

Evangelical Free Church of Canada

Who We Are

(documents, articles, and commentaries
on the ethos of our movement)

EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF CANADA

WHO WE ARE (OUR ETHOS):

The strength of the Evangelical Free Church of Canada is in our united commitment to, and service for, Jesus Christ, and our empowering by the Holy Spirit. That unity is then lived out through the shared ethos that directs how we serve together, treat each other, and stand as a testimony to the world. That ethos is found articulated in numerous documents and articles as attached. These are provided to strengthen our bond, and also to inform all about the nature of who we are.

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**OUR PURPOSE:** *We exist to share Jesus and join Him in His work of transforming lives.*

**OUR VISION:** *The EFCC desires to be a unified family of churches and individuals with Christ-like leaders who live the Free Church motto as we join God's redemptive work in every part of Canada and the world.*

#### OUR CORE VALUES:

***The Gospel*** -- The power of God and the hope of the world.

***The Local Church*** -- With a mandate to share Jesus as Lord.

***The Word*** -- Authoritatively revealing the gospel of Jesus.

***Culturally-Sensitive Servant Leadership*** -- Humble and passionate to share good news.

***Prayer*** -- Inviting the Holy Spirit to lead us in our mission.

***Creativity & Diversity*** -- In methods, styles, to share with all peoples.

***Interdependent Ministry*** -- Local, national and international gospel sharing.

***Personal Transformation*** -- Lives changed by the gospel and Holy Spirit.

#### OUR CHARACTER and CALLING

##### OUR CHARACTER:

The Kingdom of God is His eternal possession and is present in part but not fullness in the world today. By God's decree, under His direction, and empowered by His grace, the universal Church is responsible for the care and expansion of that Kingdom. Every local church, denomination, and ministry organization is a part of that Kingdom and carries some responsibility in the work of the Kingdom. As a part of that Body of Christ, the Evangelical Free Church of Canada (EFCC) desires to understand and fulfill its particular calling in the

work of the Kingdom. The EFCC will seek to live out our calling to be a New Community in Christ, reflecting the fullness of His vision for the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven.” We will do this by putting aside the prevailing values of our time and replacing them with the radical demands of the gospel of God’s grace.

**OUR CALLING (also often referred to as Our Motto):** IN ESSENTIALS UNITY; IN NON-ESSENTIALS CHARITY; IN ALL THINGS JESUS CHRIST.

The calling and spirit of the EFCC is summed up well in this famous motto. It both defines our call and expresses our aspirations for the 21st century.

### **IN ESSENTIALS UNITY...**

- Essential Truths: We are called to embody and proclaim the essential truths of Christianity as articulated in the Word of God, expressed through the centuries in the great creeds of the church and defined for us in our Statement of Faith. We continue in the tradition of our EFCC forefathers who said “Where stands it written?” These truths have led us to Jesus Christ who said “He is Truth” and that the “Truth will set us free.”
- Spiritual Unity: This calling is to a spirit of unity in Jesus Christ, with an affirmation of the priesthood and ministry of all believers, congregational government in the local church where He is Head, meaningful involvement within our fellowship of churches, and cooperation with all who share our call to these essential truths.

### **IN NON-ESSENTIALS CHARITY...**

- Generosity of Spirit: We are called to a generosity of spirit that frees us to embrace a wide variety of Christian brothers and sisters -- “simply believers” -- some with whom we will not agree in matters that are outside our Statement of Faith. Our spirit is one of warm welcome to all believers who share our commitment to our Statement of Faith and who seek to follow Jesus’ command to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves.
- Kingdom Minded: This generous spirit encourages us to joyfully work with those outside our own denomination, those of “like precious faith” who endeavor to expand the kingdom of heaven.

### **IN ALL THINGS JESUS CHRIST**

- The Great Command and Great Commission: We are called to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Lord God. Through His grace and through His Spirit we seek to fulfill His command to love our neighbour by loving each and every person, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. We seek to fulfill His great commission by making followers of Him from all people groups.
- Godly Living: From the practice and teachings of Jesus, from the present ministry of the Holy Spirit working within us, and from the pietistic model of our forefathers, has grown a spirit that hungers for a closer relationship with Jesus Christ that will transform our hearts, our heads, our hands, and will reveal itself in a Christ-inspired value system and a holy lifestyle.

