

## New Covenant EPC- 2024 Budget

Here are a few considerations from the Session's Budget Meeting conversation to share with the congregation:

- The Treasurer estimates that with current giving levels, we will exceed the 2023 budget, and the Lord will bless us with around \$172,000. Additionally, our actual spending has been below the 2023 budget.
- In 2023, thus far, through 3 quarters, 50 family units are making regular contributions, with the average family will give an estimated \$3500 per year.
- Considering the *Know Your Community Report* indicated the median household income of those around us (and likely our congregation as well) to be 10.8% 35-50K and 18.9% 50-75K per year, this \$3500 is possibly below a suggested 10% Tithe. However, the fact that 50 family units have contributed is well above the average of 28% of households in our area that are known to be giving to a church.
- In 2023, we have budgeted \$40,000 for a pastor's salary and housing and an additional \$5,562 in expenses. This is less than what would be needed for a full-time pastor. However, with current expenses, we are \$31,556 to the good through 3 quarters of 2023. Thus, with the current giving level, we would have sufficient funds to support a full-time pastor. (Not at the level that we paid Pastor Chris- in the 2022 budget, the complete compensation package was \$107,224, which included all expenses, medical, and retirement. This was over 50% of that year's total church budget.)
- While you will see budget amounts for the Secretary, Treasurer, Janitor, Children's Director, and Youth Ministry Leader, know these are not Salaries. These individuals are working hourly and are being compensated for the time they are working.
- In November and December Session will be working on Church Rolls. It is estimated that when there are 120+ on the rolls, that number may be closer to 90. With that in mind, the budgeted amounts for the EPC and General Assembly will likely be less.

With these themes in mind, Session has approved a carry-over budget with the addition of one line item as you will see on the reverse side.

Category	2023 Budget	2024 Budget
<b>Payroll Expenses</b>		
Children's Director Salary	4,250	4,250
Janitor Salary	9,984	9,984
Pastor Housing Allowance	24,000	24,000
Pastor Salary	16,200	16,200
Payroll Taxes	5,000	5,000
Secretary Salary	12,480	12,480
Treasurer Salary	4,160	4,160
Youth Ministry Salary	4,160	4,160
<b>Transitional Pastor Expenses</b>		
Pastor 403B	4,062	4,062
Pastor Business Expense	0	0
Pastor Education Allowance	0	0
Pastor Medical Insurance	0	0
Pastor Misc. Medical	0	0
Pastor Travel	1,500	1,500
<b>EPC Expense</b>		
EPC Per Member Asking	1,800	1,800
EPC Women's Ministry	180	180
Presbytery of Alleghenies	1,800	1,800
<b>General Assembly Expense</b>	0	0
<b>Christian Education</b>	2,000	2,000
<b>Evangelism</b>	2,500	2,500
<b>Stewardship</b>	200	200
<b>Worship &amp; Media</b>	2,500	2,500
<b>Property</b>	14,500	14,500
<b>Vehicle Expense</b>	2,000	2,000
<b>Office</b>	3,000	3,000
<b>Property Building Expenses</b>	12,000	12,000
<b>Utilities Expenses</b>	18,000	18,000
<b>Missions Expenses</b>	18,000	18,000
<b>AHG &amp; Trial Life Ministry</b>	0	1,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	164,276	165,276

## **New Covenant EPC Vision Challenge**

Through the visioning process we the members of the Vision Team have become convinced that the Lord our God has already thoroughly equipped our congregation to reach the community around us. In our demographics (age, economic status, social status, etc.) and in our interests (hobbies, values, leisure activities, knowledge, etc.), we are very much like the people in our community – 2/3 of which are unchurched and may not know the Lord Jesus Christ and be destined for eternity in hell.

We believe that the lost and hurting world is longing for a place of real belonging and face to face relationships. Our vision is a vision of reaching the lost and not of wooing people from other congregations to our church. We envision each member personally reaching out to friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and those Christ brings into our lives who do not yet know Jesus. In this concept of friendship or family evangelism, our friendship is attractive and we extend that friendship to our neighbors. We understand that the New Covenant family is grounded solely in Christ and that this is a family into which God is calling people.

