

CONSTITUTION
OF THE
FELLOWSHIP OF
EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCHES



Adopted July 2013

Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches

FEBC USA
11605 WEST DODGE RD STE 3
OMAHA NE 68154-2566

FEBC CANADA
PO BOX 2858 STN MAIN
STEINBACH MB R5G 1P3

phone 402.965.3860

fax 402.965.3871

info@febcministries.org

www.fellowshipforward.org

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FELLOWSHIP CONSTITUTION

SECTION I: NAME AND IDENTITY

A. Name

Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (the Fellowship) is the name of this international association of churches.

The following terminology will be used throughout this document: “FEBC Canada” refers to the corporation in Canada (Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches of Canada). “FEBC USA” refers to the corporation in the United States (Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches). “Fellowship” refers to the cooperative relationship between churches from FEBC Canada and FEBC USA.

B. Identity

We are a fellowship of evangelical churches, biblically grounded, valuing local autonomy, committed to a common purpose and a shared set of values, working together to build the Church of Jesus Christ in our local communities and around the world.

The Fellowship holds in common this constitution and the following defining documents: “Fellowship Articles of Faith;” and the “Fellowship Position Papers.”

The Fellowship operates in Canada and the United States through two independent corporations: “FEBC Canada” and “FEBC USA” operating according to their respective bylaws.

The Fellowship has a long-term relationship with some churches in Paraguay. Representatives from these churches are invited to attend and welcome to participate in Fellowship activities.

SECTION II: PURPOSE, MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

A. Purpose

The Fellowship exists to provide a framework which enables member churches to stimulate and encourage each other to be more effective in building the Church of Jesus Christ through interaction, joint service projects, mutual assistance, accountability and fellowship.

B. Mission

Joining our hands to strengthen His Church

C. Vision

Becoming a Proclaiming People

We will be a fellowship of churches that equips and inspires one another so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed
by every member
of every church
at every opportunity.

D. Values:

1. **God** — He is worthy of our love, worship and obedience. Our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
2. **The Bible** — It is the infallible, authoritative rule for faith and practice. God’s Word is properly understood through normal, historical-grammatical, literal interpretation. It forms the foundation of our worldview.
3. **Christian maturity** — Believers are to be trained and encouraged to become mature in Christ.

4. **Salvation for all people** — We are each responsible for the clear proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people of every ethnicity — locally and throughout the world.
 5. **Our Anabaptist Heritage** — This has shaped our understanding of believer’s baptism; the priesthood of every believer; biblically qualified elders; biblical church discipline; autonomy of the local church; and separate functions for church and state.
 6. **The local church** — We are communities of local believers who meet to worship, train and encourage each other to love and good works. Our churches are autonomous yet interdependent.
 7. **Family** — The family unit is the basic structure of society, composed of a man and a woman mutually committed to a lifelong marriage relationship; nurturing and training the children God gives to love and obey God and serve one another.
 8. **Jesus’ return** — The blessed hope of Jesus’ return motivates us to live holy lives, to fulfill the Great Commission, and to persevere in our faith.
- a. The cooperation, guidance, stability, accountability and support of the Fellowship
 - b. Assistance with recruitment and screening of pastoral candidates
 - c. Guidance or assistance in matters of church issues or conflict resolution with the assistance of Fellowship approved mediators/consultants
 - d. The counsel, visits, encouragement and vision of Fellowship staff
 - e. Financial resources such as loans, scholarships and grants
 - f. Resources for church health, growth and multiplication
 - g. Networking for mutual support and work
 - h. Participation in national and global great commission vision and projects
 - i. Use of Fellowship names, logos and trademarks
2. Each affiliate church is expected to do the following:
 - a. Respect the Fellowship Constitution, Articles of Faith and Position Papers by ensuring that their own doctrine and practice do not contradict or undermine these Fellowship statements
 - b. Support the Fellowship by:
 - 1) Communicating to its congregation the Fellowship’s vision, opportunities and needs
 - 2) Praying for the Fellowship churches and leaders
 - 3) Sending delegates to annual conventions
 - 4) Encouraging members to serve on Fellowship boards and commissions
 - 5) Financially supporting the Fellowship
 - 6) Prayerfully and financially supporting local Fellowship church planting projects through the Extension Committees
 - 7) Assisting affiliate churches when possible through work teams, ministry teams, etc.
 - 8) Giving precedence to missionaries from Fellowship churches in scheduling and support
 - 9) Providing the Fellowship with such reports as the Fellowship requests
 - c. Respect the process of the theological screening of all pastoral candidates by the Commission on Churches prior to extending a call

SECTION III: AFFILIATE CHURCHES

A. Membership

The Fellowship is comprised of local churches which have chosen to affiliate for mutual ministry and encouragement (see “A. Purpose” on page 5). These churches fall into two categories: *Full members* and *Associate members*.

