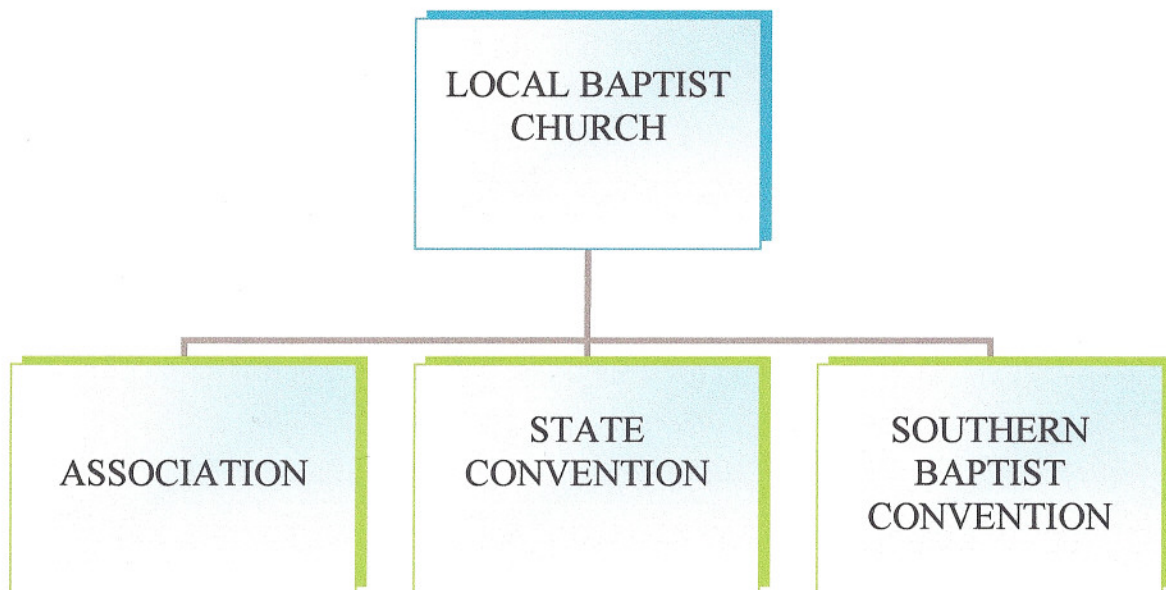


## A Simple Organizational Chart Showing Southern Baptist Denominational Hierarchy



The local church is the New Testament body. It is not under the authority of any of the other denominational bodies, though it may cooperate with them to accomplish common tasks (such as missions, education, church planting, training, and so on).

The three bodies on the second level are likewise independent of one another, although they may have cooperative agreements and relationships to allow them to further the collective work of the churches. Any of these bodies may interact with either of the two other bodies, although in common practice, the state convention is often the go-between with the local association and the national Southern Baptist Convention.

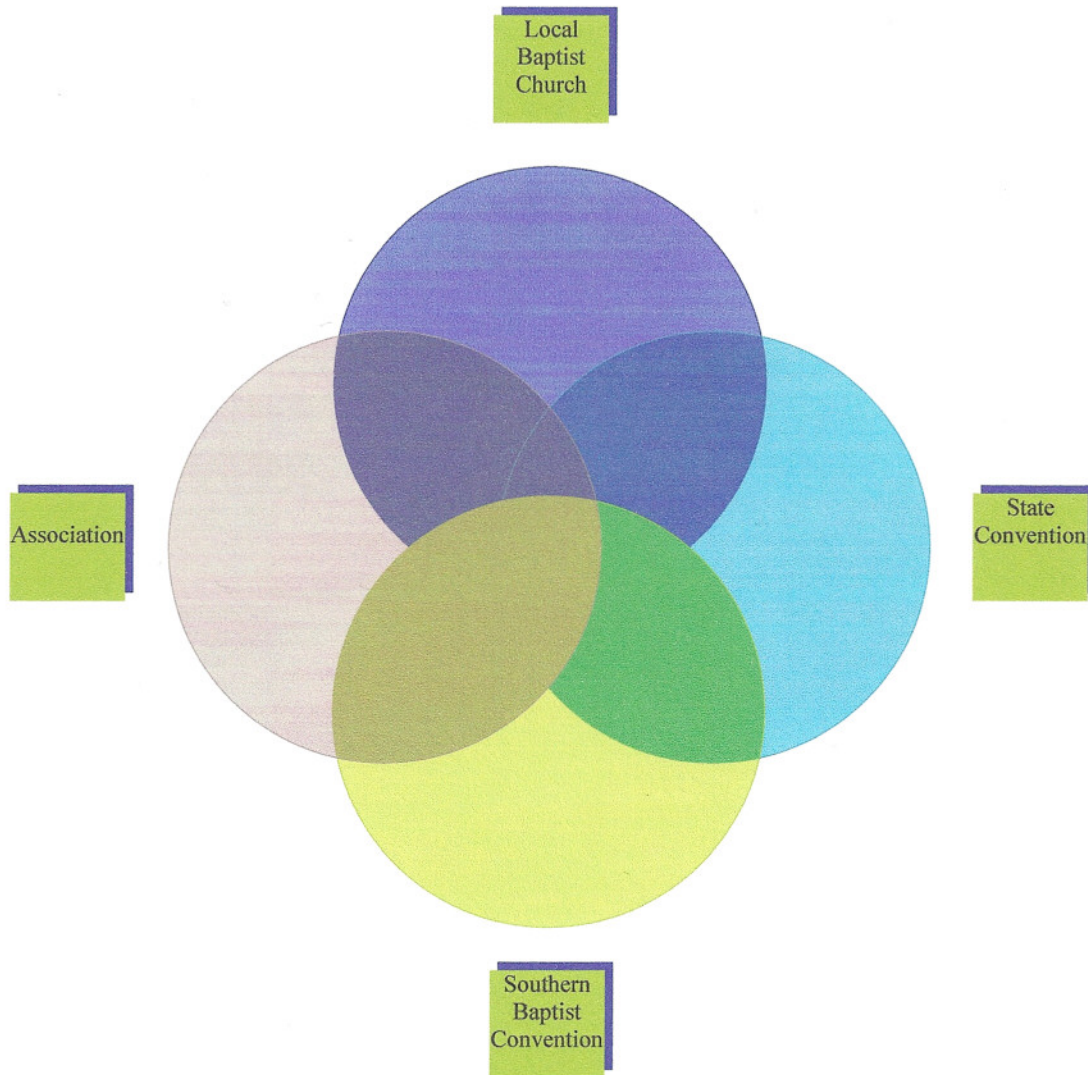
A church is not required to be a part of all three denominational bodies on level two, although most Southern Baptist churches choose to do so. Cooperating churches may send “messengers” to the annual meetings of the other denominational bodies. These messengers make decisions about officers, planning, budgets, etc. These individuals are called “messengers” rather than “delegates” because the local church *never* delegates its authority to the individual or to the denominational body. Thus, the local church is not bound by decisions of the other denominational bodies, but may choose voluntarily to follow them.

### The Fundamental Concept

The key words to understanding Southern Baptist denominational hierarchy are *cooperate*, *cooperation*, *cooperating*, and *cooperative*. All denominational bodies on this chart are fundamentally independent of one another. Relationships between the bodies are based upon voluntary cooperation.

## Another Way to Visualize Denominational Relationships

Another way to look at the relationships between denominational bodies is to see them as overlapping circles rather than as straight line boxes. On the chart below, the areas of overlap represent areas of cooperative relationship. Remember that the overlap areas do not imply structural integration; each body is still fundamentally independent of the others.



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