

Nelson Baptist  
Association

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A Short History

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*"Centennial Celebration"*

*Cox's Creek, Kentucky*

1849

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1948



# NELSON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

On Saturday, October 29, 1785, four Regular Baptist churches—Severn's Valley, Cedar Creek, Bear Grass and Cox's Creek, met at Cox's Creek to form an association. This was the second organization of its kind west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was called Salem Baptist Association. The Elkhorn Association had been organized only twenty-nine days before.

The growth of this body was slow until 1800 when it gained a prominent place among the associations of the State. In 1849 by mutual consent the following churches were dismissed from the Salem Association to form another association; Cox's Creek, Bloomfield, Rolling Fork, Bardstown, Mill Creek, Little Union, New Salem, Mt. Washington, Shepherdsville, Hardin's Creek and New Hope.

Messengers from all of these churches, except Hardin's Creek, met at Cox's Creek on the 28th of September, 1849, and formed Nelson Association. Hardin's Creek was received the following year.

The following is from the record of the first meeting:

"Convention of United Baptist, held at Cox's Creek Church, Nelson County, Ky., on the 28th and 29th days of September, 1849.

"Introductory sermon preached by Elder W. Vaughan, from 133rd Psalm—'Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity.'

"Spencer Minor was called to occupy the chair, and P. B. Samuels to act as secretary.

"The objects of the meeting were stated, and churches wishing to be constituted into the association called for, when the following churches represented themselves by Letter and Messengers:

Cox's Creek	membership	343
Bloomfield	"	357
Mill Creek	"	117
New Salem	"	154
Little Union	"	126
Bardstown	"	50
New Hope	"	49
Rolling Fork	"	158
Mt. Washington	"	91
Shepherdsville	"	50
	Total	<hr/> 1495

"W. Vaughn, P. B. Samuels, J. R. Stanley, Henry Gore and T. H. Summers were appointed to draft a Constitution, Rules of Decorum and Articles of Faith."

The second day Chaplin Fork applied for admission and was received.

The second meeting was at Shepherdsville and J. M. Frost addressed the association upon the design and prospects of Georgetown College. The body afterwards passed resolutions stating Georgetown College was worthy of support of the association.

A letter written by one of the brethren appointed by the association and addressed to the associations with which this body corresponded was called The Corresponding Letter. The first one reads as follows:

“Dear Brethren:

“Through the tender mercies of God, we are permitted to meet in an associated capacity for the first time since our organization, and although some of our churches complain of great coldness, and barrenness in religion, we feel to return thanks to the Great Head of the Church, that some of them communicate to us glad tidings of revivals in their midst, during the past year. We have received by baptism 81. Our total number is 1678. The names of the brethren appointed to bear this letter will be found in the minutes. We desire you to continue correspondence with us by Letter and Messengers. Our next association will be at Mt. Washington, Bullitt County, Ky. Commencing on Friday before the 1st Sabbath in October, 1851. Brethren, remember us at the Throne of Grace.”

From the Treasurer’s Report of 1852:

“Indian Mission Association -----	\$ 56.15
Kentucky and Foreign Bible Society-----	46.18
General Association -----	31.90
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Total Disbursements-----	\$134.23”

In 1855 a committee was appointed to take necessary steps to establish a High School in Bardstown. The following were named to serve on the committee: W. Vaughn, P. B. Samuels, A. King, J. M. Bell and L. McKay.

On the 27th day of November, 1857, J. T. Hedger began his work as missionary for the association at a salary of \$400.00 per year.

The minutes of 1861 contain a report stating that two Sabbath schools were organized by the missionary, J. H. Spencer. No action relating to Sunday schools was taken by the association, however until 1865. The following appears in the minutes of that year:

“RESOLVED, That we, the Nelson Association sympathize with the objects of the Sunday school enterprise, and will cordially co-operate with Elder W. S. Sedwich, the agent of the General Association, and with Elder J. V. Riley, Sunday school missionary in our bounds, and recommend semi-annual Sunday school meetings; one of which shall be held with this body.”