### **HOW DO WE SERVE TOGETHER?**

The Evangelical Free Church of Canada is a movement that is committed to the local Church. It is our conviction that the local Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, is the ideal

context for producing personal life change in fulfillment of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

We also believe that being a voluntary, interdependent network of churches enables us to fulfill the mandate of the Church more effectively.

Districts in the EFCC connect Evangelical Free Churches by province or geographical region. In districts, generally, a superintendent and board, or lead team, provide services such as pastoral care and placement, credentialing of pastors, church consultation and the strategic establishment of new churches.

Just as each local church is self-governing, so too are most of our districts. Delegates selected from churches in their districts meet in conference to elect officers and to transact the business of the districts. Issues pertaining to district finances and the setting of budgets are dealt with at district conferences. In some areas, local churches have decided to delegate some of those responsibilities to the National Office and the District has become a sub-set of the National for the sake of effective and efficient mission. The nature of the EFCC allows for that kind of flexibility in structure for the sake of the mission.

Local churches are governed **congregationally**. (For more on this see “What it Means to be an EFCC Church below.) They join the EFCC through their district, or directly through the National Body if there is no District governing body in their region.

As a collective, member churches empower and delegate many shared tasks and concerns to the “Home Office”, who direct numerous National Ministries as well as the International Ministries of the EFCC. Our Executive Director, as well as our Board of Directors, are elected by our National Conference, and given the responsibility of management and oversight of our shared ministries. The Home Office thus works alongside Districts, churches, pastors, missionaries, and partners to facilitate the work for which we have a collective calling.

## **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN EFCC CHURCH**

This document describes foundational principles that the EFCC movement has as expectations for the individual churches within the movement. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is our conviction that it is important that there is alignment in the following descriptive areas for the unity and mission fulfillment of our movement.

### **THEOLOGY**

An Evangelical Free Church (EFC) accepts and adopts without reservation, revision, deletion or addition, the Statement of Faith of the EFCC as its Statement of Faith. (As the EFCC National Conference of 2008 adopted a revised Statement of Faith, this may be either the new or the former Statement of Faith.) EFC pastors and elected leaders accept and communicate without reservation the Statement of Faith, and the membership accepts and lives in harmony with the Statement of Faith. An EFC acknowledges differences in areas of evangelical theology not specifically addressed by the Statement of Faith, and embraces with grace those within their fellowship and the denomination that may hold differing views.

### **SENSE OF MISSION**

The mission of the EFCC is to *“be a unified family of churches and individuals with Christ-like leaders who live the Free Church motto as we join God’s redemptive work in every part of Canada and the world.”*

An EFC evidences a partnership in this mission by:

- Annually evaluating and giving attention to increasing its Great Commission health.
- Being involved in multiplying healthy churches among all cultural groups, both at home and abroad, in obedience to Christ’s call to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.
- Partnering with the work of EFCC at home and worldwide.

### **ATTITUDE**

The EFCC, in addition to a common theology, also has a shared commitment to a common attitude. This common attitude is characterized by:

- A unity based upon the essentials, coupled with freedom and charity in non-essentials.
- Being evangelical in theology and practice.
- Cooperating with others who are advancing the cause of Christ.
- Teaching liberty in Christ with responsibility and accountability.
- A balanced teaching ministry that engages both the mind and the heart.
- Interdependence through working with the larger body of the EFCC.
- Respect, appreciation and acceptance of people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Sensitivity to those in our congregations who suffer from social destitution, and compassionately addressing their particular needs to the best of our abilities.

These values are more fully articulated in the EFCC document, “Our Character and Calling.”

### **POLITY**

An EFC has the freedom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to govern its own affairs in accordance with both the mind of Christ and the Word of God.