At New Covenant, we are not merely a group of families, we are families that are family together and we want to foster this operation and understanding of ourselves in how we do things moving forward – supporting relationships and fellowship across the generations, families, interest groups, and other distinctions within the church.

We want first to be the family of Christ, evident in deep relationships, care, and love for one another and then to invite the unchurched into that light and life. Our vision is to do so using intergenerational activities aimed at creating a bridge to the unchurched through the things that they already have in common with us. For example, a men's ministry opportunity to invite in the unchurched could take the form of a turkey calling seminar, a sportsman's game dinner, or other events of mutual interest and for which we are already well equipped. Likewise, the women are considering inviting women to a bread baking class, for a fall canning event, or a crafting event, all aimed at building bridges to the gospel. We do this because we recognize that while some may not be willing to attend a Bible study, they may be willing to come to an event centered around activities like golf or gardening. It may also be much easier for us to invite our unchurched neighbors and friends to events in which we know they already have an interest. By analogy, we seek to bring in orphans from the street and let them sit down at our family table and experience the oneness that we have in Christ and the difference that He makes in our lives and for this to be the doorway to a longing for the faith we have.

We also feel that an unreached group for whom we may be uniquely equipped may be the physically disabled and those with special needs who are represented strongly in our area. We as a family have room in our midst to reach out specifically to those that are in some ways the least of these our brethren, those who may not be desirable for other churches, but for whom the kingdom of God has always had a prominent place. This is in keeping with our unshakable ethic of life and the worth, worthiness, and intentional creation of each individual just as they present themselves to us, at each phase in their life, and at whatever degree of health or unhealth they find themselves.

## **What does this mean for YOU?**

Women from age 1 to 100, we need you to consider what your interests are, what your lifetime experiences have gifted you to know, what things you could teach right now, how to quiet a fussy 3-year-

old, how to bake bread, how to plant a garden, how to sew curtains, how to groom a horse . . . you get the idea. Many of us have a lifetime of hard-won experience – this is God’s way of gifting us. Be willing to hear about new ministry ideas and be willing to become involved and to invite others. We need you to catch the vision of women being women together and inviting others into our circle of friendship and family in Christ.

Men from age 1 to 100, we need you to consider what your interests are, what your lifetime experiences have gifted you to know, what things you could teach right now, how to clean a gun, how to call a turkey, how to plant a garden, how to build a fire, how to hit out of a sand trap . . . you get the idea. Many of us have a lifetime of hard-won experience – this is God’s way of gifting us. We also need leaders who catch this vision to begin to draw our men together to explore how best to rally around these ministry ideas, discuss them, and move forward. We need you to catch the vision of men being men together and inviting others into our circle of friendship and family in Christ.

Everyone, we need you to consider how you might be called toward ministry to those with special needs. Has the Lord been equipping you in your own family over the years, do you have experience through friends, neighbors, and work, or is the Lord issuing a call in your heart as you read this vision? Can you imagine a special needs summer camp hosted at our church for those who need extra help, who don’t fit in, who struggle to find a place? Can you envision what the Lord had in mind when He led us to put in an elevator and handicapped equipped bathrooms decades ago? We need people with vision in this area to explore and draw together like-minded people.

New Covenant, we need to focus upon, strengthen, and make more visible our alliances and relationships with ministries that share our values and determine those relationships that will best fit with our vision. We need to identify ministries that can support and come alongside the goals we are outlining so that they can become more than simply organizations to which we give, or which use our space, but true ministry partners that affirm and work towards our vision as we do theirs.



*Summary of SWOB Analysis  
for New Covenant  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
1911 Harlansburg Road  
New Castle, PA*

*Introduction*

I began my service as the Transitional Pastor of New Covenant EPC on October 1, 2022. Beginning on October 21<sup>st</sup>, I met with church members for a SWOB analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Barriers). This is an evaluation tool used in times of transition to help churches gain an honest assessment of their current state of affairs. Additionally, the SWOB analysis gives us a way to evaluate New Covenant Church in comparison with the universally accepted standards for church health in the EPC. We learned about these standards at the Church Vitality Seminar held at New Covenant on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, led by the Presbytery of the Alleghenies Church Health Coordinator, Marc De Jeu. 13 people from New Covenant attended the seminar and met twice since then to process what we learned.

