

# Process for Change to the FEBCC Affirmation of Faith

## **Preamble:**

Due to our mutual belief that our Affirmation of Faith is our most enduring and significant document as an association of churches, a threshold vote of 75% will be required for any approved change as per Article 2.1 of the Fellowship National's Bylaws.

## **Proposal to change:**

The Fellowship National's Affirmation of Faith was voted on and passed in 1953 at our founding Fellowship National Convention (at Cooke's Presbyterian Church, Toronto) and most of our Fellowship Regions adopted it. There have been no changes made to the Fellowship National Affirmation of Faith since 1953. So, why consider this process to make potential changes now?

For many years differing Fellowship leaders and churches have pointed out several reasons why changes need to be considered:

- The National Council believes doing a review of our Affirmation of Faith after almost 70 years of history is essentially a necessary, wise and healthy thing to pursue in a carefully planned three year process. Should we consider clarifying and confirming who we are as Fellowship Baptists?
- Every Statement of Faith is created to address the enduring broad truths of Scripture, but also the particular issues of any moment in history when the Statement is written. Some believe we should dialogue together and consider addressing issues in our current setting. No one is espousing changes to essential doctrine on this journey. National Council is proposing our member churches consider amendments to a few sections of our Affirmation of Faith, with the possible addition of no more than 2-3 sections.
- The National Council believes there are a few things stated in the current Affirmation of Faith that are not practiced by all or most of our local churches (e.g. order of elements in Lord's Supper). This could be considered a credibility issue when we largely do not practice what we clearly assert in our belief statement.
- Some believe the language of our current Affirmation of Faith needs some modernization. Our Affirmation of Faith was created in 1953 when the KJV Bible was the norm. Just as newer Bible translations have refreshed the language without changing doctrinal truth, should we consider giving the language of our Affirmation of Faith a refresh?
- Some believe our Affirmation of Faith should consider including only primary Gospel issues, and not secondary issues. National Council believes we should consider a vigorous dialogue together on what the essentials are to identify as a Fellowship Baptist Church?

## **Principles guiding our discussion:**

1. All conditions of Article 2.1 of Fellowship National's Bylaws must be met in the deliberations and process for change to our Affirmation of Faith.
2. All changes will be given ample opportunity for prayer, reflection, review, and input during the proposed three-year process for potential change(s) to our Affirmation of Faith.
3. Communication is critical, and so, the Fellowship's National Council will provide clear and ample communication during the process along with adequate opportunity for input, feedback and debate among our constituency.

4. Once this “process” document is approved by the delegates at a Fellowship National Conference (FNC), the three-year process begins with reports from work accomplished, delegate discussion and feedback occurring at FNC2023 (Toronto, ON), FNC2024 (Dartmouth, NS) and a final vote at FNC2025 (Niagara Falls, ON).

***Synopsis of Article 2.1 of the Fellowship National Bylaws:***

- Proposal to amend Affirmation of Faith may be initiated by National Council and/or submitted by a member church to National Council with 5% of other member churches endorsing the notice of amendment.
- Member churches must follow the Article 2.1 process.
- Notice to amend must be given to each Region and member church 9 months before the next FNC.
- Regions can submit an objection to any proposed amendment at least 3 months before the next FNC.
- Amendments to the Affirmation of Faith must be passed by 75%

**Five Phases of the Process of Change:**

Throughout this document, the term “National Council” may refer to the entire Council, a sub-committee of Council, an ad hoc committee established by Council, or the Senior Ministry Team (President and National Directors) as directed by the National Council. This determination will be made by the National Council, in whatever way seems to best facilitate movement forward toward a Notice of Amendment to our member churches concerning changes to our Affirmation of Faith.

**Phase One: Initiate**

Delegates of member churches at a Fellowship National Conference will vote (TBA: 50% to pass) to approve the document “Process for Change to the FEBCC Affirmation of Faith”.

