

***Denominational Affiliations***  
*An initiative of the 2003 Diaconate*  
**August 25, 2003**

*(Note: In contradiction to this statement, Park Road Baptist Church officially severed ties with the North Carolina Baptist State Convention on January 31, 2007. See below for information concerning this decision.)*

One of the major initiatives of the Diaconate of the Park Road Baptist Church for the year 2003 is to evaluate the church's denominational relationships, and to make recommendation(s) to the congregation concerning these (or perhaps other) denominational entities. Mack Duncan and Ken Godwin were appointed to lead this initiative, and after some dialogue with deacons and ministerial staff, the decision was made that we not establish any new relationships at this time. In evaluating our current affiliations, both Daniel Vestal, Executive Director of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Stan Hastey, Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists made presentations to the congregation concerning their organizations. Materials were distributed to deacons and the congregation, and all church members were urged to explore these materials and related websites in order to gain further knowledge of these affiliates.

Six different denominational affiliations are recognized below, all of which our church currently maintains, with some level of participation. The subcommittee recognizes that in a "post-denominational" age, multiple relationships such as these are valid, and can be maintained without consuming energy distracting our congregation from its primary mission. The subcommittee sees its most important contribution through this process as having increased the congregation's awareness of a need for networking with other churches and agencies, and the partnerships which denominational agencies can provide to this end.

After the two presentations and ensuing conversation with the Administrative Deacons, a three-tiered approach to our currently held affiliations is recommended:

**1. That Park Road Baptist Church *pursue* its relationship with the *Alliance of Baptists, the United Baptist Association, and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.***

A. In our evaluation of the Alliance of Baptists, we have come to believe that the theology and mission emphasis of the Alliance most closely resembles our congregation's own theology and mission, and that this organization, therefore, is the affiliate with which we can most fully participate. "Pursuit" of such a relationship includes, but is not limited to:

- \* Encouraging church members, especially church leadership, to subscribe to the Alliance newsletter, *Connections*, for information concerning the Alliance of Baptists;
- \* Encouraging congregational participation at state and national meetings, and striving to contribute leadership from within our congregation to the leadership committees of these bodies;
- \* Encouraging an increasing level of financial support for the Alliance and its missions and ministries;
- \* Encouraging active participation in the missions and ministries of the Alliance of Baptists.

B. Since the founding of the United Baptist Association, our congregation has enjoyed a strong association with our partner churches in the association. Through this association our church has opportunity to participate in a multi-racial climate of fellowship and collaboration, supporting a number of local projects, such as Hope Chapel for homeless men, and a Vacation Bible School program for under-privileged children. We recommend a level of continuing support for the UBA through:

- \* Encouraging participation in the monthly associational meetings;

- \* Encouraging church members to participate in UBA sponsored ministries;
- \* Encouraging a continuing level of financial support.

C. Given a globally-charged political climate and, especially in light of what appeared an imminent invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003, our church engaged in a partnership with the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, which is housed in Wedgewood Baptist Church. Comprised of Baptist congregations from Canada, Central America, and the United States who are interested in Jesus' call to be "peacemakers," the PBFNA is a vital resource for congregations who take such a challenge as a corporate calling. Because our relationship with the BPFNA is new, and because the political climate is still highly charged, we recommend pursuing this relationship through:

- \* Encouraging church members, especially church leadership, to subscribe to the Peace Fellowship newsletter, *Peaceworks*, for information concerning the PBFNA;
- \* Encouraging congregational awareness of issues relating to peace and justice;
- \* Encouraging financial support for the BPFNA.

## **2. That Park Road Baptist Church *maintain* its relationship with the *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship*.**

Our congregation has used continues to use the CBF as a valuable ministry partner and resource. In this regard, we recognize the validity of continuing to partner with the CBF, making use of their resources, *and* contributing resources to the CBF. Our evaluation, however, also revealed significant differences with the CBF, made evident especially by their recent funding policy which denies the funding of universities and divinity schools which admit homosexual students, and which prohibits the hiring of homosexuals. As a congregation which is welcoming and affirming of all persons, we recognize the inherent contradiction of values within our organizations. The policy decision is of concern not solely due to the issue of homosexuality, but due to the implication for future decisions. Recognizing the theological tensions that exists, then, maintaining a relationship might include, but not be limited to:

- \* Encouraging church members, especially church leadership, to subscribe to the CBF newsletter, *fellowship!* for information concerning the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship;
- \* Encouraging congregational participation at state and national meetings;
- \* Encouraging some financial support for the CBF;
- \* Recognizing that one of our congregation's valid offerings to the CBF is to model inclusion and to present a dissenting voice on issues that discriminate against the recognition of the infinite worth of all persons as the children of God.

