
AN INTRODUCTION: WHO AND WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP ATLANTIC?

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Vision and Goals

The stated goal of Fellowship Atlantic is “Helping congregations accomplish the mission Jesus gave the church.” To achieve this, Fellowship Atlantic promotes health in our churches, plants churches in our Region, and encourages healthy leadership in our churches. (These are further discussed in the “Big Three” section).

Saying that “Fellowship Atlantic will help congregations accomplish Christ’s mission” speaks of the centrality of Christ’s church. Fellowship Atlantic’s ministry is to help our churches fulfill their biblical mandate. Our primary goal is not to build up our Fellowship, but to aid churches in what Christ has called them to do. We are convinced that Jesus is building His church (universal and local) and Fellowship Atlantic’s responsibility is to serve our churches to fulfill this mission.

Saying that “Fellowship Atlantic will help Congregations accomplish Christ’s mission” speaks of the centrality of the Great Commission (Matt 28.19-20). We are all called to be disciples who are making disciples of Jesus Christ.

How are these values demonstrated? We believe the local church is autonomous and tasked with doing their part of this Great Commission. Our Fellowship is an association because we recognize the value of local churches and their leadership. We also believe the local church best fulfills their calling in fellowship or partnership with other like-minded local churches. We are better together than we would be alone.

Our statement of faith is narrow enough to embrace the primary tenets of the Christian faith based on the reality that the Word of God is inerrant truth and the only directive for all faith and practice of the Christian life. It remains broad enough to include different ideas and interpretations of secondary matters of biblical truth. Working together, we can accomplish much for our Saviour and lend aid to churches for direction in ministry and for support in times of trouble. We desire to come alongside pastors and church leaders for edification and strength to accomplish this mission.

The History of our Region

Fellowship Atlantic is part of the national Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists in Canada (FEBC) is an association of over 500 evangelical churches scattered across Canada from the Yukon to the eastern tip of Nova Scotia. Our churches range in size from a few dozen to several hundreds and hold worship services in a great variety of languages.

The Fellowship was born in 1953 out of a desire for a nationwide body of churches committed to the truth of God's Word and the proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ. In the years since its inception, several hundred churches have joined The Fellowship, either in large blocs (such as the Regular Baptist Churches of British Columbia in 1965) or individually. The dozens of church-planting projects undertaken by Fellowship churches and ministries continue to be our main source of growth.

The first FEBC church in this region was Faith Baptist Church in Sydney, NS (1957). Since that time other churches joined the Fellowship and eventually Fellowship Atlantic was formed. Presently there are churches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé region of Quebec. We are very grateful to the men and women who laboured tirelessly over the years so that gospel preaching churches join together in mission for the glory of God and the good of this region of Canada.

(Additional historical information is available on request. The most recent history of the FEBC was published in 2003, *The Glorious Fellowship of Churches, 1953 - 2003*, published by FEBC.)

Our National Association

Fellowship Atlantic is one of the five regions that make up the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada (FEBC). These are Fellowship Pacific, Fellowship Prairies, FEB Central, AÉBÉQ and Fellowship Atlantic. Each region has its own governance and charitable status while relating closely with the National Head Office in Guelph, Ontario. FEBC governance is directed through the National Council, which functions with representatives from every region. The National Council is the policy-making body of the fellowship. Ongoing practical direction of the Fellowship is through the association and meetings of the President, the national management staff, and the Regional Directors from across Canada.

Fellowship Atlantic is a voluntary association of churches, not a denomination in the usual sense. Each member church is self-governing, and each church incorporates directly with the

government as a society. Neither the Regional Council nor the Regional Director have any direct authority over member churches. Ties are formed through relationships, rather than lines of authority. However, membership in the Fellowship requires that each church agree with Fellowship Atlantic's Statement of Faith, and subscribe to our Values of Association, Code of Ethics, and Abuse Protection guidelines.

The Regional Council functions as the Board of Directors for the association and is responsible to ensure that we operate in compliance with our bylaws. As such the Council is responsible for establishing policy, conducting business affairs, and facilitating the cooperative efforts of the association in fulfillment of its mission. The Regional Director is hired by the Regional Council to further coordinate these missional initiatives on behalf of the Council and is accountable to the council which determines his duties, responsibilities, and remuneration.

