

Quiet meeting signals fellowship's maturity: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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With a call to minister to “a world in need,” the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship began its 16th year by appointing 19 mission workers, adopting a \$17 million budget and contributing \$32,801 to a special human-rights offering.

The fellowship’s June 22-23 annual meeting in Atlanta was quiet, even by CBF’s own standards, with little official business and no controversy. Almost unnoticed was a constitutional amendment that restored a mention of Jesus and the Great Commission to CBF’s governing documents.

Last year, adoption of constitutional changes that omitted that language stirred heated debate at the general assembly and sparked months of criticism within CBF’s 1,850 affiliated churches and beyond. The new amendment—a constitutional preamble in which fellowship members “gladly declare our allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and to His gospel”—was adopted June 22 without opposition or discussion by the 3,005 registered participants. It already had been approved by CBF’s Coordinating Council last October.

Also absent this year was any debate about the fellowship’s past as a group of dissenting moderate Southern Baptists—which several participants said is a sign of CBF’s maturity as an organization.

Instead, the CBF annual meeting—and the related gatherings of dozens of partner organizations— focused on the future, as CBF-type Baptists seek a positive role to play in a less denominational, more ecumenical setting.

Daniel Vestal, CBF’s national coordinator, told assembly participants that the fellowship stands for “inclusiveness and freedom, openness and partnering.” He added: “I can tell you today that all over the world there are Baptist Christians who share these values and want to partner with us because of these values.” –

