

WHAT WE BELIEVE

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Cooperation

# CHRISTIAN UNITY AMONG CHURCHES

- . Local Church Autonomy - Every church is its own body, directly accountable to Jesus Christ as its head
- . Cooperation - Every church is called to recognize its common salvation, common faith, and common mission with other churches, and thereby recognize that when we agree on a common salvation and faith, we should cooperate to accomplish our common mission.

# CHRISTIAN UNITY AMONG CHURCHES

- I Corinthians 12:12-14 - For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.  
For the body is not one member, but many.

# CHRISTIAN UNITY AMONG CHURCHES

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

# COOPERATION IS VOLUNTARY

- The congregational form of church government stresses the role of the individual believer and understands the local congregation as the authority in church matters.
- There is no person or institution outside of the local church that can tell that church what to do or to believe. Each church is accountable only to Christ.

# COOPERATION IS VOLUNTARY

- . While pastors have authority in local churches as under shepherds of the Great Shephard (1 Peter 5:1-4), this authority is invested in them by the churches and they are accountable to the churches. Churches may be part of associations and denominations, but they do so voluntarily.
- . This form of church government follows the New Testament most closely.

# COOPERATION IS VOLUNTARY

- . In and Acts and the Epistles, the focus is on the local church, and there is never reference to any structure outside of the local church. There is no instance of an individual or organization exercising control outside of the church. Even Paul had to convince his readers to follow his advice (e.g., Gal 1:11-24).
- . The pattern in the book of Acts is that the congregation as a whole chooses its leaders and determines its own policy (Acts 1; 6; 13:1-3; 14:27; 15:2-3, 22).

# COOPERATION IS VOLUNTARY

- . Because we are congregationalists, we are not responsible to other entities, only to God. However, we voluntarily associate with other Christian groups to achieve a common purpose.



# COOPERATION IS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- . We cooperate not just for the sake of cooperation but for the sake of accomplishing gospel purposes. Our churches can do together what no one church can do alone.
- . Eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of our people require a mobilization and coordination that start with the local church but are then extended through cooperation with other churches.

# COOPERATION IS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- . Cooperation requires a level of unity beyond a minimal identification with Christ's gospel (e.g., John 17:14-24). True cooperation is grounded in a robust living faith. Cooperation extends not only from the individual to the church and from churches to general Baptist bodies but also to other Christian denominations.

# COOPERATION IS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- . This is why Southern Baptists do not join ecumenical organizations and church councils. We believe that true cooperation is grounded in a common commitment to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and in a common obedience to the Bible as the Word of God.

# THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

- . Cooperation includes our united efforts to undergird and fund Great Commission ministries, such as North American and international missions, church planting, the work of our seminaries, and benevolent ministries.
- . As Southern Baptists, we do this primarily through the Cooperative Program, where churches pool their funds at the state, national, and international levels for missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries.