

# THE LOCAL CHURCH I: ORGANIZATION PHIL. 1:1

## London Baptist Confession of 1644

A CONFESSION OF FAITH of seven congregations or churches of Christ in London, which are commonly, but unjustly, called Anabaptists; published for the vindication of the truth and information of the ignorant; likewise for the taking off those aspersions which are frequently, both in pulpit and print, unjustly cast upon them. Printed in London, Anno 1646.

### XLVII

And although the particular congregation **be distinct and several bodies**, every one **a compact and knit city in itself; yet** are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affairs of the church, **as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their only Head.**

### Early Baptist brethren confessed:

- **An emphasis on the autonomy of the local church**
- **The headship of Christ & authority of the New Testament**
- **Voluntary association for various reasons**
- **One body – the universal church!**

1 The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word.  
From heaven He came and sought her  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her  
And for her life He died.

2 She is from every nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth;  
Her charter of salvation,  
One Lord, one faith, one birth;  
One holy Name she blesses,  
Partakes one Holy Food,  
And to one Hope she presses,  
With every grace endued.

3 The Church shall never perish!  
Her dear Lord to defend,  
To guide, sustain, and cherish,  
Is with her to the end:  
Though there be those who hate her,  
And false sons in her pale,  
Against or foe or traitor  
She ever shall prevail.

4 Though with a scornful wonder  
Men see her sore oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder,  
By heresies distressed:  
Yet saints their watch are keeping,  
Their cry goes up, "How long?"  
And soon the night of weeping  
Shall be the morn of song!

5 'Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation  
Of peace forevermore;  
Till, with the vision glorious,  
Her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great Church victorious  
Shall be the Church at rest.

6 Yet she on earth hath union  
With God the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion  
With those whose rest is won,  
With all her sons and daughters  
Who, by the Master's Hand  
Led through the deathly waters,  
Repose in Eden land.

7 O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we  
Like them, the meek and lowly,  
On high may dwell with Thee:  
There, past the border mountains,  
Where in sweet vales the Bride  
With Thee by living fountains  
Forever shall abide! Amen

**How** are we to organize a local, NT Baptist church?

**Many** (most?) churches are organized by tradition(s) and therefore not questionable.

**Many** (most) other churches are organized by / in reaction

The answer seems obvious: All local, NT Baptist churches should be organized upon &/ from revelation  
→ Biblical authority and NT priority

## I. The local church is led by the pastors / elders / overseers!

**Acts 20:17** And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας) of the church. **Acts 20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock (τῷ ποιμνίῳ), over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers** (ἐπισκόπους), to feed (ποιμαίνειν) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

**1 Peter 5:1** The **elders** (Πρεσβυτέρους) which are among you I exhort, **who am also an elder** (συμπρεσβύτερος), and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **1 Peter 5:2 Feed** (ποιμνάτε) the flock of God (τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ) which is among you, **taking the oversight** (ἐπισκοποῦντες) thereof, **not** by constraint, but willingly; **not** for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; **1 Peter 5:3 Neither** as being lords over (κατακυριεύοντες) God's heritage, **but** being ensamples to the flock (τοῦ ποιμνίου).

**Titus 1:5** For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** (πρεσβυτέρους) in every city, as I had appointed thee: **Titus 1:6** If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. **Titus 1:7** For a **bishop** (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

➤ **The local church leaders are called by three names**

➤ **The three names focus on three functions**

### A. Overseers (ἐπίσκοπος): overseeing the flock!

**Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, **to all the saints** (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi (τοῖς οὓσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις), with the **bishops** (ἐπισκόποις) and **deacons** (διακόνους):

**Acts 20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock (τῷ ποιμνίῳ), over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers** (ἐπισκόπους), to feed (ποιμαίνειν) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

**1 Timothy 3:2** A **bishop** (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

**Titus 1:7** For a **bishop** (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

**1 Peter 2:25** For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto **the Shepherd** (τὸν ποιμένα) and **Bishop** (ἐπίσκοπον) of your souls.

### B. Elders (πρεσβύτερος): leading the flock!

**Acts 11:30** Which also they did, and sent it to the **elders** (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους) by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

**Acts 14:22** Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. **Acts 14:23** And when they had ordained them **elders** (πρεσβυτέρους) in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

**Acts 15:2** When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto **the apostles** (τοὺς ἀποστόλους) and **elders** (πρεσβυτέρους) about this question.

**Acts 15:4** And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of **the church** (ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας), and of **the apostles** (τῶν ἀποστόλων) and **elders** (τῶν πρεσβυτέρων), and they declared all things that God had done with them.

**Acts 15:6** And **the apostles** (οἱ ἀπόστολοι) and **elders** (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) came together for to consider of this matter.

**Acts 15:22** Then pleased it **the apostles** (τοῖς ἀποστόλοις) and **elders** (τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις), with **the whole church** (σὺν ὅλῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ), to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

**Acts 15:23** And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; **The apostles (Οἱ ἀπόστολοι)** and **elders (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι)** and **brethren (ἀδελφοὶ)** send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

**Acts 16:4** And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of **the apostles (τῶν ἀποστόλων)** and **elders (πρεσβυτέρων)** which were at Jerusalem. and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

**1 Timothy 5:1** Rebuke not **an elder (Πρεσβυτέρω)**, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren; **1 Timothy 5:2** The **elder (πρεσβυτέρας)** women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

**1 Timothy 5:17** Let the **elders (πρεσβύτεροι)** that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

**1 Timothy 5:19** Against **an elder (πρεσβυτέρου)** receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

**James 5:14** Is any sick among you? let him call for **the elders (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας)** of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

**1 Peter 5:1** The **elders (Πρεσβυτέρους)** which are among you I exhort, **who am also an elder (συμπρεσβύτερος)**, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

### **C. Pastor (ποιμήν, ἑνος) feeding the flock!**

**Acts 20:17** And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called **the elders (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας)** of the church. **Acts 20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock (τῷ ποιμνίῳ), over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers (ἐπισκόπους)**, **to feed (ποιμαίνειν)** the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

**Ephesians 4:11** And he gave some, apostles (τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους); and some, prophets (τοὺς δὲ προφήτας); and some, evangelists (τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς); **and some, pastors (τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους) and teachers;**

**1 Peter 5:1** The **elders (Πρεσβυτέρους)** which are among you I exhort, **who am also an elder (συμπρεσβύτερος)**, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **1 Peter 5:2 Feed (ποιμάνετε)** the flock of God (τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ) which is among you, **taking the oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες) thereof, not** by constraint, but willingly; **not** for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;