

COVER LETTER
&
UNITY PROPOSAL

PHASE 1

*for ecclesial response by
February 28, 2005*

November 2004

BACKGROUND

In October 2004, advance notice was sent to all ecclesias in North America indicating that a unity proposal would be sent to them in early November by the NASU committee.

The NASU Unity Proposal and its accompanying Cover Letter were mailed as planned and are presented herein.

Each ecclesia has been asked to prayerfully consider this opportunity to heal the breach in our Lord's body, to make a decision following their own ecclesial practices, and to communicate their ecclesial decision and voting results to the NASU committee.

Cover Letter

for
The NASU Unity Proposal – November 1, 2004

To all Brothers and Sisters of Amended and Unamended
Christadelphian ecclesias in North America:

November 1, 2004

Greetings in our shared Hope.

We are thankful for the entire Christadelphian body's patience with the unity process. We share this important Cover Letter and Unity Proposal Package with a sense of humility and hopefulness that God's righteousness will be made manifest through a unified body in Christ.

More than ever, there is an urgent need to rectify the division that has rent our community to the detriment of us all. We believe that with God's blessing, the enclosed NASU Unity Proposal is a means to help heal the breach in our communities and end this schism. It is with firm conviction that Christadelphians mutually believe and share in the Truth concerning the "*great and precious promises*" (2 Peter 1:4), the coming Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ. We also face a common deadly enemy, namely, a carnal world of immorality, violence and corruption. The blessings of unity will strengthen our family in Christ, and enable us all, young and old, to withstand this onslaught, while strengthening our ecclesial efforts to preach the Truth to this world engrossed in darkness. A united body of Christ will enable us to demonstrate to the world that we are our Lord's disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35). It will provide our youth with an undivided house that will help them withstand the evil days at hand, and our ecclesias with a sound legacy to help prepare the bride for our Lord's return. This unity effort requires a Christ-like spirit of grace and reconciliation on the part of each of us to heal the breach in our Lord's body. Many brethren have already experienced firsthand the fruits of our shared faith by participation in the NASU process.

As a result of the development of the NASU, we have concluded that members in good standing of all Christadelphian ecclesias (Amended and Unamended) should be recognized as brethren in fellowship with Christ and our Heavenly Father, and therefore with each other "*...and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*" (1 John 1:3) unless ecclesias choose to stand apart. The enclosed Unity Proposal Package presents our recommendation for a scripturally sound basis of reconciliation and, Lord willing, a procedure that results in full fellowship with one another, and thus a fuller declaration of God's glory.

Feedback

Since distribution of the October 2003 NASU Package, the Christadelphian NASU Steering Committee (CNSC) has received considerable feedback. Themes common to both communities were:

- Generally, the package was well received as a scripturally sound doctrinal basis upon which unity might be achieved.
- There was encouragement from individuals and ecclesias to proceed with a recommendation for implementation of unity.
- There were concerns about the appropriate treatment of fellowship. (See **Fellowship** overleaf.)

Taking the above factors into consideration, the CNSC has prayerfully sought a means to implement unity among Christadelphians in North America. We seek to do these things "*decently and in order*" (1 Corinthians 14:40) in such a way that all brethren can participate in a meaningful way, before our Lord.

After much prayerful thought and Bible study, we offer the enclosed document entitled "Unity Proposal Package", which was developed by the CNSC. In the spirit of grace, dealing with each other as brethren for whom our Lord died, it is a heartfelt attempt to be as inclusive as possible of brethren of like precious faith.

Fellowship

When we consider how closely our Lord identifies with his body (Matthew 25: 40, 45; Acts 9: 1-5; 1 Corinthians 12: 26-27) we believe it is valid and appropriate for brethren to be concerned about separation from brethren. A common concern expressed to us by some in both communities has been that the Inter-Ecclesial Fellowship Practice statement (NASU Page 9, 2nd paragraph) might require ecclesias in a united North American community to sever longstanding fellowship ties (with brethren they believe to be in fellowship with Christ and God) unless their ecclesias formally endorse the NASU.

At the same time, upholding the One Faith is of paramount importance to all Christadelphians. Neither the Unamended nor the Amended community practices open fellowship – our ecclesias welcome to the memorial table visitors who are members in good standing of other recognized ecclesias that share our faith.

With these factors in mind, this unity proposal is based on an inclusive approach (Romans 15:7) intended to allow North American ecclesias to unite together in fellowship unless ecclesias, by their own decision, choose to stand apart. It is our desire that with a Christ-like spirit of grace, mercy and love for one another, all ecclesias will consider the moral and spiritual imperatives that result from our belief that, *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling...”* (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Ecclesias in the united community would continue to handle individual cases of conflict (including unity-related issues) like they would any other internal matter, as is the established practice. We expect that ecclesias will continue to make prayerful, scripturally-guided decisions consistent with the principles stated in the Ecclesial Guide.

Process

In our earlier communications, we asked for feedback but did not request ecclesial decisions. We now believe it will be helpful for all concerned to determine the support for the enclosed (highlighted) NASU Unity Proposal, before asking for a final decision to proceed with implementation.

We are asking for an ecclesial decision on the enclosed (highlighted) NASU Unity Proposal. It outlines a two-phase process:

1. The first (current) phase is intended to determine support for the highlighted NASU Unity Proposal in the enclosed document.
2. In the second phase, this information will be reported to the community, and provided there is support, it will be used to formulate more specific recommendations for the implementation of unity in North America.

Important Note

Any decision in Phase 1 does not bind any ecclesia to a course of action.

It is not until Phase 2 that ecclesias will be asked to express their support for a definitive course of action.

