



EPC

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

COMMITTEE REPORT

National Leadership Team
Report to the 38th General Assembly



Scott Griffin
Chair

Summary of Work, 2017-2018:

1. Focus on the Business of the EPC.
2. Oversight responsibility of the Strategic Initiatives.

Recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly:

1. That an interim committee be appointed by the Moderator to study how the EPC can better become a denomination that faithfully embraces and serves our neighbors from every nation, tribe, people, and language. (Revelation 7:9).
2. That the 38th General Assembly (2018) approve the proposed EPC Corporate Bylaws.
3. That, pursuant to the EPC Foundation Board's request, the Church Loan Fund applications be administered by the Finance Committee of the NLT.
4. That *Rules of Assembly* X.10-1A be amended to further define and clarify the role of the NLT.
5. That the 38th General Assembly approve an amendment to *Rules for Assembly* 2-3 to delete "nominating speeches" for Moderator-elect nominees.
6. That the 38th General Assembly sets aside the three-term limitation upon the Stated Clerk (*Book of Government* 20-3A.2 – The Assembly must approve this by a 2/3 vote).
7. That the 38th General Assembly re-elect the Stated Clerk to a new three-year term.

Work of the Committee in 2017-2018:

The thirteen members of the National Leadership Team are committed to knowing and promoting the mind of Christ for the over 600 churches that make up the EPC in the United States, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico. After the devotional and opening prayer, at each face-to-face meeting of the NLT we immediately review and confirm our mission and vision statements:

Mission: We exist to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus as Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations.

Vision: To the glory of God, the EPC aspires to be a global movement of congregations embodying Jesus' love to our neighbors near and far, engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership.

At our October and April meetings we focus on the business of the EPC that the NLT needs to address. The August and January meetings are more strategic. The NLT evaluates the four elements of the EPC mission statement and the four strategic initiatives of the EPC vision statement.

Strategic Initiatives – the statement of vision includes our four strategic initiatives: 1) **transformation** (church revitalization), **multiplication** (church planting), **effective biblical leadership**, and **global movement** (World Outreach and fraternal relations).

As part of its oversight responsibility, in the past year the NLT invited the leaders of each initiative to address and take questions from the NLT: Tom Ricks (church planting), Ken Priddy (church revitalization), Phil Linton (global movement - World Outreach).

In addition, a Metrics Team led by Moderator-elect Tom Werner developed metrics by which progress for the church planting and church revitalization efforts can be measured. With the proposed disbanding of the permanent Church Planting and Revitalization Committee, the NLT is considering asking the 2019 Assembly to create a permanent committee that would focus on evaluating the progress of these important initiatives.

In July 2017, staff oversight of these initiatives was re-arranged. Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri oversees effective biblical leadership and the World Outreach element of global movement. Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah works with church planting, church revitalization, and the fraternal relations aspect of global movement.

Financial Development - The 2018 fiscal year budget (FY 2018 budget, beginning July 1, 2017, and ending June 30, 2018) was augmented with additional funds from undesignated reserve (\$129,000) in order to ensure the full funding of the strategic initiatives in the year ahead. Approving this budget at Fair Oaks, the 37th General Assembly was notified that if increased giving to Per Member Asking (PMA) did not cover this \$129,000, the FY 2019 budget would need to be reduced accordingly. In the first six months of our fiscal year (July-December) there was little evidence of a substantial increase in PMA giving. At its January 2018 meeting, the NLT took actions in anticipation of cutting the FY 2019 budget it would recommend to the 38th General Assembly (2018). However, beginning in January giving to PMA surged by 12% (or \$160k) over the last fiscal year. This has continued through April. The NLT praises God and thanks you for the remarkable outpouring of support for the EPC as a mission- and vision-driven denomination of churches. Chief Operating Officer Phil Van Valkenburg produced an excellent presentation of the proposed FY 2019 budget. It can be viewed at www.epc.org/files/ga2018document-fy2019ministryreport.

Relief Funds – The hurricane season of 2017 was an unprecedented one for the EPC. EPC churches in the greater Houston area were hit by Hurricane Harvey. Our churches in Florida were struck by Hurricane Irma. And Hurricane Maria brought devastation to Puerto Rico and our churches there that is still being felt. EPC churches and individuals contributed more than \$1.2 million to these three relief funds in the last four months of 2017. When a series of earthquakes hit southern Mexico last fall, our fraternal partners

the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM) asked for our assistance. We established a Mexico Earthquake Disaster Relief fund and were very pleased to receive and send on to the INPM \$21,000.

