this is another compelling reason to rethink structure.

Ultimately, decision-making is a question of power and authority. An association's flexibility and openness depend largely on its values, trust, and desire to be better. Where your association nets-out in this area will be unique to you. But remember, blessed is the associational leader whose association is willing to be flexible!

Chapter 8: Fruit-Bearing

We are familiar with the concept of bearing fruit. Throughout the New Testament, we are confronted with our personal Christian responsibility to bear kingdom fruit. Why should we expect less from our associations?

Outside of the religious community, companies all over the world are realizing that they have to meet customer needs to stay in business. The days of peddling unwanted products are over. Fairly recent experiences in the auto industry have proven that. For decades, the American consumer wanted high quality, fuel-efficient cars, but Detroit would not accommodate. The way the Japanese auto industry filled the void intentionally overlooked by U.S. companies became a "textbook" case of market penetration.

Presently, corporations are finding that brand loyalty is extinct. Companies must prove their value every day or the competition will put them out of business. Although this may not directly compare with associations' need to provide value to churches, it is important to understand that every church member is a consumer who is told every day that they do not have to settle for less. This attitude easily transfers into the church where they rightly ask, "Why do I contribute resources to an organization that I'm not sure what they do?"

Although customers' expectations are one motivation for our associations to bring value to the local church, it is not the only one. I believe God has gifted us individually and collectively with skills intended to benefit the kingdom. Alone, none of us possess all of the gifts; together, we have the necessary tools.

Whether due to customer expectations or obedience, the association needs to bring value (bear fruit) to the local church. Every part of the body of Christ has a purpose. For individuals, this means that we must discover our purpose and do it. Likewise, associations have a purpose. I believe many associations' purposes center around providing some type of service to the local church. What happens when associations do not fulfill their purpose? In my mind, this results in God providing help for churches from another source, and when that happens, associations cease to exist. This is not to say that all associations are in this condition. Unfortunately, some are in this condition because they have lost touch with their constituents. This is tragic because the association is the organization best suited to serve the local church. However, with resources stretched thin in an ever-changing environment, good stewardship dictates we accomplish the greatest good with the gifts God has provided.

In summary, our command is to bear fruit. For any organization, that means to serve its "customers." In the case of an association, I believe this principle means that an association's primary duty is to assist local churches to be all they can be in God's sight.

“Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered”
(Matt. 21:19, NIV).

Chapter 9: Harmonious Structural Elements

The idea of structural conflict² is easy to understand when you think about it, but we seldom do. The essence of structural conflict is when structural elements have opposing objectives or produce opposing results. When an organization experiences excessive structural conflict, the greater work of the organization is in jeopardy. Let me illustrate with a simple, personal example: weight loss.

If someone is overweight, he will be motivated to take action. Even though he or she has two choices, eating less and exercising more, most people opt for eating less.

As someone eats less, his clothes begin to fit better, and he starts feeling good about himself. However, there is another consequence which will sooner or later cause conflict—hunger. As someone eats less, biological defenses against starvation kick in and he gets hungry. Hunger brings its own set of motivations that, as time passes, get stronger until the person breaks down and eats a half-gallon of ice

cream. The condition created by hunger overran the desire for losing weight, so the person ate. Now what happens? You guessed it, he begins to gain weight, and as soon as his clothes are tight enough, the motivation for losing weight will override the desire to eat, and he will go on another diet. The cycle goes on.

This humorous example illustrates structural conflict. You can diagram this cycle of diet-hunger structural conflict. The circles on the left contain change-motivating conditions. Circles on the right contain the actions taken to overcome the initial condition. Conflict occurs when an outcome of one action creates another condition whose resolution leads to the initial condition. It becomes a cycle of opposing objectives.

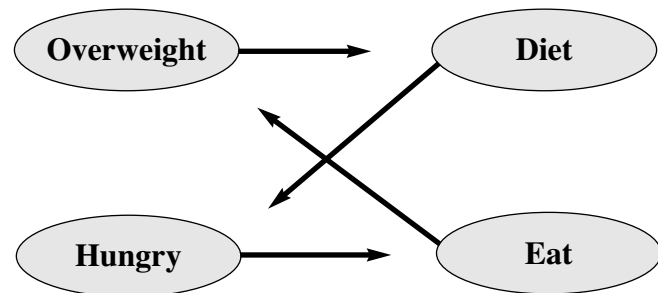
Try diagramming combinations of conditions and outcomes in your own setting. When viewing structural tension in this way, you'll see how the actions of one structural element can lead to opposing actions in another. It happens all of the time. Sometimes they are easy to spot, but other times they are not so obvious.

Conflict is something you cannot avoid. In fact, without friction (which is sometimes confused for conflict), organizations go nowhere. Whenever you get people with differing views and values together, there will be conflict. Conflict becomes structural, as illustrated below, when it is built into the system.

Your association may have a structural element (a fellowship team) whose stated purpose is fellowship among churches and members, and whose values are inclusiveness and mutual acceptance. Opposing this group is a credentials committee whose stated purposes are doctrinal purity, and value they consistency and a desire to not change. With one's purpose opposing another's values, conflict is inevitable.

The solution is to redesign a group's objectives or purpose. However, notice that the greatest contributor to conflict in this situation is values. Values are not something that will change with a simple redesign, yet they have a significant impact on organizational effectiveness, especially in the area of structural conflict. Therefore, working with/on organizational and individual values must be a key component of rebuilding.

Identifying potential structural conflict is not usually a natural/intentional leadership process. At best, it is intuitive. However, with practice, leaders can anticipate potential causes and symptoms of structural conflict, and build them out of the system.



Chapter 10: Outcome Based Planning

Efficiency and effectiveness appear to be similar, but in one sense they are miles apart. In order to be efficient you simply have to do something well; to be effective you also have to do the right thing! I heard someone once describe efficiency as "rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic." Whether this is true or not, it illustrates that you can be efficient at a futile task.

In associations, there can be activities we do very well that do not produce kingdom results. Perhaps we lost sight of the purpose for a process, yet continued to do it even after its value diminished. Or, we developed strong competencies in one process and thus became reluctant to change because that would require learning a new system. Whatever the case, with dwindling resources in a rapidly changing environment, many associations are finding that they can no longer afford the luxury of "spinning their wheels."

Avoiding the trap of becoming efficient at non-fruit bearing tasks is easy to say, but hard to do. The only hope an association has for changing entrenched processes is to keep focused on vision and desired outcomes. Always ask yourself, "Is this the best way to achieve kingdom results?" Then, test those results against meaningful goals and objectives.

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:8, RSV).

If you do not presently know, you will soon find out that this is an emotionally charged topic that must be handled with care and compassion. It is difficult for people to give up doing something they have "always done." Nevertheless, to be good stewards, we have to view our actions in terms of what we hope to accomplish and then ask if the processes we presently use are the most efficient and effective.

Try this exercise if you seek effectiveness. On a blank sheet of paper, write your association's priorities. Then, take these and list desired outcomes for each. Below each outcome list the methods your association uses to accomplish them. Try to avoid labeling methods in terms of the process currently used (i.e., you would not necessarily refer to Bible study as Sunday School, for that is one of many processes for studying God's Word). Finally, to the right of each method, list the process you currently use, and ask if the methods listed are the best available for accomplishing the desired outcome. As you have probably already discovered, this process also forces you to ask if the association shares certain desired outcomes. Not only do you need to seek to do things the best way, but you must also seek to do the best things.

“Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27, NIV).

“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21-22, NASB).

Outcome Based Planning Worksheet

Central Association

Objective 1: Strengthen Churches

Improve Bible Study

Cell group training

Sunday School assistance *

Bible study leadership conferences

Experiential events

Operation Lydia training **

Enhanced Worship Experience

Help churches get needed technology (i.e., projectors)

Worship leader conferences

"Gen-X" worship seminars

Contemporary worship seminars

Intentional interim for worship leaders

Improve Discipleship

Cell group training

Create a resource library of affinity group material/studies

Experiential events

On Mission Christian resources

Volunteer Leadership Training

* Nothing excludes supporting programs like Sunday School, simply recognize that there may be other processes that should be supported by the association.

** Operation Lydia is an excellent Bible Study process developed, published, and supported by the WMU—try it!

Chapter 11: Organized for Action

As previously mentioned, many of our present associations were designed in a fashion that was familiar and comfortable to the people it served. This sounds unusual, but consider what the Bible says about church organization and structure. There is no mention of committees, business meetings, majority rule, or even the democratic process. So if these major structural elements were not given to us from God, where did they originate? We created them.

As well as our present structure served past generations, we have to face the reality that many today do not share their predecessors' satisfaction with being part of an institution. Their idea of service and ministry is more direct and participative. They want to "make a difference" in their world, giving their time and money to causes for which they can become emotionally attached. Combine this new definition of service with two other cultural realities, and you can understand why some associations do not attract younger volunteers.

Families are losing discretionary time. I once heard that the average family has 30 fewer hours of free time each month. If true, this makes time more valuable and people less desirous to attend unimportant meetings. However, I have heard conflicting reports about discretionary time. Proponents on another side say that discretionary time is not diminishing, rather there are just more activities in peoples' lives which competes with the church. Whatever your position, the fact remains that our volunteer base is dwindling.

Secular industry has moved away from an institutional style, hierarchical organization. Corporations are eliminating many of their middle-positions in response to employees' desire to control their own destinies. So, when these young (highly competent) professionals come in contact with religious organizations that are highly structured, they become frustrated and unable (or unwilling) to work in such an unfamiliar structure.

To solve this problem, associations have streamlined their organizations so that every participant who wishes can have a "hands-on" ministry opportunity. In many cases, associations have renamed committees to "ministry teams" or "task groups." This action, they feel, better describes the work of these groups and is more compatible with what members are familiar with at work.

Another structural change that speaks to this societal need is dismantling the hierarchy. Rather than making the association a vertical structure of positions and authority, transform it into a free-flowing body where lines of communication are open and groups are easily formed (and removed) for a specific purpose.

You have probably seen how churches and secular organizations are moving away from committees to task groups and teams. Although simply changing the name of a committee will not do any good, making the change to "the real things" will be beneficial. The concept behind a task force is that it is a body that seeks to accomplish a specific job or desired outcome. Task forces are not tied to any one program or process; rather, they are free to pursue their goals with energy and creativity. Teams connote sharing authority and responsibility among all team members. Everyone is an active participant (a doer) on a team.

In summary, today's Christian wants hands-on service that is more emotionally satisfying than committee work. If associations are going to mobilize all people with the joy of Christian service, they will have to make these opportunities available, which may mean an organizational redesign. Many associations have a "blend" of people with a variety of thinking systems. Some have called this the gap between shifting cultural paradigms. If this is your circumstance (and the likelihood is great that it is), you will need to maintain components of each, legislative bodies and hands-on groups. Care should be taken so that one does not have dominion over the other.

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror” (James 1:22-23, RSV).

Chapter 12: On Mission

Recent generations of evangelicals in North America have seen "missions" only as something for which to pray, study, and pay. To many well-intentioned Christians, missions are always "someplace else" and church is "at home." It's arguable that Baptists are not as guilty as other denominations. However, our evangelistic effectiveness reveals a discouraging downturn. Returning to our missional roots as the body of Christ is a critical component of many associations' redesign.

The first premise from which we work is that our missional assignment comes from God and is owned by God. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"(Acts 1:8, NIV). "...Mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purpose to restore and heal creation. 'Mission' means 'sending,' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history."³

The second premise is that missional activity must be adapted to the culture it seeks to influence. International missionaries are aware of this premise. When you attempt to evangelize different cultures or groups of people, you not only have to translate the Word into their language, but also in into their culture. This is now true of North America. We are no longer a homogeneous "melting pot." In fact, it is questionable whether we were ever a melting pot. Rather, America is (as Canada discovered earlier) more of a mosaic of different cultures that interrelate and influence one another, but never blend into one unified culture. The result is that to effectively present the gospel in our own community, we have to interpret it as if for a different culture. It is not enough to treat the gospel as we want it treated. "The gospel of Jesus Christ is for the world, not the church, and congregations must regard themselves solely as Christ's messengers, with all the discretion and self-effacement that such a role implies."⁴

The third premise is that the mission field is not just "over there." When we step outside our front door, we step into a mission field. We once thought ourselves a Christian nation, which is (and probably always was) totally false. This fact increases the importance of local churches joining together to battle the forces of evil in their immediate territory. If we are going to effectively reach our communities for Christ, we are going to have to return to the New Testament model of the local church being "resident aliens" in their own country—a body "in" the world, but not "of" the world, and fully aware of the difference.

The fourth premise is that you cannot do missions if you're not on mission. "To state this point even more directly, being a missionary and being a 'sent' community—a 'body of people sent on a mission' —...is first about how the church goes about those actions and the character of its own life in the process."⁵ At some point in time, being on mission turned into a program. It was demoted to one of many activities of the church.

The fifth and final premise is that missionary service benefits the servant. Too often we view our missional activity in the light of helping others. While true, the benefit to the obedient servant may be sadly overlooked. The New Testament command to make disciples still applies in the twenty-first century. Fulfilling this command is a matter of obedience. Obedience to God has always carried its own benefits to the Christian, just as failure to obey carries consequence. "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20, NIV). Although one's personal motivation may be directed outward, to minimize the blessings for obedience misses a critical component.

Churches and associations across North America are learning (or relearning) that being on mission brings many tangible benefits. Many have reported (and continue to report) significant, tangible benefits. Be careful not to let this become your motivation for being on mission. However, we can be encouraged by the fact that God will bless our obedience. To some, this is what association is all about, a supernatural fellowship of churches on mission.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

Chapter 13: Relevant Training

Do you think you should train your Sunday School workers? Would you question the need to train Vacation Bible School (VBS) workers? What about training your associational messengers or committee chairs? Many associations would have to answer "no" to that last question—and that's unfortunate.

For every job in the association, from committee member to moderator, you cannot assume that he or she fully understands their responsibility, especially after a redesign. In fact, just because someone is elected during the annual meeting does not mean that a person even knows what an association is! Therefore, it is important for you to train at every opportunity.

