



Breaking Up the Family in the Pursuit of Uniformity

From the Blog of Michael Frost

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We are a fellowship of moderate baptistic congregations, committed to the autonomy of the local church, who disagree on some pretty fundamental issues like the sovereignty of God, the mission of God's people, the work of the Holy Spirit, and ordination. But now, forty years after I joined them, we are facing yet another controversy, this time about whether to allow churches that affirm same-sex marriage to remain affiliated with our association. Yep, we're meeting yet again to decide whether to throw some churches out of our association.

Some among us are demanding that even though we're allowed to disagree on matters of theology, missiology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology, we must be uniform in our view on marriage.

Yes, you heard right. Uniformity on marriage is required while uniformity on certain outworkings of theology, missiology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology are not. Maybe those insisting on such uniformity are just the same as those advocates of previous controversies. You can get caught up in a particular cultural moment and demand everyone join you in your view. You can forget the strength and importance of cooperation among churches even when they disagree on non-core issues, especially among smaller denominations.

I've referred to our group of churches as an association or a denomination, but in a lot of our correspondence we call ourselves a "family of churches." I like that. **Families are comprised of people who can disagree (sometimes wildly) on a whole host of issues, but who are bound together in love and by shared history. We don't cast out a son or daughter or even crazy Uncle Charlie if they happen to disagree with the rest of us. When our differences on a single issue cloud our ability to see that love and shared history, we lose something very important. In fact, forgetting that sense of family is downright dangerous to the mission of the church.**

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