

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

Church Development Committee Manual

03/31/2026

PRESBYTERY OF THE CENTRAL CAROLINAS

Church Development Committee Manual

The purpose of this manual is to:

1. Provide a central source for the Book of Government, Presbytery By-laws and Acts of Presbytery that pertain to the Church Development Committee.
2. To define the manner in which the CDC will carry out its responsibility.
3. To provide groups and churches wishing to become EPC Churches with a clear understanding of the process.
4. To identify and describe resources available to churches that want to enhance church vitality.

The Manual Contains The Following:

- A. Church Health, Revitalization and Vitality
- B. Church Standards/Book of Government
- C. Presbytery Bylaws (that apply to CDC)
- D. Duties of the Missional Director and Church Health Coordinator
- E. Non-EPC Reformed Churches and Groups

A. Church Health, Revitalization, and Vitality

The health of local congregations in the Presbytery of Central Carolinas is one of the top priorities for the CDC. The work of the Presbytery is carried out by individual local congregations and networks of congregations. The assessment of the health and vitality of our congregations is an important part of evaluating and assessing how well our churches are doing.

The process of revitalization is a necessary component in the life of all our churches. It is the goal and the desire of Presbytery that every member congregation be Evangelical, Presbyterian, Reformed, Missional, and Vital according to Scriptural principles and our Book of Order. The EPC website (<https://epc.org/about/values/>) contains clear and important descriptions of these values.

Churches should intentionally aspire to these five key attributes, which may be assessed as given below.

Five Attributes of a Healthy Congregation:

1. Evangelical
 - a. Addressed by the current minister and session exams.
 - b. Other things that may be addressed:

- i. Does the leadership intentionally develop and equip other leaders from the congregation?
- ii. Is evangelism integrated into other ministry programs/activities?

2. Presbyterian

- a. We will encourage ruling elder involvement by individual churches at stated presbytery meetings and on the various committees and commissions. Each Teaching Elder is expected to be involved in a cohort based on geography. Churches could share in or jointly accomplish such things as officer training, missions, church planting, collective outreach, student ministry, etc.

3. Reformed

- a. Addressed by the current minister and session exams.
- b. Other things that may be addressed
 - i. What is the ongoing process for vetting and training church officers?
 - ii. How well does the congregation understand the basics of Reformed theology?

4. Missional

- a. Fundamental attributes of the EPC and of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas:
 - i. Planted by God in its own community to effectively reach those around them.
 - ii. Continually in the process of equipping its members to be missionaries sent by God.
 - iii. Constantly re-examining itself as to whether it is merely doing maintenance of existing ministries and members, or is it effectively doing the mission of reaching its own community.
- b. Other things that may be addressed:
 - i. What ministries has your church intentionally designed and implemented to reach lost people in your neighboring communities? What results have you seen from those ministries?
 - ii. In terms of expanding the kingdom of God, what hope or dream do you have for your church? What plans do you have to move that dream toward reality?
 - iii. How do you develop and deploy disciples into meaningful outreach?
 - iv. In what ways could you see your church being involved in church planting?

5. Vital

- a. Things that may be addressed:
 - i. Does your church have a clearly defined vision/mission that is well known by both leadership and membership?
 - ii. How does your actual ministry align with your church's vision/mission?
 - iii. What is the process by which you evaluate ministry effectiveness?
 - iv. What is the role of personal and corporate prayer in your church?
 - v. How much of your ministry energy and resources (financial, talent, programming, etc.) is invested in ministry beyond your congregation?

- vi. Is your church culture conducive to change when and where needed?
- vii. Is the minister seen as an effective leader and teacher?
- viii. Does the leadership deal effectively with conflict and strive to maintain unity in the church?

The Church Revitalization Lifecycle: Five Primary Stages

Birth – God plants a vision for a church in the hearts of a group (missional group, particular church, Presbytery, etc.). As the vision is shared, excitement builds and relationships are fostered around accomplishing the vision together. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its vision, or calling from God.

Growth – The ministry capacity of the church is increasing. Over time, the church is doing more and more ministry and the quality of that ministry is better and better. The Growth Stage features health, growth and multiplication. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its alignment of vision with everything that happens in the life of the church.

