

Baptist groups like new ecumenical body: Christian Churches Together

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Leaders of the American Baptist Churches in the USA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship say they are excited about potential opportunities for formal dialogue with other U.S. Christians, including Catholics, Orthodox, mainline Protestants, evangelicals and Pentecostals in the fledgling Christian Churches Together in the USA.

Both ABC's and CBF's governing bodies are taking steps toward becoming founding members of CCT. A much broader fellowship than the National Council of Churches, CCT is seeking to embrace the widest range of Christian communities by sometime next year.

"Our General Board has authorized us to become a part of it officially," said ABC General Secretary Roy Medley, adding that final documents and cost estimates are still forthcoming. "It will give us a place to have the spectrum of our family represented," said Medley, noting that American Baptists range from evangelical to liberal.

Medley said he favors CCT's approach over groups that vote on resolutions and take sociopolitical positions. CCT "will be more about conversations and mutual knowledge of one another's faith and traditions," said Medley. As a result, he added, a wide range of American Christians will likely participate. "That means that Roman Catholics and evangelical Pentecostals will be involved."

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Coordinating Council voted February 20 to pursue participation in CCT. John Finley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, and a member of the CBF ecumenical task force, spoke in favor of a recommendation that the fellowship "identify as a founding member."

Daniel Vestal, CBF coordinator, urged support, saying he is impressed by the broad inclusiveness of CCT. "I've, frankly, been waiting for the emergence of some ecumenical body that fits CBF," said Vestal, "and in which we fit." -Associated

Baptist Church