



**EPC**

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

## **National Leadership Team**

Executive Summary Report  
to the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly



Tom Werner  
*Chairman*

### **Summary of Work, 2019-2020:**

1. The National Leadership Team (NLT) received regular reports from the Revelation 7:9 Task Force and engaged with Co-chairmen Rufus Smith and Dean Weaver in its work.
2. The NLT continued to implement the Executive Transition Plan first formulated in 2018.
3. The NLT continued its oversight of the strategic priorities, implementing the new matching fund approach to transformation (church revitalization).
4. The NLT expanded to sixteen members and welcomed five new members to the 2019-2020 NLT.

### **Recommendations to the 2020 General Assembly:**

1. That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approve the [terms of call](#) for Stated Clerk-elect Dean Weaver.
2. That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approve the FY2021 [Administration budget](#).
3. That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approve the consideration of increasing the funding of the line items within the budget (with a focus on strategic ministry opportunities) should FY21 revenue exceed the budget.
4. That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approve the FY 2021 [Special Projects budget](#).
5. That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopt the [Minutes of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Assembly](#).

## **Work of the Committee in 2019-2020:**

### **Revelation 7:9 Task Force**

The formation of the Revelation 7:9 Task Force was approved by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2018. Appointed by 38<sup>th</sup> GA Moderator Tom Werner, it is comprised of 13 individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds (though majority Caucasian), male and female. The Task Force spent its first year primarily listening within the denomination and provided an interim report of its findings to the 39<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

The second year of the committee's work has been focused on developing recommendations to the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The committee's goal is the presentation of S.M.A.R.T. (*Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time-sensitive*) recommendations, accompanied by resources and templates for churches in the EPC to become more ethnically, age, and economically Revelation 7:9 mosaic communities. The Task Force plans to make two sets of recommendations: one set for individual congregations and a second set for the EPC as a denomination. Through Co-chairmen TE Rufus Smith and TE Dean Weaver, as well as 2019-2020 NLT chairman Tom Werner, the Task Force has been in regular contact with the NLT. Their full report is found in another section of the Commissioner's Handbook.

### **Executive Transition**

Since 2018, the National Leadership Team has been conscious of—and planning for—the departures of the Stated Clerk, Director of World Outreach (both scheduled to leave in June 2021) and the Chief Operating Officer, who departed in June 2019.

### World Outreach Evaluation Team

Anticipating the departure of the Director of World Outreach in June 2021, the NLT decided an evaluation of EPC World Outreach was in order in 2019-2020. An evaluation team representing EPC leadership in global missions was appointed. Members were TE Betsy Rumer, RE Brad Gill, TE Johnny Long, RE Alan Johnson, TE Brian Tweedie, TE Kevin Cauley, and NLT member RE Rob Liddon, who served as chairman. Its initial meeting was August 26-28 at the Office of the General Assembly in Orlando. The Evaluation Team filed its final report to the NLT, which approved it on April 8, 2020. This report is being further discussed with NLT and World Outreach leadership. It will be extremely useful to the Director of World Outreach Search Committee, to be appointed soon.

### Stated Clerk Search Committee

This committee convened its first meeting August 27-29, 2019, at the Office of the General Assembly in Orlando. Its full report is in another part of the Commissioner's Handbook.



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### Chief Operating Officer

Phil VanValkenburg, who served as Chief Operating Officer since 2014, departed in June 2019. Instead of immediately filling this position, the NLT agreed to a six-month trial period for OGA staff with the position left vacant. COO responsibilities were assigned to various staff members. At its January 21, 2020, meeting, the NLT satisfied itself that staff was able to work effectively without the COO and left the position vacant.

### Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri

At its April 30, 2020, meeting, the National Leadership Team received and approved the recommendation from the NLT Personnel Committee that Jerry Iamurri be reappointed to a new three-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk.

### **Strategic Priorities**

Embedded in the EPC vision statement, “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” are the strategic priorities of global movement, multiplication (church planting), transformation (church revitalization), and effective biblical leadership. These priorities are reviewed by the NLT at their August and January meetings.

Global Movement encompasses the ministry of EPC World Outreach and the Fraternal Relations Committee. The transition in EPC WO is provided previously in this report. The report of the Fraternal Relations Committee is found in another section of the Commissioner’s Handbook.