If a preponderant majority of the community is able to move forward in unity after the second phase, it will be our continuing duty to reach out to any brethren who may then choose to stand apart, in the hope that they will reconsider their position and join the united Christadelphian community in peace and harmony for the glorification of our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the benefit of our ecclesias.

We encourage all brothers and sisters to have the courage of faith to do what is right in the eyes of our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in God’s essential guidance to help us proceed with a proper means of implementation. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psa. 133:1)

Brethren of the Christadelphian NASU Steering Committee:

Colin Badger; Ken Curry; Don Davies; Don Elliott; Doug Finlay; Ian Finlay; Rod Ghent; George Jackson; Ian McPhee; Ron McPhee; Noel Peare; Andrew Pearse; Ron Wayne; Bill Yake; Paul Zilmer

UNITY PROPOSAL PACKAGE

NOVEMBER 1, 2004

PROCESS

This unity proposal is divided into two phases, and allows time for response by the communities and reporting results back to the communities. The first phase is intended to assess the will of the communities, and the second phase is intended to draw on the results of the first phase. All plans are subject to our Heavenly Father's will, and we ask all ecclesial members and representatives to prayerfully seek His guidance as they prepare their response to the NASU Unity Proposal.

Phase 1. Each ecclesia is asked to make a declaration of acceptance or rejection of the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL** (highlighted on the opposite side of this page) in the space provided, and to mail it back by February 28, 2005.

Phase 2. The results of Phase 1 will be tabulated and reported back to all Unamended and Amended ecclesias, sent by March 31, 2005. A second proposal will be presented which, depending on the nature of the results of Phase 1, will set out one of the following:

- a) a plan proposing specific recommendations for the implementation of unity, or
- b) some other proposed means by which the **NASU** unity initiative may be concluded.

Any proposal made as part of Phase 2 will be based on the information gathered in phase 1.

Reporting Back to the Communities

In order to properly determine the will of the Christadelphian body in North America, it is important to know the number of ecclesias in favor of and opposed to the unity proposal, as well as the vote count of individuals in each ecclesia. A report will be issued to the communities.

Importance of Participation

It is important to do all things decently and in order, and to be fair-minded and sensitive to the will and concerns of the whole community as well as to individual ecclesias and individual brothers and sisters. In order to achieve the most appropriate course of action, it is important for all ecclesias to participate in voting on this proposal as completely as possible.

It is of course possible that some ecclesias' declarations may be incomplete, or may not be received within the time frame. In the absence of complete information, tabulations will necessarily have to be made based on the information received within the time frame.

Therefore, we respectfully urge your co-operation and participation as we work toward assessing the appropriate course of action with respect to the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL** herein.

A Respectful Urging From the NASU Steering Committee.

The CNSC respectfully requests that all ecclesias in North America (Unamended and Amended) give serious, prayerful consideration to the important **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL** herein. Each ecclesia is respectfully requested to submit its prayerfully considered declaration of acceptance or rejection of this proposal by way of signing of the appropriate lines in the Declaration box by the duly appointed Ecclesial representative (e.g. Recording Brother, Secretary, etc.) It is our fervent hope and prayer that this proposal might result in a genuine unity amongst like-minded brethren with God's blessing and to His Glory.

THE NASU INITIATIVE

The NASU is the result of extensive direct discussions and Bible study between Unamended and Amended brethren in a process that has taken some 9 years, and involved some 40 ecclesias comprising approximately 1700 brothers and sisters. Together these ecclesias took time to intensively study the Scriptures and each other's views and perspectives on the issues historically associated with the division. Having had the benefit of this first hand, in-depth dialogue with each other, it was discovered that many of the doctrinal differences that "the other side" has been alleged to espouse are not differences at all when discussed thoroughly and fairly with open Bibles. We recognize that not all ecclesias have had the benefit of these direct discussions, although they now have in their possession the resulting common expressions of understanding as set out in the North American Statement of Understanding (NASU).

CONCLUSIONS RESULTING FROM THE NASU INITIATIVE

1. That the October 2003 NASU booklet (NASU) presents jointly developed and acceptable expressions of understanding which are harmonious with Scripture.
2. That the NASU provides a sound basis for unity among Christadelphian Ecclesias in North America (Amended and Unamended).
3. That based on the understanding set out in the NASU, members in good standing of all Christadelphian ecclesias should be recognized as brethren in fellowship with Christ and our Heavenly Father, and therefore with each other (1 John 1:3). "...and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"

The Christadelphian NASU Steering Committee (CNSC) has set out the following Proposal as a means of implementing unity amongst Christadelphian brethren in North America.

NASU UNITY PROPOSAL

We Propose:

- That all North American Christadelphian Ecclesias extend fellowship to one another based on acceptance of the conclusions 1 to 3 above. All ecclesias will be part of this united community unless they choose to stand apart.
- That implementation of mutual fellowship will commence in Autumn 2005, dependent upon the acceptance of this NASU Unity Proposal and the recommendations in Phase 2 by the preponderant majority in Christadelphian Ecclesias in North America.

DECLARATION

Name (or other identification) of Ecclesia: _____

Ecclesial Representative (name, printed): _____ Position: _____
(Recording Bro., Secretary, etc.)

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

After prayerful consideration of the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL** as set out above, our Ecclesia declares its **acceptance** of this Proposal. _____

Signature of Ecclesial Representative

Number of ecclesial members **accepting** the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL**: _____

Number of ecclesial members **rejecting** the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL**: _____

DECLARATION OF REJECTION

After prayerful consideration of the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL** as set out above, our Ecclesia declares its **rejection** of this Proposal. _____

Signature of Ecclesial Representative

Number of ecclesial members **accepting** the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL**: _____

Number of ecclesial members **rejecting** the **NASU UNITY PROPOSAL**: _____