

"If we go back into the annals of the Fellowship past, we would see that most of our early successes were the result of clear theology, commitment to mission, and closely connected community. In effect, we were an interdependent group of churches."

Partnership 2016 is a recognition that over time we may have lost some of our clarity, passion, and reliance on one another. It is a return to our roots, where our direction for the future takes us right back to the past. It is an attempt to guarantee that our pursuit of the mission of Jesus is relevant and meaningful for today, but solidly based in unchanging values that God loves.

If we are to move forward with the gospel of Jesus Christ in our region, then we will need each other. None of us have the capability of doing it alone. I encourage you to be a positive and excited partner as together we seek to transform our region with the love of Jesus, for the honour and glory of God."

David Horita
Regional Director, Fellowship Pacific



"The journey we embarked upon together five years ago has been filled with change as we have sought to intentionally redirect our efforts to help our churches achieve their God-given mission. When our Regional Director recently informed the Fellowship Pacific Board that our region of churches grew approximately 3.4% in 2010 after years of simply maintaining and even losing ground, we realized one of the answers to the question, 'What difference have any of our changes made?' We are experiencing a growing blessing from God. We believe there is much more to come. We have come far, but not far enough. As a Board, we believe now is the time to move forward with Partnership 2016 with anticipation of what God has in store. "

Lorrie Wasyliv
Executive Director, WINGS
President, Fellowship Pacific Board



"I've always believed that we're at our best as a Fellowship when we are all pulling in the same direction. Choosing to depend upon each other will make us all better. I include the Seminary in this. For too long, we have tended to think of Northwest as an independent entity. But in truth, Northwest cannot separate its identity from that of the Fellowship. The seminary only has value as it serves the churches. We depend upon the churches and the churches depend upon us for quality leadership development. I consider that a privilege."

Kenton Anderson
President, Northwest Baptist Seminary





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Review

Partnership 2016 is the natural next step in our movement forward as Fellowship Pacific. Over the past number of years we have embarked on a journey of change for the sole purpose of ensuring that we fulfill the mission given to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At the most simple level, this mission calls every church to be actively engaged in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who do not know him and to intentionally help existing believers to completely surrender to Jesus. The crystal clear mandate of the Fellowship Pacific is to help churches to achieve this mission.

Partnership 2016 grows out of an unchanging belief that the Great Commission of Jesus to *“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* is still a command we must follow.

We present this initiative to you because the Fellowship Pacific Board and Staff are committed to fulfilling the mandate of the risen Lord in Acts 1:8, where He gives his last instructions prior to the ascension, teaching that *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

All of our past changes, as well as Partnership 2016 have been pursued in order to see these commands of Jesus vibrantly lived out in every one of our churches. In the process of seeking to help churches it has become evident that this is a task for all of us. We cannot reach the local community of our own “Jerusalem,” nor the region that is our “Judea and Samaria,” nor “all nations” without a mutual agreement to work together.

It is worth a review of recent history.

In 2005 the Fellowship Pacific (then Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in B.C. & Yukon) initiated a study by Rob Waller and Associates of the current situation within our churches and region. This study indicated that the Fellowship was in a crisis situation, needed radical change, and might only have one opportunity to correct the problems. Specifically, the results of the study recommended the following changes:

- Clarifying our mission and vision so that it is embraced by the entire constituency.



- Determining a governing structure that effectively addresses the complexity of the regional ministries.
- Building a budget and sound financial plan that effectively engages the support of our churches.
- Creating a dynamic and strategic regional ministry plan.
- Designing a good communication system that delivers current information to our churches in a timely fashion.
- Implementing an ongoing evaluation strategy designed to keep us moving ahead to the best of our ability with effective ministries and services.

In the last six years most of these changes have been instituted. As many of you know, the Fellowship task force spent many months touring the region, talking to churches and discussing options with individuals before any changes were made. Since then, the mission and vision statements have been rewritten, our governing structure rebuilt, our budgeting and “restricted fund” processes completely revamped, a strategic plan developed and continually revised, and consistent evaluation has taken place. Most significantly, we have repeatedly chosen to become a proactive association of churches that work together in order to better complete the mission God has entrusted to us.

The big question is this: **“What difference have any of these changes made?”** Very few of us like change, so there needs to be a defined return on the discomfort that change evokes in each of us individually, and in each of our churches.

Prior to 2007 most denominations and Fellowship regions were in decline. While the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in B.C. and Yukon was considered one of the healthiest regions in Canada, the truth is that we were merely maintaining. However, due to your courage in supporting change and through the foundational sacrifices of our past leaders we have enjoyed a growing blessing from God in the last four years. Specifically:

- In 2007 the Fellowship Pacific was growing at a rate of .1 of 1 percent.
- In 2008 the Fellowship Pacific grew at approximately 1 percent.
- In 2009 the Fellowship Pacific grew at approximately 2.5 percent.
- In 2010 the Fellowship Pacific grew at approximately 3.4 percent.

Obviously this growth is the work of God, and directly attributable to Him. All praise and thanks belong to Him. We do not take it for granted. While the numbers themselves have little value, they do represent real people whose eternity will be



changed because the Fellowship Pacific churches were obedient to God. Each of those people who have come to know Christ have huge value to God, and to us.

When we voted to accept a new vision statement in 2007, we chose an averaged target rate of 5 percent growth across churches, and prayed that God would allow this to happen by 2014. We are well ahead of schedule, and also ahead of the targets set within our strategic plan. As usual, when we respond in obedient faith to our Lord, He does far more than all we can ask or imagine.

While we celebrate the work that God has already done, we must acknowledge that the task ahead of us remains daunting. As most of us are aware, our region anticipates huge population growth through new immigrants in the next

decade. These hundreds of thousands of people will come into our beautiful country with little or no knowledge of Jesus Christ. We are also painfully aware that both British Columbia and the Yukon have the highest percentages of residents in Canada who claim no religious affiliation. Of those who do state a religious affiliation, there is little or no growth in Christ following churches while growth among many other religious groups is steadily occurring. Beyond this, it should be of particular concern to realize that the age group most spiritually disenfranchised is the fifteen to twenty-nine years olds. Even among young people who attend church, the current dropout rate following high school is between sixty-six percent and eighty percent (depending upon whose statistics are used). In short, our job has just begun. The Great Commission of Jesus is a long way from being achieved in our time, in our region. It is still a command we must obey.

Partnership 2016 is the next big mountain we must climb together if we are to continue to build on the momentum that has begun. We believe that our mission statement of “leveraging the collective strength of our churches in order to achieve an unforgettable God-honouring impact” is more tangible and more achievable than it has ever been. We have learned a lot in the past five years about how to do church better together. But we have just begun. We believe God has called us to an exciting and dynamic future. Please read on, discuss, understand, and join us in this future.

Partnership and Unity



Todd Chapman

Auguston Neighbourhood Church
Vice President, Fellowship Pacific Board

“Interdependence. It’s about time! The bringing together, breaking down and building up of cultures, generations and denominations for the growth of God’s kingdom. An example of Christ’s powerful gospel at work and a glimpse of the answer to the prayer of Jesus for unity.”





Overview & Rationale

Overview

Partnership 2016 is a pilot project that asks our Fellowship Pacific churches to experiment and engage with an aggressively interdependent structure for the next five years. We need the permission and ownership of our member churches to begin this pilot project, and we will need the permission and ownership of our churches to continue it after 2016.

Partnership 2016 would begin with a three year phase-in process in which every church would be given the time to make appropriate adjustments in order to align their ministries with this interdependent initiative. Then, for the final two years of the project we would seek to fully operate on the Partnership 2016 basis in order to have a fair and complete understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to Fellowship Pacific ministry. Finally, at our convention of 2016, we will ask our churches to make a final determination on whether or not this is a direction that we should pursue into the longer term future.

This plan is an attempt to ensure that the Fellowship Pacific, Ministry Centre, member churches, and our ministry partners work together in order to be increasingly effective in reaching the lost and making disciples. We believe that we can do more in unison than we can do apart. However, this requires us to make active and intentional choices to serve one another for the sake of the gospel. It requires every member church to accept responsibility for its own “Jerusalem”, but also for “Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.” It is a heartfelt and passionate commitment to transforming our local communities as well as our entire region with the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

Partnership 2016 requires all Fellowship ministries (Ministry Centre, Seminary, etc.) to be voluntarily and directly accountable for defined ministries and outcomes that will help our local churches. These would be overtly stated such that every church would know exactly what kind of help they should be receiving. However, Partnership 2016 also would require every church to accept a higher level of peer to peer accountability for doing their best to be effective, and doing their part in assisting other churches to achieve meaningful Kingdom results.



Rationale

When we began to redesign Fellowship Pacific ministries in 2007, we knew that it would take all of us as leaders and churches to make it happen. From a Fellowship Pacific Board and Ministry Centre perspective, we also believed that before we could ask for defined commitments from our churches, we needed to demonstrate that interdependence and mutual accountability could make a Kingdom difference.

Fundamental to our changes was the belief that every church has a responsibility to use their resources generously and wisely for the growth of the Kingdom of God. If true, then:

- It is incumbent upon every church to legitimately determine if their affiliation with the Fellowship Pacific helps the Kingdom of God to grow, or not.
- It is incumbent upon the Fellowship Pacific to tangibly and identifiably help local churches to be effective in the mission Christ has given.