Full member churches are autonomous, yet they choose to be interdependent with other churches of the Fellowship. An autonomous church is defined as a church that meets weekly for public worship; maintains a membership list; has a leadership structure with a plurality of elders (or equivalent); is governed by a written constitution; is incorporated and is financially self-sufficient.

Associate members are dependent churches (usually church plants) which have begun to hold regular weekly services under the guidance and oversight of a “mother” church, an extension committee, or the Commission on Church Planting. Associate churches become full member churches when they meet the requirements set forth in the autonomy flow chart from the *Church Planter’s Manual*. At such time, the Commission on Church Planting will recommend to the respective national Delegate Body full membership of the associate church.

B. Privileges and expectations of affiliate churches

1. An affiliate church has the following privileges of membership in the Fellowship:

- d. Maintain all its facilities in accordance with local building and fire codes. Adequate risk and liability insurance will be secured and periodically reviewed. Adequate security for the public will be provided
 - e. Demonstrate biblical values and ethical standards in all activities
 - f. Obey all governmental regulations with respect to finances and public safety
 - g. Affiliate churches are members of their respective nation's Fellowship corporation and operate under the laws of that jurisdiction
3. Liability of affiliates: Affiliate churches shall not be held answerable or responsible for any act, default, obligation or liability of the Fellowship or for any engagement, claim, payment, loss, injury, transaction, matter or thing relating to or connected with the Fellowship.

C. Affiliation process

- 1. The President will oversee the recruitment process of churches into the Fellowship.
- 2. A church desiring affiliation must be approved by the Commission on Churches, and the respective national directors and the Delegate Body.
- 3. Affiliation procedures are written in the *Directors' Handbook*

D. Dissolution of relationship

In the sad and unlikely event that either the Fellowship or an individual church wishes to dissolve the relationship, the following guidelines will be respected:

- 1. All efforts will be made for reconciliation with appropriate patience. Unity in the body of Christ is of consequential importance.
- 2. FEBC Canada or FEBC USA will disaffiliate from a local church when any one of the following conditions occur:
 - a. The local church ceases to exist. In such cases, property and assets should be transferred to FEBC Canada or FEBC USA.
 - b. The local church requests disaffiliation and has followed its own constitutional process to do so.
 - c. The local church holds views which undermine or contradict the Articles of Faith or Position Papers of the Fellowship.
 - d. The local church is violating civil or criminal laws. Exception may be granted if the law compels the church to violate God's written commands.

- 3. Any local church property owned exclusively by FEBC Canada or FEBC USA is under the control of the directors of the respective corporation.
- 4. Any local church property owned jointly by the local church and FEBC Canada or FEBC USA may be transferred solely to the local church provided the church has legal status as a charity and a leadership structure. All legal fees will be the responsibility of the local church.
- 5. FEBC Canada or FEBC USA will exercise no claims to property owned solely by the local church.
- 6. In an effort to glorify God, all parties will seek to uphold the credibility and reputation of the former partner.

E. Clergy Credentialing

1. Licensing

Upon certification of the Commission on Churches and in accordance with their policies, the Fellowship will provide a minister's license to any minister called or commissioned by a Fellowship church.

2. Ordination

- a. The Commission on Churches partners with the local church to ordain qualified pastors. Ordination by a like-minded fellowship may be recognized with the approval of the Commission on Churches.
- b. The ordination policy is recorded in the *Commission on Churches Handbook*.
- c. The Fellowship maintains ordination records.
- d. Fellowship ordination will be revoked if the minister's beliefs are at variance with the Articles of Faith of the Fellowship or if the minister is practicing or promoting immoral behavior which is directly condemned in the Scriptures.

SECTION IV: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Fellowship consists of churches which are represented by their delegates; a Board of Directors; a Doctrinal Council; Commissions; Employees; Extension Committees; and a Nominating Committee.