An EFC develops a local church polity that fits within the following parameters of congregationalism:

- The membership includes only those who have a personal faith in Christ (a believer's church).
- The collective membership in a duly called meeting is the highest authority in the local church, exhibiting both a willingness to be scripturally accountable to the elected leadership, and encouraging elected leadership to be mutually accountable to them as the ultimate authority in the local context. Moreover, members and leaders unitedly subscribe to a relationship covenant based on Mathew 18, giving priority to biblical patterns of conflict resolution and exercising biblical discipline within the context of Christian love and cultural sensitivity.
- Congregationalism is that form of government wherein the highest authority under Christ in a local church resides in the corporate will of the church membership, and in which a realistic process and reasonable opportunity exists by which that corporate will is determined and carried out, especially as it affects such matters as:
  - Selection or appointment of the principal governing board (elder, deacon etc.)
  - Selection of the senior pastor.
  - Approval or alteration of constitution/bylaws.
  - Approval of an annual church budget.
  - Approval of any major purchase or dissolution.
- An EFC has, as its local polity, a form of congregationalism that fits the size and demographics of the congregation.
- An EFC teaches that congregationalism includes the involvement of the entire body in ministry.
- An EFC entrusts much of the decision-making to godly leaders who are trained, trusted and allowed to lead.

## **ARTICLES DETAILING THE ETHOS OF THE EFCC**

### **Essentials and Non-Essentials in the Evangelical Free Church**

(Excerpts from an article by Bill Taylor)

The Ten Article Statement of Faith (SOF) adopted at National Conference 2008 is the EFCC's statement of essential theological truth; that is, we ask our pastors and churches to affirm the SOF as the common doctrinal basis for the EFCC family. This raises the whole issue of our EFCC motto: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, charity; in all things Jesus Christ." Allow me to talk a little about the Free Church approach to the whole topic of essential and non-essential truth.

When we talk about this, we are really saying that some truth is so central to our faith that we must ask all of our pastors and churches to affirm it in order to belong to and minister in our family. On the other hand, other truths are not as central to the faith and Christians of equal piety, learning and commitment to the authority of Scripture have long disagreed about them, and so we ask our pastors and churches not to exclude people from fellowship over these

issues. Examples of such issues in Free Church history would include variances of opinion regarding speaking in tongues, predestination, eternal security, mode and timing of baptism, and timing of Christ's return.

This approach has allowed people from various backgrounds to fellowship and minister in Free Churches in unity even when they disagree over some of these non-essential issues. The EFCC has recognized that our unity is primarily in the person of Jesus Christ, not merely in an intellectual adherence to doctrinal statements – as important as doctrinal statements are. Hence, we take seriously Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 where He asks the Father to make His children one, and Paul's declarations that we are one in Christ. Galatians 3:28-29, Ephesians 2 and I Corinthians 1-3 all develop this idea of our unity in Jesus Christ. However, we also recognize that there are certain essential beliefs about Jesus Christ and the gospel that are necessary to affirm in order for us to be one in Christ. The apostle Paul summarized these gospel and Christological essentials in passages such as I Corinthians 15:1-8; I Corinthians 8:6; II Timothy 2:5-6. The apostles also summarized these same gospel essentials in sermons recorded for us by Luke in Acts 2, 3, 10 and 13. One of the features of the EFCC Ten Article SOF is that it links what we consider to be essential truths for our unity in Christ to the gospel via the "gospel headers." I believe that the "gospel headers" are a strong point of our SOF, making it reminiscent of the historic creedal summaries of doctrine that unified Christians through the centuries, such as the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.

Some will deny that there are non-essentials at all. They believe that every issue is a truth issue over which Christians must agree or break fellowship. Arnold T. Olson admirably summarizes the Free Church approach to this in his book, *The Significance of Silence*, arguing that prior to 1950 one arm of the Free Church movement did not even have a doctrinal statement, and that when the Norwegian/Danish and Swedes merged in 1950 they worked hard to be silent on issues that were not core gospel issues. This approach really has precedent in the New Testament where the early church was forced to decide which parts of the Old Testament law would need to be affirmed and adhered to by Gentiles in the church. See Acts 10-11 for Peter's struggle with unclean food and Gentiles, and Acts 15 where the Jerusalem Council had to decide how the gospel would relate to Old Testament laws. The apostles were also very aggressive in commanding members in the early church to avoid divisions and to hold to the law of love (II Timothy 2:14-16; Titus 3:9-11; Romans 15:17-20; John 13; I John 3, I Peter 4:7-11 to name a few). Hence, the gospel and the person of Jesus Christ are at the core of the unity of the body.

