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**Elders Respond to Cooperation Plan**

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Thursday, 01 June 2006

We have much for which to be grateful. We are thankful for the fellowship of many like-minded believers around the world. We appreciate the efforts of the nine brothers comprising the Unity Proposal Group and the document they put together. One can only imagine the difficulty of their task and the sacrifices they made in order to accomplish their assigned objective. We do not consider ourselves to have been up to such a challenge or that we could have produced a better document. We appreciate the call to humility and the humble manner in which the proposal has been submitted. We respect each man in the proposal group and pray that nothing we say here will be considered a personal affront to any one of them.

It has been difficult for us to reach a decision about ratifying the proposal – each one of us is at a different place in our thinking. We largely agree with the shared beliefs, most of which we have expressed in some form on our website. We agree with the need to cooperate together for missions and to come together for fellowship, teaching, encouragement and to resolve differences. We understand that third world churches desperately need to be financially supported and remain connected and that many of them yearn for direction and need oversight.

On the other hand, we do have concerns about the regionalization, representation, and conferencing concepts – the organizational aspects presented. We do not question the hearts of the proposal group. We understand that this is all a proposal and that all these considerations are subject to change. But to us this seems to be a step backward toward a human-centered organization structure rather than a God-centered fellowship of churches.

We do not really see the need for such a document. We have no real problem with the majority of the proposal, per se, but we have been functioning without it. We have been actively involved in mission work and fellowship with sister churches and will continue to do so. Please do not take this as arrogance, boasting, or cynicism. Whatever good has been accomplished here has been through God and is rather a testimony to Him and our feeble attempts to remain dependent on Him to lead us. We feel often that God seems to be working in spite of us, rather than through us. Of course, that's really the way it has always been. Document or no document, structure or no structure, ICC or not - any good, any growth - have been from God alone. We believe God is leading His movement(s). He always has and always will.

Most of us (elders) have been around for many years. Most of us come from of traditional church of Christ roots. We remember the early days of “our movement” and the excitement and enthusiasm we felt before it was identified as such. We remember traveling to conferences and being challenged by the openness and inspired by the fellowship, Biblical teaching and powerful preaching. We recall asking if we could send money to the Boston mission collection and being so fired up to participate in the sacrifice – not just hear about it. We had no organization, no structure, and no written documents – except God’s word. We were growing in our love for God and our appreciation for the cross, and were catching a glimpse of the dream for world evangelism. We were seeing tremendous examples and God was

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moving our hearts.

More than anything else over the past few years, we have been longing for God to move again in this way in the hearts of the disciples in Nashville. We continually try to point them to the cross. We do not feel that structure and accountability are the ways to produce a Godly motivation. It may take a while for everyone to get where they need to be, but we believe God's word is working in the heart of each one. (Mark 4:27) While not always obvious, we also believe there are weeds growing among the wheat. But God has a plan for that, as well. (Matthew 13:24-30) We believe the greatest examples and most glorious days are ahead of us.

We are working to keep unity in the brotherhood. We are actively involved in cooperating with other churches in our mission efforts. We agree with the shared beliefs, although we might re-word a couple of items. We believe that there will be reasons to meet and work out things in the future. We definitely want to continue to be a part of these efforts and processes, trying to find solutions for the needs and problems among us. However, we do not feel that giving an unqualified ratification of the proposal is the right thing for the Nashville Church at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Holt, Dave Mundie, Bob Neyland, Priestley Reaves, Woody Rowe

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