A. Delegate Body

- 1. **Identity:** FEBC Canada and FEBC USA are represented by delegates from their respective churches.
- 2. **Purpose:** The Delegate Body will provide input and perspective from the local churches to the

Fellowship, and in return, to communicate the Fellowship's work to the local churches.

3. **Accountability:** Delegates are directly accountable to their own local church.
4. **Responsibilities:**
 - a. FEBC Canada delegates will elect directors of FEBC Canada and approve the FEBC Canada budget.
 - b. FEBC USA delegates will elect directors of FEBC USA and approve the FEBC USA budget.
 - c. Elect Doctrinal Council members.
 - d. Ratify the slate of commission members.
 - e. Ratify by a two-thirds majority any changes to the Constitution, Articles of Faith and Position Papers.
 - f. Communicate their church's affirmations, suggestions and concerns on how the Fellowship is fulfilling its purpose, mission and vision.
 - g. Communicate the Fellowship's vision and progress to their churches.

B. Board of Directors

1. **Identity:** The Board of Directors is comprised of directors of FEBC Canada and directors of FEBC USA.
2. **Purpose:**
 - a. **Spiritual Leadership:** They shall provide future oriented direction and spiritual leadership over all the activities of the Fellowship, enabling the Fellowship to accomplish its purpose, mission and vision.
 - b. **Protection:** They protect the organization so that it will always honor God by being consistent with Scripture and respecting its Constitution.
3. **Accountability:** The directors are directly accountable to their respective national delegate body.
4. **Organization:**
 - a. The Board of Directors shall consist of three (3) to six (6) men from each corporation who meet the following criteria:
 - 1) Have demonstrated a faithful commitment to serving the Lord and understand biblical, visionary leadership concepts.
 - 2) Have served on a Fellowship commission for a minimum of two years or have

been a member of an affiliate church for a minimum of five years.

- 3) Recommended by the elder board, or equivalent, of that local church.
 - 4) Agree to respect the Fellowship's constitution, defining documents and vision.
 - 5) Meet the character profile of an elder based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - 6) Not concurrently serving on any Fellowship commission.
- b. Terms for Directors shall be four years. Directors may not serve more than three consecutive terms. After a two-year hiatus, a former director may again be nominated.
 - c. The Board of Directors will choose officers from within their group with the following guidelines:
 - 1) The Chair shall set the agenda and lead all board meetings.
 - 2) Any three (3) members may add an item to the agenda.
 - 3) The Vice-Chair shall fulfill the responsibilities of the chair when needed.
 - 4) The Recording Secretary shall ensure that minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors are recorded and distributed to the members.
 - 5) The terms of officers shall be two years. The Chair shall be selected at the end of convention on even-numbered years. The Vice-Chair and Recording Secretary shall be selected at the end of convention on odd-numbered years.
 - 6) An officer may serve a maximum of three consecutive officer terms in the same office.
5. **Responsibilities** are detailed in the *Directors' Handbook*.
 6. **Finances**

Each corporate Board of Directors will oversee its own finances (including recording, reporting and auditing) and appoint a financial officer at its discretion.
 7. **Removal of Fellowship Directors**

Any director who misses three meetings consecutively without valid reason will be automatically removed from the Fellowship Board of Directors. The remaining board members will determine the validity of the reason.

C. Doctrinal Council

1. **Purpose:** The Doctrinal Council will ensure that the Articles of Faith of the Fellowship accurately articulate the Fellowship's understanding of the Scriptures, and that the Fellowship is addressing pertinent social issues through Position Papers.
2. **Accountability:** The Doctrinal Council is directly accountable to the delegates.
3. **Organization:**
 - a. There will be a minimum of four (4) and a maximum of six (6) members.
 - b. Members shall serve for five-year renewable terms (no term limits).
 - c. The Doctrinal Council shall elect from within its group the following officers with the following guidelines:
 - 1) The Chair shall set the agenda and lead all Doctrinal Council meetings
 - 2) Any two (2) members may add an item to the agenda.
 - 3) The Vice-Chair shall fulfill the responsibilities of the chair when needed.
 - 4) The Secretary shall record and distribute the minutes of all meetings.
 - 5) Terms of officers shall be staggered three year terms.
 - 6) The chair may only serve for two consecutive terms of office.
 - d. The Commission on Churches may provide a liaison who may audit and comment in any meeting of the Doctrinal Council.
4. **Qualifications:**
 - a. Have service in vocational ministry and associated with a Fellowship church for at least five years.
 - b. Be a member in good standing in a Fellowship church.
 - c. Be recommended by the elder board, or equivalent, of that local church.
 - d. Meet the character profile of an elder based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - e. Have the capability to evaluate nuanced and complex theological arguments, and preferably hold a Master's degree or equivalent in Biblical and/or theological studies.
 - f. Be in agreement with the Fellowship's constitution, and defining documents. Upon their election, they will sign a document affirming the same.