The phrase "in all things Jesus Christ" is indeed a key part of our ethos. As Olson reminds us, the early Free Church pioneers did not ask people, "what do you believe about...?", but rather, "are you saved?" Thus, the EFCC has always been a "believers only, but all believers" movement.

This suspicion of basing unity merely on a cerebral assent to a systematic theology is well founded when one considers the very nature of the Bible. The early Free Church pioneers were suspicious of systematic theologies and church traditions and demanded to know "Where Stands it Written?" before they allowed anyone to impose a certain practice on them. For instance, they broke with the Lutheran church primarily because they could not find clear enough biblical support for the state church's strict rule that the Lord's Supper could only be

served in a church by duly licensed clergy. When one reads the Bible one quickly confirms what early Free Church leaders discovered: that the Bible is not a neat summary of systematic theology or rules that is uniformly easy to interpret. Rather it is a collection of different types of literature, by many authors, that God has woven together to reveal His gospel story and plan of redemption. There are core passages that are easy to arrive at a consensus regarding the author's original intent. However, there are also many passages that are difficult to understand. Further, the Bible does not interpret itself. We, as subjects, come to the text, bringing our assumptions and prejudices and try to ascertain what the author was saying then, and what God is saying to us now. Granted, we trust the Holy Spirit to lead us and to help us understand what God is saying to us, but nowhere does God promise us that the Holy Spirit will ensure that all Christians across all times and cultures will arrive at the same interpretive conclusions. This is why we intuitively know that the apostle Paul is correct when he declares in I Corinthians 13 that we now see "as in a cloudy mirror" and that while we live on this earth, our knowledge is partial but someday when we see Jesus, it will be complete!

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to be as objective in prayerfully interpreting the text as possible, but it does explain why we have centuries old debates over mode of baptism, Calvinism versus Arminianism etc. It also is cause for us to have a hermeneutical humility and to be charitable to those who disagree with us on some of those issues that are less clear biblically (what we call non-essentials). It also serves as a call for us to watch, as Paul phrased it to Timothy, how we handle the Word – to "carefully handle the Word of truth." As evangelicals we are people of the Word, but it is quite easy for us to bring our baggage to the text and then abuse the text by selectively ignoring passages that contradict our point of view; by proof-texting while ignoring the larger context the verse is a part of; by stretching a text to make it say more than the author intended; by ignoring the historical or cultural situation a passage was written to address and so on. This of course, explains why two committed Christians can argue opposite conclusions with great passion by simply using different texts or by accusing each other of subjective bias in their use of the same texts or by simply declaring that the other person is "caving in to culture."

So in the EFCC we do not exclude people from fellowship who disagree with us over those issues we have identified as non-essentials. The question is, how do we choose which are which? Historically we have summarized our theological essentials in our SOF and our moral essentials in our Code of Conduct. And by process of elimination, if something is not in either of those documents, then it is a non-essential. But some folks in Free Churches find this bothersome because an issue/position that they consider essential is not found in either of these documents! In fact, we are not saying that because we have declared an issue to be a non-essential issue by not including it in our SOF or Code of Conduct that we consider it to be unimportant. Indeed, what could be more important than the nature of free will, the sovereignty of God, the security of one's salvation, predestination and all the other issues that are tied up in the Calvinist/Arminian debate? So when we talk about essentials versus non-essentials we are not simply saying that non-essentials are minor issues that are unimportant. However, we are saying that while we encourage passionate debate among the members of our family on these issues, we call for charity and an inclusive spirit that allows us to agree to disagree and continue to live out our common identity and mission in Jesus Christ. The difficult question then arises, "how do we decide as a movement which issues are

essential (and demand uniform affirmation in the family), and which are non-essential and demand charitable debate and gracious acceptance of those who disagree with us?”

While I believe that our leaders in the past have rightly identified the essentials that ought to be included in our SOF and Code of Conduct (and by extension those non-essentials to deliberately leave out), please allow me to propose four markers that might help us to further distinguish essentials from non-essentials in the future.

The first indicator revolves around history. Has there been historical agreement or disagreement over this issue in the broader church? Christians, equally committed to the authority of Scripture have arrived at differing conclusions on issues such as baptism, predestination, eternal security, free will, timing of the return of Christ, sign gifts etc., and have passionately defended those conclusions for centuries. Where there is such a history of disagreement, we ought to (as our forefathers did) deliberately leave this issue out of our SOF and Code of Conduct (declaring the issue to be a non-essential), allowing a diversity of opinion in the movement. However, we must be careful here on two accounts: first, we need to be clear regarding whose history we are talking about (i.e. we probably mean the history of the church in the “west” or Canada, forgetting that the church has a history in Asia, Africa and South America too!) Second, just because the “church” seemed to agree for hundreds of years on an issue doesn’t mean we automatically should accept it as a settled essential or even as a divine truth – for example, for close to two millennia the majority of western church leaders taught that women were morally inferior to men, slavery was biblically justified and that interracial marriage was an abomination to the Lord. We would probably not agree with these interpretations today. So an argument from history, while a good indicator, is not a sufficient cause to label something essential or non-essential.

Second, and this follows from the first, is there cultural unanimity or disagreement on an issue? For instance, do Asian or African Christians view the issue differently than Western Christians? We must recognize that the Bible was written in a culture, and each culture interprets the Word in its own way. As western Christians, we sometimes have a colonial default assumption that our culture is superior and that our positions on all biblical issues are the only legitimate hermeneutical conclusions. Yet different cultures look at a host of issues such as leadership, structure/church structure, suffering, the tribulation etc. and arrive at different conclusions from the same texts. When different cultures hold differing positions on an issue, we need to see this as a possible indicator that this is a non-essential and thus it is an issue to debate but to not break fellowship over.

Third, what is the biblical emphasis and exegetical certainty on an issue? Where the Bible doesn’t say much, or seems unclear, we should probably look at considering this issue a non-essential, because a diversity of opinion will be inevitable. So, to use the example above, how much does the New Testament tell us regarding church structure? Faced with seemingly contradictory passages, different genres of literature, we need to exercise enough hermeneutical humility to ask our leaders to move beyond mere selective proof-texting that supports their conclusion to responsibly handling all the relevant texts for each issue. An example of this is the need to decide if a passage is conveying descriptive truth versus prescriptive truth. For instance, in Genesis 3, is God saying that Eve should be ruled by Adam or that because of the fall, the new reality will be that male/female relationships will be sadly characterized by on-going power struggles for the rest of history? The conclusion one draws

from this passage, whether it is merely descriptive or prescriptive of how family relationships ought to be, has a huge impact on how one interprets other passages. So, where an issue rests on passages with low exegetical certainty or where the issue has little biblical emphasis, we need to avoid making it an essential that all must agree on.

The fourth and I believe, most persuasive indicator that an issue is an essential or a non-essential, is its connection to the person of Christ and the Gospel. We are unapologetically Christo-centric and evangelical and at the end of the day, the apostles seemed to judge the theological centrality of an issue based on its relation to Christ and the gospel. So, Peter had to grapple with Old Testament laws and New Testament grace in Acts 10 as did the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Paul argued against heresies that substituted human wisdom for the centrality of Christ in Colossians 2 and declared that he became all things to all men that he “might save some” in I Corinthians 9. John reminds us in John 1 that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and Paul pushes cultural boundaries in Philemon to remind Philemon of our oneness in Christ. The central message of the early church was unapologetically Christ and Gospel-centred. Other issues seemed to pale in importance. We need to follow their lead – this is why I am so happy our core beliefs are now connected to the gospel in our Statement of Faith.

So at the end of the day, the EFCC summarizes its doctrinal essentials in the SOF and its moral essentials in its Code of Conduct. CS Lewis called the basic beliefs of all who are part of the family of God “Mere Christianity.” He asked his readers to not draw “fanciful inferences from my silence on certain disputed matters,” stating that it didn’t mean he was sitting on the fence or that he either thought the matter important or unimportant. Lewis declared that he wasn’t presenting an alternative to the creeds but bringing people into the hall – but people were not to wait in the hall but go into the rooms where there “are fires and chairs and meals.” The rooms of course, were the denominational traditions we all choose to find a home in eventually. But Lewis closes by asking us that once we have chosen our room/family to be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. “If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.” Some denominational “rooms” have lengthy lists of beliefs to be affirmed before one can move from the hall to the family room. The Free Church however, has always attempted to minimize the number of extra beliefs one needs to affirm to gain entry to the Free Church family room, beyond what one needs to believe to get into the great hall. It is my hope that we can continue to be kind to those in other rooms (and the hall) and preserve the charitable spirit in our family that first asks “Do you belong to Christ?” before asking “What do you believe about...?”