The Process Document will be provided to all member churches at least 6-8 weeks in advance of the vote at the annual National Conference (FNC 2022), giving adequate time for pastors, boards and church members to direct their delegate(s) on whether to affirm the document.

By affirming the process, churches are affirming an openness to start the process to discuss, debate and decide on possible future changes to our current Affirmation of Faith.

**Phase Two: Define**

The Definition Phase of the process will be overseen by the Fellowship’s National Council and will seek to ensure clarity during the entire process. The primary role of the National Council will be to seek feedback from member churches and Regional Councils. An ad hoc committee will be formed to facilitate the process. The AoF (Affirmation of Faith) Committee will consist of 14 members, including:

- Two members of the Fellowship’s National Council
- One member from each Regional Council or their designate (five in total)
- One member from each Seminary: Northwest, Heritage, and SEMBEQ (three in total)
- Three ad hoc members chosen by National Council
- The National President

The National Council chair, chairs the AoF Committee with the support of the President in fulfilling his duties, calling meetings, and directing the process toward agreed upon outcomes. Fellowship National will provide resources and finances to ensure the completion of the process.

Any recommendations received and endorsed by National Council will be communicated to member churches in reports between FNC2022, FNC2023, FNC2024 and FNC2025.

National Council will seek to communicate to member churches:

- Issues that might be created by suggested changes
- Biblical and theological understanding and implications of the suggested changes
- Historical perspectives on the suggested changes
- Practical implications of the suggested changes, including our broader partnerships beyond our national association of churches

To ensure clarity and transparency, the National Council will commit to providing a written report to member churches in February and September of each year during the process (November 2022 – November 2025).

### **Phase Three: Engage**

The Engage Phase will provide ample time for the AoF Committee to interact with our member churches, pastors, mission personnel and Regional Councils; providing regular reports to National Council concerning progress on suggested changes to the Affirmation of Faith.

As per Article 2.1 of Fellowship National's Bylaws, any suggested changes to the Affirmation of Faith may be initiated by National Council or by no less than 5% (or 25 churches) of our member churches issuing a notice of amendment:

*a. Change initiated by National Council:*

National Council directs the three-year process with final notice of amendment sent to member churches at least nine months prior to FNC2025 for vote by ballot (75% threshold) by accredited delegates.

*b. Change initiated by Member Churches:*

During the three-year process, National Council will be seeking feedback from local churches on their desires for changes to our Affirmation of Faith. Churches will receive reports, communicating news from National Council and the AoF Committee.

In the event our member churches desire a change to the Affirmation of Faith that is not being considered or pursued by National Council, a gathering of member churches must follow the Bylaws as per Article 2.1 and vote affirmatively on the proposed change within their own local church, and then garner the same affirmation to the Notice of Amendment from at least 5% of member churches. These churches must provide 'Minutes' of the Church Meeting and results of the vote to National Council with assurance that their constitution or Bylaws were followed.

Upon receipt of the Notice of Amendment of at least 5% of member churches, the Fellowship's National Council will inform our constituency that the proposed amendment(s) will become part of the Draft Notice of Amendment to be voted on at FNC2025.

It is incumbent upon any church desiring to amend the Affirmation of Faith to give ample notice to member churches for due process; therefore no Notice of Amendment will be accepted by National Council after February 1, 2024.

### **Phase Four: Refine**

During the Refine Phase, National Council will provide opportunity for input and discussion at FNC2024 (Dartmouth, NS). A draft of the proposed changes to the Affirmation of Faith will be sent to all member

churches in September 2024 for discussion by our member churches. Delegates will come to FNC2024 to debate and deliberate on the draft proposed changes. A report of these discussions and decisions will be sent to our member churches in February 2025 (nine months prior to the vote, as per Article 2.1) by way of a formal motion of the amendments to the Affirmation of Faith being proposed by National Council for vote at the FNC2025 (November).

However, further refining can occur between January and April 2025 where:

- Member churches may communicate further refinements to National Council on or before April 30, 2025.

