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This time of year is very busy, somewhat tiring, and extremely encouraging for me. While the work can be tiring, the results are very energizing, and they remind me why this work is so important.

I have now enjoyed two of the three scheduled retreats for our pastors and their wives. I pray that the speaker and events we plan are encouraging, but I know that the most important aspect involves connections. Relationships with the other couples and with Gary and I are deepened, and couples in relationships with others know that ongoing prayer, encouragement, and advice are only a phone call or a personal visit away. This can be life-giving.

There is rest, relaxation and restoration for your pastor and his wife. There are learning opportunities and times of group discussion and prayer. But the key to these events is building connections that will positively impact the ministries of our pastors for years to come.

I also recently attended the annual winter meeting of the FEBC International Board of Directors. Two full days in board meetings probably sounds horrible to many, but this is a time I look forward to with great anticipation. There is a lot of work, but there is also deep theological conversation, personal stories, joking, laughter, meals together, and games after the meetings have ended.

These men come from different backgrounds and settings, but they are truly dedicated to shared goals. What God can do in this setting is powerful and deeply gratifying. Watching men with differing opinions come to unity on various issues is a display of the way the Body is intended to work, and these men operate under God's guidance with a spirit of grace and mutual respect.

I also want you to know that these men have the proper focus. As an administrative/governance board, it would be easy for the focus to be on balancing the budget, or gaining efficiency, or growing, or a hundred other things. But the directors of your Fellowship are laser focused on serving God and serving you as well as they can. They are constantly asking the question: "How can we best fulfil our vision to strengthen churches?" And they are acting not only with wisdom, but also with faith that God will accomplish what we cannot. I am grateful for each of them.

It is a pleasure to serve alongside your directors and staff, and a pleasure for all of us to serve you! Thanks for your prayer and encouragement.

Kevin Stone

President

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