



January 2019

For more than five years, Effective Biblical Leadership has been one of our priorities at the national level of the EPC. And in the seven months since last year's General Assembly in Memphis, we've hosted a large number of peer leadership groups. These meetings help foster a culture of leadership development.

They include presbytery moderators, stated clerks, ministerial and candidates committee chairs, and church development committee chairs. Church planters are another group that meets regularly. Executive pastors and directors of administration, plus executive assistants, also get together. Two groups of local church pastors are yet another peer group that we host.

When we count all these groups, approximately 170 key leaders in our presbyteries and local churches participate in these gatherings.

What's impressive is that the members of these groups want to get together. They look forward to connecting, sharing triumphs, bearing each other's burdens, learning best practices, and praying for each another. They recognize that they're "better together" than working in isolation. They know that there's collective wisdom and experience to be shared for the benefit of all. I especially appreciate the way those who are older who are investing in our new and younger leadership.

These meetings, like that of our presbyteries and annual General Assembly, reflect a culture—a quality of life together—that is distinctive. Indeed, based on my exposure to the U.S. and global church, what the Lord Jesus is doing in the EPC is unique. The way we relate to one another—the way we "do church" together in the EPC—is simply not the way other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations operate.

I think that there is a broader opportunity for us in this respect. I don't have to remind you that animosity, suspicion, and mistrust are running wild in our increasingly politicized, polarized culture. However, could it be that EPC churches—modeling who we are in our neighborhoods and communities—could serve as a place of civil conversation and connection? Could our congregations be a place of reconciliation for men and women looking for a refuge from all the destructive noise and anger?



That's part of what the Revelation 7:9 Task Force is all about. In this first year of their work they're in "listening mode," seeking your input. Your hopes and frustrations. What you'd like to see us do. Where you'd like to see us go in the next 10-15 years as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Yes, our culture is increasingly antagonistic. But it increasingly needs the life and salvation that is found only in our risen Savior and Lord.

This focus on leadership groups speaks to our commitment to building a culture of excellent and effective biblical leadership, one of the four strategic priorities in our vision statement. I'd like to also touch briefly on some other developments in the others.

The number of church plants in the EPC has actually decreased in the past few months. But that's good news! This is because three of our plants have declared victory and become particularized, local churches. Nación Santa (which translates to Holy Nation) in Haines City, Florida, celebrated this new status on January 20. It's our first Hispanic EPC church in Florida. Praise the Lord and congratulations to Nación Santa and its pastor, Luis Quiñones.

In global movement, we tend to focus on World Outreach and fraternal relations. But that is not all the Lord is doing. In the past few years, a team of EPC leaders in Puerto Rico and Texas led by Ruling Elder Alfredo Aponte-Cordova has been translating our constitutional documents into Spanish. This all-volunteer effort has completed the work of the Book of Government, the Book of Worship, the Book of Discipline, and several of the EPC's Position Papers. We hope to make these available on our website soon. Next on their list is the Westminster Confession of Faith.

These are some of the exciting, distinctive developments happening in the EPC as we continue to pursue the opportunities our Lord Jesus has for us. What God is doing in your local church is important—very important! But I also hope that you will remember and celebrate what our Lord is doing in the 600+ churches that is the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. That work is worthy of our time, our talent, and our treasures too.

Thank you, and also remember this: Christ is risen!