### **Association, Autonomy and Unity**

From a blog post by Bill Taylor

The preamble to the 2008 Ten Article Statement of Faith (SOF) reads: “The Evangelical Free Church of Canada is an association of autonomous churches united in a common commitment to God’s evangel – the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again to give

us eternal life. To God's glory, the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Our essential theological convictions are vitally connected to this gospel."

I am often reminded of the dynamic tension inherent in the Free Church. We are an association of autonomous -- or better yet "self-governing" -- churches, united in a common commitment to the gospel and the task of sharing it with a needy world. This is a classic both/and scenario that is so easy for us to turn into an either/or way of thinking. On the one hand, many of our churches (or individuals in our local churches) default to an almost exclusive emphasis on autonomy. "I am an autonomous individual" or "we are an autonomous church" we say, so "you cannot tell me/us what to do, no matter what the broader family has decided!" Others, reacting against this hyper individualism and aversion to collaboration/accountability, reply "autonomy is just an excuse for someone/a church to sit and be grumpy and unproductive. Let's centralize authority in the church/denomination and get moving forward in ministry!"

How does one embrace autonomy and association? I believe that the fact that we are "united in a common commitment to God's evangel" is a key factor to consider. It was the key factor in the early church as well. Consider Acts 4. After Peter and John spent the night in prison, where is the first place they went? They sought out their family, but not their biological, nuclear family. No, they met with their supernatural family and they prayed for boldness to share the gospel -- and the place was shaken (4:23-31)! Then we see the radical nature of this family -- they did not consider their stuff to be their stuff, and that freed them up to give it away to anyone who was in need (4:32-37). This wasn't communism; people still owned things; they were still autonomous. However, they were united in heart and mind. The phrase refers to a radical allegiance. They didn't all think exactly the same, but they had the same allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, to each other and the same commitment to spreading His good news.

It is difficult to find this common sense of allegiance and community today. After all, the church/denomination runs programs to meet my needs. And those programs take care of people, so it really isn't my job to be my brother's keeper, is it? And so, our churches, and by extension our "association," becomes a disconnected group of autonomous individuals/churches with a minimalist sense of calling. Collaboratively caring for each other and carrying out our Lord's mission becomes quite secondary to looking out "for me and mine." And we are poorer for this way of thinking. But it is changing. Our churches will always be self-governing in terms of who they hire, what roles they have them fill, what ministry they get involved in etc. But many of our churches are now looking to collaborate, to grasp once again the benefits of being an association, a part of a supernatural family that unites around the Ten Article Statement of Faith and our EFCC Character and Calling, both of which are grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel! Read them on our website at [www.efcc.ca](http://www.efcc.ca). We understand in a clearer way that "the district" or "the national" or "the Mission/EFCCM" are not some nebulous entities "out there" -- no, we, the members of the association, are "the district", the "national", the "Mission." Yes, those entities have staff that carry out some functions, but they are just that, staff, our staff, and they serve us.

I was reminded recently of how churches are working together overseas through the EFCCM; how churches collaborate to send medical supplies to Cuba through MEMO; how churches

such as Winnipeg EFC partnered to plant a church in Winkler and in the inner city of Winnipeg; how Ottawa Chinese Bible Church partnered with Salmon Arm EFC on a youth cultural exchange; how people at a District conference can reach out with an offering to bless an Iranian brother planting a Farsi speaking church in Richmond Hill where former followers of Islam are becoming followers of Jesus Christ. I am reminded that there is much more we can do if we are willing to work together and help each other. And when I see that partnership happen I am blessed!

Yes, we are self-governing churches; we will never be a top down movement; the agendas will be set on the ground where they are carried out. But we are also an association -- a family -- and the family rallies around a Statement of Faith and a Character and Calling that rallies us around our motto: "in essentials unity, in non-essentials charity, in all things, Jesus Christ." My hope is that our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the task of spreading his good news will become so strong that we will become powerful allies - caring for each other and collaborating in the gospel. As we pray for boldness together, may we see "the place shaken" once again!