

Outline of Strategy for Church of God Co-operation

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Version 2.3 Draft

Introduction

In the 1990s I produced a strategy for Church of God co-operation, and it is probably in a box somewhere. Based on what I can recall of it and with further thought, I have produced the summary below.

In the first instance, **it should be acknowledged that this strategy outline is not about merging groups** in the main, but cooperating in some way to try and stop and reverse their decline.

The basic thesis for this short outline is that we, in the various Church of God groups, should be regarding each other as brethren, recognising each other despite minor differences and working together which is essential in these days. I call our groups the 'Church of God family.'

For the groups have attempted outreach/evangelism on a major scale, but have never been able to attain to a level that is necessary for a multiplicity of reasons, that can be discussed in another article in the future.

The various groups, it is assumed, would probably work toward co-operation at different levels and speeds dependent on attitude, minor doctrinal differences and governance structure.

Their decline and lack of growth is self-inflicted and not of God Who will not force them to do this or that to ensure growth or outreach. It is His desire that they prosper and grow and if they do not, that is based on *their* decision-making. In other words, they need to quit blaming God for the disunity and lack of outreach. Rather, soul-searching and admitting to their failures is paramount.

In the meantime, what can be done to increase outreach?

Strategy Outline

In developing a strategy, one must come to an understanding of the groups and their differences; and their desires for cooperation, which, dependent upon such criteria will determine their level of interest.

Levels of interest from the Church of God groups could probably fall into these categories:

- Unification
- Federation
- Confederation
- Friends
- Not interested

NB: for instance, those groups that decide to federate with each other, could confederate with others. Or groups that merge, may federate or confederate with other groups. It is not an either/or strategy but rather there is overlap between these categories./

The table below attempts to capture the various aspects of the strategy and summarise them.

Strategy in Table Format

Type of Interest	Reasons	Strategy (short version)	Organisation
Unification (full merger with a single head office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close in administrative structure • Close in Fundamental doctrines • Close in secondary level doctrines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly discuss with all the congregations first • Step-by-step approach and trial congregational mergers • Initial unified annual ministerial conferences • Single logo and policies for all regions and congregations • Single website • Legal unification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xxxxx • xxxxx • xxxxx
Federation (head office with representation from regions based on agreed criteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close in doctrine • Historical differences in administrative structure • Suspicions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly discuss with all the congregations first • Step-by-step approach and trial congregational mergers • Initial unified annual ministerial conferences • Single logo • Single website • Similar policies for all regions and congregations • Legal agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xxxxx • xxxxx • xxxxx
Confederation (loose association & congregational independence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic doctrinal agreement (but not in every detail) • Desire for congregational independence • Suspicions • Past hurts • May evolve into a federation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly discuss with all the congregations first • Step-by-step approach and trial congregational cooperation • Initial annual ministerial conferences • Joint socials • Joint projects • Link websites • Documented governance approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xxxxx • xxxxx • xxxxx
Friends (recognition and cooperation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eg may not observe Feast Days or other critical doctrines, but willing to be friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders visit each other • All ministers speak well of each other's groups • Occasional preaching in each other's groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xxxxx • xxxxx • xxxxx

Type of Interest	Reasons	Strategy (short version)	Organisation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint projects • Joint socials • Share books in each other’s central or congregational libraries 	
Not interested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership differences • Extremism • Past hurts • Spirit of competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the negative approach, still let them know that they are considered a part of the ‘Church of God family’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xxxxx • xxxxx • xxxxx

The following will be generic to each category above, with the exception of the final one:

- In Church services make announcements about other groups including prayer requests,
- Ministers speak at each other’s Sabbath services and Feast sites as they are able,
- Hold Feast sites in close proximity so that members can visit each other’s sites with ease,
- Not stand in the way of members wishing to visit other groups or presenting at other groups or their Feast sites,
- Hold annual BBQs of the ministry to break down barriers and foster friendships,
- Apologies where there have been past hurts,
- Link websites and share literature,
- Permit ministerial observers from other groups to sit in on meetings such as general conferences in a non-voting capacity.

Concluding Remarks

I think that in most cases various Church of God groups would be interested in a level of cooperation (Federation or Confederation) rather than full unity at this time due to differences in governance structure and doctrine.

The foreseen fruits of these suggested efforts would be:

1. A greater Work/outreach. And because success beckons success, there will be growth. “If you build, they will come,”
2. Happier churches,
3. Demonstrating brotherly love to the world,
4. And most of all, please and glorify God.

The aforementioned is not difficult to accomplish at all, it just needs a full strategy with a step-by-step, project management approach. And associated policies that ‘plug in’ to the overall plan.

This writer is willing to develop such a strategy in detail.

Schematic of Types of Interest