Recline – The ministry capacity of the church levels off into plateau. Over time, the church is doing the same ministry over and over at more or less the same level of quality. Recline is a tepid, tread water stage featuring ministry management by routine, filling in the blanks. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its programs.

Decline – The ministry capacity of the church is decreasing. Over time, the church is doing less ministry but seeking to retain the same programs. The quality of that ministry and participation in programs is more and more compromised. Decline is a weak stage featuring decreases in membership, attendance, giving and overall impact in the community. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its structure.

Death – The ministry capacity of the church is dissolving. A church that is dying can still be meeting and worshiping but looks like a patient on hospice care. They are doing what they can to simply keep the doors open; but there is no sign of health or vitality, there is no energy or acceptance of change, and there is poor stewardship of God's resources. Everything is focused inwardly. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is unhealthiness.

Churches on the upside of the life cycle (Birth, Growth and early Recline) are facing moderate revitalization, while churches on the downside of the life cycle (Recline or Decline) are facing a much more severe revitalization process. Churches in the Death phase need to walk the journey of lost viability (next section), make plans accordingly, and seek to impact the kingdom by finishing well.

Since vitality naturally decreases over time, church revitalization needs to be an ongoing process. It is much better for churches to embrace revitalization early in the life cycle rather than late, as revitalization is much more attainable from a position of strength than a position of weakness. The best way for a church to begin or maintain missional vitality is through Vision. Vision is achieved by continually seeking to answer four fundamental questions that are concerned with Purpose, Objectives, Goals and Structure.

- A. Purpose statements answer the question: Whom are we trying to reach?
- B. Objective statements answer the question: How are we going to reach them?
- C. Goal statements answer the question: When do these things happen?
- D. Structure statements answer the question: How do we organize to accomplish the goal?

Answering questions, A through D, helps to give rise to a church's vision, vitality and growth.

Church Viability

This policy on Church Viability provides guidance on implementing, and is supplemental to, the EPC Book of Order G.21-2.D.2.d (BOG)

It is the goal and the desire of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas that every member congregation be evangelical, reformed, presbyterian, missional, vital and healthy according to Scriptural principles and our EPC values, as identified in this manual above. However, the Presbytery recognizes that there may be congregations whose circumstances prevent those goals from being realized. In such cases, it is not only right but the duty of Presbytery to intervene through its Ministerial or Church Development committees to assist such churches toward healthy congregational life.

RATIONALE:

Although no complaint may have been received, if in the judgment of the CDC a local congregation is having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the committee has the authority to investigate and make recommendations to Presbytery.

The following guidelines shall be used by the CDC to implement its task.

Determination of Church Viability

As a standard, the CDC considers a church to be viable when at least 4 criteria are evidenced.

They meet the following criteria:

1. Have at least 30 adults regularly in worship.
2. Can communicate and have set forth in writing God's call and vision for their church.
3. Have established clear goals for their work for the next 3 years.
4. They provide their own leadership, including elders or elder candidates ready to be ordained and installed.
5. They are fruitful in ministry and in the process of fulfilling their God-given calling.
6. They are financially self-sustaining.

Conversely, functional viability can be called into question by corporate concerns that include but are not limited to these:

- Lack of vision
- Lack of effectiveness in carrying out the mission
- Lack of converts
- People consistently leaving the church
- Only an aging population in the church
- Lack of funds

- Lack of effective leadership
- Changing community with cultural distance with the community
- Lack of outreach to community
- Sin in “the camp”

These issues may also be evidenced by personal concerns such as:

- Internal fighting
- Territorialism
- Absence of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5)
- Defensiveness
- Control struggles
- Unwillingness to seek help
- Lack of humility, faith, prayer and spiritual maturity

The above criteria (and others deemed appropriate) shall be used to determine whether a particular church is possibly “non-viable.”

The CDC will exercise utmost discernment in making a determination of viability for a local church or group, taking into account the inter-relatedness of these criteria and any other extenuating circumstances. Should the Committee determine that minimum viability does not exist, nor is there any realistic expectation that it may exist in the future, it shall recommend to Presbytery one of three options:

- The Presbytery partners with the church to begin a process of revitalization.
- A local church may be reclassified as a mission church.
- The church will be dissolved (BOG 5-9).