Some people say that training is dead. They base this on the fact that attendance at training events is dwindling. However, this is not consistent with the rest of our culture that almost idolizes self-improvement through books, lessons, and videos. The conclusion we must draw is not that training is dead, but rather that the way we historically do training is dead! It is not that people do not want to improve themselves or their skills, it's just that we have not made improving their skills in church work as important as golf or bass fishing.

We still have to respect individuals' discretionary time, and the fact that people do not want to attend lots of meetings. However, if done with relevance and excellence, training will actually attract volunteers. A host of other benefits can be realized by taking a proactive stance on training. You will have input in your leaders' view of associationalism; you will be able to share your vision; better-equipped members will return to your churches; and the association will become stronger.

Finally, remember that if you do not train your association's workers, the only model they will have for associational service is the church business meeting.

Part III: Key Elements of an Association

Chapter 14: Key Structural Elements

As with the body of Christ described here by Paul, our associations are made up of many parts. Paul tells us that we are to be careful not to give greater "honor" to those things that the world "honors." "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; . . .”
(1 Cor. 12:12, NIV).

of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Cor.1:27-29, NIV). In the next pages, we will examine some of the components that are most universally present in associations. This list is not all inclusive of elements in an association's structure.

However, these have proven to be most frequently changed in a reorganization.

Staff

Perhaps the easiest element of the association to identify as structural is the associational staff. This is good in the sense that it is easily changed (through organizational charts and job descriptions), yet it can be bad if it is the only place you focus for an associational redesign. There is no right way to reorganize associational staff; it depends on your personal style and context. For that reason, the following list of what other associations have done with their staff may offer some ideas about your own structure.

- Align staff positions with key/strategic priorities. That way, there is always one person on staff who identifies with those task forces/groups/committees who work in those areas.
- Align staff positions with key state convention areas. This streamlines communications between association and state.
- Align staff with key vision, mission, or purpose components.
- Some associations see their staff's primary role as administrative. This theory holds that the volunteers (committees/task forces/teams) are the ones who should do the ministry.
- Others see the staff's primary role as ministry related.
- Administrative control and level of supervision are important considerations regarding staff. Based on gifts and abilities, discuss and make intentional processes like authority, decision-making, and budget expenditures.
- Intentionally group positions to maximize personal giftedness.
- Some associations have moved away from traditional job titles, like director of missions, because their membership does not identify with them.

Reorganizing staff positions is an important part of a structural redesign, but it is not the only part! Be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that by changing job descriptions you have changed the position. Just because an employee is paid to do a job doesn't mean you will have their complete dedication and enthusiasm. Employees are also customers!

Volunteers

The most important structural element in an association is the body of believers it seeks to serve. Yes, serve. When a Christian is working in an association, he or she is serving God, and the association is serving believers by providing a place to fulfill their call. This is basic to associationalism.

Realities, like diminishing discretionary time, must also be considered. Therefore, a reduction in number and broadening of scope of the volunteer teams may have to take place. Following are principles and examples from other associations about their volunteer structures:

- When no volunteers come forward to do something, maybe it needs to be eliminated.
- Consider electing a team leader and let him or her enlist people with whom they work well.
- When a group of churches or individuals is called to a new ministry, the association needs to consider adopting it. If they do, then an ad hoc group can be formed as long as the call remains.
- At times, a volunteer may feel God's call, yet not be aware of all of the areas of service available to him or her. Be prepared to offer trial periods and/or periods of discovery for new volunteers.
- Everyone can "burn-out." Give people time off to re-charge.
- Frequently show gratitude and recognition. Take care not to be patronizing or promote pride. However, these hard-working souls need to know they are appreciated.
- Train—train—train.

Vision

We have already discussed how important vision is to an association. It is the target, the ideal future state God set before us. This section addresses vision as an entity or structural element (or dimension if you prefer). Vision exists and is an element of structure that impacts other elements. As such, vision must be discovered, created, managed, cared for, and incorporated completely into the organization culture.

You may not personally see vision as a structural element. However, you must treat your associational vision with intentionality, for if left alone, vision will wither and die. No structure can replace God's vision firmly entrenched in your association.

It would be appropriate at this time to mention several other structural elements which, as with vision, must be intentionally created and maintained: values, purpose, mission, and strategy. If other elements are designed in conflict with these, it could put the association in jeopardy.

For example, it does not seem bad for an association to have a strong value for fellowship and closeness. However, if the association's mission statement emphasizes evangelism, new people and churches entering the association could threaten the closeness many once felt. These two structures would conflict and lead to oscillation (i.e., a back and forth movement that results in a lot of activity, but little progress) and ultimately damage the entire organization.

Another example of these elements in conflict is if your association's strategy includes reaching into low-income housing with a compassion ministry. Yet, when you develop your budget (another structural element), no accommodations for a compassion ministry are made. These two structural elements are incongruent because the budget must support strategy.

Guiding Documents

An association's constitution and bylaws are among the most important structural elements. Although they do little in the way of direct ministry, they potentially regulate, direct, empower, and limit every aspect of associational organization.

Great care should be taken when rewriting guiding documents. These represent legal definitions and authorities of the association in the eyes of government. For this reason, if your association needs to rewrite its guiding documents, you should seek legal counsel, perhaps through your state convention. Although some may feel this is an avoidable expense, it would be devastating if any of the association's real property or its 501(c)(3) status (IRS regulation) were lost due to unintended carelessness.

The first thing to do is to ask yourself if you want to rewrite your guiding documents again in the near future. If the answer is no, which it usually is, then you must consider how to make these documents flexible enough to allow future changes. Associations have done several things to increase flexibility:

- Remove structural elements that are likely to change. Committees or task groups that will not change frequently should be in your bylaws. Examples of these are executive boards, administrative teams, or director of missions.
- Develop a hierarchy of authority. Include varying degrees of structural detail and rigidity. One example would be an association that has a constitution, bylaws, and procedure manual. Each of these documents can be referenced in one another, yet each has a different purpose.

The constitution is the basic legal document that defines and sometimes incorporates the association. It provides a great deal of legal protection and contains little in the way of structure, except that which may be required by law (i.e., a board). From a structural standpoint, the constitution would not need to change frequently, so it should be the most difficult to modify.

Bylaws, on the other hand, are slightly less difficult to change and contain a little more in the way of structure. An association might place slow-to-change administrative structures in their bylaws.

The largest number of structural elements should be in the procedure manual. This is where ministry teams and task forces should be listed, as this document has the greatest flexibility. In cases where associations have procedure manuals, they can often be changed by action of the administrative board.

- One association's bylaws provided little in the way of structural direction. However, it did contain Article 11 which said that the moderator, administrative counsel, or director of missions had the duty to create any ad-hoc groups necessary to fulfill the purpose of the association. Although committees and task forces were created by action of the association at large, key leaders of the association were responsible to create the teams necessary for day-to-day ministry.
- Change the way committees or ministry teams are formed, filled, and rotated. Does the nominating team really need to select each member of a group, or should they just select the chair? Additionally, some associations are finding that some groups do not need to be rotated off in one, three, or five years. If someone is called and gifted in an area, why should they rotate? This, of course, requires that an association have the maturity to remove someone who is in the wrong place. However, some find this to be a small price to pay for not having to have such an involved selection process.
- Give any newly created structural element an expiration date. This means that, rather than perpetuating potentially unnecessary structural elements through association inaction, establish an expiration date or "sundown" clause. In doing so, inaction will result in the dissolution of a structural element. It may seem like a minor difference; however, more committees have been retained beyond their effectiveness due to inaction than intent.

To summarize, when changing your guiding documents get expert advice. These are legal documents that could have long range effects on the association. Your guiding documents can be very helpful to your ministry by empowering and freeing the association to get on with kingdom work. On the other hand, if ineffective, your guiding documents can prove to be a “mill stone” holding the association back. Careful analysis and consideration must be given when working with your guiding documents.

Formal and Informal Communications

During a redesign, most people do a pretty good job structuring formal communications. Reporting structures, meetings, and written reports are usually thought through and designed fairly well. The only caution in this area is to consider the amount of communications you request. Every minute a minister or volunteer spends reporting is a minute away from ministering. Make sure your requests are valid, meaningful, timely, and understood as necessary to the overall effort. If you do not do this, you will experience the following problems. Do any of these sound familiar?

- Members arrive late to meetings—sometimes even the chairperson.
- Members frequently find excuses to miss meetings—my cat has a cold.
- Reports come in late and poorly done.
- Volunteers for certain groups become harder to find.
- E-mails are not returned.

Informal communication is an element that is often overlooked. Although difficult to organize, it can deeply impact the association. More important than structuring informal communications is to know where it is and how to use it most effectively.

Summary

This ends the section on structural elements, as well as the main body of this work. The principles, structural elements, models, and examples you will need to lead your association through the redesign process have been presented. As always, if you are involved in an associational redesign, do not hesitate calling your state convention or the Associational Strategy Team at NAMB. We stand ready to serve you as you serve the local church.

"I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work" (Neh. 2:18, NIV).

Footnotes

1. Robert Sowell, "Flexible Structures for Changing Associations," 1998, p. 1.
2. Robert Fritz, *Corporate Tides* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1996), p. 16.
3. Darrell L.Guder, *Missional Church, A Vision for Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), p. 4.
4. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *Church Between Gospel & Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 186.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Reading List

Anderson, Leith. *A Church for the 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1992.

Barna, George. *The Power of Vision: How You Can Capture and Apply God's Vision for Your Ministry*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1992.

The Organization of the Future. Edited by Richard Beckhard, Marshall Goldsmith, and Frances Hesselbein. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.

Bradley, J. C. *A Baptist Association: Churches on Mission Together*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1984.

Brown, George and Uri Merry. *The Neurotic Behavior of Organizations*. New York: Gestalt Institute of Cleveland Press, 1987.

Cotter, John J. *The 20% Solution: Using Rapid Redesign to Create Tomorrow's Organizations Today*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995.

Easum, William. *Dancing with Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

Edited by Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.

Edited by George R. Hunsberger, Craig Van Gelder, and Craig Van Hunsberger. *Church Between Gospel & Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*. Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996.

Fritz, Robert. *Corporate Tides: The Inescapable Laws of Organizational Structure*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1996.

Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

Malphurs, Aubrey. *Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don't Teach Pastors in Seminary*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997.

- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.
- Mead, Loren B. *The Once And Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier*. New York: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1991.
- Perry, Bob, Ray Spears, and Stephen Welch. *Values-Based Tactical Planning for Religious Organizations*. Richmond, Va.: Organizational Health Associates, 1996.
- Peters, Tom and Dean LeBaron. *The Circle of Innovation: You Can't Shrink Your Way to Greatness*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997.
- Roberts, Wess, Ph.D. *Leadership Secrets of Attila The Hun*. New York: Warner Books, 1985.
- Schaller, Lyle E. *The New Reformation: Tomorrow Arrived Yesterday*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday Books, 1990.
- Sowell, Robert. "Flexible Structures for Changing Associations Building a Vision Community." 1998.
- Sweet, Leonard I. *Quantum Spirituality: A PostModern Apologetic*. Dayton, Ohio: Whaleprints, 1991.
- Tinsley, William C. *Breaking the Mold: Church Planting in the 21st Century*. Dallas: Creative Church Consultations, Inc., 1996.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.

Appendix 2: Collaborators

Without the gifts of time, wisdom, and insights from leaders like the ones listed below, this work would never have seen the light of day. I owe a great debt to these, and others who are not mentioned, for their service to God's kingdom. The individuals listed below have agreed to let me give you their names and numbers as potential resources if you ever need any wise counsel about your association's organization or structure.

Bill Agee	Ariz.	(602) 841-1400	bdagee@ix.netcom.com	Archie Herrin	Miss.	(601) 736-2254	
Jere Allen	D.C.	(202) 265-1526		Billy Hickman	Okla.	(918) 469-3739	
Everett Anthony	Ga.	(770) 423-7161		Sid Hopkins	Ga.	(770) 963-8350	
Terry W. Arnold	Nev.	(702) 786-0406	40423.423@compuserve.com	Randy Jones	Ky.	(502) 245-4101	Randy_Jones@KYBaptist.org
Ken Beckner	Kan.	(316)221-3988	scba628@juno.com	Malcolm Jones	Tenn.	(423) 336-1122	
John Bedford	Tenn.	(901) 632-0145		Tommy Knotts	S.C.	(803) 648-0204	
Walter Bennett	Fla.	(904) 704-5965	Hiberniabaptist@juno.com	Don F. Mabry	La.	(318) 445-5454	
Dennis Betts	Ohio	(614) 258-8491	dennislbetts@compuserve.com	Ignatius Meimaris	Mass.	(781) 449-4000	70423.1632@compuserve.com
Sam Birky	Calif.	(707) 643-7671	Sbirky@aol.com	Eddie Miller	Nev.	(702) 331-3363	70420.735@compuserve.com
Debbie Blankenship	Ala.	(334) 222-3009		Karl Ortis	Calif.	(415) 387-3444	
Leon Boyd	Ga.	(770) 498-4266		Stephen Parks	La.	(318) 865-5613	
JC Bradley	N.C.	(336) 883-2233	Cenbasn@aol.com	Jere Patterson	Ala.	(256) 773-5243	
Doyle Braden	Calif.	(714) 671-0339		Robert Perry	Va.	(804) 329-1701	
Norman Brinkley	Calif.	(909) 937-3297	nbrinkley1@integrityonline.7.com	Bill Phillips	Ore.	(541) 345-3393	70423.42@compuserve.com
Marlin Brown	Mo.	(816) 826-2070		Ron Pinkerton	N.C.	(704) 375-1197	
Michael O. Canady	La.	(318) 448-3402	Mike@lbc.org	Jesse Ramage	Va.	(757) 488-1162	70420.543@compuserve.com
Lon Chavez	Calif.	(553) 229-9533		Ronald Rowe	Fla.	(904) 727-6800	
David Cleeland	Fla.	(305) 271-5600		Margaret Slusher	Ga.	(770) 410-6510	Mslusher@namb.net
Ken Coffee	Texas	(214) 828-5100		James Smith	Ga.	(912) 475-5649	domacon@bellsouth.net
Russell Cook	Okla.	(405) 273-4558		Robert Sowell	Calif.	(562) 869-5391	lasba@aol.com
Sturat Cundiff	Ind.	(812) 392-2992		Bobby Stafford	N.C.	(919) 467-5100	bstaffo@bscnc.org
Roy Davis	Tenn.	(931) 484-1858	cumbplatassoc@multipro.com	Clarence Steiner	Ga.	(404) 957-3032	
David Dean	N.Y.	(212) 787-7037	103601.3447@compuserve.com	Michael Stewart	Calif.	(408) 229-6140	
Robert Dixon	Ark.	(870) 247-2008		Tom Thomas	Ariz.	(520) 753-9262	rvba@ctaz.com
Bill Duke	Va.	(757) 596-4587		Nelson Tilton	N.M.	(505) 243-2707	
Timothy Ellis	Ohio	(419) 589-8919	Tellis53@aol.com	Clayton Turner	Ga.	(706) 632-5741	
Larry Fisher	Calif.	(510) 613-8160		Joe Vernon	Ga.	(706) 865-1980	
Ben Gault	N.C.	(910) 485-8791	nsrbasbc@juno.com	Randy Wadford	N.C.	(704) 786-9171	
Ed Gilman	Fla.	(727) 530-0431	EdGilman@aol.com	Everett Walden	Mo.	(660) 562-3133	
Ron Hale	Pa.	(412) 931-6040		Steve Welch	Va.	(703) 941-6822	
Joel Harrison	Ga.	(770) 455-4870		Ronald Wildes	Ga.	(770) 964-9830	
Robert Haskins	Okla.	(405) 942-3800		Craig Wilson	Va.	(804) 672-2100	

As always, the Associational Strategy Team at NAMB stands ready to assist at (770) 410-6521 or

<http://www.sbclink.com>

Describe the basic demographics of your association:

(Attach supporting demographic information if available.)

