

RESPONSE TO THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE BY THE COORDINATING COUNCIL OF THE COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

As a Fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches, we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5) As we make application for membership in the Baptist World Alliance, we sincerely desire understanding and harmony with all member bodies, including the Southern Baptist Convention. We make the following statement "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4: 2-3).

In accordance with the requirements of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's (CBF) application for membership in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), it is necessary that the CBF establish that it is not an "integral part" of any other BWA member, in this case the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Accordingly, we the Coordinating Council, as the governing board of the CBF, in our regular business meeting on October 17-19, 2002 in Atlanta, GA do hereby acknowledge that we have "separated ourselves from the structures and organization of the SBC, and have a distinctly diverse understanding to the SBC of what it means to be an organized body of Baptist churches and individuals in covenant relationship."

Furthermore, we offer the following twenty indications that we are no longer integral to the SBC:

1. We have repeatedly and publicly stated that we are not a part of the SBC.
2. The SBC has acknowledged that we are a separate entity by refusing to receive funding through the CBF for the past seven years.
3. We have our own published and widely distributed philosophy, mission statement, core commitments and key initiatives.
4. We have our own annual assemblies that routinely draw 3,000 to 5,000 of our constituents, at which we elect leadership, pass budgets and conduct business.
5. Last year we adopted an organization-wide strategic plan setting our direction for the next decade.
6. We have substantial organizational documentation, including a Constitution and Bylaws, which clearly establishes our unique and separate identity.
7. We have our own organizational structure, including a board of directors, formal annual budgets, and a large group of employed staff and office buildings.
8. We have organized autonomous states and regions with their own boards of directors, formal budgets, employed staffs, and office buildings.

9. We own and operate our own missions sending agency, foundation and a benefits board with over 300 participants.
10. Our 140 missionaries are in partnership with other autonomous entities worldwide as representatives of the CBF.
11. We share no common agencies or institutions whatsoever with the SBC.
12. We have over 150 partnering churches that have no formal membership in the SBC.
13. We have planted over fifty churches that partner only with CBF at the national and international level.
14. We are recognized as an official endorsing body for chaplains and pastoral counselors by the US Armed Forces Board; national pastoral care, counseling and education organizations; and other viable entities. Since 1998 more than 250 people have been endorsed.
15. We are recognized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) by the United Nations and have participated as such on the world stage.
16. We have many negotiated partnerships with established entities that recognize us as a separate and distinctive organization.
17. We are listed in the European Baptist Federation Directory as a separate entity.
18. Many of our present leaders have never participated in the SBC or considered themselves Southern Baptist.
19. We have applied for membership as a distinctive, autonomous Baptist association in the Baptist World Alliance.
20. We are recognized by numerous U.S. Baptist state conventions as a legitimate national Baptist body, including Virginia, Texas, and North Carolina, each of which offers a channel for its churches to give to CBF through its state budget.

Though fully independent of the SBC or any other union, we do not declare that we are a denomination or convention. Rather, we are Baptist by conviction and we are a partnership of churches and individuals by philosophy. We have chosen instead to define ourselves as a "fellowship," which means that we are "a Baptist association of churches and individuals" in partnership for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

In keeping with our mission statement, commitments, and initiatives, we "uphold the right of autonomous churches to partner [or not] with any global mission agency or congregational entity of their choice." This is consistent with our understanding that the local congregation is the focus of traditional Baptist polity and the centerpiece of any Great Commission, New Testament strategy to transform the world through Christ's love.