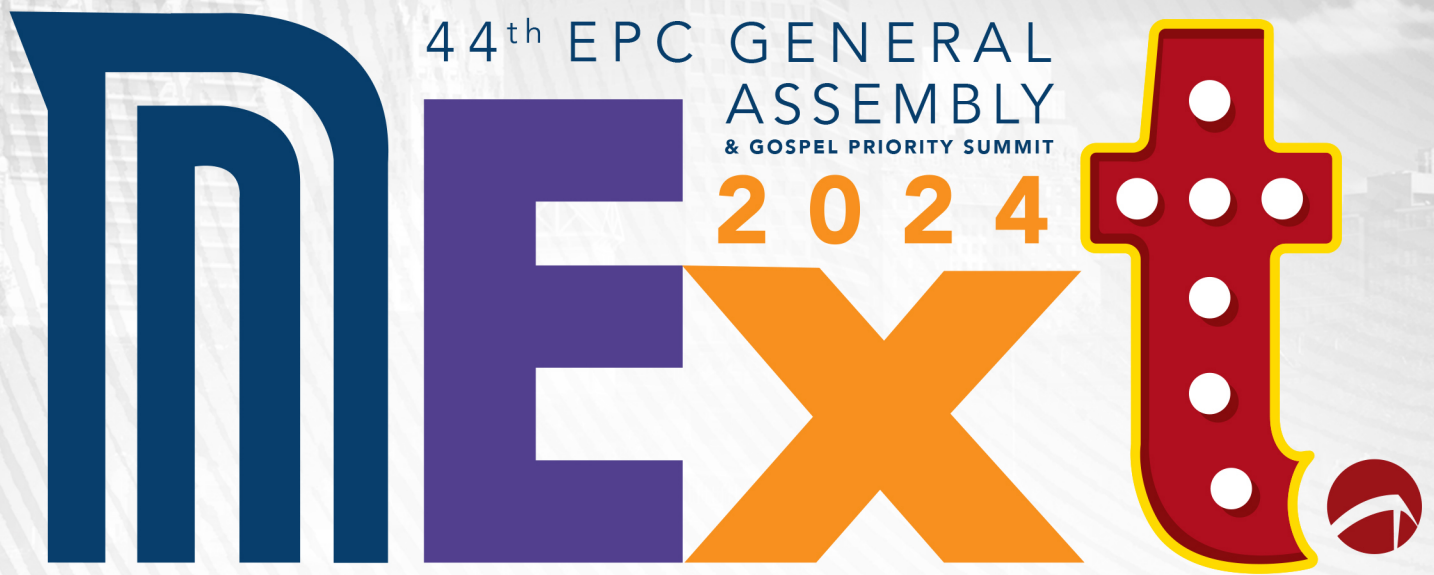


II TIMOTHY 2:1-2

44th EPC GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
& GOSPEL PRIORITY SUMMIT
2024



MEMPHIS  TENNESSEE

HOSTED BY HOPE CHURCH MEMPHIS



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44th GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONER HANDBOOK

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Brothers and Sisters:

Welcome to the 44th General Assembly / Gospel Priorities Summit. Our theme this year is “*Next*” based on I Timothy 2:2, “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

This *Commissioner’s Handbook* includes two sections:

- 1) “Preliminaries” which provides important introductory material to help familiarize you to our time together, and
- 2) “Matters Received and Referred.” This is the business the Assembly will address. Other documents, such as the *Rules for Assembly*, committee reports, audited financial statements, and more are available at www.epc.org/ga2024documents.

To get a good overview of the work of your denominational leaders over the past year, read the Moderator’s Report, National Leadership Team Report, and my report. These three reports are at the end of the Preliminary section.

We design GA to be much more than an annual meeting to conduct church business. We have numerous opportunities for equipping, edification, and worship. I hope you’ll join me in praying that the God of grace and peace will send His power on us during our time together at Hope Church!

Coram deo,

D. Dean Weaver
Stated Clerk



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OVERVIEW OF ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

Monday, June 17

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	Check-in/Information Open
2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	Civil Right Museum
5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.	GA Kickoff at Grind City Brewery

Tuesday, June 18

7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Check in/Information Open
8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.	Nursery/PreK – Infants to 5yrs old
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Elementary – Kindergarten – 5 th Grade
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Youth (6 th -12 th Grade)
9:00 a.m.- 9:45 a.m.	Worship
10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Plenary Session 1: Effective Biblical Leadership
11:45 a.m.	Box Lunch Pick Up
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	Networking Lunches
1:15 p.m.-2:45 p.m.	Plenary Session 2: Global Movement
3:00 p.m.-5:15 p.m.	Business Session 1
5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Ticketed Gospel Priorities Dinner
7:15 p.m.-8:15 p.m.	Worship/WO Global Worker Commissioning Service

Wednesday, June 19

8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Check in/Information Open
8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.	Nursery/PreK – Infants to 5yrs old
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Elementary – Kindergarten – 5 th Grade
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Youth (6 th -12 th Grade)
9:00 a.m.-9:45 a.m.	Worship
10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Plenary Session 3: Church Health
11:45 a.m.	Box Lunch Pick Up



OVERVIEW OF ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

Continued

Wednesday, June 19

12:00 p.m.-12:50 p.m.	Networking Lunches
1:15 p.m.-2:45 p.m.	Plenary Session 4: Multiplication
3:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.	Business Session 2 Standing Committees
5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Ticketed Group Dinner
7:15 p.m.-8:15 p.m.	Worship
8:15 p.m.-8:45 p.m.	Desserts

Thursday, June 20

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Check in/Information Open
8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.	Nursery/PreK – Infants to 5yrs old
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Elementary – Kindergarten – 5 th Grade
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Youth (6 th – 12 th Grade)
9:00 a.m.-9:45 a.m.	Worship / Moderator Communion Service
10:00 a.m.-11:15 a.m.	Equipping Sessions: Church Health 1, 2, & 3 Church Planting 1, 2, & 3 Effective Biblical Leadership 1, 2, & 3 Global Movement 1 & 2
11:30 a.m.	Box Lunch Pick Up
11:45 p.m.-12:45 p.m.	Pastor’s Wives Lunch
11:45 p.m.-12:45 p.m.	Equipping Sessions: Church Health 1, 2, & 3 Church Planting 1, 2, & 3 Effective Biblical Leadership 1, 2, & 3 Global Movement 1 & 2
1:00 p.m.-5:15 p.m.	Business Session 3
1:15 p.m.-2:45 p.m.	Women’s Enrichment
5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Ticketed Gospel Priorities Dinner
7:15 p.m.-8:15 p.m.	Worship



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PERMANENT COMMITTEES

(Through the 44th General Assembly)

BENEFIT RESOURCES, INC., BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Eric Shipton <i>New River</i>	RE Stuart Van Kirk <i>Alleghenies</i>	RE Michael Busch <i>Alleghenies</i>
Michael Moore <i>Central South</i>	RE Jim Lewien <i>West</i>	RE Bill Overcast <i>Central South</i>
TE William Reisenweaver <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>	Sandy Siegfried <i>Great Plains</i>	Cathy Scott <i>East</i>

CHAPLAINS WORK AND CARE COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Scott Kennaugh <i>Midwest</i>	TE Glen Holman <i>New River</i>	RE Kendra Bowers <i>Central South</i>
RE Darrell DeHaven <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE David Horton <i>Central South</i>	TE Marty Carpenter <i>Pacific Southwest</i>
RE Bruce Alexander <i>New River</i>	TE Karen Bolte <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE David Snyder <i>Midwest</i>

DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Bill Crawford <i>Gulf South</i>	TE Cliff Mansley <i>West</i>	TE Whitney Alexander <i>Gulf South</i>
RE Hans Othmer <i>Gulf South</i>	RE Dave Shanklin <i>Central South</i>	RE Jim Winter <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>
Paul Gorny <i>Member at Large</i>	Nancy Prott <i>Member at Large</i>	Toni Harris <i>Member at Large</i>

FRATERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
RE Carol Culbertson <i>West</i>	RE Roger Rumer <i>Alleghenies</i>	TE David Galbraith <i>Midwest</i>
TE Don Fortson <i>Central Carolinas</i>	TE Case Thorp <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>	RE Josh Shelley <i>Central South</i>
RE Holly Lazzaro <i>East</i>	TE Alan Trafford <i>Gulf South</i>	TE Stan Van Den Berg <i>Great Plains</i>



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MINISTERIAL VOCATION COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Chris Curtis <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Fred Lian <i>West</i>	RE Richard Gash <i>Alleghenies</i>
TE Rachel White <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE Scott Sealy <i>Central South</i>	TE Doug Resler <i>West</i>

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
RE George Hertensteiner <i>Great Plains</i>	RE Earla Bethel <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>	TE Greg Ayd <i>Central South</i>
RE Linda McDaniels <i>West</i>	RE Brian Evans <i>Midwest</i>	RE Chris Danusiar <i>Rivers & Lakes</i>
TE Neil Smith <i>East</i>	TE Michael Flake <i>Central Carolinas</i>	TE Julie Hawkins <i>Pacific Northwest</i>
RE John Ivy <i>Central South</i>	TE Carolyn Poteet <i>Alleghenies</i>	RE Joi Williams <i>Coastal Mid-Atlantic</i>

NEXT GENERATION MINISTRIES COUNCIL

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
Meg DeHaven <i>East</i>	TE Cole Lescher <i>Mid-America</i>	TE Joseph Stroup <i>Alleghenies</i>
TE Sir Gregory Thornton <i>Central South</i>	TE Megan Kroeker <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	Faith Hampton <i>Central South</i>
TE Andrew Mills <i>Gulf South</i>	Geraud Bumfield <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	TE Dan Kish <i>Central South</i>

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Joshua Hurd <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	TE Robert Chambers <i>Central Carolinas</i>	TE Bob Vincent <i>Gulf South</i>
RE Ann Weston <i>Mid-America</i>	TE Tom Clymer <i>New River</i>	RE Kelli Marks <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>
RE Stacey Miller <i>Coastal Mid-Atlantic</i>	TE Brad Kenney <i>West</i>	TE SJ Winter <i>Mid-West</i>
TE David Ricketts <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	RE Rob Liddon <i>Central South</i>	TE Mike Goolsby <i>Great Plains</i>
TE Jeff Chadwick <i>Southeast</i>	TE Ron Meyer <i>East</i>	TE Juan Rivera <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>
	TE Rob Sparr <i>Alleghenies</i>	

PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Ed McCallum <i>West</i>	RE Donald Flater <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Zach Hopkins <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>
RE Brian Wyatt <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	RE Gordon Miller <i>New River</i>	TE Barton Kimbro <i>Central South</i>
RE Forrest Norman <i>Alleghenies</i>	TE Tom Werner <i>Mid-America</i>	RE Jeff Hollingsworth <i>Southeast</i>

PRESBYTERY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
RE Jane Bodden <i>Florida and the Caribbean</i>	RE Ray Kinat <i>Alleghenies</i>	RE Ron Bengelink <i>Pacific Northwest</i>
RE Bill Myers <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	TE George King <i>Gulf South</i>	TE Jason Steele <i>Midwest</i>
RE Keith Hopkins <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE Mark Willems <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE Mark Willems <i>Pacific Northwest</i>

THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Cameron Shaffer <i>East</i>	TE Stephanie Black <i>Coastal Mid-Atlantic</i>	RE David Buschart <i>West</i>
RE Carol Williams <i>Alleghenies</i>	RE Joe Bingold <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE Luke Johnston <i>Great Plains</i>

WORLD OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Class of 2024:	Class of 2025:	Class of 2026:
TE Rick Dietzman <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	RE Johnny Long <i>Southeast</i>	TE Whitney Alexander <i>Gulf South</i>
RE Susan Lear <i>Great Plains</i>	TE Marcos Ortega <i>East</i>	TE Waring Porter <i>Central South</i>
RE Wes Peterson <i>Coastal Mid-Atlantic</i>	RE David Van Valkenburg <i>West</i>	

OTHER COMMITTEES

(Through the 44th General Assembly)

AD-INTERIM DOMESTIC ABUSE COMMITTEE

Appointed by the Moderator following the adjournment of the 43rd General Assembly

TE Bonnie Gatchell <i>East</i>	Kimberly Hock <i>Midwest</i>	Nam Hee Kim <i>PCA</i>
Lauren Matheus <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Howard Quach <i>Central Carolinas</i>	Susan Werner <i>Mid-America</i>
TE Stephanie Black <i>Central Carolinas</i>		

AD-INTERIM ORDINATION STANDARDS

Appointed by the Moderator following the adjournment of the 43rd General Assembly

TE Julie Hawkins <i>Pacific Northwest</i>	TE Doug Resler <i>West</i>	RE Chris Danusiar <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>
TE Aron Gibson <i>Central Carolinas</i>	TE Zack Hopkins <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Jerry Iamurri <i>East</i>
TE Fred Lian <i>West</i>	TE Rachel Toone <i>Coastal Mid-Atlantic</i>	TE Matt Koehn <i>Southeast</i>
TE Annie Rose <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Megan Kroeker <i>Pacific Southwest</i>	TE Terrance Gray <i>Midwest</i>

Task Force to review Book of Discipline

Appointed by the Moderator following the adjournment of the 43rd General Assembly

RE Rob Liddon <i>Central South</i>	TE Betsy Rumer <i>Alleghenies</i>	TE Marc de Jeu <i>Alleghenies</i>
TE Neil Smith <i>East</i>	RE Bob LeSuer <i>Alleghenies</i>	TE Ed McCallum <i>West</i>
RE Steve Bretsen <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>		

PASTORAL LETTER OF RACIAL LAMENT AND HOPE

Appointed by the Moderator following the adjournment of the 42nd General Assembly

TE Sean Boone <i>Mid-America</i>	TE Gerrit Dawson <i>Gulf South</i>	TE George Robertson <i>Central South</i>
TE Marcos Ortega <i>East</i>	TE Annie Rose <i>Rivers and Lakes</i>	TE Joe Kim <i>East</i>
RE Carol Williams <i>Alleghenies</i>	RE Ken Chang <i>West</i>	RE Linda McDaniel <i>West</i>
TE Michael Davis, Resource <i>Central South</i>	TE Rufus Smith, Advisor <i>Central South</i>	



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2023-2024 EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

MODERATOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

STATED CLERK'S REPORT



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A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

Moderator
Executive Summary Report
to the 44th General Assembly



Joe Kim, Moderator
43rd General Assembly

Grace and peace to you all in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

It has been a blessing and honor to serve as Moderator of the 43rd General Assembly. This is a fantastic denomination that is full of so many wonderfully gifted people all across the country who are both faithful and fruitful. I have had the privilege of serving on multiple national committees and have worked with people from a number of presbyteries. What has been solidified for me more than ever is that the EPC is my home; a wonderful home that I love and will continue to work hard for. I know many, if not all of us feel the same.

Our times these days are full of trouble. There are ongoing wars in both Israel and the Ukraine that are in their own ways, tragic and troubling.

At home there is growing anxiety as another presidential election looms, especially in the age of AI, social media and a growing distrust of authority and “truth”.

But our hope is forever in Christ who warned us that we would have much trouble in this world. And in that context, He urged us to take heart, for He truly has overcome the world.

My prayer for myself as well as for the denomination was that the Holy Spirit would give us wisdom and sobriety so as to offset our anxieties and help us keep our eyes fixed on Christ as we went about our Lord’s business.

This year, there were three Ad-interim committees and a Task force in service.

- The Ad interim committee on the Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope has finished its two-year project and will be submitting its final draft at this General Assembly.
- The Ad interim committee on Domestic Abuse began meeting online last October and has been diligently working to revise our older pastoral letter on domestic abuse.

- The Ad interim committee to review our ordination standards and processes began meeting last fall.
- The Task force on reviewing our book of discipline has begun their work as well.


Assistant Stated Clerk Michael Davis and the Gospel Priorities staff have been working hard to bring The Gospel Priorities the OGA and the denomination into alignment.

- In Church Planting we will no longer be outsourcing our assessments of planters and instead will do all assessments “in-house”.
- In Church Health there has been an explosion of growth in our Transitional pastor training seminars in both demand and attendance.
- The Ministerial Vocation Committee, in conjunction with Church Health have created training videos for Pastoral Search Committees that will be available later this year.
- The Effective Biblical Leadership Pastor and spouse retreat had excellent attendance and by all reports was helpful and productive.
- The EBL webinar series on equipping and encouraging leaders has been well received.

I would like to conclude my report with something I remember Roman Catholic scholar (Bishop Robert Barron) say in a lecture about issues surround Vatican II. Barron recounted a story about Pope Benedict who once objected to the mission statement of a particular Catholic journal. The journal’s stated mission was to continue the spirit of Vatican 2, which Catholics hold as an official Church Council. Councils are when the whole church stops whatever it is doing to: discuss, debate, and if necessary, fight over some serious issue that the church has come face to face with. But Ratzinger was adamant that Councils are temporary and this combative debating spirit necessary for "council time" should not persist into "normal time" where instead a spirit of love and service should exist.

Benedict's words really have a lot of wisdom. May the combative spirit that is of the world not find its way into our churches. And during the times when debate is necessary, may the “council spirit” we bear be temporary and end at the appropriate time so that when we are finished, it is our Love and not our contentiousness that shows the world that we truly are Christ’s disciples.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joe Kim, Moderator
43rd General Assembly

June 2024
www.epc.org/2024report-moderator

National Leadership Team
Executive Summary Report to
the 44th General Assembly



Rosemary Lukens
Chairman

The National Leadership Team functions similarly to the Session of your local church. It is the call and the responsibility of the NLT to carry out the directives that you, the General Assembly, request of us. Most importantly, we are responsible to seek the mind of Christ as we carry out what you have asked us to accomplish. We are to assist and to lead in expressing our mission statement that states who God has called the EPC to be.

We are also to develop strategies that express what God is calling the EPC to do, to carry out the mission statement on behalf of the General Assembly. That includes assistance and support for all the missional evangelistic operations of EPC – World Outreach (Multiplication/Evangelism), Church Planting (Multiplication/Evangelism), Church Health (Transformation/Evangelism), Pastoral Health and Development (Effective Biblical Leadership (EBL)/Transformation).

The NLT consists of 12 members who participate in three different committees: Personnel Committee, Finance Committee and Strategic Planning Committee. Each committee has a representative from the Office of the General Assembly both for support and to help implement the work of the NLT committees.

To meet your requests this year we have:

- Established Church Health Coordinators for all 16 Presbyteries! Thank you to Bob Stauffer and his leadership team for their diligent work.
- Church Health received an \$888,000.00 grant from the Lilly Foundation for the creative and innovative work of our church health team.
- EBL (Effective Biblical Leadership) started a cohort for pastors following last year's General Assembly co lead by TEs Doug Resler and Rachel White. It has been very



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successful, and you will be receiving a full report from TE Michael Davis, Assistant Stated Clerk, and the team, regarding the cohort and all the activities of EBL.

- Tom Ricks continues to work diligently in Church Planting. We, on NLT, rejoice in his success realizing that Church Planting is one of the top strategies for Evangelism.
- Gabriel de Guia and the World Outreach team are thriving and providing excellent leadership, support, and resources to our global workers, as you will note in his report.
- TE Annie Rose, Director of Ministerial Support and Development, has been working with PIR Ministries Executive Director, Roy Yanke, to provide webinars that both provide wisdom, understanding and guidance for pastors who are dealing with challenging and difficult situations. She has also organized and led Pastor and Spouse Retreats for renewal and refreshment.
- The committee on Pastoral Lament and Hope has completed its work, which will be presented at this GA.
- As asked by the 43rd GA, I have appointed three groups to review and update three of our documents:
 - Ad-Interim committee to review and update our Pastoral Letter on Domestic Abuse. Domestic abuse in many of its forms is present not only in homes, but also in churches. Clergy abuse has become increasingly evident. This committee has the challenging task of defining abuse and providing both examples and guidelines as well as how to manage abuse. That group is chaired by TE Bonnie Gatchell.
 - Task Force to review and update the Book of Discipline. The BOD has not been revised since 1996. Obviously, in our culture, where holding people accountable is grossly downplayed and bordering on non-existent, the church is challenged by these present realities, to hold to the standard of Jesus. This committee is chaired by RE Rod Liddon.
 - Ad-Interim Committee to review and revise (if necessary) the EPC Standards for Ordination. This committee will do a thorough examination of our current standards and then make recommendations, if needed, to those standards. We will not in any way be “watering down” our standards. We will need to determine what changes, if any, are necessary as we seek to replace the large number of retiring baby boomer pastors. This committee is co-chaired by TE Doug Resler and TE Julie Hawkins.

