



WHY
Call A
Sandy
Charlestonian
Creek
Baptist
Roundtable?

Can The Vision Be Recaptured?

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8. That it is our duty to be tender and affectionate to each other, and study the happiness of the children of God in general; to be engaged singly to promote the honor of God.

9. And that the preaching *Christ tasted death for every man*, shall be no bar to communion.

10. And that each may keep up their associational and church government as to them may seem best.

11. That a free correspondence and communion be kept up between the churches thus united.

Unanimously agreed to by the joint committee. Ambrose Dudley, Joseph Redding, Robert Elkin, John Price, David Barrow, Daniel Ramey, Thos. J. Chilton, Samuel Johnson, and Moses Bledsoe."

References

1. The Reformed Reader: Baptist Cameos – Richard Furman. p 1
2. H. Leon McBeth. The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness Nashville. Broadman Press 1987 p 220
3. McBeth p 220
4. McBeth p 445
5. Sightler Publications: James H. Sightler, M.D. p 2
6. McBeth. p 220
7. McBeth. p 231
8. McBeth. P 232



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WHY CALL A SANDY CREEK - CHARLESTONIAN BAPTIST ROUNDTABLE?

Can The Vision Be Recaptured?

The Psalmist declared, “One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4). What is significant regarding the Sandy Creek, Charlestonian, and Silver Bluff Baptist traditions that speak to Baptist life today?

Sandy Creek, Charlestonian, and Silver Bluff Baptists were three distinct Baptist traditions that trace their roots to North and South Carolina in the 1700’s and the three cities that still bear the names. These three Baptist groups included Black and White Baptists in the Charlestonian and Sandy Creek traditions, yet **they were vastly different in worship, preaching, organizational styles, and secondary doctrines.** Their differences in style and secondary doctrines cannot be emphasized enough. Yet what is most significant about these three unique Baptist traditions is that they formed a “Union” to do ministry and missions together, and to worship and work together, because of their commitment to unity in Christ and not uniformity on secondary or non-essential matters.

The discussion and vision surrounding the historic December 5, 2006 Sandy Creek-Charlestonian Roundtable will be, “**Should We Go Back to the Future?**” God said “in the last days that He will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28). Will the Lord do it again as He did with the Charlestonian, Sandy Creek, and Silver Bluff Baptists? Can the vision and example of unity and diversity demonstrated by our Baptist ancestry be recaptured in our generation?

We trust that these historical insights on Baptist roots and development have been insightful, interesting, and inspirational to you. Please join us in prayer that the **Sandy Creek-Charlestonian Roundtable** meeting will be equally inspirational and impactful and if God’s will be so – He will do it again. I hope to greet you Tuesday, December 5, 11:00 a.m. at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, TX. Please feel free to visit us on our website at www.cbcarlington.org

Terms of the Union of Regular and Separate Baptists

The Terms of Union: The terms of the union as given by Benedict are: "We, the committees of the Elkhorn and South Kentucky Associations, do agree to unite on the following plan:

1. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the infallible Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.
2. That there is one only true God, and in the God-head or divine essence, there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
3. That by nature we are fallen and depraved creatures.
4. That salvation, regeneration, sanctification, and justification, are by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.
5. That the saints will finally persevere through grace to glory.
6. That believers' baptism, by immersion, is necessary to receiving the Lord's Supper.
7. That the salvation of the righteous and punishment of the wicked will be eternal.



Wade Burleson has written a doctrinal statement that fosters unity among Baptists that is worthy of consideration that you can access at kerussocharis.blogspot.com. Read the article entitled “A Southern Baptist Statement of Cooperation”.

