

October 16, 2025

*"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*

Ephesians 4:3–6

## **To the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada,**

With deep sadness, Fellowship Pacific has learned that two letters have been circulated to churches across Canada regarding a proposed motion for the upcoming National Fellowship Convention. These letters contain strong accusations against Fellowship Pacific, filled with falsehoods and misinformation that have caused confusion and division among our churches. Because these claims misrepresent who we are and what has taken place, we believe it is important to provide clarity for the sake of truth, unity, and our shared gospel witness.

We are not writing to stir controversy, but to ensure that churches across Canada have an accurate picture of what is actually happening within Fellowship Pacific and to call all of us back to unity in the gospel.

### **1. Our Established Policy and Practice**

In 2005, Fellowship Pacific passed (83% voted in favour) a clear policy that the role of lead pastor is reserved for men. This makes our position complementarian, not egalitarian, since egalitarianism teaches that all leadership roles in the church are open to both men and women without distinction. All our churches comply with this policy. Beyond this, we leave matters to local church autonomy, keeping with our region's long-standing Statement of Faith (adopted in 1927).

Earlier this year, a group of ten churches brought a motion to our regional convention that would have done something similar to the proposed national motion. This motion was defeated (80% against), resulting in the continuation of our 2005 policy. An attempt was also made to bring a similar motion to Prairies regional convention this past spring where it too was defeated.

Following the defeat of the ten churches' motion regarding the Fellowship Pacific policy of 2005, another motion was made and passed from the floor of the AGM, stating that the constituency *"direct the Fellowship Board to follow up with the ten signatory churches who brought the motion forward today to see if they can joyfully fellowship with us moving forward in support of the decision that was reached today."*

In keeping with that clear mandate from the churches, the Regional Board initiated a follow-up process—an act of due process carried out on behalf of the constituency—to write to each of the

ten churches. Each church was asked to reply by September 15, 2025 to indicate whether they could joyfully fellowship with us moving forward in support of the decision of the AGM. This process was not about full agreement on every issue, nor did it require churches to change their convictions or adopt a different theological position. It simply asked whether they were willing to remain in joyful fellowship within Fellowship Pacific—affirming our shared 2005 policy that lead pastors must be male—while choosing to cease actions that create ongoing controversy or seek to pressure other churches or the National Fellowship to remove those who differ within these established boundaries.

One church has chosen to withdraw, three did not respond by the deadline, and the remaining six submitted a joint letter from their pastors and elders disputing the process rather than providing the response requested by the constituency’s motion.

## **2. The Character of the Present Motion**

The recent letter is not the product of patient dialogue or careful biblical discernment. Rather, it has:

- Rushed a motion forward without time for thoughtful discussion, prayer, or unity-building.
- Framed Fellowship Pacific in accusatory terms, even by signatories who are not a part of our region.
- Been introduced by leaders who have openly declared it would be acceptable if the Fellowship broke apart over this issue.

Such an approach grieves us. Scripture consistently calls us to build unity, not fracture it (Eph. 4:3). To elevate this single issue above all else risks narrowing our Fellowship where even minor differences could be grounds for exclusion.

The letter leaves a false impression about recent events in our region. The one suspended Fellowship Pacific church was not suspended for doctrinal disagreement or asking questions, but for ongoing divisiveness in attitude and action. Nine other churches raised the same concerns and were not suspended. Pastor Paul Dirks and New West Community Church were suspended for a consistently divisive spirit. Fellowship Pacific stands firmly for churches’ right to hold a stronger complementarian stance than our 2005 policy.

It is untrue that ten churches are being required to “accept the region’s egalitarianism.” As stated in the letter circulated nationally, our August 5 correspondence allegedly required churches to “accept the region’s egalitarianism, leave, or be removed.” This is completely false. Fellowship Pacific has never asked any church to change its convictions or adopt a different position. Each church continues to have full autonomy within the boundaries of the 2005 policy to determine its own ministry practices. The issue at hand is not that some churches hold a stronger complementarian view, but that they are seeking to have other churches—even perhaps all of Fellowship Pacific—removed from the Fellowship, thereby undermining the local autonomy that has always characterized our movement.

Most troubling is that pastors who know this to be untrue continue spreading it, slandering Fellowship Pacific and perpetuating falsehoods causing great harm to our unity. This misrepresentation reveals a divisive spirit that tears down rather than builds up Christ's church. This should cause delegates to carefully consider the character of those bringing this motion and defeat it—not only on the issue itself but because of how it is being advanced.

### **3. Position Papers vs. Affirmation of Faith**

Our Fellowship has historically used position papers to express what most churches believe, but these are not binding like our Affirmation of Faith. In 1990 we adopted a cessationist paper on the charismatic movement, yet we did not—and do not now—elevate that paper to bylaw level or make cessationism required for Fellowship membership.

This remains a wise safeguard. Position papers allow the majority to speak clearly while leaving room for differences of conviction. They strengthen unity by showing where most churches stand without fracturing unity by binding every church to agreement on secondary matters.

The current motion overturns this wisdom. By elevating the 1997 gender position statement to a policy-statement status, it would effectively make it as binding on churches as the Affirmation of Faith, binding all churches to one interpretation. Making position statements binding changes our Fellowship's very character.

The stakes are high: if this motion passes, Fellowship Pacific could find itself forced out—not because we have abandoned Scripture, but because a small group insists every church conform to their narrower interpretation. This would be tragic. Fellowship Pacific has been a faithful member since 1965. We have followed the same policy since 2005, and National Council has affirmed we are in full compliance. Do not allow this small group to divide what God has held together for decades.

### **4. A Positive Vision from Fellowship Pacific**

There is sometimes concern expressed that Fellowship Pacific is drifting. The reality is quite the opposite:

- We are deeply committed to the authority of God's Word.
- We hold firmly to the gospel of Jesus Christ's absolute centrality and supremacy.
- Our churches are active in evangelism, church planting, and discipling their people to follow Christ.
- We have agencies dedicated to caring for the poor and refugees, ministering to women and children fleeing domestic violence, and others.
- We have three camps—Qwanoes, Sunnybrae, and Mountainside—reaching thousands of children and teenagers every year.

- Our school, Northwest College and Seminary, is thoroughly committed to the Bible, the gospel, and training pastors and Christian leaders.
- Baptist Housing and its Foundation invest generously in Fellowship Pacific, believing deeply in the gospel work taking place throughout our region.

This is not drift. This is gospel mission.

### **Our Appeal**

Brothers and sisters, the world is already fractured. Christ calls us to unity in the gospel, not division over secondary issues.

We urge delegates at the National Convention to vote against this motion.

A position statement should never be rushed into approval, because doing so makes it, in practice, an Affirmation of Faith issue. Such a step risks splitting our Fellowship, which for sixty years has united churches from sea to sea around the gospel's essentials.

Let us not abandon that heritage. Stay centered on the gospel mission. Pray for our leaders, our churches, and our unity in Christ.

On behalf of Fellowship Pacific,

Ben Hall  
President of Fellowship Pacific

Brent Chapman  
Regional Director of Fellowship Pacific

Barton Priebe  
President of Northwest Seminary and College