
How Does a Church Become Affiliated with Fellowship Atlantic?

Prologue: The Value and Expectation of Association

As noted in the Fellowship Atlantic Bylaws, we believe there is a Value and Expectation of Association as local churches. We exist to provide our member churches with sharing encouragement, resources, and opportunities they need to fulfil our cooperative missional objectives. Through ongoing communication, email and phone, local church visits, various meetings, consultations, pastor clusters, and conferences, etc., this Fellowship carries out the biblical mandate.

Association is a relationship with privileges and responsibilities, and it is imperative that churches understand what these are when considering aligning themselves with Fellowship Atlantic. Among the privileges we see:

- Churches who are working together for the sake of the gospel.
- Churches sharing information and help so each can thrive.
- Churches working together to see new churches established or revitalized.
- Pastors regularly meeting for encouragement and sharpening.
- Pastors and wives gathering for retreats and fellowship.
- Regional Director who is working with your church and others toward the health of our churches and leadership for the glory of God and the good of our provinces.

Some of the responsibilities include:

- Giving to the support and costs of Fellowship Atlantic and its Regional Director.
- Contributing time and energy for our combined mission.
- Protecting the vulnerable among us by implementation of plans to protect them, and regularly training staff and volunteers to implement these practices.
- Pastors modeling a spirit of inter-dependency by participating in Regional opportunities such as pastor clusters, conferences, retreats etc.
- Pastors and other church staff whole-heartedly affirming our code of ethics.

Our Code of Ethics is a solemn pledge whereby we place ourselves under an obligation to God and accountability to one another. Anyone who accepts the responsibility as a pastor or staff of a Fellowship Atlantic church should sincerely embrace this covenant:

“Because the church I serve is affiliated with the Fellowship Atlantic Region, I fully agree with and will teach and demonstrate agreement with the Fellowship Affirmation of Faith. I will participate wholeheartedly in the life of the Region and then the National Fellowship. This includes praying for God's blessing on its life, witness, ministry and growth and encouraging my church to participate in the missional objectives of the Fellowship regionally, nationally and internationally.”

Should a church lapse into a state of non-participation, consistently absenting itself from meaningful contact, and failing to support the cooperative missional objectives of Fellowship Atlantic, they should expect significant effort by the Regional Director and Council to reengage the church through contact with its leadership. Should these attempts fail to bring about a satisfactory renewal of the relationship, this shall constitute grounds for removal from Fellowship Atlantic.

HOW DOES A CHURCH BECOME OFFICIALLY AFFILIATED WITH FELLOWSHIP ATLANTIC?

I. OVERVIEW OF A CHURCH RECOGNITION COUNCIL

Purpose: It is important to establish that the church which has applied for affiliation is compatible with Fellowship Atlantic. We are convinced this is important both from the Region's point of view and the church's point of view. The following are the Procedures and Process for a Recognition Council:

Note: All documents from the church for perusal are to be sent out ahead of time to those who will attend. This way, the documents do not have to be read aloud when the Council meets.

II. PROCEDURE FOR FORMING A CHURCH RECOGNITION COUNCIL.

1. A church that is seeking affiliation with Fellowship Atlantic must already have a nucleus of people organized into a local Baptist church, must have decided on their official name, and must have an established statement of faith and by-laws.
2. Having been recognized as a properly constituted evangelical Baptist church, the membership of the church must vote to apply for affiliation with the Fellowship Atlantic Region of The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. (See below for greater clarity of the process)
3. The local church then contacts the Fellowship Atlantic Regional Director or Regional Council to request a Church Recognition Council to be formed to discuss their affiliation.

If approved, other Fellowship Baptist churches within the region will then be requested to send messengers to this special event.

4. To better understand the mission and policies of Fellowship Atlantic, the church seeking affiliation will be given an Orientation Package. This Orientation Package consists of: Fellowship Atlantic By-Laws, Doctrinal Statement, Value of Association, Code of Ethics and Ministry Summary, Credentialing, Ordination and Abuse Protection Policies. The church will be fully apprised of these things, and the advantages and expectations of joining the Fellowship long before the calling of a Recognition Council.

5. The church completes and returns the provided application form (see below) to the Fellowship Atlantic office. This completed application is presented to Regional Council for their approval. Upon approval, the Regional Council calls a Church Recognition Council and, in consultation with the church, sets a date to meet.

6. The Church Recognition Council takes place. If approved, this Council recommends the church for membership at the next Regional Conference. A positive vote by delegates of member churches completes the process and the church is affirmed as part of Fellowship Atlantic. At the next Fellowship National Convention, the church's name will be presented to the rest of the nation.

III. SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR CHURCH RECOGNITION COUNCILS

1. The Regional Director, Regional Council, and delegates from various Fellowship Atlantic Churches will help the local church to understand the process well so they can be properly prepared. The local church can decide on their own how they will apply hospitality to the incoming messengers. The pastor and church leadership are expected to sit at the front of the meeting to make presentations and answer questions (see # 7 & 8, below).
2. Though this format may vary from church to church, it is recommended that the meeting begin with a devotional thought, a song, the reading of Scripture, and prayer.
3. The Regional Director or Regional Council chairperson will appoint a temporary Moderator and a meeting Secretary.
4. The minutes, calling for the Council, will be read from the Regional Council minutes.
5. A rollcall: the messengers and churches they represent will be enumerated and their names spoken aloud.
6. Once the Council has been formed and named, a motion for a Moderator will be made and elected; the same will be done for the Secretary of the meeting, who will take minutes.

7. The Council will seek to understand the church's reasons for desiring to be part of Fellowship Atlantic. In keeping with our "*Big Three*", Council will inquire about the church's overall ministry health, based on observations informed by through the church's short historical sketch, doctrinal statement, discipleship practices, and ministry plans. They will address the church's function by reviewing a statement of finances, their Constitution, and Church Bylaws.

They will also inquire about the church's plans for leadership development – how they are actively working toward developing leaders for the future. Finally, they will inquire about their desire to see churches multiplied, and how they might be able to join with other churches in planting future congregations for the glory of God.

Since the documentation on these matters is to be provided to council members ahead of time, it is unnecessary that they be read at this time but should certainly be referenced where appropriate. Council members should be familiar with the documentation supplied and be ready to seek clarifications and ask questions as they see fit. The church's leadership may give a verbal summary as to the history, practice, and finances of the church.

8. The Council will take the time it needs to interact with these documents and this information while remembering the total length of the meeting is 2 -2 ½ hours. The purpose of a Council is not to re-write or criticize the documents, but to interact with them for clarification with the hope of accepting them into Fellowship and encouraging them in the faith. The chairperson must be diligent to keep the meeting on track and on time.
9. As satisfaction is gained, the chairperson will bring the questioning to closure and the meeting will take an intermission, where everyone clears the room except the Council. The Council will deliberate and bring a decision.
10. In many of these events, there is a planned service that follows the Council decision. In any case, the whole meeting is re-convened, and the decision of the Council is given. There may be recommendations for some changes. In most cases, since there was communication prior to this meeting, church acceptance and affirmation take place.
11. The local church decides if there is a luncheon or service to follow. This should be done in consultation with the Regional Director or the Regional Council.

IV. FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING A CHURCH RECOGNITION COUNCIL

1. Once the Council is formed and the Chairperson and Secretary are elected, the time of discussion of the historical sketch, finances, vision, philosophy of ministry, and the like, should be limited to about 15-20 minutes. The remainder of the time should be spent on discerning if there is similarity in vision, passion for the gospel, desire for church health, plans for church function and leadership, and prayers for future multiplication. The Regional Director and Regional Council should help the church with preparations for this prior to the Recognition Council and clarify those things needing attention.
2. Prior to the formation of a Church Recognition Council, some of the preparation work of the Regional Director and the Regional Council includes discussions of the format of the Council, how the church envisions themselves fitting in the Fellowship, and how they may participate and contribute to the ongoing work of the Fellowship. What is to be gained in them becoming a member? How will Fellowship Atlantic be able to help them grow in Christ and His grace? The Regional Council should also discuss the “Big Three” with the applying church so they can be prepared to discuss this well.
3. These procedures and process of the Church Recognition Council are dynamic and may be tweaked for every event. However, this should be seen as a highlight of ministry both for the church and Fellowship Atlantic, and every effort should be made for this process to be successful.
4. Having applied for membership, it is proper for a church that has applied for affiliation to appoint messengers to the next Regional Convention. Forms and information will be sent ahead of time.

V. SAMPLE DOCUMENTS FOR A REGIONAL COUNCIL

1. A typical “Motion of Approval” might read like this:
“The following decision has been moved by _____ and seconded by _____. We have been impressed with the warmth of your hospitality toward us today, the overall health of your church family, the quality we see in your leadership, and your commitment to the Word of God; therefore, based upon these observations and considerations, the Council recommends that _____ (church name) _____ for acceptance at the next Fellowship Atlantic Regional Convention. Such acceptance will be followed by automatic acceptance in the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada at the next National Convention.”
2. Application for Membership into the National Fellowship body.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
IN THE FELLOWSHIP ATLANTIC REGION OF
THE FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCHES IN CANADA

Dear Brethren:

This is to certify that the _____ Baptist Church in _____ was recognized as a regularly constituted Baptist Church by a council composed of _____ Messengers from _____ Evangelical Baptist Churches. These assembled on the _____ day of _____, 20__.

Affirming our compliance with the By-Laws of The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada and having familiarized ourselves with the past positional resolutions of the Fellowship, and affirming our agreement of the doctrinal statements of the Fellowship, we do hereby make application for membership in The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada.

Signed on behalf of the _____ Baptist Church

Date: _____ Church Clerk _____

NOTE: Please include the following information with the application:

- (1) Copy of the Minutes of Regional Executive Council where applicable.
- (2) Copy of the Minutes of Recognition Council.

Revised 2021