

CCT Assurances

On Tuesday March 24, FEB Central held their AGM. It was a time of encouragement as we heard reports of what Christ is doing through His churches across the region. Naturally, pastors and churches were eager to learn more about the CCT process. For this, FEBN President, Steve Jones, was interviewed by FEBC Regional Director, Tom Haines. It is equally natural for leadership to want to ‘steady the ship’ in tumultuous theological times. However, there are more helpful and less helpful ways to bring assurance. In an informal interview format Tom asked Steve some common questions about the matter. Using his relational currency, Steve unequivocally responded that FEB remains “convictionally complementarian.” Steve further shared that any differences amongst our churches is to do with practice and not belief. Lastly, while acknowledging that the past year or so had been difficult, Steve shared that the unity of the CCT was such a blessing to him. Tom applauded these things, that it was all very encouraging to hear. However, was this reassuring?

Again, it is not unwise to seek to reassure in times of trouble; we do this with children when they are afraid. However, if what we told a child was unrealistic, they might believe for a time or they might not be fully willing to trust what we’ve said. The last year or so has been difficult for churches, pastors and leaders, given the theological and practical seriousness of what is at stake. This much is true. However, while probably well intentioned, what Steve and Tom shared felt misleading to many of us. This is why.

Firstly, words require definition. Unless he is using a very different definition, Steve cannot say we are “convictionally complementarian” when recent months have clearly revealed that we are not. It isn’t simply that we apply our complementarianism differently; we aren’t all complementarian.¹ Organizational unity must not be sought via ambiguity at the expense of truth. Clarity is kindness.

Secondly, it is difficult to imagine that the CCT’s first round of meetings went off without a hitch when a sizeable portion are or support egalitarian practices and would not agree with our ’97 position statement. While it is encouraging to know that the meetings ended well, a challenging journey remains. From how it the survey is worded it is potentially designed to gauge either just how diverse we are or what degree of agreement exists. The survey results will then become a guide as to what steps can be taken to move forward. The results of the CCT survey (which we won’t see until Nov) will no doubt determine the tenor of the rest of the CCT meetings and what proposed documentation we receive in September.

A more reassuring presentation could have looked as follows. Our leaders could have affirmed their commitment to the ’97 document or equivalent, acknowledged the real challenges

¹ We have consistently applied the same definitions regarding the ecclesiastical office of pastors/elders/overseers: that this is reserved for qualified men, including teaching to mixed congregations.

this process faces, offered realistic (i.e moderated) and specific answers to the questions raised, and then offered a hopeful and specified vision that would encourage unity.

As such we'll have to wait and see with the CCT. May we all engage and pray as they have asked. However, may our engagement not shy away from asking hard questions and may our prayers be specific vs. general; that FEB would remain true to Scripture and through reformation experience renewal.