



Presbytery of Central Carolinas
12th Stated Meeting
Overbrook Presbyterian Church
Gaffney, SC
April 24-25, 2026

Table of Contents

12 TH Meeting Docket Presbytery of Central Carolinas.....	3-4
Stated Clerk’s Report.....	5-6
Teaching/Ruling Elder Commissioner Guide from The Book of Order.....	7
Substitute Motions Chart for G.A. Meeting on Ascending Motions.....	8
Stated Clerk’s Report on Parity approved at the 11 th Stated Meeting.....	9-10
11 th PPC Meeting Minutes (draft).....	11-44
Executive Council Minutes.....	45-56
Church Development Committee Report.....	47-59
Stewardship Committee Report.....	60-63
Statement of Financial Position.....	60
Statement of Revenues and Expenses.....	61-62
Percentage of Income Giving.....	63
Report of Ad-Interim Committee on SSA and Ordination Standards.....	64-68
Book of Government, Edits & Comparison.....	69-71
Pastoral Letter, Edits & Comparison.....	72-99
Pastoral Letter, Clean & Numbered.....	100-112
Position Paper, Edits & Comparison.....	113-125
Position Paper, Clean & Numbered.....	126-131



Proposed Docket
Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Twelfth Stated Meeting
Overbrook Presbyterian Church
Gaffney, SC
April 24-25, 2026

Mission: Mobilizing church leaders to make disciples and plant churches for gospel-transformation

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

[Romans 5:1-5]

Friday, April 24th, 2026

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 8:30 AM | Registration & Team / Committee Meetings |
| 1:00 PM | Call to order – Moderator – TE Eric Bartel
Host Welcome – TE Bill Wade |
| 1:05 PM | Opening Prayer & Worship – Chaplain TE Bill Wade, Overbrook EPC |
| 1:40 PM | Preliminary Matters – Moderator TE Eric Bartel and Stated Clerk TE Robert Howard <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Declaration of a quorum & adoption of the docket● Communications and referrals● Welcome to first-time commissioners and corresponding members● Welcome New Congregations |
| 1:40 PM | Moderator's Report - TE Eric Bartel <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduction of Committee Chairs● Task Force - By-Laws Revision Discussion● Upcoming GA |
| 2:00 PM | Report of the Missional Director – TE Brian Land <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Church Health Coordinator |
| 2:20 PM | Report of the PCC Stated Clerk – TE Robert Howard <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Minutes (see packet for details)● Communications & Referrals● Attendance and Parity report for today's meeting● Other matters |
| 2:45 PM | Fellowship (15 min) |
| 3:00 PM | Order of the Day: World Outreach
Drew McCarty |
| 4:50 PM | Church Development Committee—RE Anita Hill |

- 5:30 PM Worship and Celebration of the Lord's Supper
- Music led by praise team and choir
 - Preaching & Communion
 - Mission Offering: The Barnabas Fund
 - Prayer ministry and fellowship available after the close of the service

6:30 PM Break for Dinner

Saturday, April 25th, 2026

9:00 AM Call to Order – Moderator TE Eric Bartel

9:05 AM Devotional Messages (15min)

- TE Donovan Campbell

9:30 AM Report of the Church Planting Committee – TE Logan Keck

9:45 AM Report of the Stewardship Committee – TE Donovan Campbell

10:00 AM World Outreach - TE Ken Thomas

10:10 AM Fellowship (15 min)

10:25 AM Report of the Ministerial Committee – RE Butch Hill

- Examinations
 - Transfer Candidate TE Scott Matson of the Presbytery of Pacific Northwest.
- Omnibus motion

11:30 PM Expression of appreciation to the host – TE Eric Bartel, Moderator

11:30 PM Doxology, Prayer, & Charge

11:45 PM Adjournment

**Thirteenth Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Centre Presbyterian Church - Mooresville, NC**

Stated Clerk's Report
Presbytery of Central Carolinas
12th Stated Meeting
Overbrook Presbyterian Church
April 24-25, 2026

Session Minutes Due in April 2026

- Greenville Presbyterian Church
- Hendersonville Presbyterian Church
- Indian Hill Presbyterian Church
- Kershaw Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- Lake Forest Church Huntersville/Iglesia/UCity/Westlake
- Lighthouse Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- McBee Presbyterian Church
- McLean Presbyterian Church
- Nell Townsend Presbyterian Church
- New Cut Presbyterian Church
- Overbrook Presbyterian Church

Communications



**46TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY &
GOSPEL PRIORITIES SUMMIT**
JUNE 16-18, 2026 | ENGLEWOOD, CO
CHERRY CREEK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Where to register to be a General Assembly Commissioner

Registration Link

<https://web.cvent.com/event/c4ab6023-e030-4da2-ab1b-2d5ff62bf625/summary>

Certification:

46th GA | 2026 RE COMMISSIONER CERTIFICATION

- Ruling Elders must be elected and endorsed by the Session of a congregation to serve as Commissioners to the General Assembly.
- A church may elect the same number of Ruling Elder Commissioners to General Assembly as it does to its Presbytery.
- Once a congregation's Ruling Elder Commissioners are elected, **the Clerk of Session must submit the Ruling Elder Commissioner Certification Form no later than May 15 of each year.** *Without this certification, a Ruling Elder will not receive voting credentials at the Assembly.*
- All Teaching Elders who are active members of their presbyteries are eligible to vote and need no additional certification.
- Link:

<https://epconnect.org/ga2026recommissionercertificationform/>

IMPORTANT: *Completing this form does not register your Ruling Elders for the General Assembly. Online registration becomes available on April 1.*

