

**Blue River-Kansas City  
Baptist Association**

**Membership  
Application**

**A guide to becoming a member church in  
the BR-KC Baptist Association**



VISION 

2020

# Welcome!



We're excited that your church is considering becoming a member of the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association, one of Missouri's largest associations of Baptist churches. As you look through the materials in this guide, it is my prayer that God will lead you to the very best for your church.

Baptists in America have been forming associations for over 300 years. We believe that voluntary associations are scriptural. Note the references in the book of Acts and in Paul's letters regarding churches helping one another and praying for one another. Association's are the local expression of a fellowship of churches.

The work of our Association is guided by a Master Ministry Plan developed during an intensive strategic planning process in 2009 titled VISION 2020. You will read more about the plan later in this guide, and a copy is in the materials you received with this guide. You can also read and download the Master Ministry Plan and Ministry Team documents from our website shown at the bottom of this page.

Through our combined resources and efforts we expect to realize the truth of the saying, "We can accomplish more together than we can separately." Your church will always be an autonomous Baptist congregation, but by voluntarily "plugging in" to the missions ministry of our Association, you can have an even greater impact locally for Christ's kingdom.

I wish you the best for your church as you prayerfully consider your decision to join with over 125 sister Baptist churches here in western Missouri.

In Him,

Dr. Rodney Hammer

## Vision Statement

*We envision a network of healthy Baptist churches partnering together to transform lives and communities through the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ at home, in North America and around the world.*

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Pr 29:18*

## VISION 2020 Objectives

**G**ospel Outreach

**R**esourcing Churches

**A**ssisting Community Transformation

**C**hurch Planting

**E**quipping Leaders

[www.blueriver-kansascity.org](http://www.blueriver-kansascity.org)

## **A Brief History of Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association**

The Association was formed in 1982 when messengers from the Blue River Baptist Association and the Kansas City Association voted to join forces for the Kingdom. Each of these two Associations had a long history of ministry with the Blue River Association dating to October 11, 1834. Some of the charter churches of that association are still members of BR-KC.

Dr. Melvin Hill, pastor at First Baptist Church, Grandview, was called as the first Executive Director of Missions for the new association. It was during his tenure that the current Mission Center building was erected at I-470 and Woods Chapel Road. The Mission Center has served as the offices for the staff since 1988. Shortly after completion of the building, Dr. Hill was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in 1989. Later that year the Mission Center was named The Melvin M. Hill Sr. Mission Center in his honor.

Dr. Donald Hammer was called to be the next Executive Director of the Association, but unforeseen health problems caused him to have to resign the position after only six weeks of service.

Dr. Morton Rose became the third Executive Director after having served as Interim Director for two years preceding the calling of Dr. Hammer. It was under his leadership that the Association undertook a new paradigm of ministry. Prior to his administration, the work of the Association was largely driven by the program structure of the churches. Work was compartmentalized into Sunday School, Discipleship, Music, Youth, Deacons, Media Library, WMU, and other programs of the church. The Association staff divided these program areas up and each directed the work in their area.

Dr. Rose downsized the staff from four ministry directors to two Associate Directors of Missions and rewrote their job descriptions to reflect a consultative approach to ministry with the churches. The work of the Association changed from calendaring large events centered around the programs of the churches to the staff serving on-call to work with individual churches in meeting their ministry needs. With the exception of Sunday School leader training, most program area workshops were eliminated. This consultative model continues to this day. Each church in the Association is able to call on the staff or ministry teams for help in any area of ministry. The staff and ministry teams will resource the leaders needed to address the church's need.

Dr. Nodell Dennis was called to the Executive Director position when Dr. Rose retired in 1995. Dr. Dennis came to us from San Antonio, Texas where he served as pastor. During his stay he was very active on the national level of convention life, serving as an officer and eventually as President of the Southern Baptist Convention Association of Directors of Missions. Dr. Dennis retired and moved back to Texas at the end of 2007.

In October of 2008, Dr. Rodney Hammer was called to be the fifth Executive Director of the Association. Before coming to BR-KC, Rodney served with the International Mission Board of Southern Baptists for 18 years, 10 in Asia, and 8 as Regional Leader for Central and Eastern Europe.

Dr. Hammer has led the Association to revision our ministry and reorganize our work. Assisting the Association staff now are five volunteer Ministry Teams made up of people who have a heart's desire for local missions work. These teams are the result of over a year of strategic planning and "dreaming the dream" by pastors and other leaders in the Association. The teams are tasked with leading our ministry in the areas of Gospel Outreach, Resourcing Churches, Assisting Community Transformation, Church Planting and Equipping Leaders.