If formed, our mission will be to work cooperatively with Baptist and Evangelical churches in church planting, mission projects, and spiritual life conferences – **celebrating our unity in Christ without requiring uniformity in each church.**

It is fascinating and exciting to learn that African Americans were a part of and historically linked to the Charlestonian and Sandy Creek Churches. The Sandy Creek and Charlestonian traditions included White and Black Baptists working and worshiping together. The historic descriptions of the worship practices at Sandy Creek could be stated of many African American Baptist churches today. Because of the Silver Bluff Baptists relationship to the Sandy Creek Baptists, the free style of worship and preaching, the affirmation of spiritually gifted women, and less formal church government, I proudly call myself a Sandy Creek Baptist.

Wade Burleson, Pastor of Emmanuel Baptist church in Enid, Oklahoma, in many ways reminds one of the Charlestonian Baptist tradition, given his bent toward Calvinist theology, carefully crafted sermons, doctrinal and theological precision and dialogue, a commitment to organizational structure in local church operations, and the use of technology to foster theological debate and dialogue. Wade Burleson and I do not agree on the same solutions with regard to problem solving in the SBC. We are different, yet this son of Charleston and son of Sandy Creek stand united in Christ, inviting Baptists and other evangelicals to join us from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints to share in dialogue and fellowship where diverse viewpoints are welcome and where we'll pray about solutions together.



“O Lord, would You revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in Thee?” (Psalm 85:6). The purpose of this gathering will be to discuss contemporary issues and possible solutions in Baptist life in an environment where diverse viewpoints are welcome, and to prayerfully **explore forming a fellowship modeled after the historic Regular Baptist (Charlestonian) and Separate Baptist (Sandy Creek) “Union” where Baptist and evangelical churches can work and worship together in unity without requiring uniformity.**

What are the lessons today's Baptists can learn from our Baptist heritage emanating from Sandy Creek, Charleston, and Silver Bluff? This paper will seek to answer that question, but first let me give you a brief overview of these three rich but vastly different Baptist traditions. We will begin with the Charlestonian tradition that so greatly influenced Southern and National Baptist life that we see evidenced today.

The Charlestonian Baptist Tradition

The Charlestonian Baptists were also known as the Regular or Particular Baptists. They were known for their Reformed, or Calvinistic theology, a commitment to doctrinal purity and precision, structure, formal worship, theological training and dialogue, and social and spiritual sophistication. Today they would be referred to as “high church” or “silk stocking” Baptists in White and Black church settings, respectively. The Regular Baptist churches (Charlestonian Baptist) were mostly in urban areas and they shied away from the revival emotions that accompanied the First and Second Great Awakenings. One of the most influential associations in the South was the Charleston Baptist Association which was formed in 1751, and has the distinction of being the first association of Baptists on Southern soil. The Charleston church moved into prominence under the leadership of Richard Furman, who became pastor in 1787. Richard Furman's spiritual heritage



of evangelistic Calvinism determined his doctrine and tempered his preaching.¹ Furman devised and implemented the organizational concepts that have since characterized Southern Baptist denominational life.² The First Baptist Church of Charleston was instrumental in organizing this association. The Charleston tradition believed in providing education and organization for Baptists in the South. Their worship and preaching were more formal and less emotional. Walter B. Shurden described the “Charleston Tradition” with its grace and dignity as emphasizing *theological* order in their confession of faith, *ecclesiological* order in their “Summary of Church Discipline”... their *liturgical* order with their dignified worship and stately hymns and their *ministerial* order in their emphasis upon a trained minister.” Furman University in Greenville, SC was named after the highly esteemed pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston.³ The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary roots can also be traced to the movement which Furman began.⁴

The Sandy Creek Baptist Tradition

Sandy Creek Baptists were also known as Separate Baptists, and they were known for their devotion to fervent and free worship, evangelism, and church planting. The Separate Baptists were dedicated to the “old time religion.” They preached a “whosoever will” gospel with strong gestures, tears, and altar calls during which the preachers left the platform and went through the congregation exhorting sinners to come forward to be saved. The entire congregation sang the gospel in folk tunes. Songs such as Amazing Grace were set to these folk tunes.⁵ They rattled the rafters with their songs and were free to testify in church, say “amen” or “glory,” and run or shout if they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Separate Baptists most distinctive feature was their emotional style preaching and worship. Outcries, epilepsies, and ecstasies attended their meetings.⁶ Shouting, weeping, and falling down in a faint were not uncommon. They often danced in the spirit during worship. Women assumed a more prominent role among the Separate Baptists. There were elderesses and



