

**Presbytery Review Committee**  
Report to the 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly



Ron Bengelink  
*Chairman*

**Summary of Work, 2020-2021:**

1. The committee once again endeavored to provide structure, order, and continuity to the process of reviewing the minutes of each Presbytery. All committee members worked from a common set of specific requirements for EPC Presbytery minutes reflecting the Constitution, the *Rules for Assembly*, and the *Acts of Assembly*. This list will also be distributed to all Presbytery Stated Clerks.
2. The minutes of each of the EPC's 14 Presbyteries were reviewed by two committee members, with their findings reviewed for consistency by the entire committee.
3. The Committee also reviewed the lists of the attendance for all Presbytery Stated Meetings for 2020 in order to ascertain the level of commitment by all EPC church sessions to our Presbyterian form of government as reflected in their engagement in the meetings of their Presbytery.

**Recommendations to the 2021 General Assembly:**

**Recommendation 41-28:**

That the Assembly approve the Exceptions Requiring Responses (by December 31, 2021) as found in the Minutes of eight Presbyteries.

**Recommendation 41-29:**

That the Assembly approve the responses of the Presbyteries to those Exceptions approved at the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

**Recommendation 41-30:**

That the Assembly approve the referral of the Committee's findings regarding the failure of at least 12% of EPC churches to provide any engagement with their Presbytery during 2020 by either their Teaching Elder(s) or Ruling Elder(s) the Commissioners to the Ministerial Vocation Committee for further study and action.

## Work of the Committee in 2020-2021:

Presbytery Review Committee members RE Ron Bengelink, RE Jane Bodden, RE Ray Kinat, RE George King, RE Gary O'Keefe, and TE Jason Steele accomplished this year's work with a series of virtual meetings beginning on March 18, 2021, and completing on April 30, 2021. The committee was ably supported by Assistant Stated Clerk Jerry Iamurri and his Administrative Assistants, Zenaida Bermudez and Vanessa Mullendore. Each pair of reviewers was assigned from four to six sets of minutes to review. They then met with the Committee Chairman to develop a consistent set of findings, and finally with the Committee as a whole approve these findings.

Prior to this process, the Chairman had developed a draft for a PRC "Handbook" which listed, in the order usually found in the minutes of Presbytery Stated Meetings, the required content as specified in various locations in the *Book of Order, Rules for Assembly* Section IX 9-12G, and in various entries in the *Acts of Assembly* since 1981. The intent was to provide a common resource for all members of the Committee, no matter what their level of prior experience with this task. This Handbook was modified based on the committee's experience using it this time so that now, in its final form, it can also be made available to the Stated Clerk of each Presbytery to more clearly define the standard to which their Minutes will be held.

Another focus of this year's review was an analysis of the reported attendance of the representatives of each church in each of our Presbyteries over the course of the year. Our *Book of Government* is clear that each church needs to send all of their Teaching Elders (since they are members of the Presbytery) and two Ruling Elders commissioned for each Teaching Elder, to participate in each Stated or Called meeting of the Presbytery (G.19-2A). Our analysis of the attendance reports for the required three Stated Meetings for the year 2020 shows that 77 EPC churches (more than 12%) *sent no representatives (including their Teaching Elder) to any of the three meetings during this past year*. The range of non-attendance varied from 0 (for one Presbytery) to 20% (for at least two Presbyteries). We also observed that in this COVID year, most Presbyteries had the option of virtual attendance for at least two of their three meetings, and therefore attendance only required sitting in front of a computer screen at home for 3 to 5 hours. Therefore, our third recommendation this year is to refer this information to the Ministerial Vocation Committee for further study or recommendations.

## Recommendations to the 2021 General Assembly:

### Recommendation 41-28:

That the Assembly approve the **Exceptions** by December 31, 2021:

### Alleghenies

The committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Alleghenies be approved with the following **exceptions**:

- A. For Mr. Justin Olivetti and 36-18A (p.664) for TE Matthew Geary must list the membership of the Commissions appointed to ordain and/or install TEs to show each member's office and church represented. Minutes must also list the location and date of that proposed activity (G.21-1A.2).

