



“Autonomy of the Local Church”

Matthew 16:13-197

June 15, 2014

What Does Autonomous Mean?

- _____, self-governing, self-directed
- Led by Pastor, Staff, and Church Leadership
- Democratic Process, (everyone has a say)
- We choose to cooperate collectively

What is Our Structure? (Acts 1:8)

Jerusalem _____

Judea _____

Samaria _____

The World _____

- The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)
Founded in 1845, & headquarters is Nashville
- The Cooperative Program
Founded in 1925 to fund the work of the SBC

What Are Our Guiding Principles as a Church?

- The _____
- The _____ and _____

What is Our Purpose?

Worship Expressing the love we have to God privately and corporately

Evangelism Mobilizing our members to engage the culture, locally and globally

Discipleship Developing fully devoted followers

Fellowship of Christ
Building Meaningful & Accountable Relationships with other believers

Ministry Meeting needs with love

Churches grow stronger through worship, grow broader through ministry, grow warmer through fellowship, grow deeper through discipleship, grow larger through evangelism

How Can I Join This Church?

- Profess your faith in Christ and be baptized
- Transfer of Letter
- By Statement of Faith

What is My Responsibility? Be a Committed Member

1. I will _____ the unity of my church
 - By acting in love towards others
 - By refusing to _____
 - By following the leadership
2. I will _____ the responsibility of my church
 - By _____ for its growth
 - By _____ the unchurched to attend
 - By welcoming those who are our guests
3. I will _____ the ministry of my church
 - By discovering my PLACE of service
 - By being equipped to serve
 - By developing a _____ heart
4. I will _____ the testimony of my church
 - By _____ faithfully
 - By living a godly life
 - By giving regularly

WHY WE ARE BAPTISTS?

“Autonomy of the Local Church”

Matthew 16:13-19 & Colossians 1:18

June 15, 2014 AM Worship

What is our identity, what makes us distinctive, different.
Cannot lose our identity as who we are as Southern Baptist

2 weeks ago we learned the first letter of BAPTIST was the **B**: the Bible is our sole authority above anything else!

We will read this morning the clear **foundation and head** of the Church Universal (including all Christian Churches) and our Church too is Jesus Christ. [Matthew 16:13-19](#); [Colossian 1:18](#); [Ephesians 3:20](#) It is not me nor any other leader in our church nor member, it's Jesus!

Quote: M.E. Dodd wrote, “The deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection and His 2nd Coming are the component part of this foundation... The Church has a sure foundation, a safe foundation, a solid foundation, an enduring foundation, an eternal foundation.”

So the local Church is not some invention of man, it is the design of Almighty God to be the vehicle for world redemption. It's primary calling is to worship for out of that comes everything else a church does.

The Greek word *ekklesia* is the primary NT word for Church and means the ones call out.

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

“A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

What Does Autonomous Mean?

- **Independent, self-governing, self-directed**

No one can tell us what to do yet it is not true that we are free to just do as we please either – it cannot become anarchy. We must follow Christ and His Word above all else. That is what guides us.

- **Led by Pastor, Staff, and Church Leadership**

The Leadership which God has ordained to lead the church.

2 offices listed in the New Testament, Pastor & Deacons, and church leadership provide accountability to those who serve the body. Three words used there, bishop, elder, and pastor which we believe adds understanding and definition to the office of the pastor. These words were used interchangeably. The Pastor is to shepherd, lead, guide, and direct the Church while the deacons are called to sever alongside the Pastor in ministry as servants. The Pastor should be a man.

- **Democratic Process, (everyone has a say) –Congregational**

The process which we choose to operate in, everyone can have a say. It's why we vote on stuff, do business meetings, so that everyone realizes they have a part which means they have a responsibility.

- **We choose to cooperate collectively**

We make a conscience decision to choose cooperate with other churches, through the structure of the SBC.

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

“Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by

various groups of Christ's people. 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.”

How Do We Cooperate? (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem Lebannon Baptist Association
(43 churches mostly in Forest County) association exists to promote unity, fellowship, & ministry in these churches (Example, church wants to ordain homosexual, association would vote them out) Located in Hattiesburg
- Judea Mississippi Baptist State Convention
Mississippi State Convention where there are over 1500 churches in our state
- Samaria North America Mission Board (NAMB)
Dr. Kevin Ezell is the president and there are over 5000 missionaries in North America
- The World International Mission Board (IMB)
Dr. Tom Eliff, just under 5000 missionaries around the world going and sharing the Gospel of Christ.

