

After 10 years at the helm of FEC, Ron Habegger retires

Rocky Rocholl says he'll build on the foundation laid for FEC's future.

By Kristi Reimer
FECConnections Editor

During his 10-year tenure as President of FEC, Ron Habegger oversaw some dramatic moments in the unfolding of the denomination's history: a major name change and the adoption of a strategic vision for the future among them. However, when asked what has made the biggest impact on him personally, he thinks of the local congregations before anything else.

"Both Anita and I loved visiting the churches," Ron says. "We were encouraged and blessed as we saw the ways individual churches worshiped the Lord and worked together.

We'll miss that most of all."

Ron took over the presidency on Jan. 1, 2001, after a 34-year career with Phelps Dodge Corp., a copper mining and manufacturing company where he'd been Vice President of Operations. But FEC leadership was hardly a new thing at that point. With his background in business and finance, Ron had been serving as President of the Christian Service Foundation since 1984. "I spent 15 years getting to know the churches, pastors, and people of FEC as President of CSF," Ron says. "That was key to the transition of becoming President of the denomination."

So what does the President of FEC do on a day-to-day basis? "For much of the time it's

simply the routine business of running the organization," Ron says: "helping churches find pastors, conducting votes for pastoral calls, assisting congregations with organizational structure or the creation of bylaws. Then there's the internal administrative work—managing staff, keeping ahead of

paperwork, budgeting, and so on."

"But in a larger sense, I've tried to focus on creating a vision of who we are as FEC," Ron says. "What is our role; what is the work God has given us to do? I've tried to help churches see how we do that collectively as a

denomination and encourage them to look at how they can do that locally in church ministry. What is their Jerusalem; what is their Judea, their Samaria, their ends of the earth?"

The reference is to Acts 1:8, where Christ tells his disciples, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This verse forms the basis of Vision 2020, FEC's strategic mission for the future. Ron helped oversee the crafting and adoption of Vision 2020 after FEC's General Board requested that he create a statement that would help churches think about their direction and goals for the future. "Directors Earl Cecil and Scott Wagoner and I began to look at



Ron Habegger and Rocky Rocholl

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*We've seen how
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Ron Habegger

our church planting and overseas missions efforts, and we talked with various churches and church planters and came up with Vision 2020," Ron says. "We ran it by the General Board and they were receptive, so in 2006 the delegate body adopted it as the vision for the denomination for the coming years."

But before the people of FEC could figure out where they were going, they first had to examine who they were. In the late 1990s, then-president Don Roth and the Elder Board spearheaded an effort to change the name of what was then called the Evangelical Mennonite Church. Although the Mennonite roots of the denomination would always be strong, many believed that particular label no longer defined their primary identity and could even create a stumbling block for people outside the church who were unfamiliar with Mennonite culture.

But not everyone was ready to leave the Mennonite name behind.

In 2000, the change came to a vote during Convention, and after some impassioned discussion, the church delegates voted it down. This was the same year Ron was elected President. "I decided the first thing we needed to do was let the emotions cool down,"

he says. "I didn't do anything with the name change the first couple years." A few years later, more church leaders were receptive to the change, and in 2003 the Evangelical Mennonite Church became the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

Along with guiding the transformation in FEC's identity and vision, Ron has also overseen a change in the role of the main office in Fort Wayne: Instead of the FEC Headquarters, it's now the FEC Resource Center. "Rather than giving direction to the churches by saying we need to do A, B, and C, I've tried to learn about what they were doing in ministry and how I could encourage and equip them to be more effective," he says.

Besides these major milestones and transitions, Ron says a personal highlight during his presidency has been to see FEC's church planting efforts move into Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, and Idaho. "FEC is growing," he says. "And we're not just inviting churches and planting new ones; there's growth within the churches. When you look at the number of baptisms, that's an indication that churches are winning people to Christ. We've seen how God is faithful when we are obedient to go. We've watched Him work in communities where He brings together a body that then becomes His church."

Ron has also been thrilled to see FEC return to Africa as a mission field after a number of years with no presence there, and he's enjoyed seeing children who've grown up in FEC come back to become pastors and staff members in those same congregations. In addition, he says, "There's bright young talent from other parts of the country and other churches who are leading in FEC."

One of those individuals who found their way to FEC as an adult is Rocky Rocholl, who took Ron's place as President in August. Rocky grew up in a pastor's home in Minnesota and always felt a pull to be in full-time ministry. But he didn't see himself preaching every Sunday, and since he thought that's what all pastors did, he worked for 20 years in business instead. During that time he started seeing a connection between churches' administrative needs and spiritual health, and he realized that's where his skills and heart were. He joined the staff of a Missionary Church in Fort Wayne and eventually connected with Brookside Senior Pastor, Jim Pearson.

