

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In preparing this 50 year historical summary of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Association, it was necessary to read all 50 years of our Associational minutes. I don't think anyone can do this without it adjusting their perspective on our Association and on the faith it represents. Hopefully, this final section of our Associational history puts the last 50 years into a better perspective or context for all of us.

While much attention is given to the sermons preached and the subjects discussed, other aspects of our Association are just as prominent. We do love to sing! Over the 50 years of this Association we have sung 260 different songs. It would come as no surprise that by a factor of nearly 2 to 1, Amazing Grace is by far our most popular song, having been sung 55 times. While many of the song leaders or pianists in the early years of the Association were not recorded, we still have a sizeable group of men and women who have aided our singing to the glory of God. And in recent years, specials that were sung by talented individuals or groups have greatly lifted our spirits toward Heaven and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

While 78 preachers (licensed and ordained) are the most we've ever had in our Association at one time, we have had 240 preachers in our Association over the 50 years of our history. Of course some have fallen by the wayside, but far more have gone on to live dedicated lives in service to the One who called them. You will see their name listed in the registry of our ministers and you will see their names listed as ones who led us in prayer or who conducted devotionals for us as well as delivered sermons or wrote reports for us to discuss.

The subjects discussed in our meetings were broken down into ten categories. By a large margin, "Church Work" was the biggest category. It shows our concern for discussing how we, as the Lord's churches, can do a better job of fulfilling the great commission.

Finally, we have been blessed to have a large number of brethren to visit our Association. Many of our previous members are led to another area to labor but find their way back at Association time to renew old acquaintances and to fellowship with us in the presence of our Lord.

Our Association is preaching and subject discussion, but it is also praying and singing. Probably, most of all, it is a coming together of God's people to further our mutual faith.

Recognition must be given to Elder Delbert Compton, who first envisioned a history of the Association that captured the lesser publicized part of it. Though Brother Compton was unable to complete this work, it was his idea that is contained in this history. Also, a big "Thank You" to Elder Odus Cummings for providing the 5 Associational Minutes that I did not have. We could not have had a 50 year history without them.

May God bless the Bethel Missionary Baptist Association and His churches that comprise its membership.

Elder John A. Keen, Jr.