The SWOB process involved meeting with individuals and families in the church. The purpose of these meetings was to get to know people and hear directly from them about their perception of New Covenant Church. This took place by formally asking 4 standard questions as well as follow-up questions that arose in the course of the conversation. The goal was to clearly hear people's perception of New Covenant EPC at this time. I met with 50 individuals to attain a solid overview of the congregation and to determine major themes and trends.

The next step in the SWOB process is to analyze the results of the interviews. This is a time to identify themes within each category and isolate the most predominant characteristics of New Covenant Church within those categories. Each category has been divided into three groupings: (1) characteristics mentioned by 10 or more people; (2) characteristics mentioned by 5 or more people; and (3) characteristics mentioned by less than 5 people. The information gathered from the SWOB interviews is confidential and the names of those quoted has been kept anonymous. The Session has examined this report and will present it to the congregation at the Spring Congregational meeting.

The goal of this assessment is to gain an honest assessment of ourselves, identify areas of growth as well as possible mission fields, and what areas need to be addressed to enable New Covenant to become a healthier, more vital church. Session will develop strategies to address pressing concerns and the Vision Team will discern where God is leading New Covenant and who He is calling us to become. Ultimately, this process will create a profile for our next pastor that accurately reflects who we are, our vital needs, and our God-given vision and goals.

Yours in Christ,  
Billy  
Pastor Billy Woodman  
Transitional Pastor

## STRENGTHS

How can we maximize our strengths and build on their solid foundation?  
“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” – *Philippians 4:13*

### FIRST GROUPING: Mentioned by 10 or more people.

**Friendly and Welcoming:** Several people commented on how welcome they felt when they first visited the church. Greeters noticed visitors and connected them with others in the congregation. Members greeted one another warmly prior to worship and during a “meet and greet” time.

**Caring and Loving:** A sense of genuine love and caring for one another existed in the congregation. A close feeling of togetherness existed and deep friendships were forged. People felt connected with each other and the church, genuinely enjoying each other’s company. Many small groups were formed and met regularly.

**Grounded in God’s Word:** New Covenant was founded on the infallible Word of God and the church maintains a high view of Scripture. Strong, Biblical preaching and teaching developed a core of Biblically and theologically literate disciples who take their faith seriously.

**Facility and Property:** The church facility is in excellent condition and well-cared for with a committed group of men on the Property Team who meet weekly to care for the building and grounds. A number of people commented on how the facility has been effectively used in the past but at the same time has unrealized potential for future ministry and outreach given its location and multi-use capability.

### SECOND GROUPING: Mentioned by 5 or more people.

**Pastoral Leadership:** Comments made on strong pastoral leadership largely focused on the ministry of Pastor George and the founding of the church.

**Founding Members:** The commitment and passion of the group that planted the church and built it up was a real strength. One person said, “These people remember our beginning when we started with nothing, not even a roll of TP!” Another commented, “Great hardship led to great unity.”

**Generosity:** Giving generously to the church and community. Giving far more than expected for the new church building and paying it off in 7 years.

**Helpfulness:** Lots of hard workers and people willing to help out when asked and wherever needed. A willingness to “go the extra mile.” A former pastor commented, “I don’t have to do much of anything because all of you do most everything!”

**Mature Believers:** Spiritually mature disciples who “speak the Truth in Love” and encourage one another in their faith. This was exhibited by the large number of adult Sunday school classes pre-Covid.

**Community Outreach:** Examples cited were the Fall Festival, Nerf Nights, After-school program, Sewing Group, and support of Laurel schools such as the tutoring program.

### THIRD GROUPING: Mentioned by less than 5 people.

- Willingness to try new things.
- Desire to see the church grow.
- Prayer-focused.
- Faith and commitment of those members who remain after many others left the church.
- Trail Life and American Heritage Girls Christian Scouting.
- Wonderful spirit.
- Wealth of Wisdom: Elder saints, retired pastors, life experiences, life-long marriages, etc.
- A committed core of members in their 40’s – 60’s.
- Financially sound.
- Solved problems over the years.

