

# 20/20 Vision

Finding a New Vision for Our  
Fellowship of Churches

Report of the FEBC Vision Team



2010

## FEBC 20/20 Proposed Vision

### Why Is A Vision Needed?

At the 2009 Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEBC) convention, the Executive presented six significant challenges that are threatening the viability of the Fellowship.

- Financial shortfall
- Lack of Fellowship participation
- Negligible growth
- Personnel shortage
- Communication breakdown
- Lack of vision

During the round table discussions that followed, the delegates overwhelmingly agreed that *lack of vision* was the number one challenge that our Fellowship needs to address.<sup>1</sup> Many of the other challenges were noteworthy, but clarifying the vision will provide the framework for potential resolution of the other challenges.

The delegates charged the FEBC Executive to present a new vision to be voted on at the 2010 FEBC Convention. This required a clarification of what is meant by a vision as opposed to a purpose/mission statement. The purpose/mission statement identifies why an organization exists.

The FEBC's current purpose statement is: *"The Fellowship exists to provide a framework which enables member churches to stimulate and*

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<sup>1</sup> Lack of vision (17 Votes); Communication breakdown (9 Votes); Hire a President (5 Votes); Lack of participation in the Fellowship (4 votes); Doctrinal Statement everyone can endorse (3 votes); Personnel shortage, Lack of growth, Need to restructure (2 Votes each); Financial shortage (1 Vote)

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*encourage each other to be more effective in building the Church of Jesus Christ through interaction, joint service projects, mutual assistance, accountability, and fellowship.”*

A good vision statement paints a compelling picture of what could be and always serves the mission statement.

In light of the request from the delegates for a vision statement for the FEBC, the Executive sent a team to visit the member churches. This team presented the message to our churches that our Fellowship is at a crossroads and sought to gather input about the future of the Conference.<sup>2</sup> The FEBC Executive also appointed a six member Ad Hoc Vision Casting Committee (Appendix C) to process this input from the member churches and to draft a proposed 2020 Vision Statement.

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<sup>2</sup> See “Summary of Feedback from FEBC Churches” in Appendix A

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### What Is Our Focus?

Based on the data collected from the churches, the Ad-Hoc Vision Casting Committee evaluated the FEBC's strengths and weaknesses. It is important to note that world missions, church planting, pastoral retention, and biblical teaching are obvious strengths within our fellowship.

World missions – The FEBC ranks among the highest in per capita giving for foreign missions in North American churches.

Church planting – The FEBC experiences a 70% success rate.

Pastoral retention – Average tenure of a Senior Pastor in the FEBC is 8.7 years; average tenure of a Youth Pastor is 6.9 years.

Biblical teaching – The FEBC places strong emphasis on Christian education and Bible College graduates.<sup>3</sup>

Conversely, the key weaknesses of the Fellowship are lack of growth and lack of outreach to the local community.

Lack of growth – In the last 10 years, the Fellowship only increased by 100 people (4,000 to 4,100); 62% of our churches reported a decrease in attendance.

Lack of outreach – This was the greatest expressed need among our Fellowship churches.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-five percent of our churches stated they had “no conversion growth” in the last 10 years.

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<sup>3</sup> “Exploring Future Options for our Fellowship”

<sup>4</sup> Appendix A

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After considering the strengths and weaknesses of our Fellowship, it became apparent that if the FEBC is to chart a new course for the future we must address our weaknesses. Ten years of stagnation and reluctance to proclaim the Gospel locally are unacceptable weaknesses for a church. After prayerful analysis of the feedback from the churches, a vision focused on *local outreach* proved to be more appropriate than a vision focused on growth for the following reasons:

1. When churches focus on numerical growth, it often comes at the cost of spiritual maturity. When looking to fill the pews, many churches seek to build their own kingdoms instead of the kingdom of God.
2. Church growth is a good thing when it comes by the fruit of the proclamation of the Gospel.
3. Scripture charges believers with the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Luke 24:46–47), while conversion is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44).

When the FEBC was formed, the heart of the people was to tell others about Christ. Our Conference grew as the Gospel was proclaimed locally and globally. The Gospel was proclaimed frequently resulting in the growth of the Fellowship, with a strong emphasis on foreign missions. The passion for local outreach has waned as validated by the lack of conversion growth in many of our churches. If we fail to develop a clear vision for the future, the existence of the Fellowship and its current strengths are in jeopardy.