Describe the basic demographics of your churches:

Next to the association in-session, list the major decision making bodies/individuals.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In the space below, illustrate your association's organization.

(If you have an organization chart, attach it.)

What are your association's strategic priorities?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

What key objectives have you set for these priorities?

Method for measuring

Completion Date
results

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What are your association's stated core values?

What, if any, values does your association have that may conflict with its stated values or objectives?

If your association were given a gift of \$98,831, what would you and they want to do with it?

What has been your association's greatest accomplishment in the past three years?

What is the base for your association's structure? _____

What do you believe it should be? _____

What do you believe are your churches' reasons for being part of an association? (circle all that apply, remember churches can have multiple reasons.)

Shared resources	_____%	Accomplishment	_____%
Heritage	_____%	Geography	_____%
Doctrine	_____%	Fellowship	_____%
_____	_____%	_____	_____%

How would you judge your association's readiness for change? Why?

List any stakeholders in your association you know of other than local churches.

Flexibility

Flexibility is a characteristic many associations wish to instill through a structural redesign. To achieve it requires a number of "inside-out" considerations. First there are the "inside" or internal attributes that have to be present to achieve flexibility. With these internal attributes in place, the association can begin working on the "outside" or actual structural changes that can bring the association greater flexibility.

Inside-Out Considerations

Internal Attributes	Structural Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to change • Forbearance • Desire to be flexible • Willingness to relinquish power • Clearly understood purpose, mission, and vision • Commitment to fruit bearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove many structural elements from guiding documents • Use a hierarchy of documents • Reduce structurally supported gate-keeping • Legitimize the use of ad hoc groups • Empower "doers" to be "deciders" • Expandable, self-refilling committees/groups • Remove unnecessary groups/committees • Eliminate gatekeepers' formal authority • Clearly communicate vision, strategy, and goals • Have effective communication vehicle(s)

Flexibility Inventory—Consider the following questions to discover your flexibility:

1. Who and what committees would have to approve an out-of-budget expenditure of \$100?
...of \$1,000?
2. List all of the structural elements required/mentioned in your constitution or bylaws. How many are totally filled most of the time?
3. How much time is required to change your constitution? ...your bylaws?
4. Does your association have an effective operations manual?
5. Does a finance committee (or its equivalent) have decisive authority over ministry groups?
6. Are there any other gate-keeping bodies/individuals in your association?
7. Does your association enable and use ad hoc groups? Who can organize them?
8. Has a church recently asked for assistance in an area that the association could not respond?
9. What would you say is the base of your association's structural organization?
10. How would you judge your association's flexibility? Why?

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a characteristic many associations wish to instill through a structural redesign. To achieve it requires a number of "inside-out" considerations. First there are the "inside" or internal attributes that have to be present to be effective. With these internal attributes in place, the association can begin working on the "outside" or actual structural changes that can lead to greater effectiveness.

Inside-Out Considerations

Internal Attributes	Structural Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to change • Desire to be effective • Forbearance • Risking temporarily losing competency • Willingness to shift program paradigms • Clearly understood outcomes • Commitment to fruit bearing outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful training • Challenge your programs annually to insure these are the most effective for meeting your desired outcome • Risk placing creative thinkers in key leadership roles • Instill regular/frequent systems for evaluating results • Stop referring to processes by their program name in your communications and documents • Expandable, self-refilling committees/groups • Let the most qualified people make decisions • Clearly state desired outcomes in ministry descriptions • Have effective communication vehicle(s)

Effectiveness Inventory—Consider the following questions:

1. How often do your committees or teams evaluate their progress towards stated goals?

2. Do job descriptions state the outcome you desire from an individual's or team's work?

3. Do you have frequent opportunities to see how other associations are meeting the needs of churches?

4. How frequently would you say a decision is made when the most qualified or knowledgeable person is not present?

5. How many people need to participate in making relatively small decisions?

6. What major service goals have you set for this ministry year? What methods or processes will you use to deliver them?

7. What training events does your association typically conduct?

1. training for associational messengers.

How many usually attend?

Empowered to Be and Do (as opposed to meet and vote)

Empowerment is a characteristic many associations wish to instill through a structural redesign. To achieve it requires a number of "inside-out" considerations. First there are the "inside" or internal attributes that have to be present to allow empowerment. With these internal attributes in place, the association can begin working on the "outside" or actual structural changes that can make the association an empowering body.

Inside-Out Considerations

Internal Attributes	Structural Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to change • Forbearance • Commitment to lay ministry • Desire for meaningful Christian service • Willingness to relinquish power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instill systems for identifying gifts/calls and matching them with service opportunities • Intentional/continual creation of ministry opportunities • Structural legitimacy (i.e., Director of Lay Ministries) • Instill systems for flexibility in the association • Effective methods for communication within the association

Empowerment Inventory—Consider the following questions:

1. Within your association, how many groups' sole purpose is to make decisions that will impact the activities of others?
2. What percentage of your committee members are new to the association?
3. Describe the "burn-out" quotient of committee members in your association?
4. Can you always describe being a member of one of your association's committees as being "fulfilling"?
5. Do you offer your churches regular assistance or instruction in gifts assessment and empowering lay ministries?
6. Do you communicate regularly your association's vision?
7. If someone walks into your office and tells you about a ministry they feel God has called them into, what assistance can you provide to help them fulfill their call? When was the last time this happened?
8. Describe the last mission trip your association sponsored. Where are the participants of that mission trip now?
9. Do you maintain a database of gifts among members of your association? Do you provide such a service for local churches.
10. In general terms, do you consider your association one that empowers lay ministry?

Conflict

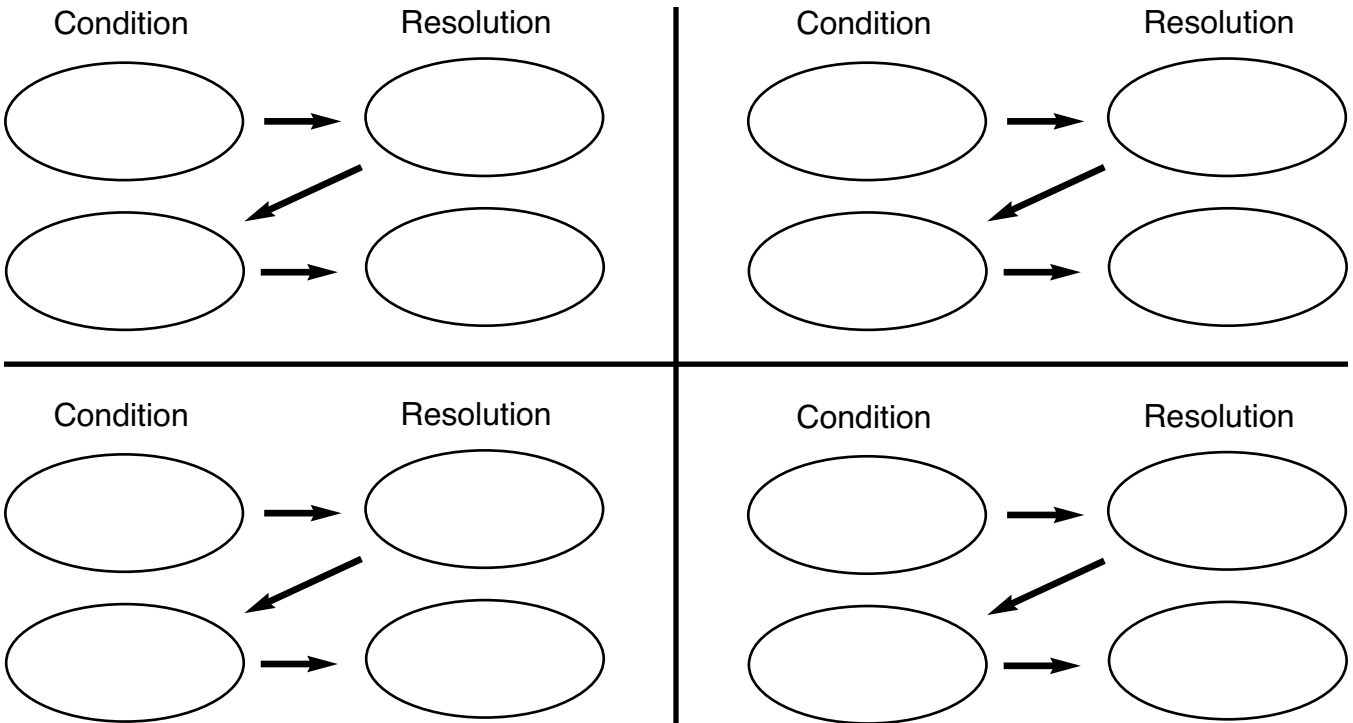
Is there recurring conflict within your association? Describe it.

Do elements within your association conflict fairly frequently? What are they?

_____ vs _____
_____ vs _____
_____ vs _____
_____ vs _____
_____ vs _____

What would you say is the root of their conflict (values, doctrine, foundation for fellowship, attitude towards change, conflicting desired outcomes, something else)?

If they exist, chart these conflicts in terms of the condition/resolution cycle.



How do you think changing your organization and structure can impact these conflicts?

Appendix 4: Core Values Audits 1 and 2

(This material from the book *Values-Driven Leadership* by Aubrey Malphurs, 1996, was reprinted with permission from Baker Book House. Do not reproduce this material without permission from Baker Book House. We strongly recommend that these audits not be used without understanding the information contained in the book.)

Core Values Audit 1

Directions: Rate each of the core values below from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. Godly servant leadership | _____ 16. Evangelism |
| _____ 2. A well-mobilized lay ministry | _____ 17. Strong families |
| _____ 3. Bible-centered preaching / teaching | _____ 18. A grace-orientation to life |
| _____ 4. The poor and disenfranchised | _____ 19. Praise and worship |
| _____ 5. Creativity and innovation | _____ 20. A Christian self-image |
| _____ 6. World Missions | _____ 21. Social justice |
| _____ 7. People matte to God | _____ 22. Committed Christians (discipleship) |
| _____ 8. An attractive facility | _____ 23. Giving / tithing |
| _____ 9. Financial responsibility | _____ 24. Counseling |
| _____ 10. The status quo | _____ 25. Civil rights |
| _____ 11. Welcoming visitors | _____ 26. Christian education (all ages) |
| _____ 12. Cultural relevance | _____ 27. The ordinances |
| _____ 13. Intercessory prayer | _____ 28. Equal rights |
| _____ 14. Sustained excellence / quality | _____ 29. Other: |
| _____ 15. Fellowship / community | |

Write down all the core values – but no more than 12 – that received a rating of 4 or 5. Rank these according to priority by placing the number 1 in front of the highest, 2 in front of the next and so on.

Core Values Audit 2

Directions: The following questions will help you to discover and clarify an established organization's (church or parachurch) core ministry values. Ask people in the organization (leaders, participators, and others) these questions, as well as answering them yourself. Try to answer as many of the questions as possible even though some of the answers may be similar or identical.

1. Where do you invest your time in this ministry? Why?
2. Where do people invest their money in this organization? Why?
3. What are people within and outside this ministry saying about it?
4. What is it about this organization that excites you (What stirs your emotions)?
5. What attracts people such as yourself to this ministry (Why are you here)?
6. When people brag about this ministry, what specifically do they brag about?
7. What do you and others admire most about this ministry? What do you admire least?
8. If you are a leader in this organization, why are you in a leadership position? What would cause you to resign?
9. If you are a member or an employee of this organization, what would cause you or others to leave?
10. Name one or two changes that would make this a better ministry. What would not change?
11. If God would grant you one wish for this organization what would it be?
12. What is most important to this organization (What is this organization's bottom line)?
13. What are this ministry's core values?
14. What are your ministry core values? Do they agree or disagree with the ministry's core values?

Appendix 5: Readiness for Change Inventory

(This material from the book *Values-Driven Leadership* by Aubrey Malphurs, 1996, was reprinted with permission from Baker Book House. Do not reproduce this material without permission from Baker Book House. We strongly recommend that these audits not be used without understanding the information contained in the book.)

