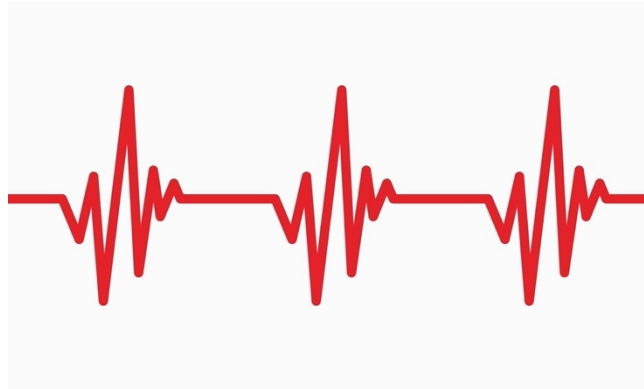


# VITAL SIGNS

of a Healthy Association



**Associational Health  
Assessment Tool**

## VITAL SIGNS OF A HEALTHY ASSOCIATION: ASSESSMENT TOOL

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### Additional resources include:

Prayer Guide: ENGAGING CHURCHES TO PRAY FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION

Book (coming soon): “Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Association”

Book (coming soon): “A Futuring Process for Your Association: Discover Tomorrow”

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## ENDORSEMENTS

*Few people have the breadth of successful experience working with associations of churches like Johnny Rumbough. This helpful tool is the culmination of decades of fruitful associational work. It cuts to the heart of what it means for an association to be healthy and it provides an incisive path to health for those associations that are not yet all that God intends for them to be.*

**\_\_Richard Blackaby, President of Blackaby Ministries International, *Experiencing God, Spiritual Leadership, The Ways of God.***

*Every organization has a stated mission and vision - ensuring that you are steadily heading in the right direction to accomplish your objectives requires focus, determination, and regular evaluation. I'm grateful for the work of Johnny Rumbough. His experience, knowledge, and wisdom about the role and work of the local Association is abundantly displayed in this resource. As our Association considers its work and our future, this tool has been invaluable in helping us ask the right questions, measure our actions against our stated goals, and evaluate our stewardship of the resources churches are entrusting to us. I believe you will find Vital Signs equally helpful in your work.*

**\_\_Bob Bickford, Executive Director, Nashville Baptist Association (TN)**

*Dr. Johnny Rumbough's "Vital Signs of a Healthy Association" is not just a tool; it's a compass for navigating the complex landscape of organizational health. This insightful assessment serves as a simple device for an introspective look at one's current reality, offering a structured approach to evaluating the pulse of any association. By delving into key indicators, Dr. Rumbough empowers leaders to numerically gauge the vitality of their associations with clarity and precision. This assessment is more than a mere checklist; it prompts deep reflection and critical analysis, fostering a deeper understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. This information equips a team to customize an action plan according to that information.*

**\_\_Rick Curtis – Assistant to the President for Convention and Associational Relations, North American Mission Board, SBC**

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# WELCOME

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5

A doctor typically asks several key questions to understand a patient’s condition thoroughly. One of the most common and important questions is, “What brings you in today?” or “What are your main symptoms?” This question helps the doctor identify the primary concerns and reasons for the visit, allowing them to focus on the diagnosis and treatment accordingly. Likewise, local Baptist associations would do their churches a great service by submitting themselves to a health assessment. Checking vital signs does not indicate unhealth. Instead, it allows for early detection of any potential concerns, monitoring of its well-being, and ensures timely intervention and support, as needed. Mission partnerships, leadership development, stewardship health – just to mention a few of the vital signs of a healthy association – are worthy of our attention if we are to be a healthy association postured to serve the New Testament church in this special time in history.

## Instructions

- Score each of the seven pages using a number between 1 (low) & 5 (high). This should be YOUR best understanding of how your association is doing.
- All 10 statements must be scored. ***If you don’t know one, then score a 3.***
- Write the total for each Vital Sign at the bottom of each page.
- Transfer the total Vital Sign score from each page to the appropriate block on the My Association Health Index (MAHA) on page 8.
- Total the “MAHA” page and divide by 7 for the Overall Health Score.