In fact, the strategic plan adopted by the Fellowship Pacific Board in 2007 stated that the Fellowship “has no innate value, but only a derived value when we help local churches to do their jobs better.” It was a clear acknowledgement that the Fellowship is a resourcing agency that exists to help each of our churches.

This fundamental belief has led us to refocus almost everything we do to help our member churches. Out of this clear mandate of aiding and challenging churches came our church consultations, consultation follow-up, board training, a training focus in regional conventions, learning communities, support for satellite churches, increased focus on ethnic church leadership development, stewardship and budgeting assistance, restoring women’s ministries, and hiring a director for Fellowship Youth ministries.

Obviously we are not done yet, nor have we fully developed any one of these areas of ministry support. We recognize there are still church support resources that must be started, as well as an ongoing need to improve our delivery of services to churches.

However, it is equally obvious that this is a huge job and cannot belong solely to a few people in a Fellowship Ministry centre. It not only requires a large effort from our staff personnel, but demands the combined wisdom and efforts of our churches and church leaders.

Perhaps the most obvious example of how this works is our church consultations. As of February 2011, we have completed about twenty-five to thirty consultations in churches, and have learned a lot in the process. We discovered very early on that contrary to the training we had received, Fellowship Pacific consultations would need to



be a team effort. Every consultation uses a lead consultant (Fellowship Pacific trained), and a team of two to four others from around our region. We look for leaders who have gone through consultations, have a similar setting (rural, urban, ethnic, etc.), have particular skills, and are willing to sacrifice time and energy for the good of other churches. Once the consultation weekend is completed, Fellowship Pacific promises to return two to three times in the upcoming year to help train the church in defined areas of ministry. This requires the expertise of another group of people in specific areas such as outreach, governance, small groups, constitutions, etc.. These people again sacrifice time to help other churches. We also serve the churches through learning communities for consultation church pastors, in which leaders meet on-line to learn leadership together. At other times, we provide an individual leadership coach for the pastor in the year of follow-up.

Partnership and Mutual Support

"Every church has responsibility to use its resources generously and wisely for the growth of the kingdom of God. The commissioning by Northstar Fellowship Church in Quesnel to send a pastor to Whitehorse Fellowship Church to help them with pastoral leadership for a few months is one demonstration of interdependency. It is an important part of the blessing, connectedness, and relationships that can exist between our churches. We are not just spots on a map, but there is significant meaning in our relationships as we hold forth the gospel of Christ."



Norm Botterill

Associate Pastor, Northstar Church
Board Member,
Fellowship Pacific Board

These kinds of interactive ministry are the key to our future together. When we help each other, we all grow, we all learn, and we all become accountable for effective Kingdom ministry. It is challenging and fruitful. But it is also impossible to do alone.

As each of our methods for helping churches has been developed, it has become absolutely clear that the member churches of Fellowship Pacific will need to actively choose their future. The level of ministry required to intentionally support all of our churches is unsustainable if we do not choose to do it together. Yet this requires a radical shift in some of our member church perspectives. For example, until 2011

financial support to Fellowship Pacific from member churches dropped for almost fifteen straight years. Likewise, under the guise of autonomy, a number of churches chose complete non-involvement with one another and have been resistant to any kind of mutual accountability.

The Fellowship Pacific Board believes that our current trajectory is making an obvious difference in a number of our churches and has the potential to help all churches. As



mentioned in the Overview, we can now demonstrate sustainable growth that reverses the decline seen in almost every denomination in Canada. We believe this is a direct result of our current proactive and interactive ministry.

Partnership 2016 is not a request to have control in any individual church or to interfere in the autonomy of any church. It is, however, a challenge to every church to commit to an interactive future. In a sense it is no different than what has been requested before. The primary difference is that the Fellowship Pacific Board is willing to define the kind of commitment that is being asked for, and to define exactly what each church should expect in return. Through this process we will become accountable to one another, all in pursuit of seeing people experience the amazing love of Jesus. We desire to have healthy churches fulfilling the mission Christ has given.

It makes sense, It is biblically sound. It honours God. We would ask you to prayerfully consider your participation and support for Partnership 2016.



Partnerships and Consultations

Shawn Barden
Lead Pastor, Mountainside Community Church
Board Member, Fellowship Pacific Board

"Mountainside Community Church is experiencing a season of unprecedented growth.

Our Church is literally bursting at the seams with new faces checking out the claims of Jesus for themselves- eternities are being changed, lives are being transformed.

A key ingredient to our vitality has been our church's involvement in the Consultation Process. This process not only helped objectively evaluate the health of our church, but also put us on the fast track to implement necessary changes for the sake of the gospel. The result is a church inspired by our mission, ministries focused and re-aligned with the mission so that we are all pulling in the same direction, and former church-spectators getting out of the bleachers and into the game. It is such an exciting place to be!

It is possible that in time we may have eventually arrived at this place, but there is no doubt in my mind that the help, advice, and encouragement we received from other Fellowship Leaders has played a critical role in us walking boldly into the unforgettable future Christ has for us."





What To Expect From Fellowship Pacific

Partnership 2016 is a five year pilot project. As such, we anticipate it will take up to three years for churches and for the Fellowship Pacific to fully align with this initiative. As this occurs, the resources will become available for the Fellowship Pacific to provide to our churches all of the items listed on the next four pages. This should allow a two year period for all of our member churches and ministry partners to see how this interdependent future would look and operate, prior to making a decision on whether or not to continue past 2016.

Fundamental Commitments and Attitudes:

| | |
|---|--|
| Biblical and Theological Orthodoxy | We will not move from the core values of our faith, or from our Statement of Faith. Any alterations will be driven by, and approved by member churches. |
| Missional Clarity | Fellowship Pacific exists to help churches achieve their mission of reaching the lost and making disciples. Fellowship Pacific ministries will be oriented towards these outcomes. |
| Cultural Diversity | As an expression of God's eternal Kingdom, Fellowship Pacific will ensure that all church supporting ministries will be available and applicable to the diversity of cultures in our Region. |
| Church Advocacy | Regional ministries will be based upon the belief that Christ's plan for reaching our world runs directly through the local church. Thus, we will be a continual advocate for local church support, planting, and ministry. |
| Servant Leadership | Fellowship Pacific staff and board will seek to model servant leadership following the example of Jesus. As such, we will both challenge churches to be effective and continually assist them in their pursuit of meaningful ministry. |
| Consistent Transparency | Recognizing that the Fellowship Pacific serves every member church, we will operate with transparency and honesty. |



What To Expect From Fellowship Pacific in Partnership 2016

Church Health Ministries:

Church Consultations Every Five Years

Consultations will be provided for the purpose of assisting churches through objective evaluation of ministries. Each consultation will be followed by ministry support in the next year, including:

- A minimum of two training sessions in ministry areas identified in the consultation.
- Learning community support for the church pastor.
- Individual coaching support as appropriate for pastor or ministry leaders.

Pastoral Search Committee Support and Training

Local church search committees will be supported through process discussions and training. Personnel recommendations will be made, with Fellowship Pacific helping to identify potential candidates.

Financial Management and Support

Stewardship development and support will be provided upon request, including the following:

- Training and ongoing support to church treasurers, book-keepers and finance teams.
- Equipping and training of Stewardship Ministry teams.
- Assistance and professional support for capital campaigns and projects.
- Canadian Council of Christian Charities connection through affiliation with Fellowship Pacific.

Theological Support and Direction

Through the Advisory Team of Fellowship Pacific and Northwest Baptist Seminary, churches can receive help in clarifying theological issues within their ministry, including vetting of potential pastoral candidates.

Conflict Mediation

If necessary, Fellowship Pacific will aid local churches in contracting outside mediation services in order to resolve church conflicts.



What To Expect From Fellowship Pacific in Partnership 2016

Leadership Development:

Traditional and Non-Traditional Pastoral Development

Fellowship Pacific believes that leaders are a key to continuing to grow and be effective in ministry. Thus, in our partnership with Northwest Baptist Seminary, we will:

- Continue to provide traditional modes of pastoral development through full-time student training.
- Develop and implement Church-Based training for individuals who desire to “learn-on-the-job.” These innovative programs will continue to result in accredited degrees, but with extensive in-church experience.
- Ongoing training will be available for pastors through involvement in Learning Communities (on-line groups for pastoral development).
- Annual gatherings for pastoral training based on church specific and ministry specific affinities.

Church Board Training and Development

Lay leadership in churches will be supported through:

- Bi-annual regional training opportunities for Board members.
- Semi-annual podcasts and webinars to equip and train Board members.

In Church Lay Leadership Development

Fellowship Pacific will provide resources and training for developing leaders within each local church, and for local church ministries. Some of these may be provided through partnerships with others, and will include:

- Potential leader identification.
- Equipping of lay leaders for specialty ministries such as youth, children, worship, etc..



What To Expect From Fellowship Pacific in Partnership 2016

Church Reproduction:

Church Planting

Fellowship Pacific will plant churches at a minimum rate of 5 percent of our total number of churches annually. This number includes Fellowship Pacific initiated plants, satellite plants, and mother-daughter plants.

- Fellowship Pacific will recruit and assess potential church planters.
- When planting policy requirements are met, funding will be provided to assist churches desiring to plant.
- Support, training, retreats, and Learning Communities will be provided for church planters.

Overseas Church Planting and Support

Annually, Fellowship Pacific will be directly involved in at least one church plant overseas in order to increase global mission awareness.

