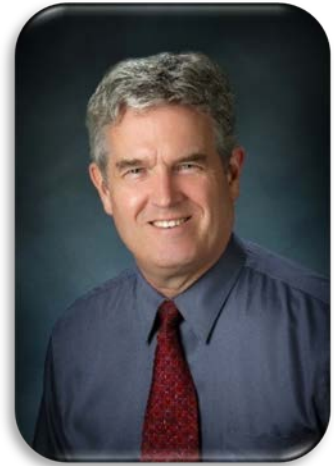


Stated Clerk

Report to the 38th General Assembly



Jeff Jeremiah
Stated Clerk

Occasionally I'm able to stand back and reflect on all the changes that have occurred in the EPC and in my ministry across the last twelve years. It's been an amazing ride! In addition to the dramatic changes in the size and scope of the EPC, we minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ today in a culture very different from 2006. It's "the best of times and the worst of times" but we know our risen Savior reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has a plan and He is working His plan for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory!

Finishing my fourth term as Stated Clerk, I'm still grateful for the opportunity to serve our Lord Jesus and you in this distinctive and challenging role. Please know how much I appreciate your encouragement, support, and prayers, especially as we continue to pray, work, and hope for the release of our brother in Christ, Andrew Brunson.

Praying and Advocating for One of our Own

The churches of the EPC held Days of Prayer and Fasting for Andrew Brunson on October 7-8, 2017 (marking the one-year anniversary of his imprisonment), April 15, 2018 (the day before Andrew's first trial date), and May 6, 2018 (the day before Andrew's second trial date). Across the months, Brian Smith, our Director of Communications, has done an outstanding job keeping the EPC informed about Andrew's plight. EPC social media has been among those media he's fully utilized to provide updates on Andrew's status and encouragements to pray.

An increasing amount of my time has been invested in Andrew's situation since January 2018, as the number of our "Friends of the EPC" has grown substantially. This group now includes leaders and/or staff connected to the offices of the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, National Security Advisor, two additional US Senators, three Commissioners of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and NGO staff working full time on religious freedom issues. I'm very grateful for the efforts of more than 20 EPC leaders and church members who have helped connect my office with many of the fore-mentioned government leaders.

My initial fourteen years of pastoral ministry were spent in the nation's capital. Little did I know at the time that those years in DC would prepare me for the current advocacy work we're doing for Andrew. The NLT has instructed me to invest the time I believe is necessary to work effectively for Andrew's release. They regularly receive reports on our work in this area.

In those weeks when Andrew's situation takes up more time than usual, Marti Brenner, my Executive Assistant; Jerry Iamurri, Assistant Stated Clerk; and Phil VanValkenburg, Chief Operating Officer; have regularly "gone the extra mile" in covering for and taking over tasks I otherwise would have addressed.

A major focus of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) is to resource, support, and encourage our presbyteries. This has especially been the case as we've grown from eight presbyteries serving 180 churches in 2007 to fourteen presbyteries serving more than 600 churches in 2018. This past year we celebrated the division of the Presbytery of the Pacific into the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest and the Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest. As the OGA is closely engaged in helping in the formation of new presbyteries, we've also been available to help existing presbyteries do strategic planning and evaluate their organizational structure.

As part of our ongoing support for our presbyteries, Jerry Iamurri and I host the following meetings of presbytery leadership groups: Stated Clerks in November, Ministerial and Candidates Committee chairs in April and September, and Moderators in August. Church Development Committee chairs meet with either the Church Planting Team at the annual church planters retreat or with the GO Center. The feedback we've received from these meetings have been very positive. It's been affirmed that it's worth the time for participants to travel to the OGA for these meetings. It's very beneficial to get peer leaders together to share best practices, responses to common problems and opportunities, and to network.

EPC in Transition

As the retirement of our Boomer pastors continues, the Assistant Stated Clerk and I are available to provide informal counsel to search committees. Search committees are strongly encouraged to engage the Ministerial Committee of their presbytery early in their process.

Protection Matters

The EPC Constitution is one of our best protections should we ever find ourselves facing civil litigation. However, if we claim in court that we abide by our Constitution but it can be shown that we don't adhere to our constitutional commitments, our defense could be severely undermined or even dismissed. There are two items of concern: 1) Constitutionally, local church sessions are required to give their minutes to the presbytery session review committee annually. We need 100% participation in this important matter. 2) Constitutionally, all Teaching Elders are required to file an annual report with the ministerial committee of the presbytery in which they hold their membership. We need 100% compliance with this important matter.

Annual Church Report (ACR)

Under Chief Operating Officer Phil VanValkenburg's leadership, the 2017 Annual Church Report (ACR) has been revised and simplified. Phil did a great job soliciting input from the leadership of EPC churches as he launched into this project. Whereas the typical reporting to the ACR by EPC churches in the past was 60-65%, the ACR for 2017 enjoys 90% participation.

Some helpful information to glean from the 2017 ACR www.epc.org/files/ga2018document-2017annualchurchreport: Total giving in EPC churches was \$341 million. Giving to EPC Per Member Asking (PMA) was \$2.294 million; giving to Presbytery PMA was \$4.344 million. EPC giving to outreach and world missions was about \$44 million, with EPC World Outreach receiving \$3 million. EPC giving to church planting was approximately \$2.7 million, of which 48% went to EPC church plants.

The good news about the 2017 ACR is that we have much more reliable data than in previous years. This ACR will provide a good baseline for assessing the health and vitality of the EPC in coming years. The not-good news is that compared to the 2016 ACR, church membership declined by almost 9% and worship attendance was off by 4%. While it may be that incomplete reports were supplemented with estimates that inflated our 2016 numbers, these declines must be noted and acknowledged. They confirm that we have work to do in proclaiming effectively the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

www.epc.org/files/ga2018document-churchesreceiveddismisseddissolved

Commissioner's Handbook (CH)

We received a lot of feedback from commissioners to last year's General Assembly about the size and complexity of the Commissioner's Handbook (CH). Of special concern was the multiple ways the same recommendation was named. Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri and his staff have done a great job of simplifying and streamlining the CH. Please give us your feedback about the CH for this Assembly. We are always looking to improve our service to you, the church leaders of the EPC.

A Personal Note

In July 2012, Cindy suffered a stroke from which she enjoyed a full recovery. For the incredibly generous outpouring of love, care, and support for us, since that time when I'm asked, "What is your church home?" my response has been "The churches of the EPC." You came through for us again as "our church" on and after October 9, 2017. On that day our grandson Walker was born and died. Not only were we overwhelmed by your care for us, the cards, letters, and expressions of love and comfort to my grieving son and daughter-in-law filled a basket. Michael said, "Dad, we don't even know these people." I replied, "Michael, that's the EPC." Thank you for being there for Cindy and me, and for Michael and Emily.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Jeremiah

Stated Clerk

June 2018