# Mission Partnerships

*“because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”*

Philippians 1:5

## **What is “Mission Partnerships”?**

Mission Partnerships involve collaboration between associations, churches, and/or missionaries, leading to an ongoing engagement with a missionary or mission point in accomplishing the goal of advancing the gospel.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don't know, score 3.**

### **I. Mission Partnerships**

- 1. There is evidence that a majority of the churches in the association are currently (this year) on mission somewhere
- 2. The association has a plan to inform churches of mission opportunities
- 3. The association provides opportunities for churches to connect with missionaries
- 4. The association has a plan for churches to engage in ongoing mission partnerships
- 5. Churches are often encouraged to partner together in mission opportunities
- 6. The association leads churches to engage with church planters and/or missionaries in Send Cities and international cities
- 7. The association knows my church's mission engagements/partnerships
- 8. The association emphasizes prayer for those needing to hear the gospel
- 9. Mission partnerships are celebrated regularly
- 10. The association intentionally stays informed of local, state, national, and international mission opportunities and plans missional partnerships

TOTAL SCORE:  
**MISSION PARTNERSHIPS**

# Leadership Development

*“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*

1Timothy 4:12

## **What is “Leadership Development”?**

Leadership Development in our local Baptist association focuses on equipping church leaders with the spiritual, emotional, and practical skills needed to lead effectively in ministry.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don’t know, score 3.**

## **II. Leadership Development**

- 1. The association’s mission/vision is communicated well in a variety of ways
- 2. The association understands its purpose and how to accomplish the mission
- 3. Key leaders in the association actively support the association’s vision
- 4. The Associational Mission Strategist (aka Director of Missions) often communicates the purpose of the association and has vision for fulfilling it
- 5. Most churches know and can explain what is expected of them as a member church
- 6. The association’s leaders know how, when, and by whom decisions in the association are made
- 7. The association’s leaders and volunteers (lay leaders and pastors) are effectively empowered to lead their area of responsibility
- 8. The association’s ministries have the resources necessary to fulfill its goals
- 9. The association’s staff demonstrates appreciation to volunteers
- 10. The association offers adequate opportunities for spiritual growth

**TOTAL SCORE:  
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

# Stewardship Health

*“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”*

1 Corinthians 4:2

## What is “Stewardship Health”?

Stewardship Health reflects our collective commitment to managing resources biblically and wisely, ensuring that all contributions are utilized effectively to sustain and grow our mission of advancing the gospel.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don’t know, score 3.**

### **III. Stewardship Health**

- 1. Churches model biblical stewardship and generosity in their giving to the association
- 2. Churches demonstrate mission giving through their giving to the association
- 3. The association regularly communicates church contributions
- 4. The association effectively communicates its financial information
- 5. The association’s finances are a testament to good stewardship
- 6. The association clearly explains its endowments and designated funds
- 7. The association has adequate giving options (check or online)
- 8. The association’s signage is visible and adequate
- 9. The exterior of the building, property, and parking are well-kept and maintained
- 10. The interior of the building is clean, comfortable, and functional

**TOTAL SCORE:  
STEWARDSHIP HEALTH**



# Futuring

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”*

Psalm 32:8

## **What is “Futuring”?**

Futuring is seeking God’s guidance to discover a path toward a future that will allow your association to thrive and bring God great glory.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don’t know, score 3.**

## **IV. Futuring**

- 1. The association regularly offers churches the opportunity to gather in corporate worship
- 2. The association encourages churches to experience God’s presence and power
- 3. The association’s leaders use opportunities to lead people to encounter God
- 4. The association’s leaders lead toward a worship experience when gathering for its events and meetings
- 5. Churches are given the opportunity to engage in a revitalization process
- 6. Churches are given the opportunity to partner with a church-in-need
- 7. The association celebrates church revitalization and/or church replanting
- 8. The association effectively communicates church stories of hope, health, and thriving
- 9. The association demonstrates spiritual unity
- 10. Church health is a high priority of the association

TOTAL SCORE:  
**FUTURING**

# Pastor Engagement

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”*

Ephesians 4:11-12

## What is “Pastor Engagement”?

Pastor Engagement fosters unity, collaboration, and shared vision among the pastors in your association.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don’t know, score 3.**

### **V. Pastor Engagement**

- 1. The importance of discipleship is emphasized by the association’s leadership
- 2. The association adequately offers equipping opportunities for pastors
- 3. The association effectively promotes pastor gatherings in small groups
- 4. The association welcomes and recognizes new pastors in the association
- 5. Resources/books are readily made available to pastors
- 6. The association’s leadership has a clear plan to help all pastors pastor together
- 7. The association encourages and creates opportunities for pastors to gather with one another
- 8. The association provides growth opportunities for pastors
- 9. The association’s Pastor Together focus is helpful
- 10. Opportunities for pastors are provided throughout the year for spiritual growth

