

## **Questions and Answers**

### Related to the 2006 Plan for United Cooperation

#### **1. Why do we need a statement of belief?**

The use of belief statements can be both positive and negative, but our heritage tends to focus on the negative. We must remember the cultural derivation of some of these past teachings. This sincere posture seems derived from times past when religious America was so convicted about numerous issues and matters of opinions that people divided over trivial points and elevated them to matters of salvation. At its inception, the Restoration Movement took on creedalism by rightly championing the Bible as the ultimate authority. We hold, however, that an early-on posture of suspicion about all things written has become a significant liability in this postmodern, stand-for-little world. Many more of us fear the consequences of not stating our convictions than we do the consequences of putting them in writing. Many brothers and sisters are also wondering where different congregations stand on specific issues of practice and doctrines. While no one is suggesting a creed, we are advocating a break from the anti-statement thinking and encouraging our churches to be consistent and clear on their most pertinent convictions. To help with this, we have included statements that are in agreement with our shared beliefs. The following reasons indicate why we advocate such statements:

1. The apostolic church and succeeding generations expressed core convictions whenever it was called for.
2. We live in a time that requires greater clarity, and the anti-creedal DNA of our heritage actually makes it harder for us to stand for something in this age.
3. Others will misrepresent us if we do not represent ourselves.
4. Declaring our convictions in advance hinders those of hidden belief systems from rising up in times of uncertainty.
5. The consensus among our fellowship is for us to stand together for greater truths and cherished values and to express them honestly.

#### **2. What exactly are you asking us to sign up for?**

We are simply calling for those churches that are unified on the statement of beliefs, general practices and connections to begin the process of functioning as a stronger and more unified brotherhood.

#### **3. Do you have a plan for meeting needs and challenges that go beyond a church's regional grouping?**

Yes. Each regional group will send representatives to resolve those needs and challenges that will arise (through prayer, Bible study and discussion). A chairman and an agenda committee would be selected by those representatives to serve in that capacity for a period of two years. This

committee would organize and prioritize the ideas and concerns and facilitate the coordination of smaller subcommittees that would then make presentations to the general assembly.

**4. How would those needs and challenges be put on the agenda?**

Any representative from a participating church may submit a proposal to the Agenda Committee. Currently so many needs have gone overlooked or been neglected that it will take some time for this group to catch up, so to speak.

**5. What if a church decides later to join or not participate?**

The door should never be closed for a church to later join or withdraw their association at any time for any reason.

**6. How should those churches be treated that choose not to sign up?**

There may be many different reasons why some churches may not sign up. They are still our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to continue to respect, love, and cherish one another in the Lord.

**7. Would our church ever be coerced to give up leaders, people, or money to other churches or mission efforts?**

No. These coercive practices are not respectful, loving, or considerate and must never be tolerated. Great respect and love must be freely given between congregations that both give and receive training and input.

**8. Would churches ever be required to give a specific amount to missions support?**

No, we do not believe that any amount should ever be given under compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7). Certainly appeals would be made as needs come up, strategies are formed and consensus is built.

**9. Does our commitment of the older women training the younger women mean that the women must be paid staff?**

No. Although that may be preferred and encouraged, the commitment is not one of compensation, but believing that women have a God-given ministry with other women--one of training, counseling, and studying with other women.

**10. Does "remembering the poor" mean that our church must give to a particular charity such as HOPE Worldwide?**

Not necessarily. While we encourage our churches to remember the poor around the world and appreciate the tremendous impact of HOPE

Worldwide, those decisions remain with the leadership of the local congregations.

**11. Are you saying that this fellowship is against members being romantically involved with and marrying non-Christians?**

Yes, because God has made it clear that he is against it.

**12. What if our church supports most of the shared beliefs, but not all? Should our church still ratify this plan?**

No. That would be problematic and even nullify the purposes of having a plan. Many Protestant denominations could state that they agree with most of these shared beliefs. Part of the purpose of this proposal is to recognize those congregations that still share these long-held beliefs and convictions and are committed to carrying the gospel message to every person in every nation.

**13. What if we cannot meet the deadline of April 3rd?**

The April 3rd date is not a deadline, but rather the date that we will begin to publish those churches that affirm this plan. This list will be updated regularly to reflect those churches that wish to be added.

**14. Why is the document so long?**

There are some that would have preferred a shorter document, but there are others that appreciate the efforts that we made to provide more explanation.

**15. I'm not sure which region our church would be a part of. Do we have a choice?**

Yes, but it is recommended that each church consider the geographical region you are near. However, each church would make the final decision in each case.

**16. Can we have more regions than those listed?**

First of all, remember that one of the purposes behind gathering together within a region is to have a large enough group to provide synergy, powerful fellowship, and spiritual sharpening. That being said, there will probably be some large regions that will choose to meet sometimes all together and other times gather together in smaller sub-regions for practical reasons.