Even the most dynamic church can become resistant to necessary, healthy change. However, churches must change if they are to have significant impact on their communities. Is your church [association] ready for change?

Directions: Each item below is a key element that will help you evaluate your church's readiness for change. Strive for objectivity – involve others (including outsiders) in the evaluation process. Circle the number that most accurately rates your church.

1. Leadership. The pastor and the church board (official leadership) are favorable toward and directly responsible for change. Also, if any influential persons (unofficial leadership: the church patriarch, a wealthy member, for example) are for change, score 5. If moderately so, score 3. If only the secondary level of leadership (other staff, Sunday school teachers, etc.) is for change while unofficial leadership opposes it, score 1.

5 3 1

2. Vision. The pastor and the board have a single, clear vision of a significant future that looks different from the present. If the pastor is able to mobilize most relevant parties (other staff, boards, and the congregation) for action, score 5. If the pastor but not the board envisions a different direction for the church, score 3. If the pastor and the board have not thought about a vision, and /or they do not believe that it is important, score 1.

5 3 1

3. Values. The church's philosophy of ministry (its core values) includes a preference for innovation and creativity. Though proven forms, methods, and techniques are not discarded at a whim, the church is more concerned with the effectiveness of its ministries than adherence to traditions, score 5. If moderately so, score 3. If the church's ministry forms and techniques have changed little over the years while its ministry effectiveness has diminished, score 1.

5 3 1

4. Motivation. The pastor and the board have a strong sense of urgency for change that is shared by the congregation. If the congregational culture emphasizes the need for constant improvement, score 3. If the pastor and/or the board (most of whom have been in their positions for many years) along with the congregation are bound by long-standing traditions that are change-resistant and discourage risk taking, score 1. If somewhere between, score 2.

3 2 1

5. Organizational Context. How does the change effort affect the other programs in the church (Christian education, worship, missions, and others)? If the individuals in charge are all working together for improvement and innovation, score 3. If some are, score 2. If many are opposed to change or are in conflict with one another over change, score 1.

3 2 1

6. Processes/Functions. Major changes in a church almost always require redesigning processes and functions in all the ministries of the church such as Christian education, church worship, and others. If most in charge of these areas are open to change, score 3. If only some, score 2. If they are turf protectors or if they put their areas or ministry ahead of the church as a whole, score 1.

3 2 1

7. Ministry Awareness. Does the leadership of your church keep up with what is taking place in the innovative evangelical churches in the community and across America in terms of ministry and outreach effectiveness? Does the leadership objectively compare what it is doing to that of churches that are very similar to it? If the answer is yes, score 3. If the answer is sometimes, score 2. If no, score 1.

3 2 1

8. Community Focus. Does the church know and understand the people in the community – their needs, hopes, aspirations? Does it stay in direct contact with them? Does it regularly seek to reach them? If the answer is yes, score 3. If moderately so, score 2. If the church is not in touch with its community and focuses primarily on itself, score 1.

3 2 1

9. Evaluation. Does the church regularly evaluate its ministries? Does it evaluate its ministries in light of its vision and goals? Are these ministries regularly adjusted in response to the evaluations? If all of this takes place, score 3. If some takes place, score 2. If none, score 1.

3 2 1

10. Rewards. Change is easier if the leaders and those involved in ministry are rewarded in some way for taking risks and looking for new solutions to their ministry problems. Also, rewarding ministry teams is more effective than rewarding solo performances. If this characterizes your church, score 3. If sometimes, score 2. If your church rewards the status quo and a maintenance mentality, score 1.

3 2 1

11. Organizational Structure. The best situation is a flexible church where change is well received and takes place periodically, not every day. If this is true of your church, score 3. If your church is very rigid in its structure and either has changed very little in the last five years or has experienced several futile attempts at change to no avail, score 1. If between, score 2.

3 2 1

12. Communication. Does your church have a variety of means for two-way communication? Do most understand and use it, and does it reach all levels of the congregation? If this is true, score 3. If only moderately true, score 2. If communication is poor, primarily one-way and from top down, score 1.

3 2 1

13. Organizational Hierarchy. Is your church decentralized (has few if any levels of leadership between the congregation and the pastor or board)? If so, score 3. If there are people on staff levels or boards/committees who come between the congregation and the pastor or the board, then more potential exists for them to block essential change, score 1. If between, score 2.

3 2 1

14. Prior Change. Churches will most readily adapt to change if they have successfully implemented major changes in the recent past, score 3. If some change, score 2. If no one can remember the last time the church changed, or if such efforts failed or left people angry and resentful, score 1.

3 2 1

15. Morale. Do the church staff and volunteers enjoy the church and take responsibility for their ministries? Do they trust the pastor and the board? If so, score 3. If moderately so, score 2. Do few people volunteer and are there signs of low team spirit? Is there mistrust between leaders and followers and between the various ministries? If so, score 1.

3 2 1

16. Innovation. The church tries new things. People feel free to implement new ideas on a consistent basis. People have freedom to make choices and solve problems regarding their ministries. If this describes your church, score 3. If this is somewhat true, score 2. If ministries are ensnared in bureaucratic red tape and permission from on high must be obtained before anything happens, score 1.

3 2 1

17. Decision Making. Does the church leadership listen carefully to a wide variety of suggestions from all the congregation? After it has gathered the appropriate information, does it make decisions quickly? If so, score 3. If moderately so, score 2. Does the leadership listen only to a select few and take forever to make decisions? Is there lots of conflict during the process, and after a decision is made, is there confusion and turmoil? Then, score 1.

3 2 1

Total Score:

If Your Score Is

47 – 57: The chances are good that you may implement changes, especially if your scores are high on items 1-3.

28 – 46: Change may take place but with varying success. Chances increase the higher the score on items 1-3. Note areas with low scores and focus on improvement before attempting change on a large scale.

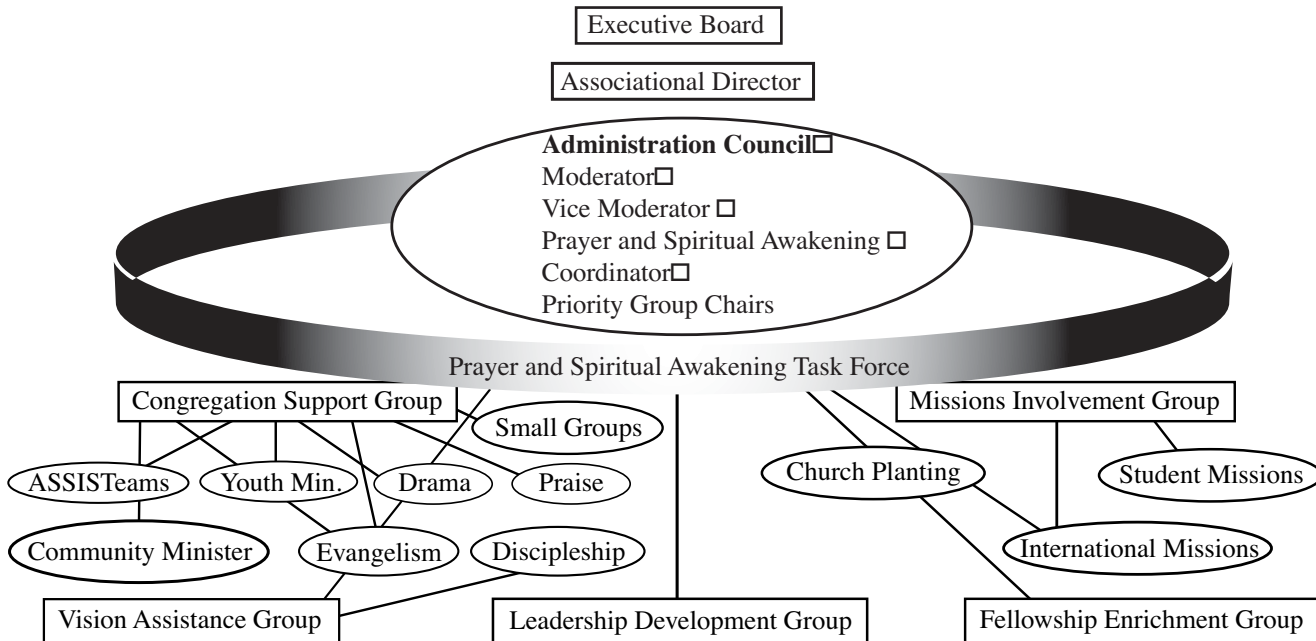
17 – 27: Change will not likely take place. Note areas with low scores and attempt to improve them if possible. Consider starting a new church and implement your ideas in a more change-friendly context.

For additional copies, write or call: Vision Ministries International
5041 Urban Crest
Dallas, TX 75227
(214) 841-3777

Cost: \$3.00/copy (includes postage & handling)

Model 1: Mega City Vision

156 congregations in a large metropolitan area



Purpose: Our association is a covenant fellowship of congregations committed to seeking the full expression of God’s kingdom through the continuing pursuit of a future for every church, and a church for every person, in our city and around the world. Through the empowerment of Christ’s Spirit, we intend to change our city and claim our world for Christ in this generation.

Vision: This association does not have a traditional vision statement per se. What they have is more a position paper on principles, purposes, and priorities. Their purpose, to a great degree, expresses their vision. Two captions from their vision statement sheds more light on this association’s view of an improved future:

“We believe that God will use our faithful implementation of this mission to transform our city. The new city will have a reputation for friendly neighborhoods that celebrate cultural diversity. The people who live here will be safe, and empowered to choose their own futures. The created natural environment will be cherished, but not worshipped. More and more families will be nurturing healthy people who genuinely care for others, as well as themselves. Christ will be honored by most and admired by all. Every congregational fellowship will be consciously progressing toward its unique, divinely revealed future. Every person will have access to at least one healthy congregation that he or she views as relevant. Disciples of Jesus Christ will be effectively sharing the gospel of the kingdom daily in every marketplace setting. And this area will be a center for the development and deployment of fruitful agents in Christ’s global movement.”

Principles:

Revelation—Jeremiah 29:11

A divinely revealed vision for the future

Innovation—Isaiah 43:19

We decide never to deny or settle for current reality.

Cooperation—Philippians 1:27

A choice to join our emotions, imaginations, and actions

together in responding to our common challenge.

Multiplication—John 15:8

Investment in reproducing disciples and congregations

Contextualization—Acts 2:6

Encourage distinct groups to develop distinct traditions

Priorities:

1. Assist each congregation to comprehend and communicate its divinely mandated vision.
2. Assist each congregation to identify resources and implement methods necessary for the accomplishment of its vision.
3. Assist each congregation to identify, nurture, and equip God-called leaders.
4. Facilitate the involvement of our congregations in ongoing missions activity.
5. Foster fellowship among our congregations.

Guiding documents: Thirteen articles in five pages that address only foundational structural elements. Beyond the basics (purpose, membership, meetings, officers, etc.) the bylaws require 2 other structural components, an Executive Board and Association Director—all other structural considerations are covered in Article 11 where it states:

Article 11 – Organization

The association annual meeting or an Executive Board meeting shall elect such leaders or groups as necessary to fulfill the requirements of these bylaws, or as are otherwise deemed necessary.

The moderator or the association director may appoint special task groups to undertake tasks of a temporary nature. Such ad hoc groups shall be dissolved following the completion of their tasks, or at the direction of the person who appointed them.

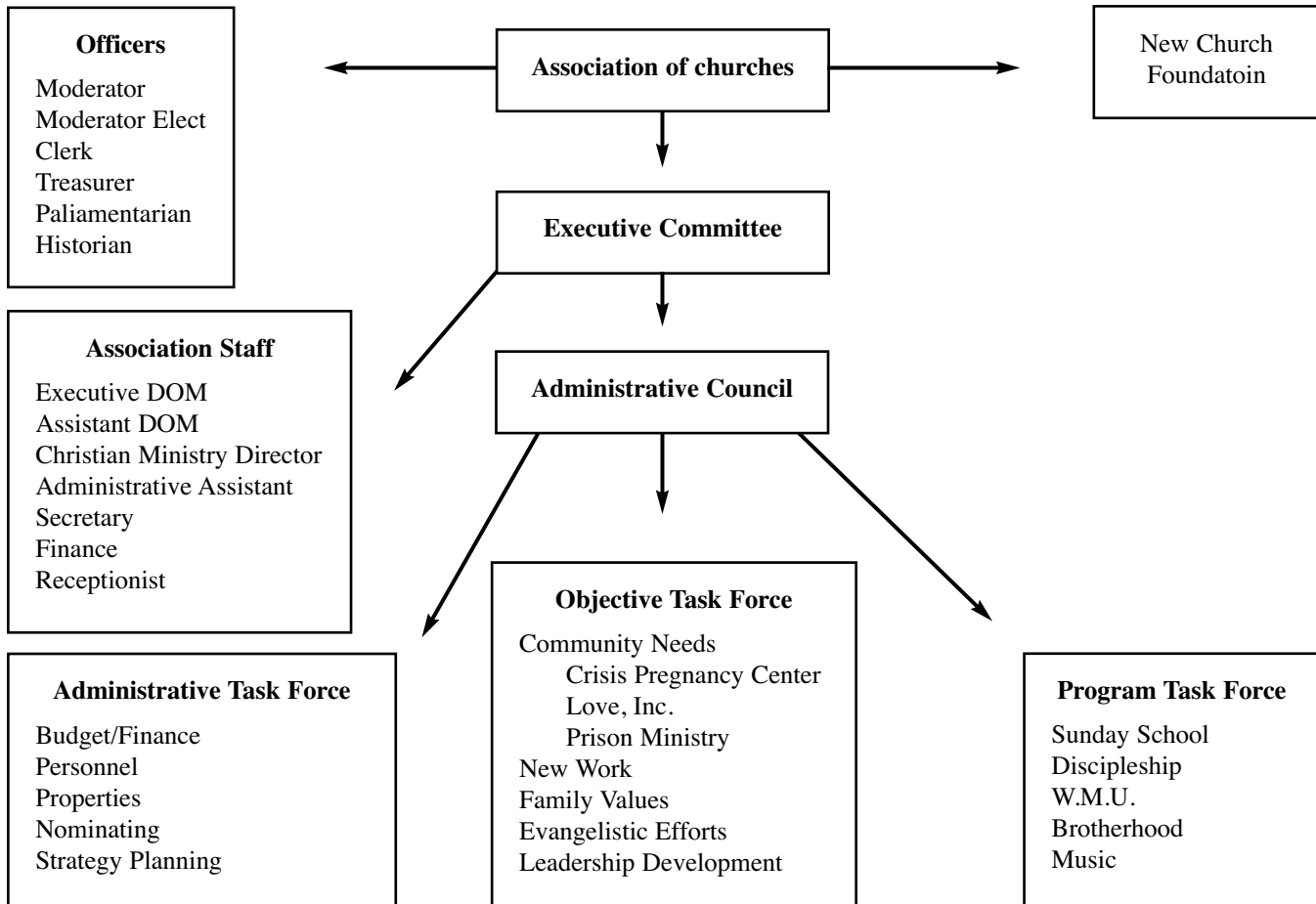
Structure: This association has chosen a nontraditional method to illustrate their organizational structure. A key point to mention is that although all of the structural elements can be changed very quickly, everything is encompassed by the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Task Force. Another key point is that the only elected positions are the director, officers, and chairs of the groups; all other positions are appointed by those leaders. Additionally, notice that there is no nominating committee. The moderator, director, and association at large assume these responsibilities.