TOTAL SCORE:  
**PASTOR ENGAGEMENT**

## Church Networking

*“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

Romans 12:4-5

### **What is “Church Networking”?**

Church Networking enables churches to collaborate, share resources, and support each other in ministry efforts.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don't know, score 3.**

### **VI. Church Networking**

- 1. The association encourages churches to partner with other churches for mission and/or ministry opportunities
- 2. The association has created an environment of family (of churches)
- 3. The association provides opportunities for churches to build relationships through fellowship events
- 4. The association provides churches to network through special events such as the Senior Adult Fall Festival, collection/distribution of Health Kits, and etc
- 5. The association provides opportunities for church networking through praying and serving together
- 6. Pastors or pastor gatherings provide opportunities for church networking
- 7. The association provides regular emphasis on the significance of churches networking together
- 8. The association has developed opportunities for churches to develop partnerships among one another
- 9. The association is respectful of the church calendars, to avoid business
- 10. The association handles conflicts constructively

TOTAL SCORE:  
**CHURCH NETWORKING**

# Church Strengthening

*“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25

## What is “Church Strengthening”?

Church Strengthening focuses on enhancing each congregation's spiritual vitality, leadership, and organizational health.

**How are we doing? On a scale of 1 (not well) to 5 (very well). If you don't know, score 3.**

## **VII. Church Strengthening**

- 1.The association has a plan to identify and appropriately meet the needs of the churches
- 2.The association is organized for effective ministry to churches
- 3.The association helps churches with awareness, connection, and engagement of mission opportunities
- 4. Churches can request help from the association
- 5.The association demonstrates an openness to help a church in need
- 6. The association has appropriately communicated that established churches start new churches
- 7.The association is prepared to serve all-size churches located in any part of the area
- 8.The association's leadership demonstrates a shepherding role among churches
- 9.The association encourages generational involvement
- 10.The association values creative ideas coupled with Biblical wisdom

TOTAL SCORE:  
**CHURCH STRENGTHENING**

## My Association Health Assessment (MAHA)

- 1) In the spaces below, write the average score of each Vital Sign, as you have recorded them at the bottom of the previous pages.
- 2) Add the average scores to create the Subtotal Score.
- 3) Then divide the Subtotal Score by seven to arrive at your Overall Health Score.

### Seven Vital Sign Scores (from previous pages)

- \_\_\_ Mission Partnership
- \_\_\_ Leadership Development
- \_\_\_ Stewardship Health
- \_\_\_ Futuring
- \_\_\_ Pastor Engagement
- \_\_\_ Church Networking
- \_\_\_ Church Strengthening

SUBTOTAL SCORE:

**SUBTOTAL DIVIDED BY 7**

=

**OVERALL HEALTH SCORE**

**Overall Associational Health Assessment Score**

(Note: 50 is a perfect score)

**Individual's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Church Name** \_\_\_\_\_

*“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you”*

Titus 1:5

*“Churches exist out of a promise made by Jesus. Associations exist out of permission granted by our supporting churches.”*

Johnny Rumbough

**About the Writer**

# Johnny Rumbough

Executive Director / Associational Mission Strategist, Lexington Baptist Association (South Carolina)

Johnny Rumbough is in his 28<sup>th</sup> year serving as the Executive Director/Associational Mission Strategist of the Lexington Baptist Association, SC (1996-present). Before coming to LBA, he served in a NAMB-appointed position at the Greenville Baptist Association, SC (1991-1996) and then earlier as a church planter in Tega Cay, SC (1985-1990). He is a 1981 Charleston Southern University (SC) graduate and earned his Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985. He was awarded a Doctor of Religion degree from Charleston Southern University in 2003.

In addition to speaking in hundreds of churches over the past 40+ years, Rumbough has served as senior pastor, associate pastor, and interim pastor in churches of various sizes. He has trained over 172 pastor search committees in the Lexington Association and has provided insight to scores of churches and associations going through significant change. He has experience leading churches and associations in a futuring (revitalization) process.

Rumbough was on the formational leadership team that created NOBA (Network of Baptist Associations) in the early decade of 2000 and was later elected to serve as president of SBCAL (Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders) from 2010-2015 and led the organization to restructure and revitalize for a better future. He is an Associational Ambassador (volunteer) for the North American Mission Board, SBC, and is a frequent speaker/trainer for revitalization and replanting events.

What's most important about Johnny Rumbough is that he was saved by the grace of God in 1975 and married his college sweetheart, Valerie, in 1976. They have two grown children: Son - Jason Rumbough (Kelli) and Daughter - Jamie Burton (Justin), and six grandchildren: Micah, Luka, Noelle, Liam, Judah and Charlotte.