"Jim asked if I would come to Brookside and be the Family Ministries Pastor," Rocky says. "I said I could do that, but it wasn't my sweet spot. He said, 'Well, if the church grows like we're expecting, in a couple of years you can hire your replacement.' So that's exactly what I did. I spent 12 years at Brookside, 10 years as Executive Pastor."

During the last eight years, Rocky also served on FEC's General Board. In March he got a call from Matt Boyers, head of FEC's presidential search committee, who said he had a few questions related to the search. "I assumed he wanted to ask me about someone they'd identified," Rocky says. "But he said, 'No, we'd like to talk with you.' I didn't know if I was qualified—I don't have deep FEC roots and I've never been a Senior Pastor—but the committee members assured me that they didn't see that as a negative. I said I wouldn't say no, because there were many opportunities for the doors to close."



Ron and Anita Habegger



Matt Boyers and Tim Bertsche praying over Rocky and Sue Rocholl at Convention 2010.

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*Rocky Rocholl,
FEC president*

The doors, however, swung open even wider. As Rocky met with FEC leaders throughout the interview process, they identified three critical roles for the President: One, he had to be someone who could be a pastor and shepherd to the pastors of FEC. Two, he had to be someone who was a vision caster. And three, the President needed to have administrative gifts.

“They asked me to prioritize those three areas in the order I felt I could do them,” Rocky says. “And that was my order. First and foremost I have a pastor’s heart. Second, God’s given me a measure of discernment to see a vision and lead. And even though I’ve been an Executive Pastor for a number of years, that’s a learned skill rather than my driving passion. So they gave me those three things as my job description and hired me as President.”

In looking ahead to FEC’s future, Rocky is examining how the churches can find new ways of doing ministry in a changing society. “We have to be willing to be fluid and embrace an element of risk as God calls us to change and respond to His leading,” he says. “That’s not always easy to do.”

“But the foundation has been laid,” he continues, “due in large part to Ron’s leadership over the last 10 years. All of these things I see as next steps and chal-

lenges that Ron has laid the groundwork for,” he says. “These are not my changes—the transition’s already begun. He’s paved the way.”

In addition, Rocky says, “Ron has brought a great deal of organization to the financial and structural aspects of the denomination. That will make my job much easier,” he says. “I can take what is there and keep developing it rather than having to initiate and create it from scratch.”

For his part, Ron plans to spend some time in prayer and contemplation with Anita regarding the next steps God has for them. “We have talked about the fact that this last stretch of my career has been a very busy period for us,” Ron says. “Over the next few months, we’re going to spend some quiet time with the Lord and ask Him what to do next.”



Rocky and Sue Rocholl

As he looks back on his time as President, Ron says he thanks God for an excellent staff at the Resource Center and wonderful people on the General and Elder Boards. “I have very much enjoyed my time,” he says. “It’s been a privilege to serve in this capacity. I want Rocky and the churches to

know I am excited for them and what God will bring in the next 10 years. There is no greater place to be than FEC.” ■

Convention 201



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Mark your calendars!
Convention 2011 will be held August 4-6
at Brookside Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.



God provides teachers for FEC missionary children in Albania

Ruth Keller and Alyssa Ricca travel overseas in January 2011.

Two young women, Ruth Keller and Alyssa Ricca, have responded to God's call to serve in overseas missions. Ruth and Alyssa will travel to Albania in January to teach the children in the Morton and Roseboom families, who are serving as FEC international workers in that country.



Ruth Keller

Ruth, a student at Taylor University, is the daughter of Nancy Keller from Brookside Church. She became a follower of Christ at age 6 on Good Friday when she asked her dad, "Why do we celebrate this day?" He explained why Christ had to die and what that sacrifice means for us. That evening Ruth trusted Jesus as her personal Savior and Lord.

Ruth worked on an Indian reservation in 2003 teaching Vacation Bible School, in Mexico in 2005 with Brookside assisting in evangelistic efforts, and in 2007 in the Dominican Republic teaching VBS. More recently she worked with the Yemeni community in Dearborn, Michigan, as part of Taylor World Outreach. She taught English as a foreign language and provided childcare at a local Christian community center.