We have not yet discussed the most important components of their structure—a base that fosters flexibility. This association chose God's vision as a base, consequently, their five vision led priorities became key structural elements of their organization. Therefore, if the vision is altered, the structure automatically changes in response.

On Mission Strategy: This association has a highly developed On Mission Strategy incorporated into their vision statement. It is structured into their organization through their priorities as the Mission Involvement Group. This group's objectives are: (1) To lead at least 20 percent of their member congregations each year to establish new congregations, and (2) lead 50 percent of their member congregations to communicate the gospel across geographic, ethnic, and/or social distances by the year 2000.

Model 2: Structured for Strategy

84 congregations in a blend of suburban and rural communities



Purpose: To advance and promote the Christian faith in accordance with the beliefs, practices, and principles of the Southern Baptist denomination and the purposes of the Georgia Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention; to cooperate with these conventions and other like associations in the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, and in support of our Christian institutions.

Vision Statement: To see New Testament churches growing and unified as they fulfill the Great Commission, and joyfully cooperate in creative ministries to enhance and enlarge the work of the kingdom of God in our area.

Mission Statement: This association of churches is to be the catalyst for effective Christian ministry that links congregations together in the use of spiritual and material resources.

Objectives: (adopted annually and automatically leads to task forces under the Objective Task Force department)

1. Community needs: Help our churches discover and distribute resources to meet community needs in Jesus' name.
2. New work: Start and nurture new missions and churches.
3. Family values: Provide up-to-date materials, information, and training to help our churches strengthen biblical family values.
4. Evangelistic efforts: Encourage our churches to establish and maintain an evangelistic priority in all that they do.
5. Leadership development: Equip our churches to develop the leadership potential of their members.

Guiding Documents: This association has a one-page constitution and four pages of bylaws. The only structural elements contained in the bylaws (other than messengers, officers, church members, and typical statements about relationships between the association and churches) are the executive committee and administrative council.

Chairpersons in two of three task force groups are elected during the spring meeting (of the entire association) and then they, in conjunction with nominating task force, nominate remaining members for election in the fall. The nominating task force is different in that the moderator and moderator elect appoint people for new vacancies created from a three-year rotation. Other task forces under the administrative area also rotate every three years. Officers of the association are also corporate officers. And, associational ministry staff divides up the task force groups so that a ministerial staff is connected to each.

Structure: This association has a very formal structure that might appear confining; however, there are two structural components that mitigate this tendency. First, the task force group called "objectives" is a direct reflection of their strategic priorities, and they are open for review every year. Therefore, as needs change, the association can rapidly redirect their efforts and change structure. The second mitigating factor is that the members of these same task forces are elected annually, thus offering more flexibility.

Two final items worthy of note are the DOM's intentional desire to make the associational office "user friendly," and his frequent use of video as a method of communications to the churches. Both of these features are culturally sensitive and go a long way to maintaining the good relationship they have with the local churches.

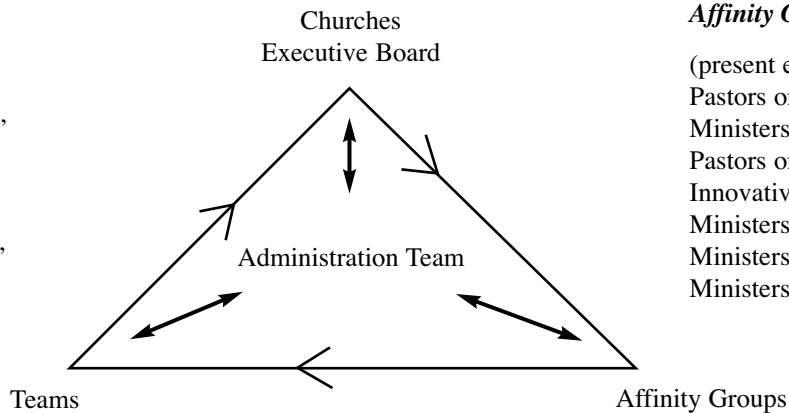
On Mission Strategies: Although this association does not have an On Mission Team or Missions Development Council, their expression of the on mission principles is fairly thorough. In one sense, the entire Objectives Task Force group could be viewed as an On Mission Team. It is where the new work, evangelism, and ministry task forces reside; plus, considering their flex strategy in dealing with these priorities, they are constantly looking to see where God is at work. There may be something lost in the processes, for example each task force is responsible to be advocates for their own mission activity; however, it is equally likely that more people involved is preferable. This may be a moot point since they enjoy considerable church participation for their partnerships, mission trips, and community ministries. Additionally, the DOM estimates that 50 percent of the churches express some form of their own on mission activity.

Model 3 Metro High Service

110 congregations in a metropolitan area next to a mega-city

Team

Trustees, Leadership
Revitalization, Mission Starts,
Mission Projects,
Cooperation/Unity,
Prayer/Revival, Age Level,
WMU, Storehouse Ministries,
Personnel
Operations, Nominating



Affinity Groups

(present examples)
Pastors on Church Growth
Ministers of Music
Pastors on Leadership
Innovative Pastors think-tank
Ministers of Education
Ministers of Yourth
Ministers of Children

Theme: A first-century passion for a twenty-first century world.

Theme Scripture: "I'm sending you off to open the eyes of the outsiders so they can see the difference between dark and light, and choose light, see the difference between Satan and God, and choose God. I'm sending you off to present my offer of sins forgiven, and a place in the family, inviting them into the company of those who begin real living by believing in me" (Acts 26:17b-19, The Message).

Purpose: To involve churches in a cooperative fellowship to do missions, evangelism, leadership, and ministry support for building the kingdom of God.

Vision: To assist each local church to develop and implement a God-given vision, and to involve people in a corporate effort of missions and hands-on-ministries.

Core Values:

Jesus as our model	Missions as our spirit	Customization as our service	Bible as our base
Equipping as our method	Unity as our expression	Actions as our fulfillment	Prayer as our priority

Priorities:

1. Cooperation/Unity: To build the kingdom dreams of cooperation among the churches.
2. Prayer/Revival: To encourage all churches to pray in unity for each other, and to pray that our community and our world will be reached for Christ.
3. Leadership: To provide and promote leadership training and assessment for staff and key leaders that they may become more effective as leaders.
4. Revitalization: To provide training and assistance to existing local churches in the area of strategy planning and church growth.
5. New starts: To start healthy, evangelistic, discipling, reproducing churches.
6. Mission projects: To involve Christians in doing missions locally and globally (2 teams—long term/short term).

Ongoing Teams:

1. Storehouse Ministries: To motivate and promote aggressive Christian social ministries.

2. WMU: To encourage and assist the churches within the association to be involved in missions locally and globally.
3. Training (age level): To provide training opportunities, events, and resources for teachers and workers in all age-levels (key leaders, adults, youth, children and preschool) and to do cooperative evangelistic work.
4. Administrative Teams:
 - Personnel—To secure, encourage, and support the best association staff possible.
 - Operations—To be responsible for properties owned by the association.
 - Nominating Team—To enlist leaders to serve on the teams of the association and to make recommendations to the Executive Committee for election.
 - Trustees—To represent the association in all legal matters.

(Note: individual teams are established around each priority and goal, plus ad hoc affinity groups organized as needed. Teams change as priorities change—on a three to five year cycle with strategy development.)

Guiding Documents: This association is governed by bylaws, a document about four and a half pages in length. Aside from the usual articles dealing with name, purpose, membership, authority and meetings, their bylaws require few other structures (as previously mentioned). The method for selecting members of teams is interesting. The association elects team members, and then they meet in committee session to choose their facilitator or leader, who will serve as their representative to the Administration Teams.

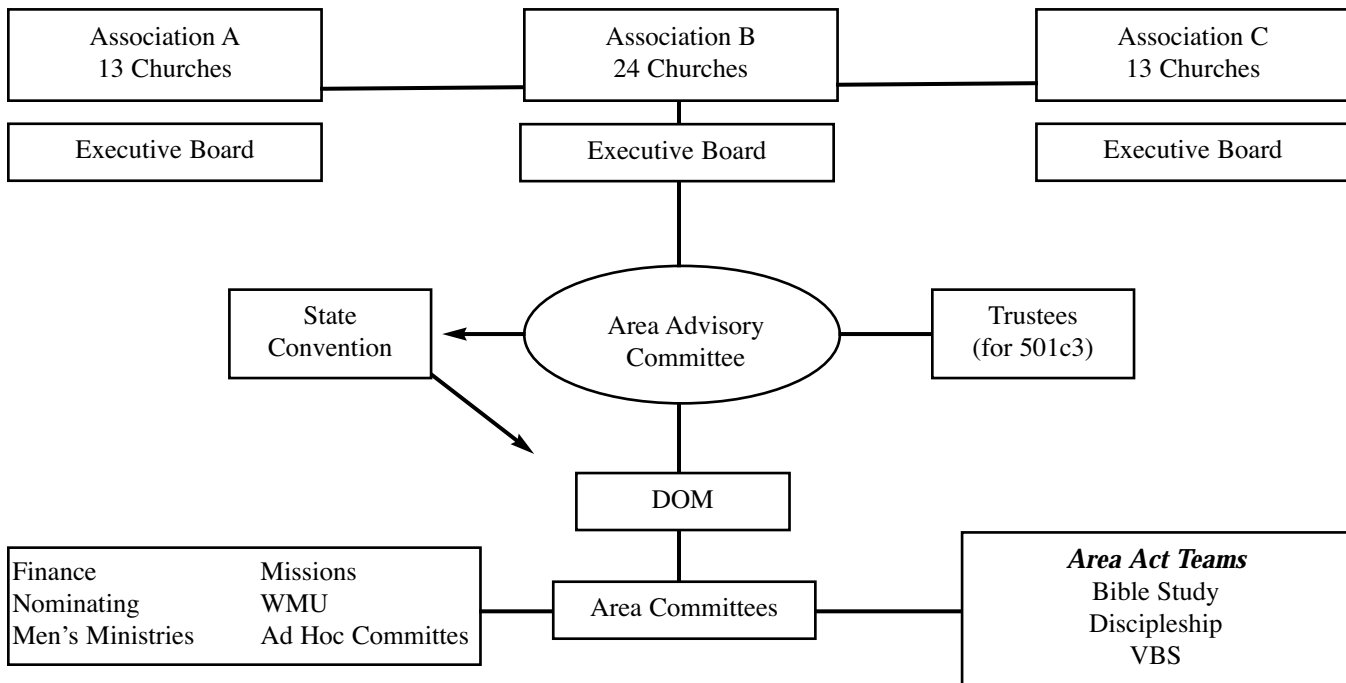
Officers of the association are moderator, moderator-elect, clerk, treasurer, and three trustees.

General Observations: This association is organized and structured for maximum flexibility, with most teams and affinity groups set-up for change. If needs arise outside of a normal strategic planning cycle, individual teams are empowered to enlist and implement task force groups to make "out of cycle" adjustments.

Overall, this association is extremely committed to the local church, and it strongly focuses on helping them discover and fulfill on mission priorities. They provide additional services and program support; however, those functions seem to run on "auto-pilot" while their creative energies are focused on missions and ministry.

On Mission Strategy: This association's on mission strategy is integrated throughout its structure. Teams which focus on mission starts, mission projects, WMU, ministry, and cooperation/unity, are teams that narrowly focus on individual components of a broader on mission philosophy.

Model 4: Rural after God's Own Heart
An area association: 50 churches in a rural context



Structure: This area association does not have an extensive structure. The area association program in this state is one where multiple, adjacent, associations share an associational missionary (compensated by the state convention) because they cannot individually support one. Each association remains autonomous; however, a certain amount of coordination is required to develop enough “critical mass” for some of their necessary processes.

The reason this association is included as a model is because they are able to perform many organizational and on mission activities with very little structure. The structures and processes exemplified by this association can be applied to similarly sized Christian groups.

Many committees are led by the same people who also sit on an executive board. This compact structure allows the boards to perform many functions if they are willing to mitigate legislative protocol—and they are! Functionally, most of each association’s business is actually conducted at board meetings. Whether they are considering a region wide evangelistic campaign or a location for a new mission, the executive board handles it. Admittedly, limited specialization can lead to an overworked board or a missed opportunity; however, under the wise leadership of a sensitive DOM, these groups appear to be giving the churches just what they need. The philosophies and practices that make this system work are listed below.