The Fellowship Head Office oversees several other ministries of importance to the Regions. Fellowship International, with 70+ missionaries, ministers in about 20 countries around the world. Since Quebec has such a low number of evangelicals (less than ½ of one percent), that province receives special attention in partnerships between English speaking churches from other places in Canada and French speaking church plants. There are currently nearly 100 French-speaking Fellowship Baptist churches in Quebec. Other ministries of FEBC include community chaplaincy, spread across the country and international aid, donated by local churches and disbursed through FAIR (Fellowship Aid and International Relief) and in conjunction with other like-minded, evangelical organizations as the need arises.

Regional Director

Fellowship Atlantic is represented across the region by a Regional Director (RD). Presently, this role is fulfilled part-time. The RD Job Description focuses on connecting with pastors and their wives, providing encouragement and coaching to pastors and churches in their challenges, and giving assistance as requested. As well, the RD is to function as the regional representative of the Regional Council and National Fellowship of churches.

The Big Three...

Several years ago, the people of our region agreed with brothers and sisters across our nation that our "Big Three" would be Church Leadership, Church Health, and Church Planting. We desire to be used by God to train up the leaders of our churches through education and mentorship. We desire to encourage and support church health and leadership health – spiritual, emotional, and physical. We desire to see churches planting churches in our region and throughout the world and assist them in training and assessment. Fellowship Atlantic is intentional in the exposure we give to these, through various writings, regional training, and staffing.

We Value Association

The Fellowship is first of all, based on biblical *koinonia*. The evidence of the New Testament is that churches are made up of individuals and families who gathered for worship and fellowship in local churches (Act 2.46-47; Rom 16.1-16). Such local churches are the visible manifestation of the universal church of Jesus Christ worldwide.

Fellowship Atlantic seeks to bring this inter-connectedness to our Region. We are greater together, sharing resources, advice, encouragement, prayers, and blessing. Through ongoing communication, local church visits, various meetings, consultations, and clusters, this Fellowship carries out our biblical mandate. There are member churches and “friends of the Fellowship.”

Presently, there is no Fellowship Atlantic head office. All pertinent documents and records are housed online. There are, however, expenses that our churches cover so that our region can minister as we desire and our Regional Director can be paid for his services.

Pastor Clusters

We value relationship between pastors and churches. One way we regularly encourage pastors is through “clusters” that gather to discuss and encourage each other. Normally, this includes two groups – one in Halifax area and one in Southeastern New Brunswick. Pastors and other leaders (whether Fellowship or other) have enjoyed lively discussion, followed with prayer and a meal together. Sometimes leaders from both groups gather in a central location for a super-cluster, to discuss a subject of importance to both local churches and the region. Many of those who have been part of these clusters will attest to the fact that they have been both encouraged and strengthened in the work God has called them to.

The Regional

Once every year, delegates from the churches of Fellowship Atlantic gather to discuss the business and ministry of our region. This is our time to hear reports of what God is doing, to fellowship together with other believers, to vote on expenditures and initiatives, to pray for God’s leading and wisdom, and to hear God’s word preached and respond faithfully. We see this as a vital time of worship and celebration, spread over an evening and a morning together.

Ministry Retreats

Once a year, Fellowship Atlantic plans a ministry retreat for pastors and their wives. The intent is that this is a time of refreshment and relaxation as well as interaction with others that we do not get to see as often as we would like.

Consultations

Church Consultations have been used from the Atlantic to the Pacific to help churches to continue to be on mission and in good health. As churches request help, the Regional Director and Council arrange a group of several pastors or leaders from the region to meet with a church to carefully listen to its people and to prayerfully respond with prescriptions to the church and its leadership to assist them in the future. This process works best in a church that is functioning well, rather than one in poor health or in crisis. It is promoted as a positive approach to local church ministry.

In summary, Fellowship Atlantic promotes a connected and cooperative ministry for many of the Evangelical churches in our area. Our ministry seeks to add value to the calling and engagement of pastors and churches by providing meaningful life-giving fellowship and resources for gospel ministry. By God’s grace we will continue to work together to reach people in Atlantic Canada, as Jesus continues to build His church.