## WEAKNESSES

How can we address our weaknesses and minimize their impact?

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” – 2 Corinthians 12:10*

### **FIRST GROUPING:** Mentioned by 10 or more people.

**Poor Communication:** A lack of communication was revealed in a number of different ways. This included not knowing what was going on at the church, a lack of coordination between groups and ministries, ineffective means of communication (verbal, written, social media), and when people left there was a lack of communication regarding why people left. One person put it this way, “The left hand didn’t know what the right hand was doing any more than the left side of the worship center knew what was happening on the right side.”

**Lack of Youth and Young Families:** New Covenant has been home to many young families, children, and youth in the past, but has lost most of its youth. A number of possible reasons were given for this decline, such as a stagnated youth program that was not able or willing to adjust to the needs of the millennial generation. This led to young families leaving.

**Aging Congregation:** As church members have gotten older and gone on to be with the Lord, the lack of younger generations allowed to take their place has resulted in an aging congregation. While older members often have time to give to church work, they may lack the energy they used to have. In addition, annual “snowbirds” present unique challenges in worship and leadership when key leaders are not present for part of the year.

### **SECOND GROUPING:** Mentioned by less than 10 people.

**Loss of Fellowship:** Beginning prior to the pandemic but exacerbated by Covid, there has been a reduction in the number of small groups along with connections between individuals and groups. The Fellowship Team aged out and with it one of the driving forces for church fellowship and maintaining connections. The Evangelism Team and Service Group have attempted to fill this gap and is trying to build up the fellowship between members once again.

**Worship Issues:** These include a decline in attendance, uncertainty about whether the church should continue with two services or go to one service, and differences regarding traditional vs. contemporary music. The role of children in worship and Children’s Church led to division and hurt that has yet to be fully resolved.

**Lack of Vision:** A sense that the church has lost its way was expressed, along with wondering “what’s next?” The original vision that motivated the planting of New Covenant EPC and the building up of the church in its early years gradually faded over time and was not replaced by a new vision. Where is God leading NC, EPC both now and in the future? This has contributed to a lack of shared unity in ministry for as it says in Proverbs 29:18, “where there is no vision, the people perish.”

**Inability to Connect with the Community:** The church has not connected with the community in meaningful and lasting ways. Reasons given for this include a large number of members who don’t live in the immediate area but drive a distance to church. While the church gives generously to local organizations and ministries, there is a lack of hands-on involvement in the community. This has led, at times, to an inward focus.

### **THIRD GROUPING:** Mentioned by less than 5 people.

- Loss of prayer initiatives.
- Declining membership = dwindling number of volunteers.
- Lack of women’s fellowship.
- Resistance to change: “We’ve always done it that way!” Lack of support for new initiatives.
- Factions/Divided: “People who remain are capable of accomplishing much but struggle to get on the same page.”
- Lost first love: Lack of enthusiasm and spiritual fervor.
- Spiritual maturity issues in the congregation.

- Church ownership issues: Whose church is it really?
- Loss of clear and effective process for ministry and mission within the church and its committees.
- Not as friendly and welcoming as it was previously.
- Not fully taking advantage of wisdom, experience, and gifts of members.
- Leadership issues, especially between Pastor Chris's departure and the arrival of the Transitional Pastor.

**“Deny your weakness and you will never realize God’s strength in you.”**

**“The thankful heart sees the best part of every situation. It sees problems and weaknesses as opportunities, struggles as refining tools, and sinners as saints in progress.”**



## OPPORTUNITIES

How can we seize our God-given opportunities and capitalize on them?

*“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” – Galatians 6:10*

**FIRST GROUPING:** Mentioned by 5 or more people.

Note: No opportunities were mentioned by 10 or more people.

**Community Events:** Meaningful events mentioned that the church has held include the Fall Festival, Apple Butter Stirring, Rummage Sale, etc. A member commented, “We’re not a hospital, we’re first responders going out into the community to meet physical and spiritual needs.”