National Council will report on progress in a report and send the final Notice of Amendment to all member churches by June 2025 for vote at FNC2025 (Niagara Falls, ON).

### **Phase Five: Decide**

The Decide Phase occurs at the Fellowship National Conference (FNC2025). The proposed Notice of Amendment to the Fellowship's Affirmation of Faith will be voted on (75% threshold) by accredited delegates.

The Notice of Amendment will be sent to all member churches first in February 2025, with possible refinements by June 2025. This gives many months for church boards and members to discuss and decide on the proposed changes found in the Notice of Amendment. In the delegate package the Fellowship's National Council will provide the Motion and include a document with an explanation behind each recommended change.

National Council will host the business meeting at FNC2025 in which the vote is to take place; a 75% majority vote of accredited delegates is required to pass each of the proposed changes to the Affirmation of Faith. There will be multiple votes based on how many proposed changes are found in the final Notice of Amendment.

A final report will be forwarded to all member churches in early 2026 and the National Council will move forward with all legal or procedural changes that arise out of any changes to the Fellowship's Affirmation of Faith, including federal government and CRA requirements.

### **Potential Process Schedule**

- August 29, 2022: National Council approval of Process Document.
- September 8, 2022: Regional and National Directors approval of Process Document.
- September 21, 2022: Process Document sent to member churches with notice of Motion, to approve process document at FNC2022 and begin process to consider possible amendments to the FEBCC AoF.
- November 16, 2022: Delegates vote on Motion to approve Process Document at FNC2022. If approved, the three-year process begins.
- December 2022: The National Council chair and President contact Regions, seminaries, and National Council to confirm leaders who will be part of the fourteen (14) member Affirmation of Faith committee.
- February-March 2023: First meeting of AoF Committee. Discussion will include possible changes to the AoF as well as the ways the AoF Committee will interact with member churches on multiple platforms.

- February 2023: National Council status report sent to member churches informing them who is serving on the AoF Committee and how churches can provide proposed AoF amendments for consideration (deadline is February 2024).
- May 8-9, 2023: AoF Committee report discussed by National Council.
- September 2023: National Council status report sent to member churches. Council will inform (remind) member churches that the deadline to send possible AoF amendments (following Article 2.1) to National Council is February 2024.
- Aug-September 2023: Second meeting of AoF Committee.
- November 6-8, 2023: National Council status report provided to delegates at FNC2023 (Toronto, ON). Business meeting and workshop held for delegate interaction with the AoF Committee and National Council. Council will inform (remind) member churches/delegates that the deadline to send possible AoF amendments to National Council is February 2024.
- January-February 2024: Third meeting of AoF Committee called and National Council status report sent to member churches.
- May 2024: AoF report to National Council discussed.
- Aug-September 2024: Fourth meeting of AoF Committee called.
- September 2024: National Council status report on AoF process sent to member churches. In this report, National Council will provide a *Draft* of the amendments being proposed to the Fellowship National AoF.
- November 2024: National Council status report provided to delegates at FNC2024 (Dartmouth, NS). Business meeting and workshop held for delegate interaction with the AoF Committee and National Council related to the *Draft* amendment(s) proposal.
- Jan-February 2025: Fifth meeting of the AoF Committee called and National Council status report sent to member churches. This report will include a Notice of the proposed amendments to Fellowship National's Affirmation of Faith which fulfills the requirement of Bylaw Article 2.1 to send notice nine months prior to the vote at FNC2025 in November 2025.
- Feb-April 2025: Further refinement of the proposed amendment(s) may occur over three months. Member churches must submit these suggested amendments on or before April 30, 2025 to National Council.
- June 2025: National Council sends FINAL notice of amendments to member churches.
- November 2025: Member churches will vote at FNC2025 (Niagara Falls, ON) on the Affirmation of Faith amendment(s).
- Early 2026: National Council will implement any legal or procedural changes arising from changes made to the Fellowship National's Affirmation of Faith.