



7820 Fort Street
Omaha, NE 68134-2366

Phone: 402.965.3860

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What an exciting time this is! The US is celebrating our 250th anniversary this week, which is pretty cool, but my excitement is focused on other things. As I complete my preparations for our annual gathering – Connect, I am always pretty pumped up. I am in the midst of preparing information for the delegate folders, printing off reports and agendas, setting final details, and thinking through every aspect of the event. It is equal parts exhaustion and exhilaration.

Most importantly, this is the time that I look back over our past year and dream of what next year might look like, so I can share these things with your delegates. Frankly, God has worked miracles this past year! We have seen him heal and restore in difficult situations, provide wisdom and courage to church leaders, and provide pastors for several of our churches who were in need. But perhaps the easiest miracle to quantify is how he provided for us financially in ways that far exceeded our expectations. The difference between our expected withdrawal from reserves and our actual gain amounts to a \$128,000 swing. For perspective, this swing is over half of our total FY2026 budget! Praise the Lord! This is an amazing shift from a few years ago!

There is not one obvious source for this increase. Spending was a bit less than budgeted, investments provided more return than expected, many of our churches increased giving or gave unexpected one-time gifts, and we received several one-time gifts from individuals. While pledged support for the Ministries Coordinator position actually dropped a bit, God still amazed us. Individual one-time donations pushed the total received for MC Support over 100% for the first time since the support model was established. This reminds us that God is faithfully providing, but also that we cannot relax or rest on last year's success. We need continued commitment!

The future of the Fellowship looks bright. Earlier this month I had a great meeting with a church that is interested in joining the FEBC. Another church will be meeting with me later this year, and discussions continue with several other viable prospects. Pray that God will direct each one.

I am excited at how God is working. I am excited at new opportunities. I am excited at the growth in connection among our member churches. And I am excited at how God continues to use you, the people of our Fellowship, to provide mutual encouragement and support for our churches. I believe this ministry is important – and we could never do it without the help of people like you.

Thank you so much for your ongoing prayer, support, and encouragement!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Stone".

Kevin Stone – *President*
president@febministries.org

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