- Board meetings are not regularly scheduled. They are called on an as needed basis, thus avoiding meaningless "make work" gatherings.
- Meeting locations are chosen based on need and opportunity. Many times they will meet in a coffee shop or in the back room of a local hardware store.
- All board meetings are come-as-you-are affairs.
- Board meetings are less formal with intentional periods of unplanned sharing. God is invited to every meeting, and the Holy Spirit is allowed to speak through the board members. At a recent board meeting, a spontaneous discussion arose about creating a region wide evangelistic event. They look for needs that God can fulfill.
- Functionally, the executive board is the On Mission Team, since their first priority is to find out what God wants them to do.

- The DOM attempts to make every meeting a worship experience—again, God is always invited!
- Casual networking is important to their communications; sometimes a meeting is avoided this way.

Conclusions: No man-made organization will ever be perfect. However, in this setting a loose-knit, casual organization seems to meet the needs and temperament of local leadership. Additionally, this type of structure needs few resources to support the bureaucracy, leaving more resources (time, effort, and money) for serving their purpose.

Model 5: Town/Metropolitan Mixture

70 congregations with rural churches mixed with "big-city" churches

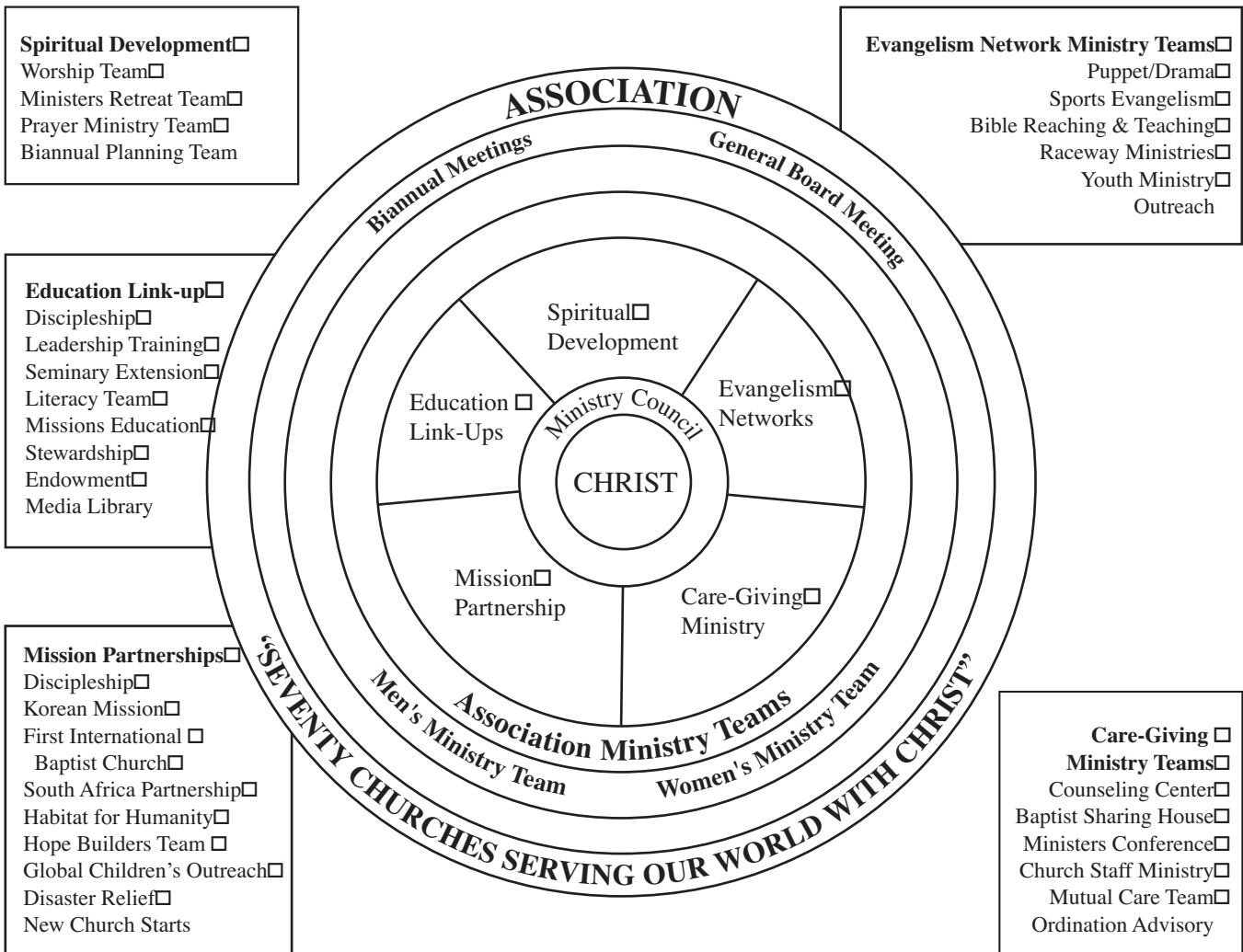
Mission Statement: [This] association exists for the purpose of working with and encouraging its member churches to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord. The association will fulfill its purpose through local ministry and through cooperation with sister churches in joint missions efforts at home and around the world.

The association will seek to provide leadership, resources, training, ministry opportunities, and missions opportunities. We will further seek to provide encouragement to each church, its pastor, staff, and members, so they may better fulfill their Christian calling and responsibility, according to the teachings of the New Testament.

The association is to encourage fellowship among its churches, members, pastors, and staff to develop a Christian unity that is needed to give a positive and powerful witness to the world around us.

Purpose: To join God where He is presently working to:

1. Work with churches to fulfill the Great Commission.
2. Provide leadership, resources, training, and ministry opportunities to each church.
3. Encourage fellowship and unity among the churches.



Priorities:*Objective I. Evangelism Networks*

To assist churches, ministers, and laity in discovery and use of the many different methods of evangelism.

Objective II. Care-Giving Ministries

To lead our churches to share their physical and spiritual resources with the community in which they live and minister.

Objective III. Education Link-Ups

To equip our churches, ministers, and laity of our association with skills that will assist them in their ministry.

Objective IV. Spiritual Development

To assist in the spiritual development of our churches, their staff, and their members.

Objective V. Mission Partnerships

To cultivate new mission projects and partnerships within and without our association for the purpose of involving churches and their members in missions.

Guiding Documents: This association's guiding documents are five pages of a constitution and by-laws. The by-laws primarily deal with the duties of the officers and administrative bodies (i.e., Enlistment Ministry Team, Personnel Committee). The constitution is the most influential guiding document with regards to structure.

Most of their structural elements are contained in their constitution. This means that changes to existing bodies can only be made when the association is in session; however there are accommodations for creating new bodies as needed so there is a measure of flexibility built into the system. Among the structural elements required by the constitution are Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Trustees, Ministry Council, and five ministry councils (Spiritual Development, Evangelism, Education, Care Giving, and Mission Partnership), along with a listing of all present ministry teams (see above).

Although all of these structural elements are in the constitution, their charters are not. For this, they have a guidebook called "Ministry Teams: Descriptions & Tasks." With this guidebook, the constitution or bylaws do not have to be encumbered with all of this detail.

Given that they recently voted to change their bylaws and constitution, and to a great extent these changes were significant, have made substantial strides towards flexibility and responsiveness to a changing culture. So long as their will to change continues as it is now, they will easily be able to make needed changes in the future.

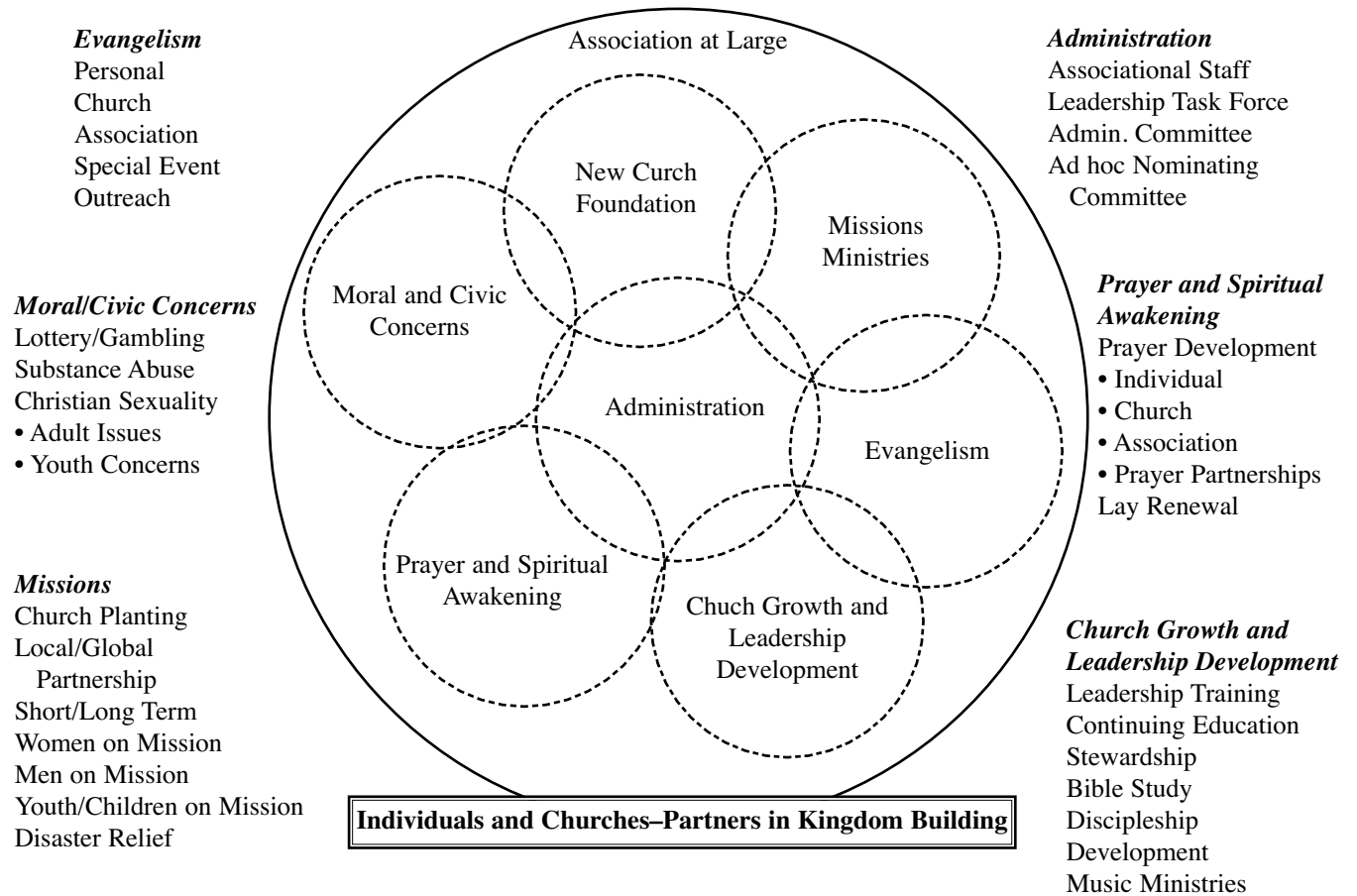
General Comments: One interesting fact about this association's journey is that they took several years to discover God's desire for their direction and structure. Sometimes we get the impression that God's will is bestowed upon us like a bolt of lightning. However, in many cases the search for His will is in itself a learning process that strengthens us along the way.

Another noteworthy item in this association's structure is that their organization chart does not attempt to describe all of their structural elements. Conspicuously missing (from the chart, not the association) are many of the typical administrative bodies like nominating committee, administrative boards, and other things. This fact points out that although one purpose for an organization chart is to "describe" structure, it can also serve as a motivating feature describing only the elements which the organization considers most important.

On Mission Strategy: As you can see, this association has integrated missions throughout its organization. Although most of their missions activity falls into the purview of the Mission Partnership Council and Evangelism Network Council, missions education is the responsibility of the Educational Link-Ups Group. As we are seeing in many associations, on mission responsibilities are too broad for a single group to manage. So, in response, several groups or teams are assigned a portion of this duty. Conventional wisdom would indicate that coordination might be a problem; however, I see no signs of it here.

Model 6: Growing Southern Suburb

A New Association: 29 congregations in one of the fastest growing counties in the US; population 110-125K



Purpose: The purpose of [this] association is to resource and assist churches and individuals in a continuous cyclic event of:

- Bringing individuals into a personal relationship with God through a salvation experience with Jesus Christ;
- Developing individuals into mature and effective disciples;
- Sending laborers globally to do kingdom work;
- Encouraging churches to work collectively in mission endeavors.

Staff: The only staff at the association is the associational missionary (a.m.) and a secretary. The a.m.'s job consists of 75 percent church starter strategist, and 25 percent church consultant, service broker, and leader/mediator. The secretary fulfills the role of clerk, treasurer, receptionist, office manager, and secretary.

Officers: The officers of the association are: (1) Moderator—presides over meetings, supervises all committees, is president of corporation; (2) Associate Moderator—serves in moderator's absence; (3) Clerk—keeps records, notifications, secretary of the corporation; (4) Treasurer—CFO of corporation, expedites financial dealings of association; (5) Associate Treasurer—fills in for an absent treasurer.

Guiding Documents: This association is governed by a constitution and bylaws. The former is five pages long with 11 articles; the later is half a page. Besides the usual legislative components (purpose, authority, membership, meetings, officers, etc.), only the Executive Committee and Administrative Committee are required structural elements.

Structure: The organization chart illustrates a casual, “networking” organizational style. It focuses on community building, as well as trying to help churches think strategically. It is directly tied to strategic priorities, issues that are presently very important to the churches of their geography. As they develop in an ongoing process of strategy development, priorities will change, as will structural components.

