

Explanation of Beliefs

Carolina Movement

Part 1 - Introduction

Our Board of Directors at Carolina Movement has put much time into thinking through how to best approach our statement of beliefs. Carolina Movement is not a church or denomination, but a mission organization supporting churches and complimenting denominations to help churches become church planting churches.

We desire to let each independent and autonomous church or organization we partner with determine their own set of beliefs under their own ecclesiological structure. However, we also desire to help catalyze churches to plant distinctly Christian churches who accurately proclaim the Gospel of Jesus across North Carolina. Therefore, it is necessary to define the basic evangelical beliefs that define a Gospel proclaiming Christian Church.

We find the famous quote; *"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity"*, to be helpful when thinking about theological beliefs for a broader mission organization like Carolina Movement. While the quote is full of wise counsel, it also begs the important question: "what are the essentials?" What are the things that would and should cause churches to not cooperate or fellowship with one another?

Most but not all churches and leaders realize they should not allow every theological distinction to hinder cooperation with other bible-believing, gospel-centered churches. With that being said, we do believe there is a place for separation when churches cease to be bible-believing, gospel-centered churches

Part 2 - Essentials

The Bible clearly teaches needed separation from the non-believing and the heretical. There are certainly situations where it is unwise to associate and cooperate with those who reject Biblical truth and the gospel of Christ.

So how do we know when to separate? When is it OK to extend the right hand of fellowship and when is it not? This takes us back to our opening quotation — *In essentials unity, non-essentials liberty, in all things charity*. We all long for unity, but what are the non-negotiables of the Christian faith that when violated would force separation?

We believe that theological beliefs that serve as the drivetrain of the gospel such as a Triune God, deity of Christ, deity of the Holy Spirit, deity of God the Father, the virgin birth, the sinless life of Christ, substitutionary atonement, literal resurrection, and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone described in the inspired, authoritative Word of God cannot be compromised.

These classic orthodox beliefs represent the first part of our statement of beliefs. However, we believe it is necessary to articulate a second area of essential beliefs in our modern era. These beliefs include defining explicit sinful behaviors the scriptures describe as evil but our culture and some churches accept, promote and glorify. We believe it is essential for Christian churches of all tribes who stand on the word of God to clearly define sin in the way the Bible defines sin.

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness” - Isaiah 5:20 CSB

Our statement of beliefs includes such statements defining biblical righteousness which are essential for Christian fellowship and cooperation.

Part 3 - Non-Essentials

Now, let's assume we agree on essential Christian doctrines necessary for any level of fellowship or cooperation. How do we address non-essential doctrines in which many evangelical Christian churches differ? First, we affirm that non-essential does not equal non-important. Instead, they are not essential beliefs for salvation and cooperation among brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's return to the quote we began with at the beginning of our explanation; *“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”*

How can churches place proper importance on key non-essential doctrines, while extending liberty to other churches with varying beliefs without breaking fellowship and cooperation?

First, it is important to begin this part of the conversation with the understanding that some level of unity, fellowship, and cooperation among Bible-believing Christians and churches is not optional.

John 17 records the longest prayer of Jesus in the Bible, prayed shortly before his arrest and crucifixion. It marks the one time in the scriptures when Jesus specifically prays for Christians in our day and age.

“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed... “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” - John 17:1,21-23

A failure to strive for unity, fellowship, and cooperation among those who follow Jesus as Lord is a direct departure from the express will of King Jesus. The prayer of Jesus in John 17 is known by many as the great collaboration. We must find a way to teach and practice vital secondary doctrines of faith within our churches without breaking fellowship with other churches over every theological

difference. The result when we separate over every secondary doctrine is a complete fracture instead of the complete unity Jesus prayed for in his future church.

Part 4 - Application

We desire all of North Carolina to know that God has sent Jesus into the world and has loved them through the united presence of the body of Christ on mission together (vs 23). However, we cannot have unity for the mission with those who do not recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his Word. Our goal at Carolina Movement is to provide a framework to live out the prayer of Jesus in John 17, stand on essential doctrines of the faith, and allow churches to place proper importance on key secondary doctrines.

In our statement of beliefs, we strive to clearly define the essentials of Christian doctrine that should unite us with fellow Christians, while also separating us from unbelievers and those who no longer hold to biblical Christianity. A church that does not affirm our statement of beliefs would not be a candidate for becoming either a sending church or a church plant with Carolina Movement.

In our statement of beliefs, we do not define a stance on a variety of secondary doctrines. Rather than implying these doctrines are unimportant, we extend liberty to local churches to articulate and define these doctrines at their local church level.

We seek to provide a framework for sending churches to partner with church planters who align with their key secondary beliefs while also having fellowship with the broader body of evangelical believers. Our financial model allows sending churches to designate 100% of their donations to a church plant of their choosing, enabling them to intentionally partner and direct 100% of their donation funds to church plants with whom they are in theological alignment.

Our Church Planter [application](#) intentionally asks a range of secondary theological questions to help best match sending churches with approved church planters. Sending Churches have the freedom and encouragement to ask planters with whom they are interested in partnering any theological question to ensure they are a good fit for mission partnership. Our goal is to allow sending churches the ability to have full theological transparency when choosing the right church plants to support with the precious resources, time, and relationships they are charged with stewarding. Ultimately, it is up to individual churches to choose what churches their local leadership feels led to partner with based on their theological beliefs, relational connection, geographic priorities, and missional strategies.

The Lausanne Covenant is widely regarded as one of the most significant documents in modern church history. Emerging from the First Lausanne Congress in 1974, with Billy Graham as its advocate and John Stott as its Chief Architect, it served as a great rallying call to the evangelical Church around the world. It defined what it means to be evangelical, and challenged Christians to work together to make Jesus Christ known throughout the world. It is a covenant with one another, and a covenant with God himself.

The following quotation from the Lausanne Covenant fully expresses our heart:

"World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel... We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily advance evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by a sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the Church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience." - *The Lausanne Covenant*

The Baptist Faith and Message is also a great model for how churches and denominations can maintain adherence to key secondary beliefs while also allowing room for cross denominational partnership for the sake of world evangelism.

"Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

- Baptist Faith & Message 2000 (XIV. Cooperation)

Carolina Movement has sought to provide a framework for such cooperation where the end of cooperation for the evangelization of the state of North Carolina can occur with "no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament" through freely choosing church plants and planters that are in line with their respective theological beliefs and designating 100% of their contributions as a sending church towards their designated church plant.

In conclusion, like mission organizations such as [Compassion International](#), [Houston Church Planting Network](#), [Samaritans Purse](#) and [World Vision](#) (click to see statements of faith) we seek to be grounded as a distinctly evangelical Christian organization that empowers local churches to carry out the great commission of Jesus in North Carolina. Carolina Movement accomplishes this goal through empowering churches to cooperate in order to become church planting churches, leaving non-essential doctrines to churches and denominations to determine as they are led without violation of conscience or compromise.