

An Exposition of the 2nd (1689) London Baptist Confession

Chapter 26.12-15: Of the Church

26.12 As all believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches, when and where they have opportunity so to do; so all that are admitted unto the privileges of a church, are also under the censures and government thereof, according to the rule of Christ.^a

^a 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15

1. All believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - a. When and where they have opportunity to do so.
 - b. Local church “membership” was nearly universally understood as a duty.
2. Everyone who binds himself to a local church...
 - a. Is admitted unto the privileges of that church.
 - b. Is under the authority of that church.

26.13 No church members, upon any offence taken by them, having performed their duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any church-order, or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church, or administration of any ordinances, upon the account of such offence at any of their fellow members, but to wait upon Christ, in the further proceeding of the church.^a

^a Matt. 18:15–17; Eph. 4:2–3

1. If any church member should be offended by someone or something...
 - a. He should perform his duty toward the person who offended him.
 - b. He should not disturb any church order.
 - c. He should not neglect the gathering or the administration of any ordinance (Heb. 10:25).
2. Rather, he should wait upon Christ.

26.14 As each church, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ,^a in all places, and upon all occasions to further every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces, so the churches, when planted by the providence of God, so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.^b

^a Eph. 6:18; Ps. 122:6 ^b Rom. 16:1–2; 3 John 8–10

1. Churches should regularly pray for one another.
 - a. In all places and upon all occasions.
 - b. For the betterment of all and the advance of the gospel.
2. Churches should labor to hold communion with one another.

26.15 In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or administration, wherein either the churches in general are concerned, or any one church, in their peace, union, and edification; or any member or members of any church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to truth and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together, do, by their messengers, meet to consider, and give their advice in or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the churches concerned;^a howbeit these messengers assembled, are not entrusted with any church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any churches or persons; or to impose their determination on the churches or officers.^b

^a Acts 15:2,4,6,22–23,25 ^b 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 John 4:1

1. Difficulties or differences in doctrine or practice will arise.
 - a. Within local churches themselves.
 - b. Among the churches in general.
2. When troubles arise, local churches should seek counsel from those with whom they commune.
 - a. All churches in the communion should be kept informed.
 - b. The church communion is not entrusted with power or jurisdiction over the member churches.