

## "REPORT FROM THE VISIONING & PRIORITIES TASK FORCE"

Old structures that once served well frequently become outdated and awkwardly cumbersome! Times change to expose new needs and new demands. We live in such a time as an Association! There may have been a day when nearly 150 Executive Council members could be expected to gather for reports and to deliberate on matters of significance. There may have been a time when committees and teams would meet on a monthly or quarterly basis with or without a pressing agenda and still look forward to the fellowship even if matters of substance were not part of the plan. Ministers gathered weekly for volleyball, lunch and collegiality because they served in the same area Association.

Now, in spite of more time-saving devices than ever, time is scarce and gathering for the sake of gathering fails to gain much traction in our hurried and harried world. Gathering in groups of any kind—we call them affinity groups—has more to do with common interests and shared backgrounds such as the school we attended or the sports we enjoy than with the name of the Association to which we belong. If the meeting doesn't lead to some precise and focused action, it has little appeal. Too many meaningful competitors beckon to allow anyone much time to idle away.

Most of us have too few friends and too little time for family and loved ones! Far too many tasks are left undone or incomplete.

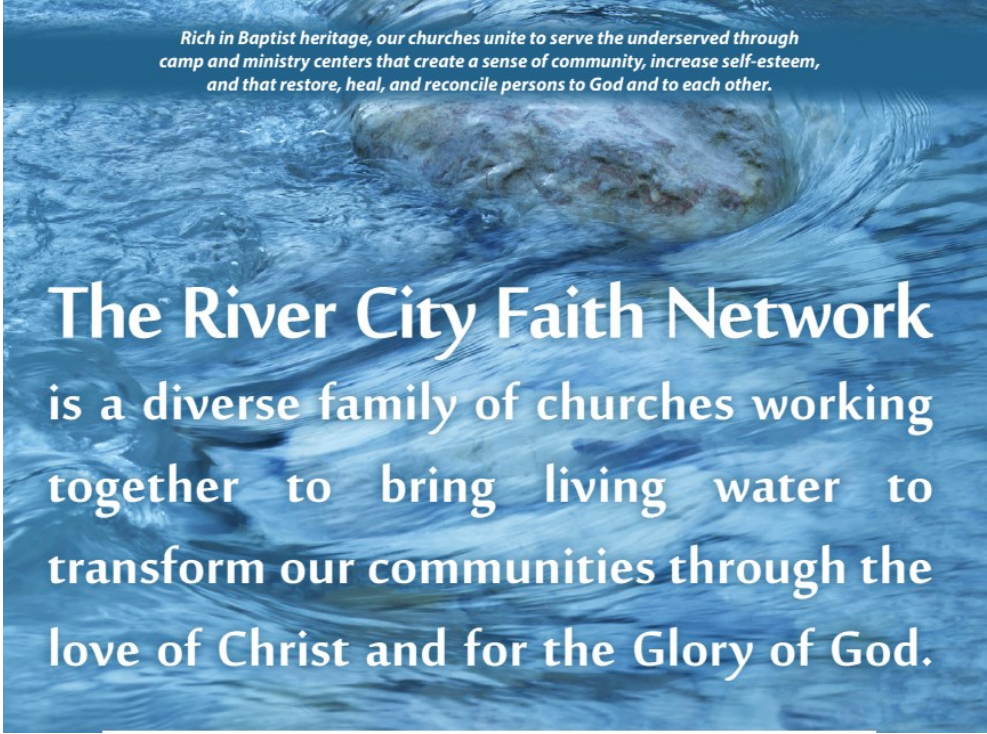
In light of the demands upon all of our churches and their people, it is time for the Richmond Baptist Association to simplify its focus and concentrate its energies while divesting itself of dated structures and methods that were good for a day that has long passed. It is time that we expand our reach into a broader community with partnerships that will better enable us to strengthen the influence of the Kingdom of God in the lives of the underserved of our city in more powerful ways than ever before.

Introducing - **"The Richmond Baptist Association known as THE RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK!"**

This is, after all, the River City! The powerful waters of the James River influence all of us! A powerful flood wall reminds us of the negative impact that water, uncontrolled and unharnessed, can have. Channeled, the river provides energy and electricity—power—for countless thousands living along its banks. For our churches the river reminds us of the water of life and has become a cherished site for large gatherings to baptize their members. Jesus invited the Samaritan woman at the well to partake of water that would satisfy her thirst as nothing else could. John the Baptist protested at Jesus' invitation to baptize Him, declaring that it was he who needed to be baptized by One Who offered such an humble invitation. In the end, John the Baptizer, lowered his cousin and friend and our Lord and Savior into the water.

And so, the Visioning and Priorities Task Force is proposing that the Richmond Baptist Association become known as "THE RIVER CITY NETWORK" capturing the rich imagery of water and the One Who gives to us and to our city the water of life! Out of our rich Baptist heritage we remain a collection of Christ-followers bound together by a common faith in One able to save and to transform.