For 28 years the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association has been carrying forward the legacy of Baptist Associations of the last 300 years. We exist to provide opportunities for fellowship, leader training and combined missions ministries to and for our churches. Becoming a part of BR-KC is a commitment to be an active participant in this legacy. All of our churches are encouraged to give a portion of their undesignated receipts each month to the work of the Association, and to actively take part in the missions work available in this area. There is a place of service for anyone who wants to help.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***1. What does it cost to be a member of the Association?***

It costs time, effort and resources. Time, in that we want you to attend the Executive Board Meetings held quarterly and the Annual Meeting held each October. Effort in that we would hope that you, or some of your leaders, would feel led to participate in our volunteer Ministry Teams. These teams oversee the planning and execution of our ministries and are open-membership, meaning that you can participate as your schedule allows. You don't have to commit to being at every meeting of the team. And Resources in that all of our churches are encouraged to contribute to the work of the Association a portion of their undesignated offerings each month. The amount your church will contribute is determined by a vote of your church members. The Association does not have dues or fees. You give as God has blessed you so that you can be a blessing to others.

### ***2. What control does the Association have over the member churches?***

None! Each of our churches are individual autonomous Baptist churches. You give up none of your autonomy by joining the Association.

### ***3. What does my church gain by becoming a member?***

You become a part of VISION 2020, our Master Ministry Plan for the coming decade (see #6 below). You join with others to extend the Kingdom, partake of opportunities and resources for growth and make your unique contribution. You gain the fellowship of a network of like-minded churches. You will be connected to thousands of Baptists across the areas where our churches are located. You gain the opportunity to be a blessing to sister churches, and to be blessed by other churches. You will see the ministry impact of your church multiplied as the dollars and manpower you provide are channeled to address the needs of our area and abroad.

### ***4. Does my church have to join the Missouri Baptist Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention to be a member of BR-KC?***

Just as your church is autonomous, the Association is also autonomous. You do not have to belong to any other Baptist group to be a member of BR-KC, but we would hope that you would explore the possibilities and advantages of belonging to the state and national conventions. Much of our work is funded by the North American Mission Board of the SBC, and we actively promote and participate in the ministries of the Missouri Baptist Convention. Membership in these two conventions connects you to 2,000 churches in Missouri and over 44,000 churches nationwide. Together we fund the work of over 10,000 missionaries in North America and around the world.

### ***5. Just what does the Association do?***

We carry out the goals of our Master Ministry Plan through the work of our five Ministry Teams. In addition to those specific goals, we are on-call to our churches to train leaders in Sunday School, Discipleship, Music and Youth Ministry, Deacons, Media Library, Family Ministry, Singles Ministry, Woman's Missionary Union, Vacation Bible School, and any other area of leadership where a request is made. We plant new churches, loan video studies and A-V equipment to churches, coordinate volunteers and provide ministry opportunities, provide ministry resources such as the party wagon and bar-b-que smoker, connect ministry needs with people who can meet those needs, coordinate evangelism efforts, and work to make our communities better places to live. We assist search committees, help churches with food pantries and clothes closets, counsel pastors and staff, support language missions, support deaf ministries, help with pulpit supply, work with the other two Kansas City Baptist associations on area wide projects, and more.

In short, the Association exists to support and enhance the ministries of the churches.

### ***6. How does the Association choose ministry and mission projects?***

In 2009, the Association spent almost a full year working through a strategic planning process called VISION 2020. The purpose of that process was to determine the direction for Associational ministries for the coming decade. Through a study of our communities and our churches, and interviews with pastors, staff and laity, we arrived at five objective areas. Those areas are:

- Gospel Outreach
- Resourcing Churches
- Assisting Community Transformation
- Church Planting, and
- Equipping Leaders

The goals and action plans developed around those objectives constitute our Master Ministry Plan. A copy of the MMP is included in the materials you received along with this guide and is available on the web at [www.blueriver-kansascity.org](http://www.blueriver-kansascity.org)

### ***7. What does my church need to do in order to become a member of the Association?***

The details of our membership process are covered in the next section, "Becoming a Member Church."

## Being a Member Church

The Bylaws of the Association state the following in regard to membership:

### 4 Membership

4.1 **Qualifications.** Members of the Association shall be individual Baptist churches which:

4.1.1 are in sympathy with the purpose of the Association as described in these Bylaws;

4.1.2 participate in a covenant relationship with the other Members of the Association as that covenant\* may be established and amended by the Association.

