

Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms (CABF)
Constitution and Governance Committee
Special Project to Update the CABF Governance Structure

Background

The CABF has been rapidly expanding in recent years, with Member Churches and Individual Members now in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and clergy from at least four of these jurisdictions credentialled by CABF. More applications are coming in virtually every month.

With the growth of the Association, both with respect to the number and geographic distribution of individual members and church members and with the increase in the number of activities, such as the Cross Canada Conferences and contacts with other like-minded organizations within Canada and internationally, the time has come to review the Association's amended By-Law #2 to identify places where it can be updated to meet evolving needs.

With the broadening of membership to become a truly Canada-wide organization, the Council and membership now stretch across four time zones. Meetings of Members and meetings of Council or Executive have been accommodated by scheduling of timing and use of Zoom Meetings. However, this rapid growth has put more pressure on those in leadership positions and increased the workload for some committees. We are still entirely dependent on volunteers to provide leadership and to do the administrative work needed to keep us running smoothly, so we need an effective and efficient governance model to facilitate this effort. In time, we will likely need at least part time paid help to deal with administrative detail, but we are not yet positioned to make this move.

The time has come to review the management structure of the association, with regard to the Officer, Council, Executive and Committee roles and responsibilities to ensure that leadership is provided; administrative, planning and program functions are executed; and succession plans are in place to ensure ongoing functioning. This last point is particularly relevant, since we have experienced several years of difficulty in finding individuals willing to take on the roles of President, Secretary and Vice President. Filling some Committee Chair positions has also proven to be problematic. All of this puts greater pressure on those who are in Officer, Council or Committee roles.

Recently, a number of these issues and opportunities for improvement have been raised by individuals or small groups, especially related to workload, vacant positions, coordination and communication in the governance of the Association.

Mandate

This was discussed at the November 13, 2024, Council Meeting and the following motion was passed unanimously:

“That the Constitution and Governance Committee be given a mandate to do a thorough review of needs of the CABF organization with regard to structure and governance and any necessary changes to the By-Laws, to position us to move forward as a national organization.”

In the discussion at Council, it was clear that Council wished as wide consultation as possible, with input from all stakeholders, including from persons serving in various roles, from all committees, and from persons of varying ages and backgrounds and geographic perspectives. This could be accomplished by face to face or written communication or by persons volunteering to work more closely with the Constitution and Governance Committee on this project. Although Council will take a very active role in receiving reports and recommendations from the committee, input and comment should not be limited to presently serving members of Council or CABF Committees.

Objective

The objective of this process is to ensure that the Association is provided with a governance model that meets current and future needs and that important items are adequately addressed in By-Law #2 and the Policy and Procedures Manual. Such items include, but are not limited to:

- formalizing the role of the Executive (presently has no terms of reference and is not mentioned in By-Law #2 or the Policy and Procedures Manual);
- identifying the impediments to recruiting to vacancies on Council;
- reviewing the roles and responsibilities of Officers (especially the President) with special attention to workload;
- reviewing the distribution of workload between existing committees and the need for redistributing responsibilities or creating additional committees (such as Cross Canada Conferences or Communications);
- clarifying communication pathways between officers, executive, and committees and between committees;
- ensuring that there is regional representation in governance and planning;
- planning for the Assemblies associated with the Annual General Meetings; and
- planning for the Cross Canada Conferences.

Process

Initial work will attempt to identify the issues and opportunities, followed by identifying potential strategies for resolving each issue or improving each process. CABF Council will be kept up to date on this work as it progresses and will comment on the matters identified and any additional matters to be investigated. Council will also comment on the merits of, and their preference for or against, potential strategies which are identified for each area where improvement is desired.

The committee will use its research and the guidance from Council to develop possible changes to By-Law #2 and changes to roles and responsibilities and operational procedures in the Policy and Procedures Manual for consideration by Council.

When the work is completed and Council is satisfied, the committee will prepare a briefing package for the membership and present the proposed changes to By-Law #2 for a vote by means of an Extraordinary Resolution at a Meeting of Members. Changes to the Policy and Procedures Manual will be approved by Council.