- **The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)**
Founded in 1845, & headquarters is Nashville
Founded in 1845 with 15.7 millions members (Don't know where half of them are) Made up of over 46,000 churches, that cooperate in a worldwide effort and the headquarters is in Nashville, TN
- **The Cooperative Program**
Founded in 1925 to fund the work of the SBC
Helps to fund international missions, north American missions, state and local missions, seminaries, hospitals, colleges and other ministries. Our church is currently giving 6% of our budget to the cooperative program. This doubles our Cooperative Program giving from 3 to 6 and with plans to be at 10% by the Year 2016. We partner with the other 50,000 churches in doing this. The Cooperative Program is the greatest vehicle used to share the Gospel here and around the world. There is

nothing else like it! M.E. Dodd again stated, "...Money given to the Cooperative Program will go farther, rise higher, spread wider, work deeper and last longer than when given to any other place or cause."

Would be easy to keep money for ourselves as many churches have done in recent decades, but as Pastor I will lead us to increasing that giving to 10%. It was reduced because of the financial difficulties at the time, but the Lord has blessed us and we will continue to do our part.

What Are Our Guiding Principles As a Church?

- The Bible
- The Baptist Faith and Message

What is Our Purpose?

- Worship** Expressing the love we have to God privately and corporately
- Evangelism** Mobilizing our members to engage the culture, locally and globally
- Discipleship** Developing fully devoted followers of Christ.
(It is not a program, not a process, helping believers grow spiritually)
- Fellowship** Building Meaningful & Accountable Relationships with other believers (Community) Sense of connection
- Ministry** Meeting needs with love Find a need and meet it.

Churches grow stronger through worship

Churches grow broader through ministry

Churches grow warmer through fellowship

Churches grow deeper through discipleship

Churches grow larger through evangelism

When we do these 5 things, 4 things will follow – numerical growth, spiritual growth, ministry expansion, and missions advance.

How Can I Join This Church?

- **Profess your faith in Christ and be baptized**
- **Transfer of Letter** (member of another sister Southern Baptist Church)
We don't steal church members, you will not see me do that ever.
Now, we do allow the Lord to lead people to us from other congregations as the Lord leads them our way.

80% of all church growth in America is what we call transfer growth

- **By Statement of Faith**

Means I am a believer, I have been walking with Lord, I have been properly baptized by immersion, but I am not in a Southern Baptist Church.

What is Our Responsibility? Be a Committed Member

You can be a member, and not a model member, you can have your name on our church roll and not be a Committed Member.

50% of people on many rolls of Southern Baptist Churches, cannot find where these people are.

It's why we did that series back in February I Am A Church

Member...*(Review that quickly and encourage people to sign the banner)*

6 Commitments We Ask Everyone to Make – I Will Be A Functioning Church Member, a Unifying Church Member, Not Let It Be About my Preferences or Desires, I Will Pray for My Church Leaders, I will Lead My Family to Be Healthy Church Members, and I will Treasure My Church Membership as a Gift.

Starting Point for everyone to know what we believe as a Church and where we are going – We will require that to be taken before you can join in the coming months – **We will have one coming soon for those new folks who have joined us in recent months.**

1. I will safeguard the unity of my church

(His church, but take ownership in it)
disunity, someone who sows discord

- By acting in love towards others
- By refusing to gossip
- By following the leadership [Ephesians 4:29](#)

If I am going to speak a word, it needs to build up, not tear down

2. I will share the responsibility of my church

- By praying for its growth
- By inviting the unchurched to attend
80% of those who in church today, because someone personally invited them
- By welcoming those who are our guests and not just leaving it there

These folks are not visitors, but guests, roll out the red carpet, get the china out

3. I will serve the ministry of my church Not saved to sit, but to serve

- By discovering my PLACE of service
- By being equipped to serve
- By developing a servant's heart

4. I will support the testimony of my church

What would people say if we sent out people into the 10 miles around our church, what do think about that church (private investigator)

We assume people know exactly where we are but they don't know about it, don't where we are

- By attending faithfully
- By living a godly life
- By giving regularly