**Youth Outreach:** Nerf Night, After School Program, Scouts, etc.

**Facility/Property:** Leveraging the physical plant to meet the needs of the community as well as the church. Potential uses mentioned included coffee house, open mic night, pickleball classes, free community meals, Sportsman Banquet, outdoor events, Praise Band Nights, etc.

**SECOND GROUPING:** Mentioned by 5 or less people.

- Trail Life/American Heritage Girls Scouts: How can we do a better job of leveraging this active ministry? One suggestion was to develop a ministry to men with the Trail Life leaders and a ministry to women with the American Heritage Girl leaders.
- Clearly lay out a process/pathway to discipleship and growth in Christ.
- Train greeters and restore Meet and Greet in Worship.
- Have a presence in the community and at community events: Lawrence County Fair, Float in Community Parade, Trash Pickup, etc.
- Evaluate what current ministries we can build upon and what ministries are no longer effective and need to be eliminated.
- Develop ways to address brokenness and division in the church body to create healing and unity.
- Continue to build unity and oneness through fellowship meals, joint services, etc.
- Marketing: Update the website and use social media to “get the word out” about NC, EPC. One member said, “People buy you first and the product second.”
- Build back up a small group ministry/Life Groups.
- Reconnect with the school: 5<sup>th</sup> quarter, after school, etc.
- Back to School VBS in September.
- Evaluate our mission partners and shrink the number of partners to the ones that we can have a dynamic mission partnership and hands-on participation.
- Plan events that appeal to people in the community and then invite them to participate.
- Engage in missional ministry: experiment and try stuff. “Failure is not trying.”
- Find ways to build relationships with people in the community. Provide training for personal evangelism and sharing our faith.
- Special Needs ministry.
- Focus on Young Adult/Young Family Ministry.
- Prayer focus: Seeking the Holy Spirit

**“God will supply us with the opportunity, but it’s up to us to do something with it.”**

**“Our impossibility is God’s opportunity.”**

## **BARRIERS**

How can we overcome barriers that hinder our ability to fulfill God's mission and ministry?

*"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them,  
for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." – 1 John 4:4*

**FIRST GROUPING:** Mentioned by 5 or more people.

Note: No barriers were mentioned by 10 or more people.

**Resistance to Change:** "We never did it that way before." "Stuck in a rut." "What traditions do we need to keep and what ones do we need to put to rest?"

**Aging Congregation:** Lack of energy and dwindling number of volunteers. Can this potential barrier be turned into an opportunity by how we minister to and with older people?

**Differences:** Different personalities, desires/opinions, family groups, age groups, etc.

**Ineffective Leadership:** Lack of bold leadership, courage to make difficult decisions, developing new leadership, strong personalities, etc.

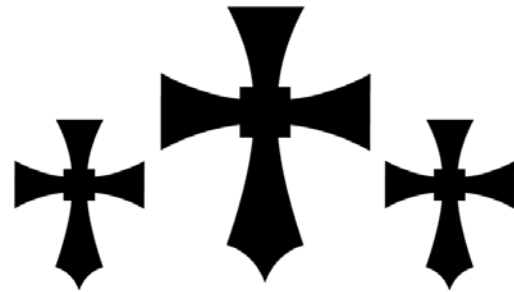
**Makeup of Membership:** Many suburban members in a rural community. How will we respond to people who don't look like me or come from a different cultural/ethnic/racial background? A member shared this unfortunate experience: "I had a friend who came with me to church once and felt uncomfortable. She didn't feel like she 'fit-in' because of the way she looked and dressed."

**SECOND GROUPING:** Mentioned by 5 or less people.

- Communication issues.
- Lost critical mass of young people.
- Lack of workers: post-Covid lack of involvement.
- Fear: Fear of the unknown and letting go of the familiar.
- Discouragement: Why have so many people left? What's wrong with us?
- Negativity.
- Financial pressures in a shrinking congregation.
- Wait and see attitude: It was stated that some people are waiting and seeing what happens during the transition and are giving it a year or so."

