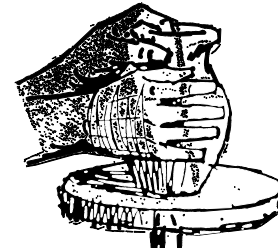


# His Workmanship at Westside

“For we are His  
workmanship, created in  
Christ Jesus for good works.”  
—Ephesians 2:10



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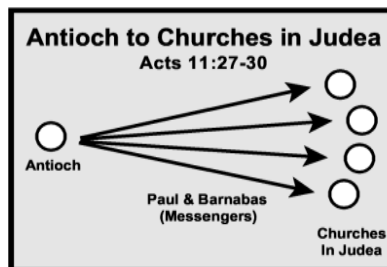
Isaiah 64:8

## Local Church Cooperation and Local Church Autonomy by Joe Price

The Bible teaches in three ways:  
(1) By direct command or prohibition.  
(2) By approved example. In the case of church cooperation, the example must be exclusive.  
(3) By required inference, i.e., logical conclusions reached from the text. In what examples of the New Testament church do we see of churches cooperating? If they worked together, how did they act—jointly or concurrently? That is, did two or more churches combine funds and centralize control through one common agency (e.g., a *sponsoring* church) in order to cooperate jointly? (A *sponsoring* church assumes responsibility for a particular work and then receives funds from other churches to help finance that work. This is not a Bible pattern). Or did they act independently (yet concurrently—at the same time—with each other) to meet their goals and duties independent, but with mutual goals? A pattern exists in the New Testament, and we should find it and follow it (Heb 8:5; Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30; Num 8:4; Ezek 43:10; Ax 7:44, re: the tabernacle/temple; Phil 3:17; 1 Tim 1:16; 2 Tim 1:13; Tit 2:7, re: behavior and doctrine).

### Cooperating in helping the needy

(benevolence). There are two patterns: A. One church (Antioch) helped other churches (in Judea) in time of material need by sending funds to relieve needy saints, Ax 11:27-30. How did the Antioch church cooperate with churches in Judea to help needy saints? First, a decision to help was made. Then,

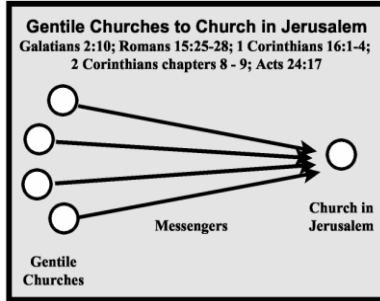


funds were collected from the Christians at Antioch. When a certain amount was collected, Paul and Barnabas were messengers for the Antioch church to take the funds to the elders of each church in Judea that they were helping, Ax 11:30; cf. Ax 14:23. There were several churches in Judea (Lydda, Joppa, etc.), Gal. 1:22; Ax 9:32-43. Paul traveled throughout all Judea, cf. Ax 26:20 with 9:26-29; Gal 1:17-22. Paul and Barnabas delivered the funds to the elders of the individual

churches in Judea for distribution to their own needy saints. Jerusalem was their last stop, Ax 12:25, and thus could not have been an overseeing, distributing (sponsor) church. B. Several churches in Achaia (Greece, Macedonia) sent financial relief to one church (Jerusalem), 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2:10; Rm 15:25-28; Ax 24:17. This was concurrent (at the same time) cooperation of churches. This collection was taken to Jerusalem by Paul and his company and was delivered to the elders of the church the day after Paul arrived in Jerusalem, Ax 21:17-20. There were separate requests for help, 2 Cor. 8:4, 10, separate collection of funds, 1 Cor 16:1-2. In addition, a separate identity of funds existed (no “pooling”), 1 Cor 16:3. Each church made its own separate decision about the amount sent, 2 Cor 8:3, 10-11, and who would be the messengers selected to carry the funds, 1 Cor 16:3-4. The messengers were individuals, not churches, and some churches used the same messenger, 2 Cor 8:18-19, 23 (today a church could mail a check or wire funds to another church). We conclude there was no pooling of funds,  
*continued on p. 2*

***“It pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.” —Romans 15:26***

no convention of churches, no common oversight, and no *sponsoring* church—funds were not sent through



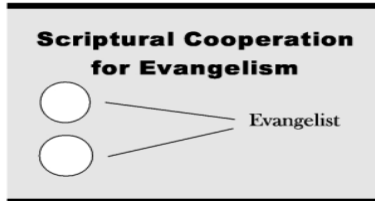
another church. The churches of the New Testament acted independently, although often for the same goal and at the same time (concurrently).