A Plan For Partnership, Revitalization, and Dissolutionment

Upon a determination of possible non-viable status, the CDC or CHC will enter into conversation with the church to conduct an assessment of viability. Once an assessment has been completed, the CDC or CHC will determine which of the three options stated below is best to pursue.

Option 1: Partnership for Revitalization

A partnership should normally be conducted over a period of at least one year, involving but not limited to the following actions:

1. The CDC shall appoint a partnership team of 3-5 people from the CDC and the local church.
2. The partnership team will consult with Session and congregation prior to the team’s development of a revitalization plan.
3. The partnership team will make a report of its findings and recommendations to the Session.

After the Session has received the recommendations, the report will be sent to the Chair of the Church Development Committee and Ministerial Committee for review. In some cases, the CDC may determine and recommend to the Presbytery that reclassification is necessary for the successful redevelopment of the church. In such cases, the Presbytery will follow guidelines established in the BOG, chapter 5.

Option 2: Partnership for Reclassification

The CDC may make a determination that reclassification as a Mission Church is the best option, in which case the CDC will undertake oversight and work with the mission church towards revitalization.

Reclassification should be viewed by all involved at the congregational and Presbytery levels to be the first step toward a renewal of the congregation's vision, purpose, mission and ministry. This should never be seen as a punitive step. The local church may view this reclassification as "a step backward," or even a sign of failure when, actually, it should be viewed as a step forward, and received in an attitude of renewed hope and as an opportunity to correct past miscalculations, misjudgments, misunderstandings or mistakes. The faith, prayers, giving, attitude and cooperation of leadership and members are critical ingredients in the revitalization process.

The most immediate impact upon a reclassified church is the temporary dissolution of its Session and/or Diaconate. Part of Presbytery's action to reclassify a local church to mission church status is to place all active Ruling Elders and Deacons on inactive status according to BOG 14-2B.6. Such persons are eligible to serve on a newly structured Steering Committee at the approval of the administrative team. Presbytery would also re-designate any pastor(s) of a reclassified church to that of Evangelist(s) according BOG 9-5.C.

Upon determination by the CDC, the reclassified church may apply for "local church" status once all the appropriate criteria for viability have been met.

Option 3: Dissolution

Should the CDC determine that a congregation is non-viable and a process of revitalization and/or reclassification is either not possible or unable to achieve the necessary revitalization, then the CDC will recommend to the Presbytery of Central Carolinas that the congregation be dissolved, in accordance with the Book of Order, G.5-9 and G.8-4.

The following documents are provided for churches to consider as additional resources:

Church Health and Fruitfulness

When asked to define church health, some church leaders point to traditional metrics which show "success" in a readily quantifiable or measurable way, such as:

- The number of ministry programs provided by the church
- The number of committees working within the church
- The number of people attending the church
- The size of the church budget

Others will point to metrics of faithfulness in the church that are less quantifiable but are qualitatively spiritual, such as:

- The church's engagement in spiritual disciplines
- The church's faithfulness in prayer
- The church's liturgical excellence
- The church's theological purity

Both sets of metrics (measurable and spiritual qualities) are important to the life and health of the church, but they may not be the best or most biblical way of defining church health. Within the continuum between success and faithfulness there is the biblical model of fruitfulness.

SUCCESS FRUITFULNESS FAITHFULNESS

Gospel fruitfulness is described in the Scriptures in a multiplicity of ways and particularly in:

Bearing Fruit is the Scriptural essence of vitality:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”
(John 15:1–8 ESV)

Gospel fruitfulness is also described specifically in the Scriptures as:

Bearing Fruit through Ministry with the Poor:

“And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.” (Galatians 2:6–10 ESV)

Bearing Fruit through the Formation of Godly Character:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:16–24 ESV)

Bearing Fruit through Conversion

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:16-29)

Church Health

The Presbytery of Central Carolinas in accordance with the General Assembly of the EPC has developed a process to come alongside churches desiring to enhance their vitality and outreach effectiveness. This process is called Church Health and includes coaches that are equipped to guide and encourage.