We, the members of NLT are grateful for the expertise, the passion for Jesus, and the incredible amount of work of Bob Stauffer, Annie Rose, Tom Ricks, Gabriel de Guia, and Michael Davis. These Gospel Priorities belong to each one of us. Fulfillment of these priorities requires – yes requires- the brains, energy, expertise, and feet on the ground of our leaders. These priorities are



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essential for the growth in God's kingdom, and the EPC. Please encourage these leaders who give, and then give more, to the work of God's Kingdom in the EPC.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary W. Lukens
Chairman, NLT

June 2024

www.epc.org/2024report-nlt

Stated Clerk
Executive Summary Report
to the 44th General Assembly



Dean Weaver
Stated Clerk

Grace and peace to you in our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. I hope, trust and pray as you read this you and your family are well and blessed in the Lord. This greeting, or some form thereof is normally how I have begun my hundreds (if not thousands) of emails this past year. I have done this for two reasons; (1) Influenced by Paul's epistles, beginning a communication in the context of the grace and peace of God in Jesus Christ -seems right to me. It also includes a prayer, that I typically stop as I am typing and pray for the person to whom I am writing. (2) The EPC is a family of churches, and we are always at our best when we lean into our relationships that we share because of our blessed and merciful Savior.

Concluding my first three-year term as your Stated Clerk and going through my first full 360-Performance Review, this time has afforded me the opportunity for some reflection, both looking back and looking forward. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve you these last three years, and there is much to celebrate. And if the Assembly approves another term, there is much ahead of us to consider and accomplish -all by God's grace!

The past three years have been a time of mission clarity and mission alignment that has begun to lead to missional effectiveness. Every opportunity I have been given to speak or present, I have emphasized the "E" in EPC...reminding us of our core mission, which is that as a family of churches we're formed and called to carry out the Great Commission. Simply connecting the four Gospel Priorities (which are embedded in our Vision Statement) as the ways in which we seek together to carry out Jesus' Great Commission has been an ongoing exercise in "mission clarity." The restructure of the 43rd GA to include now our Gospel Priority Summit is a prime



example of this...and the post-GA survey comments were overwhelmingly positive. In fact, in my visits to our presbyteries these past three years, I have observed that our “middle courts” are now structuring themselves around the Gospel Priorities and seeking to equip our congregations to help them carry out the Great Commission in their communities, regions and around the world. This is an important step in what organizational leaders refer to as “mission alignment.”

Of course, mission clarity and mission alignment, while important, are not the endpoint. The hope and prayer are that mission clarity and mission alignment will lead to *missional effectiveness*. All praise to the Lord, there appears to be some early signs of fruit being born that might be considered missional effectiveness. In the last three years in the areas of Church Health we have trained more than 3,000 people to share the Gospel using the EPC’s Three-Circles evangelism tool. And while it is impossible to draw a direct correlation, we have also during the same three-year period recorded 5,400 first time professions of faith in our congregations. We think the number of people coming to Christ through the EPC is much higher, but each of those professions of faith at least represents someone who came to Christ and joined one of our churches. Praise God! We have also witnessed 2,900 infant baptisms and over 1,000 adult baptisms. In Church Planting we have birthed over 25 new congregations in the last three years and now 6.7% of the EPC are now actually church plants. Internationally, over 190 new churches have been planted through our WO Global workers and we know of at least another 1,800 first-time professions of faith. Our emphasis on Biblical Leaders has born fruit as well, as hundreds of pastors, church planters, chaplains and global workers and spouses have attended retreats, seminars, cohorts and received counseling support as well. The Effective Biblical Leadership team successfully conducted four (4) webinars just this semester, providing training and equipping to over 200 individuals. We have doubled down on our investment in the wellbeing of our pastors, the health of our congregations and the multiplication (individually in evangelism and corporately in church planting) of disciples. The early signs are that as we have renewed our commitment to join in the Lord’s Great Co-mission that He is blessing the EPC with some significant fruit.

The next three years, Lord willing, might very well be a time to catalyze this gospel momentum and sustain this Gospel work of the advancing Kingdom. Missional effectiveness will require and necessitate *missional engagement*. As a Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical and *Missional* family of churches it will be essential that we find creative ways to grow and sustain the mission without growing an institutional bureaucracy. As a missional body, our focus must always be on the local congregation as the place where the Kingdom breaks in and the world is changed (on earth as it is in heaven). To carry out the Great Commission and hopefully cooperate with the movement and the Holy Spirit in His work of multiplication, we will need, each of us, to be “Disciples who make Disciples.” In light of this, one of the next movements in our shared fellowship will need to be to develop, nurture and promote a robust approach to discipleship.



A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

Damien Gerke’s definition of discipleship in his book, In The Way: The Church As We Know It Can Be a Discipleship Movement (Again) is; “A disciple is someone who lives as Jesus lived, deliberately and faithfully practicing His teachings and way of life.” -That’s not a bad place to begin!

Yes, being the Stated Clerk involves meetings, meetings, and more meetings. Resourcing the General Assembly’s Permanent Committees, which carry on the work of the Assembly between our meetings, as well as serving the leaders of our lower courts (presbyteries and sessions) is a full-time job. Much time is spent caring for and helping those in crisis, with medical needs and in wake of disaster relief...and much more. Speaking, preaching, and traveling to presbyteries and churches of the EPC is demanding work. Like a pastor of a local congregation, I could spend all of my time on the internal challenges and needs -which are paramount. Yet, as a called servant leader to a family of churches like the EPC – the committee that recommended me three years ago understood and the National Leadership Team continues to hold me accountable to the need to continue our outward (Great Commission) focus which is likewise paramount to the calling of your Stated Clerk. If asked to serve another three years, I promise upon the grace of God to offer all that I am in service of the beloved Bride of Christ found in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. I am grateful for each of you and the opportunity to serve together as we carry out the Great Commission.

Coram Deo!

-dean

Rev. Dr. D. Dean Weaver,
Stated Clerk/President

June 2024

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Churches Received, Dissolved, Dismissed

May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024

Presbytery of the Alleghenies

Church	City	State	Received	From
Hope Presbyterian Church	Columbus	OH	2/24/2024	PCA

Presbytery of the Central South

Church	City	State	Received	From
Koinonia Church	Nashville	TN	1/27/2024	PCA
First PC of Reform	Reform	AL	4/27/2024	PCUSA

Presbytery of the Rivers and Lakes

Church	City	State	Received	From
Edgerton First Reformed Church	Edgerton	MN	9/22/2023	RCA

Presbytery of the Southeast

Church	City	State	Received	From
First Presbyterian Church	Donalsonville	GA	10/26/2023	PCUSA



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Presbytery of the Alleghenies

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
Faith Fellowship Church	Johnstown	OH	6/9/2022	6/25/2023

Presbytery of Central South

Church	City	State	Received	Dissolved
All Souls Church	Nashville	TN	4/4/2018	4/15/2024

Presbytery of the Central South

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
Ridgecrest PC	Locust	NC	2/24/2013	6/25/2023

Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
Faith EPC	Brooksville	FL	01/10/1988	2/29/2024

Presbytery of the Gulf South

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
River Community Church	Prairieville	LA	10/22/2007	1/27/2024

Presbytery of the Mid-America

Church	City	State	Received	Dissolved
Highlands Church	Chesterfield	MO	01/30/2016	05/09/2023

Presbytery of the Midwest

Church	City	State	Received	Dissolved
New Heart Community Church	Norton Shores	MI	09/10/1999	1/27/2024
Cross Way EPC	Mt. Clemens	MI	05/09/2014	04/07/2024

Presbytery of the Midwest

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
Holtsinger Memorial PC	West Chester	OH	11/11/2011	05/01/2023

Presbytery of the River and Lakes

Church	City	State	Received	Dismissed
First EPC	Cedar Grove	WI	11/16/2006	08/24/2023



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Summary of Action Items

(Communications, Overtures, and Resolutions)

- 44-01 The **Nominating Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **ELECT** RE Victor Jones as Moderator of the 44th General Assembly.
- 44-02 The **Nominating Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **ELECT** TE Dave Strunk as Moderator-elect of the 44th General Assembly.
- 44-03 The **NLT** recommends that the 44th General Assembly re-elect TE Dean Weaver as Stated Clerk for another three-year term.
- 44-04 The **Nominating Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **ELECT** the slate of Nominees for the 44th EPC General Assembly permanent committees, standing committees, and boards.
- 44-05 **Ward Church, Northville, MI, INVITES** the 44th General Assembly to hold the 45th General Assembly on its campus.
- 44-06 The **Stated Clerk** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **RATIFY** an amendment to the *Book of Government* 17-5 Overture 43-A. (16 Presbyteries voted to approve).
- 44-07 The **Stated Clerk** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **RATIFY** an amendment to the *Book of Discipline* 1-1 Overture 43-B. (16 Presbyteries voted to approve).
- 44-08 The **NLT** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the FY25 Administrative Budget.
- 44-09 The **NLT** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the FY25 Special Projects.
- 44-10 The **NLT** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the minutes of the 43rd General Assembly.
- 44-11 The **Ad-Interim Committee on Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope as submitted.



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- 44-12 The **Presbytery of the Midwest** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to postpone the discussion and vote on the approval of The Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope until the 45th General Assembly.
- 44-13 The **Fraternal Relations Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church withdrawal its formal fraternal relationship with the Association of Charismatic Presbyterian Churches in Puerto Rico and future relationships be through the World Reformed Fellowship.
- 44-14 The **Fraternal Relations Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church withdrawal its formal fraternal relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru.
- 44-15 The **Fraternal Relations Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church enter into a Fraternal Relationship with the National Union of French Protestant Reformed Churches (UNEPREF).
- 44-16 The **Fraternal Relations Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church extend the current Articles of Agreement with the St. Andrew's Presbytery of Argentina through 2025.
- 44-17 The **Benefit Resources Inc., Board of Directors** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code.
- 44-18 The **Presbyteries of the Southeast, Central Carolinas, and New River** respectfully **OVERTURE** the 44th General Assembly to **APPROVE** the adjusting of boundaries between the three presbyteries.
- 44-19 The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** Paraclete Missions Group as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency.



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- 44-20 The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency.
- 44-21 The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** API (Asian Partners International) as an EPC World Outreach Approved Agency.
- 44-22 The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Government* 8-2 C and *Book of Worship* 3-3.J and that Recommendation 44-23 be answered by this action.
- 44-23 The Presbytery of the **Pacific Northwest** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* 8-2 C and the *Book of Worship* 3-3.J.
- 44-24 The Permanent Judicial Commission recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Worship* 3-3.I and that Recommendation 44-25 be answered by this action.
- 44-25 The **Presbytery of the Rivers and Lakes** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Worship* 3-3.I concerning explicit qualifications for admission to the sacraments of the Lord's Supper.
- 44-26 The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain endorsements and that Recommendation 44-27 be answered by this action.
- 44-27 The **Ministerial Vocation Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain endorsements.
- 44-28 The **Ministerial Vocation Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 10-7 & 9.5C.3 concerning Transitional Pastors.
- 44-29 The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 10-7 & 9.5C.3 concerning Transitional Pastors.



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- 44-30 The **Presbytery of Mid-America** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.
- 44-31 The **Presbytery of Mid-America** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how churches and Presbyteries are to promote and preserve the peace of the church as it relates to three specific questions.
- 44-32 The **Presbytery of the Central South** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly seeking a moderator appointed Ad-interim Committee to study and address the items surrounding same sex attraction, as well as to update the EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality.
- 44-33 The **Presbytery of the Gulf South** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly seeking to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.
- 44-34 The **Presbytery of the West** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards with respect to the doctrines of identity progressive sanctification, and concupiscence (inclination to sin).
- 44-35 The **Presbytery of the Alleghenies** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to conduct a review of existing EPC positions, letters and other guidance to assess their adequacy in addressing issues of human sexuality.
- 44-36 The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **REFER** amending the *Book of Government* section 9-3 to the Permanent Committee on Theology and the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for their consideration and that Overture 44-37 be answered by this action.
- 44-37 The **Presbytery of the New River** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending *Book of Government* 9-3.



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- 44-38 The **Moderator of the 43rd General Assembly** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the 2024-2025 Chairman for the BRI Board of Directors, and a slate of nominees to fill vacancies on the Permanent Nominating Committee
- 44-39 The **Presbytery Review Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the exceptions requiring a response as found in the 2023 minutes of 11 of our 16 presbyteries.
- 44-40 The **Presbytery Review Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the responses of the presbyteries to those exceptions sent to them by the 43rd General Assembly.
- 44-41 **Possible Omnibus Motion**

44-01 *(to the Floor)*
From the Nominating Committee

Nominee for Moderator of the 44th General Assembly
RE Victor Jones

Victor Jones is a Ruling Elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Laurel, Mississippi, where he and his wife, Rachel, raised their seven daughters. Being blessed with seven children in seven years was a life-changing experience only to be matched by the overwhelming support and encouragement of the Body of Christ at Westminster over the last three decades. Victor and Rachel are graduates of Mississippi State University, as are all of their daughters and son-in-law. They are enjoying a new phase in their marriage—being grandparents to two baby boys.



Victor operated the family business until 2016 when it became part of a 16-location, multi-state John Deere dealership. He is currently a John Deere tractor salesman for AG UP Equipment. He is passionate about his involvement with Laurel Christian School and served the Board for many years as it expanded to a full K-through-12 school. For the last decade he has served as a Trustee for South Central Regional Medical Center and is currently Vice Chairman of the largest employer in the community. Victor serves on the Advisory Board of Trustmark National Bank.

Victor enjoyed his time as Moderator of the Presbytery of the Central South, which was followed by being the first Moderator of the Presbytery of the Gulf South as we grew into an additional Presbytery. That was followed by participation on the EPC National Leadership Team for the last four years.

The first General Assembly he attended was in 1979 in Kansas City during a tumultuous time for Presbyterians. A truth that has become more evident to him is when our Teaching Elders are accompanied by two Ruling Elders to do the “work of ministry,” God often blesses the unity, shared vision, and encouragement that “build up the body of Christ.” It is encouraging that the EPC is focused on the four Gospel Priorities as we share in this work of ministry together.



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44-02 *(to the Floor)*
From the Nominating Committee

Nominee for Moderator-elect of the 44th General Assembly
TE Dave Strunk



Dave grew up in a Christian home with two wonderful parents, and the middle child between two sisters. He became a Christian at 9 years old, when his dad prayed with him on the living room couch. At the age of 17, Dave sensed a palpable and unrelenting call to pastoral ministry while on a church mission trip. Being from Knoxville, TN, Dave went to the University of Tennessee, and immediately upon graduating in 2006 got married to his wife Laura and moved to Denver to attend Denver Seminary where he graduated three years later (in 2009). Throughout seminary and following for ten years, he was involved at the volunteer, staff, and ordained level at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church. All three of the Strunk children were born in Colorado and baptized at CCPC. In 2016 the Strunks moved back to their home in Tennessee in order to plant an evangelistic church out of their mother church, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church. Church of the Redeemer was launched in 2017 in Alcoa, TN, and Dave has been lead pastor ever since.

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44-03 *(to the Floor)*

From the National Leadership Team

The NLT recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the **Re-election** of Stated Clerk, TE Dean Weaver for another three-year term.

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44-04 (to the floor)

From the Nominating Committee

Slate of Nominations – Permanent Committees and Boards

Some nominees had not confirmed acceptance of their nomination at press time and will be announced at the 44th General Assembly

Note: ^second term; *pending Session or Presbytery endorsement

Benefit Resources Inc. Board of Directors

Class of 2027	TE Brandon Jolley*	Midwest
Class of 2027	Bob Coleman	Central South
Class of 2027	RE Tom Love	Central Carolinas

Chaplains Work and Care Committee

Class of 2027	TE Scott Kennaugh^	Midwest
Class of 2027	RE Jim Pleuss	Rivers & Lakes
Class of 2027	RE Bruce Alexander	New River
Class of 2025	TE Karen Bolte	Pacific Northwest

Disaster Relief Committee

Class of 2027	TE Paul Gibson	Florida and the Caribbean
Class of 2027	Tommy Phelps*	Southeast
Class of 2027	Rich Phillips	Pacific Northwest

Fraternal Relations Committee

Class of 2027	TE Brandon Addison	West
Class of 2027	TE Josh Hammans	Florida and the Caribbean
Class of 2027	RE Holly Lazzaro^	East

Ministerial Vocation Committee

Class of 2027	TE Chris Curtis^	Rivers & Lakes
Class of 2027	TE Rachel White^	Pacific Northwest

National Leadership Team

Class of 2027	RE George Hertensteiner^	Great Plains
Class of 2027	RE Linda McDaniels^	Central South
Class of 2027	RE Neil Smith^	East
Class of 2027	RE John Ivy^	Central South



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Next Generation Ministries Council

Class of 2027	TE Sir Gregory Thornton^	Central South
Class of 2027	TE Stephanie Poblenz	Midwest
Class of 2027	TE Ian Johnston*	Great Plains

Nominating Committee

Class of 2027	TE Nick Welch	Pacific Northwest
Class of 2027	RE Ann Weston ^	Mid-America
Class of 2027	RE Stacey Miller^	Coastal Mid-Atlantic
Class of 2027	RE Christine Deane	Pacific Southwest
Class of 2027	RE Tommy Jordan	Southeast

Permanent Judicial Commission

Class of 2027	TE Ed McCallum^	West
Class of 2027	RE Bryan Wyatt^	Pacific Southwest
Class of 2027	RE Forrest Norman^	Alleghenies

Presbytery Review Committee

Class of 2026	RE Jane Boden^	Florida and the Caribbean
Class of 2027	RE Frank Brown	Southeast
Class of 2027	TE Keith Hopkins^	Pacific Northwest

Theology Committee

Class of 2027	RE Carol Williams ^	Alleghenies
Class of 2027	TE David Bowen	Central South

World Outreach

Class of 2027	TE David Pluess	Rivers & Lakes
Class of 2027	TE Jeff Chadwick	Southeast
Class of 2026	RE Wes Peterson^	Coastal Mid-Atlantic
Class of 2025	RE Susan Lear^	Great Plains

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44-05 *(to the floor)*
Communication

Ward Church, Northville, MI **INVITES** the 44th General Assembly to hold the 45th General Assembly on its campus.

[Invitation Letter from Ward Church](#)



April 24, 2024

Dean Weaver, Stated Clerk
Evangelical Presbyterian Church
5850 R.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 510
Orlando, Florida 32822

Dear Dean,

Please consider this letter a formal invitation to the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to be our guests at Ward Church in Northville Michigan in June 2025, as approved by our Session on February 19, 2024.

We feel fortunate to have a facility that can accommodate the commissioners and guests, and to have volunteers who are excited to serve. Hosting the General Assembly is our great honor. We look forward to welcoming you to the great state of Michigan next summer!

Serving Christ Together,

Scott McKee
Senior Pastor

Steve McKinnie
Clerk of Session

cc: Marti Ratcliff



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44-06 *(to the floor)*

From the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk recommends that the 44th General Assembly **RATIFY** an amendment to the *Book of Government* 17-5 Overture 43-A (16 Presbyteries voted to approve).

[Descending Overture 43-A](#)

RECOMMENDATION 44-06

Descending Overtures from the 43rd General Assembly Evangelical Presbyterian Church

DESCENDING OVERTURE 43-A

To amend the *Book of Government* 17-5, with the following sections renumbered, and the *Book of Government* 6-8D and 18-3H be amended.

Current <i>Book of Government</i> 17-5	Proposed <i>Book of Government</i> 17-5 <i>Amendments in bold italics</i>
<p>BOG 17-5 Treasurer</p> <p>A. Where the responsibility for the finances of the local church falls to the Board, it shall appoint a Treasurer to handle the financial matters of the congregation. This person may or may not be a Deacon.</p> <p>B. Where the Session retains responsibility for financial matters, it shall follow this stipulation: the Treasurer shall report to the appointing body at each stated meeting, keeping a careful record of financial matters. The appointing body shall be responsible for an annual audit of the finances of the church.</p> <p>BOG 17-6 Meetings</p> <p>A. Frequency The Board shall meet at least quarterly unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or when ordered to convene by the Session. When requested in writing by one-fourth of the Board, the Chairman shall call a meeting. The purpose shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted.</p>	<p>BOG 17-5 Meetings</p> <p>A. Frequency The Board shall meet at least quarterly unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or when ordered to convene by the Session. When requested in writing by one-fourth of the Board, the Chairman shall call a meeting. The purpose shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted.</p> <p><i>[Subsequent sections to be renumbered]</i></p>

Current <i>Book of Government</i> 6-8 D	Proposed <i>Book of Government</i> 6-8 D <i>Amendments in bold italics</i>
D. If a local church does not elect Trustees (or if Deacons have not been given the responsibility of property), the Session, or a designated portion of the court, shall serve as the Trustees of the local church.	D. If a local church does not elect Trustees (or if Deacons have not been given the responsibility of property) , the Session, or a designated portion of the court, shall serve as the Trustees of the local church.