**Cooperating in evangelism.** There are three patterns. A. One church sent a preacher to another church, Ax 11:20-24. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to the young church in Antioch to encourage them “*that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord,*” Ax 11:22-23; cf. 13:1-3; 14:21-22, 26-28; 15:22-31, 40; 18:22. Both the sending church and the receiving church cooperated to meet an evangelistic need in Antioch. Thus, each church may support an evangelist to work with it, 2 Cor 12:13. A church may act alone in supporting a preacher in another place, Phil 1:3-5; 2:25, 30; 4:14-18.

B. One church sent several preachers out to preach, Ax 13:2-4. One church may send as many preachers as it wants to work in another place. The Antioch church, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, sent out Barnabas and Saul. They reported back.

C. Several churches supported one preacher, sending funds directly to the same evangelist, Phil 4:10, 15-16; 2 Cor 11:8-9. Several churches may independently and directly support a

preacher working in another place. All these show a pattern of direct contact with the preacher, e.g., the Philipians church sent funds directly to Paul in Rome by a messenger, Phil 2:25, 4:18. This follows the principle in 1 Cor 9, that preachers of the gospel should “live from the gospel,” v. 14, and “partake of the offerings,” v. 13; see also Gal 6:6. This created a close, loving bond between the evangelist and the church(es) that supported him, cf. Phil 1:3-6, 25-26; Col 1:3-8; 1 Thes 1: 2-3; 3:6-13. When several



churches do the same thing at the same time, the cooperation is *concurrent*; but there is no pattern of *joint* support, e.g. churches sending funds to a *sponsoring* church which then sends funds on to the preacher(s). A *joint* arrangement is not in the Bible.

**Cooperating in edification.** The church at Colossae was commanded to send a letter to the church at Laodicea, Col 4:16. They were also to get a letter that Paul wrote to Laodicea and read it to the Colossian church. Thus churches cooperated in forwarding letters and messages to one another. The Jerusalem church sent evangelists directly to edify and teach people in Antioch. A local church may send scriptural teaching to any person or group of people anywhere, 1 Thes 1:18. When a local church sends a letter to other churches or pays a preacher to hold a gospel meeting for another church, this is scriptural congregational cooperation.

**Autonomy of the local church.**

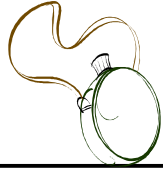
Although the word “autonomy” is not found in the New Testament, the principle of local church autonomy is plainly taught. In fact, no principle is more basic to the New Testament pattern for the organization of the church than that of the independence of the local church. The term *autonomy* means, “The quality or state of being independent, free, and self-directing; individual or group freedom,” Webster’s New International Dictionary. Church autonomy means that the execution of the will of Christ belongs within the local church and is not to be surrendered, partially or completely, to any outside control. Elders are to be appointed within each local church, Ax 14:23; Tit 1:5. These elders (also called bishops/ overseers or pastors/ shepherds, Ax 20:17, 28; Tit 1:5-9), rule the church which they are part of, 1 Pet 5:1-2. There they rule under the authority of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Pet 5:4. No scripture broadens their authority. The elders of the local church have no right to oversee anything other than the work of their own local church. There is no authority for a church to allow any man, group of men, or organization outside the local church to oversee all or any part of its function.