- Usually these church plants will be initiated in conjunction with Fellowship International and existing Fellowship Pacific church affiliations.
- Usually these church plants will include on-site training provided by Fellowship Pacific church leaders and personnel.

Community Impact:

Share Ideas for Community Transformation

Communicate the many ideas and successes that Fellowship Pacific churches have as they become involved in their local communities in order to love people and share the gospel. This will include ongoing training in creating a meaningful outward focus to our local church ministries.

Interaction of Ministry Partners

Provide an annual forum in which our ministry partners can seek ways to work together for greater impact.

Initiate Regional Projects That Will Help Churches Serve Their Community

At least bi-annually help to initiate a “Great Commandment” project that will clearly address a stated need within our region.





What Partnership 2016 Would Mean For Fellowship Pacific Churches

If Fellowship Pacific churches choose to move ahead with Partnership 2016, it would mean a commitment to work together with other churches in order to achieve the Great Commission and Great Commandment. The following few pages are a first draft of the kinds of mutual involvement and accountability that would be anticipated from all of our Fellowship Pacific churches. Please remember that this is not a “top-down” exercise, but rather requires our churches to choose this future and then to be accountable to one another in fulfilling their commitments.

Fundamental Commitments and Attitudes:

Biblical and Theological Orthodoxy

Churches will not move from the core values of our faith, or from our Statement of Faith. Two of the ways that this commitment will be expressed are:

- Churches will send all pastors who are new to the Fellowship Pacific to an annual Orientation Session that will include connecting with existing pastors, Fellowship history, credentialing (review and expressed commitment to the statement of faith), and orientation to Fellowship Pacific ministries. Credentialing will only occur after completion of the Orientation Session.
- Any changes desired in the Statement of Faith would be initiated from our churches, and would follow a previously agreed upon policy for change.

Financial Support

Fellowship Pacific churches will give three percent of their general offering income to support Regional Ministries.

- Beyond the base of three percent, churches will consider additional support for special projects as identified by Fellowship Pacific. Typically there will be a variety of kinds of projects ongoing in order to give churches the opportunity to support in areas of their specific passion.

Basic Participation

All churches will be active participants in the basic elements of Fellowship Pacific, including such things as attendance at conventions, pastors retreats, and in filling out an annual one-page ministry update.



What Partnership 2016 Would Mean to Our Churches:

Interdependence & Church Health:

Schedule a Church Consultation Every Five Years

Churches will be willing (hopefully even desire!) to have a church consultation provided every five years for the purpose of gaining an outside, objective perspective on what should be done to enhance their ministry effectiveness.

Share Staff and Ministry Volunteers to Help Other Churches

A key to our interdependent future is churches helping churches. Thus, based on individual giftedness, time, and experience, leaders from any given church could anticipate being used to help elsewhere in such areas as:

- Being on (or leading) a consultation team twice a year.
- Providing training seminars to another church in areas of specialization, such as Outward Focus, Evangelism Training, Small Group Ministry, Leadership Development, etc.
- Coaching another church leader through occasional face to face meetings, phone calls, and regular interaction.
- Leading a Learning Community.

Interdependence & Church Reproduction:

Church Planting Conversations

Minimally, church boards will schedule a meeting with the Director of Church Planting or Director of Ethnic Ministries every three years in order to discuss church planting possibilities.

Church Plant Support

As a church planting movement, Fellowship Pacific churches will support church plants both at home and abroad.

- While not always able to participate in every church plant, Fellowship Pacific churches will encourage and pray for all new church plants.
- As part of their annual budget review, churches will consider financially supporting a church plant as part of their project giving to the Fellowship.



What Partnership 2016 Would Mean to Our Churches:

Interdependence & Leadership Development:

Participation in Church Based Leadership Development

Since development of quality leaders is in the interest of every church:

- Churches would be involved in Identifying emerging leaders in their churches.
- Some churches will become involved as Training Centres

Along With Other Churches, Become Excellent Learning Organizations

In a wide variety of ways, churches will engage with others in ongoing learning for the purpose of serving God better. Some of the ways this engagement will occur are:

- Staff will be involved in Learning Communities where they can learn along with other staff in their area of specialization.
- Church Boards will be involved in Board training at least bi-annually.
- As necessary and desired, lay ministry leaders may also join a Learning Community (i.e.: Church treasurers, Board Chairs, etc.).

Global Leadership Training

At least one pastor from each church will be willing to participate in leadership training for churches in other parts of the world. This would involve joining with others to provide training for pastors in other parts of the world who do not have the training advantages that are available in Canada.

Interdependence & Community Impact:

Engagement with Community Impact Ministries

Fellowship Pacific churches will be willing to participate with and support our partnering agencies, including such groups as WINGS, Baptist Housing Ministries, New Hope Community Services, camp ministries, etc..

Financial Support

As part of their annual budget review, churches will consider financially supporting specific ministry projects (Great Commandment or Community Impact projects) as part of their extra project giving to the Fellowship.





Time Line For Implementation.....

Beginning of February, 2011

Send Information to Churches

February to March, 2011

Meet With Sampling of Church Boards to Review Concept, Implementation, and Issues

- *Appropriate revisions made after consultation with churches*

April, 2011

Wide Discussion of Partnership 2016 at Regional Convention

- *Appropriate revisions made after consultation with churches*

May to June, 2011

Town-hall Meetings Around Region for Explanation and Interaction

- *Appropriate revisions made after consultation with churches*

October, 2011

Special Convention With Final Discussion and Vote for Five Year Pilot Project

April 2016

Final Vote on Whether to Continue with Partnership 2016

Partnership and Consultations



"One of the ways that interdependence works for us up in Prince George is in church consultations. My first experience in church consultations was as a rookie observer on a consultation team. I learned firsthand what a consultation is all about and how we can help one another. Then we had our own church consultation last fall. It was a very valuable experience for us as a church. The consultation crystallized what we already knew and put concrete steps to our plans. Now I am scheduled to be part of another consultation team. I learned, I received, I give back: Interdependence...it is working!."

Brian Joyce

Pastor, Central Fellowship Baptist Church, Prince George
Board Member, Fellowship Pacific Board





Exactly What Decision Is Required?

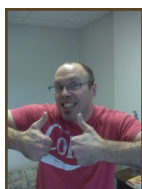
In October, 2011, churches will be asked to vote on a motion somewhat like the following:

"That Fellowship Pacific and its constituent churches begin the five year pilot project 'Partnership 2016' as described the final draft of the Partnership 2016 information package. In so doing, we recognize that our Fellowship Pacific Ministry Centre, Northwest Baptist Seminary, and Fellowship Pacific Churches are accepting a peer to peer accountability relationship for the fulfillment of this project."

Please remember that as we proceed through the time-line for implementation, there will likely be changes to Partnership 2016, based on the input of our churches. Fellowship Pacific will keep you aware of these changes as they are being made.

Partnership and Youth Ministries

"The Youth Ministries of our Fellowship Pacific churches have been partnering together for some time as we recognize the benefits of working together. This interdependent partnership has resulted in regional events and camps for teens, training for volunteer youth workers, and support systems for youth pastors. A number of years ago our youth pastors envisioned an effective internship program for emerging leaders based on practical experience and quality education. This Youth Leadership Training Program is a very practical example of what happens when we work together. Clearly our youth ministries throughout Fellowship Pacific simply would not be what they are today if it was not for our desire to partner together for the greater good of Christ's Kingdom!"



Rob Schweyer

Director of Youth Ministries
Fellowship Pacific





Frequently Asked Questions

You have asked for three percent of the general income from every church. What is the rationale for that number?

This is a good question that required careful and thorough consideration. The Fellowship Pacific Board and Staff realize that the most vibrant ministry always takes place in the local church and that we need to be investing the vast majority of our funds into the local church. With this in mind, we have sought to keep the amount requested as low as possible to encourage local church ministry. We are seeking to balance the focus on local church ministry with the knowledge that Fellowship Pacific involvement helps these same churches to be more effective. As mentioned in the Overview section, we have seen tangible results from Fellowship and local church partnerships in the past few years. Some of our considerations in determining the three percent target amount included the following:

- In the past churches were asked to give to Fellowship Pacific based on a “head tax,” whereby churches gave a certain number of dollars for every member or regular attendee. While that exact mode of ministry support was not successful, the concept of asking for a defined amount of dollars based on church size is not something new to the Fellowship.
- When we projected future budgets based upon ministry we desire to provide, we realized that it was impossible to accomplish the required outcomes with three percent giving from our churches. In fact, we would need over three hundred thousand dollars more income in every year. To respond to this problem, we removed as many things as we could from the projected budgets without impacting our ability to serve churches and encourage more growth. For example, we reduced the number of directly funded church plants from five church plants per year to three. Instead, we created a budget line that allows churches to support specific ministry projects with giving beyond the initial three percent. We were extremely hesitant to reduce the number of fully funded church plants, but it was impossible to sustain at a three percent giving level. Likewise, while we would prefer a full time church consultant to oversee the church consultation ministries, it can’t be done with only three percent giving. So why did we not ask for more? Simply because we are



strong believers in local church ministry. It is where people are reached for Christ, and where disciples are made.

