



October 2020

September of 2020 was historic for the EPC! From the Office of the General Assembly in Orlando, on September 17 and 18 we convened our first-ever virtual General Assembly. The feedback was positive and unanimous—Glenn Meyers was masterful moderating a most unique gathering of EPC leaders. Our meeting was also historic for participation. 416 Ruling Elders registered for the meeting; 388 Teaching Elders signed up. I'm pretty certain that this is the first time in the 40 years of the EPC that we had more Ruling Elders than Teaching Elders at a GA.

We posted an extensive recap of our Assembly's activities on EPConnection. I encourage you to read this information-rich article. For this month's Journal I'd like to hit some of the high points of our Assembly and conclude with a pastoral comment.

Dean Weaver, Lead Pastor of Memorial Park Presbyterian Church in Allison Park, Pennsylvania, and Moderator of the 37th General Assembly was elected as my successor. Dean will be installed at the 41st General Assembly in 2021. In addition to electing Glenn Meyers as the Moderator, Brad Strait, Senior Pastor of Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church in Englewood, Colorado, was approved as the Moderator-elect. The Assembly also filled vacancies in our permanent committees and boards as they were presented by the Nominating Committee, chaired by Alan Conrow.

The General Assembly approved an EPC operating budget for next year totaling \$2.36 million. This was a 17 percent decrease in the budget that was originally drafted in early 2020. The National Leadership Team was very sensitive to, and concerned about, difficulties our churches could be facing as the shutdown continued. For this reason, it recommended this reduced budget.

I am always grateful for your support for the ministry of the Office of the General Assembly. I am very pleased to report that through September you've been incredible with your generosity. Per Member Asking giving for the first three months of the fiscal year is exceeding what we had budgeted for. Last month, the Assembly also authorized the National Leadership Team to increase funding of some strategic line items if our giving exceeds projected spending. I'm confident that if the current giving trend continues, we will be able to invest more in strategic priorities by the end of 2020. Praise the Lord and thank you.



The Assembly also extended the work of two interim committees. The Revelation 7:9 Task Force, formed in 2018, will continue its work through the 42nd General Assembly in 2022. Co-chaired by Teaching Elders Rufus Smith and Dean Weaver, the Task Force's written report will be sent to all EPC presbyteries, churches, and pastors as we continue to pursue the rich unity and diversity the Apostle John speaks to in Revelation 7.

The work of the Giving Culture Study Committee was extended through the 41st General Assembly in 2021. Chaired by Ruling Elder Jane Cooper, this committee was approved at the 2019 Assembly. Its task has been to address how to improve the long-term culture of giving to the EPC. Among the four recommendations the Assembly approved last month was one directing the Theology Committee to define "connectional" and "connectionalism" as we understand those terms in the EPC.

One of our strategic priorities in the EPC is to actively participate in the mission of the global church. Responding to recommendations from EPC World Outreach, the Assembly approved the Outreach Foundation, PAK7, and the Frontier Fellowship as approved agencies. In addition, Avant Ministries was approved as a cooperative agency. On the fraternal relations side, the EPC has enjoyed a close relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil for more than 30 years. A fraternal agreement dating from the year 2000 was updated and approved by this year's Assembly. This new agreement specifically focuses on church planting.

To conclude, I have this pastoral comment: "Adapting" is the word that comes to mind to describe where we are as a Church in October of 2020. Adapting.

Across the EPC—our churches, presbyteries, committees, boards, and leadership networks—we're adjusting. We're changing "on the fly." We're adapting as we seek to minister faithfully and effectively in this shutdown.

On the one hand, I am so grateful for the technology at our disposal to do this. I often remind myself: "How could we have managed this ten years ago with the technology we that had back then?"

On the other hand, as we're adapting we're being stretched, we're being stressed, we're being strained. A colleague said recently, "Everything we do now requires more of us." All of us know that this accumulation of change, uncertainty, and stress is having an impact emotionally, spiritually, physically.



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Here is my pastoral plea to you: Please take care of yourself! Be intentional; make a commitment each day to take care of your heart, your soul, your body, and your mind. A regular part of my devotional life is praying Psalm 91 over us, that God will be our shield and defender, our refuge and fortress. Because of who He is, we will not fear the deadly pestilence, the pestilence that stalks in the darkness. He is the 'always God' who is always with us! Be encouraged, comforted, and strengthened in this truth.

Thank you, God bless you, and remember: Christ is risen!