Why is the independence of each local church so important? The obvious and most basic reason is that it is part of the New Testament pattern for the organization of the church, and we must keep this pattern, 2 Tim 1:13; 2 Jn 9. The examples of church cooperation in the New Testament reveal three principles: 1) No church is to act as agent for another church or churches since, when several

*continued on p. 3*



Psalm 133:1



**Fill your can-  
teen in 2013**  
“...filled with the  
knowledge of the  
glory of the Lord.”

**Church Cooperation**, from p. 2  
churches pool their resources to do a work common to all of them, all the other churches become subordinate to the church which decides how the funds will be used. 2) No church may assume the oversight of any part of the evangelistic work (or any other work) of any other church or churches. 3) the equality of each local church's oversight must be maintained. The overriding principle is church autonomy. The oversight of all the work of each local church is completely within that church, 1 Pet 5:1-4. This plan dramatically demonstrates the superiority of God's wisdom to man's wisdom, Is 55:8-9; Rm 11:33-36; Eph 3:8-11. By this amazingly simple plan, in stark contrast with the elaborate schemes of men, the first century church took the gospel to the whole world in one generation, Col 1:5-6, 23. Church autonomy protects churches from general apostasy. Though there were numerous sins and false doctrines found among the 7 churches of Asia, nevertheless, because of the independence of each local church, no sin or false doctrine was found in them all, Rev 2-3. Centuries later, when all known local churches in Western Europe were tied together under the papacy of the Roman Catholic church, each false doctrine or practice that was introduced immediately spread to all. Historically, the first step into apostasy in the Lord's

## Discipleship Here At Home

church has destroyed of the autonomy of local churches. The Lord knew that elders understand local needs and problems better than those outside. The divine plan of church organization is to the glory of God, Eph 3:20-21, whereas human organizational schemes glorify men.

**Practical problems regarding church cooperation.** Difficulty may come when we confuse the patterns for benevolence and evangelism. Some people attempt to defend and justify the *sponsoring* church for *evangelism* (where churches should send directly to a preacher) by using the Biblical pattern for *benevolent* work of churches (where churches sent to churches in Ax 11:27-30). Others say there is no pattern of cooperation so we are at liberty to choose any way to cooperate: “*We are to have fellowship one with another, and the Lord gave no pattern for congregational cooperation. How then can one violate a pattern that does not exist?*” G. K. Wallace, Gospel Advocate, 5/3/56. However, the divine pattern for a subject is all that God has revealed on that subject, Jn. 17:17, and God's silence is not consent, I Thes 5:21-22. God has spoken, Heb 1:1-2, so there is a pattern. Not following God's pattern is what causes division in the Lord's body, 1 Cor 1; 1 Jn 2:19. The dividers are those who introduce teaching and practices that are without divine authority, cf. Rm. 16:17. The New Testament does indeed give us a complete pattern for church cooperation, in both evangelism and benevolence, 1 Cor. 4:17. We must be ready to do every good work, Tit 3:1, and *good* is defined by God and found in inspired Scripture, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. The issue is not about methods and arrangements whereby local churches do their own work of preaching the gospel. The issue is independence of local churches. The scriptural pattern is for independent, autonomous churches to cooperate concurrently to accomplish their God-given work.

**PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here & away**

**Mark Campbell**—unconscious in ICU at St. Anthony's after hitting head on concrete in fall while working Tues

**Matt Reames**—hydrocephalus (fluid on brain) causing headaches, blurred vision; waiting for VA to insert shunt; had accident that totaled his truck last week

**Madge Wallace**—lung cancer spreading  
**Gary Boyd's sister Gail Storz**—fluid in her lungs; cancer

**Brittany Tope's mother Gayle Shrull**—return of breast cancer; radiation

**Rocco Sangellino Jr**—hospital for low oxygen levels; other illness in **Savarese** family

**PRAISE! Brett Witherington's nephew Baby Emory Moore**—surgery successful

### CHRONIC CONDITIONS

**Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr;**

**Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes**—asthma

**Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy

**Pearl Chapman**—leg pains; pancreatitis

**Nell Free**—heart; spinal pain

**Kirk Johnson**—worsening MS; house-bound in cold weather and needs help

**Menards**—age; **Lloyd**, diabetes, ear

cyst drained; **Virginia**, eye problems, BP

**Sandra Perry**—neuropathy from diabetes

**Cheryl Reames**—diverticulitis; fibro

**Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung

**Rejoice** The **Reameses** have a new grandson, **Gabriel Wilson**, born

2/18, 9 lb, 4 oz. **Cheryl** is in FL with the Wilsons for a few weeks.