- We are working hard to ensure that all of our dollars spent are directed at helping churches achieve their mission through consultations, church plants, ethnic church support, and training and learning opportunities. We do not want to be spending any money in ways that don't build the Kingdom of God, particularly through the local church.
- We considered what other groups of churches in Canada are requesting from their churches. For example, other Fellowship Regions have already asked their constituent churches for specific amounts of financial support. The Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Territories region (FEBCAST) has asked for four percent from their churches, and our Francophone association (AEBEQ) have requested five percent from their churches. When we looked at other evangelical denominations we also discovered that the amount of support expected is far higher than our three percent target, with some groups at ten percent or more. For comparison purposes, you should know that the Mennonite Brethren request five percent; the Baptist General Conference ask for five percent to the region and five percent to the national; the North American Baptist request six percent; and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada ask for a total of twelve percent.
- The bottom line is that we believe our churches will get an excellent Kingdom return on their three percent investment. This is particularly true if we keep a larger perspective than just our individual churches, and seek to fulfill our mission of transforming our entire region with the gospel of Christ.

Partnership and Cultural Change

"Without partnerships we won't have a ministry to the ethnic minorities nor the multicultural majorities in our region. Our ability to partner has meant everything to us as we have seen God lead us from our small sphere of influence with a few people to a world of distinct cultures asking us for help. By partnering we are a part of God at work in incredible ways beyond our gifting, expertise, and resources. Fellowship Pacific is crossing cultural boundaries and ministering to many cultures that previously we had little or no impact with. It is vitally important that our Churches partner with us; the future of a phenomenal harvest is in our grasp and we need to stand together to see God do this. I believe He intends to take us on a journey of reaching the lost from every tribe and nation that will impact our region and the world, but He is waiting to see if we will do it together."



Dan Chapman

Director of Ethnic Ministries
Fellowship Pacific



What does it mean to “share personnel” from church to church?

This is one of the more exciting and interesting parts of the Partnership 2016 plan. Part of our interdependent reality would be to share gifted and passionate leaders between churches. This does not mean they would leave their church, or be taken out of the church. It merely means that both pastors and lay leaders who are particularly gifted would be asked to assist other churches through training and coaching. Fellowship Pacific would administer this, seeking to ensure that no one church would be overtaxed by having their leaders gone for an excessive amount of time. At this point we envision that it might require a couple of weekends a year, or possibly a phone call every couple of weeks if in a coaching relationship.

This kind of interaction is valuable for every church for a number of reasons. First, we have already discovered in our church consultations that helping others is a wonderful way to evaluate our own ministries. When we participate in helping another church, it is impossible to do so without thinking about our own. This assistance to others is a great way to gain objective perspective on our own ministry. Second, as leaders come together to help each other we cross-pollinate ideas and concepts that are helpful to all of us. If we are working together more often, then what one person learns is shared with others so that we are all learning more. Third, one of the major concerns for the Fellowship Pacific as we have grown has been a loss of community, and a lack of awareness of what is going on in other places. An interactive, personnel sharing future allows us to get to know each other and each other's churches. It is a great way to get below the surface of sister churches, and to share in ministry with other people who have passions matching our own.

What happens with a church that cannot afford to give three percent right away?

Part of the reason for having a five year pilot project is that it gives every church time to make some changes. Thus, the initial three years of the project is designed to allow churches that are not yet supporting Fellowship Pacific time to phase in the changes. Just as we would teach people within our churches to begin tithing by taking the first step and then building upon it, so our churches should work towards this three percent target over the three year period.

We do believe that three percent is a workable number for any church that wants to accomplish it. If a church desires to reach this target, then Fellowship Pacific is committed to working with them towards that end. Stewardship training and budgeting assistance is available for any church that wants some help.





Partnership and Church Planting

Tim Paquette
Church Planter, Clearwater, British Columbia
Board Member, Fellowship Pacific Board

"Our move to plant in Clearwater enjoyed unbelievable support and enthusiasm from both the Regional Fellowship staff and several Fellowship churches. I expected the novelty would wear off; however, five years later the communication, the visits, the gifts and cheques and support continue to pour in. This is Clearwater! We are well beyond the beaten path and yet our congregation has come to deeply appreciate the connections made with supporting churches and continues to enjoy those relationships through the various camps and retreats at Sunnybrae Bible Camp. God has established His good work here via the outward nature of the Fellowship. This process has been humbling in that, I never fully understood the value and encouragement of interdependence until I planted a church. Never again will I underestimate its worth."

What if a church does not want to be part of Partnership 2016?

During the five years of this pilot project, there may be churches who do not want to be a part of it. As always, these are decisions that belong to individual churches. However, we would strongly encourage every church to try this for the five years, remembering that there is a final vote at the end of this project time period. In order to know whether or not this is an effective way for us to move forward, we need our churches to be involved.

In the end, if a church chooses to refrain from participating, they will be served for the five year pilot period on a fee for service basis. Since they have chosen not to contribute financially or by sharing their personnel to help other churches, it is reasonable to ask them for the cost of services rendered.

Can other churches join Fellowship Pacific if they so desire?

Yes. As always, Fellowship Pacific is open to talking to churches who might want to join into our Fellowship. However, these churches would need to be in theological agreement with us, able to sign our Statement of Faith, and also be willing to commit to our mission and vision.

New churches would enter on a three year probationary basis, in which full voting membership would be given at the end of the three year period. To be accepted as members after three years, these churches must be in full compliance with the Partnership 2016 agreements.



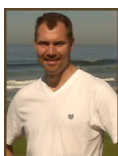
What happens at the end of five years if we vote to continue with the Partnership 2016 model, and there are some churches who do not want to?

At that point, churches who choose not to participate may elect to belong at an Associate Member level. An Associate Member church would continue to be part of the Fellowship Pacific family, and continue to be included in our activities and processes. However, all ministries would be provided to them on a fee for service basis, and they would not have voting privileges.

Are we able to make these kinds of changes without revising our Fellowship Pacific constitution?

We believe that until the final vote in 2016, no constitutional changes will be necessary. As a pilot project that is subject to changes deemed necessary by our constituent churches, it is important to retain as much flexibility as possible. As well, there is nothing in the Partnership 2016 proposal that requires a constitutional change in order for us to move forward.

However, if it seems right to our churches and to the Lord, then we would likely bring appropriate constitutional changes to our convention in 2016. These changes would be intended to strengthen our agreed upon partnerships.



Partnership and Church Planting Networks

Colin van der Kuur
Director of Church Planting
Fellowship Pacific

"The success rate of a church plant that begins through the sole effort of a pioneer church planter is about one in four. When a church plant is supported by a mother church with prayer, finances and people resources the survival rate of a church plant is four out of five.

South of the border we see the emerging of church networks that are working together to start church planting movements. Mars Hill, Redeemer and Northpoint are church networks that are multiplying churches to open up whole areas of unreached cities with the power of the gospel.

These examples of church planting illustrate that impact multiplies through interdependence. Our desire as churches for God to change our region begins with the reality that God must first change us by humbling our pride and uniting us in a common vision. My dream is that as we leverage our collective strengths we can start a church planting movement in the Fellowship Pacific that results in the salvation of a new generation of people in love with Jesus beyond what we have seen or hoped for. Join us."





Projected Budget for the Next Three Years

The next two pages provide a projected budget for the Partnership 2016 plan. As mentioned in the Frequently Asked Questions section, there have been many drafts of this budget.

The budget following is based on a number of assumptions. It is impossible to plan three years into the future without making any assumptions. It is even more impossible when we are creating an imagined future that we have not yet experienced! Below are some of the assumptions we have used, and information that will be helpful to you as you review the budget:

- The budget uses rounded numbers in order to simplify it, and is in thousands. Thus, add three zeros to everything!
- The budget assumes income based upon eighty churches choosing to become involved in Partnership 2016. While we are praying that every one of our one hundred churches would do so, we have budgeted more conservatively.
- The budget assumes that our churches phase into the three percent giving level at one third per year. This means that they are giving at about one percent the first year, two percent the second, and three percent in the third.
- The budget assumes that churches choose to give to some of the special projects. While we included three church plants per year in the budget, we would prefer to fund five. Thus, we have included forty thousand dollars per year being given as project giving beyond the three percent. This would only require an extra five hundred per year from the budgeted “eighty” churches who are participating.
- Baptist Housing Ministries has contributed to the Fellowship Pacific in a number of ways over the years through their Foundation for Fellowship Baptist Ministries. However, in the next few years they will be moving to a formula approach to giving that adjusts according to financial markets. Thus, while this amount of money is an unknown, we have chosen to budget assuming a continuation of the existing amount.