J. V. Riley had been appointed by the General Association August 17, 1865, as Sunday School Missionary for Nelson Association and the first report of Sunday school work appeared in the minutes of 1866.

A copy of a petition to the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Kentucky appears in the minutes of 1866 as follows:

“WHEREAS, the Legislature of Kentucky on the 22nd of February,

1865, granted a charter to the Curators of 'Kentucky University,' whereby all the public lands accruing to this State by Act of Congress, July 2, 1862, entitled, 'An Act donating Public Lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the benefit of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts,' were committed to the custody of the Curators of said University, said lands amounting to 330,000 acres; and, whereas, the Legislature did, on the 10th day of February, 1866, appropriate out of the public funds raised by a common tax, \$20,000 to the said University, to put into operation an Agricultural and Mechanical College; and, whereas, said 'Kentucky University' is under the control of a religious denomination, as much so as are the Colleges at Danville, Georgetown, Russellville, Bardstown, Millersburg and Shelbyville, and, whereas, we regard a union of Church and State, direct or indirect, to any extent whatever, by appropriation of money from the State Treasury, either for the building of houses of worship, the support of the ministry, or for the endowment of institutions of learning, literary, scientific, or theological, under the control of any one religious denomination, as inconsistent with the genius of our free institutions, and as fraught with evil to both church and state; and, whereas, the said Acts of our Legislature are manifestly partial in their operation, and, therefore, unjust to all the other religious denominations in the State; and, whereas, the Act of the Legislature of 1865, herein referred to, was passed during the confusion occasioned by the war, without due consideration, and without being submitted to the voice of the people; and, whereas, moreover, the Legislature reserved to its self the right to modify, or repeal any portion or all of said Acts of 1865 and 1866, whenever it may be deemed by them right and proper so to do.

"THEREFORE, we the signers hereunto, citizens of Kentucky, present to your honorable body our solemn protest against the said Acts of the Legislatures of 1865 and 1866, and respectfully petition you to repeal those Acts, withdraw from the custody of the aforesaid Curators of 'Kentucky University,' the funds now in their hands, and establish an Agricultural and Mechanical College to be under the exclusive control of the State, untrammelled by any alliance whatever with any religious sect or denomination."

A committee was appointed from each church to get signers for the above petition.

In 1871 the body endorsed the action of the Educational Committee relating to moving the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from South Carolina to Kentucky. In the minutes of that year an error occurred when the statement was made that it was the 24th session. It was the 23rd in as much as there was no meeting in 1862. This error has been repeated each year until the present time.

At the meeting of 1884 the association gave instructions that the messengers come to the next meeting prepared to stay the whole time—three days.

In 1892 there were 2277 church members reported and only 723 enrolled in Sunday schools. In 1947 there was a membership of 6470 and a Sunday school enrollment of 4177. This was nearly three times as many church members and nearly six times as many in Sunday schools.

Only fifteen men have held the office of moderator. Five of these only one year each. Thomas Hall was moderator twenty-eight years; W. H. Moody eighteen years;

J. A. Booth fifteen years; Wm. Vaughn fourteen years; others two to seven years. Eight men have held the office of clerk. T. P. Samuels was clerk for thirty-seven years.

Article IV of the Constitution was changed in 1923 to limit the term of the office of moderator to not more than two years in succession. However J. R. Kysar was elected regularly each year until 1926. That year they changed the Constitution back to its original wording.

Only six baptisms were reported in 1881. This was the lowest in the history of the association. In 1922 came the highest year with 434 baptized.

In 1899, the end of the first fifty years, the membership had gone from 10 churches with 1495 members to 21 churches with 2944 members. The lowest membership was 1429 in 1864. The two thousand mark was passed in 1872. The membership passed 3000 in 1901; 4000 in 1916; 5000 in 1927, and 6000 in 1945.

There are now twenty-five churches, with full-time preaching in all but three. Twenty-seven Sunday schools. Most of the churches have Sunday school rooms and are fully graded, others have additional rooms under construction.

Many of the hindrances that the early churches faced have been overcome. We look forward to the challenge that is before us.

Those who help make the history of the next century will profit because of the sacrifices made and victories won by the God fearing men and women of the past one hundred years.