

Resolution on the Priority of the Local Church

The messengers of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting together in regular conference June 25–29, 2012, in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania,

Rejoicing that God has granted forgiveness and adoption into His family to all who believe on His Son (John 1:12; Eph. 1:5), and that God enables His children to grow in righteous conduct and deepening faith through the instruction of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16) and the ministry of fellow members of the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:21; 4:16),

Believing that a local church is an organized congregation of immersed believers associated by covenant of faith and commitment to righteousness (Eph. 4:13–16), and carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20),

Affirming that each local church has the responsibility of self-government subject to Christ, under the oversight and nurture of pastors and the service of deacons (1 Tim. 3:5,10), and that it is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel,

Conscious that some of God’s children give heed to false doctrine and disobedient practice, falling prey to Satan’s attempt to remove the pillar and ground of the truth which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15–4:2),

Observing that some believers exhibit an imbalanced focus on personal growth and benefit, neglecting effectual love for siblings in Christ (Phil. 2:4); being quick to distance themselves or depart the local church rather than bear with one another in humility and gentleness, or give and receive correction consistent with doctrinal soundness, or yield liberties for the sake of love,

Recognizing that some diminish the distinctiveness of the church by confusing the church and the coming kingdom of God,

Aware that some theologians claim that God is done with the local church, arguing that His bride’s persistent imperfections result in His abandonment of the concept altogether, we

Reject the idea that carnality warrants the abandonment of God’s plan for the local church since God alone can rescind or replace our commission and He has not,

Declare that the spiritual growth of the body is just as important as personal growth and that neither can truly occur without increased love for fellow saints,

Urge those among the GARBC to thoroughly instruct the brethren in God’s teaching on the local church, promoting and examining the expression of their local church covenant and rehearsing it regularly; and to equip the family of God for ministry that we may be a holy temple for the Lord, confronting those who “church-hop” as a technique of avoidance, and taking heed to the spiritual health and well-being of each member and prospective member,

Direct believers in Christ to identify with faithful saints in a location through membership and submit to God-placed gifts and roles, demonstrating loyalty to Christ and care for fellowship and attendance, as we see the Day approaching (Heb. 10:24), and

Recommit ourselves to the manifestation of God’s wisdom by the church, bowing our knees in submission to the Father to Whom be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. Amen.