Current <i>Book of Government</i> 18-3H	Proposed <i>Book of Government</i> 18-3H <i>Amendments in bold italics</i>
H. To determine the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.	H. To determine <i>and oversee the finances of the local church including the budget</i> and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.

2023-24 Ballot Information for Descending Overtures

Presbytery	Overture 43-A - YES	Overture 43-A - NO
Alleghenies	50	0
Central Carolinas	54	0
Central South	57	0
Coastal Mid-Atlantic	52	0
East	75	0
Florida & Caribbean	40	0
Great Plains	62	1
Gulf South	53	0
Mid-America	38	0
Midwest	75	0
New River	61	0
Pacific NW	58	1
Pacific SW	52	0
Rivers & Lakes	42	0
Southeast	87	0
West	76	0
TOTAL	932	2



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44-07 *(to the floor)*

From the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk recommends that the 44th General Assembly **RATIFY** an amendment to the *Book of Discipline* 1-1 Overture 43-B (16 Presbyteries voted to approve).

[Descending Overture 43-B](#)

RECOMMENDATION 44-07

**Descending Overtures from the 43rd General Assembly
Evangelical Presbyterian Church**

DESCENDING OVERTURE 43-B

To amend the *Book of Discipline* 1-1 be amended.

Current <i>Book of Discipline</i> 1-1	Proposed <i>Book of Discipline</i> 1-1 <i>Amendments in bold italics</i>
<p>1-1 Definition of Church Discipline</p> <p>There are two kinds of authority vested in the church; the responsibility of order and the authority of jurisdiction.¹⁹⁶ Both kinds of authority are given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the responsibility of order, particularly in regard to the reproof of the erring.¹⁹⁷ As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority requires the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.</p> <p>The word “discipline,” when used in the <i>Book of Discipline</i>, chapters 1-11, shall therefore refer to the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.</p>	<p>1-1 Definition of Church Discipline</p> <p>There are two kinds of authority vested in the church; the responsibility of order and the authority of jurisdiction.¹⁹⁶ Both kinds of authority are given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the responsibility of order, particularly in regard to the reproof of the erring.¹⁹⁷ As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority requires the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.</p> <p>The word “discipline,” when used in the <i>Book of Discipline</i>, chapters 1-11, shall therefore refer to the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Church discipline does not supersede or negate the legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse to civil authorities according to local and state requirements.</i></p>

2023-24 Ballot Information for Descending Overtures

Presbytery	Overture 43-B - YES	Overture 43-B - NO
Alleghenies	50	0
Central Carolinas	50	0
Central South	56	3
Coastal Mid-Atlantic	52	0
East	78	0
Florida & Caribbean	35	0
Great Plains	62	0
Gulf South	54	0
Mid-America	38	0
Midwest	57	19
New River	60	1
Pacific NW	64	2
Pacific SW	56	0
Rivers & Lakes	43	0
Southeast	87	0
West	76	0
TOTAL	918	25



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44-08 *(to the Administration Standing Committee)*

From the National Leadership Team

The NLT recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the [FY25 Administrative Budget](#).

www.epc.org/2024report-ntl



FY25 Budget Request

	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request
Revenue		
Total POI	\$2,484,448	\$2,561,284
Service Provider Income (SPA)	\$938,279	\$533,265
Other Revenue and Support		
Pledge	\$40,000	\$40,000
Great Commission Fund		\$44,000
Unrealized Gains		
Interest and Dividends	\$45,000	\$95,000
EPC Total Support and Revenue	\$3,507,727	\$3,273,550
 Expenses		
Administration		
Staff Costs		
Staff Salaries and Benefits	\$1,960,279	\$1,793,171
Staff Events/Celebrations	\$2,000	\$2,000
Professional Expense Allowance	\$4,750	\$6,000
Continuing Education/Training	\$7,000	\$8,000
Total Staff Costs	\$1,974,029	\$1,809,171
 Staff Travel - OGA staff		
Airfare	\$8,000	\$4,500
Lodging	\$6,300	\$6,500
Car Rental	\$11,000	\$2,500
Meals	\$4,000	\$700
Taxi/Tolls/Parking	\$2,700	\$1,150
Travel Mileage/Fuel	\$5,000	\$1,000
Total Staff Travel	\$37,000	\$16,350

	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request
Executive Travel - Stated Clerk and Moderator		
Airfare	\$22,000	\$22,000
Lodging	\$11,000	\$6,500
Car Rental	\$3,300	\$4,800
Meals	\$550	\$1,400
Taxi/Tolls/Parking	\$550	\$1,900
Travel Mileage/Fuel	\$600	\$1,400
Total Travel	\$38,000	\$38,000
Executive Travel - Assistant Stated Clerk		
Airfare	\$20,000	\$19,000
Lodging	\$5,400	\$7,000
Car Rental	\$3,100	\$2,500
Meals	\$2,000	\$2,200
Taxi/Tolls/Parking	\$2,300	\$2,000
Travel Mileage/Fuel	\$800	\$2,300
Total Travel	\$33,600	\$35,000
Stated Clerk Professional Expense Allowance	\$6,000	\$4,000
Commercial Insurance	\$59,012	\$63,680
Tech Services		
Software Subscriptions	\$73,428	\$96,311
Equipment	\$17,100	\$ 30,000
Total Tech Services	\$90,528	\$126,311
General Office		
Rent	\$266,416	\$273,845
Telephone and Internet	\$20,911	\$36,049
Printing	\$9,200	\$2,200
Postage and Shipping	\$22,000	\$2,500
Office Supplies	\$16,000	\$16,000
Bank Fees	\$16,000	\$26,000
CC Processing Fees	\$2,000	\$9,000
Memberships and Subscriptions	\$2,200	\$5,000
Business Meals	\$6,000	\$9,000
Miscellaneous	\$1,000	\$2,000
Van Expense	\$1,000	\$1,000
Misc. Mtg. Expenses	\$2,500	\$1,000
Financial Development/Communications	\$5,000	\$0
Total General Office	\$370,227	\$383,594

	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request
Professional Services		
Audit Fees	\$27,720	\$37,600
Legal Fees	\$5,000	\$5,000
Professional Fees	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total Professional Services	<u>\$35,720</u>	<u>\$45,600</u>
Church Planting		
Leadership Team Mtgs.	\$10,000	\$0
Staffing/Leadership	\$15,000	\$50,000
Assessment	\$20,000	\$0
Red zone funding	\$5,000	\$0
Zoom dialogs		\$0
Seed funding for underserved and under reached	\$5,000	\$0
Church Planter Retreat	\$57,823	\$0
Total Church Planting	<u>\$112,823</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>
Church Health		
Mtgs/Training/Misc.	\$25,000	\$0
Team Administrator	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$4,000	\$10,000
Presbytery Coordinator Support	\$45,000	\$0
Total Church Health	<u>\$74,000</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>

	FY24	FY25
	Budget	Request
	FY24	FY25
Effective Biblical Leadership		
Leadership Institute at GA	\$5,000	\$4,600
EBL - General	\$0	\$4,896
Chaplain Endorser Travel	\$15,000	\$15,000
Chaplains Work & Care Committee	\$10,120	\$9,400
Disaster Relief Committee	\$0	\$9,400
Ministerial Vocation Committee	\$12,840	\$17,600
Next Gen Committee	\$7,110	\$7,200
XP/Admin peer network	\$8,000	\$8,000
7:9 Team	\$11,040	\$28,520
Pastoral Letter Committee	\$27,600	\$0
Presbytery Min. Chairs	\$0	\$15,040
Presbytery Moderators	\$0	\$0
National Leadership Team Mtg.	\$29,440	\$44,800
Presbytery Stated Clerks Mtg.	\$18,400	\$17,600
Nominating Committee	\$0	\$0
Permanent Judicial Committee	\$0	\$0
Presbytery Review Committee	\$0	\$0
Theology Committee	\$0	\$11,280
Book of Discipline Task Force	\$0	\$9,400
AIC - Domestic Abuse	\$0	\$13,160
AIC - Ordination	\$0	\$16,920
Total Effective Biblical Leadership	\$144,550	\$232,816
Global Movement		
ESG POI	\$496,890	\$435,418
Fraternal Relations Committee	\$2,500	\$0
Fraternal Relations Association dues	\$32,849	\$23,610
Other Global Movement	\$0	\$0
Total Global Movement	\$532,239	\$459,028
Total Operating Expenses	\$3,507,727	\$3,273,550
Net Cash Flow from Operating Activities	\$0	\$0



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-09 *(to the Administration Standing Committee)*

From the National Leadership Team

The NLT recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the [FY25 Special Projects](#).

www.epc.org/2024report-nlt



FY25 Special Projects

Account	FY24 Request	Contributions as of Feb 2024	Feb 2024 Balance	FY25 Request
Ministerial Vocation				
Care of Pastors and Spouses	\$5,000	\$7,287	\$52,924	\$5,000
Care of Chaplains	\$10,000	\$10,228	\$31,100	\$10,000
Small Church Network	\$5,000	\$2,910	\$20,928	\$5,000
7:9 Team	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
	\$20,000	\$20,425	\$104,952	\$45,000
Student and College Ministries				
Next Gen Ministry	\$4,000	\$0	\$2,338	\$4,000
	\$4,000	\$0	\$2,338	\$4,000
National Outreach				
Church Planting Initiatives	\$250,000	\$35,686	\$333,863	\$250,000



Account	FY24 Request	Contributions as of Feb 2024	Feb 2024 Balance	FY25 Request
World Outreach				
Bangladeshi Project	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Lebanon Philemon Preschool Project	\$280,000	\$175,106	\$464,948	\$280,000
Food Vouchers for Syrian Refugees	\$20,000	\$363	\$355	\$20,000
The Crochet Project	\$20,000	\$28,527	\$26,836	\$20,000
	\$370,000	\$203,996	\$492,139	\$370,000



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-10 *(to the Administration Standing Committee)*
From the National Leadership Team

The NLT recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the minutes of the [43rd General Assembly](#).

www.epc.org/2024report-ntl

44-11 *(to the Floor)*
From the Ad-Interim Committee – Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope

The Ad-Interim Committee on Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope as submitted.

www.epc.org/2024report-plrlh

[Pastoral Letter Racial Lament and Hope](#)

A Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope

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PREFACE

“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!’” Rev. 7:9-10

We in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) look to the day when the Lord Jesus will receive worship from the united chorus of his children from every tongue, tribe, and nation, when all suffering and strife will cease, and when God wipes away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4). Until that day, we weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15) and we point one another to the promise of the gospel: one new humanity redeemed in Christ (Eph. 2:15).

This letter arises from calls within the EPC for tools to address issues of racism with a biblical grounding. As commissioned by the 42nd General Assembly, we write and speak to this issue through biblical lament and hope and reject the worldly theories that so polarize our society. Our framework is a simple, biblical progression of experiencing pain, lamenting the gap between what is and what God has promised, to finally comforting one another with the hope of the gospel and its current demonstrations among us. Therefore, we provide a set of scriptures, texts from the Westminster Confession of Faith, prayers, and stories of hope to share with our congregations.

INTRODUCTION

To our beloved EPC brothers and sisters in Christ, Teaching and Ruling Elders—shepherds all.

We thank God as you faithfully follow our Lord in loving service to all under your care and as you teach and guide, comfort and warn the sheep with the Word of God that they may flourish to his glory. In sharing their lives through a multitude of changing, challenging, and troubling matters and relationships, you have built into their being, helped bear their burdens, and shown sacrificial love.

We write to you to describe how racism impacts our faithful obedience to our Lord’s command in John 13:34-35: “Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Sadly, the sinful reality of racism and related false remedies permeate many human institutions, just as sin pervades all human life this side of the Fall.¹ And while we seek to respond to the wounds of our world (including those which may impact the EPC), we also write to you as fellow shepherds in the EPC with the aim to carry out Great Commission of Jesus as a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations. This four-fold identity shapes our language as we chart a way forward towards reconciliation and hope.

Throughout this letter you will find references to the Westminster Standards in hope that you seek further confessional reflection on this topic. As the Church, we hold scripture as the final rule in all

¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in Modern English (“WCF”)*, 3rd ed. (Livonia, MI: EPC, 2010), 6.2-5.

matters of faith and life; the Bible must remain our North Star. Let our conversations remain grounded in and from the biblical perspective, our Reformed and confessional heritage, and the shared experiences of our brothers and sisters.²

DEFINITIONS

It is challenging to address the reality of racism when secular nomenclature and charged vocabulary promote polarization. The world and its language, biases, politics, and perspectives cannot rule over a Christian's perspective. *How* we talk about racism is as important as actually talking about it. And so, we define (and perhaps redefine) some common terms in the hope we can unify, not divide, in our conversations.

Race. The term **race** categorizes people on the basis of physical characteristics of skin color, facial form or eye shape and may include ancestry, shared culture or historical affiliation.³ In current cultural conversations, **race** is the frequently used term. Yet, our research and discussions reveal that race is not a neutral term. Historically, misuse of this term has divided the divinely ordained one human race (Acts 17:26; Larger Catechism Q/A17) into a *hierarchy* of races, legitimizing a multitude of abuses. When race means distinguishing and defining only by color, such use narrows the diversity of ethnicities that contribute to who we are. It strips away the depth of individual contexts, connections, and varied histories, reducing identity to a single word.

Ethnos/Ethnicity, as used in common language and in Revelation 7:9, accurately defines the grouping of people sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion or language, and incorporates aspects of geography, historical background, allegiance or association.⁴ Therefore, as we examine racism, the use of *ethnicity*, not *race*, is the biblical, more accurate descriptor of diversity within humanity.⁵

Racism is the unbiblical belief that there is a *causal link* between ethnicity and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and behavior, typically resulting in personal or collective discrimination, judgment or favoritism.⁶ In biblical terms, we would classify racism as the sin of partiality. Racism is not a binary Black/White problem, nor one unique to the United States, but is historically entrenched within humanity, sowing distrust and conflict.

Institutional and **Systemic Racism** have varying, culturally popular meanings that can interfere with honest discussions on how racism impacts institutions, and yet we must address the concept. We begin with first discussing what **Institutional/Systemic Racism** is *not*. To be clear, we do not believe the United States is irredeemably racist. Nor do we believe that people in any given institution or

² WCF 1.10.

³ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Race"; National Human Genome Research Institute; *Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. "Race"; US Census Bureau.

⁴ *Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. "Ethnicity"; National Institutes of Health; *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Ethnicity."

⁵ Many who descend from slaves cannot discover their ethnicity through genealogical ancestries. Our preference for the use of the term "ethnicity" should not be understood to discount this wrong or to discourage the use of the term "race" in popular discourse. Rather, our preference for the term "ethnicity" should be understood as an eschatological hope, a protest of the way things are and a longing for the day when every person's knowledge of ethnic identity is restored.

⁶ Gal. 2:11-14; James 2:1-10.

system are presumptively individual racists. Nor are individuals personally guilty of or complicit in past actions committed by others of the same ethnicity.

However, as Americans, we inherit a national history that includes heinous ethnic discrimination. The impact of racism on our society's institutions—educational, judicial, financial, health care and even religious— continues to reverberate to present day injustices. Therefore, we must address this reality.

As such, we define Institutional/Systemic Racism as behaviors, policies, or practices of an organization or system that result in or otherwise support an unfair advantage to some people, and/or unfair disadvantage to other people, based on ethnicity.

With these definitions in mind, we consider our racial lament and hope.

THE SIN OF RACISM

Racism is a sin because it violates God's principles and commands. Racism belittles and dehumanizes people, stripping them of their created dignity as image bearers of God.⁷ The doctrine of adoption stated in *WCF* 12.1 leaves no room for misunderstanding our equality before God.

God guarantees the adoption of all those who are justified in and for the sake of his only son, Jesus Christ. Those adopted enjoy the liberties and privileges of God's children, have his name put on them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, and are enabled to cry, Abba, Father. They are pitied, protected, provided for, and disciplined by him as a father. They are never cast off, however, and are sealed until the day of redemption and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.⁸

We must also recognize racism as a tool of spiritual warfare—a powerful attack on God's people by Satan.⁹ The enemy's strategy is to fracture the Body of Christ, assault our identity as God's people, distract and divide us from our unity in and with Christ.⁹

Racism contradicts the anticipation of Revelation 7:9 in which believers from all ethnicities will praise before the throne. God's triumph gathers all his people together.

THE IMPACT OF RACISM GENERALLY

As people who understand that all humanity suffers from total depravity and the pervasive effects and deadly consequences of sin, we cannot be surprised that hateful attitudes and actions, violence, injustice, brokenness, fear of others and profound distrust abound.¹⁰ Ever since the Fall, human

⁷ *WCF* 4.2.

⁸ *WCF* 25.2, 35.1. See also *Westminster Larger Catechism* ("WLC") Q.62, Q.63, Q.74; *EPC Essentials of our Faith* #5. 9 Eph. 6:11-13; Rev. 12:7-9.

⁹ 1 Jn. 2:9-11; *WCF* 16.6, 26.1,2.

¹⁰ Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23; *WCF* 6.

beings have been categorizing and discriminating against each other, and our hearts have been prone to make such judgments. We group, actively and subconsciously, around shared distinctives and exclude based on differences, from children bullying on the playground to ethnic genocides. We deny. We tribalize. We accuse. We excuse. And this sin of partiality and even hatred is most inappropriate, hurtful and toxic when found among God's people.

Whether individual or collective, such behavior compromises our witness, questions our integrity, and diminishes the goodness of the Gospel we proclaim and our ability to go into the world and make disciples. Racism directly harms our mission because these sins necessarily deny that all humans are created in the image of God and relativize the atonement according to perceived differences that affect how people are valued. As followers of Christ, our response to the sins of racism should reflect an uninhibited resolve to love one another and reach the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹¹

THE RESPONSE OF THE EPC

The theology of the Westminster Standards, our system of doctrine, leaves no room for participating in sins of racism and partiality and provides the framework needed to develop a Reformed understanding of ethnic diversity and kingdom unity. The Bible condemns the sins of racism while proclaiming redemption by the Triune God. Through this redemption, God is creating a kingdom mosaic of his children from all people groups, bringing glory to himself.¹²

Racism, as Satan's tool against this redemption, promotes divisions preventing us from truly loving one another.¹³ As a predominately majority culture denomination, we have the challenge of becoming a denomination more reflective of a Rev. 7:9 reality. We may neglect to address whether our churches are truly welcoming to those of other ethnicities versus simply accepting the comfortable status quo. We may have biases or lack of cultural exposure that: (1) make it hard to recognize the abilities, strengths, and spiritual gifts of those from other ethnicities, and (2) prevent us from recognizing the unequal power and influence we share with people not of our ethnic majority. We may also be unaware that there are pastors in the EPC who have been deeply wounded by racism, both in terms of ongoing reverberations of historical sins and contemporary expressions of discrimination.

Communities or churches with little to no exposure to people of other ethnicities can exist in a state of detachment or lack of empathy. Indifference is not an option. We are *Christians*, bound together in a global Church family. Whether or not these hurts are in our particular community, they impact our Church. If something causes pain and suffering to a fellow Christian, whether or not we can understand it or relate to it, we are called to weep with those who weep. The pain and injury, grief and fear experienced by members of our church family should not go unrecognized or unacknowledged.¹⁴

Indifference is a great ally of bias and racism. We conform not to the world and its values, but love one another genuinely, with brotherly affection and outdoing one another in showing honor (Rom.

¹¹ Matt. 28:19-20; *Essentials* #7.

¹² WCF 12.1

¹³ WCF 4.2; WLC Q. 22

¹⁴ WLC Q. 131 & 132

12:2-3,9-10). In the church there “is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-29). We are called to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-4).

Our hope contradicts narratives that view humanity merely through a story of unguided emergence, brute survival, oppression, struggle, liberation, and eventual earthly utopia. And, while it is not within the power of the EPC to end racism in our country or culture, we are charged to recognize and combat racism in our denomination and prophetically shine light into the world; to seek the welfare of the city wherein we dwell (Jer. 29:5-7). We are to tell our story of God’s perfect creation, our tragic fall, Christ’s costly redemption, the church’s world-reaching mission and the glorious final re-creation of heaven and earth.¹⁵

Until now, the EPC has left this widespread, multifaceted, and profoundly troubling issue largely unaddressed, especially in terms of denominational resources for our shepherds. To truly love our brothers and sisters in obedience to our Lord, together we should reflect deeply on racism and learn to recognize its impact in our own lives. We want to give voice in lament on behalf of those who suffer from, or otherwise experience, racism.