Partnership 2016 Budget Projections

| All Numbers Are In Thousands (add "000") | MINISTRY CENTRE | | | | CHURCH REPRODUCTION | | | | LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | | | | CHURCH ACCELERATORS | | | | COMMUNITY IMPACT | | | | TOTALS | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Actuals Jan-Dec 2010 | Budget 2010 | Proposed Budget 2011 | Proposed Budget 2012 | Proposed Budget 2013 | Actuals Jan-Dec 2010 | Budget 2010 | Proposed Budget 2011 | Proposed Budget 2012 | Proposed Budget 2013 | Actuals Jan-Dec 2010 | Budget 2010 | Proposed Budget 2011 | Proposed Budget 2012 | Proposed Budget 2013 | Actuals Jan-Dec 2010 | Budget 2010 | Proposed Budget 2011 | Proposed Budget 2012 | Proposed Budget 2013 | Actuals Jan-Dec 2010 | Budget 2010 | Proposed Budget 2011 | Proposed Budget 2012 | Proposed Budget 2013 | |
| INCOME | Donations & Grants | 340 | 350 | 394 | 429 | 445 | 136 | 97 | 213 | 237 | 237 | 5 | - | 5 | 5 | 5 | 25 | 5 | 90 | 90 | 90 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Endowments | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 40 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| | Interest & Investments | 5 | 113 | 105 | 103 | 103 | 22 | 40 | 130 | 75 | 25 | - | - | - | - | - | 33 | 29 | 25 | 24 | 23 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Events | 20 | 18 | 20 | 20 | 21 | - | - | - | - | - | 19 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | - | 21 | 10 | 10 | 10 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Training & Development | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Other Income | 39 | 38 | 41 | 41 | 42 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | 9 | - | 34 | 34 | 34 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Church Consultations | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12 | 19 | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | - | - | - | |
| | TOTAL INCOME | 455 | 568 | 610 | 643 | 661 | 200 | 182 | 390 | 361 | 311 | 64 | 62 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 96 | 81 | 172 | 171 | 170 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | EXPENSES | Staff: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | - Salary & Wages | 125 | 159 | 126 | 127 | 129 | 132 | 117 | 108 | 109 | 110 | - | - | - | - | - | 47 | 10 | 150 | 153 | 154 | - | - | - | - |
| - Benefits | | 16 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 15 | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | - | 23 | 24 | 24 | - | - | - | - | |
| - WCB | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Staff Development | | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | - | - | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 7 | 7 | - | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL STAFF | | 147 | 183 | 149 | 150 | 152 | 150 | 132 | 126 | 128 | 128 | - | - | - | - | - | 50 | 10 | 181 | 184 | 186 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Office Expense | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Administration | | 17 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | - | - | - | |
| - Office Rental | | 17 | 17 | 18 | 20 | 20 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 4 | 4 | - | - | - | - | |
| - Insurance | | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Equipment | 6 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| - Depreciation | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| - Professional Fees | 25 | 20 | 25 | 26 | 27 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL OFFICE EXPENSE | 71 | 67 | 73 | 76 | 79 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12 | 8 | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Convention & Board | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Convention | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - National Convention | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Board | 10 | 7 | 12 | 12 | 12 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL CONVENTION & BOARD | 38 | 37 | 43 | 44 | 45 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Grants & Support | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Church Planting | 0 | - | - | - | - | 79 | 41 | 238 | 181 | 148 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Ethnic Ministries | - | - | - | - | - | 109 | 87 | 83 | 83 | 73 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Stewardship | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 16 | 20 | - | - | - | 16 | 20 | - | - | - | |
| - NW Baptist Seminary | - | - | - | - | - | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | - | - | - | - | - | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | |
| TOTAL GRANTS & SUPPORT | 0 | - | - | - | - | 188 | 129 | 321 | 264 | 221 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 134 | 16 | 20 | - | - | - | 338 | 282 | 455 | 398 | 355 | |
| Ministry Expenses | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Training & Development | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 22 | 23 | 24 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Mentoring & Support | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 7 | 12 | 17 | 17 | 14 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 10 | 29 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| - Promotion & Communication | 8 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Travel | 13 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 19 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | - | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 12 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| - Expense | 4 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 12 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| TOTAL MINISTRY EXPENSES | 25 | 30 | 29 | 30 | 32 | 23 | 22 | 26 | 31 | 29 | 16 | 35 | 37 | 39 | 42 | 39 | 64 | 73 | 78 | 80 | - | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | |
| Church Consultations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Survey Development | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| - Consultations | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 19 | 20 | 25 | 35 | 35 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL CHURCH CONSULTATIONS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 20 | 25 | 25 | 35 | 35 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | 282 | 317 | 293 | 301 | 308 | 360 | 283 | 472 | 423 | 378 | 150 | 169 | 171 | 173 | 176 | 125 | 119 | 290 | 305 | 310 | - | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | |
| TOTAL INCOME (LOSS) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 917 | 893 | 1,232 | 1,207 | 1,177 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | (102) | 0 | 7 | 36 | 33 | |



Biblical Rationale.....

The following section was a paper prepared by Dr. Larry Perkins in order to assist our churches in understanding the biblical and theological rationale for an interdependent future. Thus, it is a self-contained document written separately from the rest of the Partnership 2016 booklet.

Locating Ourselves as Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in relation to Other Fellowship Pacific Churches¹

Introduction

If the first millennium ended with the church split in two, the second millennium is ending with the church split into thousands of pieces, autonomously governed, even competing, fighting like siblings.²

Thomas Oden's description of the fractured church should arouse considerable grief and repentance among Christians. The thrust of New Testament teaching regarding the church focuses upon its unity in Christ, with many different metaphors describing what such unity looks like. Inability within the Canadian reality to present the visible church as united in Christ converts directly into a diminished ability to pursue Christ's Great Commandment (Matthew 28:19-20). It was Jesus himself who said "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). The "one another" surely includes believers and leaders in other Baptist churches in the Fellowship Pacific churches.

Fellowship Baptist churches in British Columbia and the Yukon have declared their desire to make a "God-honouring impact" in their various communities. However, this vision will only be achieved with celebration as churches discover new, Spirit-generated, biblically-sanctioned passion and intentionality to live before God with sincere interdependence. Pursuing the vision to "be" the church that Jesus died, rose again and ascended to create as its Lord does not involve creating new doctrine or adopting novel interpretations of particular Scriptures. Rather it requires believers, with repentant and hope-filled hearts, to rediscover biblical truth and creatively discern how to live it wholeheartedly, effectively, consistently, and perseveringly in the 21st century.



This paper seeks to outline biblical mandates, models and applications and propose specific theological constructions that will enable Fellowship Pacific as part of the Church of Jesus Christ to express a Christ-honouring, Spirit-empowered interdependence, to the Glory of God and the achievement of the Great Commission.

Several premises guided the development of this discussion paper:

1. Scripture always evaluates tradition; tradition represents the way previous generations of believers have sought to live their faith obediently in their cultural context. Christians value tradition because they believe in the priesthood of believers past and present. They constantly evaluate tradition in the light of Scripture to ensure that our assumptions and practices are true reflections of the Messiah's life and reign.
2. The New Testament writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, emphasized the community essence of the church – a group of people in eternal relationship with Jesus, Messiah and Lord, and with one another to the glory of God and for the accomplishment of his eternal plans. Being is fundamental and it is a personal and collective being. Relationships with other believers in the Kingdom matter to God.
3. The Messiah's community as his representative, his body, in this world and under the energizing leadership of the Holy Spirit is active, pursuing God's goals and living obediently according to his values. Doing is the necessary result of obedient discipleship and it is a personal and collective doing.
4. The biblical mandates, models and applications give primary shape to any systematic theological propositions Christians derive in order to guide the contextualization of biblical truth. Biblical theology informs systematic theology; systematic theology shapes contextualization; the process of contextualization sends us back to re-examine Scripture to make sure we have understood God's desires, values and goals as fully as possible.
5. General human culture reflects a distorted, fallen humanity, yet God's truth can be found at times within it because of his general grace and providence.
6. All believers, while justified and sanctified in Christ, still wrestle with sin and selfish desires. Vocational Christian leaders struggle with issues of ego, ambition, power, and control. They must exercise great care in every situation to be Jesus' servants in humble submission to his values and mission, as difficult as this can be. Entrusted with spiritual direction, they have greater responsibility to model in word and deed the unity that Jesus prayed for and mandated among his followers.



Brief Historical Contextualization

The B.C. region of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches was birthed in church division. Challenges in the 1920's to the authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures, particularly in relation to materials in Genesis and the reality of the Virgin Birth, Miracles and Resurrection of Jesus, i.e. his deity, led some Baptists to disassociate themselves from other Baptists and start a new association of Baptist churches. This action was not done lightly or easily. However, those leaders and people believed that at least two fundamental principles of Christianity (i.e. the inerrancy of Scripture and the deity of Christ) were at stake, which, if churches failed to embrace sincerely, they would cease to represent Christ faithfully.

Three decades later (1950's) this group of churches took a bold step and united with Baptist groups on the Prairies, in Ontario and in Quebec to form the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches. The decision had its own set of controversial issues, but in the end it was determined that we agreed upon core biblical beliefs and discerned that we could carry forward the Great Commission more effectively in Canada and globally if we worked together. Church planting and missions were the passions that encouraged our unity, set in the context of agreement around core biblical truths.

Again several decades into the future (1980's) the B.C. Region of our Fellowship agreed to work collaboratively with two other Evangelical Christian denominations and formed the Associated Canadian Theological Schools. The primary motivator was to equip effective ministry and pastoral leaders. As well, there was recognition that these three groups agreed substantially about core biblical truths, defined by the term "Believers' Church."

During these 70-80 years of life as an association of Baptist churches other issues have emerged in the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists Pacific (FEBPAC) which led some churches to disassociate. These issues concerned international missions and interference by other denominations.

Church planting, missions and to some degree leadership development continue to be key elements that encourage collaboration and association, based on continued commitment to Evangelical Baptist distinctives. Relationships among church leadership and engagement together in developing ministry agencies to address significant social needs (seniors care, children and youth (camps), and abused women) have also been a significant contributor to cohesiveness.



