How Did we Get Here?

Last November at the 2025 National Convention, a group of concerned FEB Member Churches put forward a motion to elevate the 1997 Position Statement to a binding Policy Document. This motion was put forward through proper process as a grassroots effort to address Egalitarian practice in our Fellowship of Churches. It was also intended as an effort to come to the defense of a group of Complementarian Churches in FEB Pacific who were being actively threatened with expulsion as a result of their vocal opposition to the Egalitarian practices of their Region. The aggressive Egalitarian tactics of the Regional Leadership were clearly on display at the 2025 Pacific Regional Convention in a publicly available video that was later locked down by those Regional Leaders so that it was no longer possible for any FEB Member Churches to view. Although the motion we put forward to address this crisis received significant support from more than half of the Delegates at National Convention, it failed to receive the requisite super-majority required by the Bylaw for such a motion to pass. Sadly, eight Complementarian Churches from FEB Pacific were subsequently disfellowshipped for allegedly 'divisive' conduct in opposing Egalitarian practice. An additional three Complementarian Churches from the Prairie Region were also disfellowshipped and publicly branded as being 'divisive'. In the wake of the failed motion, the National Leadership of FEB stepped forward immediately with a prepared plan to steward a two-year process that was intended to bring 'congruence' between the Articles of Faith and the National Bylaw with respect to the issue of male-only Church leadership, and the current allowance of female Pastors and Preachers in some Member Churches. After a national survey was conducted and analyzed by the Congruence Committee, all FEB Member Churches received a communication from FEB National leadership on September 30, 2026 with two important proposals: 1) A Revised Article on the 'The Local Church' (replacing the previously proposed article that was defeated at the 2025 Convention), and 2) A Revision of By-Law Article 4.1(a)(iii). In this communication President Steven Jones expressed optimism that we are "rounding third base and coming home". In reality, the results of the CCT survey show that this optimism is entirely unwarranted, with 73% of Churches indicating that the title 'Pastor' applies only to the 'oversight office', and 80% of Churches indicating that women are not permitted to preach at the primary worship gathering. The results of the survey clearly show overwhelming support among FEB Churches for a true Complementarian position. That being the case, it seems likely that we are still standing at the plate swinging at pitches rather than rounding third base.

The Proposed CCT Article on the 'Local Church'

The newly proposed Article on the Local Church represents a substantial improvement on the draft article that was put forward by our National Leadership, and rejected by our Member Churches at the 2025 Convention. The newly drafted Article now defines Church officers as "biblically qualified pastors/elders, who oversee God's flock". As written, this newly drafted Article correctly equates 'Pastor' and 'Elder', and thus brings the Articles of Faith into partial agreement with the existing 1997 Position Document. Most importantly, it brings the Articles of Faith into greater agreement with inspired Scripture. The wording of this newly proposed article appears to rule out the possibility of one more subtle form of 'egalitarianism' in which the word 'Pastor' is defined as a

'gifting' rather than an ecclesial 'office'. On the revision of this Article, we applaud the work of the Committee. We view this new draft as a significant improvement over the previous iteration which provided a wide-open loophole for softer shades of Egalitarianism to become permanently entrenched in our Fellowship. Our appreciation for the work of the committee being noted, we believe that the Article should be made even stronger by equating the word 'overseer/bishop' with the words 'pastor' and 'elder'. By making it clear that these three terms are synonyms for the same ecclesial office, the Article would be even further strengthened, and brought into full conformity with the existing Position Statement.

The Proposed CCT Bylaw Revision

In examining the proposed Bylaw revision, it appears to us however, that what is being given with one hand is being taken away with the other. The revised Bylaw proposal now contains an Egalitarian loophole by means of two contradictory and incompatible definitions of the word 'Pastor'. On the one hand 'Pastor' is defined in this draft document as 'Elder'. Such a definition does indeed bring theological congruence with both the 1997 Position Statement, and the newly drafted Article on the Church (should it be affirmed). Strangely enough however, a second proposed definition of the word 'Pastor' contradicts the first definition in such a way as to allow Member Churches in our Fellowship to maintain the unbiblical practice of having 'Pastors' who are not 'Elders'. In a document that is intended to clarify terminology, and to bring 'congruence' between the Bylaw and the Articles of Faith, it is perplexing why the leadership of FEB National would put forward two contradictory definitions of the word 'Pastor'. If anything, we believe that this second definition adds to the existing confusion rather than resolving it. While the loophole for the ongoing tolerance of female 'preachers' and 'pastors' appears to have been closed in the Articles of Faith, that same loophole has now been re-located to the Bylaw. The obvious implication is that such a revision would not resolve our unity crisis, but make it far worse by enshrining the present Egalitarian position of the Pacific Region in which only the 'Senior Pastor' needs to be male. It does not take a lot of foresight to see how such 'incongruous' definitions of the word 'Pastor' would not merely allow for the practice of female 'Pastors' to continue unabated in our Fellowship, but would permanently validate it in our governance documents. Simply shifting language and definitions that relocate theological compromise to the Bylaw instead of the Articles of Faith is unacceptable in our view. It certainly does nothing to resolve the serious problem of unity that has been confronting our Fellowship over this issue of female Pastors. In the light of the self-contradictory document that has just been released, we would urge our National Leadership to bring clarity rather than to add further layers of confusion. If this issue is to be resolved, the National leadership of FEB must get off the fence and decide on one definition of the word 'Pastor' that is in line with the teaching of Scripture, and not with the unbiblical practices of certain wayward FEB Churches. We desire a unity that is based upon Scriptural clarity, not a false unity that is based upon pragmatic convenience.

Concluding Observations

Given the fact that the vast majority of survey respondents (80%) believe that pulpit ministry in a mixed gathering should be restricted to men, it appears that the proposed CCT Bylaw revision given to us by FEB National is vastly out of step with the will of our Member Churches. The Proposed revisions do not in any way solve the issue that threatens our unity, but actually aggravate it even further by attempting to enshrine this pragmatic compromise in the National Bylaw. Should this Bylaw be passed by our Member Churches, the existing policy of FEB Pacific will become a national policy. Such a move would be utterly disastrous, and would actually put us in a far worse position than we are presently in with the existing Bylaw (which already uses the phrase 'pastoral office', thus ruling out the Egalitarian sleight of hand that turns 'Pastor' into a gift rather than an office). We would urge our National leaders to stop trying to placate the minority, by enshrining that minority view in a Bylaw. If FEB is to remain Complementarian, it is imperative that any attempt to forge a big-tent compromise on the issue of female pastors be resisted. We would also like to urge FEB administrators to stop using the word 'complementarian' to refer to churches and pragmatic theological positions that allow women to preach and teach contrary to Scripture. The CCT survey shows us that such use of language by the administrative leadership is out of step with the Scriptural conviction of 80% of FEB Member Churches, and only serves to bring further confusion.

Sincerely,

Rev. John C. Bellingham (representing the Elders of Rosedale Baptist Church, Welland Ontario)