Affirmation of an *outreach* focus for our vision is even more apparent when we consider how the Holy Spirit is already leading us to address this weakness in our fellowship:

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1. In 2004, the Executive addressed this weakness by adding a new commission to our fellowship—the Commission on Outreach.
2. At least two FEBC churches added Pastors of Outreach to their staff in the last six years (CBC and EBC, both in Omaha).
3. In the last year, many churches expressed a holy discontent regarding their struggle to reach their local communities effectively.<sup>5</sup>

As a fellowship of churches, we are longing for help, for change, for revival in our local outreach ministry.

When we examine opportunities for local outreach, it is clear the Holy Spirit is bringing the lost to our doorstep (international students, broken families, and those in economic crisis). These people are looking for hope and have an openness that did not previously exist. We cannot ignore them as the Holy Spirit draws them to the Father and we have the opportunity to share Christ with them. A door has opened to the Fellowship because of the declining number of churches in North America that exhibit strong biblical teaching. People are seeking Truth, but not finding it. Additionally, our transient society leaves people disconnected and looking for meaningful relationships. Every church has neighbors who desperately need Jesus. We must be willing to step out of our comfort zone and make significant personal sacrifice in order to take the Gospel to the lost.

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix A

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### What Is the 2020 Vision?

#### ***Intentionally Reaching the Lost***

**A fellowship of churches that equips and inspires one another so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed by every member of every church at every opportunity.**

#### **Anchored to Values – Propelled by Mission – Driven by Vision**

Vision Defined:

#### ***“Intentionally Reaching the Lost”***

We will not give up or be satisfied with ineffective attempts to proclaim the Gospel. We will keep looking for ways to tell others about Christ, trusting the Holy Spirit will be at work drawing people to Himself.

#### ***“A fellowship of churches”***

We are a fellowship of autonomous evangelical churches, who are committed to the Scriptures and to working together to build the Church of Jesus Christ in our local communities and around the world.

#### ***“that equips and inspires one another”***

As a fellowship of 42 churches, we will communicate regularly with one another so that together we can find ways to proclaim the Gospel more clearly and more frequently. We will encourage one another with stories of transformed lives; we will confess our struggles and missed opportunities; and we will share experiences, expertise, resources, and training with each other.

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### ***“so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed”***

The Gospel we make known is first of all Christ centered. Freedom from sin comes only through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection. We recognize it is not our role to save people. We do, however, have the responsibility to both demonstrate a life that is being transformed by the Gospel and to invite people to trust in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf to make them right with God. We will be effective witnesses in both word and deed, living lives full of grace and truth.

### ***“by every member”***

Every individual in the churches of the FEBC will see involvement in evangelism as something they do as part of their day-to-day walk.

### ***“of every church”***

Each church in the FEBC community will actively be involved in evangelism as a corporate body. Our local churches provide the essential framework for the individual members to function interdependently. In the context of a supportive and cooperative community, the power of the Gospel can be more clearly displayed and proclaimed. The local church also plays a key role in connecting with other Fellowship churches. Working together, the resources necessary to accomplish this vision can fit into place.

### ***“at every opportunity.”***

At every opportunity, every member of the FEBC prays to God for opportunity and boldness. We will replace the misconception that "the only way for my neighbor or friend to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for her to come to my church and listen to my pastor preach." Instead, through shared stories, training, and experiences, we will start to recognize more of the opportunities the Holy Spirit provides each month, each week, and each day, to proclaim the Gospel. It does not

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matter our age; we will encounter these opportunities in the lunch room and on the playground, in the office and on the job site.

### **What Will We Lose?**

What about our strengths? If our primary focus is local outreach, will we lose our strength in biblical teaching, in world missions, or in church planting? No. In fact, we expect just the opposite will happen and we believe it is better to focus on what we will gain! As we proclaim the Gospel more frequently, our hunger for biblical teaching increases, our desire to proclaim the Gospel globally will increase, and the need to plant churches will increase as the Fellowship grows through conversion.

There may be events in our churches that need to be dropped or modified as an intentional review of the Fellowship and church calendars is made to put an outreach focus on every appropriate event.

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### What is Next?

Should the proposed vision be accepted by the Executive, the next step will be to develop some objectives and strategies that will help us achieve our vision. The ad hoc committee has some ideas that can serve as a starting point of a dialogue that needs to continue with the Executive, with the Commission on Outreach, and with our 42 churches.

Our objectives and strategies must challenge us to significant changes, not just in our churches, but first of all in the personal lives of our leaders (on our executive and commissions, our pastors, and our elders) and also in the lives of our members. A change of heart, a change of schedule, and courage are imperative, if we are going to intentionally reach the lost.