What Is Lament?

Lament provides a biblical way to publicly grieve our sorrows and express our anger to God; sorrow and anger we experience in the face of suffering, sin, and brokenness. Lament is the response of believers when confronted with unabating, faith-shaking injustice and gives voice to an equally persistent faith—refusing to give up hope. Lament enables us to bring our real, painful concerns to the throne of grace, pouring out our hearts before the God who loves us, knowing that he hears us (Heb. 4:16). Laments are expressed in words of hope that the God who is in covenant with us because of his word will once again remember his people, forgive our sins and rescue us. Unlike the grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness, a lament always has hope, however apocalyptic its anchor. The hope is that, although a solution to my plight may be elusive, despair will not have the last word. As lament is not a common practice among us, we describe the practice in detail.

LAMENT IN THE BIBLE

Lament characterizes much of scripture and varies from personal to corporate expressions. The Psalms are replete with prayers of lament; over one-third of the Psalms fit in this category. Some examples are Psalm 3; 10:1,12,16-18; 12; 77:1-20; 88 (which contains no resolution). The Book of Lamentations records the prophet’s heart-rending lament over the fall of Jerusalem.

Why does the Bible prominently feature lament? Because suffering sits at the center of sin-plagued human experience. We live in a fallen world, with nothing but our groans and our wordless idols to give us respite. And so we groan, even if only with the voice of the Holy Spirit who groans on our

¹⁵ WCF 14.2

behalf when we ourselves are wordless (Rom. 8:18-26). The experience of lament, as reflected by Bruce Waltke, is normal for God's people living in a fallen world.¹⁶ R. W. L. Moberly similarly finds:

The predominance of laments at the very heart of Israel's prayers means that the problems that give rise to lament are not something marginal or unusual but rather are central to the life of faith.... Moreover, they show that the experience of anguish and puzzlement in the life of faith is not a sign of deficient faith, something to be outgrown or put behind one, but rather is intrinsic to the very nature of faith.¹⁷

Psalm 13 is a paradigmatic lament that helps us understand the posture and structure of this form of prayerful expression.

Verses 1-2 are an expression of pain:

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Verses 3-4 contain an appeal to God for help:

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

Verses 5-6 are an expression of faith in God:

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.

As we encounter suffering, pain, and injustice, let us discipline ourselves to turn to God in lament, knowing that he is the holy and righteous one who can and will make things right.

THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS AS ADDITIONAL BASIS FOR RACIAL LAMENT

Our Confessional Standards further provide a context for lament, calling us to unity:

Adoption is an act of God's free grace in and for his only son, Jesus Christ, by which all those who are justified become his children, have his name put on them, have the Spirit of his Son given to them, are provided for under his fatherly care, are welcomed to all the liberties and

¹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary*, Kindle ed. (Eerdmans), 1.

¹⁷ R. W. L. Moberly, "Lament," *NIDOTTE*, IV, 879.

privileges of the sons of God, and are made heirs of all the promises and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory (WLC A. 74).

WCF Chapter 26 teaches on the fellowship of all believers united to Jesus Christ and therefore to each other.

26.1 All believers are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by his Spirit and by faith, and have fellowship with him in his grace, suffering, death, resurrection, and glory. United to one another in love the saints have fellowship in each other's gifts and grace and are obliged to perform those public and private duties which nourish their mutual good, both spiritually and physically.

26.2 By their profession of faith saints are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion with each other in the worship of God and in the performance of other spiritual services for their mutual improvement. They are also bound to help each other in material things according to their different abilities and needs. This fellowship is to be offered, as God gives the opportunity, to everyone in every place who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus.

When we participate in the sacraments, we are celebrating the covenant relationship we have in and with Christ and with all others who are in Christ regardless of their tongue, tribe, or ethnicity. In the sacraments, we bear witness to the essential oneness we share in Christ and practice "holy fellowship and communion with each other."

LAMENT DOES NOT REQUIRE PERSONAL GUILT

Sometimes we resist the call to lament because we think it necessarily includes an admission of personal guilt; the Bible teaches us otherwise. We see in scripture the people of God joining the heart of God in lamenting the brokenness of the world. Daniel cried out in prayer to God over the sin of all Israel and asked the LORD to turn his wrath away from Jerusalem (Dan. 9). Nehemiah, too, confessed sin on behalf of the people of Israel and called on the LORD to keep his covenant promises (Neh.1:4-11). The idolatry witnessed by Paul in Athens prompted him to make a faithful declaration of the Gospel (Acts 17:16-34).

Scripture also teaches us that lament is not unique to humans: our triune God himself expresses lament. In Genesis 6:6, God observed the wickedness of humanity. "The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled." The LORD also expressed lament in the face of Saul's disobedience, saying to Samuel, "I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions" (1 Sam.15:11). The Holy Spirit can be grieved by human sin (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30). The Lord Jesus expressed lament in the face of sin and the suffering it brings:

And when he drew near and saw the city [Jerusalem], he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation' (Luke 19:41-44).

Jesus also grieved and lamented over the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:33, 35, 38). As he faced his crucifixion, he experienced deep grief and cried out in prayer to the Father (Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 13:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; Heb. 5:7). Does our being in Christ, who offered up prayers of lament, shape us as a people who do likewise?

WHY LAMENT NOW?

In our nation's history, America has experienced key events of racial strife and their impact on society: the Civil War and emancipation; the Sand Creek massacre; the Chinese exclusion laws; the Montgomery bus boycotts and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination – to name a few among many. These moments give rise to groups advocating social change, and likewise provoke a response from those who disagree wholly or in part with the proposed change. Polarization and conflict often arise out of these events, with the church attempting to insert the peace of Christ (or perhaps remaining silent) and encourage discussion and engagement.

The death of George Floyd stands out as a recent moment. Floyd's tragic and unnecessary death, resulting in a conviction of the officer for second-degree murder, sparked a firestorm of racial unrest and sits as a modern pivot point in our national conversation about racism. Floyd's death provoked discussion of how race-based violence, and even deaths, remain overlooked or minimized. EPC churches struggled to know how to respond to the unrest and even how to pray in response to news of Floyd's murder and other highly publicized tragic deaths of people of color in 2020. In the gravity of this moment, the lack of biblically grounded resources to which our churches could turn became apparent.

Our society, and even our churches, are divided on blame, causes, and solutions for violent crime. Yet, the church can and should grieve the loss of life, the societal factors that contribute to these deaths, and the civil discord these pivotal moments expose.

And so we might pray...

How long, LORD? How long will you allow the powerful to crush the powerless?

You who are near to the brokenhearted, will you not bring justice to the earth? You have sent Jesus, your Messiah, into the world to usher in peace, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim the year of your favor. He took our sin upon himself and paid the penalty on the cross. Your Spirit raised him from the dead, and he lives and reigns in victory with you. When will he return to bring final victory to the earth? When will Jesus come to judge the living and the dead?

As we wait, LORD, comfort us in our grief. Bring peace to those whose minds are filled with terror. Bring justice through the imperfect working of our courts. Keep us from perpetuating violence. Reassure us that vengeance is yours, that you will repay those who do evil deeds and do not bend the knee to you in repentance.

You are our only comfort and hope, LORD. You are the one we trust when no one else is trustworthy. We look to you. Come, Lord Jesus!

LAMENTING RACISM

Scripture clearly teaches us to care about and share in our brothers' and sisters' pain:

- Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).
- If one part [of Christ's body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (1 Cor. 12:26).
- Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).
- Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Our society, and specifically the EPC, has people of color who experience ongoing, painful effects of racism. When we acknowledge the pain and destruction arising from racism and prejudice, we see the wounds of our brothers and sisters and join our voices together, crying out to our God for intervention. Put another way: it may not be our fault, but it is our concern. Together as the people of God, we can maintain our holy fellowship with one another in Christ through the practice of lament in the face of hatred and injustice. We lament a situation that does not reflect God's design for his world, turning to him for justice, comfort, and transformation.

As we live into our covenant union, listening to one another's expressions of pain creates awareness of ways in which we possibly participate in the racial brokenness of the world. The Holy Spirit may prompt us to turn to God in confession and repentance. Lament can open our hearts to one another and to God and invite the healing work of Christ's Spirit, overcoming our earthly divisions (Eph. 2:11-22) and demonstrating the truth of the Gospel (John 17:20-23).

If we refuse to join our brothers and sisters in lament, or if we move too quickly to claim gospel victory without taking time to grieve with those who are hurting, we communicate to them that they shoulder their pain alone. In so doing, we fail to bear one another's burdens, and an opportunity for unity and solidarity is lost.¹⁸ As Richard Mouw stated in 1978, "To make covenantal promises on behalf of a black child is to commit ourselves to the black struggle. If society tries to treat him like a second-class citizen, we will have to protest on his behalf since he is our brother in a holy nation!"¹⁹

And so we may pray:

Heavenly Father,

We acknowledge your eternal goodness and the gracious covenant you have established with us. It is not our own righteousness that has brought us into this relationship but the righteousness of Christ, covering us and restoring us to our purpose as image bearers chosen to reflect your glory.

¹⁸ Waltke, Houston and Moore, *The Psalms*, 2.

¹⁹ Richard J. Mouw, "Baptismal Politics," *Reformed Journal* 28, no. 7 (July 1978): 2-3.

We grieve over how individuals who bear your image and likeness are subjected to abuse. We lament the discrimination and denial of dignity experienced by those in America who have been marginalized, not only by those distanced from you but even by those who declare Jesus as Lord. Regrettably, the church has fallen short in taking action, speaking out against and publicly or privately condemning and lamenting racism in any form toward any individual or group. This racism is evident in acts of antisemitism and ethnic hate. We lament racism in both personal and structural contexts.

We humbly pray for healing, unity, and justice. May your love permeate our hearts and communities, transforming us into reconciliation agents and advocates for equality. Grant us the strength to confront and change the structures that perpetuate discrimination and grant us the courage to stand against racism in all its forms.

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Our Hope

The realism of lament can seem like a path only of gloom, but the opposite is the case! When we enter the grief of people without dismissing, qualifying, or blaming, we find ourselves bearing one another's burdens and showing love... a true *kingdom harmony*. Engaging in lament, we live out our faith that Jesus will bring a new heaven and a new earth. In that hope we live and minister.

JESUS RECONCILES US TO GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

Amid the human tendency to tribalize around ethnic distinctions, we have one great reason for hope: "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). Through Jesus' sinless life, atoning death, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension, the great divide has been crossed and a new and living way to God is open.

Moreover, Jesus has created in himself reconciliation for humanity with one another. "For he himself is our peace," wrote Paul to the variety of ethnicities in the Ephesian church. Christ "has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14). Jews and Gentiles, people intently aware of "the other," discovered a deeper oneness.

Every person who is united to Jesus by the Holy Spirit through faith and repentance becomes a new creation. We die to the sinful self. Paul testified, "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Ethnicity recedes before the primary identity of being in Christ and so we repent of any identity we held as supreme. Nation, language, social class, education, ethnicity in all their manifestations remain part of us, but they yield in priority to the one supreme marker, signified in baptism, of our having died and risen with Christ Jesus. Nothing from the old humanity may remain elevated above the new Adam, Jesus. "The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

This dying to self and rising in Christ, being joined to his humanity as the only reconciliation with God, is also the only basis of being truly reconciled to others. Kingdom harmony can only occur if the very basis for relationship is set at this deeper, grace-filled level—to deal with personal sin, of course, but

also to provide the bridge whereby we can find connection, even unity, turning “others” into “one another.” An angry, polarized world with its human-centered theories cannot provide this sort of genuine reconciliation.

THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciled in Christ, we then can turn outward: “We should also harbor charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, and kindness. Our speech and behavior should be peaceful, mild, and courteous. We should be tolerant of others, be ready to be reconciled, patiently put up with and forgive injuries against us, and return good for evil” (WLC A. 135).

These reconciling actions arise from understanding how people of diverse ethnicities share *equal* standing in Christ. “Equals are required to pay attention to the dignity and worth of each by honoring each other above themselves and by rejoicing in each other’s gifts and success as if their own” (WLC A. 131). In other words, we live out the prayer our Lord taught us: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, *on earth*, as it is in heaven.”

Our evangelism, our witness, will have integrity when we live out visibly this kingdom harmony. We can pursue the unity that exists in Jesus only as we lay down our own ethnic barriers in order to find deeper identity with one another in Christ.

PURSUING HOPE: EXERCISING THE GIFTS ALREADY GIVEN

Through the person and work of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the EPC has the:

1) Power and courage to engage humbly in the lives of people from different ethnicities and *ask to listen*. We can intentionally set aside time on a regular basis to allow open, candid, and respectful discussions between ethnicities to occur, promoting forgiveness, lament, and transformation. We already see our churches taking responsibility to vigorously pursue activities that foster such kingdom harmony.

One example is Hope EPC in Memphis which developed a course called *Ethnos*, an 8-week multi-ethnic, intergenerational small group which includes three outside joint class spiritual adventures. *Ethnos* features a hot meal eaten together, Bible study, guided table-talk and biblical deliberation on ethnicity and culture from a Scripture-centered view. Active listening, praying, caring, and sharing each other’s life experiences allow the group to appreciate and celebrate their God-given varieties, while breaking through the barriers of ignorance or fear to promote kingdom harmony and their commonality in Christ.

2) Courage to embrace the lives of the overlooked, gazing in love until we are deeply moved with compassion out of which arises Spirit-prompted acts of love. As relationships develop, we can risk an exchange of ethnic stories. This would include, in time, sharing experiences of the effects of racism. Those whose stories express pain and suffering will find such exercises riskier and more burdensome. Those whose ethnic stories have nurtured and sustained us will want to be

grateful for the effort it takes to tell painful stories. We all want to be patient as we begin noticing as precious people those we have not seen or seen only through a lens of dismissal or blame.

Congregations could recognize and celebrate the different ethnicities in their congregations. If a church is largely homogenous, the congregation could seek relationship with another church in its community. For example, the staff of First Presbyterian in Baton Rouge met with the staff of a neighbor church, Abounding Love Ministries. They shared stories of their history, their people. In particular, the mainly Caucasian staff of FPC listened, grieved, and prayed over the stories of those who grew up Black in Louisiana. A few weeks later, together they visited the River Road African American Museum together, and then over lunch, processed the visit, sealing their friendship in gentle tears.

- 3) Commitment to lament alongside** others who have experienced the effects of racism. We know that the Spirit leads us into the sorrow of creation over the Fall of humanity (Rom. 8:22-23). Regular confession of sin lays down the tracks along which regular, honest, and healing lament over racism can occur. Our worship services could regularly include prayers of confession that draw us to lament and repent of various aspects of racism. Ethnic indifference, blindness to racial pain, acts of diminishment, discrimination or hostility, stereotyping and blaming can all be acknowledged. Such lament is healing and uniting.

In our wider communities, we can find a model in Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. In 2015, a racially motivated shooter killed nine members gathered at the church. The pastor of the church has since begun a ministry called One New Humanity, which in November 2022, organized a Prayer Procession through seven places in Charleston, including the Old Exchange Building where slaves had been traded. The multi-ethnic event focused on lament, repentance, forgiveness, and unity. Such creative ways of shared sorrowing for sin can lead the church to a richer experience of faith, hope and love.

- 4) Ability to do justice** in our communities. As our churches address racism and its effects, we can seek more just communities. This can include churches partnering with public schools or even creating Christian schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Jobs and training programs can open paths for the formerly incarcerated returning to society. Our churches can encourage members to serve on town/city councils and task forces that address transportation access, housing, policing, and economic initiatives. Churches can host or organize community festivals that welcome a variety of ethnicities to participate. We look for creative engagement cultivating kingdom harmony.

For example, Forge Church is an EPC multi-ethnic church plant in Greensboro, NC. Their leading edge of evangelism is through children's sports leagues. Pay It Forward promotes multi-ethnic and socio-economic integration by offering participation at no charge. Sports for children becomes an invitation for families to participate in the church. Multi-ethnic sports leagues have readily led to a diverse worshipping community.

- 5) Knowledge to resist narratives** that respond to the pain of racism without lament, empathy, confession, repentance or reconciliation in Christ. We want to become aware of and counter the non-Gospel strategies (e.g., Critical Theory or Christian Nationalism) which define liberation as

moving *into* more of ourselves and our tribes. These philosophies set people of different ethnic, economic or social groups against one another. We know they are doomed to fail, dividing others and furthering hostility. We offer the Gospel as the truly freeing alternative. But instead of being silent on issues of ethnicity and racism, the EPC can encourage teaching that clearly distinguishes true from false models for kingdom harmony.

The purpose of the EPC Rev.7:9 Task Force is, in an age of increased adversity to the Gospel, to assist churches in improving the delivery of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment within their local 1-3-5-mile radii. About 15% of EPC churches have either inquired or begun a step reaching a more local diverse audience.

6) Authority to wield scripture, prayer, and the truths of our Confession against the principality of racism in the church. Even as we expose errant narratives of liberation, we are also bold to shine the light of scripture into our individual hearts and the ways racism has affected the EPC. Revelation 7 envisions glorious multi-ethnic worship of the true God. It offers a great picture of unity and equality. Has our largely homogenous denomination intentionally opened doors for service and leadership by those not of the majority ethnicity? Have we risked our preferred styles of worship to be enriched and challenged by the worship flavor others may bring? Let us more boldly proclaim a message of kingdom harmony, and the change it calls for, even at risk of creating initial discomfort or anger.

In 1964, the elders of Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis barred African Americans from entering its sanctuary. Following their Pastor Jeb Russell, the congregation overruled those elders and later Pastor Sandy Willson led the congregation to public repentance, asking forgiveness from the surviving members of the local “kneel-in” movement.²⁰ Over the last several years, Second Presbyterian Church aggressively has pursued racial diversity and unity in its pastoral staffing as well as membership, with wonderfully positive results.

7) Inspiration to plant more multi-ethnic churches, to encourage mono-ethnic churches to envision a widening reach in worship and mission, and to engage varied and creative interaction with believers across ethnic lines. At the presbytery level, we are encouraging new church development leaders to focus more intentionally on fostering churches with diverse congregations.

Cherry Creek Presbyterian in Denver hosted pastors and ministry leaders from the local ethnic congregations including Mongolian and Filipino churches, a Hindi/English speaking southern Indian fellowship, and an Indian Telugu speaking fellowship. Scripture was read in native tongues, each pastor/leader prayed corporately as part of the liturgy, and the Telugu choir led special worship music. A subsequent panel of church leaders discussed movement of the Lord in their churches, outreach and missions, what their gatherings involve, and what the unity of the Spirit looks like across our ethnically diverse congregations using the same facilities.

²⁰ Stephen R. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation*. Oxford Univ. Press (2012)

BENEDICTION

We pray that the scripture, confessions, stories, and thoughts above assist you in the ministry of peace and healing you carry out in Christ's name. And we pray that our shared work produces disciples committed to realizing unity in the church.

May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus, to whom be glory forever and ever (Heb. 13:2-21).

The Ad Interim Committee

TE Sean Boone
RE Ken Chang
TE Gerrit Dawson, chair person
TE Joe Kim, assistant chair person
RE Linda McDaniel
TE Marcos Ortega
TE George Robertson
TE Annie Rose
RE Carol Willaims

TE Michael Davis, GA Staff
TE Rufus Smith, Advisor

June AD 2024



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-12 *(to the floor)*

Overture from the Midwest Presbytery

The [Midwest Presbytery](#) respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to postpone the discussion and vote on the approval of The Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope until the 45th General Assembly.

[Midwest Overture](#)

[Response to Midwest Presbytery](#)

Overture of the Presbytery of the Midwest (EPC)

to

the 44th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

on the matter of

The Postponement of the Completion of “A Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope”

While, we as a Presbytery affirm the intention of “A Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope” (henceforth *Pastoral Letter*) in bringing to our attention the sinfulness of partiality in all its forms (James 2:1, 9), including racism and unfounded cultural preference,

And, we want to listen to and learn from the stories of pain experienced by minority brothers and sisters in our church and society,

Yet, at the same time, we as the Presbytery of the Midwest EPC have serious concerns about the method, tone, and current form of *Pastoral Letter*,

Furthermore, we seek for the *Pastoral Letter* to become more effective in its goal of persuading, motivating, and helping churches and elders,

Therefore, the Presbytery of the Midwest EPC overtures the General Assembly

- to postpone the discussion and vote on the approval of this letter until the 45th General Assembly so that the committee may take under consideration the recommended edits from commissioners and presbyteries of the EPC, and that an updated letter be distributed by February 1, 2025, to give time for consideration by presbyters before the General Assembly.

