

CBF considers UN campaign to fight poverty, hunger & disease

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WASHINGTON (ABP)—The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at its general assembly took the first step toward joining the United Nations' campaign against global poverty and disease, called the [Millennium Development goals](#).

In a break from business-as-usual during the Fellowship's national meeting, participants voted overwhelmingly to instruct their governing body to consider ways CBF can join other Christian groups to reach the United Nations' Millennium Development goals.

The Fellowship's Coordinating Council will spend the next year investigating "the feasibility and means by which CBF might be involved" with other religious and non-governmental groups rallying behind the U.N.'s long-term and comprehensive campaign to eradicate hunger, poverty, AIDS, and crushing Third World debt.

Colleen Burroughs of Birmingham, Ala., executive vice president of the mission-focused Passport Camps and founder of the development project

Watering Malawi, introduced the motion from the floor of the assembly.

Motions from the floor of the assembly rarely result in action. Often they are referred to the Coordinating Council, the 68-member representative body that meets three times a year. Virtually all business in the 17-year-old Fellowship is funneled through the Coordinating Council. The Fellowship's bylaws disallow resolutions and discourage debate during the plenary sessions.

But CBF Moderator Emmanuel McCall referred Burroughs' motion to a business breakout session, where it quickly garnered the support of other participants, including CBF missions and programming staffers.

The eight Millennium Development Goals, intended to eradicate extreme global poverty by 2015, are:

- Reduce by half extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achieve universal primary education.
- Promote gender equality and empower women.
- Reduce child mortality by two-thirds.
- Reduce maternal mortality by three-fourths.
- Reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Develop a global partnership for development.

Council leaders declined to consider the Millennium Development goals prior to the assembly, deferring instead to the CBF's partner organizations that deal with public policy and global ministry.

Meanwhile, many other Christian denominational groups have endorsed the U.N. goals since they were introduced in 2000, among them American Baptists, United Methodists, Evangelical Lutherans, Church of the Brethren, the Episcopal Church and the Mennonite Central Committee.

CBF of Virginia also voted to allocate half of the “emerging opportunities” line item in their budget for the development goals. That initial allocation was \$5,000, totaling \$2,500 to the U.N. goals. The Virginia group also collected an offering of \$2,400 that went toward providing water in Malawi, which Virginia leaders also counted toward the development goals.

During the breakout session, supporters argued for asking the general assembly to act.

“I understand why you don’t want people popping up and making resolutions on every issue under the sun,” said David Breckenridge, pastor of Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va. “But, that being said, I wonder if we overreacted just a bit. Maybe we have some procedures that are so ironclad that it makes it very tough to act decisively in a timely manner.”

Others said endorsing the goals does not commit the Fellowship to rearranging its ministry strategy.

Harriet Harral, CBF’s incoming moderator from Fort Worth, said the Fellowship is already engaged in addressing some of the U.N.’s concerns.

“CBF is already doing a number of things that are consistent with these goals—for example, our involvement with Christian Churches Together to confront issues of hunger and families in need,” Harral said. It also includes “our work with Together with Hope and Buckner International.”

Rather than referring Burroughs’ motion to the council, most breakout participants favored asking the full general assembly to act on it.

“I don’t think we have to wait for the Coordinating council to take that action,” said Jack Glasgow, CBF moderator-elect and a pastor from Zebulon, N.C. “I’m really in favor of this motion because it’s doing more than just asking for endorsements. It is also asking for action.”

Breakout participants, who are empowered to make a recommendation to the general assembly, amended the motion to “instruct” rather than “request” the Coordinating Council to consider a response to the U.N.’s goals.

The motion was presented to the general assembly June 29 and approved without opposition.

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