



**Ad Interim Committee
on Pastoral Letter**
Report to the 38th General Assembly



Sandy Wilson
Chair

Summary of Work, 2017-2018:

1. The proposed Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality

Recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly:

1. **RECOMMENDATION 38-03:**
That the proposed Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality be adopted.

Work of the Committee in 2017-2018:

History & Members

The 36th General Assembly (2016) instructed the Moderator to appoint the ICPL to draft a pastoral letter on “Ministering to the Church and the World on Issues Pertaining to Human Sexuality” and report to the 38th General Assembly (2018).¹ This committee follows the work of the ad interim Committee on Position Paper Revision through which the 37th General Adopted the Position Paper on Human Sexuality and included several of the members of the former committee as indicated by an asterisk (*) below.

By way of reminder,

A pastoral letter is intended to shine the light of God’s word broadly on a general area of concern to the Church. Requiring the approval of only one General Assembly, it is not as definitive as a Position Paper that requires the approval of two General Assemblies including a minimum of one-year circulation among the presbyteries. The primary purpose of a pastoral letter is to guide churches within the EPC rather than to identify our positions to the world.²

TE Adam Barr is Pastor at Peace Church near Grand Rapids Michigan. In addition to his work in the local church, Adam speaks and writes frequently on the intersection of Christianity and culture, and his published works include *Compassion without Compromise*, co-authored with Ron Citlau, and is a contributing author to the Teaching the Text Commentary volumes on Exodus, Leviticus-Numbers, Matthew, and Revelation. Adam and his wife Jennifer have four sons.

TE Sharon Beekmann* conducted a private counseling practice for over thirty years in individual, marriage, and family therapy before becoming a Teaching Elder. She is the author of *Rescued and Redeemed: How to Discern Demons from the Divine, Enticed by the Light*, and, with Peter G. Bolt, co-author of *Silencing Satan: Handbook for Biblical Demonology*. Sharon is an Associated Faculty at Denver Seminary, Director of Discovery Workshops for Presbytery of the West, and Chair of the EPC’s Women’s Resource Council.

¹ Draft *Minutes of the 37th General Assembly*, 53.

² *Minutes of the 17th General Assembly*, 30.

TE Mike Glodo* is Associate Professor Practical Theology & Dean of the Chapel, Reformed Theological Seminary Orlando. Mike just completed his twenty-first year at RTS Orlando where he has taught Old Testament, New Testament, preaching, and pastoral theology. Ordained in the EPC in 1987, Mike's ministry experience includes youth, college, singles, men's ministry, lay renewal, outreach, and assimilation in large suburban and small semi-urban church contexts. From 2000-2006 he served as the Stated Clerk of the EPC General Assembly. He has been married thirty-four years and is the father of two adult children.

RE John Graham* is an attorney. Raised in Rome, Georgia, John is a graduate of Washington & Lee University and University of Virginia School of Law. He just completed his fifty-sixth year of legal practice and of marriage to his childhood sweetheart Frances Ann. A ruling elder over forty years at First Presbyterian Church, John served at Moderator of the 20th General Assembly.

RE Scott Griffin served as Moderator of the 36th General Assembly and is the current Chair of the National Leadership Team (NLT) on which he has served for the past six years. A retired Technology executive of the Boeing Company, Scott holds an MBA from the University of Puget Sound and a Masters of Non-Profit Leadership from Seattle University. Scott has been an elder beginning in 1987. Since his retirement from Boeing, Scott gives the majority of his time to pro bono work with non-profit and non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and abroad. He and his wife of 42 years have three married adult children and live on Fox Island in Washington state.

TE Jeff Jeremiah is Stated Clerk of the General Assembly since 2006. He previously served as Associate Pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland, and Pastor of First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Kent, Washington.

