



Responsible Trustee	Date policy produced	Name of Policy Writer	Frequency of Review	Date reviewed on / by whom	
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Working With Other Faiths Policy

Application

This policy provides the underpinning for decisions to be made about when / how Cambray Baptist Church works with other churches or faith-based organisations. Such decisions are always made by the Elders and Deacons with advice from the Senior Pastor as one of their number. No decision on working with other churches or faith-based organisations may be made on behalf of Cambray Baptist Church without the agreement of the Elders and Deacons, who also are acting as Trustees of the Church to uphold the constitution and Basis of Faith of the church.

Background

Cambray's founding documents established Cambray Baptist Church as a church whose Pastor holds to a Calvinistic theological, Particular Baptist position. The Basis of Faith of Cambray Baptist Church is Evangelical, Gospel-based and seeks to be Biblically faithful, but is also broad within it's Reformed Evangelical position. Unity in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is therefore at the heart of our founding principles, and while we may differ with other churches on a number of matters not essential to salvation, we strive to maintain the unity we enjoy with other bible-based gospel churches and para-church groups both within and beyond the family of Baptist Churches.

However, our commitment to the Gospel means that we are unable to express Christian fellowship with those who cannot affirm the fundamental truths of the faith.

Biblical Basis

From the very beginning of creation God's purpose was that the entire human race would be united in fellowship under his good rule of love and blessing. Tragically ever since Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden of Eden, sinful humanity has been characterised not only by alienation from God but also by broken relationships, suspicion and division from one another. However God, in his great grace, purposed to save a people for himself out of the broken community of this sinful world, and to build a new humanity united as a single body.

The ultimate fulfilment of this vision is the single people united in worship before the throne of God in glory (Rev 7:9). This unity of God's people is effected through the saving work of Christ on the Cross. Through him both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God: "...His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross... For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." (Eph 2:15-18)

The whole church is to be built up “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph 4:13). This is part of God’s great purpose “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (Eph 1:10); indeed all things are to be reconciled in Him: “For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col 1:19-20)

Christian unity is therefore at the heart of the purposes of God.

Our Gospel Unity

Christian unity is established through the Gospel. It is through this message that we are saved and united to Christ (1Cor 15:1-2, Rom 1:16, Eph 1:13). When the Lord Jesus prays for unity, it is amongst those who receive the Gospel (John 17:20). Some say that we are united as believers by our experience of the Holy Spirit. This is true, but it would be wrong to set the Holy Spirit in opposition to the Gospel. We receive the Spirit through the Gospel (Gal 3:2, Eph 1:13). It is the Spirit who gives us new birth (John 3:5-8), but he brings this new life through the Word (Jam 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23). If we have a real experience of the Holy Spirit, then we will find that he deepens our understanding and appreciation of Christ, and his Word (1Cor 2:9-16). When we work and cooperate together, it is in the cause of the Gospel (Phil 1:27).

If we are to find common cause with other believers, it will be partnership on the basis of a shared commitment to the Gospel. This will be expressed by a shared doctrinal basis.

Rejection of False Teachers

Whilst we long to enjoy unity with all who profess the name of Christ, the New Testament warns repeatedly of false teachers and false prophets coming into the church. Whilst such false teachers profess to know Christ as Lord, and appear as brothers, they are in reality wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt 7:15, Acts 20:29-31). In twisting or distorting the Gospel they rob us of our message for the lost, and instead of building up believers in the truth lead them astray to spiritual ruin (Col 2:18-19, Rev 2:20-23). Elders are charged with the primary responsibility of guarding the flock against such malign influences, and we are commanded to reject them and remain separate from them (Rom 16:17, Gal 1:8-9, 5:12, Phil 3:2, 2 Pet 2:1-22, 2 John 1:9-10, Jude 1:1-25).

These New Testament teachings require us to stand apart from those who would deny the core truths of the gospel, whether implicitly or expressly.

It is important to understand the pastoral motivation of Jesus and the apostles in warning against false teachers. Matters of spiritual life and death are at stake if these false brothers are accepted and their deviant doctrines embraced. We are therefore obligated by love to stand apart from them, both for the sake of the church and its witness to Christ, and also for the sake of such false teachers themselves, as we would long for them to come to repentance and true saving faith.

Policy

Jesus prayed for the unity of his people, and this is an essential element of our witness (John 17:23). We are urged to maintain spiritual unity, in the face of differences of belief and practice which are not essential to the Gospel. Therefore:

- Our commitment to unity extends to all who are united to Christ in a variety of church and para-church groups. We look forward to the day when all of God's people will be united before him in glory.
- This spiritual unity is to be expressed amongst all who confess the truth of the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that we are saved, and built up in the faith. Jesus' prayer for unity was for those who would believe in him through the message preached by the apostles (John 17:20). True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel. The gospel of salvation by grace is so precious to us that we desire to stand together with all who believe and preach it.
- We cannot express Christian fellowship with those who reject the gospel as expressed in our Basis of Faith. The New Testament warns us repeatedly to guard the church against the influence of false teachers who deny the truth. Therefore we cannot join in partnership in evangelism or activities of Christian fellowship with those who are unable to affirm the essential doctrines of the faith as expressed in our church Basis of Faith and ethical statements.
- We are unable to affiliate formally to groups (such as Churches Together) which exist to express unity between churches naming Jesus as Lord, but without concern as to whether they hold to the core doctrines of the gospel as expressed in our Doctrinal Basis.
- There are many opportunities for us to find common cause with others (both inside and outside the professing church), if these do not compromise our distinctive testimony to the Gospel. For example, we may be able to speak together on moral issues, in defence of our religious liberties, or to work together in acts of practical charity and compassion. Such activities are at the discretion of local church leaders.
- Working with those with whom we have common cause should, however, only be in situations where we are not required to suggest common faith / belief nor where another faith / belief is propagated from 'the same platform'.
- In line with the trust deeds of the church buildings and our church constitution, we are unable to permit use of our buildings or resources for activities by any group, person or business which does not advance the objectives of the church and who cannot affirm the essential doctrines of the faith as expressed in our Basis of Faith. In the rare cases where we consider commercial or charity use of the church building or resources, no organisation whose objectives, stance or stated position which is in opposition to any part of the Basis of Faith of the church will be permitted.