

## **Fraternal Relations Committee**

Report to the 38th General Assembly



Gerrit Dawson  
*Chair*

### **Summary of Work, 2017-2018:**

1. Explored a fraternal relationship with the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO) and invited ECO to send a representative to the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.
2. Addressed the status of planting Hispanic churches in the US and the need for improving communications between EPC churches and the presbytery leadership of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM)
3. Notified the Evangelical and Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru (ERPCP) of our intent to enter into a relationship with them.
4. Sent requested information to the National Union of French Protestant Reformed Evangelical Churches (UNEPREF) and encouraged them to join the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).
5. Received, discussed, and responded to several requests for fraternal relations.

## **Recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly:**

### **1. RECOMMENDATION 38-17:**

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly give the Committee authority to appoint EPC representatives to engage with groups where participation of the Stated Clerk is not necessary.

### **Work of the Committee in 2017-2018:**

**Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO)** – The 37<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2017) took the following action: “The permanent Fraternal Relations Committee is directed to explore a fraternal relationship with the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO).” At its September meeting the Committee discussed this directive as well as a report from Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri. Iamurri had been in conversation with his ECO counterpart since July. ECO invited and Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah attended and addressed the annual gathering of ECO on January 23. The next day he met with ECO leadership for breakfast. That conversation focused on potential partnerships in such areas as church planting, church revitalization and transitional pastor training. At its April meeting the Committee received this report as well as the report of EPC TE Ron Horgan. Horgan, serving as a transitional pastor in an ECO church, had attended the whole of the January 22-25 ECO meeting. The Committee decided to invite ECO to send a representative to our 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2018). Rev. Jennifer Holz, Executive Pastor of First-Colorado Springs, CO will represent ECO in Memphis.

**National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM)** – The Committee acknowledged that after a “strong start” our relationship with the INPM has “gone cold.” One problem has been the difficulty getting INPM pastors through the US immigration process so that they can lead EPC church plants in Hispanic communities. The other is the breakdown in communication between EPC churches wanting to send short term mission teams and INPM presbyteries who would receive them. In the meantime, after a series of earthquakes in Mexico in late 2017, the INPM requested financial help as they recovered from these disasters. In spite of the three hurricanes the EPC confronted, a solicitation for Mexico Earthquake Disaster Relief to EPC churches received \$21,000, which was sent to the INPM. In 2018 there are now two church plants led by INPM-ordained pastors; Rev. Victor Leal of the Lake Forest Hispanic church plant – Huntersville, NC and Rev. Abiud Lope of the Great Plains Hispanic church plant – Avery, NE. Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah has been invited to the 2018 INPM General Assembly in July. At that meeting he plans to discuss with INPM leadership 1) status of the planting of Hispanic churches in the US using INPM-ordained pastors, 2) improving communications between EPC churches and INPM presbytery leadership.

**Evangelical and Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru (ERPCP)** - The Committee is grateful that the 37<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2017) approved its recommendation to

enter into a fraternal relationship with the Evangelical and Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru (ERPCP) for the purpose of developing equipping materials (theological and practical) and church revitalization materials for leaders in the Peruvian Church. We notified ERPCP leadership of this action and look forward to their response. The translation of EPC materials into Spanish is one matter that will need to be resolved.

**National Union of French Protestant Reformed Evangelical Churches (UNEPREF)**

At its September meeting, the Committee gratefully received an excellent report from WO global worker Jeff Kim. Kim had represented the EPC at the May 2017 Synod meeting of UNEPREF. UNEPREF leadership expressed an interest in a fraternal relationship with the EPC. The Committee agreed that it would encourage UNEPREF to join the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), through which the EPC could link with them. UNEPREF is currently a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). In addition, EPC confessional documents and position papers that UNEPREF requested were sent.

**Response to Requests** – in the past year the Committee has received and discussed requests for fraternal relations from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the United Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil, the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Church of Christ in Thailand. Given the limited resources the EPC possesses to fund and staff these relationships the Committee’s normal response has been to encourage these bodies to join the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF). Through the WRF the EPC could be in relationship with them. In terms of serving our current fraternal partnerships, the Committee agreed to ask the National Leadership Team to appoint a “Chief Ecumenical Officer” in the event the Stated Clerk, Assistant Stated Clerk or Moderator was not available to represent the EPC at a meeting. In addition, the Committee agreed to ask the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly for the authority to appoint EPC TEs or REs to represent the EPC to some of our fraternal partners.

**Recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly:**

**RECOMMENDATION 38-17:**

The Fraternal Relations Committee recommends that the 38th General Assembly give the Committee authority to appoint EPC representatives (TE’s or RE’s) to engage with groups in situations where the participation of the Stated Clerk is not necessary, but where an EPC representative in the relationship would be helpful.

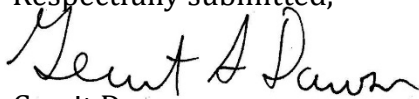
**Committee Members:**

TE Gerrit Dawson (Chair), Presbytery of the Gulf South  
RE Gwynn Blair, Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean  
RE Jerry Harmon, Presbytery of the Central South  
TE Gary McGhee, Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic  
RE Tod Paulson, Presbytery of the River and Lakes  
RE Peter Pugliese, Presbytery of the Alleghenies

**Committee Meeting Dates:**

September 18, 2017  
April 4, 2018

Respectfully submitted,



Gerrit Dawson

Chairman

June 2018