4.2 **Application.** An organized Baptist Church desiring to become a member in the Association shall apply in writing to the Association's Director of Missions who will refer the matter to the Credentials Committee for review, investigation and recommendation to the Association for action by the Association. Churches recommended for membership which have been sponsored by a Member may be received immediately into the Association upon majority vote of the Association. Churches applying for membership which have not been sponsored by a Member may be received under the watchcare of the Association for one year upon majority vote of the Association. Upon completion of the year under the Association's watchcare, the Association may vote to receive the church as a full member in the Association.

\*The Association Covenant is located on page 6 of this guide.

Once you contact us about membership, one of the association staff will schedule a meeting with you to visit about your reasons for wanting to join the Association. This meeting will take place at your church, or in the neighborhood where you are starting a church. We will want to know what you understand about Southern Baptists and Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association. We'll want to know a brief history of your church and why you believe that membership in the Association will help your church to fulfill its Kingdom mandate. What do you expect to gain from being a member? How will your church help the Association fulfill its ministry goals? These, and other questions about your church and your vision will help give us an insight into how we can best serve your needs and how you might be able to assist others in the Association. There will also be ample time for you to ask questions about BR-KC.

If you want to continue the process after this meeting, a meeting will be scheduled with you and your key leaders and the Association's Credentials Committee. The meeting with the Credentials Committee will be an opportunity for you to share your church's vision and answer a few questions regarding your doctrine and polity (see the section titled Doctrinal Statements on page 6.)

The Credentials Committee of the Association will want to see the following documents from your church:

1. Your church's Constitution and Bylaws, or a statement on how your church is organized.
2. A copy of your Church Budget
3. A map showing the location of the church, or in the case of a new work, the target area for the new start.
4. A photo of the church.
5. The Membership Request Form signed by the appropriate church leaders.

Upon a favorable vote by the Credentials Committee, a motion will be brought at the next meeting of the Executive Board, or at the next Annual Meeting, whichever comes first, that your church be received into the Association either directly or by watch-care (see Bylaw 4.2 above).

## **Covenant Among the Churches of the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association**

We, as member churches forming the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association, covenant with each other to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in the best traditions of churches which have affiliated with each other in the Baptist bodies known as associations, state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention during the period beginning with the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

We, as member churches of the Association, covenant to develop and exercise our own programs of ministries under the leadership of Christ, and to do so with a spirit of Christian love and respect for the other churches in the Association. In this endeavor, each church covenants to be mindful of the corporate Baptist witness in the area and to uphold the good name of Baptists as a people who profess a living faith which is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

We, as member churches of the Association, covenant to uphold this living faith as expressed in confessions of faith which are to guide the Association in establishing and maintaining a doctrinal relationship among the member churches. This covenant includes the agreement that there are certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe and cherish, and with which we have been, and do now closely identify. This covenant, therefore, includes the agreement of the churches that these doctrines are best expressed in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, The Baptist Faith and Message, and/or previous statements of faith from which these have been formed, and to which the Association will reference in dealing with any church on doctrinal issues.

We, as member churches of the Association, covenant to take a Biblical stand on contemporary moral and spiritual issues concerning deviate and sinful behavior, such as, but not limited to, crime, pornography, gambling, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual sins (including adultery, fornication and homosexuality), racial prejudice, abortion, corruption in government, and family-related abuses.

We, as member churches of the Association, covenant to work with each other within the framework of the Association's Bylaws and to keep the commitments made in this covenant. Each church agrees that if for any reason it cannot work in keeping this covenant, or function within the Bylaws of the Association, it shall withdraw from membership in the Association. If such a church does not do this, then the member churches acknowledge that the Association will take actions to dismiss that church from the Association.

### **Doctrinal Statements**

The Credentials Committee will want to see a copy of your church's doctrinal statement if you have written one. In lieu of your own written statement, you may affirm the New Hampshire Confession of Faith or any version of The Baptist Faith and Message as being representative of your beliefs.

If you use one of these two statements, but find individual areas where your church would not be in agreement, we would expect that you would call this to the committee's attention and explain your points of disagreement.



## Membership Request Form

*An electronic version of this form is available at [www.blueriver-kansascity.org/membership\\_form.html](http://www.blueriver-kansascity.org/membership_form.html)*

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address line 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Church's website (e.g. <http://www.yourchurch.org>) \_\_\_\_\_

Please write a brief history of your church:

Briefly describe your church's setting, vision and mission:

Is your church in agreement with The New Hampshire Confession of Faith or any of the versions of the Baptist Faith and Message? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If your answer above was "No," please explain any disagreements you have with these confessions. (use the back of this form if necessary)

By sending this form, our church is officially requesting membership in the Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Pastor*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairman of Deacons (or other appropriate leader)*