Specific Reasons for Our Request

(1) Whereas, “a committee is appointed by a court to study a matter and make recommendations back to the appointing body, or to carry out the decisions already made” and this only (G.21-1A.1, emphasis added), which indicates that a committee has authority only to make recommendations for the consideration of other commissioners to the Assembly, rather than to issue it with directions or commands,

And, “in higher courts, Teaching and Ruling Elders are also known as Presbyters or Commissioners and share in the governing of the Church” as peers with equal standing and authority by the principles of Presbyterian polity (G.9-1, emphasis added),

Yet, the “Pastoral Letter” exhibits an undue tone of authority and decision *over* the church, rather than presenting humble findings and recommendations *to* the church, and

(2) Whereas, the expressed purpose of the letter from the National Leadership Team’s Report of 2022 is to be “a carefully considered work in the course of perhaps two years to speak the truth of the Bible regarding race.” (Minutes of 42nd GA, p. 81, emphasis added)

and, the National Leadership Team, in their report to the 43rd GA, admitted that this “is a massive, complex, and divisive issue.” (Minutes of 43rd GA, p. 83, emphasis added)

and, “the Holy Spirit speaking in the Bible is the supreme judge of all religious controversies” and “the Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek... are to be the church’s ultimate source of appeal in every religious controversy” and “everything pertaining to [God’s] own glory and to man’s salvation, faith, and life is either expressly stated in the Bible or may be deduced as inevitably and logically following from it” (WCF in Modern English, 1.10, 1.8, 1.6)

Yet, there appear to be many assertions in the letter which were not argued for but rather assumed, and may not be understood, apparent to, or held by a consensus of the commissioners of the church, and

Furthermore, suggestions would be improved by more in-depth Biblical exegesis or other indications of Biblical support,

We have decided, to request the course of action in the Overture Above.



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

June 3, 2024
TE Pete Scribner, Stated Clerk
RE Andy Warner, Assistant Stated Clerk
Presbytery of the Midwest
3453 Lakewood Shores Drive
Howell, MI 48843

Dear Pete and Andy,

In accordance with **Rules for Assembly V.5-6**, “*The Stated Clerk, or a person designated by the Stated Clerk, shall be the parliamentarian of the General Assembly,*” the Stated Clerk has asked me to determine the proper handling of Overture 44-12 from your presbytery, asking “*to postpone the discussion and vote on the approval of this letter until the 45th General Assembly so that the committee may take under consideration the recommended edits from commissioners and presbyteries of the EPC, and that an updated letter be distributed by February 1, 2025, to give time for consideration by presbyters before the General Assembly.*”

An Overture, as used in our ecclesiastical terminology, is a request from a lower court to a higher court to initiate an item of business for the higher court’s consideration. This overture is not requesting consideration of a new item of business but is essentially a motion to postpone and refer a business item already slated to come before the Assembly. Only a Registered Commissioner of this General Assembly may make such a motion, and any GA Commissioner may do so when the item comes to the floor.

Overtures also are processed according to **Rules for Assembly IX.**

Standing Committees 9-1 *All business shall ordinarily come to the floor of the Assembly for final action through Standing Committees, except reports of ad interim committees, which shall report directly to the Assembly.* (emphasis added)

This means that even if this overture was presenting a new item of business related to this Ad Interim Committee, it could not be directed to a Standing Committee since all Ad Interim Reports go directly to the floor of the Assembly. Any such overture would, therefore, also be referred directly to the floor of the Assembly which would have no greater effect than a commissioner moving the same request.

Additionally, the rationale for this Overture is based on a review of a draft report from the Ad Interim Committee which was circulated to invite feedback from across the denomination. The concerns addressed in your rationale may not even appear in the final report of the Ad Interim Committee, therefore a request to postpone and refer back to the Committee is premature since the final report has not been presented to the Assembly.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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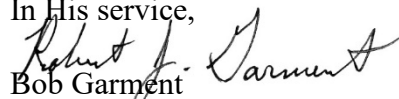
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Finally, the Overture’s request for distribution of a revised Ad Interim Committee report “by February 1, 2025” is out of accord with **Rules for Assembly VIII.8-2** “*All ad interim committees shall make full reports in writing with the rationale for all recommendations included therein, and such reports shall be mailed to all Commissioners at least two weeks prior to the convening of the Assembly.*” (emphasis added).

For these reasons, as the designated parliamentarian for this General Assembly I am ruling Overture 44-12 from the Presbytery of the Midwest as procedurally out of order. Please note that the Overture’s intent, of seeking to postpone a discussion and vote of the Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope remains the right of a commissioner of the 44th General Assembly.

It may be helpful to understand why this process was developed in this way. In some reformed and presbyterian systems, the General Assembly was composed of delegates selected by the presbyteries and, consequently, became a de facto meeting of presbytery representatives. The EPC intentionally shaped its polity to limit the influence of lower courts at the Assembly to proposing business items without shaping the Assembly’s treatment of them. Our EPC General Assembly is designed to be a gathering of representatives of individual congregations to maintain a “grass roots” approach to denominational governance.

In His service,


Bob Garment
Chief Parliamentarian

44-13 (to the Fraternal Standing Committee)

From the Fraternal Relations Committee

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church withdraw its formal fraternal relationship with the Association of Charismatic Presbyterian Churches in Puerto Rico and future relationships be through the World Reformed Fellowship.

Rationale: The Permanent Committee on Fraternal Relations evaluated the relationship with the Association of Charismatic Presbyterian Churches in Puerto Rico and found no evidence of any relationship in practice. Numerous attempts to contact ACPCPR were unsuccessful. As a result, the committee does not believe it meets the criteria for Fraternal Relations established in *Acts of the Assembly* 12-10. Furthermore, since the establishment of the Fraternal Relationship (*Acts of Assembly* 94-01), the EPC now has three congregations on the Island of Puerto Rico which are integral members of the EPC. Puerto Rico is now a part of the Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean.

www.epc.org/2024report-fraternalrelations

44-14 (to the Fraternal Standing Committee)

From the Fraternal Relations Committee

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church withdrawal its formal fraternal relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru.

Rationale: The Permanent Committee on Fraternal Relations evaluated the relationship between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru and found no evidence that the relationship, as, defined in *Acts of the Assembly* 17-10 was in practice. Numerous attempts to contact the ERPCP were unsuccessful. As a result, the committee does not believe it meets the criteria for Fraternal Relations established in *Acts of the Assembly* 12-10.

www.epc.org/2024report-fraternalrelations



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-15 (to the Fraternal Standing Committee)
From the Fraternal Relations Committee

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church enter a Fraternal Relationship with the National Union of French Protestant Reformed Churches (UNEPREF).

Rationale: Concurrent with *Acts of the Assembly* 84-06 the Permanent Committee on Fraternal Relations has identified, with the assistance of a WO Global Worker, the National Union of French Protestant Reformed Evangelical Churches and after multiple meetings and a trip by EPC WO and Church Planting Leadership have confirmed a viable fraternal relationship that would be profitable to carrying out the Great Commission commensurate with *Acts of the Assembly* 12-10.1.a.

www.epc.org/2024report-fraternalrelations

[Visions and Values of the UNEPREF](#)

Vision and Values of the UNEPREF

(National Union of French Protestant Reformed Evangelical Churches)



(left to right: President: Jean-Raymond Stauffacher, Rev. Jeff Kim, GA Moderator- Guy Maillard)

May 12-15, 2017 Montauban, France

World Outreach Staff-Rev. Jeff Kim

Central South Presbytery

History and Development:

In France, at the beginning of the 20th century, two large church denominations constituted what we know as the Reformed Church:

The Union of Reformed Churches with roughly 150 churches and the National Union of Reformed Evangelical Churches with approximately 450 churches. World War I (1914-1918) created large-scale disaster that brought these two church groups together along with the army chaplains which constituted a change of mentality for these two distinct church groups.

Following this war-time period came a growth, not only in theology but also in ecumenicalism since these were very difficult economic times. The unification of these two particular church denominations seemed almost imminent in the eyes of many. It is for this reason that in 1938 the ERF (The Reformed Church of France) was born from much discussion regrouping a large number of Free Evangelical and Methodist Churches.

Several church communities desirous to manifest the unity of the body of Christ, renounced, in the name of an evangelical and Calvinist orthodoxy, to take part in the formation of the Reformed Church of France. They decided to maintain at the center of their theology “the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures, that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, died for our sins and resurrected for our justification.” These communities gave birth to the National Union of Independent Evangelical Reformed Churches (EREI).¹

In 2003, the EREI modified their name to the UNEPREF (National Union of French Protestant Reformed Evangelical Churches).

Today, the UNEPREF across France represents 3,500 members with 48 churches and 34 pastors serving in specific parishes across the southern portion of France all the way to the southwest of France up to Bordeaux, along with the region of Paris. 10 pastors serve as chaplains in prisons or hospitals or abroad in overseas mission projects. There are 280 elders that serve within these 48 churches. There are 20 different cultural associations across France that represent different outreaches in the community along with 4 vacation centers that welcome children and families for camps and Christian training.

All UNEPREF churches express a real sensitivity to the reformed history and traditions of France. On a local level each church follows a presbyterian form of government

¹ <http://www.uncpref.com/presentation-uncpref/identite-uncpref/histoire.html>

where each church elects their elders and deacons in a democratic, representative form of government. Each church is represented by its pastor and elders on a national level at the annual National Synod. The desire of each church is to have relationships of trust and confidence with all UNEPREF churches in France, as well as reformed churches in Europe and throughout the rest of the world.²

Beliefs:

We are Evangelical Reformed Churches which signify that we receive the Bible as the Word of God desirous to live our lives in conformity with our faith. We recognize that the key confessions such as the Nicene Creed and the Confessions of the Rochelle 1872 are the actual expressions of our faith. We call all men and women to faith and repentance recognizing the love of God manifested through Jesus Christ. We believe that each member should live in community with others in each respective church that represents a certain discipline and theological orientation which underlines our Reformed identity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Reformed Evangelical Churches desirous to affirm their spiritual heritage and vocation of the 15th century Reformation and of the revivals of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century from which they came, renewed their testimony in society through projects of evangelism, diaconate, and mission.

The specificity of UNEPREF churches throughout protestantism in particular, characterized themselves by being Reformed and Evangelical. UNEPREF church members are Protestants, heirs of the Reformers who in the 16th century proclaimed the unique authority of the Bible and that salvation is by faith alone. The term Reformed shows the historic as well as theologic link with the origins of the French Reformation with the discovery of the thoughts of the French Reformer, John Calvin, as well as the place of the confession of faith of The Rochelle in the way of governing the life of this particular church union.

The UNEPREF is an evangelical denomination, they believe that the Bible remains the unique and authoritative testimony of the infallible revelation of God and they allow themselves to be transformed by the message of the Gospel such as it is expressed in the Bible. It is by the living and personal faith in Jesus do they share their faith that is shared in the Gospel as expressed in the Bible.³

² <http://www.unepref.com/presentation-unepref.html>

³ <http://prolambesc.free.fr/quisommesnous/index.html>

Vision:

The churches that belong to the UNEPREF exist to glorify God by contributing to the growth of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ helping men and women develop holistically. These churches seek the direction of the Holy Spirit as they desire to grow in authentic adoration maintaining faithfulness to the word of God, growing in authentic worship, developing enthusiastic evangelism, practicing acts of compassion, as they seek to be caretakers of creation. In order to concretely work out this vision statement the member churches of the UNEPREF engage in three different areas:

1. Being disciples of Christ who desire to be sensitive to God's Word. As they hear God's Word do they allow it to continually transform their lives in order to live a holy life before the Lord. It is from this process of transformation that flows the presence and power of God in our lives.
2. Being on mission for God means considering the urgency of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that we encourage the members of our churches to share their faith with those around them in order to welcome and edify those that God calls to himself.
3. Celebrating God together being welcoming, joyful congregations describes who we are. Also, allowing each member of our churches to grow and develop their spiritual gifts for the service of the Church and brotherly communion is an important key.

Through this vision, the UNEPREF expresses its values and perspectives which are shared by each one of the communities that it composes. This gives priority and direction to our denomination. This vision is developed and amended at times during our General Assembly to better reflect the churches that are represented. Each church must then receive and seek to implement the way in which they desire to adapt this vision to their particular context. The goal is for each church, large or small, rural or urban to put into practice their own method of applying this vision in order to respond to the call of God in their own church community.⁴

Church Organization:

Since 1948, UNEPREF churches are members of the Protestant French Federation. They are also members of the National Council of French Evangelicals (CNEF).

Internationally, the denomination is organized and participates actively with several church and mission organizations notably the CMER, DEFAP, CEVAA, and MTW.

⁴ <http://www.unepref.com/presentation-unepref/vision-unepref.html>

The UNEPREF is organised according to the presbyterian model. Each church belongs to one of the three regional presbyteries (synods) (South-West, Languedoc-Cévennes, or Gardonnenque-Provence) and sends representatives to the General Assembly (national synod), held annually in March.^[10] Once every three years, the General Assembly convenes and elects its president (currently pastor Jean-Raymond Stauffacher).

The church has strong links with the theological seminary Faculté Jean Calvin (formerly: Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée) in Aix-en-Provence. The majority of its pastors are educated here.

Within France, UNEPREF participates in the Protestant Federation of France,^[11] the Protestant Missionary Service,^[12] the Protestant Lutheran-Reformed communion (affiliation only),^[13] and the French national council of evangelicals.^[14]

Denominational Missions Projects:

Since the Toulouse General Assembly in 2011, the UNEPREF adopted a common missionary project. The UNEPREF seeks to help its churches to live out its vision and respond to the call of Christ in the Great Commission of Mt. 28:18-20. Its objective is very clear: We share the passion of God for His world, we love all that God has created, we rejoice in the providence and justice of God in all his creation. We proclaim the Gospel to all creation and the nations, and long for the day when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the depths of the seas.” (Le cap 2010)

In order to accomplish this mission, the UNEPREF engages in several key areas through evangelism, service (the diaconate), and chaplaincy. Through church-planting strategies the UNEPREF seeks to plant new churches as well. Also, through fraternal relations with all Christian churches in France and with Reformed churches throughout the world. Currently, there are 34 MBB (Muslim Background Believers) throughout the different churches of the UNEPREF. The UNEPREF is open to the growth and development of evangelism projects toward Muslims and all alike. For several years the UNEPREF supports the numerous missionary projects of the DEFAP. In parallel, certain churches have ongoing projects in Haïti, Conakry, Guinea, and Romania.⁵

Potential EPC Projects:

Jean-Raymond, what do you think would be important to put here?

1. Outreach to muslims in certain cities that would be a strength to help church evangelization and church-planting. This is a key area that World Outreach (EPC missions agency) would like to develop. How could this more concretely develop itself within the UNEPREF?

⁵ <http://www.unepref.com/presentation-unepref/vision-unepref/projet-missionnaire-commun.html>

2. JR, you also mentioned collaborating on several other levels: consulting, theological projects, relations with women in the church, etc...

Partners:

1. French Protestants: www.protestants.org
2. National Council of French Evangelicals (CNEF) www.lecnef.org
3. Protestant Service Mission www.defap.fr
4. World Communion of Reformed Churches <http://wcrch.ch/members>⁶
5. Mission To The World. (PCA) www.mtw.org

⁶ <http://www.unepref.com/presentation-unepref/organisation-unepref/partenaires-institutionnels.html>



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-16 *(to the Fraternal Standing Committee)*
From the Fraternal Relations Committee

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church extend the current Articles of Agreement with the St. Andrew's presbytery of Argentina through 2025.

Rationale: *Acts of the Assembly* 09-03 defines the Fraternal Agreement with longtime, and highly valued Fraternal Partner, the St. Andrews Presbytery of Argentina. Whereas both ecumenical committees are working collaboratively on a renewed fraternal relationship to be presented at the 45th General Assembly of the EPC (2025) the committee recommends continuing the formal relationship as the "articles of agreement" are being developed.

www.epc.org/2024report-fraternalrelations

44-17 *(to the floor)*
From the Benefits Resources, Inc., Board of Directors

The BRI Board of Directors recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code.

www.epc.org/2024report-bri



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-18 *(to the Overtures and Resolutions Standing Committee)*
**Overture from the Presbyteries of the
Southeast, Central Carolinas, and New River**

The **Presbyteries of the Southeast, Central Carolinas, and New River** respectfully
OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly to **APPROVE** the adjusting boundaries between the
three presbyteries.

[Overture on Adjusting Boundaries](#)

Overture on Presbytery Boundaries

From: Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Presbytery of the Southeast
Presbytery of the New River

We rejoice and give thanks to God for the growth of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, specifically in the area of the former Presbytery of Mid-Atlantic, which has been realigned into three presbyteries: the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas, the Presbytery of the Coastal Mid-Atlantic, and the Presbytery of the New River.

Two churches in Western North Carolina which closely identify geographically and missionally with the Presbytery of Central Carolinas are located just within the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Southeast.

Plumtree Presbyterian Church, Plumtree, North Carolina
Buck Hill Presbyterian Church, Newland, North Carolina

In accordance with the provisions of **Acts of Assembly 12-05** it has been determined by the Presbytery of the Southeast that the inclusion of those two churches in the Presbytery of Central Carolinas would not cause an adverse effect on total membership, financial resources, or any other measure enumerated in that act. The inclusion of those churches into the boundaries of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas would benefit the cost and mode of travel in both presbyteries.

Further, when mapping the congregations of the Presbytery of the New River within Western North Carolina, it was discovered that one of them is actually located just below the original southern boundary of that presbytery and is in the northern area of the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas. The two presbyteries agree that this church is actually a member of the Presbytery of the New River.

Adjusting the boundary between the presbyteries of Southeast and Central Carolinas along with correcting the boundary between Central Carolinas and New River would clarify the ministry area of these three presbyteries.

Therefore, the Presbytery of Central Carolinas, the Presbytery of the Southeast, and the Presbytery of The New River overture the 44th General Assembly to realign the boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Southeast, Central Carolinas, and New River within the state of North Carolina as follows:

Within the state of North Carolina, the eastern boundary of Southeast Presbytery will run along the eastern boundary of Haywood County and the western boundary of Transylvania County.

The Northern boundary of Central Carolinas Presbytery will run from the North Carolina-Tennessee border along the eastern boundary of Avery County, the western Boundary of Caldwell County, until it joins US 321 South to I-40 East. It will continue east on I-40 through Iredell County to the SW corner of Davie County. It will then follow the western boundary of Davie County and part of the western boundary of Davidson County to where it intersects I-85 North. It will continue along I-85 North to where it intersects the northern boundary of Randolph County. From there it will follow the northern boundaries of Randolph and Chatham Counties to the western Boundary of Coastal Mid-Atlantic Presbytery.

44-19 *(to the World Outreach Standing Committee)*
From the World Outreach Committee

The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** Paraclete Missions Group as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency.

Rationale: Paraclete is the sending organization of a seasoned missionary couple. Chris and Kristen Furr, long-time members of the EPC, are applying to World Outreach as coop workers. Sending and supporting our own is a high value in the EPC and we want to do that for the Furr's. As determined by the WOC this couple and their work are aligned with EPC World Outreach and the EPC and the Furr's would benefit by having them commissioned as World Outreach workers. Approving Paraclete as an official cooperative agency would enable this to happen as well as create options for future workers to serve.

www.epc.org/2024report-woc

[Paraclete Missions](#)

44-20 *(to the World Outreach Standing Committee)*
From the World Outreach Committee

The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency.

Rationale: MAF is a longstanding ministry that has been critical in bringing the gospel to the most remote places and people in the world for decades. It is an organization that EPC World Outreach is fully aligned with. K&B, EPC members and former longtime missionaries are headed back to the field with MAF. Sending and supporting our own is a high value in the EPC and we want to do that for the Greens who are applying to World Outreach as coop workers. As determined by the WOC this couple and their work is aligned with EPC World Outreach and the EPC and would benefit by having them commissioned as World Outreach workers. Approving MAF as an official cooperative agency would enable this to happen as well as create options for future workers to serve.

www.epc.org/2024report-woc

[MAF](#)



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44-21 *(to the World Outreach Standing Committee)*
From the World Outreach Committee

The **World Outreach Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** API (Asian Partners International) as an EPC World Outreach approved Agency.

