

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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IS THE SPONSORING CHURCH SCRIPTURAL?

Jason Trick

Today we read a lot about churches “cooperating” with one another in spreading the Gospel. Some of our brethren believe that this work in spreading the Gospel is too great for any local congregation, therefore church cooperation is necessary. Is there any scriptural authority for this? Nowhere in the New Testament—generally, specifically, as a command, approved example or necessary inference—do we have authority to act in cooperating with churches in sending funds to a “Sponsoring Church.”

What is the Sponsoring Church? It is a congregation which assumes the oversight and control of some activity in the field of evangelism, in which congregations delegate funds to that church to do the work. What does the Bible teach about a Sponsoring church?

The Sponsoring Church Violates Church Autonomy.

Autonomy means: the condition or quality of being self-governing, or independent. Each church must manage its own affairs in matters of expediency. Each congregation must oversee its own work. Paul says, “Therefore take heed to

yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). The elders were to shepherd the flock in Ephesus, the church among them, not others. Also, how can elders in one state shepherd the work of a flock in another state? Peter says, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers”... (1Peter 5:2). The elders are to shepherd the flock among “You,” not other churches. A local church does not have the scriptural authority to turn over control of its work, completely or partially, to another eldership in another congregation. To do so is to surrender and lose its autonomy.

The Sponsoring Church Tries To Activate The Universal Church. Brethren today believe that the universal church is the only effective means of evangelizing to the world. That is not true, the New Testament churches were to go and evangelize, and it accomplished this work. As Paul writes, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with

me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities” (Phil. 4:15-16). Some of our brethren believe that the church at Philippi served as a sponsoring church. That is far from the truth; the church in Philippi had fellowship with Paul in preaching the Gospel. There was no sponsoring church involved, they sent money “directly to Paul.”

The Sponsoring Church Violates the New Testament Pattern For The Local Church. Each local church is to be independent in its work. As Paul writes, “And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem” (1Cor. 16:3). The “You,” is referring to one church, not churches or sponsoring church.

Again I ask where is the book, chapter, and verse that authorizing the Sponsoring Church? It is without authority, violates church autonomy, and violates the New Testament pattern for the local church.