



A Global Movement of Evangelical Presbyterian Churches

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We're about a month away from our 38th General Assembly at Hope Presbyterian Church in Cordova, Tennessee. I hope you've registered for this important annual gathering of the leadership of the EPC! Our purpose this month is to highlight the important events and business on our schedule.

Taking a cue from the 2017 Assembly, this year's GA in Memphis will conclude on Friday, June 22—hopefully before dinnertime.

I hope you've taken the time to look at the GA section of our website. We have provided detailed information about the Leadership Institute, our worship service speakers, networking lunches, descending overtures, exhibitors, the daily schedule, and much more.

One item that is not on the schedule that I want to announce to you today is that on Thursday, June 21, we will welcome Jacqueline Brunson Furnari, Andrew Brunson's daughter. If you haven't watched her moving testimony to the U.S. Helsinki Commission last November, you should take a few minutes and do so. After hearing her plead for our government's help to get her father out of a Turkish prison, you will appreciate even more the toll that Turkey's imprisonment of Andrew has taken on his family.

Jacqueline will speak to us, we'll sing Andrew's modern hymn "Worthy of My All" that he wrote from prison last year, and will pray for Jacqueline and her family. I promise, you don't want to miss this special time on Thursday, June 21.

Regarding our business sessions, we have two important reports from interim committees that will come straight to the floor.

The first is from the Interim Committee for the Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality. This Pastoral Letter is a guide for our pastors and leaders as they minister to hurting men, women, boys, and girls in need of healing and hope in this area.

Unlike the Position Paper we approved at last year's Assembly, a Pastoral Letter is not a public document. The purpose of a Pastoral Letter is to guide churches within the EPC, and so by definition is internal to our denomination. This is in contrast to a Position Paper, which is a public declaration to the greater church and world on a particular topic.



When the Pastoral Letter comes to the floor, you can Approve, Amend and Approve, Reject, or refer to a committee to review and report back to the 2019 Assembly.

Because it is an internal document, we will not be posting it on our website. It will be available in the Commissioner's Handbook, and we will email it to our Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders soon.

The second report is from the Interim Committee on Ministerial Education, which we've been calling ICME. This committee was formed in 2013, and it will make its final report at this Assembly.

ICME is proposing an amendment to our Book of Government that expands the role of Commissioned Pastor in the EPC (that is, a pastor without full ordination as a Teaching Elder). Currently, the Commissioned Pastor is a role reserved for churches without a pastor. ICME's recommendation would allow a church with a pastor to call a Commissioned Pastor as well. This would then multiply the ministry of the pastor or pastoral staff, which can sometimes be constrained by the requirements that certain pastoral duties only be performed by an ordained Teaching Elder. By the way, the Ministerial Vocation Committee fully supports the ICME proposal.

Another important item for this Assembly is a recommendation from the National Leadership Team that a new interim committee be formed to explore where God is calling the EPC in the next decade. You could call this a "blue ribbon, long-range planning committee" for the EPC.

In addition, we'll elect our Moderator and Moderator-elect, and commission 11 new EPC World Outreach global workers at our Thursday evening worship service.

The NLT is recommending that you elect me to a new three-year term as Stated Clerk.

Lastly, we are working hard on the Commissioner's Handbook. The handbook is being simplified and streamlined this year to make it easier for you to use, and I think you'll like it.

Thank you very much, and I sure hope to see you in Memphis next month. I truly believe that you will be glad you attended this meeting.

One final thing: as always, remember, Christ is risen!