On Mission Strategy: The association has a Mission Development Council that is further divided into these sub-groups:

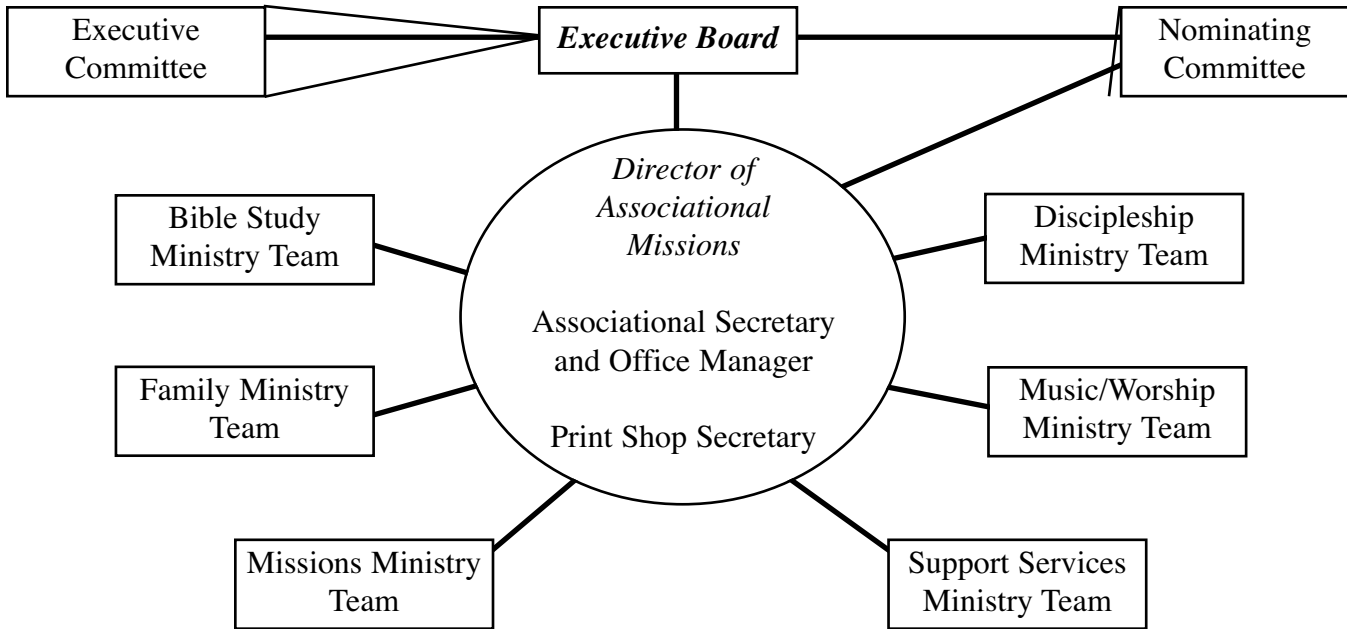
- Anglo Church Starts
- Ethnic Church Starts
- Volunteer Missions
- Partnerships

Their advocating strategy consists of:

- Pulpit sharing with mission pastors
- WMU publicity
- WMU missions awareness meetings/conferences/banquets
- Publicized mission trips

Success of their on mission efforts are exemplified by the fact that 18 of 29 congregations participate in mission trips and relate on mission activities.

Model 7: Middle American College Town
61 Congregations in a metropolitan college city that is fairly urban



Mission/Purpose: "[This association] is a cooperating body of local Southern Baptist churches existing for the purpose of glorifying God by enabling each church to fulfill its unique mission for Christ and by providing channels for cooperative ministry."

Structure: The strategic planning committee based the association's structure on purpose, and is still in force to revise the constitution and bylaws to be so driven. So rather than having a strategy per se, their structure is a reflection of their strategy. Also, this structure is partially configured like their state convention's. No attempts were made to 'force-fit' the two organizations together. When alignment was possible, it was chosen.

Their primary strategic elements are listed below.

These teams represent the greatest structural elements of this association. Whereas some associations divide these functions into broader sub-categories, and layers, this association does not.

This feature appears to pull the functional groups of the association closer to their purpose.

This structure also places ministry on the same level with administration, not subordinate to it.

1. Association Ministry Team: an oversight group made up of associational officers and ministry team directors.
2. Bible Study Ministry Team: Primary focuses are:
 - Sunday School
 - VBS
 - Continuing Education
3. Discipleship Ministry Team:
 - Discipleship Training
 - Prayer
 - BSU
 - Evangelism
 - Deacons
 - Counseling

4. Family Ministry Team:

- Men’s Ministry
- Women’s Ministry
- Christian Life and Ethics
- Singles Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Children’s Ministry

5. Music and Worship Ministry Team:

- Choral and Vocal Music
- Instrumental Music
- Drama Ministry
- Technical Ministry

6. Missions Ministry Team:

- New/Renewed Works
- Volunteers in Missions
- Camps
- Community Ministry
- WMU
- Chaplaincy

7. Support Services Ministry Team:

- Budget and Finance
- Personnel
- Building and Grounds
- Trustees and Legal
- Communications

Regarding the Change Process: These organizational changes are relatively new, and as already mentioned, they are still in process. Since the DOM at this association is also new, I took the opportunity to discuss with him the change process. The steps he took to initiate organizational change, in order of perceived importance, were:

1. Improve associational communications, starting with a newsletter.
2. Work closely with committee leadership in developing a shared vision for the association’s future.
3. Improve the physical appearance of the association, and make it more user-friendly.

Guiding Documents: Their constitution and bylaws cover three pages. They address only the barest essentials of operations like purpose, membership, officers, trustees, meetings, amendments, and a few structural components. These structural elements required by the bylaws are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Board: the authority of the association "out of session." • Associational Ministry Team: the functional ministry coordination body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nominating Committee: the body responsible for recommending key leadership positions. • Executive Committee: A functional body of the Executive Board.
--	---

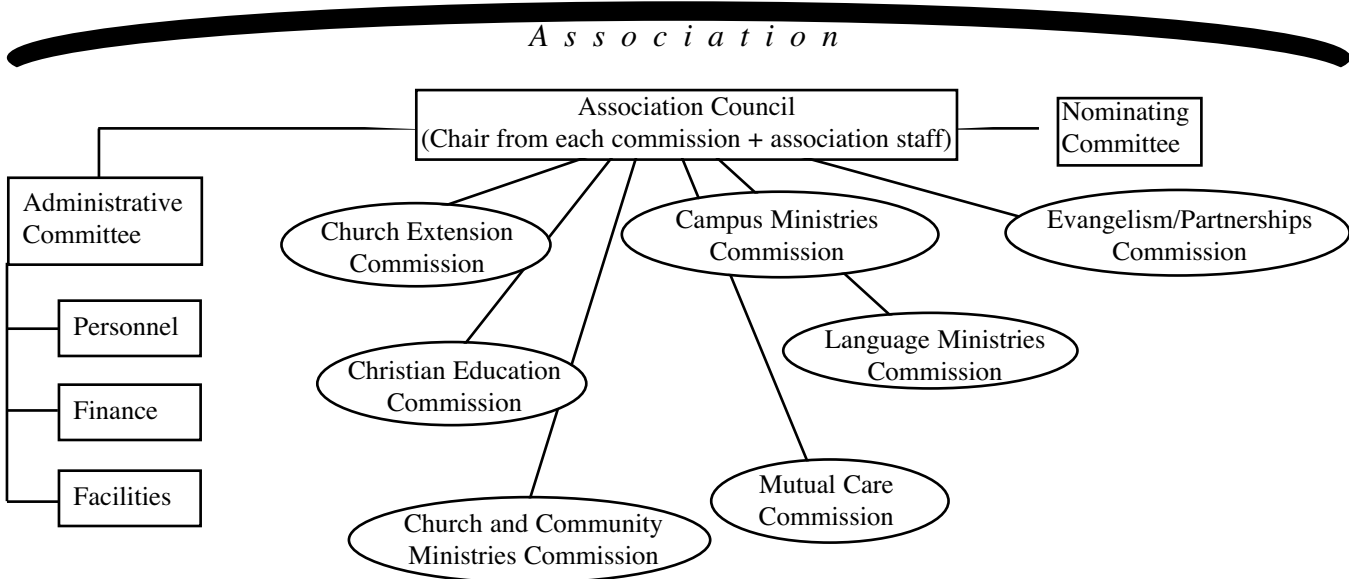
-plus- the following Associational Officers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator • Clerk • Director of Missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-Moderator • Treasurer
--	---

Job descriptions, recorded goals, and a detailed handbook assign definition and direction to these ministry teams.

On Mission Strategy: Their On Mission Strategy centers around their Missions Ministry Team. In fact, this team functions to a great extent, in the intended fashion of a Missions Development Council. Only in this case, the Missions Ministry Team is organized for its members to do ministry, rather than solely legislate. One interesting exception to traditional roles is evangelism, which they place under the Discipleship Ministry Team.

Model 8: Suburb of Capital City
100+ Congregations Capital City Suburb



Vision: It is the dream...

- of reaching our community by reflecting the love of God and transforming people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.
- of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the tens of thousands of residents in [our area].
- of welcoming new members into the fellowship of our church family—loving, learning, laughing, and living in harmony together.
- of developing people to spiritual maturity through Bible studies, small groups, seminars, retreats, and Bible school for our members.
- of equipping every believer for a significant ministry by helping each person discover the gifts and talents God gave him or her.
- of sending out career missionaries and church workers all around the world and empowering every member for a personal life mission in the world. It is the dream of sending our members on short-term mission projects to every continent. It is the dream of starting at least one new daughter church every year.
- of having adequate land and buildings to facilitate worship, prayer, Bible study, training lay ministers, and recreation. All of this will be designed to minister to the total person—spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially.

Values: [Our] association holds the following as priority core values:

EXCELLENCE—We believe in quality service and products because our culture demands quality and our Lord deserves nothing less.

RELEVANCE—We believe that the Christian faith is relevant to our world and we want our churches to be articulate communicators of the gospel.

SERVICE—We believe the association exists to serve churches, therefore, we will work with a servant-spirit to enable and empower churches and church leaders.

FLEXIBILITY—We believe that our effectiveness depends on our openness to diversity and change, and the efficiency with which we can make decisions and change directions.

NETWORKING—We value relationships and we believe that the association should be a catalyst for creating networks of strategic links between persons and churches.

Battle Cry

“Making disciples who make a difference.”

<p>[Aspired] Core Values:</p> <p>Intimacy with God Obedience to Christ Power of Holy Spirit</p>	<p>Desired Results:</p> <p>Spiritual Growth Ministry Expanse Mission Advance Numerical Growth</p>
---	--

Mission Statement: Our Mission is to serve churches by creating networks that enable them to effectively fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ in ways relevant to our world and appropriate to our diversity.

Mission Objectives:

A. Magnification (Worship)

B. Maturity (Education)

C. Membership (Fellowship)

D. Mission (Witness)

E. Ministry (Service)

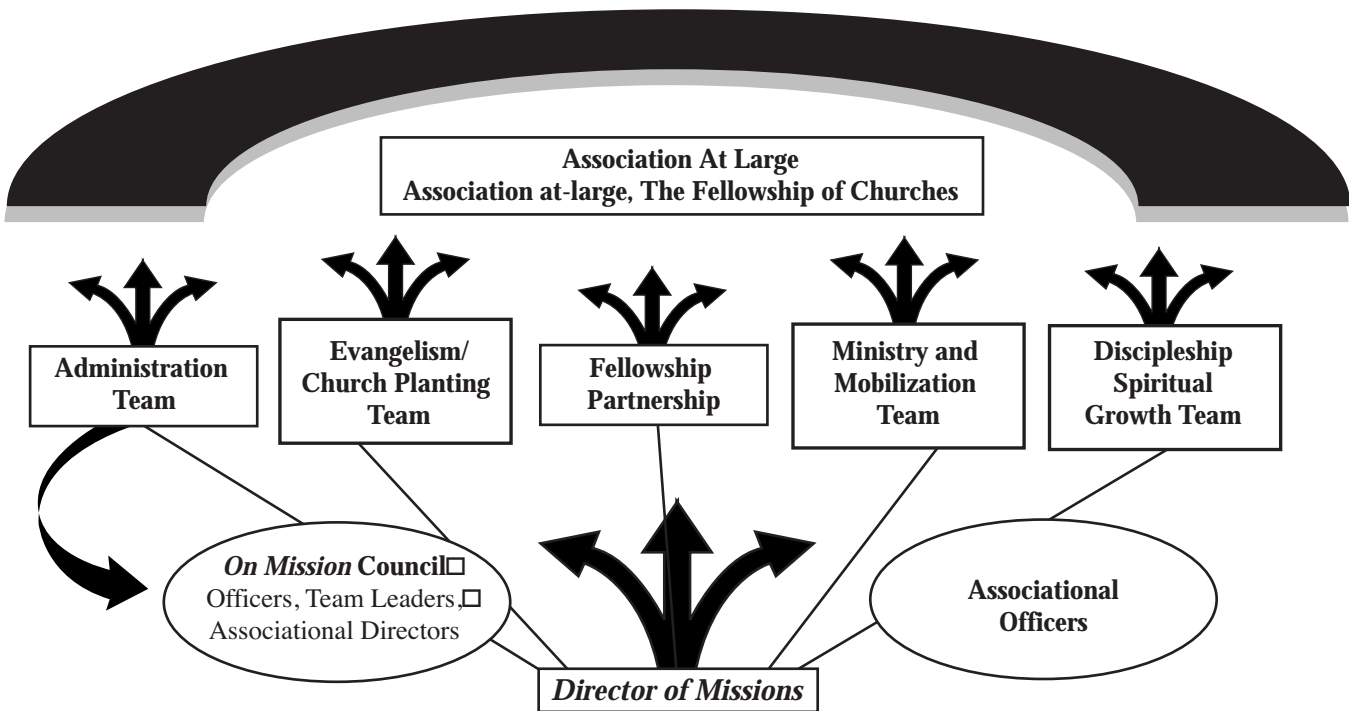
Each Mission Objective has its own set of individual goals, each supported by a written strategy for attainment.

Guiding Documents: A one-page constitution and six-page bylaws guides this association. Other necessary guidance is produced in separate documents like strategy outlines and values statements. This is a values driven association, so much of their plans center on these. Structural elements contained in the constitution are the officers (5), the Administrative Committee, and Associational Council. In the bylaws, all of the structural elements diagramed in the above organization chart are delineated. Considering their strong commitment to values and vision, having these structural elements so firmly set has not hampered their flexibility.