TE Annie Rose is Discipleship Pastor at Saddlerock EPC in Wenatchee, Washington. Annie is a newer TE in the EPC, having served as a ruling elder for nearly ten years at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Warrenville, IL. Before joining Saddlerock, she served for two years as the Moderator of Rivers & Lakes Presbytery. Annie has been involved in ministry to young adults since 2003 and has walked with them through a variety of sexual and identity issues, ranging from unplanned pregnancy to LGB struggles. She has worked in crisis pregnancy and jail ministry and loves to see the gospel of Christ accompanied by works of mercy and compassion. Annie has been grateful to witness the amazing work of the Holy Spirit in transforming people's lives. She and her husband Joel have been married for ten years and have two young daughters.

RE Rick Schatz* serves as President of the Prayer Covenant and is Executive Director of the Religious Alliance against Pornography. A longtime elder at Evangelical Community Church in Cincinnati, Rick served for twenty-six years with pure HOPE, fourteen as President, and was a member of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. Rick has been married to his high school sweetheart Sharon for 50 years and they have three grown sons.

TE Sandy Willson* is the former senior pastor of Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, and Council member emeritus of The Gospel Coalition. Currently he serves as interim senior pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Birmingham, Alabama. He and his wife Allison have five adult children. Sandy teaches DMin and MDiv courses on theology of ministry, particularly in the area of leadership.

Process

The Committee met in person in September 2016 to outline the letter, discuss the issues and positions to be taken in each section, agree on the tone of the letter, to assign the major sections to primary authors and secondary readers, and to appoint an editorial team to receive, edit, and integrate the sections. It met next via telephone conference in March 2017 to review the work to date and again in June review the first full working draft. The Committee held two listening sessions during the 37th General Assembly in which it solicited input on the range of issues to be addressed. The committee met in August to finalize the content and review a proposed first draft compiled by a three-person editorial team.

During the fall the editorial team produced what became the preliminary draft issued for comment. During that time the draft was shared with select outsiders who have particular expertise, training, and personal experiences that would qualify them to provide feedback. The men and women consulted included persons with personal and professional experiences with same sex attraction, physical and sexual abuse, terminal degrees in counseling, and experience in theological education.

By the first week of January the committee delivered the preliminary draft to the Office of the General Assembly to be distributed to church sessions and teaching elders for comment. On January 18 that draft was distributed with a request for input by the end of February. That deadline was subsequently extended to March 31 in order allow a generous amount of time for input.

The committee received feedback from church sessions, teaching elders, ruling elders, and church staff members. The input includes typographical corrections, stylistic suggestions, substantive suggestions, and generous encouragement. All of the input was given serious and receptive consideration. As to the substantive suggestions, in some cases input came asking for opposite changes. Even in these cases, possibilities were considered which could satisfy the concerns of each. Based on our broader knowledge of what is in the letter, we decided that some suggestions were already addressed elsewhere while we gladly accepted the greater wisdom of the input and made numerous changes to the draft. The editorial team went through the input in detail, formulated proposed changes to the draft, then shared those proposed changes with the committee as a whole. The recommended draft is the product of this process.

Product

The proposed pastoral letter, as the committee understood from the beginning and strove to bear in mind throughout, belongs to the Assembly, not to the committee. While we are ready to explain why we have said what we have said and why we have addressed some issues and not others or not taken positions on some matters while doing so on others, this is your pastoral letter. We are grateful to have been entrusted with this responsibility and hopeful that it will help our churches and each of us who are “bruised and broken by the fall” with the confidence that “Jesus ready stands to save us, full of pity, joined with power.”

Recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly:

RECOMMENDATION 38-03:

That the proposed “Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality” be adopted.

Committee Members:

TE Sandy Wilson (Chair), Presbytery of the Central South
TA Adam Barr, Presbytery of the Midwest
TE Sharon Beekmann, Presbytery of the West
TE Mike Glodo, Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean
RE John Graham, Presbytery of the Southeast
RE Scott Griffin, Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest
RE Annie Rose, Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest
RE Rick Schatz, Presbytery of the Midwest

Committee Meeting Dates:

September 12, 2016, Memphis, TN
April 7, 2017, Web Meeting
June 19, 2017, Fair Oaks, CA
November 30, 2017, Denver, CO

Respectfully submitted,


Sandy Wilson
Chairman

June 2018