

Statement on Kingdom Partnership

The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, exhorted all followers of Christ . . .

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:1-6)

Introduction

Chicago Metropolitan Baptist Association (CMBA) affirms the truth of these words of Paul from the Bible. We believe that there is indeed only one Body of Christ, one Church and that we all serve the same God through our common Savior. We further believe that God calls us to work at realizing this unity in the global Church through diligent work in love, patience, gentleness, humility and the Holy Spirit. We confess with sorrow that we have often fallen short of this standard. Sin and Satan have too often divided us in the past. We humbly beseech the Lord, by the blood of Christ, to forgive us and to enable us by grace to rise above our failures.

Now, CMBA envisions a new day marked by collaboration, partnership, unity, and love. Christians in the global Church come from different backgrounds. We represent different philosophies of ministry. We do not always agree on every issue. Nevertheless, by the grace and wisdom of God, we are one. It shall therefore be the policy of CMBA to walk in unity with other Christians for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are determined to show the world that we are truly His disciples by our love for one another.

The Basis of Kingdom Partnership

In order to further promote the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and to more faithfully bring Good News to those of every people and nation, tribe and tongue, it shall be the policy of CMBA to actively pursue both formal and informal kingdom partnerships with other Christ-followers who may not be a part of our association or denomination – following God together as one family, co-laborers in His harvest (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 14:6; Eph. 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:20; 2 Cor. 6:1; Mt. 9:36-38). May God richly bless these relationships in many unique and inexpressible ways for His glory and our pleasure in Him. The following items represent both the essential elements and basis of such partnerships:

Doctrine

We commit to hold fast to the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jud. 1:3). This faith is fixed firmly on the person and work of our Lord Jesus

Christ and expressed authoritatively in the holy word of God, the Bible (Heb. 12:1-2, Prov. 30:5). While our purpose in kingdom partnerships is especially to engage in collaborative mission with those outside our denominational family, our participation in these partnerships must never diminish or compromise our theological convictions as Southern Baptists. *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) remains the statement of faith for our association. However, an organization, church or individual need not be Southern Baptist in order for us as Southern Baptists to fruitfully collaborate with them in Kingdom ministry for the glory of God. We recognize that it is agreement on the *essentials* of the Christian faith which is truly mandatory for the formation of Kingdom partnerships.

Thankfully, the body of Christ has produced a statement that summarizes core doctrines and missional convictions that has come to find broad and overwhelming acceptance among Evangelical Christians in practically every nation—the *Lausanne Covenant*. This statement has proven itself over time to serve as an excellent theological basis for the formation of Kingdom partnerships around the world. We find that the *Covenant* is in complete harmony not only with the Bible but also with what we believe as Southern Baptists. To be sure, it is not a Southern Baptist statement of faith; nevertheless, it is one that we believe Southern Baptists can affirm without hesitation. We thus affirm the *Lausanne Covenant* and require that it be agreed upon by all parties to any formal kingdom partnership in which CMBA participates. The following points assume this first.

Fellowship, Dialogue, and Mutual Up-building

CMBA recognizes that God has gifted and resourced the universal Church and that we are impoverished when we are isolated from the broader body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). Thus it is right for our association to seek to bless and be blessed by our brothers and sisters from outside CMBA through fellowship, training, consultations and conferences, prayer, worship, study and resource-sharing (Heb. 10:24-25).

Mission

We remain committed to obey Christ by faithfully carrying out the Great Commission “though none go with us.” However, if we are to be truly faithful and effective in bringing Good News from Chicagoland to the ends of the earth (Mt. 28:18-20), we will need to be engaged in mission collaboratively with the whole body of Christ. Southern Baptists alone cannot complete God’s kingdom work! Thus, it shall be the policy of CMBA to seek to make disciples among all peoples, to compassionately meet the needs of people in the name of Jesus, to work towards the planting and strengthening of new churches, and to pray earnestly that the Kingdom of God would come (Mt. 28:18-20, Mt. 10:42, Acts 15:41, Lk. 11:2) – and to do this as often as possible in concert and harmony with other Christians. We will seek to avoid needless duplication in favor of collaboration. We will shun competition in favor of sacrificial service toward churches and ministries outside our association. We will be careful to renounce boasting in anything but that which shows God’s greatness – recognizing that all credit for any good thing

belongs to Him and that unless He builds the house, we all labor in vain (Ps. 127:1).

Love

The leaders of our churches and association should strive to bear the burdens of other Christian leaders who may be kingdom partners with us (Gal. 6:2). We are committed to show love and respect to one another in all forms of communication. In particular, we will not tolerate gossip, insults, slander, or malicious criticisms spoken against our partners in the Lord. Instead, we will always seek to communicate openly in love and gentleness with each other. Our aim will be peace, unity, and mutual edification. It is the policy of CMBA to love all those who are our true brothers and sisters in the faith.

Forming Kingdom Partnerships

The formation of official kingdom partnerships is assumed to be an organic process that is directed by the Holy Spirit. The above points are intended to guide this process by providing essential parameters and limitations, goals and expectations. However, it is perhaps impossible to govern exactly how actual partnerships are formed with other denominations, churches, organizations, or other parties. What we offer below should be considered more as aims for the formation and maintenance of formal kingdom partnerships:

Communication & Accountability – Kingdom partnerships should be pursued eagerly but not entered into lightly or secretly. Parties acting on behalf of CMBA should seek to communicate partnership opportunities with appropriate authorities in our association. Official partnerships should be approved by the administrative council and announced to the association as a whole. Some means of evaluating and assessing partnerships on a regular basis should also be established as a matter of course.

Definition – Vaguely defined partnerships can become inactive and fruitless partnerships. It is good to define the purposes of particular kingdom partnerships and agree together upon specific ways in which those purposes will be fulfilled. In many cases, it may be deemed valuable to establish time frames for particular partnerships.

Holism – Some kingdom partnerships may have a laser-like focus (e.g. clothing the homeless in the inner city), others may be much more broad based. All should be holistic in terms of how we relate to our partners. We are, first and foremost, brothers and sisters in Christ. Our posture in kingdom partnerships can never be “business-only”; it is right and God-pleasing to love, care for, and befriend our partners and not just work with them.