**"If we didn't have obstacles to overcome & never faced impossible situations,  
we wouldn't see the greatness of God's power."**

**"The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it."**



**NewCovenant**

Loved by God to Love Others

SWOB  
Report &  
Vision  
Process

# Vision Process Timeline- Previous Action



# Vision Process- Moving Forward

Summer 2023:  
Vision Team meets to seek His  
plan for NCEPC

GOAL: Early 2024  
Call new pastor &  
implement vision

Fall 2023:  
Formal presentation of  
vision to congregation  
& begin process of  
pastoral call



## Vision Team Information

- ◆ Each team member will ask 3-4 people in the congregation to be their prayer warriors.
- ◆ Vision Team members will be regularly talking with those in the congregation and providing updates as to the progress.
- ◆ Jason Dunn, with assistance from Pastor Billy, will lead the Vision Team

# Vision Team Goals

- ◆ Seek Him to show us where our strengths as a congregation fit into serving each other and the local community.
  - ◆ This may mean we start new things or focus on things already going well at NCEPC.
- ◆ Seek Him to show us how we can improve upon weaknesses.
  - ◆ This may mean changes to processes or programs.
- ◆ Seek Him to show us how to improve communication and heal current wounds in the congregation.
- ◆ Study our local community to better understand where God is calling us to go in His name.

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

What it is.

What it is not.

How it will be used.

How the congregation can ask questions.



# What it is.

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ Listening tour of the congregation
- ◆ Grouped into categories:
  - ◆ Mentioned by 10 or more
  - ◆ Mentioned by 5-9
  - ◆ Mentioned by less than 5
- ◆ A tool that can be used to direct how we pray, act, and move forward.

## What it is not.

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ Not exhaustive of every person or idea
- ◆ Does not preempt listening to where the Spirit Leads- HE is FIRST, not the SWOB
- ◆ Not a list of our “failures as a congregation”

## How it will be used

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ Provides points of information that will be supplemented by prayer and led by the Spirit as to its usefulness.
- ◆ Serves as a tool that may move things into the open that have been under the surface for quite some time.

# How can you ask questions

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

Once you have had time to read, process, and pray about the findings, as a congregation we need to:

- ◆ Acknowledge the Spirit's leading of the process and ask productive questions of the Session and/or Vision Team.
- ◆ Prayerfully process the findings so that we don't allow misunderstandings to cause further division in the congregation.

# Highlights

**S**trengths

W>eaknesses

O>pportunities

B>arriers

- ◇ More strengths were shared than aspects of the SWOB.
- ◇ Friendly, welcoming, caring, & loving congregation
- ◇ Grounded in God's Word with pastors who preach the Bible
- ◇ Facilities:
  - ◇ commitment to paying off
  - ◇ commitment to use for ministry
- ◇ Service to community (past & present): Fall Festival, Nerf Nights, After-School Program, Sewing Group, Laurel Project Hope, Trail Life, and American Heritage Girls
- ◇ Mature Believers

How can we tune into the Spirit's leading so we can leverage these strengths to overcome the weaknesses?

# Highlights

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ Poor communication
- ◆ Aging congregation & lack of young families
- ◆ Worship issues
- ◆ Lack of vision
- ◆ Inability to connect with community\*

How do we lean on Christ to help us improve and overcome these weaknesses?

# Highlights

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ NOTE: Nothing was mentioned by more than 5 people
- ◆ Community Events: Fall Festival, Rummage Sale, etc.
- ◆ Youth Outreach: Nerf Nights, Trail Life, American Heritage Girls, & After-School Program
- ◆ Facility: how can we have the building used more often for the community's benefit?

How do we “move out of the way” so God can show us how to capitalize on these opportunities?

# Highlights

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities

**B**arriers

- ◆ NOTE: No barriers were mentioned by more than 5 people
- ◆ Resistance to change
- ◆ Aging congregation
- ◆ Demographics of membership & differences of preferences
- ◆ Leadership vacuum

How do we allow God to break these barriers?



# Vision Team

- ◆ Jason Dunn- Presbytery of Alleghenies Church Health Team Representative
- ◆ Rev. Billy Woodman- Transitional Pastor
- ◆ Jarrett Chapman- Session Member
- ◆ Rev. George Yates- Founding Pastor
- ◆ Amy Lockwood- Served on most recent Pastor Nominating Committee
- ◆ David Johns IV- Founding member of NCEPC

# Prayer & Commissioning