Her favorite subject to teach is Language Arts because she says it's easy to integrate all subjects into reading. Her interest in teaching the missionary children in Albania grows out of being a missionary

kid herself, having lived in the Maldives until she was eight years old.

Alyssa is the daughter of Ken and Cheryl Ricca from the Oak Grove Evangelical Bible Church in East Peoria, Illinois. She received Christ as her personal Savior during VBS at Oak Grove.

Alyssa is a 2009 English major graduate from Eastern Illinois University. She has been involved in a Christian Campus House at EIU, where she worshiped, served, and provided leadership in a variety of positions. She served in Haiti with others from the campus ministry two years in a row.

She has worked as a special-education teacher's aide in a local East Peoria junior high school and has also been a camp counselor, VBS teacher, and small group Bible study leader.

We believe the Lord has uniquely equipped Ruth and Alyssa to teach the Morton and Roseboom children. Ruth will return to the United States in May to graduate from Taylor University, with plans to return to Albania for the 2011-2012 school year. Alyssa's plans are to teach through the 2012 school year. Please pray for their preparations, support, and safety as they prepare to serve in Albania. ■



Alyssa Ricca

Convention 2010 quiz-off results

Top 10 senior high quizzers

1. Lydia Klassen, Grace
2. Caleb Andrews, Oak Bend
3. Melissa Felker, Grace
4. Mary Moser, Pine Hills
5. Sara Lindenfelser, Grace
5. Kelly Hirschy, Berne
7. Grace Diller, Highland Bethel
7. Adriana Gehman, Brookside
9. Clarissa Leman, Eureka
10. Rachel King, Crossroads

Top senior high quizzers from each church

Highland Bethel: Grace Diller
Berne: Kelly Hirschy
Brookside: Adriana Gehman

Crossroads: Rachel King
Eureka: Clarissa Leman
Grace: Lydia Klassen
Oak Bend: Caleb Andrews
Salem: Ben Parks
Upland: Gabby Trudeau

Top 3 senior high quiz teams

1. Highland Bethel: Bekah Steiner, Hannah Steiner, Sarah Patterson, Grace Diller
2. Grace 1: Melissa Felker, Sara Lindenfelser, Becca Butterfield, Maggie Davis, Ann Riddle
3. Pine Hills: Mary Moser, Noah Powers, Carissa Pescatello, John Secheverell, David Boylan

Top 10 junior high quizzers

1. Carissa Diller, Archbold
2. Hannah Zobrist, Grace
2. Ty Maurer, Eureka
4. John McGee, Upland
5. Tyler Webster, Highland Bethel
6. Colleen Williamson, Brookside
6. Tim Williamson, Brookside
8. Jillian Pflederer, Eureka
8. Sara Getz, Grace
10. Jackson Odle, Highland Bethel

Top junior high quizzers from each church

Archbold: Carissa Diller
Berne: Brett Litwiller
Brookside: Colleen Williamson & Tim Williamson

Crossroads: Rebecca King
Eureka: Ty Maurer
Grace: Hannah Zobrist
Highland Bethel: Tyler Webster
Pine Hills: Elizabeth Powers
Upland: John McGee

Top 3 junior high quiz teams

1. Brookside: Julian Colon, Tim Williamson, Colleen Williamson, Seth Cureton, Cassie Rigdon
2. Pine Hills: Kayla Too, Alexandra Perala, Amanda Hughes, Cameron Pescatello, Elizabeth Powers, Emily Secheverell
3. Grace 3: Lydia Klassen, Sarah Roberts, Heidi Schenbein, Sarah Lorentz, Catrina Klassen

Happenings

Two FEC young adults join Oakes team in England

In September, Jenie Neuen-schwander of Archbold, Ohio, and Liz McDaniels of Lawton, Michigan, joined the young adult ministry team at The Oakes in Sheffield, England. The Oakes is an evangelistic camp for British youth ages 8 to 18 and hosts 40 camps per year. A key part of The Oakes' ministry focus is on discipling young adults and training them for ministry through camping. In addition to discipling and training, Jenie and Liz will be involved in numerous aspects of The Oakes ministry including dorm leading, guiding activities, kitchen and dining room service, housekeeping, and more. You can learn more about the ministry at www.Oakes.org.uk. ■



Jenie Neuen-schwander



Liz McDaniels



What's new from the Christian Service Foundation?

By Al Rupp, CSF President

There have been many changes in the Christian Service Foundation in the last few months. Affecting FEC people the most is a new set of options for investments in CSF. Below you'll find a table of new rates and terms for investment certificates. Also below is a list of our other recent activities.