Currently, we are withholding the Gospel from the lost, largely because our hearts have hardened to the needs of the lost. We have fallen in love with the same things our culture loves: financial security, entertainment, and comfort. Therefore, we need to recapture the heart of our Father who loved us and demonstrated His love to us even while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

Secondly, we are part of a culture that loves to be busy. We process more information than any culture before us. We can do so many things so quickly that we have stopped asking whether the information we process and the things we do are actually worth our time. Instead of organizing our schedules according to what will make us the most money or provide us with the most fun, we need to reorganize our schedules according to God centered priorities (i.e. reaching the lost).

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Finally, if every member of every church is going to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ at every opportunity, our objectives must challenge us to be strong and courageous. All of us have opportunities to proclaim the Gospel, but many of us lack the courage to seize these opportunities. We must allow God to transform the culture of our fellowship to a culture that is more afraid of missing opportunities, than taking opportunities to proclaim the Gospel.

The FEBC is at a crucial crossroads and all of us are aware of the consequence of staying on the path we are on. Our prayers will be with our executive and our new president as you discern whether the ad hoc committee's recommendation is the appropriate course for our future.

In His service,

The FEBC Vision Ad Hoc Committee

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## Appendix A – Prepared by Harvey Schultz

**Summary of Feedback from FEBC Churches** (in response to surveys and visits to churches)

### **I. General Observations and Reflections**

- A. There is a very strong desire to see the FEBC thrive. Very few churches give any palpable indication of indifference to or disengagement from the Fellowship.
- B. In commenting about our present efforts to cast a new vision a comment we heard repeatedly was: “You are on the right track.”
- C. “Money issues will be resolved once the vision issue is taken care of” was also a comment we heard repeatedly.
- D. The discussions about FEBC’s future are strategic in nature. Many people have not been trained in strategic thinking and have difficulty entering into the debate.
- E. The decision to hire a president was viewed with favor because the job is too big for a volunteer and a full time president will help resolve a number of weaknesses.

### **II. Most evident FEBC weaknesses/failures**

- A. Lack of visibility in local churches
- B. Communication break downs

### **III. Regarding present FEBC services to member churches**

- A. General comments & impressions:
  - 1. All are important even though local churches don’t always need to use all of them. None should be eliminated.
  - 2. Often people in our churches (including leaders) are unaware of all that the Fellowship offers (another evidence of breakdown in communications).
- B. Specifically, those services which were highlighted the most often:
  - 1. Pastoral search/recruitment assistance
  - 2. Resource library and resource sharing
  - 3. Canadian benefits package (extended health and life insurance)

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4. Scholarships
5. Pastoral care (retreats, counseling, etc.)
6. Assistance in conflict resolution
7. Facilitation of government recognition & credentialing
8. Mennonite Trust services in Saskatchewan (estate planning, no-fee wills, etc.)

### IV. The greatest expressed needs of FEBC churches

Two topped the list with a vast majority mentioning the first one:

- A. Assistance in developing effective outreach/evangelism strategies
- B. Assistance for leadership development/training

### V. What's on the churches' "Wish List"?

- A. A desire for more interaction (real & physical) between FEBC churches
- B. A desire for FEBC organized inter-church ministry teams for missions, disaster relief and to assist our church planters
- C. A desire to continue to participate in church planting ministries
- D. A desire to redefine what our doctrinal essentials are and leave greater latitude on nonessentials (but no one has specific proposals to make!)

### VI. Which of our present Core Values are the most important?

The only ones that did not score high were "our Anabaptist heritage" and "diversity of local churches."

Date: March 26, 2010

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### Appendix B – Supporting Scriptures

Psalm 37:5

Proverbs 16:3

Luke 12:12

Galatians 5:13

Ephesians 6:18–20

Colossians 4:2–4

1 Timothy 1:12

2 Timothy 4:5

Hebrews 10:23–25

1 Peter 2:12

1 John 3:17–18

1 John 4:19–21

## **FEBC 20/20 Proposed Vision**

### **Appendix C – Ad Hoc Vision Casting Committee Members**

Rick Bragg – Community Bible Church – USA

Fayth Boeker – Evangelical Bible Church - USA

Nathan Janzen – Cornerstone Bible Church - USA

Paul MacDiarmid – Dalmeny Bible Church – Canada

Rich Sanne – Heartland Bible Church - USA

Brenda Wiens – Salem Bible Church - Canada

Recorder – Dana Swanson (CBC – USA)