- g. Practice a normal, historical-grammatical, literal hermeneutic.

5. Responsibilities

- a. They must consult with the Commission on Churches prior to recommending any changes to the Articles of Faith or the Position Papers.
- b. Other responsibilities are detailed in the *Doctrinal Council Handbook*.

D. Employees

1. President

- a. **Purpose:** To lead the Fellowship to successfully accomplish its vision and purpose.
- b. **Accountability:** The President is accountable to the Board of Directors.
- c. **Qualifications:**
 - 1) Has demonstrated a faithful commitment to serving the Lord and understands biblical, visionary leadership concepts.
 - 2) Meets the character profile of an elder based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - 3) Is in agreement with the Fellowship's constitution, defining documents and vision. He will sign a document affirming the same.
 - 4) Is a member of a Fellowship church (or willing to join a Fellowship church).
 - 5) Has leadership skills and experience.
- d. Responsibilities are detailed in the *President's Handbook*.

2. Administrator

- a. **Purpose:** This full-time position exists to ensure administrative coordination between the various entities which make up the Fellowship; be responsible for most of the Fellowship publications, communications, mailings; and manage the bookstore and archives.
- b. **Accountability:** The Administrator is accountable directly to the President.
- c. Responsibilities and qualifications are detailed in the *Administrator's Handbook*.

3. **Hiring and dismissal of employees:** The Board of Directors will hire and dismiss employees according to their policies recorded in its handbook.

E. Commissions

1. **Purpose:** The Commissions on Churches, Church Planting, Education, Missions, Outreach and Women's Ministries shall perform and facilitate the ministry of the Fellowship.

2. **Qualifications** of commission members
 - a. Have demonstrated faithful commitment to serving the Lord.
 - b. Be a member in good standing in an affiliate church for two years
 - c. Be recommended by the elder board, or equivalent, of that local church.
 - d. Agree to respect the Fellowship's constitution, defining documents and vision.
 - e. Members of the Commission on Churches and the Commission on Church Planting must be men who meet the character profile of an elder based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

3. **Organization**

- a. The Commissions on Churches, Missions, Education, Women's Ministries and Outreach shall consist of up to seven members ratified by the Delegate Body to three-year staggered terms.
- b. The Commission on Church Planting shall consist of up to seven members, one chosen by and from each of the functioning regional extension committees for three-year staggered terms with the remaining members to be ratified by the Delegate Body to three-year staggered terms.
- c. Each commission will organize internally during the annual convention by electing a chair, vice-chair and secretary. The chair must have served one full three-year term on a commission unless exempted by Board of Directors action.
- d. Each commission chair shall make regular reports on the activity of their respective commission to the Board of Directors.
- e. Each commission shall prepare its annual budget and submit it to the Board of Directors by February 28.
- f. Duties of commissions are laid out in the policy manual for each commission.
- g. Quorum for scheduled commission meetings to conduct official business is three members.

F. **Extension Committees**

Wherever a sufficient number of Fellowship churches operate in a region, they are encouraged to form a regional extension committee. Where such an extension exists, the Commission on Church Planting will partner with them. Each committee should respect policies and guidelines set forth by the Commission on Church Planting while showing consideration for the local culture.

1. Purpose: To select, plan, initiate and supervise church planting projects in its area. It may also contribute as needed to facilitate the broader purpose and vision of the Fellowship.
2. Responsibilities: These are set forth in the job description of an extension committee in the *Church Planter's Manual*.

G. **Nominating Committee**

1. At the end of each convention, the Board of Directors will appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of the following:
 - a. The President
 - b. One director
 - c. One member of the Doctrinal Council
 - d. One commission chair
2. The Nominating Committee is responsible to vet candidates for the following:
 - a. Board of Directors
 - b. Doctrinal Council
 - c. Commissions
3. The Nominating Committee will measure candidates only against the qualifications listed in the constitution or the respective handbooks. At their discretion they may contact people who know the candidates.
4. In order for a candidate's name to stand for election by the Delegate Body, each candidate must be approved by a simple majority of the Nominating Committee.
5. The Committee will publish a slate of nominees by the annual convention and preferably a month in advance of convention.
6. Directors and Doctrinal Council nominees will be presented individually. Commission nominees may be presented as a slate.