- B. 35th and 36th Meeting. The reports of the Administrative Commissions for these three activities listed above are not included in the Minutes of the 35th meeting or the 36th meeting as required by **G.21-1A.2**.
- C. An out-of-bounds call be approved “for a term of up to three years.” No term identified for TE Cummings, TE Bowers, or TE Zampella. 34-11B, p. 635, 35-11B, p. 649 (**G.10-8B2(a)**, p. 25-26).
- D. Call of an Assistant Pastor “shall be for a definite period of time.” No time period identified for Rev. Geary. 36-18A, p. 664 (**G.10-6A**, p. 23).

### **Florida and the Caribbean**

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. **G.11-2E** requires the Presbytery to assign a TE “in the Presbytery” as an advisor for the Candidate Under Care. Candidate Under Care Hendrickson transferred from the Presbytery of the Alleghenies to the Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean. No mention is made of assigning a new advisor from within the Presbytery. 91.06, p. 792; (**G.11-2E**, p. 28).
- B. **G.10-8B2(a)** requires that an out-of-bounds call be approved “for a term of up to three years.” No term identified for TE Vande Brake. 91.06, p. 794; (**G.10-8B2(a)**, p. 25-26).

### **Great Plains**

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Great Plains be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. Candidate Jordin Greer and Advisor Stan Van Den Berg, the Pastor, are from the same church, Eastminster Presbyterian Church. No justification for not following the requirement for “ordinarily not the Candidate’s Pastor.” 19-06B, Page 504, (**G.11-2E, Acts of Assembly 06-08**).
- B. Candidate Scott Matson and Advisor Aaron Elmore, the Pastor, are from the same church, Kirk of the Hills. No justification is presented for not following the requirement for “not ordinarily the Candidate’s Pastor.” 19-06A, page 504, (**G.11-2E, Acts of Assembly 06-08**).

### **Gulf South**

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Presbytery of the Gulf South be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. The examination of all Teaching Elders for ordination and/or installation shall include an approval of their position with respect to the Westminster Standards— either with no stated exceptions or an acceptance of any stated exception(s). This is not recorded for Candidates Stinson, Edwards, Foster, Hutson, or Watson or for the transfer of Rev. Edwards. 17.17, 10, 13, p. 9 19.05, 13-15, p. 35. (**G.12-4**, p. 30).
- B. The purpose of the Called meeting should be clearly stated, as well as the details of the call. This demonstrates for the record that: 1) the requirements for calling the meeting were met, and 2) no business other than that stated as the purpose of the called meeting was conducted. C1.01, p. 18. (**G.19-5.B**, p. 50).

## Midwest

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Midwest Presbytery be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. Candidates were asked questions, but no record was provided of examinations and no details of the candidates such as church membership and Session endorsement. Does not state that the motion passed. 170-08, p. 204-205 (*Rules for Assembly 9-12G.7, Rules for Assembly 9-12G.4; G.19-5D; G.11-2*).
- B. No record of examinations and no details of the candidates such as church membership and Session endorsement. Does not state that the motion passed. 171-17, p. 233; (*Rules for Assembly 9-12G.7; Rules for Assembly 9-12G.4; G.19-5D; G.11-2*).
- C. There was an attachment showing that Session minutes were received (53 of 57 churches), that included the church name, but none had been indicated as reviewed. There was no column indicating "Reviewed." This review information needs to be in the body of the minutes. 169th meeting, 169 Attachment B; 171-11, p. 231 (*G.19-4.A.7; Rules for Assembly 9-12G.10; Acts of Assembly 07-08.1*).
- D. Candidates Care Committee report: There were no details of how Matthew Grimm was examined for ordination (*G.12-2*).
- E. There were no details of how David Menzel was examined to come under care of the Presbytery. TE Chris Winans was approved as David Menzel's advisor, but it was not recorded that TE Winans is not Mr. Menzel's Pastor. 169th minutes, p. 186, section 169-16 (*G.11-2*).
- F. Candidates Committee. There were no *G.11-2* details for candidate-coming-under-care Blaise Shields. The two advisors for Blaise Shields were not identified as not being Mr. Shields Pastor. There were no *G.11-2* details for candidate-coming-under-care Brandon LaFontaine. The two advisors for Mr. LaFontaine were not identified as not being Mr. LaFontaine's Pastor. There were no *G.11-2* details for candidate-coming-under-care Octavio Samaniego. The two advisors for Mr. Samaniego were not identified as not being Mr. Samaniego's Pastor. There were no *G.11-2* details for candidate-coming-under-care S.K. (full name redacted for security). The advisor for Mr. K. was not identified as not being his Pastor. 170th minutes, p. 204-205, section 170-08, *G.11-2*
- G. Ministerial Committee: Omnibus motion #1: "Move TE Paul Copeland to retired rolls." There were no details from *G.15* (Retiring Pastors) in the minutes. *Acts of Assembly 12-11*. #2: "ON MOTION: That Peace Church ... be dismissed to independence." This motion should have included details that all sections of *G.5-10* (Dismissal) were followed. 171st meeting, p. 230, continuation of section 171-09.
- H. Candidates Care Committee: Two candidates were introduced, but no details of their exam (*G.11-2C*) were recorded. Advisors for the two candidates were not noted as not being the candidate's Pastor. 171st minutes, p. 233, section 171-17 (*G.11-2*).

