

SURVEY RESPONSE FULFILLMENT LIBRARY

Local Church Identity & Autonomy Partnership Models

Options for meaningful Kingdom relationship while preserving responsible local governance

DOCUMENT	SURVEY PATH	INTENDED AUDIENCE
01-03	Partner while retaining church name and identity	Pastors, boards, elders, and trustees

PURPOSE Provide a discussion framework for choosing an appropriate relationship model without presuming a merger, rebrand, or transfer of control.

READY FOR STANDARD RELEASE Send to the pastor and governing board together; require legal review for any property, employment, finance, brand, or control terms.

The governing principle

CIOA teaches that autonomous local churches benefit from relationship with other congregations and foundational ministry gifts. Fellowship can bring advice, oversight, encouragement, prayer, collaboration, and practical help while the local church continues to exercise the authority preserved in its governing documents and applicable law.

IDENTITY-PRESERVING A church may explore substantial Kingdom partnership without changing its name. Name, property, employment, finances, membership, doctrine, and decision rights must be addressed separately and in writing.

Possible relationship models

Model	Connection	Local identity
Collaborative partner	Defined event, project, or resource sharing	Fully retained
Fellowship participant	Recurring prayer, learning, gatherings, and peer relationship	Fully retained

Model	Connection	Local identity
Covenant partner	Documented mutual commitments and regular review	Retained unless separately agreed
Covering relationship	Pastoral counsel and accountability within written boundaries	Retained; authority specifically defined
KRC expression	Authorized congregational identity and formation process	Determined through a separate KRC process

These models are discussion categories, not approved legal forms. A relationship may combine elements only when the combined responsibilities are clear and lawfully authorized.

Questions that prevent confusion

- ☐ What name, marks, and public descriptions may each party use?
- ☐ Who appoints, evaluates, disciplines, or removes local leaders?
- ☐ Who owns or controls property, accounts, records, insurance, and intellectual property?
- ☐ What doctrine is essential for participation, and how are differences handled?
- ☐ What reports, meetings, offerings, dues, fees, or shared costs are expected?
- ☐ Who may speak publicly or enter contracts on behalf of either organization?
- ☐ What pastoral, legal, safety, and confidentiality matters require immediate notice?
- ☐ How may either party pause, review, or end the relationship?

Documents to review before commitment

- Articles, bylaws, deeds, leases, board policies, and current affiliations.
- Doctrinal statements, ordination or credential records, and leadership succession provisions.
- Financial controls, insurance, employment practices, child and vulnerable-person safeguards, and data policies.
- A written relationship proposal identifying purpose, term, authority, commitments, review, dispute resolution, and exit.

Autonomy and relationship in CIOA teaching

CIOA's tenets affirm both the autonomy of the local church and the value of relationship among congregations and foundational ministry gifts. Autonomy means a church remains responsible for its own lawful decisions. Relationship means that independence is not isolation: leaders can receive prayer, counsel, teaching, review, and collaborative strength without silently transferring ownership or control.

Matter	Normally retained locally	May be shared only by written agreement
Doctrine and worship	Local teaching and congregational practice	Common doctrinal expectations for fellowship or KRC identity
Leadership	Appointment and supervision under local governing documents	Defined counsel, assessment, recognition, or accountability
Property and finance	Ownership, accounts, budgets, contracts, and reporting	Specific project budgets, fees, offerings, or shared resources
Public identity	Church name, marks, communications, and records	Approved CIOA or KRC descriptors and brand use

Recommended response

NEXT STEP Select the one or two models that best fit your present need, identify your church's nonnegotiable governance boundaries, and schedule a model-comparison conversation.

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Key Scripture references (NKJV): Acts 15:1–35; Ephesians 2:20–22; Ephesians 4:11–16; 1 Corinthians 14:40

Source foundation: S01, S02. See 00-01 Source & Public Release Matrix for source titles, controls, and approval requirements. Scripture references are presented for study; verify quotations against the approved Bible text before publication.

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