



**EPC**

A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

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**DESCENDING OVERTURE 19-B  
FROM THE 39<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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To amend *Book of Government* 9-5 that would make explicit that the office of “co-pastor” is not constitutional.

| <b>Current</b> <i>Book of Government</i> 9-5A.1   | <b>Proposed</b> <i>Book of Government</i> 9-5A.1 amendment. Additions in <b><i>bold italics</i></b>   |
|---|---|
| <p>Within the office of Teaching Elder there are a variety of callings that require ordination. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>    1. Titles</p> <p>        A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.</p> | <p>Within the office of Teaching Elder there are a variety of callings that require ordination. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>    1. Titles</p> <p>        A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting. <b><i>The office of the ‘co-pastor’ is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the Book of Government, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.</i></b></p> |



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Rationale:

The Fifth General Assembly (1985) “sustained the Permanent Judicial Commission’s opinion regarding the office of the office of co-pastor as being non-existent. Relationships between Teaching Elders and EPC congregations sanctioned by the *Book of Government* are those of Pastor, Associate Pastor and Assistant Pastor” (**Minutes, 5-40**). The position of the EPC since this 1985 action has remained unchanged.

The reason for the proposed amendment to the *Book of Government* is that churches that have come to the EPC recently have questioned the constitutionality of the prohibition. It has been argued that its “not explicit in the *Book of Government* that co-pastor is prohibited.” This amendment would explicitly declare in the *Book of Government* the position of the EPC since 1985.

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**VOTE OF THE PRESBYTERIES**

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| <b>Presbytery</b>         | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b>  |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Alleghenies               | <b>62</b>  | <b>2</b>   |
| Central South             | <b>46</b>  | <b>6</b>   |
| East                      | <b>67</b>  | <b>4</b>   |
| Florida and the Caribbean | <b>51</b>  | <b>1</b>   |
| Great Plains              | <b>44</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| Gulf South                | <b>6</b>   | <b>4</b>   |
| Mid-America               | <b>16</b>  | <b>6</b>   |
| <b>Mid-Atlantic</b>       | <b>32</b>  | <b>90</b>  |
| Midwest                   | <b>61</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
| Pacific Northwest         | <b>70</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| Pacific Southwest         | <b>57</b>  | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>Rivers and Lakes</b>   | <b>19</b>  | <b>21</b>  |
| Southeast                 | <b>75</b>  | <b>10</b>  |
| West                      | <b>83</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>689</b> | <b>144</b> |