It is helpful to identify a baseline regarding a church’s posture toward outreach and the function and attitude of its leadership. This also helps the Church Health Coordinator (or one of the coaches) to become informed on the general preparedness of church leadership (pastors, session, and key ministry leaders) to respond to the process. Knowing where you are is essential for identifying what steps are most helpful and how the presbytery can best support those steps.

It is also important for church leadership to have a clear understanding of the expectations regarding the Church Health process so the church and its leadership can determine if they can commit to participating and so they know what to expect from the presbytery. Below is the summary of the 3-Step Process that the CDC will follow with churches that may be candidates for coaching.:

Step #1 – Church Preparation

Church leadership is introduced to and is presented with the process outline. Church Leadership then determines if they are ready to participate. Church leadership will be introduced to the “Missional Posture,” and the “Ideal Church Leadership” self-assessment surveys. This information will serve to:

1. Help church leadership see where they are.
2. Help the Church Health Coordinator determine which coach should be assigned (matching the attributes and gifts of the coaches with the church). The results of these self-assessment surveys will be shared with church leadership at an initial meeting.

The church leadership should participate in the Church Lifecycle Assessment – a self-assessment of the trending vitality of the church – which of the five stages of the life cycle of a church they might find themselves in.

The church may want to attend a Regional Church Health Seminar.

Step #2 – Setting the Stage

Church leadership then chooses individuals to serve as the Vision Team to move forward with the process. The assigned coach will present to church leadership the characteristics and responsibilities of the Vision Team, which will be the church team that moves the process forward and with whom the Health Coach will work.

The first task of the Vision Team will be for each member to choose a small team of folks (3 or 4 per team member) to serve as their prayer support. This group (the Prayer Team) will be asked to pray for and with the Vision Team.

The assigned coach will present to the Vision Team the characteristics and responsibilities of the Prayer Team.

Step #3 – Follow-up (with assigned Coach)

Subsequent meetings between the coach and the Vision Team will likely be necessary and helpful. The frequency, focus, and format of these follow-up meetings will certainly vary from church to church. However, in all cases, emphasis will be on aligning vision with strategy and structure for a more effective outreach.

The Refocus Process

The Refocus Process, shown below, outlines the alignment process for developing more fruitful ministry. This process is used by the individual churches that agree to work with the CDC Health Coach. Once a church decides to work with a Health Coach, it will then follow the Refocus Process.

Phase 1 – Aligning Perception – Self-Discovery Assessment and Analysis

Key Questions:

- What will we discover about ourselves?
- What will we do in light of what we discover?

Phase 2 – Aligning Vision – Who Are We Going to Be?

Key Questions:

- How does God want to express Himself through this church in this community at this time?
- What did God mean by that? (making adjustments)

Phase 3 – Aligning Strategy – Who Are We Going to Become?

Key Questions:

- How do we make contact with those we are trying to reach?
- How will we develop those we are trying to reach once we've made contact?

Phase 4 – Aligning Structure – How Are We Going to Function? (Supporting the Strategy)

Key Questions:

- What are the criteria for decision-making and resource allocation?
- How does leadership function?

Phase 5 – Aligning People – Mobilizing Servants & Leaders

Key Questions:

- How will we get people involved?
- On whom does the future depend?

B. Church Standards / Book of Government

1. The Organization, Dissolution, Reception or Dismissal of a Particular Church --
See Book of Government, Chapter 5
2. Work of the Evangelist (From G.10-3):

C. Presbytery Bylaws: Church Development Committee

1. Core Values:

- a. The mission of the Church Development Committee is to take primary leadership in the implementation of Presbytery's missional purpose: to resource, train, and hold accountable the leaders of member churches in order to fulfill the Great Commission through spiritual and numerical growth. In consultation with the Missional Director, it shall identify new strategic ministry areas within the Presbytery and establish, nurture, and support churches within the areas for the purpose of reaching the lost, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, transform members into Christ-like maturity.
- a. We believe that a church of any size can expand, grow, and advance the Kingdom of God, and its leadership can become passionate about sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church Development Committee is most zealous to fuel financially those churches that demonstrate such zeal and which set and accomplish specific strategies and goals to reach the world for Christ.