William Badke, referencing a former B.C. Regional leader, Don Reed, articulated four reasons “for the success of the BC Fellowship Baptists as a provincial cooperative body”³:

1. Substantial agreement on doctrine;
2. Inviolate autonomy in which all boards and agencies are subject and accountable to the local churches;
3. Voluntary association in which all participation is free and uncoerced;
4. Compatible accord based on mutual trust, fellowship, and confidence, with respect to united emphases and philosophies.⁴

Badke observed that “today doctrine remains important, but there is definitely more diversity, and many of the old distinctions are held to less tightly. This has created a climate for growth. However, not everyone in the movement sees this diversity as a positive or healthy development”.

As this very brief historical overview indicates perspectives regarding the nature of church unity in the B.C. and Yukon region of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches (Fellowship Pacific) continue to develop. This discussion paper seeks to assist Fellowship leaders and people to discern:

1. the biblical understanding of “autonomy” and its appropriate limitation and application in Fellowship Pacific generally;
2. biblical boundaries for doctrinal diversity;
3. what “voluntary association” means practically in the life of the early church;
4. the place for and significance of “united emphases and philosophies.”

Biblical Mandates, Models and Applications

In the Gospels Jesus presents his vision for the "Messianic community" ("my church"⁵ Matthew 16:18) that God sent him to inaugurate. The followers of Jesus, i.e. those who put their confidence in the good news he proclaimed (Mark 1:15), as they persevered through the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, experienced Pentecost (Acts 2). When God through the Lord Jesus "poured out his Spirit", the Messianic community came alive. The people of God, pre-visioned and planned by God in Eden and the Abrahamic covenant, was renewed in the new covenant Jesus established in his own blood. Jew and non-Jew linked together by faith in Messiah Jesus and filled with



the Holy Spirit formed the Messianic community, looking forward to the return of that same Messiah and the consummation of God's plan of salvation. True followers of Jesus today constitute part of this Messianic community, the "communion of the saints" (Hebrews 12:22-24), and we possess by virtue of our life in Christ "the unshakeable kingdom" (Hebrews 12:28).

The consistent sense about the church we get in Jesus' teachings focuses upon its shape and identity as the worldwide community that emerges from the proclamation of the Gospel, that bears Jesus' name and that lives obediently to his teaching. "Local church" is not discussed per se,⁶ although many of his teachings do bear upon the way a contemporary local Christian community will operate (e.g. injunctions to be forgiving, leading by serving, importance of holiness, etc.).

Family terminology serves to describe internal relationships (e.g. Mark 3:34-35; Matthew 6:9; 7:11-12). External relationships tend to be dysfunctional due to the animosity of those who do not follow Jesus. The result is hatred, persecution, and suffering. Jesus has very little to say about the organization and structure of his assembly. It will have leaders, but they must exercise their leadership with great care (e.g. Matthew 23:1-10; Mark 10:40-45; John 10:7-18). Jesus desires no divisions within his assembly, but his prayer in John 17 seems to assume that powerful forces will seek to fracture its unity. However, these forces must be resisted as much as possible.

Life in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 1-15)

When the ascended Christ sends the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the immediate result is Gospel proclamation and 3,000 people responded, being baptized and "added" (Acts 2:41). Luke emphasizes their cohesiveness (cf. 2:44,46), based upon the "apostles' teaching," "fellowship," and "breaking of bread," and "prayer" (2:42). Growth continued daily and their unity continued (4:32 "one in heart and mind"; 5:12 "all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade"). We read in 6:7 that "a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

One problem threatens this unity and it concerns the care for the widows (6:1-6), but the Holy Spirit enables the apostles to discern a good solution and bring consensus within the assembly to follow this solution.

External persecution causes the Messiah's assembly, all Jewish Christians to this point, to be "scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (8:1). Only a few, including the apostles, remained in Jerusalem. As they scattered, they proclaimed the Gospel (8:4).



Samaritans became Christians and apostles came from Jerusalem to verify this. They asked God to enable the Samaritan Christians to receive the Spirit and God responded (8:17). Unity was demonstrated through the presence of the one and same Spirit of God.

In Acts 9:10 we read of a disciple in the city of Damascus, named Ananias. Jesus miraculously saves Saul of Tarsus, who becomes a powerful evangelist. God reveals by vision to the apostle Peter that non-Jews will respond to the Gospel and this is entirely consistent with God's plans (Acts 10-11). The conversion of Cornelius and other non-Jews creates serious questions within the Jerusalem church. However, when Peter explains how God directed him, then the believers "had no further objections and praised God" (11:18).

The scattering continues to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. Proclamation directly to Greeks occurred in Antioch. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to investigate (Acts 11:22-24) and he discerned God's grace was operating there too. Barnabas recruited Paul to help him with ministry leadership in Antioch. After a few years, the Antioch church leaders (13:1-3) recognized a new ministry vision for Barnabas and Paul, sending them to Cyprus and the southern regions of Asia Minor. New churches came into being as more Jewish and non-Jewish people responded to the Gospel. They confirmed leaders within these new churches (14:23-24).

Again, controversy emerges as some Jewish Christians, particularly those associated with the Pharisees demanded that "the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of

"Although followers of Jesus emerged in diverse geographic regions, the perspective of these early believers is the oneness, the commonality that binds them together in the Messiah."

Moses" (Acts 15:5). The debate draws Christian leaders from Antioch to Jerusalem to seek resolution. Peter, Barnabas, Paul and James all speak to the issue. At the end of it all "the apostles and elders with the whole church" decided to write a letter outlining some basic principles for Gentile believers to follow, which they believed the Holy Spirit enabled them to discern (15:28). The result is encouragement of the churches. The messengers receive "the blessing of peace" as they complete their mission (15:33).

In these narratives Luke reveals how the Holy Spirit constantly pushed the early Jewish Christians to break boundaries and incorporate into the Messiah's assembly new believers who were Samaritans and pagans. These transitions were not easy, but the fabric of the Messiah's assembly was expandable, allowing them to be incorporated. Although followers of Jesus emerged in diverse geographical regions, the perspective of these early believers is the oneness, the commonality that binds them together in the



Messiah. The terminology used at 11:22 (the church/assembly existing in Jerusalem”) and 13:1 (“at Antioch in the existing church/assembly”) suggests that while there is one “Messianic assembly,” it convenes in various places. As Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, completing their first missionary journey, they ensured that “in each church” there was leadership (14:23) and they “gathered the church together” in Antioch to report what God had done (14:27). Luke indicated that various problems challenged this unity (Acts 6 the distribution of food to the widows; Acts 8 the sharing of the Gospel with Samaritans; Acts 10-11, 15 the conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles). However, in each case the Holy Spirit enabled the Christians and their leaders to discern solutions that sustained unity.

Paul's Vision for a Reconciled Church (Ephesians 3-4; Romans 14-15)

More than any other New Testament writer Paul has given shape to contemporary perceptions of “church.” He used the term more frequently and probably used a wider variety of metaphors in order to give his readers deeper insight into his theology. We find little difference in essence to the way Luke understood the term.⁷ The breadth of Paul’s vision for the Messiah’s assembly is, however, astounding.

We limit our investigation of Paul’s ecclesiology to understanding the way that the church in its geographical and other diverse expressions relates to the whole church. In Romans 14-15 Paul urged various groups within the Roman house churches to live together harmoniously. For him the bottom-line finds expression in Romans 14:17: “the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” “Disputable matters” (Romans 14:1) should not be allowed to break the peace the Messiah has established within his assembly. Paul urges believers to “pursue the things of peace and the things of mutual edification” (14:19). He warns believers not to “destroy the work of God for the sake of food” (14:20). At the conclusion of Romans his prayer is eloquent in its simplicity:

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ....Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:5,7)

Paul’s deepest desire is that the Messiah’s church will demonstrate in the most profound and practical ways the reconciliation that the Messiah’s death and resurrection have prepared for those who are justified.

In Ephesians, written perhaps five years after his letter to the Romans, Paul reiterates his vision of the Messiah’s assembly. Jesus’ death and resurrection have created “in



himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, and in this one body reconciled both of them to God through the cross" (Ephesians 2:15). One Spirit now unites them. This new "church" was designed by God to make known "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" his diverse and powerful wisdom (Ephesians 3:10). For Paul God has one "family in heaven and earth" that bears his name (Ephesians 3:14). The conclusion to this is that every believer has the responsibility to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" because there is one Spirit, one body, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:3-5). God gives gifts of people to his family so that "the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith" (Ephesians 4:12-13). It is in Christ that "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16).

"It is ambition and selfishness that divide and destroy the body of Christ. Paul is always seeking to express the 'ministry of reconciliation' in and through the life of the church."

For Paul there is only "one body," even though it might be expressed in various cities. The one Spirit who inhabits all believers generates this essential oneness. God works through the whole body to help the whole body build itself up. This is his theological understanding. From time to time the body experiences

difficulties. However, the Holy Spirit will protect the unity of true believers in Jesus, even though some might proclaim the Gospel from an attitude of envy and rivalry (Philippians 1:15). Yet even in that situation Paul urges believers and ministry leaders to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Philippians 2:2). It is ambition and selfishness that divide and destroy the body of Christ. Paul is always seeking to express the "ministry of reconciliation" in and through the life of the church (2 Corinthians 5).