If you were to sum up the Charlestonian and the Sandy Creek vision and union in one word – that word would be REVIVAL. The vision for the Sandy Creek-Charlestonian Fellowship, if formed, will be Revival in America. Sandy Creekers and Charlestonians would agree that we need a fresh touch of God’s Spirit once again upon Baptists and Evangelical churches that impacts the culture that surrounds us and touches the world.

If God confirms that He is calling us to come together as our forefathers did we will not have to struggle for a vision. Our vision would be the same as theirs: Exaltation, Edification, Evangelism, Church planting, Church Renewal and Revitalization, Theological Dialogue, Mentoring and Cross Cultural fellowship, all to the glory of God. Maybe our generation will leave a witness for the next generation.

Is God calling this generation to revive the spirit and vision of Sandy Creek and Charleston in a unified and organized manner to reach and serve this present age? Come join us in prayer seeking God’s face as we pray for revival to once again touch our nation and heal our land.

If God so moves upon us to form a fellowship our vision will be to recapture the Word of Charleston, the Wind of Sandy Creek, and the Witness of Silver Bluff once again. What we need among our churches is the Word of Charleston, “prophesy to these bones and say to them ‘O dry bones. Hear the Word of the Lord! (Ezek 37:4). We need the Wind of Sandy Creek, “and He also said to me prophesy to the breath, son of man” (Ezek 37:9). We need the Witness of Silver Bluff, “Then you shall know that I am God” (Ezek 37:13).

If God calls us to come together we will not have to struggle for a doctrinal statement. Our forefathers did it for us. I would recommend a statement almost identical to theirs that is recorded later in this writing.

II. We should not codify non-essential doctrines in employment policies in our SBC agencies, thus limiting fellowship and creating unnecessary barriers to ministry participation and cooperation. What we are faced with now is how to respond to policies that should not have ever been put in place. The united statement of our forefathers avoided this. What will it take to correct this issue?

III. In the context of slavery and segregation, the Silver Bluff (Black) and the Sandy Creek (White) Baptist could worship, work, and witness together. Surely we should be able to do the same.

IV. Our convention and fellowship suffers if either Charleston or Sandy Creek dominates the other. We must find a way for these two streams to work together. WE NEED EACH OTHER! Our invitation is for those who want Sandy Creek and Charleston to once again work together for the sake of the kingdom. “And they will know we are Christians by our love” (John 13:34).

V. There are many Baptist who desire a Sandy Creek style of worship and church government. This includes hand clapping, hand raising, dancing, prominent roles for women, and less formal church government.

VI. There are many Baptist who want theologically sophisticated sermons, doctrinal dialogue, structure, order, and organization in the local church, with a more formal, liturgical worship like Charleston, and a more traditional or less prominent role for women.

VII. An ideal church and annual convention gathering of Baptists should reflect the Charlestonian and Sandy Creek streams in worship, structure, and most of all, the manifest presence of God.

deaconesses, and some women also preached and prayed in public.⁷ The role of women at Sandy Creek was initially problematic for the Charlestonian Baptists.⁸

Walter B. Shurden described the Sandy Creek tradition as people of “Ardor”. He writes, “their worship was *revivalistic*. Faith was feeling and every Sunday was a camp meeting. Their ministry was *charismatic*; preaching was a calling and never a profession, and their *ecclesiology* was independent; their *theological* approach *Biblicist*”