NOTE: The North Carolina state CBF does not maintain the policies concerning homosexuality, which the national organization adopted, nor are they pressured to follow the national organization in any such decisions. Though the study committee is not recommending an increasing level of participation with the state organization, we recognize that at some point in the future, NC CBF may replace the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina as the best entity through which our congregation can partner with other like-minded NC Baptist churches, and most effectively support our long-standing relationships with Baptist institutions and agencies such as Baptist children's and retirement homes, Baptist hospitals, and Baptist colleges, universities, and divinity schools.

## **3. That Park Road Baptist Church *acknowledge* its historic relationship with the *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*.**

Park Road Baptist Church was established as a Southern Baptist Church, and, though the congregation severed ties with the SBC many years ago, we have maintained a relationship with the Baptist State Convention for 53 years. Through the state convention the church receives its status as

an IRS 501-c3 (charitable) organization, utilizes the resources of the Annuity Board for retirement contributions for auxiliary staff, and continues to benefit from convention resources, such as Caswell Conference Center for retreats and camps. Though the state convention is not directly tied to the SBC, the obvious and implicit connection of these organizations will, rightly, pose similar tensions for our congregation, as concerning the CBF, above. There may come a time when Park Road Baptist Church chooses to actively disassociate with the state convention on theological grounds (see note, above, concerning NC CBF), but there will be legal and procedural ramifications if that decision is made. It is not our recommendation to officially disassociate at this time, though we recognize that there are more theological differences than commonalities between our congregation and the state convention, and that these differences will render our effective partnering minimal.

Acknowledging our historic relationship might include, but not be limited to:

- \* Encouraging church members, especially church leadership, to subscribe to *The Biblical Recorder* for information concerning the Baptist State Convention;
- \* Encouraging the requisite level of financial support for the Convention, which will allow for our participation in the annuity program for our auxiliary staff;
- \* Recognizing that one of our congregation's valid offerings to the BSCNC is to model inclusion and to present in appropriate ways a dissenting voice on issues that discriminate against the recognition of the infinite worth of all persons as the children of God.

NOTE: The subcommittee recommends that we establish our church's own 501-c3 status, and that the Personnel Committee review our current retirement options for staff and strongly consider redirecting Annuity Board contributions, in the event that a dissolution of relationship becomes necessary, this procedural matter would not hinder such a decision.

On January 31, 2007, in a unanimous vote of the church in conference, the almost fifty-seven year relationship with the North Carolina Baptist State Convention was severed. The following document was sent to the Executive Director of the convention, explaining our actions:

To Whom It May Concern:

For many years Park Road Baptist Church has been frustrated and disappointed by the continuously narrowing stance of the Southern Baptist Convention, and many of its state entities. Though founded as a Southern Baptist church, and having served as an active participant for many years, it has been quite some time since this congregation supported the SBC. Our support of our historically moderate state convention has also diminished over the last decade, though as recently as four years ago Park Road Baptist Church chose (despite many voices to the contrary) to continue to affirm our nominal, but important, historic relationship to the state convention. We still affirm much of the work of Baptist agencies and institutions, and know we have kinship with many North Carolina Baptists, even many with whom we may disagree theologically.

The unfortunate action of the November 2006 convention, however, has caused us to reverse our stance in relation to the convention.

In good faith and conscience we can no longer continue to be affiliated with an organization that officially sponsors the condemnation and alienation of individuals and churches who dare to offer a full welcome to every child of God. Park Road Baptist Church welcomes as full participants in our congregation *all* who wish to join in our convictions and fellowship. We wish not to wait until we are reported to the convention to be sanctioned for our action, which we believe in all faith and earnestness is in keeping with the mind of Christ. Such action as was embraced by the convention is embarrassing to

us, and serves as yet one more indication to much of the world that the Church is often out of touch with the reality of humanity and many of its deepest needs.

After a unanimous vote from our Diaconate, the recommendation to officially separate from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina was unanimously affirmed by our congregation in our most recent church conference, January 31, 2007.

Though it is often difficult for us to do so, we continue to bear the Baptist name, recognizing and relying on our historic principles of individual freedom and corporate autonomy for which many our forebears died. We will continue to strive to be "Baptist," in the best sense of the word, and will continue to offer the welcome and embrace of a God of unconditional love, which we understand through the person of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

The Members of Park Road Baptist Church