

## INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

October 17, 1991

SUBJECT: Disposition of Churches Removed From SBC Rolls, 1988 to 1989  
TO: Dr. Larry Lewis  
FROM: Phil Jones

On a recent trip to Nashville, Steve Whitten and I searched through associational reports housed in the Corporate Planning and Research Department of the Sunday School Board in order to determine why churches were removed from the UCL list of churches between 1988 and 1989. The process used by the Sunday School Board is to send a computerized list of churches from the previous year's reports to each association along with instructions to make corrections to the list. Associations are asked to indicate why churches are deleted from the lists. If an association removes a church from its list without specifying the reason, a telephone call is made to secure this information. The result is a rather complete list of outcomes of churches removed by associations.

From 1988 to 1989, BSSB Research reports 225 churches were removed from the Uniform Church Letter tapes. We were able to find information on 220 churches that were removed.<sup>1</sup> The results are as follows:

- 55.9% of those removed were reported as disbanded by associations (123)
- 19.1% were churches that withdrew from their associations (went independent) (42)<sup>2</sup>
- 10.9 % reverted to mission status (24)<sup>3</sup>
- 5.0% were dropped because they had become inactive or noncooperating in their associations (11)<sup>4</sup>
- 3.6% merged with another congregation (8)
- 5.5% have an unknown status (12)

Generally, disbanded churches are small. The last recorded total membership data showed that 23 percent had fewer than 25 members; 50 percent last reported fewer than 50 members; and 77 percent, fewer than 100 members. Note that church membership could have dwindled substantially between the last reported membership and the time disbanding

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<sup>1</sup>Information was found on an additional three units dropped that should have never been added to an associational list in the first place.

<sup>2</sup>In one situation a church left the SBC to join another denomination.

<sup>3</sup>In one situation a church reverted to a Bible Study Fellowship.

<sup>4</sup>Note that only eleven churches were removed in this manner. From notes on the associational reports and a couple of telephone interviews, it appears that the associations remove churches only after extensive inactivity or noncooperation with the association and after repeated attempts by the association to secure cooperation. Some associations have written into their bylaws or other organizational documents, specific criteria for removal of noncooperating churches. There was no indication that any of these churches were disfellowshipped by the association because of theological problems.

occurred. There does not appear to be any relationship between age of church and disbanding—even when controlling for size.

Attached is a table showing disposition of churches removed from UCL lists by state convention.

The above data add a second year of information to that previously reported by Clay Price for the time period 1987 to 1988. While there are some classification differences, the data are fairly consistent for these two time periods. Associational reports containing similar information for churches dropped from 1989 to 1990 will not be easily accessible until spring or summer 1992 when they will be collated into a single file.

## Churches Dropped From the SBC, 1988 to 1989

State Convention	Disbanded	Withdrew	Dropped by Assoc.	Merged	Reverted to Mission	Unknown	Total
Alabama	3	2	1	1			7
Alaska	1						1
Arizona	1				1		2
Arkansas	4	1					5
California	11	3		1		1	16
Colorado	3				1		4
New England	1				1		2
Florida	7	2					9
Georgia	8	4	1	2			15
Illinois	5		1				6
Indiana		1			3	2	6
Iowa	2				2		4
Kansas-Nebraska	3						3
Kentucky	2	2	3				7
Louisiana	3				2	1	6
Maryland/Delaware	3				1		4
Michigan	4			1	1		6
Minnesota-Wisconsin	2						2
Mississippi	3					2	5
Missouri	2	3					5
Nevada	1						1
New Mexico	1	1					2
New York	5	1			1		7
North Carolina	5	7					12
Ohio	4	2	1		3		10
Oklahoma	5	1			1		7
Pennsylvania-South Jersey	1						1
Puerto Rico						2	2
South Carolina	3	1	1				5
Tennessee	2	1	3			2	8
Texas	23	10		3	7	2	45
Utah-Idaho	4						4
Virginia	1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>220</b>

Source: Associational lists of churches (LOC's) located in the Corporate Planning and Research Department, Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention