

# Proposed Changes to the Constitution and Manual of Procedure

Note: With the exception of the change to the Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 2, the submission of these changes constitutes a “first reading” and will be acted upon at the business meeting at national conference in 2007.

## To change the definitions for cooperating organizations

### ***Background:***

Currently the FGBC [Constitution](#) and [Manual of Procedure](#) allows for the designation of only one type of ministry other than local churches or districts—a “cooperating organization”. In order to be recognized as a “cooperating organization,” it must meet the following criteria:

- It must subscribe to the FGBC statement of faith.
- It must be controlled by members of FGBC churches.
- It must not be a subsidiary of one local church.
- It must have representation on its board of directors from each of the three geographical regions (exception: “an organization serving a specific geographical area”)
- It must have a scope of ministry that is broader than the immediate local church and must exist to serve other Grace Brethren Churches.
- It must meet a recognized need related to the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

The FGBC constitution is very careful to specify that the FGBC does not control cooperating organizations (especially noted for legal reasons).

### ***Current Benefits:***

The only benefit of being a cooperating organization, according to the manual of procedure is “The Council shall consult the Corporation's Boards and Cooperating Organizations in its conference planning and may invite representatives of such Boards and Organizations to its planning sessions.”

### ***Recommendation:***

The Fellowship Council is recommending the creation of two categories for cooperating organizations. One called a “National Ministry” and the other a “Cooperating Ministry.”

Our first objective is to see these entities that serve the FGBC as “ministries” instead of merely organizations.

The **qualifications** for both categories would remain the same as above except:

- Cooperating Ministries are not required to have board representation from all three regions.
- National Ministries must demonstrate “a tradition of national influence that has consistently advanced the mission of the FGBC.”

### ***Proposed Benefits:***

For the National Ministries, the benefit will remain the same as it is currently for Cooperating Organizations—to be consulted in the planning of conference.

For the Cooperating Ministries, the benefit will be that they can be regional and not restricted to the national representation requirement of the National Ministries and still be fully cooperating with the FGBC.

**Reasons** for the proposed changes:

- To provide an avenue to recognize and encourage new cooperative ministries in the FGBC.
- To continue to officially value ministries that have demonstrated a strong historic influence in the Grace Brethren movement.

Additional Comment:

Currently all cooperating organizations have equal designation according to the constitution. The creation of two categories will better allow the Fellowship Council to encourage new cooperating ministries while developing more effective ways to partner with ministries that have had a long-term and broader impact on our movement.

Change Article X of the Constitution to read:

## **ARTICLE X** NATIONAL AND COOPERATING MINISTRIES

### Section One. NATIONAL MINISTRIES

1. Requirements. Although FGBC national ministries remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, such ministries seeking recognition by the corporation and desiring to serve the Fellowship as a national ministry shall meet the following requirements:

- a. The ministry and its governing body must subscribe to the Statement of Faith set forth in Section Two of Article III of this Constitution.
- b. The ministry must be sponsored and controlled by members of FGBC churches. The ministry shall not be a subsidiary of only one local church; it shall have representation on its governing board from each of the geographical regions of the Fellowship as identified in Article V, Section Two, Point # 3 of the Manual of Procedure.
- c. The ministry must have a scope of ministry broader than the immediate local church ministries and exist to serve other Grace Brethren Churches.
- d. The ministry must meet a recognized need related to the fulfilling of the Great Commission.
- e. The ministry must be able to demonstrate a tradition of national influence that has consistently advanced the mission of the FGBC.

2. Procedure. National Ministries meeting the requirements of Section One of this Article may be recognized by the Fellowship, upon recommendation of the Fellowship Council, by two-thirds affirmative majority vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting.

3. Recognized National Ministries. Ministries recognized as national ministries of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc. are not creations of the Fellowship, nor are they an integral part of its organization. While FGBC, Inc. requests an annual report as a courtesy, it does not in any way control any of the recognized national ministries.

4. Review: The Fellowship Council has the responsibility to review national ministries regarding the above qualifications. Recommendations for removal of a National Ministry's recognition shall be approved by the delegates by a 2/3rds affirmative vote.

### Section Two: COOPERATING MINISTRIES

1. Requirements. Although FGBC cooperating ministries remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, such ministries seeking recognition by the corporation and desiring to serve the Fellowship as a cooperating ministry shall meet the following requirements:

- a. The ministry and its governing body must subscribe to the Statement of Faith set forth in Section Two of Article III of this Constitution.
- b. The ministry must be sponsored and controlled by members of FGBC churches.
- c. The ministry must have a scope of ministry broader than the immediate local church ministries and exist to serve other Grace Brethren Churches.
- d. The ministry must meet a recognized need related to the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

2. Procedure. Ministries meeting the requirements of Section Two of this Article may be recognized by the Fellowship, upon recommendation of the Fellowship Council, by an affirmative majority vote of the delegates present, entitled to vote, and voting.

3. Recognized Cooperating Ministries. Ministries recognized as cooperating ministries of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc. are not creations of the Fellowship, nor are they an integral part of its organization. While FGBC, Inc. requests an annual report as a courtesy, it does not in any way control any of the recognized cooperating ministries.

4. Review: The Fellowship Council has the responsibility to review cooperating ministries regarding the above qualifications. Recommendations for removal of a Cooperating Ministry's recognition shall be approved by the delegates by a majority affirmative vote.

Change the Constitution and Manual of Procedure as follows:

Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 1:

Current wording:

It shall be the duty of the Council to make full and complete arrangements for the conference (and any special meetings), including the preparation of the proposed agenda. The Council shall consult the Corporation's Boards and Cooperating Organizations in its conference planning and may invite representatives of such Boards and Organizations to its planning sessions. (Expenses for these representatives shall be borne by their respective organizations.)

New wording:

It shall be the duty of the Council to make full and complete arrangements for the conference (and any special meetings), including the preparation of the proposed agenda. The Council shall consult recognized National Ministries in its conference planning and may invite representatives of National and Cooperating Ministries to its planning sessions. (Expenses for these representatives shall be borne by their respective ministries.)

Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 7:

Current wording:

The Council shall receive and evaluate the requests of groups desiring recognition as cooperating organizations of the corporation, recommending the appropriate action to be taken by the conference.

New wording:

The Council shall receive and evaluate the requests of groups desiring recognition as national or cooperating ministries of the corporation, recommending the appropriate action to be taken by the conference.

Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 11:

Current wording:

The Council may serve as an advisory board to the Fellowship, its member churches, recognized districts, cooperating organizations, and other bodies who seek its counsel with no authority other than to offer counsel to these bodies.

New wording:

The Council may serve as an advisory board to the Fellowship, its member churches, recognized districts, national and cooperating ministries, and other bodies who seek its counsel with no authority other than to offer counsel to these bodies.

Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 17:

New item:

The Fellowship Council may consult National and Cooperating ministries in the development and implementation of strategic plans as appropriate to the mission of the FGBC, Inc.

Constitution: Article IV, Section One: Item 6:

Current Wording:

No church shall be denied membership in the corporation because of failure to support any or all institutions or boards, either district or national, or cooperating organizations recognized by the Fellowship except that failure to comply with membership obligations as stated in Article II, Section Three, points #2, 3, and 5 of the Manual of Procedure may subject the offending church to dismissal.

New wording:

No church shall be denied membership in the corporation because of failure to support any or all institutions, ministries, or boards, either district, national, or cooperating recognized by the Fellowship. Only failure to comply with membership obligations as stated in Article II, Section Three, points #2, 3, and 5 of the Manual of Procedure may subject the offending church to dismissal.

Constitution: Article V, Section Two: Item 2

Current wording:

Only persons who are members of the Grace Brethren Church they represent shall be seated as delegates to any meeting of the corporation. Representation at National Conference is based on the total membership of the local church.

New wording:

Only persons who are members of the Grace Brethren Church they represent shall be seated as delegates to any meeting of the corporation. Representation at National Conference is based on the average attendance at the largest regular gathering of the local church.

## To change the required basis for the Membership Fee

### ***Background:***

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches annual membership fees are approved by delegates each year at national conference as a part of the budget approval process. Currently the [Manual of Procedure](#) requires that member churches of the FGBC pay an annual fee based on each local church's membership. (Article I, Section 1, item 3)

### ***Concerns with the present system:***

There is a great diversity among our Fellowship of churches in how membership relates to the size of the church. For example: Church #1 with average main-service attendance of approximately 1000 has 650 members; Church #2 with average main-service attendance of approximately 1000 has 200 members. Under the present system, Church #1 will pay approximately \$3,400 annually and Church #2 will pay \$1,050. Such an example demonstrates that the present system is not an equitable way to collect annual fees.

In addition, FGBC statistical reports show that local church membership in FGBC churches is declining over recent years while average attendance is relatively stable. This trend puts pressure on the per-member annual membership fee needed to meet the FGBC budget.

There is also a growing diversity in the form (worship and programming) which our FGBC churches are utilizing. Some do not have an official local church membership. Some do not have a weekly main worship service. As time goes on, it will be increasing difficult to find an objective measurement for church size.

### ***Recommendation:***

The Fellowship Council is recommending that the requirement in the Manual of Procedure that the membership fee in the FGBC be based on local church membership be removed. The result would be that the Fellowship Council can recommend and the delegates approve annual FGBC membership fees each year based on other criteria.

Reasons for the proposed changes:

- To develop a fairer basis for annual fees for churches in the FGBC
- To allow the delegates to establish annual fees in ways that encourage diversity in form and a strengthening of the function of the local churches of the FGBC.

### ***Additional Comment:***

The North Central Ohio (NCO) District has changed to an annual district membership fee based on ranges of attendance or church size. Each church can, in good faith, place itself in a church-size range and pay the membership fee for that range. This new system has served the district well. The NCO model is one example of an alternate system that has been considered.

### ***Implementation:***

The Fellowship Council is recommending the following plan for implementation:

- July 2006 – The first reading of the proposal to change the Manual of Procedure at National Conference.
- July 2006 - Conduct open forums on possible ways to handle FGBC annual membership fees.
- August 2006 - June 2007 – The Fellowship Council will be available for feedback, dialog and to answer questions.
- July 2007 - Delegates vote on the proposed change to the Manual of Procedure.
- July 2007 - Delegates vote on a proposed budget and annual membership fee to take effect in 2008.

### **Manual of Procedure: Article I. Section One: Item 3**

Current wording:

A check for membership fees shall accompany the application. The fee to a member church is based on total membership.

New wording:

A check for membership fees shall accompany the application.

## To change the schedule for awarding delegates:

### ***Background:***

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches holds its annual business meeting each summer as a part of National Conference. Churches are entitled to send delegates to this annual meeting with full voting rights. The delegates elect people to the Fellowship Council, the 2nd moderator elect, approve a budget and delegate fees, approve changes to the constitution, approve and welcome new churches into the FGBC.

### ***The current system:***

The current system allows each member church to seat at least two delegates. In addition church can seat 2 delegates for every 25 members. The exact wording is, "Each member church shall be entitled to one delegate for every twenty five members or major fraction thereof; provided that every church shall be entitled to at least two delegates."

### ***Concerns:***

Large churches have the ability to have a very strong influence on the outcome of any vote by the delegates. For example, churches with 10,000 members can seat 400 delegates. Additionally, churches representation will also be influenced by membership patterns. Churches with high attendance but low membership will be under-represented.

### ***Reasons for the proposed changes:***

- To strengthen the influence of mid and small-sized churches.
- To better batch delegate representation with church attendance.

### **Constitution: Article V. Section Two: Item 1**

#### **Current wording:**

Each member church shall be entitled to one delegate for every twenty five members or major fraction thereof; provided that every church shall be entitled to at least two delegates.

#### **New wording:**

Each member church shall be entitled to at least two delegates. Additional delegates are designated as stated in Article II, Section Three, Point A of the Manual of Procedure.

### **Manual of Procedure: Article II. Section Three: Item A.**

Add new item and re-designate following items:

Each member church shall be entitled to at least two delegates. Additional delegates are based on the average attendance at the largest regular gathering of the member church according to the following schedule:

Average Attendance	Assigned number of delegates
0-50	2
51-100	3
101-200	5
201-300	10
301-500	20
501-1000	25
1001-2000	30
2001+	35

## **To change the requirements for national conference advance planning.**

### ***Background:***

The Fellowship Council is charged with the responsibility of planning and conducting the annual conference of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

### ***Currently:***

The Manual of Procedure states that “The Council shall select the time and place for the conference and shall submit its proposals to the conference at least three years in advance. Boards and Cooperating Organizations shall be consulted in the choosing of dates and sites for the conference.”

### ***Concerns over “advance” notice:***

Constitutionally, the moderator “...shall present the annual moderator's address on the general theme of the spiritual state of the churches and the challenges facing the Fellowship. He may incorporate recommendations to the Fellowship from the Fellowship Council.”

Traditionally, the moderator has a major role in planning the conference over which he presides. The requirement that the date and location of conference be announced three years in advance restricts the newly elected moderator from participating in important decisions about the conference over which he presides 3 years later.

### ***Concerns over “consulting Boards and Cooperating Organizations”:***

Current wording in the Manual of Procedure requires that “Boards and Cooperating Organizations shall be consulted in the choosing of dates and sites for the conference.” This recommendation removes this sentence for the following reasons:

1. The term “Boards” is not defined in the Manual of Procedure or Constitution.
2. The Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One, Item 1 retains this requirement.

### ***Recommendation:***

The Fellowship Council is recommending the following change to the Manual of Procedure:

#### ***New wording:***

The Council shall select the time and place for the conference and shall report its plans to the conference at least two years in advance.

#### **Manual of Procedure: Article III, Section One: Item 2:**

#### ***Current wording:***

The Council shall select the time and place for the conference and shall submit its proposals to the conference at least three years in advance. Boards and Cooperating Organizations shall be consulted in the choosing of dates and sites for the conference.

#### ***New wording:***

The Council shall select the time and place for the conference and shall report its plans to the conference at least two years in advance.