The Task Force is proposing a new Mission Statement that catches the imagery of water and carries the force of the Gospel calling us to do good works, but to do MORE than good works—to do works and to forge relationships, especially with Jesus, that yield lives transformed forever through the power of Christ and for the Glory of God.



*Rich in Baptist heritage, our churches unite to serve the underserved through camp and ministry centers that create a sense of community, increase self-esteem, and that restore, heal, and reconcile persons to God and to each other.*

**The River City Faith Network**  
is a diverse family of churches working  
together to bring living water to  
transform our communities through the  
love of Christ and for the Glory of God.

The focus of the RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK is intended to be almost exclusively that of sustaining, strengthening and expanding the mission and ministries of the three Baptist centers and Camp Alkulana! It is to focus on that which we do very well and upon what God has richly blessed in our midst.

To capture some of the impact of our ministries I am remembering a funeral I attended at the Oregon Hill Baptist Center not quite a year ago. It was a memorial service for Henry. Henry is not his real name but the memorial service was very real. Years ago Henry had become estranged from those whose bloodlines he shared. None of us will ever know what precipitated the breach, but it was definitive enough that none of his relatives attended the memorial service. For them much of his life was probably a painful nightmare.

The memorial service was conducted by our Community Missionary, Jennifer Turner, and her family as well as a member of the Pine Street Baptist Church staff, Clint Jackson. Gathered were Henry's friends, primarily others from the homeless community where he resided.

Like the memorial service, the tears for Henry were very real. His homeless "family" remembered the wood-working skills that he applied in the community, the painting jobs he had started and sometimes completed, the kindness that usually characterized him, but the moods that could at times be volatile. It was clear that Henry didn't like the confinement of the indoors; after the completion of very serious brain surgery requiring the removal of a large portion of Henry's skull, he, clad in his hospital gown, checked himself out of the hospital and reappeared among the community dwellers where he was viewed as a person of value.

The break in Jennifer's voice at the beginning of the memorial service made it clear that Henry had found at the Oregon Hill Baptist Center a family who loved him and helped him to experience God's love and forgiveness in the context of Christian community.

Though you were unaware of it, you, through Jennifer, were there on that Thursday afternoon at Henry's memorial service! You were there on those numerous mornings when Jennifer negotiated the transportation schedule with Henry to help him to be on time for the next day's doctor's appointments! You were there when Henry was given clean clothing to finish the week because he had no access to washers and dryers, clotheslines and clothespins and clean water to do laundry! You, through the Baptist centers you support faithfully, lent to him dignity in life. At his death you gave him and his friends a sense of value in the community and in the eyes of God.

Henry was 52 years old.

At his memorial service the Gospel message was clear as each of us was challenged to re-evaluate our lives in light of the gift offered to us by the Christ of the cross. One of the homeless men there prayed one of the most honest and contrite prayers I have heard in far too long. The transparency of his prayer was almost shocking; his honesty almost disconcerting, but heart-warming and refreshing. His confession was remarkably genuine. Both God and Henry had made a lasting impression upon him.

I'm glad I knew Henry a little bit. I'm so glad our Community Missionary knew him well. Through her, her family, and your gifts, Henry had come to know God!

THE RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK will help us to do in better and stronger ways what we do best, ministering to the underserved of our city who need a family of their own!

Planted firmly upon and grounded deeply in our Baptist heritage and roots, we, as a distinctly Baptist network will have an expanded capacity for including in our work the energy and resourcefulness of others with a similar passion for our city who may be less tied to our Baptist brand but who earnestly want to serve and exemplify Christ more effectively.

The Visioning and Priorities Task Force is proposing a new and fluidly dynamic structure that provides a variety of levels of affiliation for others with a passion like ours for Christ and our city. The levels of affiliation can include individuals, churches, organizations, Sunday school classes, businesses and professional service providers. One may begin on the COMMUNITY level of affiliation by engaging only occasionally through one or more of our centers or Camp Alkulana. As interest, involvement, passion, calling and conviction grows, a church or class or organization may aspire from COMMUNITY to CONNECTOR to CHAMPION and on to being part of the CORE of affiliates that both serves and governs, both carries out and sets policy for The Richmond Baptist Association known as THE RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK.

Below you will find a graphic that pictures the Levels of Affiliation both as concentric circles of increasing participation, investment and governance that moves from the outward toward the inner circle or from right to left—COMMUNITY toward CORE. Below the graphic will be a bulleted outline of how participation, investment and governance change from level to level through the Levels of Affiliation.

