



## “The History of GSACS...Short Version”

The American Association of Christian Schools began in 1972, under the leader of Dr. Al Janney. During that time, the Christian school movement was just getting started. It was reported that nationally up to eight schools a day were being established. The government did not really know how to respond to this flood of new schools. It took the country by surprise – the federal government as well as state and local governments. As a result, many government agencies began to try to regulate and control these new Christian schools, and thus the believers united together to resist the moves to license schools and control their curriculum, their teacher qualifications, and their ability to teach a biblical basis for interpreting history, English, life, and science. They wanted to be free to practice biblical discipline and character development. Dr. Janney, who presided over the AACS for twenty years, addressed the need for an organization to form to champion the cause of Christian education.

On the national level the attack seemed to come primarily through the IRS and its power to deny tax exempt status for churches with schools that would not bend to government intrusion in their ministries, especially in the area of teaching content or teacher credentialing. It was that effort to interfere with the free exercise of religion that was at the heart of the resistance on the national level. The AACS did play a key role in organizing the opposition and generating massive amounts of grass roots pressure on our legislators to the point that Congress passed a law restricting the IRS’s authority in pursuing their attack upon the cause of Christ.

In California, the battle for control seemed to center around the states drive to control and license pre-schools operated by churches as a ministry. Their drive seemed to be to try to get the churches to accept licensure, and most

of the pastors were against any form of government control of their ministries. It was a hard-fought battle and went all the way to the state legislature. The public outcry and the united front of hundreds of churches and pastors descending on Sacramento seemed to win the day, and the liberty of the churches was maintained. Several churches that are part of GSACS today were involved in the fight for the rights of churches to practice their beliefs according to their biblical convictions. Among them was First Baptist Church of Santa Maria, pastored by John Stevens, and their ministry of Valley Christian Academy whose principal at that time was John Brock.

Having won the fight on the state level, but beginning to feel the heat of the potential threat from the federal level, many pastors and school administrators in California began to discuss the possibility of talking to the AACS about joining in their fight and finding help under their umbrella.

AACS was a national association, but it was set up so that states could form Christian school associations within their state, and then as an association join AACS. It is still that way today, and that is why we have the Golden State Association of Christian Schools as a state association in California, which, in turn, is a member of AACS on the national level. Individual schools cannot join AACS, just associations from each state. Schools that are members of GSACS can benefit from all the services and benefits provided by AACS. AACS does provide some very excellent services to schools and a variety of educational helps and programs designed to strengthen the schools and their programs, but AACS is nevertheless primarily an organization that is constantly fighting for

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### *History of GSACS, continued...*

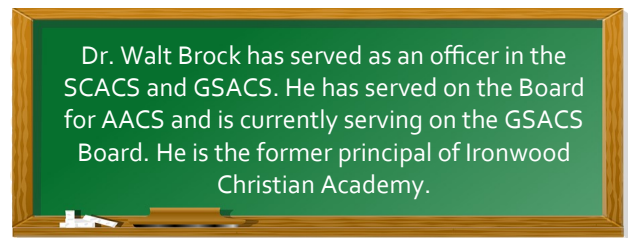
our constitutional rights in the free exercise of our religion. AACS has an ear to the federal threats and has an office in Washington DC right across the street from one of the senate office buildings just a short walk to the Capitol. Their lobbying efforts are numerous, and they are always invited to the table whenever the Department of Education is considering issues relating to private and Christian education.

As a result of the California pastors reaching out to the AACS, two representatives went to California to meet with various schools. The meeting took place in the summer of 1982, and out of it emerged the Southern California Association of Christian Schools. The northern meeting resulted in the Northern California Association of Christian Schools.

To ascertain what kind of helps and services could be available to our member schools through AACS, the leadership of SCACS (Southern California Association of Christian Schools) decided the following October to send Ross Davis and Walt Brock to Chicago to the Midwest teachers convention sponsored by the AACS member states in the area. The result of the visit and the report of how valuable the convention seemed to be to the teachers and ministries participating, the leadership of SCACS decided that it was best to proceed as soon as possible to host our first convention. Subsequently, the decision was made to have our first convention, so we quickly put together our first convention to be held in February of 1983. The theme was "Laying a Good Foundation."

With growth comes changes. When AACS changed its con-

stitution to only allow one state association per state, SCACS and NCACS joined together in a Ventura hotel in the late 80s to form the Golden State Association of Christian Schools with the newly united Board electing its first President, Pastor Ron Allen, from Calvary Baptist Church. The state office for this unified endeavor was housed at Ironwood. Much of the leadership and organizational work behind GSACS was volunteer-based, but in 1997, the organization's Board concluded that hiring an Executive Director fulltime could bring new growth and serve more schools. Steve Labins was hired for that position and continued in that role until June of 2016. During Mr. Labin's tenure, Dr. Allen retired and Pastor Dan Davidson from Bethel Baptist Church took the reins of GSACS. When Mr. Labins resigned to care for his wife, the Board then elected Pastor David Brock as President of GSACS with the intent of merging both the presidency and executive director responsibilities into one office. The state office is now located at Ironwood where a team of people burdened to come alongside churches and schools in the West oversee the organization and implement the services of GSACS.



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