Rationale: API is a ministry doing amazing gospel work in India. It has strong endorsements from EPC Teaching and Ruling elders from Manoa EPC and is fully aligned with the master plan of EPC World Outreach. Giving API “approved agency” status provides them increased credibility when allowed to present at churches and Presbytery.

www.epc.org/2024report-woc

[API](#)



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44-22 (to the Theology Standing Committee)
From the Permanent Judicial Commission

The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 8-2 C and *Book of Worship* 3-3 J and that Recommendation **44-23** be answered by this action.

Rationale: Under the Constitution the Session currently has the authority to receive members taking into consideration the individual's mental capabilities and life situation. This includes not only developmentally disabled individuals, but other conditions which may have impacted an individual's abilities to evidence a true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, including medical conditions, traumatic injury, and other scenarios and conditions. The current constitutional language is therefore broader than the proposed additional language. Likewise, Session and Minister have defined roles with respect to preparation for, and admission to The Lord's Supper (see, e.g. **W. 3, H, I, J, and M**), along with **Westminster Confession** Chapter 29. The well-intentioned and compassionate proposed additional language is therefore superfluous. The recommendation of the PJC is to keep the Constitution free of excess terminology to avoid future potential conflicts with clarity, consistency, and conformity.

www.epc.org/2024report-pjc

44-23 (to the Theology Standing Committee)
Overture from Pacific Northwest

The **Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending *Book of Government* 8-2 C and *Book of Worship* 3-3 J.

Current Language G. 8-2 C.	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>C. The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ. It is appropriate for the Session to ask for testimonials of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a sharing of one's growth in faith.</p>	<p>C. The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ. It is appropriate for the Session to ask for testimonials of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a sharing of one's growth in faith. <i>In the case of baptized, covenant children and adults, who are developmentally disabled, unable to demonstrate the above-listed evidence, the Session may consider them as members in good standing, admitting them to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.</i></p>

Current Language W. 3-3. J	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>J. Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership.</p>	<p>J. Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership. <i>Also at its discretion, the Session may admit to the table developmentally disabled persons who have been deemed members in good standing.</i></p>



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Rationale: both the *Book of Government* and the *Book of Worship* give the Session authority to examine candidates for membership and baptized children seeking admission to the Lord's Supper and determine if they should be received as members or admitted to the Lord's Supper. These proposed amendments would allow Sessions to also consider developmentally delayed individuals for membership and admission to the Lord's Table.

[Overture from Pacific Northwest](#)

Proposed Overture to the EPC GA 2024
Ascending from the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest

Whereas, the Book of Order offers no path into church membership apart from verbal/written “evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ...and determination to live...,”

Whereas, the covenant community includes baptized individuals, who are developmentally disabled, unable to profess faith and promise commitment,

Whereas, the words of Jesus Christ (John 9) clarify that infirmity, deformity and the like, may stem from the common curse, the suffering individual not at fault, the condition not a consequence or punishment of his/her sin, but for the glory of God,

Whereas, our Lord Jesus teaches us to know God as a Father who delights to give good gifts to his children far more abundantly than we can imagine (Matthew 7, Ephesians 3),

“Whereas, in 1 Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul more specifically defines “unworthy” participation in the Lord’s Supper as “getting drunk” and/or eating so much that one humiliates the poor “who have nothing to eat,”

Whereas, the Westminster Confession of Faith 10.3 not only considers, “elect infants, dying in infancy,” to be among the regenerate, but also, “elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word,”

Be it resolved, that the Book of Order be amended by adding the italicized words below to the citations listed:

Book of Government, Chapter 8-2C

The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ. It is appropriate for the Session to ask for testimonials of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a sharing of one’s growth in faith. *In the case of baptized, covenant children and adults, who are developmentally disabled, unable to demonstrate the above-listed evidence, the Session may consider them as members in good standing, admitting them to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.*

Book of Government, Chapter 8-3B.2

Persons may be received into active membership in the following manner:

a. By profession of faith

Ordinarily the person(s) being received on profession of faith shall make that profession in a public service of worship in the presence of the congregation. If not previously baptized, each person shall be baptized in accordance with the

Book of Worship as it deals with adult baptism. If already on the baptized roll, the person shall be transferred to the active roll. *The Session may receive into active membership any baptized covenant child or adult, who is developmentally disabled, unable to cognitively and verbally profess faith.*

b. By reaffirmation of faith

Persons who have previously made a profession of faith who apply for active membership may be unable to secure a certificate of membership or may wish to reaffirm their faith.

c. By transfer of membership

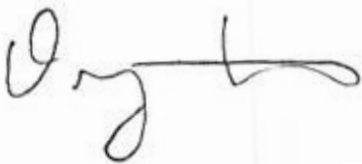
Persons may be received by transfer of membership from another Evangelical Presbyterian Church or from some other body recognized as a part of the true Church. The Session may not deny membership for any reason not related to profession of faith and obedience.

Book of Worship, Chapter 3-3J

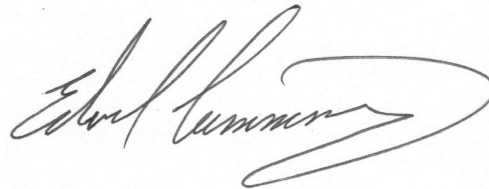
Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership. *Also at its discretion, the Session may admit to the table developmentally disabled persons who have been deemed members in good standing.*

Respectfully Submitted,
EPC Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest

March 15, 2024



TE Rev. Douglas Kortyna
Moderator



TE Dr. Edward M. Cummings
Stated Clerk

44-24 (to the Theology Standing Committee)
From the Permanent Judicial Commission

The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Worship* 3-3 I and **REFER** to the permanent Committee on Theology the question of whether the Westminster Standards limit receiving Communion to those baptized; and that Recommendation **44-25** be answered by this action.

Rationale: The PJC noted that term “true believers” is used both in the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and *Essentials of Our Faith* whereas the term “baptized believers” is not, leading to potential inconsistency of language and incompatibility between the proposal and other constitutional documents. There may be “true believers” who have not been baptized. The proposed amendment also raises questions regarding the relationship of the “visible church” and the “true church.” The question of whether the **Westminster** Standards limits admission to the Lord’s table to only “baptized believers” and how that should be reflected in the *Book of Worship* are significant and best addressed by the Permanent Committee on Theology.

www.epc.org/2024report-pjc

44-25 (to the Theology Standing Committee)
Overture from the Presbytery of Rivers and Lakes

The **Rivers and Lakes Presbytery** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Worship* 3-3 I concerning explicit qualifications for admission to the sacraments of the Lord’s Supper.

Current Language W. 3-3. I	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>I. The Minister shall invite all true believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including those from other congregations that are a part of the true Church to partake in the Lord’s Supper. All should be reminded of the need to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, to repent of sin, and to covenant once more to live as followers of Jesus. Those who are ignorant in their knowledge of Christ or who are living ungodly and unrepentant lives should be</p>	<p>I. The Minister shall invite all true <i>baptized</i> believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including those from other congregations that are a part of the true Church, to partake in the Lord’s Supper. All should be reminded of the need to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, to repent of sin, and to covenant once more to live as followers of Jesus. Those who are ignorant in their knowledge of Christ or who are living ungodly and unrepentant lives should be warned of the serious</p>



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warned of the serious consequences for those who unworthily partake.	consequences for those who unworthily partake.
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Rationale: The proposed amendment introduces baptism as an explicitly necessary condition for partaking of the Lord’s Supper, applying to adults the same restriction applied to children; it also deletes the unhelpful modifier “true” and adds a comma at the end of the restrictive clause. This amendment clarifies who may partake of the Lord’s Supper—a clarification which aids pastoral efforts to fence the table and also generates pastoral opportunity to invite to the waters of baptism any who have received and rested on Jesus alone for salvation but have not yet been baptized.

Overture from Rivers and Lakes



1 Rivers & Lakes Presbytery hereby respectfully overtures the General Assembly of the EPC
2 concerning explicit qualifications for admission to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

3
4 **Whereas** the *Book of Government* grants the authority and responsibility of Presbyteries “to
5 overture the General Assembly on those matters it believes vital or helpful to the whole
6 Church,” (BOG 19-4.C.2); and

7
8 **Whereas** the *Book of Worship* identifies “proper administration and receiving of the
9 sacraments” as essential to corporate worship (BOW 2-1.A.3); and

10
11 **Whereas** there is much confusion in American evangelical churches about the sacraments and
12 their relation to one another and widespread neglect or deferral of Baptism; and

13
14 **Whereas** the *Book of Worship* states that only “[b]aptized children may be admitted to the
15 Lord’s Supper” (BOW 3-3.J);

16
17 **Therefore, be it resolved** that Rivers & Lakes Presbytery overtures the General Assembly and
18 submits the following motion for consideration.

19
20 **MOTION:** That the first sentence of the EPC *Book of Worship* 3-3.I be amended to say, “The
21 Minister shall invite all [baptized] true believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including
22 those from other congregations that are part of the true Church[,] to partake in the Lord’s
23 Supper.”

24
25 **RATIONALE:** The proposed amendment introduces baptism as an explicitly necessary condition
26 for partaking of the Lord’s Supper, applying to adults the same restriction applied to children; it
27 also deletes the unhelpful modifier “true” and adds a comma at the end of the restrictive
28 clause. This amendment clarifies who may partake of the Lord’s Supper—a clarification which
29 aids pastoral efforts to fence the table and also generates pastoral opportunity to invite to the
30 waters of baptism any who have received and rested on Jesus alone for salvation but have not
31 yet been baptized.

32
33
34 Approved by the Rivers & Lakes Presbytery at its 40th Stated Meeting,
35 January 27, 2024.

36
37
38 
39 TE Annie Rose, Stated Clerk



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44-26 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
From the Permanent Judicial Commission

The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain's endorsements and that Recommendation **44-27** be answered by this action.

Rationale: The PJC finds the existing language in the *Rules for Assembly* (10-1 I) regarding CWCC is adequate to provide for the tasks addressed in the proposed amendment. The additional language does not clarify the endorsement process and potentially complicates the process. (Parenthetically, the constitution does not refer to permanent committees by name since they are sometimes renamed.)

www.epc.org/2024report-pjc

44-27 (to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)
From the Ministerial Vocation Committee

The MVC recommends that the 43rd General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain’s endorsements.

Current G. 9-5E	Proposed Changes for G. 9-5E Changes in <i>bold italics</i>
<p>G.9.5E</p> <p>Chaplain</p> <p>A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>G.9.5E</p> <p>Chaplain</p> <p>A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. <i>All Teaching Elders serving as Chaplains for institutions requiring Ecclesiastical Endorsement shall be endorsed through the Chaplains Work and Care Committee. Chaplains serving Institutions that do not require Endorsement should normally be endorsed to certify being fully qualified to serve in this specialized ministry.</i></p> <p>(See Rules for Assembly X.10-1 I)</p>

Rationale: This recommendation would place the process for EPC endorsement of Military Chaplains (currently found only in *Rules for Assembly X. 10-1 I.3*) within **G. 9-5E** and applies the process to non-military chaplaincy positions that require Ecclesiastical Endorsement. The addition of section C to **G.9-11** provides a means of Ecclesiastical Endorsement for Commissioned Pastors as well.



Current G. 9-11	Proposed Changes for G. 9-11 Changes in <i>bold italics</i>
<p>G.9-11</p> <p>The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor</p> <p>A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.</p> <p>A. Authorization shall be for a term up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.</p> <p>B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.</p>	<p>G.9-11</p> <p>The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor</p> <p>A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.</p> <p>A. Authorization shall be for a term up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.</p> <p>B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.</p> <p>C. <i>Commissioned Pastors approved by their Presbytery to serve as a Chaplain for institutions requiring Ecclesiastical Endorsement shall be endorsed through the Chaplains Work and Care Committee. Chaplains serving Institutions that do not require Endorsement should normally be endorsed to certify being fully qualified to serve in this specialized ministry.</i> (see Rules for Assembly X.10-1 I) [subsequent paragraphs are to be renumbered accordingly]</p>



Rationale: This recommendation would place the process for EPC endorsement of Military Chaplains (currently found only in *Rules for Assembly X*. 10-1 I.3) within **G. 9-5E** and applies the process to non-military chaplaincy positions that require Ecclesiastical Endorsement. The addition of section C to **G.9-11** provides a means of Ecclesiastical Endorsement for Commissioned Pastors as well.

www.epc.org/2024report-mvc

44-28 (to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)
From the Ministerial Vocation Commission

The Ministerial Vocation Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* section 10-7 & 9.5C.3 concerning Transitional Pastors.

Rationale: Temporary Pastoral Relationships are by invitation for a specified time and therefore do not require examination for presbytery membership, only interviewing for suitability to the task. Those pursuing transfer into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as a Transitional Pastor would be examined for presbytery membership while those serving from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church could serve by temporary invitation in the same manner as a Stated Supply.

Rationale: Teaching Elders from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church *called* as Transitional Pastors must be examined for transfer according to **G. 10-7 a.1.d**. Teaching Elders from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church who are not seeking transfer will still be able to serve as Transitional Pastors by *invitation* of a Session in the same manner as Stated Supply Pastors **G. 10-7 A.1.e**

www.epc.org/2024report-mvc



Current Language	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships</p> <p>A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained Ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a pastor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Transitional Pastor<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home presbytery.c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the presbytery shall examine and transfer the pastor according to applicable provisions of this <i>Book of Government</i>.	<p>10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships</p> <p>A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained Ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a pastor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Transitional Pastor<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home presbytery.c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church <i>and seeks to transfer ordination</i>, the presbytery shall examine and transfer the pastor according to applicable provisions of this <i>Book of Government</i>.e. <i>If a Transitional Pastor from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is not seeking to transfer ordination, the Session may extend an invitation in the same manner as a Stated Supply Pastor except that the invitation will remain in</i>



	<i>effect during the period the congregation is seeking a Pastor.</i>
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Current Language	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>9-5 The office of Teaching Elder</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>1. Titles</p> <p>A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.⁵⁴ The office of the “co-pastor” is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the Book of Government, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.</p>	<p>9-5 The office of Teaching Elder</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>1. Titles</p> <p>A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as <i>Transitional Pastor</i>, Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.⁵⁴ The office of the “co-pastor” is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the Book of Government, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.</p>

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44-29 (to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)
From the Permanent Judicial Commission

The **Permanent Judicial Commission** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government sections 10-7 & 9.5C.3* concerning Transitional Pastors.

Rationale: The PJC finds the proposed amendment meets the standards of clarity, conformity, and consistency with the constitution, and recommends adoption of the amendment.

www.epc.org/2024report-pjc



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44-30 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from Mid-America Presbytery

The **Presbytery of Mid-America** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.

[Overture from Mid-America](#)

44-31 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from Mid-America Presbytery

The **Presbytery of Mid-America** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how churches as it relates to three specific questions.

[Overture from Mid-America](#)



Presbytery of Mid America

Dexter Kuhlman, Stated Clerk
51 Village View Drive, Suite 3209
Chesterfield, MO 63017 1978
Cell: 314.974.2993
djkuhlman@mac.com

April 25, 2024

Rev. Dr. Dean Weaver
Office of the General Assembly
5850 T. G. Lee Blvd.
Suite 510
Orlando, FL 32822

Dear Dean,

Attached you will find two Overtures that were adopted unanimously by the Presbytery of Mid-America at its 99th Stated Meeting on April 24, 2024 at The Crossing, Columbia, MO. You will find Overture 1 and the accompanied document titled "Questions for the Permanent Committee on Theology" (March 2024) and Overture 2 with the accompanied document titled "Questions for the Ministerial Vocations Committee" (February 2024).

The Presbytery sends these two Overtures for the General Assembly's consideration at its 44th Assembly.

Yours in Christ,

Dexter A. Kuhlman, Stated Clerk



Presbytery of Mid America

Dexter Kuhlman, Stated Clerk
51 Village View Drive, Suite 3209
Chesterfield, MO 63017-1978
Cell: 314.974.2993
dkuhlman@mac.com

April 25, 2024

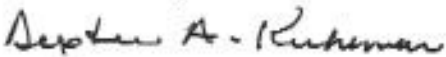
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The Presbytery sends these two Overtures for the General Assembly's consideration at its 44th Assembly.

Yours in Christ,


Dexter A. Kuhlman, Stated Clerk

OVERTURE 1 From the Presbytery of Mid-America

The Presbytery of Mid-America overtures the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence, and to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how these concepts apply to the examination of officers.

The above Overture is accompanied by the document titled "Questions for the Permanent Committee on Theology (March 2024).

Adopted unanimously by the Presbytery of Mid-America at its 99th Stated Meeting, April 24, 2024 at The Crossing, Columbia, Missouri.

Dexter A. Kuhlman

Attested by Dexter A. Kuhlman, Stated Clerk



Questions for the Permanent Committee on Theology

SUBMITTED BY:

The Presbytery of Mid-America

March 2024

Prologue

Memorial Presbyterian Church (<http://www.memorialpca.org>) formerly of the PCA, has petitioned to enter the Evangelical Presbyterian Church via the Presbytery of Mid-America. The Church Development and Ministerial Committees, which are responsible for examining the teaching and ruling elders of Memorial Presbyterian Church, are requesting guidance from the Permanent Committee on Theology (PCT) to aid us in those examinations.

Context

Our desire and aim are to approach Memorial's petition humbly, objectively, and earnestly. Given their somewhat public departure from the PCA, there is a rather complex narrative that precedes them. However, as we seek to discharge our responsibilities honorably and fairly, we would like to think more deeply and Scripturally about certain areas which may be considered matters of purity, including the subsidiary issues of identity/self-conception, sanctification, and Christian freedom.

We understand that there exists a spectrum of beliefs and convictions across the EPC about these matters. As such, the peace of the church is therefore an important consideration, as well. Additionally, it would seem that context is a vitally important variable to consider, which may inform how nuanced our thinking should be.

If the committee is unaware, we have submitted already a separate document to the Ministerial Vocation Committee. Questions to the MVC focused largely on the peace of the church. Questions to the PCT will focus largely on the purity of doctrine. We hope this framework is generally helpful, but we also acknowledge that this division is not entirely neat, and some of the questions and Scripture passages being considered will overlap. We also recognize in appropriate humility that some Scriptures may not be relevant to either. On behalf of the Presbytery of Mid-America, we are grateful to the Permanent Committee on Theology for its willingness to read through this document and consider our request

for guidance and clarity. Our purpose in this communication is to seek your help as we weigh questions and consider relevant Scripture passages that we might discern Biblical principles to shape our thinking.

Questions & Scriptural Considerations

To begin, there has been and continues to be much consternation and confusion over terminology and language, especially as it relates to how those who are same-sex attracted describe their identity and self-conception. Of particular concern for many has been the use of the phrase “gay Christian” or “gay pastor.”¹

At present, we are aware of two ascending overtures in the EPC that address this concern about language. The proposed amendment to the Book of Government, Chapter 9, Section 3 would disqualify from office persons *identifying* as homosexual. The proposed amendment is as follows (italics added for emphasis):

Men and women *who identify as homosexual*, even those who identify as homosexual and claim to practice celibacy in that self-identification, are disqualified from holding office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.²

Because the words we use to describe our identity and/or self-conception seems to be of paramount importance, perhaps we should start here.

As we prepare to examine Memorial’s TE’s and RE’s, we will seek to discover what the pastors and Session of Memorial believe about the use and meaning of the phrases “gay Christian” and “gay pastor” as means of identity. As we consider their position, we must do business with deeper questions. Does the Bible speak to “identity” language? There are certainly theological categories for a Christian ontology, but does the Bible provide permissions or prohibitions related to Christian phenomenology?

¹ We recommend to the committee an introductory section of Greg Johnson’s book *Still Time to Care* (Zondervan, 2021). At the beginning, pages xxi-xxiii, there is a brief excursus entitled “A Note about Terminology” that is worth reading. TE Greg Johnson has stated that he avoids using the couplet “gay Christian” because it confuses some people. In the aforementioned book, TE Johnson never uses the phrase “gay Christian” self-referentially. The occasion it does appear is in referring to a group of people who do identify as such. TE Johnson explains why he avoids that couplet in a Semper Ref interview here: <https://www.semperref.org/articles/an-interview-with-greg-johnson> (See Question: Do you call yourself a Gay Christian? Why or why not?). See also the PCA SJC’s report on TE Johnson, p. 16 middle and p.17, bottom: <https://byfaithonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2020-12-Speck-Decision-ann-Complaint-10.21.2021-1.pdf>. Interestingly, the report characterizes the complaint against TE Johnson as follows: “TE Johnson may not describe himself as a ‘gay Christian’ personally and publicly, but he never declares such a self-designation to be wrong and contrary to God’s Word. He refuses to do so” (p.16, top). Finally, in an email exchange with TE Johnson, he clarified: “The only time I’ve said “gay pastor” was not actually me — it was *USA Today* staff inventing a catchy title for an article in which I never actually used that phrase — all without consulting me about it. Granted, the phrase is published under my name, so perhaps I just have to live with that one. To be clear, I will use either the term “gay” or the phrase “same sex attracted” depending on what I sense my audience will be more likely to understand.”