Other funds - Gratitude Gift: the giving of EPC churches to the Gratitude Gift helps retired ministers and missionaries and their spouses with out-of-pocket medical expenses. Each year the Stated Clerk emails or writes to all members of this special group of servants. Remarkably, although the number of retirees has more than doubled since 2007, the number needing assistance has remained between five and eight per year.

Moderator's Scholarship: funds given to this scholarship are used to help leaders of our smallest churches attend our annual General Assembly meeting. Last year's giving of \$4600 has enabled us to award 15 \$300 scholarships for the 2018 Assembly.

Interim Committee Recommendation – At its January 2018 meeting, the NLT spent considerable time discussing where God is calling the EPC in the next decade. One result of that discussion is the recommendation to the 38th General Assembly (2018) that an interim committee be appointed by the Moderator to study how the EPC can better become a denomination that faithfully embraces and serves our neighbors from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9).

Corporate Restructure – After a corporate liability evaluation was undertaken in 2014, in 2015 the National Leadership Team began a restructure of the General Assembly level of the EPC. This involved separating EPC World Outreach, the Board of Benefits, and the EPC (ecclesiastical body) while keeping each of these under the oversight of the General Assembly. This restructure would protect each entity and limit the liability that the others would confront if one was facing a civil action. The 36th General Assembly (2016) approved the creation of a separate legal entity for World Outreach. The 37th General Assembly (2017) approved the creation of “Benefit Resources Incorporated”-the new legal name for EPC Benefits. To complete this project, the NLT recommends the approval of the EPC Corporate Bylaws to the 38th General Assembly (2018).

Church Loan Fund – since 2008, applications to the Church Loan Fund (CLF) have been handled by the EPC Foundation. As the ministry of the Foundation has evolved, the review of these applications is no longer a focal area for their efforts. The Foundation asked and the NLT accepted the request that review of CLF applications be handled by the Finance Committee of the NLT. The 38th General Assembly (2018) is being asked to approve this recommendation.

Rules for Assembly – acted upon by the annual meeting of the General Assembly, Rules define the structure of the EPC (permanent committees and commissions) and how we conduct our annual meeting. The NLT proposes an amendment to **Rules** that further defines and clarifies the role of the NLT. Other amendments are proposed to update and streamline how our meetings are conducted.

Clergy Housing Allowance – The EPC is a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the Church Alliance, a consortium of denominations that offers benefits for its clergy. In two previous legal challenges to the constitutionality of the clergy housing allowance by the Foundation for Freedom from Religion (FFFR, an atheist group), the Church Alliance asked the EPC to join their amicus curiae. For some reason the EPC did not receive an invitation to join the amicus Church Alliance filed in

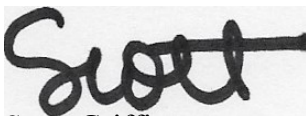
the Seventh Court of Appeals earlier this spring. The Stated Clerk has contacted Church Alliance about this matter. It is anticipated that regardless of how the Seventh rules, this case will be appealed to the Supreme Court (SCOTUS). The NLT will ensure it joins an amicus when it comes to SCOTUS. Many EPC pastors were invited by the Alliance for Defending Freedom (ADF) to join the amicus it filed with the Seventh. EPC TEs are certainly encouraged to participate individually in this way. Note that several other amici in support of constitutionality were filed, including by the Foundation for Moral Law; seventeen States (attorneys general); the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability; sixteen Members of Congress; three Tax Law Professors; the Pacific Justice Institute; and the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs.

Re-election of Stated Clerk – Following **Acts of Assembly 90-07** (which calls for an enlarged group to evaluate the performance of the Stated Clerk when his three-year term concludes), the Personnel Committee of the NLT conducted a thorough performance evaluation of the Stated Clerk from October – January. The NLT recommends that: 1) The 38th General Assembly sets aside the three-term limitation upon the Stated Clerk (**Book of Government 20-3A.2** - The Assembly must approve this by a 2/3 vote), and 2) The 38th General Assembly re-elect the Stated Clerk to a new three-year term.

Succession Planning – In the next 3-5 years, the NLT anticipates the retirement of Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah, Chief Operating Officer Phil VanValkenburg and Director of World Outreach Phil Linton. At its August 2018 meeting it will begin discussions in earnest about succession planning for each of these important positions of the Office of the General Assembly.

www.epc.org/files/ga2018report-nlt

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Scott Griffin

Chair

June 2018