On Mission Strategy: Their On Mission Strategy is developed within their vision and supported most exclusively in item "D" in their Mission Objectives. Although on mission activities are dispersed throughout their organization, it is integrated into much of everything they do. The Associational Council is the de facto on mission coordinating body.

Model 9: City/Town/Rural Mission

37 Congregations in a blended area of 120,000, growing 7 percent a year



Note: This is a newly formed association. It is so new, that the organization and structure has not yet been approved (as of this writing). However, it is interesting to take a look at the creativity of a group of churches (not in the Bible belt) seeking to define the terms and conditions of their fellowship.

Purpose: [Our] Baptist Fellowship is a covenant association of congregations committed to seeking the full expression of God's kingdom and will in their own geography and around the world. Though individual expression may vary, the foundational purpose of the church will be served by this fellowship. These non-negotiable, foundational purposes include evangelism, starting new congregations, discipleship, worship, fellowship, cooperation, and mutual accountability.

Strategy: As a purpose-based organization, they use a valued-based strategy development process resulting in the following strategic priorities:

1. Evangelism and Church Planting
2. Fellowship and Partnerships
3. Ministry and Mobilization
4. Discipleship and Spiritual Growth

Each of these strategies/teams will have strategic outlines within an organization manual, which defines their structure and activities even further.

Vision and Values: Their vision and values statements are contained in their bylaws. "Our vision is that [our] fellowship will be a unified, Holy Spirit-led, innovative partnership of churches that win souls to Christ, disciple believers, and plant reproducing, Bible-believing congregations."

"Leading this vision quest, [our] fellowship holds these values as core motivating factors for ministry. We highly value service, partnership, leadership, innovation, communication, and evangelism."

Structure: Within their guiding documents, constitution and bylaws, are four officers, the churches in fellowship at-large, and the director (in the constitution); with the On Mission Council and Administrative Team in the bylaws. The Administrative Team is responsible for financial oversight, stewardship, personnel, nominating, and credentials. The On Mission Council is responsible for coordinating the ministry objectives defined by the strategy. Both groups contain some required participants (like moderator or director), however, each is responsible for developing additional structures as needed for effective administration of their duties.

Along those same lines, ministry teams will be elected by the fellowship at-large, but are responsible for creating groups and adding individuals to their number as needed to fulfill their responsibilities.

Partnerships: An interesting component of their bylaws is a commitment to partnerships.

Article V—Partnerships

V—A. Cooperation, fellowship, and shared obligation are consistent themes that [we] recognize in Christian Service. For that reason, partnerships are sought and nurtured within and outside our geographic boundaries. Partnerships are important first as an opportunity to be obedient to Christ's Great Commission. Second, they are seen as an opportunity to give individual Christians the chance to exercise their individual gifts in service.

V—B. The following principles apply in [our] utilization of partnerships.

1. Partnerships are sought to put needs and gifts together to create the Christian synergy only possible in the body of Christ.
2. All avenues for partnerships must be explored so long as they do not conflict with doctrinal or strategic positions of the fellowship. These avenues may include: state convention partnerships, individual church partnerships, and international partnerships.
3. No partnership should be entered into inadvisably. A covenant describing the responsibility of each member must be agreed to in advance, along with a strategy, timetables, and an identified support network.
4. A partnership is not a legally binding agreement and shall not encumber the fellowship in any way. Should either party in a partnership decide to dissolve the relationship, they can do so.
5. The same qualifications for Christian leaders apply to partnership leaders.

Partnerships that involve a broad majority of the fellowship or intend to utilize a significant amount of resources must be approved by the fellowship at large. If that is not practical, the On Mission Council may approve such a partnership so long as they secure confirmation from the fellowship at large at the next annual meeting.

On Mission Strategy: Their On Mission Strategy is the direct responsibility of the On Mission Council. Presently (proposed), this is expressed in terms of new work, evangelistic activities, community ministries, and partnerships. This association is currently searching for a church planter to begin a new work, immediately.

Model 10: Old South, Modern City

85 Congregations primarily located in and around a large Old South city

ASSOCIATION-IN-SESSION (ANNUAL MEETING)

Associational Board

Coordinating Council

**Fellowship
Conferences**

Christian Educators
Ministers
Ministers of Music
Ministers of Youth
Ministers' Wives
Secretaries

Officers (Trustees)

Moderator
Vice Moderator
Clerk
Assistant Clerk/Historian
Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer

Coordinators

Chaplaincy Ministries
Communications
Cooperative Ministries
Deacon Ministries
Lay Renewal Ministries
Mission Partnerships
Pastoral Ministries
Stewardship Development

Mission Performance
Councils (look outward)
Brotherhood
Christian Life
CCM
Congregational Development
Creative Ministries
Discipleship Training
Evangelism
Language Missions
Music Ministries
Ordination
Recreational Ministries
Seminary Extension
Senior Adult Ministries
Single Adult Ministries
Student Ministries
Sunday School (Assisteam)
WMU
Youth

**Administrative
Service Committees**
(looks inward)

Constitution
Credentials
Finance
Nominating
Order of Business
Properties

Associational Staff

Employed and Volunteers

Mission: The mission of the association is to glorify GOD through Jesus Christ by assisting and encouraging congregations, individually and collectively, to be in fellowship and to fulfill their mission.

Faith Foundations: [guiding their reconfiguration process] We recognize that as the family of churches we are brought together by the ties that bind us in faith, given by the grace of God. We proclaim that we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5-6, NIV)

Therefore, we confess the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture in the lives of our churches and in the ministry of our association. We seek to encourage the growth of the missionary spirit and development of an evangelistic climate in the kingdom work of our congregations. We affirm the historic Baptist principles of the autonomy of the local church and the freedom of affiliation. We are further committed to laboring in the field so that the kingdom might be built up, and our Lord and Savior might be glorified.

These concepts represent the faith parameters, held in common, that guide the formulation of this redesign work.

Core Values:

1. The local congregation is the heart of our existence.
2. Each congregation responds uniquely to God's direction and call to mission.

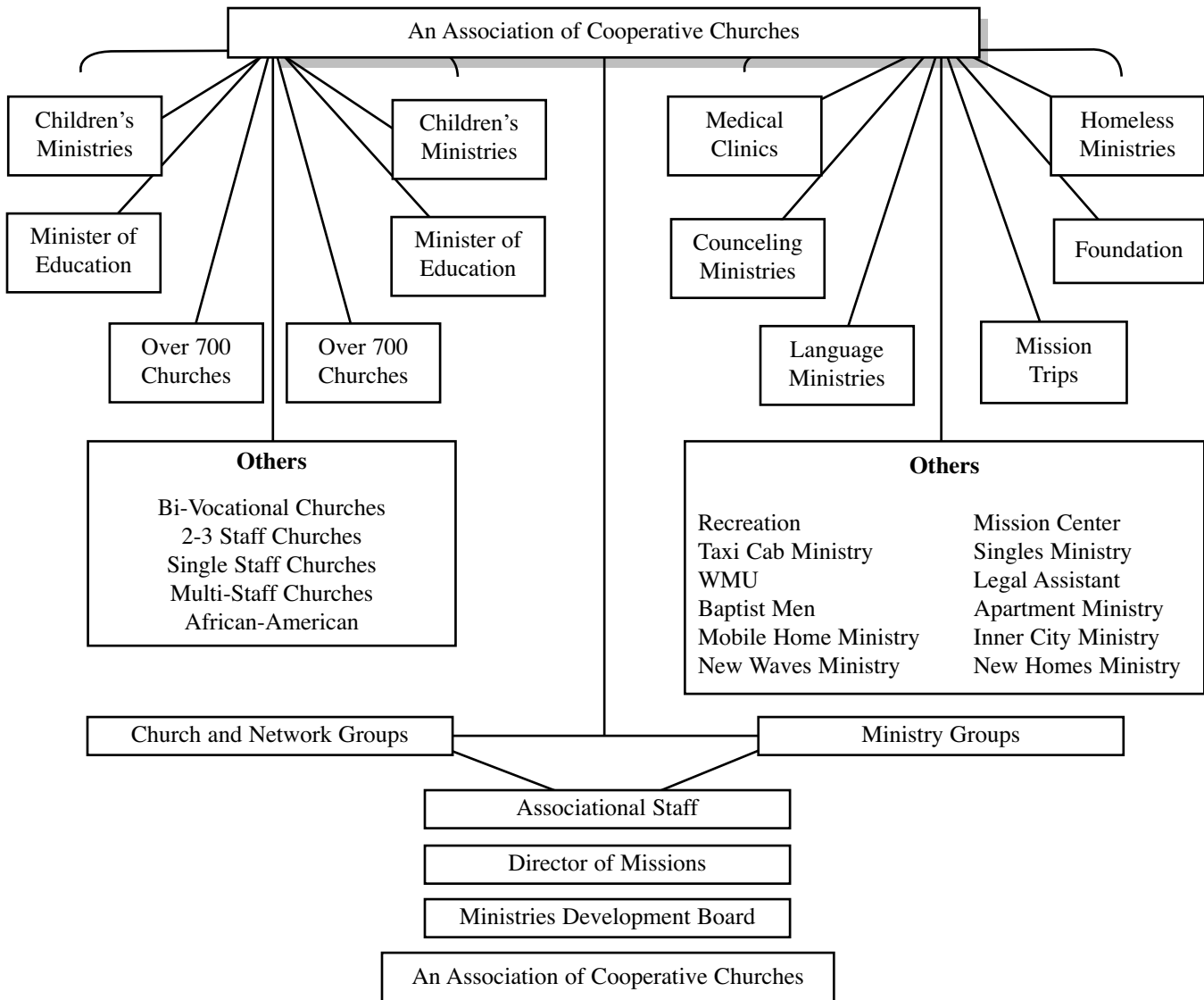
3. The association is [owned by and] an extension of the local church.
4. The challenge of the missions is our primary motivation.
5. Our collective mission and ministries emerges from the individual mission and ministry of the member congregations.
6. Mutual care and support is essential to meaningful fellowship.
7. Our greatest strength comes through working together.

Structure: Staff positions are lined up with responsibility for relating with key councils, committees, coordinators, conferences, and other things. This is a very organized method for handling a variety of complex jobs and relationships.

Associational Missionary	Missions Associate	Secretary	Financial Secretary	Open Associate
Councils				
Coordinating Council Brotherhood Church-Minister Relations Evangelism Ordination	Coordinating Council Christian Life Council CCM Congregational Development Language Missions Sunday School (ASSIST)	Coordinating Council Senior Adult Ministries	Coordinating Council Seminary Extension	Creative Ministries Discipleship Training Music Ministry Recreational Ministries Single Adult Ministries Student Ministries Youth Ministries
Committees				
Constitution Credentials Finance Nominating Order of Business Personnel	Finance Personnel	Nominating Order of Business	Finance Properties	
Coordinators				
Cooperative Ministries Lay Renewal Mission Partnerships	Deacon Ministries Pastoral Ministries	Communications		Chaplaincy Ministries Stewardship Development
Conferences				
Ministers Cluster Meetings	Christian Educators Cluster Meetings	Church Clerks Secretaries	Secretaries	Ministers' Wives Ministers of Youth
Other Responsibilities				
Board Advisory Committee— In Home DOM's Conference Ministry Board of Advisors Religious Leaders for Reconciliation	Board	Board Clerk Office Volunteers Coordinator	Board Kitchen Volunteers Coordinator	

In this greatly organized association, there is room for everyone to serve. Whereas many do not have the available personnel to staff so many volunteer and staff positions, this association is blessed with many who can serve. This is an excellent example of a highly structured organization that is ideally suited for its context.

Model 11: Mega Southern Metropolis
Over 100 Congregations in a major regional metropolitan center



Purpose Statement: As a group of Baptist churches working together, we will focus on the ministry and missions needed to exemplify the presence of Christ in our growing metropolitan area.

Mission Statement: (A) To assist churches to identify and accomplish their mission.
(B) To involve people in ministry.

Values: Our biblical values are the threads used to weave us into the fabric of a cooperating group of churches. These values, deeply embedded in our association, will help us accomplish our mission:

- Share a genuine sense of concern and care for each other that reflects the love of Christ.
- Emphasize kindness, grace, and mercy as members of the body of Christ, and recognize God as our judge.
- Exemplify the gospel of Jesus Christ by doing ministry/missions.

- Equip churches and individuals to accomplish the mission of Christ through prayer, support, encouragement, and personal involvement.
- Affirm the autonomy of the local church in matters of theology and polity.

Structure Notes: This association sees itself as a learning organization. They see a future need within the church for associations to be built on, and committed to, learning. For that reason, they are seeking to develop a network of "teaching churches" who will be the instructors for others. Peer learning not only has its own organizational benefits, but it recognizes the fact that the DOM or associational office cannot be the "expert" in all areas. Future expressions of this "churches teaching churches" direction could find the association as an entity with buildings and facilities going away. Recognizing networking capabilities of current technology would make the "physical" association unnecessary. All of the service, and better allocation of resources, could be blended in a "virtual" association.

Guiding Documents: A constitution (four pages) and bylaws (nine pages) guide this association. Additionally, this association has a 5013c non-profit incorporation status. Their purpose is stated in their constitution. The only other components of the constitution is to name the officers of the association (3), the board, create a new nominating committee, and elect the groups that will serve to prepare for the next plenary session.

The bylaws deal more thoroughly with many operational details of the association. It gives particulars of selection and duties of the board, directors, and officers. And finally, it lays down guidelines for the financial activities of the association. All other plans, strategies, and organizational details are maintained in other forms within the body.

On Mission Strategy: Their On Mission Strategy is interwoven throughout their organization. The "learning/teaching" church concept is central to their achieving their missional goals. From this also springs ministry teams that focus on doing ministry rather than legislating it. Groups, clusters, or regions of churches are also part of this strategy.

Notes



**4200 North Point Pkwy.
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176**

**A Southern Baptist Convention agency
supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®**

**For general information, call (770) 410-6000, or visit www.namb.net; to order materials,
call Customer Service Center, 1 800 448-8032, or fax, (615) 251-5983**

1M/11-9