² All sin is rooted in disordered desire. Does an inclination toward homosexual attraction deserve its own special category in our Book of Order? The focus of this proposed amendment would seem to indicate so.

Questions and Scriptures on Identification with Sin/Sinners

We are interested in questions and Scripture passages that may speak to the use of the word “identity” as such language raises questions of biblical anthropology. The words “identity,” “identify,” and “identification” come up often in the Memorial Presbyterian conversations because of how TE Greg Johnson has described himself. A baseline question in this examination is this: is it sinful for a pastor to “identify” with sin (and sinners)? Consequently, should such a designation disqualify him from ordination? Understandably, the role of pastor is an important position of leadership in the church, and his view of identity, especially his own identity, will shape the work of the church. We think of Paul’s exhortation to his protégé in 1 Timothy 3:2, that “an overseer must be above reproach.” What qualifies as *below* reproach? Does identifying as gay place TE Johnson below Paul’s threshold?

Biblical Use of the Words “Identity,” “Identify,” and “Identification”

We note that a review of an NIV Concordance shows no instances of the word “identity,” “identify,” or “identification” in the NIV Bible. The ESV has two instances of the word “identify,” both referring to identifying lost objects (Genesis 37:32 and 38:25).

Biblical Use of the Concept of Identity

The absence of the specific words “identity,” “identify,” and “identification” does not end the matter. Are there other words used in Scripture which are good parallels to “identity,” “identify,” and/or “identification” to which we should pay heed? How can we ask questions that get to a pastor’s or elder’s sense of self-conception as a sinner saved by grace using Biblical language?

On the present facts as we are developing them, we think it necessary and wise to distinguish between three positions: practicing homosexuality; approving of homosexual practices; and identifying as homosexual but not practicing or approving of homosexual acts.

Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and a substantial volume of other Scriptures condemn practicing homosexuality. Romans 1:32 condemns the approval of a list of sinful acts, including among those sinful acts the practice of homosexuality. In addition to Scriptures which address practicing homosexuality and the approval of homosexuality, are there Scriptures which condemn identifying as homosexual? If not, is “identifying as homosexual” or “identifying as a gay pastor” by itself sin where that identification is voiced without also practicing homosexuality or approving homosexual practice? We have not yet found Scriptures that flatly condemn “identifying as homosexual” (to use the modern parlance). Even so, does the practice of identifying as a “gay Christian” or “gay pastor”

send mixed, problematic signals to a culture that so idolizes sexual expression?³ Is TE Johnson building a bridge of communication with the lost and hurting world by leveraging familiar language? Or is he harming the Gospel's witness by way of compromise?

Jesus' ministry required His radical identification with sinners. The humiliation of Christ described in Philippians 2 is His identification with sinful humanity. Jesus did not need to be baptized for the forgiveness of sin; He was tempted in every way like we are, but did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Why was Jesus baptized? In one sense, it was anointing for His earthly ministry. But was the purpose of His baptism not also in part Him self-identifying with sinners? (Along the same lines, see Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 15:33-34; John 12:23-24; Romans 5:12-19; Philippians 2:6-11, and other Scriptures on baptism, as well as the meaning of the cross.) Jesus identified Himself with sinners by going to the cross, but again, without committing sin. If this is so, can we deny ordination to a pastor because he identifies with sinners, if he neither practices nor approves of their sin?

As Christians and Christian leaders, we should tread lightly here. We are warned not to add burdens to people beyond the requirements of the Gospel (Matthew 23:4), and that God's righteous judgment will fall on those who condemn others but practice the same things themselves (Romans 2:1-3). It is likely we have committed sins similar to those at issue here in our own thought lives (Matthew 5:21-22 and 27-30).

Questions and Scriptures on Self-Conception in Light of Old and New Identities

Is it sinful for a believer or pastor to identify by/with the struggle against sin in the person's life?

There are passages in Scripture where a person is thoroughly transformed by the work of God and is identified by a new name which reflects a change in what we might call identity. Abram's name is changed to Abraham, "Father of Many Nations," in Genesis 17:5. Simon's name is changed to Peter, "the Rock," in Matthew 16:17-18. Should every Christian therefore refer to himself or herself only by his or her new identity in Christ? The vast majority of Christians do not receive a new name. As such, are these name changes prescriptive or descriptive?

We note that Paul compares his old personhood to his new personhood. See 2 Corinthians 5:20, "[I]f anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here." But he also describes himself in present tense as the worst, or chief, among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). In Romans 7:21-25, Paul says he is in the middle of an ongoing battle with the pull of sin ("Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?") Paul gives us hope but he does not identify himself as a man who no longer struggles with his old nature. Paul is testifying to the reality that he is two things

³ Even as we have established (page 2, footnote 1) that TE Johnson avoids using these phrases.

simultaneously: presently in Christ and yet also still in Adam (Romans 5-7). If Paul refers to himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), should we deny ordination to a pastor for using language that foregrounds his sin struggle rather than his new life in Christ?

Questions and Scriptures on Sanctification

We call these Scriptures to the attention of the Theology Committee because we need a proper understanding of the sanctification process.

As discussed in the paragraph immediately above, some Scriptures seem to indicate that life change will take hold immediately or in a relatively short time frame following repentance, while other Scriptures indicate that change will be slow, even lifelong. Romans 6:1-3 says that we are not to continue in sin, that we who died to sin can no longer live in it. But in the very next chapter Paul acknowledges that he does not do the things he wants, but he keeps on doing the evil things he does not want to do (Romans 7:18-19). We note passages on the mortification of sin such as Romans 6 and the work of the Spirit to bring us to holiness (Galatians 5). We note also that there are what Christians may refer to as "besetting sin," a description we may understand, but the term is not used in Scripture.

Though we know life change is difficult, we may be hesitant to endorse a Gospel which lacks power to change lives. Are there Scriptures which can help us sort out when (and to what degree) we should expect transformation for Christians? Ceasing to use certain self-identifying language does not put an end to one's inner temptations and struggles against sin. Are we sure we want to raise the phenomenological bar to a height that may unhelpfully obscure the ontological realities of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Questions and Scriptures and the Book of Order on Evangelism as the Church's Primary Mission

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. We note that the EPC's Book of Order, Section 4-3 states, "It is the primary duty of the local church to evangelize, making disciples both at home and abroad..."

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul writes (underlined for emphasis)...

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. [20] To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. [21] To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. [22] To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all

people, that by all means I might save some. [23] I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Paul “identifies” with all kinds of people. “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some...” (1 Corinthians 9:22). How far does this identification extend? Paul becomes like – *identifies with* – people of different status: Jews, Gentiles, and the weak, to save some. Might Paul also identify with sinners to save them? We remember that Jesus was identified (by others) as a drunkard (Luke 7:34), a Samaritan (John 8:48), demon-possessed (John 7:20), and a sinner (John 9:24). Interestingly, Jesus never denies or rejects these associations, however offensive or inaccurate they were.

Above we suggested that Jesus identified with sinners in His ministry. By the Book of Order, we recognize the primary duty of the church to be evangelism, and by the passage in 1 Corinthians 9 we understand that Paul identified with various kinds of people to win them to salvation. Can we deny ordination to a pastor who identifies his struggles with sin for the purpose of winning others to the Gospel?

*Questions, Scriptures, and the Book of Order
on the Peace of the Church and Christian Freedom*

Acts 15 and Galatians 2, 5 and 6 address the circumcision controversy. The Judaizers wanted to impose circumcision on the Gentile believers. What is the essence of the Gospel, and what is extraneous to the Gospel? What is Christian freedom and how important is that freedom?

In Genesis 15 and 17 God introduced the Abrahamic covenant. By Genesis 17:9-14, God declared circumcision to be the mark of the covenant, that failure to be circumcised is a breach of the covenant and that any male not circumcised is cut off from the covenant. But in Acts 15, the council decides new Gentile believers need not be circumcised. The importance of outreach to the Gentiles and not placing burdens on new believers eclipsed the importance of circumcision, even though Genesis states that failure to be circumcised would cut offenders off from covenant blessing.

In this situation, Paul called Peter, James, and others to account for adding conditions to the Gospel. Galatians is so very strong in its condemnation of those who want to add works to the Gospel. “Who has bewitched you?” (Galatians 3:1, cf. 5:7). “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6). “The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be” (Galatians 5:10). “I wish they [the Judaizers seeking to add circumcision as a condition for Gentiles] would go the whole way and emasculate themselves” (Galatians 5:12 – Wow!).

Is it accurate to understand that the circumcision controversy teaches that (1) there should be no impediments to outreach to those not saved which are not absolutely essential to the Gospel? And, (2) Christian freedom should not be limited by those who advocate making even important conditions to the Gospel (though with the following caveat)?

The Book of Order, Sections 2-3 and 25-2-A are worthy of review. These uphold Christian freedom by (paraphrasing here) providing that the Scriptures are the ultimate rule of faith and practice and that the Church may create no laws which bind the conscience; and that no person may be rejected for ordination except for heresy or unless the matter obstructs the governance of the Church or exceeds the bounds of the Essentials, the Westminster Standards, and the Book of Order.

Questions and Scriptures on Limits to Christian Freedom for the Peace of the Church

Finally, we turn to 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 and Romans 14:13-23, by which Paul assists the early church to navigate the offense of consuming food sacrificed to idols and, by this circumstance, sets limits on Christian freedom. Some Christians in the Corinthian church were eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols. Paul advised generally that the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols was permissible because the idols are not true gods, but everything is the Lord's. However, if a Christian were to cause a weaker brother to stumble by eating such meat, the stronger brother should abstain from eating.

By these passages we are to understand that the freedom we have in Christ is limited if the exercise of that freedom is deleterious to the conscience of another. If the Pastor of Memorial should decline to make changes, or if the Session of Memorial Presbyterian should decline to make changes which the Presbytery of Mid-America believes to be necessary or appropriate for the benefit of the joint consciences of other churches, would the Presbytery of Mid-America be justified in declining to accept Memorial's petition pursuant to the principles of submission developed in 1 Corinthians 10 and Romans 14?

We hope this review of Scriptures will be helpful, and we look forward to advice on these and other Scriptures which will contribute to determinations that will glorify God and be wise for others.

Summary

1. In light of the modern parlance of "sexual identity" to describe one's self-conception, does the Bible provide permissions or prohibitions related to Christian phenomenology and its attendant language?

2. In consideration of the Scriptural requirement that “an overseer must be above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2), how are we to properly understand progressive sanctification in view of Romans 8:13b (“[...] if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”) and other Scriptures?
3. According to the testimony of Scripture, the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 6, § 2-6), Westminster Larger Catechism (Question 99, A.1 – A.2 and Question 194), and Westminster Shorter Catechism (Questions 16 and 18), what is our position on concupiscence and its relationship to repentance and obedience, leading to righteousness (see Romans 6:16-18)?

Conclusion

The officers of the Presbytery of Mid-America are seeking to honor the EPC, the Presbytery of Mid-America, and Memorial Presbyterian Church as we consider their petition to join our denomination. We understand that these are difficult and complex questions which require answers full of careful nuance and thoughtful clarity. Even as we discuss this matter among ourselves, our minds and hearts are drawn to Christ Jesus, who so wonderfully and perfectly sought and saved the lost, doing so in ways that dignified sinners without endorsing their sin. We desire only to follow faithfully in His footsteps. We understand that incarnational ministry can be “messy” at times. Even so, as Presbyterians whose connectionalism resists the autonomous spirit of the age, our responsibility to one another is itself an important witness to a lost and hurting world.

Humbly submitted, for Christ and His Kingdom,

RE Jack Bragg, *The Crossing*

RE Steve Hurst, *Central Presbyterian Church*

RE Ed Koehler, *Central Presbyterian Church*

RE Jay McGhee, *Brookdale Presbyterian Church*

RE Steve Ward, *Greentree Community Church*

RE Tom Werner, *Greentree Community Church*

TE Nathan Arnold, *The Bridge North County*

TE Jordan Dayoub, *River City Church*

TE Michael Morefield, *Gashland EPC*

TE Christopher Seah, *Brazeau & Faith Presbyterian Churches*

TE Mike Werkheiser, *City Church*

OVERTURE 2 From the Presbytery of Mid-America

Whereas, as ordained teaching and ruling elders we take vows promising subjection to our fellow Presbyters in the Lord and promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the peace and purity of the church (BOG 13-5A); and

Whereas, we are called by Scripture to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3);

Therefore, be it resolved that the Presbytery of Mid-America overtures the 44th General Assembly of the EPC to direct the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how churches and Presbyteries are to promote and preserve the peace of the church as it relates to the following questions:

1. To what degree (if any) should a local church's philosophy of ministry be subordinated to the will of the Presbytery if that philosophy causes or might cause division and disunity among member churches?
2. On what basis shall a Presbytery determine whether any instance of evangelistic effort or outreach unique to a local church threatens the peace, purity, and unity of the Presbytery or the EPC?
3. In the interest of outreach/hospitality to the unchurched community, shall we allow sessions in our denomination to permit use of church resources by non-Christian groups or individuals with perspectives that are at odds with God's design? If so, under what circumstances?

Adopted unanimously the Presbytery of Mid-America at its 99th Stated Meeting, April 24, 2024 at The Crossing, Columbia, Missouri.

Dexter A. Kuhlman

Attested by Dexter A. Kuhlman, Stated Clerk





Questions for the Ministerial Vocation Committee

SUBMITTED BY:

The Presbytery of Mid-America

February 2024

Prologue

Memorial Presbyterian Church (<http://www.memorialpca.org>) formerly of the PCA, has petitioned to enter the Evangelical Presbyterian Church via the Presbytery of Mid-America. The Church Development and Ministerial Committees, which are responsible for examining the teaching and ruling elders of Memorial Presbyterian Church, are requesting guidance from the Ministerial Vocation Committee to aid us in those examinations.

Context

If the committee members are unaware, Memorial Presbyterian Church operates a ministry known as The Chapel (<https://www.chapelvenue.com>). In March 2020, Memorial Presbyterian Church released an open letter, written with the purpose of answering questions about the work and ministry of The Chapel. The letter says The Chapel is “about Christians serving artists with the welcome of Jesus.” The letter also states that Memorial does not endorse art at The Chapel.¹

In the past, controversy arose around certain theater acts that were hosted at The Chapel, most notably a group named *Transluminare*. (Video segments for context: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvfb6TG6Kic> and <https://www.youtube.com/@theqcollective5485>.) We understand *Transluminare* to be an outside group not formally endorsed by Memorial, and not a large proportion of The Chapel’s use.

¹ In a recent email exchange with TE Johnson, he stated: “I realize there may be little difference to many (most?) believers, but we have tried to distinguish between (a) plays written by transgender playwrights (and others) that explore their complex experience, and (b) “activist” art that actively encourages transitioning. We have a policy of not hosting “activist” art, and so when an LGBT theatre company asked us to host several plays that we felt crossed that line, we declined. We also declined to host a drag show when asked. Even *Transluminare* was right on the line of what we considered appropriate for our venue. With mixed feelings, we have since declined to host that event again out of concern for the peace of the broader church.”

The Missouri Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America launched a formal investigation into The Chapel, but the congregation of Memorial Presbyterian Church voted to leave the PCA before a formal judgment was able to be rendered. Even so, some preliminary findings of that investigative committee were published (see <https://www.mopres.org/publications>).

We have only begun our committees' formal examination of the facts related to Memorial Presbyterian Church, and the ministry of The Chapel in particular. We want to properly balance the values of outreach to those outside the church with the responsibility to maintain peace, purity, and unity. The guidance we are requesting is primarily in developing principles which will enable the Church Development and Ministerial Committees to pose examination questions for Memorial Presbyterian Church and provide recommendations for Presbytery to balance those values.

Questions

As the members of our Church Development and Ministerial Committees prepare to examine Memorial Presbyterian Church's teaching and ruling elders, we find ourselves wrestling with the proper way to think through differences in philosophies of ministry. When the form and manner of one church's evangelistic outreach is interpreted by another church (or churches) as crossing a line morally, ethically, and/or theologically, how are we to determine what is right or permissible?

1. To what degree (if any) should a local church's philosophy of ministry be subordinated to the will of the Presbytery if said philosophy causes division and disunity among member churches?

Our Book of Government, Chapter 18, Section 3, in explaining the authority and responsibilities of a local church session, states clearly that the first business of the church is to "initiate the ministry of evangelism" (18.3.C). Surely, the ministry of evangelism will look differently depending on the context. Outreach to a rural community is going to look very different from outreach in a bustling city center which will look very different from outreach in a suburban neighborhood. Therefore...

2. How shall a Presbytery determine whether the particular instantiation of evangelism unique to a local church threatens the peace, purity, and unity of the Presbytery or the EPC?

It is the session of teaching and ruling elders that set the missional agenda for the church. As we examine Memorial's elders, who have historically defended the ministry known as The Chapel, how do we adjudicate what may be, to some, a matter of style in a specific

context but, to others, a concern about compromising the orthodoxy and integrity of the church's public witness?

What is more, ownership and property rights afford churches in the EPC a measure of sovereignty regarding what they do in their spaces (facilities and/or land). While we desire to honor and preserve those rights, we are curious about the wisdom of limitations and accountability and how such things might be administered.

3. In the interest of outreach to the unchurched community, shall we allow teaching and ruling elders in our denomination to permit use of church resources by non-Christian groups or individuals with perspectives that are at odds with God's design? If so, under what circumstances?

In the EPC's Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality, in a section offering guidance on how Christians should think, speak, and act in ways that honor Christ among family, friends, and neighbors who are same-sex attracted (SSA), it asks a direct question, followed by a comprehensive answer. On page 23, it states: "What are ways that our participation in the lives of SSA family and friends could compromise our commitment to Christ? *In general, anything that communicates, either explicitly or implicitly, support for sexual immorality of any sort would be inappropriate for the Christian*" (italics and underline added for emphasis).²

Conclusion

The officers of the Presbytery of Mid-America are seeking to honor the EPC, the Presbytery of Mid-America, and Memorial Presbyterian Church as we consider their petition to join our denomination. We understand that these are difficult and complex questions which require answers full of careful nuance and thoughtful clarity. Even as we discussed this matter among ourselves, our minds and hearts were drawn to Christ Jesus, who so wonderfully and perfectly sought and saved the lost, doing so in ways that dignified sinners without endorsing their sin. We desire only to follow faithfully in His footsteps. We understand that incarnational ministry can be "messy" at times. Even so, as Presbyterians whose connectionalism resists the autonomous spirit of the age, our responsibility to one another is itself an important witness to a lost and hurting world.

Humbly submitted, for Christ and His Kingdom,

RE Jack Bragg, *The Crossing*

RE Steve Hurst, *Central Presbyterian Church*

RE Ed Koehler, *Central Presbyterian Church*

RE Jay McGhee, *Brookdale Presbyterian Church*

² It would seem the word "support" needs far greater clarity and definition for this guidance to be interpreted rightly.

RE Steve Ward, *Greentree Community Church*
RE Tom Werner, *Greentree Community Church*
TE Nathan Arnold, *The Bridge North County*
TE Jordan Dayoub, *River City Church*
TE Michael Morefield, *Gashland EPC*
TE Christopher Seah, *Brazeau & Faith Presbyterian Churches*
TE Mike Werkheiser, *City Church*



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-32 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from the Presbytery of the Central South

The **Presbytery of Central South** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly seeking a moderator appointed Ad-Interim Committee to study and address the items surrounding same-sex attraction, as well as to update the EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality.

[Overture from Central South](#)

Overture of the Presbytery of the Central South To the 44th General Assembly of the EPC

Whereas: Within our present society we have a quickly changing landscape of sexual norms and the Church is often reactive rather than pro-active in its application of Biblical truth.

Whereas: One of the questions confronting the church is to what extent can a professing Christian identify with a sinful desire.

Whereas: The General Assembly has not given clear, definitive guidance regarding identity in relation to sexuality as these issues were not addressed in the 2017 Position Paper on Human Sexuality.