The Multiplication effort continues to enjoy strong leadership under Tom Ricks, leader of the EPC Church Planting Team. Members of the Team for 2019-2020 are RE Jack Cathey, TE Shawn Robinson, TE Michael Davis, and TE Richard Rieves. Ad hoc advisors serving this year are TE Aaron Carr, who leads the Detroit-area church planting network, and Kirk Adkisson, an active church planter in Nashville, Tennessee.

With more than 43 active church plants, we now have at least one active church plant in every presbytery in the EPC! New church plants were launched in 2020 in Kansas City (both the Kansas and Missouri sides); Jacksonville, Florida; and in the western area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On schedule to launch in early 2021 is Woke Bridge Community Church in Ferguson, Missouri.

In lieu of the annual fall church planters retreat (a COVID-19 casualty), three learning webinars will be held in September, October, and November 2020. Zack Eswine, Thabiti Anyabwile, and Greg Thompson will each lead one of our sessions. Information about dates



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and times will be available on the EPC website by the first week in September. We are learning how to care for our church planters during these interesting moments! The good news is church planters, by nature, are flexible and love a good challenge. The tough news is none of us have ever been down this road and changes can come daily. The tough circumstances existing and healthy churches face are compounded in a small local church plant. Find out how to contact the church planter(s) in your presbytery and send them a note of encouragement!

Also, a very practical way to support our church planting efforts is through participation in the 2020 Thanksgiving offering. Many of our church plants are in their first two years of their launch and their financial challenges are compounded on several levels. The Thanksgiving offering will be directed at helping our youngest church plants sustain the challenges and be positioned to grow and thrive as they move into the future. Our goal is that in the EPC, every church is a Parent, Partner, or Patron of church planting!

A key change in Transformation this year is the inauguration of matching funds. Local churches and/or the presbytery committed funds as a part of the revitalization of the church. Eight churches applied for and received more than \$53,000 from the EPC's Church Revitalization Matching Fund. Total EPC, presbytery, and local church funding for revitalization exceeded \$125,000.

Effective biblical leadership is led by Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri. The crowning piece of the EPC's commitment to this priority is the Leadership Institute. Hundreds of TEs and REs arrange their schedules to attend the Institute, normally held Tuesday-Wednesday of General Assembly week. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Leadership Institute had to be cancelled. A full slate of offerings for the 41<sup>st</sup> GA in 2021 is being developed. In addition, online seminars and workshops are being planned for late 2020. Another component of this priority is the gathering of EPC committees, networks, and leadership groups. Meetings of presbytery Stated Clerks, Moderators, and Ministerial and Candidates Committee chairs encourage and equip these leaders in their service. The Ministerial Vocation Committee, Chaplains Work and Care Committee, and the Next Generation Ministries Council all focus on increasing the effectiveness of those they resource and support.

In addition to reviewing these priorities, at its January 2020 meeting the NLT discussed the state of evangelism in the EPC. NLT members presented reports from the books, *The Myth of the Dying Church*, *I Once Was Lost*, and *You Found Me*. Michelle Sanchez, Executive Minister of Make and Deepen Disciples for the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) engaged the NLT via video conference call to share how the ECC has implemented an evangelism strategy.



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### **Expansion of the National Leadership Team**

The 39<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approved the expansion of the NLT from 13 to 16 members. Combined with members concluding six-year terms, five new members were present at the August 2020 NLT meeting. An onboarding event hosted by RE Rosemary Lukens in advance of that meeting was very helpful to incoming members.

### **Other**

“The State of EPC Pastors” is the title of TE Josh Hanson’s Doctor of Ministry project. Hanson is the Lead Pastor at Gateway Church in Findlay, Ohio. Following the template of a 2016 Barna report, “The State of Pastors,” Hanson’s project underscored the strengths of the EPC and also highlighted four concerns: 1) impending Boomer retirements and leadership development, 2) concern for the small church, 3) mental health of pastors, and 4) the lack of evangelism. The NLT appreciates this work, which has been referred to repeatedly in discussions in the last year.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Werner, Chairman

[www.epc.org/files/ga2020report-nlt](http://www.epc.org/files/ga2020report-nlt)