

# ecclesiological economics

by Larry Hovis, CBFNC Executive Coordinator

I have been a member of eight Baptist churches and served student internships in two more. I was privileged to pastor four of them. These ten churches were located in two states and a variety of communities, ranging from a small town with a population of only 200 to the capital cities of Virginia and North Carolina. They also ranged in size, from a very small church that could barely afford a pastor to much larger churches with many staff members.

Some leaned a little toward the left side of the theological spectrum while others leaned a little toward the right, but none strayed far from center. These churches exhibited some socioeconomic diversity, though most of the congregants in all of them were solidly middle class. Each church was predominantly white, though some had a smattering of people of color.

Six of these churches were “Old Firsts.” At one time, they had been at the religious and cultural center of their communities. The other four were located in suburban settings, planted at a time when their communities were new and growing with young families. By the time I reached those churches, the growth had moved to other areas.

In other, basic ways, these churches were all very much the same. All had a building. All had a full-time, paid pastor. All had Sunday School, worship in the church building on Sunday morning, deacons, committees, and other church programs and ministries. In these ways, these churches were like most American churches, regardless of denomination.

I love these churches and the many thousands of others like them. I especially love the churches that make up CBFNC. They nurtured me and continue to shape and form me as a follower of Jesus Christ. This kind of church is what “works” for me.

I have to admit, though, that this kind of church is “working” for fewer and fewer people today. And because I believe God’s love and grace through Jesus Christ is too precious to keep to myself, because I believe God’s love and grace through Jesus Christ is meant to be shared with every living person, because I believe the church is God’s primary way of introducing people to God’s love and grace through Jesus Christ and forming them as followers of Jesus, I am also supportive of starting new churches and even brand new expressions of church.

In CBF of North Carolina, there are several ways we help start new faith communities:

**Latino Churches** – With the support of Linda Jones, CBFNC helps our Latino brothers and sisters start new churches. Some historic CBFNC churches partner with these church starts by providing meeting space and other resources.

**Mission Churches in NC** – In addition to Latino churches, CBFNC has supported new churches in NC that serve the needs of other international groups, primarily immigrants and refugees from other nations who now make their home in NC. Linda also oversees this work.

**CBF New Church Starts Initiative** – Under the leadership of Andy Hale, new church start pastor in Clayton, CBFNC

joins with the larger CBF community to start other new churches, designed to reach those who are not part of a traditional church.

**Fresh Expressions** – This is a relatively new approach to starting new faith communities that began in the United Kingdom and the Church of England and has spread to other parts of the world (see related article on page 5).

CBFNC seeks to be a resource for existing churches and a catalyst for starting new faith communities. It’s not either/or but both/and. Bishop Graham Cray, former leader of Fresh Expressions UK, explains it like this:

*“Mixed economy” is an expression that originates from Archbishop Rowan Williams when he was a Bishop in Wales. The thinking behind it is that new congregations and church plants are not to replace existing churches with their approach, but complement them.*

*There is much good work to be done by traditional churches and they need to be supplemented and complemented by new forms of church to reach those that remain untouched by existing churches.*

*It is a partnership between the two and not a competition. The intention is not to replace one another, and neither is it to operate in isolation from one another but rather supplement with mutual prayer, recognition and learning from one another.* Interview with ChristianityToday.com

When it comes to church, one size (or style or expression) no longer fits all. We need a mixed economy of church in America today, and in CBF of North Carolina. That’s the kind of ecclesiological economics I pray we can all get behind.

## Proposed Bylaw Change

The CBFNC Coordinating Council (CC) and Endowment Management Board (EMB) are jointly proposing changes to the CBFNC Bylaws that would eliminate the EMB. Responsibilities now assigned to the EMB would be assumed by the CC. There are several reasons for the proposal:

The CC is the legal board of directors of CBFNC and ultimately responsible for administering all CBFNC finances.

“Management” of CBFNC endowment funds has never been done by the EMB but delegated to a management company, currently the CBF Foundation.

In most non-profits, all fundraising (annual funding, capital funding, endowment funding) is carried out under a common strategy, not segregated to different organizations.

The proposed Bylaw change will be presented for vote during the business session of the Annual Gathering and discussed during a business breakout the same afternoon (see schedule on page 7). Read the full text of the proposed Bylaw changes at [www.cbfnc.org/2018proposedbylawchange](http://www.cbfnc.org/2018proposedbylawchange).