# Levels OF Affiliation

THE  
River  
City  
FAITH  
NETWORK

## LEGEND

GP - General Program

CA - Camp Alkulana

CC - Community Centers

ACP - Annual Church Profile  
(Means of communicating  
church statistics and health  
to the partnering network)



## LEVELS OF AFFILIATION

### 1.) **COMMUNITY** - partners who ...

- may be **Baptist or non-Baptist** in religious orientation
- may support and participate in ministry projects and programs of the RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK on an occasional and sporadic basis with no longstanding commitment
- may provide income out of common Christian interest with no ongoing obligation
- may attend the open Annual Meeting as guests
- have no governing influence, participation nor representation
- have no reporting expectations

### 2.) **CONNECTORS** - partners who...

- may be **Baptist or non-Baptist** in religious orientation
- may support and participate in ministry projects and programs of the RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK on a more consistent and regular basis
- will have provided income to the General Program or Camp Alkulana or one or more Community Centers or all at the level of 1% of annual budget or a minimum of \$1,000 in the previous calendar year
- may provide minimal governance
  - through **one (1) Messenger** to the Annual Meeting
- may provide **Staffing only** for RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Teams** such as:
  - the Camp Alkulana Support Team (CAST) (**existing**)
  - the Church Hill Christian Wellness Center Support Team (**proposed**)
  - the Oregon Hill Baptist Center Support Team (**proposed**)
  - the South Richmond Baptist Center Support Team (**proposed**)
- do **not** provide **Leaders or Staffing** for RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Sub-groups** (named below)
- must have reported to the Network through the Annual Church Profile or similar vehicle in the previous calendar year
- complete or renew a **Covenant of Intentions** with the Network annually

### 3.) **CHAMPIONS** - partners who...

- **must** be **Baptist** in religious orientation
- have participated in camp and / or Community Center ministries on a regular basis throughout the previous calendar year
- will have provided income to Camp Alkulana or one or more of the Community Centers but not necessarily the General Program portion of the annual budget at the level of 2% to 4% of annual budget or a minimum of \$2,000 in the previous calendar year
- may provide governance through
  - a maximum of **five (5) Messengers** to the Annual Meeting
- may engage in policy setting through:
  - a maximum of **one (1)** member to the Network **Executive Board**
- may provide **Leaders and Staffing** for RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Teams** as mentioned above
- may provide **Staffing only** to RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Sub-groups** such as:
  - Budget Sub-group
  - Endowment/Planned Giving
  - Affiliation Sub-group
  - Human Resources
  - Facilities
  - Member Placement (Nomination)
- must have reported to the Network through the Annual Church Profile in the previous calendar year
- complete or renew a **Covenant of Intentions** with the Network annually

### 4.) **CORE** - partners who...

- **must** be **Baptist** in religious orientation
- have participated in camp and /or Community Center ministries on a regular basis throughout the previous calendar year
- will have provided income to the General Program portion of the annual budget at the level greater than 4% of annual budget or no less than \$3,000 in the previous calendar year
- may provide direct fiscal support for Camp Alkulana, the Community Centers or other designations
- provide governance through:
  - a maximum of **fifteen (15) Messengers** to the Annual Meeting
- engage in policy setting through:
  - a maximum of **two (2)** board member to the Network Executive Board
- may provide **Leaders and Staffing** for RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Teams** as mentioned above
- may provide **Leaders and Staffing** to RIVER CITY FAITH NETWORK **Sub-groups** such as:
  - Budget Sub-group
  - Endowment/Planned Giving
  - Affiliation
  - Human Resources
  - Facilities
  - Member Placement (Nominating)
- must have reported to the Network through the Annual Church Profile in the previous calendar year
- complete or renew a **Covenant of Intentions** with the Network annually

What has just been outlined is a concept in the making! It is a concept that includes vision, structure and identity! The numbers included in the concept are, at this point, suggestions which will be further evaluated in the Constitutional process and subject to the approval of the Association in business session.

The Visioning and Priorities Task Force is grateful for the opportunity to have worked on this concept on behalf of the RBA. The next step is the detailed work of creating a CONSTITUTION. It is the prayer of the Task Force that at the RBA Spring Celebration on Thursday evening, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM, at Patterson Avenue Baptist Church, the full Association during our business session will grant permission for the Constitution Committee to move forward with creating a CONSTITUTION and OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK that will put flesh to the concept, spelling out the details of how it will all work. It is our goal to complete the CONSTITUTION and OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK by late summer to provide time for critical review before the Annual Fall Meeting in October. The Association, in the meantime, will operate under its current Constitution and By-Laws. During the process there will be numerous opportunities for questions, explanations and review.

Please prayerfully consider granting affirmation to further shape this concept during the months ahead so that we may advance the possibility of entering 2015 with a solid plan for sustaining, strengthening and expanding the mission and ministries of our three centers and our camp to the underserved of our city.

Thank you very much for the assistance you have already given through the recent Town Hall Listening Sessions. You have strengthened this work with your comments, questions and suggestions.

Gratefully,

The RBA Visioning and Priorities Task Force

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