

Resolution



The Mandate

The commission given by the risen Christ to His church is clear: “Make disciples of all nations!” This Great Commission is accomplished by three actions: going, baptizing, and teaching. As the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit births new life into people who subsequently identify with Christ and His church through believer’s baptism. These nascent followers of Christ are taught in the local church context to observe all that Christ commanded with the promise of God’s presence and power (Matthew 28:19–20). This discipleship mandate is obeyed both individually and corporately through the teaching of God’s Word and the practice of God’s Word, believers not only becoming mature disciples but becoming disciple-makers.

Yet local churches dwindle in number and in health.¹ Regular Baptist fellowships, and other like-minded fellowships, shrink under the onslaught of a virulently secular age.² Internecine squabbles flourish, while scores of lost people enter eternity apart from Christ. Young adults raised in solid churches are leaving profession of faith in Christ and relationship with the local church.³

God is at work in our church fellowship, with significant bright places both large and known, and small and obscure. Here the baptismal waters are constantly stirred and adult professions of faith are common, with believers making measurable strides in faith and obedience, and with church families that know the joy of corporate godliness, Biblical unity, gospel growth, and intentional outreach in the immediate community and to unreached peoples.

Churches are being revitalized by returning to God’s pattern for local churches. Churches are being planted, and resources are being dedicated to the primary task of making disciples.

God’s Word and promise are true: Jesus Christ is building His church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

Therefore, we, the messengers of the GARBC meeting in annual conference, June 27, 2023, in Salem, Oregon, lament the presence of any indolence, pride, and neglect of Christ’s Great Commission.

¹ About 4,500 Protestant churches closed in 2019, the last year data is available, with about 3,000 new churches opening. Source: Lifeway Research.

² The GARBC at its apex had approximately 1,650 affiliated churches, with the present number of churches now totaling approximately 1,150. The largest number of churches exiting the fellowship are those churches that have closed their doors.

³ Young adults between ages 18 and 22 who had attended church regularly for at least a year during high school. The firm found that seven out of 10 had stopped attending church regularly. Source: Lifeway Research.



We resolve to examine our own hearts before God, to make our own call and election sure, to manifest progressive and continuous spiritual growth that begins at conversion, that continues by adding to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control endurance, to endurance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love, and that is completed at the abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5–11).

We seek again to become faithful disciples of Christ, not merely giving lip service to the Great Commission but doing the good work of making disciples personally and in our local churches. We with renewed vigor will go with the gospel to the lost. Without shame we will bring new believers to identify with Christ and His church through the waters of baptism. We will not only practice what we preach but preach what we practice, leading fellow disciples to observe all that Christ commanded.

We purpose to maintain fidelity to our doctrinal heritage while reaching forth with that message—the gospel of Christ—heralding the wonder of God’s saving grace to sinners both near and far. We speak God’s truth to ourselves that we are the children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life (Philippians 2:15–16).

We confess that we have been imbalanced at times, equating Biblical separation with isolation from lost people. We purpose by God’s grace to maintain the distinction between truth and error, between fidelity and compromise, *and* to develop meaningful relationships as individuals and as local churches with the lost in our communities.

We purpose this in faith and obedience, dependent upon the grace of our God. We as individual believers, as spiritual leaders, as churches, and as a fellowship seek that God will make us “worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12, ESV).