Peter's Vision for the "Holy Nation" (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Peter's vision for the church parallels that of Paul, a reality that should occasion little surprise. Primarily Peter used metaphors to communicate his understanding of the church, a word that he does not use. Through Jesus God created a new family, giving new birth to Jew and Gentile alike through the Gospel. In Christ God is building "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5) and each believer forms one of the "living stones" that form its structure, as well, they function as the "holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). He borrowed language from Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6 and Isaiah 62:12 to describe this new thing God was establishing as his people. Collective nouns such as "race, people, priesthood"



define this entity formed from people who have experienced God's mercy. This is covenant language which formerly described Israel, but is now applied in fresh ways to the emerging Messianic assembly.

Even though Peter writes to believers scattered throughout five different Roman provinces, they altogether form "the brotherhood" (1 Peter 2:17; 5:9). Mutual submission and humility are primary characteristics that enable these believers to serve and worship together "under God's mighty hand" (1 Peter 5:6-7), as they "clothe themselves with humility toward one another" (1 Peter 5:5). Peter discerns one body.

Models that Support these Visions

Within the writings of Paul, Peter and the author of Hebrews, three models or metaphors provide powerful ways of thinking about the Messiah's assembly:

1 Corinthians 12 -- the Body

1 Peter 2:4-5 -- the Living Temple

Hebrews 12:22 -- the City of the Living God.

While each metaphor adds distinctive nuance for understanding God's intent with respect to his church, they each emphasize the collective unity that characterizes this

"Submission to Christ, submission to each other, humility, love, forgiveness, mutual service are all expected to find continuous and generous expression as the Holy Spirit actively shapes the Messiah's assembly around one Gospel."



Dr. Larry Perkins
Elder, Southridge Fellowship
Past President, Professor, Northwest
Baptist Seminary

entity. This unity ignores differences in geography, race, time, gender, etc. Although there are members of Christ's body present virtually in every place, every time, and among all peoples, they form one body, not a dozen or a hundred. The expression of Christ's body in one context may display some difference from other expressions, but that reality does not annul the

fundamental principle of one body, one temple, one city of the Living God. The variations may represent diverse bodily members or temple functions or urban operations, but they still form one body, one temple and one city.

These metaphors also emphasize the mutual interdependence that God builds into this body/temple/city. Submission to Christ, submission to each other, humility, love, forgiveness, mutual service are all expected to find continuous and generous expression as the Holy Spirit actively shapes the Messiah's assembly around one Gospel.



As well each metaphor indicates that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The individual elements, however defined, serve the greater purpose and are happy to do so. There is no striving for inappropriate status or grasping for power because each acknowledges the Trinity as being the owner, Lord, and director. Within the Trinity is the head of the body, the high priest of the Temple and the king of the city.

Early Church Applications that Support this Vision

Although various events recorded in the New Testament test the limits of church unity within the early church's experience, two in particular are helpful for purposes of this paper, namely the dispute over the involvement of Gentile believers in the Messiah's assembly, and Paul's collection of funds for the Christians in the Jerusalem church. In one case, Peter, along with Paul and Barnabas are front and centre; in the second case Paul was the primary figure.

1. Dispute over Gentile Believers (Acts 15, Galatians 1-2).

As the Gospel spreads beyond the boundaries of Judaism and non-Jews receive the Gospel and become disciples of Jesus, a serious question has to be answered. Do such non-Jewish followers of Jesus have to become Jews in order to benefit from the Messiah's work, i.e. be circumcised, keep the Sabbath, adopt the dietary restrictions, etc.? Peter's experience with Cornelius, along with the vision from God, led him to conclude that the answer was no. Paul and Barnabas similarly held to that position. However, some Jewish Christians from the Pharisees in particular disagreed.

To resolve this question the members from the church in Antioch travelled to Jerusalem and met in conference with the members of the church in Jerusalem. Critical parts of the debate can be read in Acts 15.⁸ By examining the Scriptures, reflecting on Peter's testimony to God's revelation, hearing of the conversion of non-Jews and their possession of the Holy Spirit, they concluded together that Gentile followers of Jesus did not have to become Jews. Their acceptance of the Gospel and obedience to Jesus would be sufficient. However, they did request that these believers abstain from certain practices that would make it difficult for Jewish Christians to associate with them and concurrently retain good relations with other Jews.

The early Christians and their leaders rejected the idea that there could be two bodies of Christ, one Jewish and one Gentile. No, they had to find a solution that was consistent with the Gospel and would enable the fabric of the "one body" to remain whole. God's Spirit enabled their resolution. However, it seems that despite this achievement, some Jewish Christians may have rejected this position. Some of the opposition that Paul continues to experience in his ministry after Acts 15 seems to be based in such a perspective.



The seriousness of the issue cannot be diminished. The essence of the Gospel was at risk. God preserved the integrity of the fledgling Messianic assembly and of his Gospel. Probably Paul's statements in Galatians 1:6-10 indicate what he believed was at stake, namely the creation of a Gospel that was not in fact Gospel. For this he was prepared to confront even Peter himself. But note that Paul was only prepared to do this when the essence of the Gospel was being threatened.

2. *Paul's collection of funds for the Christians in the Jerusalem church (1 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15).*

One of the less well-known projects that Paul initiates is a collection of funds to assist the believers in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). This project seems to arise from the request from Peter, James and John that as Paul went about his mission, he would "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10). The references in 1 Corinthians indicate that he made request for help from the "churches of Galatia" (16:1). He repeats his request in 2 Corinthians 8-9, using the generosity of the Macedonian churches as an example (8:1-5; 9:1-5). As Paul returns to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey (Romans 15:25-29), he anticipates delivering a generous gift collected from Gentile believers for the benefit of Jewish believers in Jerusalem. In Paul's mind this blessing from the Gentile believers is a recognition of the blessing of the Gospel which they received from and through the Jerusalem church. For Paul this collection demonstrates the reciprocal "fellowship" that diverse groups within the Messianic assembly share. It shows peace and reconciliation expressed in the people of God to the glory of God. One in the Gospel, they are also one family in Christ.

Summary

The unity/oneness within the Messianic assembly/church of the New Testament arose from the relationship that every believer had with Jesus as Lord and Saviour, the residence of the Holy Spirit in every believer, and the placement of every believer in the body of the Messiah so that their gifts could serve and bring benefit to other believers, thereby enabling the whole body to bring growth to the whole body. Undoubtedly the spiritual leadership of apostles and other spirit-filled individuals (e.g. Barnabas, Priscilla, Stephen, Philip, etc.) contributed to the development and sustenance of this cohesion, even as this unity was tested by various events. Yet in the conflicts that emerged, we do not find only one or a few people prescribing what should be done. Rather God's Spirit works through various people to suggest ways forward that the people together discern as being the appropriate ways to proceed.

House churches get established in many different places both within and without Palestine. Each one has status as part of the Messiah's assembly, even as it meets in a



specific location, but also each one is encouraged to see itself as part of the whole body, with responsibility for the growth of the whole body. While Paul may work with house churches to discern and appoint elders, it is always in concert with the Christians in those house churches. The approach seems to be rather consensual, based upon mutual discernment.

All leaders in the early church regard obedience to God to have priority over obedience to Caesar. In this they declare that human political structures cannot control the ultimate loyalty of God's people. Believers respect the authority that civic leader wield for the common good (1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13), but they will not use obedience to civic/religious powers as an excuse to disobey God. In this they discern the essential autonomy of the church from political interference, although the word "autonomy" is never used in the New Testament in such contexts.

Partnership and Ministry

"Partnership, interdependence; it makes sense to me. I can't do ministry any other way. I've experienced it in every role I have had through my years as a Pastor. I don't have time to learn everything, or even to make all the mistakes myself, so I need others to journey with."



Lindsay Anderson
Associate Pastor,
Saanich Baptist Church
Vice-President,
Fellowship Pacific Board

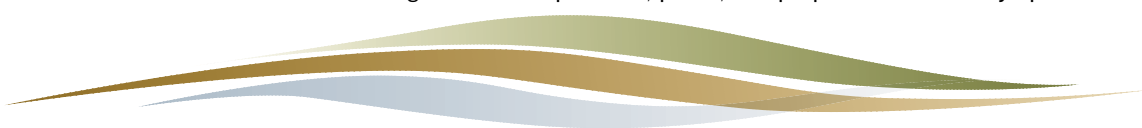
House churches behave like cells in an extended network. There is local leadership that cares for the spiritual welfare of the believers. The believers collectively in that place form and represent the Messiah's body, i.e. the people of God, the saints. Where multiple house churches exist in one city (e.g. Rome), there is no sense in the New Testament that these are "independent" entities. Rather the whole tenor and ethos of the New Testament documents focuses upon oneness, unity, inclusion in the re-established family of God. There seems to be

considerable freedom to express their Kingdom identity in worship and service, so long as the essence of the Gospel is fully embraced. Mutual love, humility, submission and forgiveness are the norms for this community of reconciliation.

Theological Implications

1. *The "Fruit of the Spirit" -- empowerment towards interdependence (1 Corinthians 13)*

The Holy Spirit fosters interdependence and oneness. The entire framework of the "fruit of the Spirit" focuses upon good relations within God's family. Despite human differences, Paul argued that we are "all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). In Christ we possess the promised Spirit. This same Spirit enables us "to bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) as we live obediently before the Messiah. A strong belief in the presence, power, and purposes of God's Holy Spirit will



direct us to serious interdependence as the people of God. Paul is very clear that “the works of the flesh” generate strife and division (Galatians 5:19-21), with strong implications regarding Kingdom inheritance. An underdeveloped doctrine of the Holy Spirit and sanctification might suggest that division within the body of Christ is quite tolerable, in fact may even be considered virtuous. This does not seem to be the mind of the Spirit whose goal and desire is for God’s people to enjoy fellowship with God and with one another.