**Mina Gonzalez** has a new grandson, **Ezana Fedencio**, born 2/22, 6 lb, 15

oz, to **Roger** and **Yodit Gonzalez**.

**Job concerns Andrew Tope** and

**Frank Savarese** are seeking jobs.

**Directory change:** Mike and Judy

Strand, MaLynda Hollingsworth

819 Miller Ct, Lakewood, 80228

**Expecting Marie Carlson**—July 1 girl



### Exposing current thoughts & trends

#### States Limit Abortions, Favor Marriage *by Tony Perkins*

In the two weeks since Jennifer Morbelli's botched abortion in MD leading to her death, state leaders are more committed than ever to protecting a woman's most basic right: safety. Women deserve to be treated in a safe and healthy environment. Last week in Alabama, by a huge 73-23 margin, the House approved a common sense measure that would require a licensed doctor with hospital admitting privileges to be present at every abortion. Nearby, Arkansas passed a bill to ban abortions after 20 weeks, the age when babies can feel pain. After a large victory in the Arkansas House and Senate (where the legislation passed 25-7), the bill now heads to Gov. Mike Beebe (D). If he listens to his Arkansas constituents and signs the bill, his would become the eighth state to ban abortions after five months.

Meanwhile, Kansas built on its solid pro-life reputation by debating a bill that would ban sex-selection abortion. No matter what the baby's gender, said state Sen. Garrett Love, "every life is precious." When the Senate voted Wednesday, it stopped groups like Planned Parenthood, whose workers have been caught on tape targeting little girls for extinction, [www.protectourgirls.com](http://www.protectourgirls.com).

Last Tuesday John Stemberger, who heads the Florida Family Policy Council, put a nail in the coffin of a same-sex "marriage" bill SB196 that proponents were disguising as a domestic partner measure. After a heated debate and testimony from John and others, the sponsoring committee was forced to pull the bill for lack of votes. Thousands of Floridians put pressure on the legislature to stop this legislation from undermining the 62% of voters who passed the state's marriage amendment in 2008.

Also last week Planned Parenthood announced it is closing four facilities (out of 27) in Wisconsin. Two years ago WI Gov. Scott Walker proposed savings of more than \$1 billion to balance the state's budget, and part of that reform included redirecting \$2 million a year from abortion providers. PP of Wisconsin had been receiving over \$1 million a year and complained bitterly. Tuesday there was once again angry posturing over "defunding" women's health programs. But that's not accurate. The budget merely redirected tax dollars to community clinics that don't perform or refer for abortions. More and more pro-life governors are finding that cutting funds to the abortion giant Planned Parenthood creates a "twofer"—they can save lives and money!

## Westside church of Christ

meets at

13789 W. 8th Avenue  
Golden, Colorado 80401  
(303) 233-5683

#### Pastors

Larry Campbell  
(303) 462-4987

DeWayne Howell  
(303) 973-7283

#### Preacher

Jim Reingrover  
(303) 973-5102

### Assembly Schedule

#### Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

#### Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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### **Grounded in Authority Series**

this afternoon at 1:30 PM:

*"How New Testament Churches Co-operated"* by Jeff Wilkes

**GOALS:** Did you pray for our upcoming gospel meeting March 10? Did you pray for 5 people who need the gospel? Did you read the Bible every day? What new principle did you learn and apply from your Bible reading last week? Keep a list. As you study, write down principles of living and what you will do next week to apply that principle. What good new principles have you applied over the last month? Thank God for teaching you His principles, and ask Him for willingness to apply His lessons to your life.