2. Membership: Cf. Article VII, Section 1, B.2.

3. Duties of the Committee are delineated in the CDC Manual on file in the Stated Clerk's Office. The Committee shall make regular reports at all Stated Meetings of Presbytery, as required, of its work.

4. The Committee will report to Presbytery as described in Article VII, Section 1, E of these Bylaws.

D. Non-EPC Reformed Churches and Groups

A. INFORMAL PHASE: Inquiry made (phone, e-mail, letter, personal conversation):

(“Tell me about the EPC,” or “What if our church wants to join the EPC?”)

- If a church inquires to someone in the presbytery (not directly to the Stated Clerk), they should be referred or directed to the Stated Clerk.

Stated Clerk

- Stated Clerk sends “Inquiring Church Packet” to the church and follows up within a month or predetermined time frame.
- Stated Clerk to verify if the church is in PCC boundaries.

MC

- Is the Church a member in good standing within their current denomination? (MC)
- Is the Pastor of the inquiring church a member in good standing in their current denomination? (MC)
- Determine if the pastor is ordainable or wants to be in the EPC. (MC)

CDC

- CDC sends the Inquiring Churches Application Packet to the interested church. The packet includes the current vision, mission statement, how many people are in attendance, goals for the next 3 years, if they agree with the essentials, and a section for questions of us.
- When the completed form is returned, several people (representatives from the CDC and the Stated Clerk) review their responses. If clarification is needed, we will meet with them (in person or zoom).
- Determine if the Church/Session affirms The Essentials of our Faith, Position Papers, EPC Statement on Scriptures, Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms and the EPC Book of Order? (CDC)

Stated Clerk

- Notify GA Office, et. al. for information purposes while observing confidentiality, if needed (Stated Clerk)

B. FORMAL PHASE. NOTE: Presbytery Stated Clerk MUST be kept informed through this phase.

- Session calls for a congregational meeting to be dismissed from the current presbytery and be received by the PCC.
- Upon approval, the Stated Clerk receives Application, Letter of Intent, and Petition to be Received from the inquiring church.
- The Stated Clerk sends a Letter of Intent to receive the inquiring church into our Presbytery.
- Teaching Elder requests reception into PCC.
- The Ministerial Committee works with TE to fulfill EPC requirements.
- The inquiring Church seeks dismissal from the current presbytery.
- The dismissing presbytery informs the church of the process to follow.
- Dismissing presbytery agrees to dismiss Church to PCC.
- CDC approaches people willing to serve on the Administrative Commission and recommends them to the presbytery. The floor will be opened for further nominations.

The CDC recommends that the Administrative Commission be led by a representative of the CDC and include some members of their geographical cohort.

- Presbytery reviews and approves the Administrative Commission for the church.
- The Administrative Commission makes arrangements for a face-to-face meeting.
- Advise of EPC process and standards (i.e., CDC's requirements for RE training).
- Develop an impression of the fit of elders, minister(s) and congregation.
- Present overview of EPC, its ethos, and Presbytery theological standards.
- Address gender-office issues as needed and appropriate.
- Elders and Church Leaders trained using the EPC Leadership Guide, WC and BOO. They should use available videos and reading materials for self-study and have scheduled review sessions in which they can discuss the materials and ask questions. CDC will appoint a trainer to conduct the training.
 - We have developed a task force to develop PCC training materials and videos to accompany the curriculum. Bill Wade and David Taylor volunteered to be a part of this task force. They will evaluate materials currently available including the EPC Leadership Guide, the POA Elder Exam Handbook used by the Presbytery of the Alleghenies, videos shared earlier, etc.
- CDC will initiate the Church Health Process with the church through a Revitalization Conference or an individual assessment with their church.
- Elders and Church Leaders will be examined by the Administrative Commission.
- The Ministerial Committee examines the minister(s).
- PIF, 10 Questions, and background check before Presbytery meeting.
- Observe, appraise regarding Presbytery standards on exceptions to The Westminster Confession of Faith (any exceptions put in writing).
- Presbytery examines minister(s) at Stated Meeting.
- Presbytery declares church/group received and Administrative Commission of reception/ordination, installation appointed, date of service set.
- Conduct Installation/Ordination and reception service.
- Continue the Church Health Process.