2. *The values of humbleness, forgiveness, and submission.*

Jesus’ teaching about Kingdom greatness always emphasized humility (Matthew 18:1-5), frequently using a child as an example. He demanded that his followers learn how to forgive one another and practice it (Matthew 18:21-35; 6:14-15). In his discourse about life in the body (Ephesians 4-6), Paul requires that believers “submit to one another in fear of Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). Peter urges similar interaction (1 Peter 5:5-7), with clear warning that God resists the proud.

Are these principles valued among God’s people with the result that they condition all relationships and behaviours? Do cultural values of independence, personal freedom, and status overwhelm believers’ desire and capacity to follow Jesus obediently and live humbly, forgivingly and submissively? Oneness and unity cannot flourish where these virtues are absent.

3. *Vocation and Submission.*

God through Jesus Christ “calls” people to himself and commissions them into his service. In this fundamental sense every believer possesses a calling, one that guides the entirety of life. How this calling finds expression varies from person to person, but this variety contributes to the welfare and health of the whole body. When a believer acts in obedience to his or her calling and applies it in specific directions, it requires a heart of humbleness, service and submission. God’s gifting is for the good of the body, not personal advancement. Being a Kingdom agent will most likely result in suffering, not status.

In some cases believers apply their calling vocationally in forms of ministry leadership. Believers are to respect those who give themselves to such vocation (1 Thessalonians 5:12-15). Concurrently those who engage in such vocation must always struggle to serve humbly and submissively, for the sake of Christ, because they too experience temptations to abuse and misuse the trust they have received. This applies both within the congregation context, as well as among the larger denominational family.

Paul urged the elders in the Ephesian church to “keep watch over yourselves” because “even from



your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard” (Acts 20:28 , 30-31). In the 21st century these words apply to pastors, elders, and denominational leaders. It is a fact that most church divisions (i.e. within denominational contexts) arise because of differences among leaders. The guardians of the body’s oneness primarily then are the vocational ministry leaders. If they do not take this responsibility with appropriate seriousness and consider the unity of the church to be one of God’s passions, then interdependence will not be sustainable. Personality clashes are not sufficient basis for church divisions.

4. *Dealing with theological diversity -- boundaries and boundary protection.*

From the perspective of the early church the primary boundary marked the distinction between followers of Jesus and everyone else. Baptism became a primary means by which a person confessed loyalty to Jesus Christ and moved within the boundary of the church, i.e. the Messiah’s assembly.

The New Testament also makes it clear that it did not take long before some who confessed to be within the church boundary demonstrated by their teaching or sinful activities that in fact they were not part of the body. 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude, 1 John, 3 John all speak to this issue. Paul counseled the Corinthian church in several matters related to church discipline (1 Corinthians 5-6). He also engaged aggressively those who would teach “another Gospel” (Galatians).

Church leaders today must exercise careful discernment, but without being hopelessly naïve on the one hand or unduly suspicious of everything on the other hand. As Jesus put it, leadership has to have the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves. The most precious commodity that sustains Christian interdependence is trust and this must be nurtured carefully over time.

The issues over which early Christian leaders were prepared to divide were all focused on matters of fundamental doctrine.

Galatians – the definition of Gospel

1 John – the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ

2 Peter and Jude – the nature of sin and the deity and lordship of Jesus

2 Timothy– denial of a future resurrection

The Fellowship Pacific group of churches divided from other Baptist churches because they discerned that belief in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture was under attack.

The oneness of the body of Christ should be sustained, unless a primary tenet of Christian faith is being dismissed. In Fellowship Pacific the definition of what is a primary Christian belief is



expressed in the Articles of Faith. Doctrinal unity then is fostered by such theological coherence. On matters that are not addressed in the Articles of Faith people within Fellowship Pacific have freedom to hold diverse perspectives.

In all cases it is the respective churches meeting in convention that give discernment in regards to such matters, not any individual ministry leader. Listening carefully to what the Spirit may be saying to the churches becomes part of this discerning process. Such procedures lodge the decision-making about such matters in the hands of the churches who are the constituent members of Fellowship Pacific. Whether a particular church decides to continue to be part of Fellowship Pacific after the churches have spoken on an issue is a matter for that church to decide. Conversely, if a church refuses to acknowledge the discernment of the other churches, then the churches may vote to dismiss that church from membership.

5. *Interdependence in service, but decentralization of authority.*

The term “autonomy” often is associated with congregational forms of church government. “By autonomy we mean that the local congregation is independent and self-governing. There is no external power which can dictate courses of action to the local church.”⁹ Such statements are right in what they affirm, but are dangerous in what they do not affirm. Considerable history has transpired since the writing of the New Testament documents which reflect the life and practices of the early church. It would be naïve and irresponsible to ignore such developments. And so it is appropriate in our ecclesiology to affirm that local churches are self-governing.

“However, the biblical principles also require local churches not to be so independent as to void or annul a demonstrated oneness among believers that the Holy Spirit desires and Christ himself prayed for. Autonomy should be never used as an excuse to avoid the necessary and missional interdependence among believers that Jesus died to create and lives to implement.”

Biblical principles already reviewed indicate that independence from national or civic political interference must be guarded. Similarly where a “church” becomes associated with a national government and assumes an authority over every expression of Christianity within national borders, such authority is not biblical and does not express the oneness of the body of Christ that the Scriptures exemplify.

So we guard this aspect of independence.

However, the biblical principles also require local churches not to be so independent as to void or annul a demonstrated oneness among believers that the Holy Spirit desires and Christ himself prayed for. Autonomy should be never used as an excuse to avoid the necessary and missional interdependence among believers that Jesus died to create and lives to implement. To use one



biblical principle to annul our obedience to another is to fall into the trap of Pharisaism – something Jesus himself denounced (Mark 7). Our love for God cannot be used as an excuse not to love our neighbours as ourselves – and this includes fellow believers. Conversely, our love for neighbor cannot get in the way of our love for God. True Christianity will be found in the appropriate alignment of both principles for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission.

The principle of self-government operates within the larger principle of the oneness of the body of Christ, the mandate to serve one another, Christ's command that we love one another for the sake of the Gospel, and the greater need of the unsaved to hear and see the truth of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Revelation 7:9-10 describes the vision John saw in heaven where “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb....They cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.’” The “communion of the saints” describes the unity of God's people throughout all time and all space, worshipping and serving God. The New Testament anticipates that God's people on earth will to some degree express this “communion,” generated by his Holy Spirit. Satan's strategy obviously seeks to thwart and destroy God's intention for his people. However, we have Jesus' own words that “the gates of Hell will not prevail” against his assembly. God will achieve his purpose.

The challenge for the church of Jesus Christ in the 21st century is to discern, express and celebrate in appropriate ways its oneness. Unity without uniformity; diversity without division; oneness without onerous authority. Mutual, agape-based interdependence will best model the desire of Jesus Christ for his followers. Leaders who demonstrate humbleness, service, and submission will foster this oneness. By such Holy Spirit-led collaboration churches can become living demonstrations of the Gospel in their service for one another and in their mission within the world.

Larry Perkins, Ph.D.

December 28, 2010.



Endnotes

1. This discussion paper only focuses on defining the relationship between the body of Christ and its local expressions. Many other matters of ecclesiology are not mentioned.
2. Thomas C. Oden. *Life in the Spirit. Systematic Theology: Volume Three* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 307.
3. William Badke, "First the Gospel: FEBBC/Y," in *A Glorious Fellowship of Churches*, edited by Michael Haykin and Robert Lockey (Guelph, ONT: The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, 2003), 229-230.
4. William Badke summarizes material here from Don Reed, B.C. regional ministry director 1978-1989.
5. Jesus' use of the term *ekklesia* here has to be understood in the context of Jewish Scripture and first century Jewish understanding. This term is one used by the Greek translator of Deuteronomy to describe the covenant congregation of Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 4:10(Greek text only); 9:10; 18:16; 23:1-2; 31:30). When Jesus used this term he was looking back as well as forwards. Just as God had established his *ekklesia* at Sinai and Israel formed it, so now the Messiah was forming his *ekklesia* by which he would fulfill his mission (Matthew 28:19-20). The Messiah's *ekklesia* is a re-visioned people of God that incorporates Jews and non-Jews into the "body of the Messiah."
6. It might be thought that Matthew 18:20 "where two or three are gathered in my name" refers to a local church context. However, probably Jesus affirms his presence with small clusters of believers who form his *ekklesia* in various parts of the world.
7. Consider Paul's use of the term "church" in Galatians 1-2 and 1 Thessalonians 1-3.
8. Some scholars consider Galatians 2:1-10 to refer to this same discussion. However, Paul never refers to the letter and its contents that result from the Acts 15 discussion, which is rather surprising because it would be a sure and certain answer to those with whom he is in conflict in Galatians. For this and other reasons Galatians 2:1-10 probably is more appropriately linked with Paul's visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 11:27-30; 12:25. Peter's actions described in Galatians 2:11-15 at Antioch perhaps then precipitated the Jerusalem conference. If Peter was confused, then others were as well and this issue needed resolution in order to protect, in Paul's view, the essence of the Gospel message.
9. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 1078. This definition is common in other systematic theologies.