SECTION V: ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

- A. New members and incumbents of the Board of Directors shall be elected at the annual convention by their respective national Delegate Body.
- B. New members and incumbents of the Doctrinal Council shall be elected at the annual meeting by the entire Delegate Body.
- C. All elections shall be by ballot and simple majority vote.

- D. All newly elected Directors and Doctrinal Council members shall take office at the close of the annual convention.
- E. The Board of Directors may appoint members to any vacant position. This appointment expires at the end of the next annual convention.
- F. Commission members:
 - 1. Churches will nominate commission members. The Nomination Committee will select and present a slate of nominees to the Delegate Body.
 - 2. Commission nominees shall be ratified by the Delegate Body with the exception of those members of the Commission on Church Planting who are appointed by the Extension Committees. They shall serve three-year staggered terms. Terms shall begin at the end of the annual convention. Nominees are expected to attend the commission meetings which take place the day before the annual convention.
 - 3. No member shall serve concurrently on more than one commission.

SECTION VI: ANNUAL MEETING

- A. The Fellowship shall meet annually at convention to conduct its business.
- B. The time and location of the annual meeting will be announced at least ninety (90) days in advance.
- C. **Quorum:** The delegates present shall constitute a quorum.
- D. **Representation** at the annual meeting.
 - 1. Delegates must be members of a Fellowship church and appointed or elected by that church to serve as a delegate.
 - 2. All officers of the Fellowship, church leaders and delegates are strongly urged to attend the annual convention sessions. Members who are not delegates shall be privileged to participate in open de-liberations. At his discretion, the Moderator may allow a non-member the privilege of participation in open deliberations. However, participation does not include voting rights.
 - 3. A full member church is granted one (1) vote for every twenty (20) members or fraction thereof. A delegate may carry up to three votes.
 - 4. An associate church is granted one (1) vote only.

E. Business Sessions

- 1. The Fellowship Board of Directors will appoint a Moderator and a Parliamentarian for the annual convention.
 - 2. The chair of the Board of Directors in consultation with the President will prepare the agenda and communicate it to the churches three (3) weeks prior to the annual meeting.
 - 3. To add an item to the agenda (excluding changes to the defining documents), a written request for the item's addition from the church (signed by the pastor, or leadership board chair) must be received by the Board of Directors chair three (3) days prior to the start of the annual meeting. With these conditions fulfilled, the item will be added to the agenda.
 - 4. New business from the floor must be presented in writing to the Moderator who will determine whether the item will be presented to the Delegate Body.
 - 5. Delegates must be present in order to vote.
 - 6. All motions will be voted by voice/hands unless ballots are requested by the Delegate Body.
 - 7. A simple majority will carry with the exception of changes to the Constitution, Articles of Faith, and Position Papers which require a two-thirds majority.
 - 8. If any vote results in a tie, the motion is defeated.
- F. The Fellowship's fiscal year shall close October 31.
 - G. The Board of Directors, the President, the Administrator, and all Commission Chairs shall present a written annual report to the Delegates at Convention. This shall be submitted to the Fellowship office by May 1.
 - H. A financial report and proposed annual budget shall be distributed to the churches three (3) weeks prior to Convention.
 - I. At convention, the respective Delegate Bodies will accept reports, elect directors and Doctrinal Council members, and adopt the budgets.

SECTION VII: AMENDMENTS

- A. This Constitution may be amended only upon recommendation of the directors and a two-thirds majority vote of the Delegate Body present at the annual meeting, providing notice has been given at least three months in advance of the meeting to allow time for discussion and recommendations by the local churches.

- B. The Articles of Faith and Position Papers may be amended only upon recommendation of the Doctrinal Council and a two-thirds majority vote of the Delegate Body present at the annual meeting, providing notice has been given at least three months in advance of the meeting to allow time for discussion and recommendations by the local churches.

SECTION VIII: FORMER CONSTITUTION

The final acceptance of this constitution renders any previous constitutions null and void. Previous membership action that might conflict with this constitution is also rendered null and void.

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