

Resolution on Fellowship

Fellowship with God (1 John 1:3-7).

- Whereas the great malady of mankind is separation from God; whereas that separation was total and final, leaving every person in death, separated from God's life; in darkness, separated from God's light; in lies, separated from God's truth; under wrath, separated from God's love; and slaves of the kingdom of darkness rather than heirs of His Kingdom.
- Whereas God pursued restored fellowship with mankind by sending His Son Jesus - the image of the invisible God, who came to bring light to our darkness and life to our death; who bore our sins in His body on the tree; took God's wrath for our sins; died as the substitute for sinners; paid for our sins that He might bring us to God. Whereas the risen Christ offers forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, and peace with God to all who believe; whereas Jesus sent his witnesses to declare that which they had seen and heard – the gospel – which received by faith creates true fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; whereas the gospel of Jesus Christ is the solution to our separation from God and the source of our true fellowship with God.
- We resolve to treasure our blood-bought fellowship with the triune God above all other fellowships. We resolve to separate ourselves from the works of darkness and to confess our sins to God and to one another, abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good. We resolve to prioritize our sweet communion with God in our corporate gatherings, our personal relationships, and our missionary endeavors.

Fellowship with God leads to fellowship with one another (believers in the local church).

- Whereas restored fellowship with God enables us to fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3-7); whereas the Spirit of God, in believers, brings unity and fellowship (Philippians 2:1-2); whereas the first believers in the risen Christ, baptized in the Spirit, devoted themselves to fellowship (Acts 2:42).
- Whereas believers are those who have been called into the fellowship of the Son (1 Corinthians 1:9); whereas the body of Jesus was torn to bring unity to the body of Christ, pictured in the regular fellowship around the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-20); whereas the labor for the gospel provided grounds for joyful fellowship (Philippians 1:3-5); whereas those suffering for the sake of Christ find fellowship with one another in partaking of His sufferings (Philippians 3:8-10).
- We resolve to welcome each brother and sister in Christ as Christ has welcomed us, with the affection, mercy, and fellowship of the Spirit (Romans 15:7; Galatians 2:9; Philippians 2:1-2). We resolve to pursue unity amid diversity by focusing on the common bond we have as God's children, cleansed by the blood of Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and citizens of God's eternal Kingdom. We resolve to walk in fellowship with Christ and His body by confessing our sins, seeking and granting forgiveness, and delighting in the unity created by His torn flesh and shed blood in the regular remembrance of the Lord's Supper.
- We resolve to lessen our attraction to lesser sources of commonality, like ethnicity, class, status, education, hobbies, style, and culture by highlighting our gospel bond. We resolve to labor for the gospel, suffer for the gospel, and to rejoice in the fellowship thereby engendered among the saints.

Resolution on Fellowship *(continued)*

Fellowship with the Body of Christ (believers in the universal church)

- Whereas God, in the gospel, created a people for His name (1 Peter 2:9-10); whereas that people consists of individuals redeemed by the blood of the Lamb from every tribe, tongue, ethnicity, and nation (Revelation 5:9-10); whereas Spirit baptism, since the day of Pentecost and until the Rapture, makes believers members of the Body of Christ (Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 12); whereas the “fellowship of the Son” extends beyond the bounds of the local church (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- Whereas Jesus commanded his disciples to be known by their love one for another (John 13:35); whereas the saints are to do good to all – especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10); whereas the early local churches delighted in the fellowship of ministering to sister churches, giving and receiving encouragement and financial assistance (2 Corinthians 8:3-4); whereas the fellowship of laboring for the gospel and suffering for the gospel extends beyond the local church (Philippians 1:5).
- Whereas the mission of the universal church involves teaching new disciples to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19-20); whereas the church, from its beginning was devoted to the Apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:41); whereas the church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15); whereas pastors are instructed to preserve and promote sound doctrine (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:10, 14; 4:2-3; Titus 2:1); whereas the Lord Jesus, the head of the church, walks among the churches (Revelation 1:20-2:2) and is sanctifying and cleansing His church by His Word (Ephesians 5:26).
- We resolve to pursue fellowship with local gatherings of the true church around the world, to join with them in the praise of God’s name, and to make known the manifold wisdom of God in creating a people in Christ (Ephesians 3:8-11).
- We resolve to resist the ease of focusing only on the needs of our own local church and to initiate new avenues of communication and care between churches. We resolve to help churches that are suffering, to edify churches that are weak, to equip churches that have needs, and to give aid to churches that lack.
- We resolve to promote sound doctrine in our own local churches and in our fellowship with sister churches. We resolve to maintain clear levels of fellowship, recognizing that while should fellowship broadly with sister churches which preach and protect the gospel, depth of fellowship correlates to the depth of doctrines held in common. We resolve to partner deeply with churches that prioritize the sound doctrine of the Scriptures, as affirmed in the GARBC Statement of Faith. We resolve to affirm the autonomy of sister churches to apply sound doctrine in their cultural context, leaving room for varying ministry practices and methods from church to church.
- We resolve to encourage churches to center their ministries on the Word of God. We resolve to promote expository preaching resulting from accurate exegesis. We resolve to equip churches, pastors, and teachers with resources that foster sound doctrine. We resolve to generate a culture of discipleship in the Word throughout our churches.

Resolution adopted by the messengers at the RBM annual meeting, June 24-27, 2024, in Elgin, Illinois.