

Hope Community Church

Week 11 - Statement Of Faith: Church Cooperation

Statement Of Faith: Church Cooperation

We believe that local churches can effectively promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary basis. Acts 15:36, 41; 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:1–3; Revelation 1:4, 10, 11

? What are the benefits of church cooperation? Why do you think it is a part of Hope's statement of faith?

? How would you define Hope as a church? How is Hope's culture different from other churches you have experienced?

? What is the important distinction between being a follower of Christ and a person who attends church?

2 Corinthians 8:1–5,13–15 (NIV)

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

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¹³Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

? How did the Macedonian churches respond to the needs of God's people (specifically the Corinthians)? How did Paul challenge the Corinthians to respond?

? Have you seen church cooperation modeled well? In what ways?

? In what ways should we feel encouraged or challenged to contribute to other churches or Christian organizations beyond Hope?

Ephesians 4:2–6 (NIV)

² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

? What does this passage say about unity?

? Practices related to baptism, communion, worship, ministry focus, use of technology, and Bible study can vary widely between churches. How does this passage fit with or challenge your perception of other churches or denominations that are different from what you're used to?

? How can we value and encourage churches that are different from our norm? How might those differences be strengths?

Acts 15:5–11 (NIV)

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart,

showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

? In this passage, some Jewish believers felt that Gentile believers should conform to Jewish customs. What was the root of that desire?

? How did Peter challenge this assumption?

? How might differences and diversity of His people glorify God?

Peter was a devout Jew, following God's commands. God knew this, and gave Peter a special vision to let him know that what was once "unclean" was no longer forbidden. You can read this passage in Acts 10:9–16. A related passage in Romans 14:1–15:3 talks about how believers can encourage and protect one another without being judgmental.

? In what ways do you need to joyfully embrace the differences between our church community and other church communities?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Examine how you talk about and perceive other denominations and believers. What are your own unbiblical biases?

? How can you better show honor to other believers who express their love for Christ in their own ways?