



## POSITION STATEMENT ON ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Ecumenism is the organized attempt to bring about cooperation and unity among Christians. At face value, mere ecumenism seems like a noble endeavor. Certainly Christians should be unified and experience godly fraternity, even between churches of different denominations.

The problem with ecumenism, as it is often understood, is when the definition of “Christian” or “Church” is blurred. We seek clarity and forthrightness in defining how the Fellowship Baptist Church operates and how it cooperates with other churches.

### **Allowances in Ecumenical Partnerships**

In keeping with our Confession of Faith (the Second London Baptist Convention, 1689), we believe in partnership with like-minded churches that upholds local church autonomy. When we say “like-minded,” we mean the term in various degrees.

**A.** The first kind of “like-mindedness” includes those who share our Confession of Faith. With those churches, we have the closest fidelity. Men belonging to churches sharing our Confession of Faith may preach in the church pulpit upon invitation, solicit our membership for financial resources, or ask us to help assist them in settling disagreements, in keeping with Chapter 26 of our Confession. Only those holding to our Confession may serve as elders in our church. We will uphold these churches’ discipline.

**B.** The second type of “like-mindedness” includes those who share a similar Confession of Faith, such as the New Hampshire Confession, the Abstract of Principles, or another Calvinistic, Baptist Confession (these may include Independent Baptist churches, Independent Bible churches, Southern Baptist Churches, Missionary Baptist Churches or Independent Reformed churches, assuming all of the above hold a similar Confession). Men belonging to these Confessions may preach in our church pulpit upon invitation, but with specific investigation of our elder body concerning their teaching. We may decide to partner with these brethren on evangelistic, missionary or other endeavors. With these brethren we may cooperate on any number of matters. We will uphold these churches’ discipline.

**C.** The third type of “like-mindedness” includes those who are evangelical or Protestant in nature but who do not hold to our Confession or a similar Reformed Confession. These include those holding to the Southern Baptist Faith and Message (only) or a similar non-Calvinist Baptist Confession, Independent Fundamental Baptist churches, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Calvary Chapel, the Church of the Nazarene, the Assemblies of God, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Brethren, or Presbyterians holding to the Westminster standards (this list is not exhaustive). With these brethren, we

may affirm their standing as Biblical New Testament churches and we may cooperate with these churches on matters of evangelism, but we will not cooperate with them on ecclesiological matters. Likewise, we may partner with these brethren on humanitarian or charitable causes. In this case and for this level of partnership, they must hold to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Similarly, they must uphold the doctrine of Sola Scriptura to receive this level of partnership. With these brethren we may attend ministerial alliances, help with humanitarian relief, or as said above, evangelism. Finally, as with the first two types of like-mindedness, we will uphold their church's discipline.

### **Prohibitions of Ecumenical Involvement**

We will not be ecumenically involved with religious organizations that do not qualify as Biblical New Testament churches.

A. We will not partner – on the grounds of fellow “church partnership” – with those religious organizations that do not qualify as Biblical New Testament churches in any way that gives tacit affirmation of them as fellow churches. This includes, but is not limited to, churches with female pastors, churches not holding to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, churches not holding to Sola Scriptura, or non-Protestant churches. We may partner with religious organizations that do not qualify as Biblical churches (supposing that they do not actively oppose our Savior's Gospel) in very limited ways, such as hunger relief, humanitarian aid, or the sanctity of human life. We will do so only with caution, and **if it is abundantly clear that our limited partnership on such matters does not equal an endorsement of those organizations as Biblical churches**. Even then, our partnership will be reserved in limited ways and in times of crisis. We will seek to actively evangelize these organizations.

B. Likewise, we have no countenance of those organizations that actively oppose the Savior's Gospel or worship false gods. This includes both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox organizations, non-Trinitarians (such as the United Pentecostals), Judaizers (like the Hebrew Roots Movement), cults (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, or “hard shell” Seventh Day Adventists), hyper-charismatics (the International House of Prayer, Bethel Church in Redding, California or the Vineyard Movement) or other groups that are explicitly non-Christian (such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.). Neither will we provide any countenance to churches belonging to denominations that are clearly apostate (these include the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, Unitarians-Universalists, the American Baptists, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) unless that individual church can demonstrate that it is in active protest of its denomination's apostasies. In no way will we partner with these organizations, even on important matters like disaster response, the sanctity of life, or hunger relief. Please note: We *will* provide help and assistance to the members of these organizations, but we will not partner with these organizations to provide assistance. We will seek to actively evangelize these organizations, as they are enemies of the Savior's Gospel.

Our stance on ecumenical partnership comes from 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light*

*with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?" (ESV).*

We are convinced that there is no justifiable reason to partner with those organizations actively opposed to the Savior's Gospel or who actively pervert the doctrine of God.

We do not believe that forbidding certain types of ecumenical partnership divides the Body of Christ. We believe it defines the Body of Christ.