

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR NORTHSHORE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

BAPTIST STANDARDS

One of the purposes of an Association is to maintain biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical integrity among Baptists. While the Association cannot tell a church what its beliefs and practices should be, the Association can insist that any member church meet certain standards that define a Baptist church. Credential requirements and a screening committee are necessary for associational churches to maintain relationships with churches of like faith, order, and practice. Northshore Baptist Association extends membership only to churches that meet Associational standards for faith, practice, and order. Any member church that no longer meets these standards will be subject to dismissal.

The basic theological and ecclesiastical order expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message is our test for membership. All member churches will subscribe to or affirm the current Baptist Faith and Message as our doctrinal standard. Other, more specific criteria used to measure like faith, order, and practice include the following:

- The Bible is our sole authority of faith and practice.
- A Baptist church is a body of baptized believers.
- Baptism is by water immersion upon confession of faith in Christ.
- The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Christ and causes us to remember the cross and helps us to anticipate his second coming.
- Northshore Baptist Association churches cooperate with the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Scriptural officers of a church are pastors and deacons. We believe that churches are pastor-led, deacon-served, and congregationally-governed, all under the headship of Christ. NSBA does not recognize elder-ruled churches as being Baptist. NSBA member churches do not teach glossolalia (speaking in tongues), as "normative" for a believer's faith and practice.

The Credentials Committee will also need to review the governing documents of any petitioning church as well as the church's budget and ministries.

Definition of A Cooperating Church

A cooperating church in the Association shall be defined as one which does the following:

1. contributes financially to support the work of the Association,
2. reports to the Association each year in a timely fashion using the Annual Church Profile,
3. elects messengers to the annual meeting of the Association, and
4. participates in cooperating ministries.

Failure to maintain meaningful participation through these means for a period of two years in succession shall invite inquiries from the Credentials Committee as to the church's future intentions regarding participation in the Association.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

Admission of Churches to the Association

Churches may become affiliated with the Association by following the procedure outlined below:

- A letter of petition should be filed with the leadership of Northshore Baptist Association at least ninety days prior to the annual meeting.
- The Credentials Committee of the Association shall study the request and determine whether or not the church is of like faith, order, and practice and provide a copy of the Baptist Faith and Message to the church.
- Upon the recommendation of the Credentials Committee and a majority vote of the messengers at the annual meeting, the church shall be admitted to watch care status for a period of one year, unless there is reason to extend this time period.
- During the time of watch care, the Credentials Committee shall (1) counsel with the pastor and leadership of the church, (2) visit the church as observers during different services at least semi-annually, and (3) meet periodically with the congregation and explain the rights, privileges, benefits, and responsibilities of membership in the Association. Opportunities for discussion should be a major feature of these meetings.
- Upon the recommendation of the Credentials Committee and a majority vote of the messengers at the subsequent annual meeting, the church may be moved from watch care status to membership in the Association.

Churches on Probationary Status

When a serious question has been raised about a member church's faith, order, or practice, the Association or Executive Board, by a majority vote, shall ask the Credentials Committee to investigate the charges and bring a report of its findings at the next meeting of the Association or Executive Board.

- The Credentials Committee shall investigate and present a recommendation that the church be: 1) Absolved of the charges, if based on erroneous information; 2) Restored, if the church has corrected the problem; 3) Placed on probationary status for a period of one year, in hopes the problem can be corrected. Two-thirds vote of the messengers or Executive Board members present shall be necessary to place a church on probation.
- Messengers from a church that is under scrutiny by the Association shall not be allowed to vote on matters to come before the body until the church has been cleared of the charges made against it. This prohibition includes matters related to its own status in the Association.
- Should a member church be placed on probationary status, the Credentials Committee shall continue to dialogue with the church and encourage renunciation of the aberrant faith, order, or practice.
- Upon completion of the probationary period, the Credentials Committee shall recommend that the church be restored to membership in the Association along with any necessary contingencies or dismissed from the Association because of aberrant faith, order, or practice.

Withdrawal or Dismissal of Churches

Churches may voluntarily withdraw from fellowship in the Association by giving notice of their desire to the Association Office.

The Association may dismiss churches for just causes. Dismissal must follow a recommendation from the Credentials Committee and the approval of two-thirds of the messengers present and voting at the annual meeting.