Whereas: We desire to have a broad representation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church consider the questions of identity, the extent of sanctification, concupiscence, and Side B Christianity in light of Holy Scripture.

Therefore, be it resolved, that Central South Presbytery overture the 44th General Assembly of the EPC to “take under advisement” and for the moderator to appoint an ad interim study committee that broadly represents the EPC to update the Position Paper on Human Sexuality to include, but not be limited to the issues of: Side B Christianity, the theological issues surrounding same-sex attraction, especially when it is experienced by professed believers, “Identity” in relation to sexual orientation, and the limits in the process of sanctification that this use of “identity” implies. This study committee will report back to the 45th General Assembly with their initial findings and to the 46th General Assembly to present their final report.



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-33 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from the Presbytery of the Gulf South

The **Presbytery of Gulf South** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.

[Overture from Gulf South](#)

From: revmike1101@gmail.com
To: [Dean Weaver](#); [Zenaida Bermudez](#)
Cc: ["John Carter"](#)
Subject: Concurrence with Mid-America Overture #1
Date: Saturday, April 27, 2024 7:05:37 PM

Dean and Zenaida,

At its 30th stated meeting held at the First Presbyterian Church of Pascagoula, Mississippi on April 26, the Presbytery of the Gulf South concurred with the 1st overture adopted by the Presbytery of Mid-America at its 99th stated meeting held on April 24th: “The Presbytery of Mid-America overtures the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence, and to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how these concepts apply to the examination of officers.” Let me know if you require any further information concerning this concurrence.

Rev. Michael Herrin
Stated Clerk, Presbytery of the Gulf South
Evangelical Presbyterian Church



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-34 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from the Presbytery of the West

The **Presbytery of West** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly seeking to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.

[Overture from POW](#)

Overture From Presbytery of the West:

Approved: That the 44th General Assembly direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards with respect to the doctrines of identity, progressive sanctification, concupiscence (inclination to sin), as well as any other matters relevant to the ordination of EPC officers, and to recommend to the 45th General Assembly such documents and/or actions as it deems prudent.



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-35 *(to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)*
Overture from the Presbytery of the Alleghenies

The **Presbytery of Alleghenies** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly seeking to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence.

[Overture from Alleghenies](#)

From Covenant Presbyterian Church, Sharon, PA Ascending Overture

The Covenant Presbyterian Church overtures the General Assembly to conduct a review of existing EPC positions, letters and other guidance to assess their adequacy in addressing issues of human sexuality. Further, it is requested the General Assembly develop any proposed recommended changes to existing document to address the implications of same-sex attraction, self-identification and concupiscence, particularly as they relate to ordination standards.

Rationale

New River recently offered an overture to specifically identify homosexuality as a prohibition against ordination prompted by a potential action by the Mid-America presbytery. While the intent of such an action is clear, many terms related to human sexuality have recently come to the fore and clouded the understanding of God-ordained human sexuality. The Central Carolina Presbytery has recently requested that any actions by Mid-America be delayed until the EPC has had time to carefully study, consider and recommend appropriate adjustment to our documentation to assist presbyteries in their examination and ordination standards. This overture seeks to formalize a request that the GA conduct such an activity so that upon review, discussion and prayer, the entire EPC family may of one mind on this difficult and potentially divisive issue.



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

44-36 (to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)
From the Permanent Judicial Committee

The **Permanent Judicial Committee** recommends that the 44th General Assembly **REFER** amending the *Book of Government* section 9-3 to the Permanent Committee on Theology and the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for their consideration and that Overture **44-37** be answered by this action.

Rationale: The PJC recognizes the importance of maintaining the highest biblical standards for officers of the church and how those standards help to uphold the peace, unity, and purity of the church. The PJC believes that theological definition of terms and doctrines not currently found in our constitution or position papers (**G. 25-2.A**) should be determined by the highest court of the church so as to be consistent with our confessional standards and then applied to the examinations of officers, and should be informed by the analysis of the Permanent Committees on Theology and Ministerial Vocation.

www.epc.org/2024report-pjc

44-37 (to the Ministerial Vocation Standing Committee)
Overture from The Presbytery of New River

The **Presbytery of New River** respectfully **OVERTURES** the 44th General Assembly to **APPROVE** amending the *Book of Government* 9-3.

Current Language	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>9-3 Life and character of officers</p> <p>A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.⁵²</p> <p>B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.</p>	<p>9-3 Life and character of officers</p> <p>A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.⁵²</p> <p>B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.</p> <p>C. <i>Men and women who identify as homosexual, even those who identify as homosexual and claim to practice celibacy in that self-identification, are disqualified from holding office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.</i></p>



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

Rationale: Scripture clearly identifies homosexual practices as sin. The EPC Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality further specifies that: “Those who make their SSA [Same Sex Attraction] tendencies their primary identity are not comprehending and embracing their full identity as image bearers of God.” The additional wording in **G9-3.C** incorporates that understanding in assessing the life and character of those being considered for holding office in the church.

[Overture from New River](#)

OVERTURE from Princeton Presbyterian Church
“Amend **G.9-3** to Disqualify from Office Persons Identifying as Homosexual”

Whereas, God created Adam and Eve and ordained the first marriage and family consisting of one man and one woman in sexual union, establishing the context for the biblical sexual ethic (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:24; 4:1); and

Whereas, God has established the one flesh sexual union between a husband and wife, as a great mystery in reference to Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:25; 31-32); and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures declare that the sexual union and desire between one man and one woman, in the covenant of marriage, is righteous and holy, and all other sexual activity is unrighteous and sinful, including homosexuality, which the Holy Scriptures describe as “degrading passions” (Rom. 5:18-19; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6 9-11; Eph. 5:3-5; Heb. 13:4, *WCF* 24:1 & 2; *WLC* 138,139); and

Whereas, the application of the 7th Commandment forbids the sins of homosexuality, unnatural lusts, and unclean affections, affirming that homosexual acts and the desires to commit those acts are both sinful (*Matt.* 5:27-28; *WLC* 139); and

Whereas, the Biblical qualifications for a church officer require him to be “above reproach” and the “husband of one wife,” officers and candidates for office must conform their lives to Biblical sexual ethics, which include denying and mortifying all sexual passions and desires toward anyone to whom they are not married (1 Tim. 3:2); and

Whereas, identification as a “homosexual,” is sinful and against nature itself, is something God detests, and is not fitting for an officer of the Church of Christ (*Lev.* 18:22; 1 Tim. 28 3:2; Titus 1:5-6); and

Whereas, the Christian’s identity is rooted in Christ so that he is a “new creation” in Him, his identity cannot be defined by sexual and/any other desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self conception (“this is who I am”) and their remaining indwelling sin (“this is what I must daily mortify”) (*Rom* 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:1-5); and

Whereas, the sexual revolution and LGBTQ+ movement are infiltrating many quarters of the Church and causing no small amount of confusion; and

Whereas, the *Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality* adopted by the 38th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in order to guide the churches within the EPC affirms that “Those who make their S[ame] S[ex] A[ttractive] tendencies their primary identity are not comprehending and embracing their full identity as image bearers of God.”

Therefore, be it resolved that Princeton Presbyterian Church overtures the 005 Meeting of the New River Presbytery, to overture the 44th General Assembly of the Evangelical

Presbyterian Church to amend the Book of Government Chapter 9 such that a new clause, G.9-3C, be added which reads as follows (new words underlined):

C. Men and women who identify as homosexual, even those who identify as homosexual and claim to practice celibacy in that self-identification, are disqualified from holding office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Adopted by the Princeton Presbyterian Church at a called meeting 28 January, 20024.

Attested by /s/ Lawrence D Emerson, Clerk of Session

44-38 (to the floor)
Communication

The Moderator of the 43rd General Assembly recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the 2024-2025 Chairman for the BRI Board of Directors and the slate of nominees to fill vacancies on the Permanent Nominating Committee.

June 2024
Dr. Dean Weaver, Stated Clerk
Evangelical Presbyterian Church
5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 510
Orlando, FL 32822

Dear Dean,

The *Rules for Assembly* 11-3 stated that the Moderator is to appoint a Chairman for the Nominating Committee, and to nominate persons to fill vacancies on the Nominating Committee. The Moderator is also to nominate the Chairman for the BRI Board of Directors for the forthcoming Assembly. I am pleased to offer the following individuals:

1. Appointments: 2024-2025 Chairman Nominating Committee
 TE Rob Sparr (Presbytery of the Alleghenies)


2. Nominations: Nominating Committee

Name	Presbytery	Class
TE Joshua Hurd	Pacific Northwest	2027
RE Annie Weston	Mid-America	2027
RE Stacey Miller	Coastal Mid-Atlantic	2027
RE Christine Deane	Pacific Southwest	2027
RE Tommy Jordan	Southeast	2027

3. Nominations: 2024-2025 Chairman, BRI Board of Directors

RE Michael Busch	Alleghenies	2026
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It is my blessing and privilege to place these names before the Assembly and in so doing to commend these fine people for service to our denomination and to our Lord.



Joe Kim
Moderator, 43rd General Assembly

44-39 (to the floor)
From the Presbytery Review Committee

The Presbytery Review Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the Exceptions requiring responses and found in the 2023 minutes of 11 of our 16 Presbyteries.

Alleghenies

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Alleghenies be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. Date of ordination/installation of TE Fixari not recorded. 47, p.956, 47-14C, **G.** 13-1A. **G.** 21-1C.2.b
- b. No definite period of time set for TE Adrian Ciganic and TE Bob Cummings. 45, p.863, 45-11A. TE Suzanne Zampella, 46, p.919, 46-13A, and TE Tanner Fixari, 47, p.955, 47-14B. **G.** 10-8B.2a

Central Carolinas

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No review of Session Minutes recorded. 2nd, 3rd & 4th meetings. **G.** 19-4A7. *Acts of Assembly* 07-08
- b. Dismissal of Ridgecrest Presbyterian, Locust, NC. No details provided on previous steps or whether to independence or another denomination. 4th, 04-35.4A, p. 26. **G.** 5. 1 through 10., **G.** 19-4A.3
- c. Change in call for TE Logan Keck to Lead Pastor. No record of a congregational vote. Also Lead Pastor is not a valid title, only Pastor. Same issue with title in paragraph k. 4th, 04-35.3J, p. 26, **G.** 9-5A.1, **G.** 10-6B, *Acts of Assembly* 02-04
- d. TE Kevin Hartley's position on Westminster not recorded. 2nd, 02-24, p. 12&13, also TE Gabriel Swing's. 3rd, 03-24, p. 11, **G.** 12-4
- e. TE Dr. Mark Hunter: Period of time not specified. 4th, 04-33, p. 24&24, **G.** 10-8B.2a
- f. Session endorsement not recorded for candidates Katie Piquette and Chandler Owens; length of membership duration not recorded. 3rd, 03-22, p. 10, **G.** 11-2 and **G.** 19-4B2
- g. No record of membership of Ministerial Committee. **G.** 21-2

Central South

The Committee recommends that the minutes of the Presbytery of the Central South be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No mention that Michael Wey's Pastoral relationship with 1st Blytheville church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 118, pg. 1015-1016, 118.08.3b, 118.08.4c., **G.** 14-1.B.
- b. No specific duties listed for TE Eli Morris, TE David Morris, TE Larry Lloyd, and TE Chad Johnson. 118, pg. 1018, 118.10, 120, pg. 1059, 120.20, 119, pg. 1032, 119.12, **G.** 10-5, **G.** 10-6.A.
- c. No defined time period for TE Hunter Bailey serving out of bounds. 118, pg. 1022, 118.22, 120, pg. 1052-1053, 120.07f. **G.** 10-8.b.2.A
- d. No mention that Bill Thompson's Pastoral relationship with Grace Presbyterian church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 120, pg. 1050, 120.07.07.3.c. **G.** 14-1.B
- e. No mention that David Fischler's Pastoral relationship with First Presbyterian Church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 120, pg. 1050, 120.07.3.d., **G.** 14-1.B
- f. No mention that Matt Miller's Pastoral relationship with Woodland Presbyterian church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 120, pg. 1050, 120.07.3.f, **G.** 14-1.B.
- g. No mention that Richard Rieves's Pastoral relationship with Downtown church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 120, pg. 1050, 120.07.3g, **G.** 14-1.B.

Coastal Mid-Atlantic

The Committee recommends that the minutes of the Presbytery of the Coastal Mid-Atlantic be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No record of closing in prayer. 4, no p.#, 1.12.11, **G.** 16-1A
- b. Parity details provided, but no names. 2, no pg.#, 1.22, 3, no pg.#, 1.04, 4, no pg.#, 1.07, **G.** 19-2A.4b, *Acts of Assembly* 05-08
- c. No details of Omnibus motion recorded. 2, no pg.#, 1.24, 4, no pg.#, 1.13.06.02
- d. Reported that 13 of 36 churches submitted minutes; no names recorded. No mention of Session Records Reviews. 2, no pg.#, 1.12, 3, 4, **G.** 19-4A7, *Acts of Assembly* 07-08
- e. Candidate Josh Woltmann's position on Westminster standards not recorded. No statement that he had no exceptions. 2, no pg.#, 1.23. **G.** 12-4, *Acts of Assembly* 03-04
- f. No details recorded on the transfer of TE Josh Woltmann from Gulf South. 2, no pg.#, 1.23, **G.** 14-1B
- g. TE Josh Woltmann – no period of time recorded. 2, no pg.#, 1.23. 3, pg.7, 1.15. **G.** 10-8B.2a

- h. “TE Taylor for the MC then recommended TE “Gutty” Guttridge as pastor at Hopewell EPC.” No explanation for why a call did not come from Hopewell. No date & time for installation. 4, pg.9, 1.13.06.03, **G.10-3, G.10-4, G.13-1A. G.21-1C.2.b**
- i. Candidate Bryan Lees: No name of church where he is a member, no record of Session endorsement, no record of advisor. 3, no pg.#, 1.16. **G. 11-2 H, I, & J. Acts of Assembly 02-04**
- j. Candidate Dan Yoon: No record of Session endorsement or of advisor. 4, no pg.#, 13.05. **G. 11-2 H, I, & J. Acts of Assembly 02-04**
- k. Minutes of meetings 2 & 4 not signed. 2, 4. **G. 19-5D**
- l. No record of membership of Ministerial Committee. 2. **G. 21-2**

East

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the East be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No primary responsibilities or definite period of time listed for TE Tyler Stanhope. 127, pg. 2, 127-14C, **G. 10-6.A.**
- b. Advisor assigned to each Candidate coming under care – none listed. 129, pg. 2, 13C, **G. 11-2E.**
- c. No mention that TE Rob Norris relationship with Fourth Evangelical Presbyterian church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 127, pg. 3, 127-14D, **G. 14-1.B.**
- d. Minutes shall report an annual review of session records of each church by name. None present in Minutes. 127, 128, and 129, **G. 19-4A7.**
- e. Minutes must report the membership of the Presbytery’s Ministerial Committee at its first meeting each year (or the last meeting of the previous year if elected for the next calendar year at that time). None found. Ministerial membership not listed to determine TE:RE ratio. Two new members only listed in 126. 127, 128, and 129 (126, pg. 001414, 126-33A), **G. 21-2.**
- f. No primary responsibilities listed for TE Tim Chiarot, TE Ken Fanning or TE Marcos Ortega. 127, pg. 6-7, 127-22E, **G. 10-6.A.**
- g. No definite period of time listed for Out of Bounds TE Michael Langer or TE Norman Yung. 129, pg. 5, 129-15B, **G. 10-8.B.2.a.**
- h. No mention that TE Jeffrey Brower relationship with Middle Smithfield EPC was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 129, pg. 3, 129-13D, **G. 14-1.B.**

Florida and the Caribbean

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No opening prayer. 98, pg. 1, 98.01. **G. 16-1.A.**
- b. No primary responsibilities or definite period of time for TE Charlie Halleran. 98, pg. 7-8, 98.07. **G. 10-6.A.**

- c. The stated exceptions for TE Charlie Halleran are not to be reported in the minutes, only the fact that they were approved as stated. 98, pg. 7-8, 98.07. **G.** 12-4.
- d. No primary responsibilities for TE Paul Gibson. 98, pg. 7-8, 98.07. **G.** 10-5.
- e. No mention that TE Joe Tolin relationship with 1st Faith Presbyterian church was dissolved at a Congregation Meeting. 100, pg. 12, 100.11. **G.** 14-1.B.
- f. Administrative Commission should be noted in the Omnibus Motion as part of #6 and doesn't appear to be part of the motion. 98, pg. 8, 98.7. **G.** 10-6.A.
- g. Terms of Call are only items seemingly in the approval noted as "Without Objection. So Ordered". 98, pg. 14, 98.15. **G.** 10-6.A.
- h. Administrative Commission should be noted in the Omnibus Motion as part of #8 and doesn't appear to be part of the motion. 98, pg. 15, 98.15. **G.** 10-6.A.
- i. If the MC has the authority of the Presbytery to act as a Commission, then Presbytery must vote to ratify their actions. MC Committee Actions seem to be reported but not ratified by Presbytery.

Great Plains

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Great Plains be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. It was moved, seconded, and approved that Mainor Arcia Madrigal, a pastor in good standing within Iglesia Comunidad el Camino (Costa Rica), serve as Stated Supply Assistant Pastor. A Stated Supply Pastor must be invited by Session. 29, p.626, 29:06-2, **G.** 10-7A.2a
- b. There was no mention of additional RE's required of some churches to meet 2:1 RE:TE (Parity). All meetings, 28, 29, and 30. **G.** 19-2A.4b, *Acts of Assembly* 05-08
- c. Membership of the Ministerial Committee not recorded to demonstrate the TE/RE ratio. **G.** 21-2

Gulf South

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Gulf South be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. No mention of a Congregational Meeting to dissolve the Pastoral relationship between TE Joshua Hutson and Graceminster Monroe. 27, pg. 155, 27.21. **G.** 14-1.B.
- b. No mention of a Congregational Meeting to dissolve The First Presbyterian Church of Houma. 28, pg. 168, 28.13.2. **G.** 5-9.
- c. Dissolving First Presbyterian Houma – really is described as a merger. No BoO reference. 28, pg. 165, 13. **G.** 5-9

Midwest

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Midwest be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. Matthew Leithen, BJ Newman, No time period for these Out of Bounds calls. 180, pg. 9-10, 180-08. **G.** 10-8B.2a.

Pacific Northwest

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. Mtg 16 – A count of churches (9) whose minutes had been reviewed was recorded but the reviewed churches were not named. Mtg 17 & 18 – Reviewed churches were not named. 16, pg. 312, 16-20, 17, pg. 321, 17-10, 18, pg. 345, 18-8. **G.** 19-4A7, *Acts of Assembly* 07-08.

West

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the West be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- a. The members of the Administrative Commission for Mountain Road were not listed. 128, pg. 8, 128.13. **G.** 21-C.2.b.
- b. The advisors for candidates Morgan and Gaessler were not named. 128, pg. 9, 128.14, **G.** 11-2E.

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[Minutes of the Presbytery Review Committee](#)

44-40 *(to the floor)*
From the Presbytery Review Committee

The Presbytery Review Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** the Exceptions responses of the Presbyteries to those Exceptions sent to them by the 43rd General Assembly.

Rationale: The Presbytery Review Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly approve the responses of the Presbyteries to those Exceptions sent to them by the 43rd General Assembly. Those Presbyteries included: Alleghenies, Central Carolina, Central South, East, Florida & Caribbean, Great Plains, Gulf South, Mid America, Midwest, Pacific NW, Pacific SW, Southeast, and West.

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44-41 *(to the floor)*
Possible Omnibus Motion

Business items coming from Standing Committee that are of a routine nature, such as Committee Minutes, are often put into an Omnibus Consent Motion. This single Motion is then brought to the floor of the Assembly for vote.

The following Committees have no recommendations:

Chaplain Work and Care Committee

www.epc.org/2024report-cwcc

Church Health Leadership Team

www.epc.org/2024report-churchhealth

Church Planting Leadership Team

www.epc.org/2024report-churchplanting

Disaster Relief Committee

www.epc.org/2024report-drc

Next Generation Ministries Council

www.epc.org/2024report-nextgen

Revelation 7:9 Team

www.epc.org/2024report-revelation79

Theology Committee

www.epc.org/2024report-theology

Ad-Interim Committee Domestic Abuse

www.epc.org/2024report-domesticabuse

Ad-Interim Committee Ordination Standards

www.epc.org/2024report-ordinationstandards

Book of Discipline Task Force

www.epc.org/2024report-bookofdiscipline