The Separate Baptists trace their origin to Connecticut. Valentine Wightman moved to Groton, Connecticut in 1705, and founded the first Baptist church in that state. In 1743, Valentine Wightman and his church began a mission church in North Stonington, Connecticut. Waitt Palmer was the first pastor. It was just at this time that the Great Awakening had come to prominence. In Tolland, Connecticut, in 1745, a Congregationalist named Shubal Stearns, under the influence of the Great Awakening, withdrew from his church and organized a Separate Congregational Church. By 1751, he became convinced, by contact with Waitt Palmer, that infant baptism was not scriptural and became a Baptist. Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall were significant in the Separate Baptist movement. Shubal Stearns, Daniel Marshall, and eight families migrated and settled in Sandy Creek, North Carolina and started the first Separate Baptist Church in 1755, and planted countless churches from Virginia to Georgia.

The Silver Bluff Baptist Church Tradition

The Silver Bluff Baptist Church tradition was comprised of free and enslaved Blacks who fellowshipped with and were constituted by leaders in the Sandy Creek tradition. They shared with Sandy Creek Baptists a devotion to exaltation, evangelism, and church planting. The emotional worship style of the Sandy Creek Baptists resonated with the Silver Bluff Baptist and they often enjoyed joint worship and fellowship.

This Black Baptist church can trace her roots back to Sandy Creek. Plantation slave preacher George Liele, the first Black Baptist in Georgia, founded the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in Silver Bluff, South Carolina in 1773. Sandy Creek Baptists strongly opposed slavery, while many Charlestonian Baptists passionately supported slavery. This may also explain why the Silver Bluff Baptists had a strong relationship with Sandy Creek Baptists. Although today all Baptists would agree that slavery is a horrible sin and shame on the legacy of Baptist and American history, the slavery issue initially served as a barrier to Sandy Creek Baptists and Charlestonian Baptists uniting.

The religious expression of the Great Awakening, particularly that of the Separate Baptists, proved to be congenial to the needs of African-Americans and as a threshold to the merging of African and American cultural traditions. One of these itinerants, Waitt Palmer, a White preacher from Connecticut, (the same man involved in Sandy Creek) found willing listeners in two men named David George and Jesse Peters. Waitt Palmer formed eight residents of Silver Bluff into a church, including George and Jesse Peters. George Liele preached to the Silver Bluff community after the church was constituted by Waitt Palmer. This church is arguably the oldest Black Baptist church in America.

The Union - The United Baptist Church Regular Baptist (Charleston Tradition) and Separate Baptist (Sandy Creek Tradition) Merge

In spite of their differences, Regulars and Separates soon decided that they could accomplish more together than they could apart. The denominational name, Separate Baptist, mostly disappeared with the formal and informal agreements of union between the Regular Baptists and Separate Baptists, beginning in Virginia in 1787, in the Carolinas in 1789, and in Kentucky in 1797 and 1801. As recorded by Benedict, the conclusion of the terms of union in Virginia stated, "...we are united, and desire

hereafter, that the names Regular and Separate be buried in oblivion; and that from henceforth, we shall be known by the name of the United Baptist Churches in Virginia." **The Separates developed more order in their worship, and the Regulars infused more fervor in theirs.**

H. Leon McBeth in his book, "Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness," summarizes the tradition debate extremely well when he writes,

"The *order* of Charleston and the *ardor* of Sandy Creek contribute to the synthesis that made up the Southern Baptist Convention. Creative elements from both traditions have enriched Southern Baptist life, and like two streams merging into one river, currents from each can still be identified and traced. The merging of these traditions which continue today; Southern Baptist are still trying to maintain balance between two streams of their heritage, the order of Charleston and the ardor of Sandy Creek"

Seven Contemporary Lessons Learned From Our Baptist Heritage At Charleston, Sandy Creek, and Silver Bluff

I. Our unity and cooperation in missions, church planting, evangelism, and Christian education should be based on our common faith and beliefs in the essentials of the faith and we should allow each other freedom in the non-essentials. If Charleston and Sandy Creek could do missions and ministry together in spite of differences, Baptists of all evangelical stripes should be able to do the same.