

September 24, 2008

Dear Recording Brethren:

Loving greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the short period of time that has elapsed since the Unity Agreement (2008) was distributed, responses received to-date have ranged generally from: encouraging comments; a wide range of questions seeking clarification; and some expressions of concern. A review of any of the past reunion efforts reveals that these are common responses within the Brotherhood. Ecclesias and Brethren are genuinely concerned about one another's welfare, while at the same time wishing to see Unity achieved with likeminded Disciples of Christ.

Subsequent to the release of the Unity Agreement (2008), some brethren made an appeal to not sign on to this, or any other agreement, at this time, suggesting that the Unity Agreement (2008) has contributed to creating confusion within the Ecclesial world. At that time, two separate initiatives had been announced; one led by the Greenaway Ecclesia, and the other was the Unity Agreement (2008). However, since then the Greenaway, Brampton, North Bay and Elgin Ecclesias have now indicated their willingness to operate under the terms of the Unity Agreement (2008).

Objective and Process

The objective of the Unity effort is to bring together those who share a common understanding of the scriptures. No Unity effort was ever achieved without exercising considerable patience, understanding and Brotherly love. The Unity Agreement (2008) was prepared with prayerful care and with knowledge of the background of other Unity efforts throughout the world. The use of local Unity agreements is not a new practice within the Brotherhood and has been an important tool in previously successful Unity efforts around the world. Regardless of the scale of the effort, it is critical that any Unity initiative should be conducted with the direction and support of our respective Ecclesias. In the case of the four Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Ecclesias, the Agreement was closely examined independently at each Ecclesia by its arranging brethren and at special Ecclesial meetings by the members of each Ecclesia. The document was then ratified by means of a formal ballot process at each of the four GTA Ecclesias, with a preponderant majority (92.4%) of Ecclesial members expressing their approval of the Agreement.

As Amended Ecclesias, one of the objectives of this Unity effort is to invite the support of other Amended Ecclesias that are willing to become signatories to this Agreement. This is the same objective of the Unamended Ecclesias that have now been added as signatories to this Agreement; that is, to work with other Unamended Ecclesias in the hope of gaining broader acceptance of this Agreement. We encourage all Ecclesias, both Amended and Unamended to review the Agreement with their Ecclesial members and to join us as signatories to it. It is understandable that some Ecclesias may be concerned or have questions, which is why we have a mechanism in place to address any such questions or concerns. We would be pleased to assist with your Ecclesial review and consideration of the Agreement.

Responses

During this period of review and consideration, Amended and Unamended Ecclesias may respond in any number of ways, for example:

Support

After careful review and consideration of the Agreement, Ecclesial members may determine (through whatever mechanism deemed suitable by that Ecclesia) that they support this Agreement and subsequently declare their acceptance of the Agreement.

Defer

After careful review and consideration of the Agreement, Ecclesial members may determine that they require either more time and/or more information about the Agreement and its implications. They may want to defer making a decision at this time. In these instances, we would be pleased to offer assistance with your Ecclesial review and consideration of the Agreement.

Stand Aside

After careful review and consideration of the Agreement by Ecclesial members, an Ecclesia may choose to stand apart from this Agreement. In making this decision, they will not participate in this Unity effort but will continue to fellowship with Amended ecclesias as per their normal practice.

Amended Ecclesias that are signatories to The Unity Agreement (2008) intend to continue fellowship with all Amended Ecclesias in any of the above cases. However, it is understood that some Ecclesias may not extend fellowship to members of Unamended Ecclesias that have accepted this Agreement.

In the West Coast Unity effort this practice was followed. Ecclesias that wished to proceed with Unity did so, and Ecclesias that felt they could not support the Unity effort expressed their position but continued in fellowship with all Amended Ecclesias. In retrospect, this was a wise decision and avoided disruption to existing Ecclesial relationships.

Our earnest desire is that when our Master returns he will find a united body ready and prepared for his appearing, and that God will bless our individual efforts to unite our two communities.

The four GTA Ecclesias thank you for your willingness to consider the Unity Agreement (2008), and look forward to the opportunity to assist your respective Ecclesias with any questions about this Agreement.

Love in the bonds of the Truth,

Your brethren from the Toronto West, Toronto East, Mississauga West and Church Street Ecclesias