Here's what CSF has been up to in recent months:

- New attorney firm engaged to handle state registrations.
- 2010 audit completed.
- New Offering Circular created.
- New method of recording investment certificates.
- New computer software now in production.
- New brochure created.
- Building in Napoleon, Ohio, on a three-acre lot purchased for the Crossroads Napoleon church.
- Additional 7.5 acres of land adjacent to the building in Napoleon purchased to give the church a total of 10.5 acres.
- CSF Dinner held October 2 at Crossroads Evangelical Church in Wauseon, Ohio.

Term investment certificates available from CSF:

Terms	\$1,000 Minimum	\$50,000 Minimum
12-month	2.00%	2.25%
24-month	2.25%	2.50%
36-month	2.75%	3.00%
48-month	3.25%	3.50%
60-month	3.75%	4.00%

To inquire about investing with CSF or for more information about any of these items or about the Christian Service Foundation in general, call Sara Smead, Bookkeeper, or Al Rupp, President, at (260) 423-3649 or e-mail csf@fecministries.org. ■

2009-2010 quiz year results

Top senior high quizzers from each church

Archbold: Grace Diller
 Berne: Kelly Hirschy
 Brookside: Adriana Gehman
 Calvary: Judah Sistrunk
 Crossroads: Rachel King
 Eureka: Liesel Pflederer
 Grace: Melissa Felker
 Highland Bethel: Bekah Steiner
 Lawton: Nick Beam
 Oak Bend: Caleb Andrews
 Pine Hills : Mary Moser
 Salem: Ben Parks
 Upland: Erick Holder

Top 5 senior high quizzers

1. Melissa Felker, Grace
2. Lydia Klassen, Grace
3. Kelly Hirschy, Berne
3. Grace Diller, Archbold
5. Caleb Andrews, Oak Bend

Top junior high quizzers from each church

Archbold: Carissa Diller
 Berne: Drew Litwiller
 Brookside: Colleen Williamson & Tim Williamson
 Crossroads: Rebecca King
 Eureka: Ty Maurer
 Grace: Hannah Zobrist
 Highland Bethel: Tyler Webster
 Pine Hills: Elizabeth Powers
 Upland: John McGee

Top 5 junior high quizzers

1. Colleen Williamson, Brookside
1. Tim Williamson, Brookside
3. Tyler Webster, Highland Bethel
4. Carissa Diller, Archbold
5. Hannah Zobrist, Grace



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President's Corner

A New Season



I remember the day Ron Habegger told me, “Oh, and you’ll be responsible to write the President’s Corner for each FEConnections.” So obviously my first question was, “How do you decide what to write about?” His advice was to “share from whatever God is teaching you.” So as I get used to new surroundings and responsibilities, it seems

that my quiet times keep emphasizing that this is a new season. New for me and my family, and also for FEC.

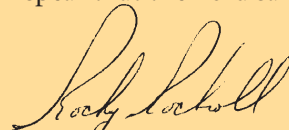
Seasons change. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us there is a time for everything, a season for every activity. That truth inspires all of us, from artists and song writers to teachers and coaches, from parents and children to farmers and businessmen. There is no right or wrong, good or bad about it; change is just an accepted fact of life. After all, back in Genesis 1:14 it was God who decided that the course of the sun and moon would determine our seasons.

Changing seasons can instill confidence, as evidenced every spring in the hearts of Cubs fans. Or they can represent challenge. Just ask the reigning Super Bowl champion as they try to repeat their performance the following year. Changing seasons can also be a source of encouragement, like when we see the first robin in spring.

In this new season in my life, my emotions run the entire spectrum. There is excitement, concern, challenge, encouragement, hope, and sadness. Again, none of these are right or wrong; they just are. The same God who gave us seasons also gave us the ability to experience emotion. So the feelings are good and there for a reason.

There is some sadness in leaving the familiar and stepping into the unknown. There is also a sense of challenge as I face a steep learning curve and develop new relationships. I feel excitement to get to be involved in the lives of people and churches at a whole new level, to hear the stories of God’s faithfulness and provision. Then there is encouragement. I’m encouraged by seeing what God is doing in and through the individuals and ministries that compose FEC. There is hope. I hear it in my conversations with pastors, missionaries, and church leaders. God is doing a work that is much bigger than any of us. So our hope is not in what we can do but in what He is doing!

This is a new season. The expectancy is high, the challenges are real, but the battle is not ours. David reminds us with his words to Goliath, “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s.”


Rocky Rocholl