## Pacific Northwest

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Pacific Northwest Presbytery be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. Authorization for a Commissioned Pastor shall be for a term of up to 3 years and may be renewed. No term specified for RE Jim Day. 7-35, p.170. (*G.9-11.A, p. 19*).

- B. Administrative Commissions of Presbytery shall have a ratio close to 2 RE to 1 TE, have not fewer than 5 members, and shall have REs representing not fewer than two member churches. (1) None of these requirements are met for the Administrative Commission approved to install RE Spencer. (2) Administrative Commission appointed to install RE Jim Day has only 3 members and no TEs. (1) 8-13, p. 8, (2) 9-20, p. 12 (G.21-1C2 and 21-1C2B).

### **Pacific Southwest**

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of the Pacific Southwest Presbytery be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. Use of the title “Executive Pastor” for a TE. EPC Teaching Elders may hold titles of Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, Stated Supply, or Occasional Supply. “These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.” #9/p. 117/9-8 (G.9-5-A.1).

### **West**

The Committee recommends that the Minutes of Presbytery of the West be approved with the following *exceptions*.

- A. Rev. Warmath’s examination was approved and his acceptance into the Presbytery of the West was approved, but no mention is made of approval of his Out-of-Bounds Call or of approval of a term of up to three years. 121st Stated, p. 9-10, 121:12B; (G.10-8B.2.a).

### **Recommendation 41-29:**

That the Assembly approve the responses of the following Presbyteries to the **Exceptions** cited by the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to their 2019 Minutes:

#### **Alleghenies**

#### **Florida and the Caribbean**

#### **Great Plains**

#### **Gulf South**

#### **Midwest**

#### **Pacific Northwest**

#### **Pacific Southwest**

#### **West**

The Committee commends the Presbyteries of the Central South, East, Mid-America, Mid-Atlantic, Rivers and Lakes, and Southeast for not having any exceptions for their 2020 meetings.

### **Recommendation 41-30:**

That the Assembly approve the referral of the Committee’s findings regarding the failure of at least 12% of EPC churches to provide any engagement with their Presbytery during 2020 by either their Teaching Elder(s) or Ruling Elder Commissioners to the Ministerial Vocation Committee for further study and action.

**Committee Members:**

RE Ron Bengelink (Chairman), Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest

RE Jane Bodden, Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean

RE Ray Kinat, Presbytery of the Alleghenies

RE George King, Presbytery of the Gulf South

RE Gary O'Keefe, Presbytery of the Midwest

TE Jason Steele, Presbytery of the Midwest

**Committee Meeting Dates:**

The PRC met on a series of video conference meetings from March 18-April 30, 2021, to review the minutes of the Presbyteries for the past reporting year (2020).

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ron Bengelink, Chairman

June 2021