Final Report on Same-Sex Attraction and Ordination (see Packet pgs. 64-131)

- Ad-Interim Committee on SSA and Ordination Standards Report
- Book of Government, Edits & Comparison
- Pastoral Letter, Edits & Comparison
- Pastoral Letter, Clean & Numbered
- Position Paper, Edits & Comparison
- Position Paper, Clean & Numbered

Ascending Overtures from the following Presbyteries (see web link at

***<https://epconnect.org/ga/ga2026documents/#overtures>*)**

- Central Carolinas
- East Presbytery
- Florida and Caribbean
- New River
- Pacific Northwest
- Rivers and Lakes

Teaching Elders / Ruling Elders as Commissioners to General Assembly

Teaching Elders:

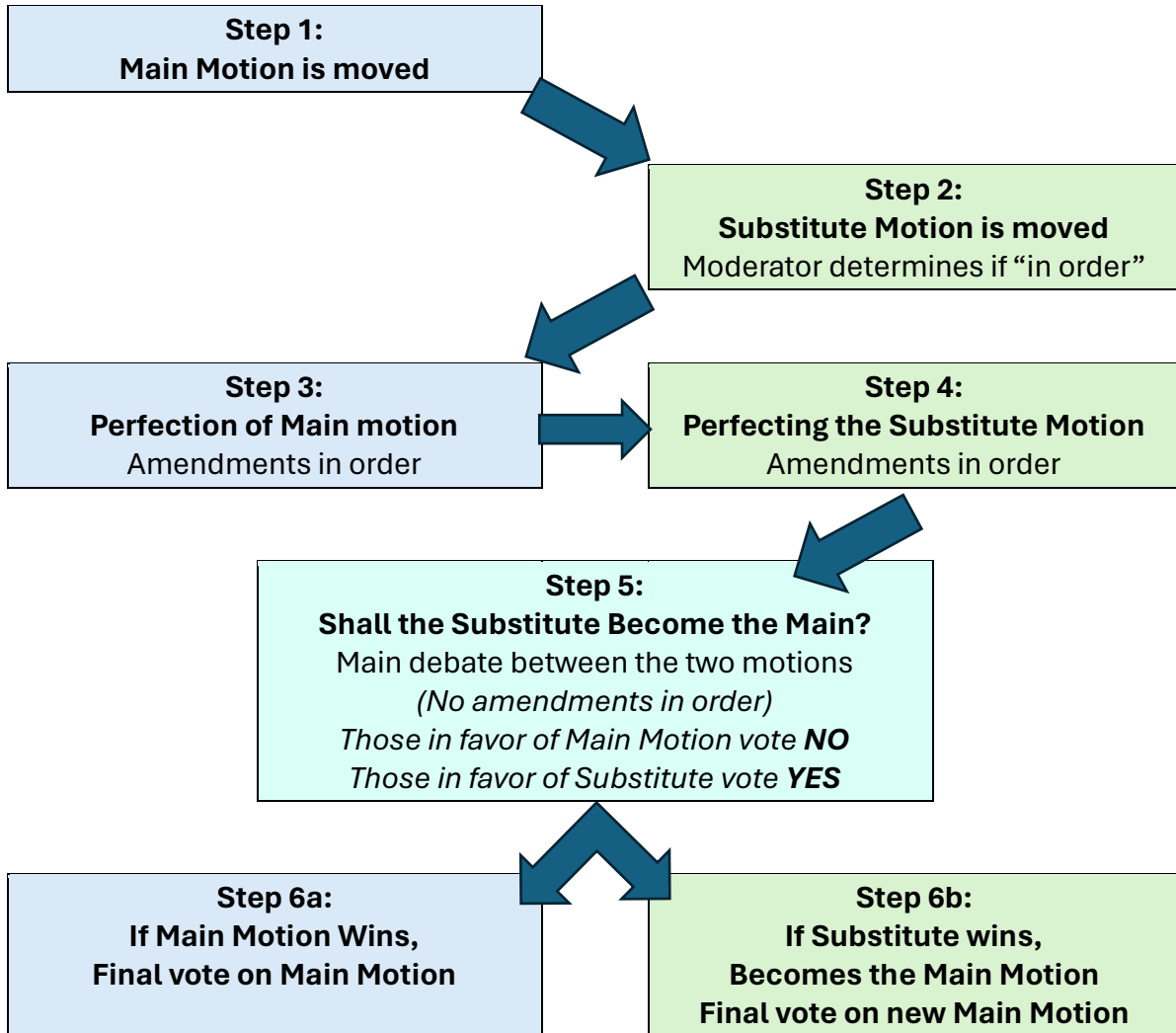
- Voting Commissioners *(these TE's have voice and vote)*
 - Active Roll of Presbytery (G.19-2A.1)
 - *Those with an active approved call or actively seeking a call*
 - Retired Active Roll of Presbytery (G.19-2A.2)
 - *Status as per G.15-2A) -retired but remain on presbytery active rolls according to provisions of G.15-1and G.14-1D)*
 - **Without an **approved call** of presbytery this only has a **2 year** duration as per G.19-2B.1a
 "...or those without a Presbytery-approved call for two years will **automatically** be place on the Associate Members roll, Presbytery by a 2/3 majority vote may exempt a minister from becoming an Associate Member for one year. The exemption may be granted to the minister on an annual basis."*
- Non-Voting Commissioners *(these TE's have voice, vote and can make motions in committee, but only voice on the floor of the General Assembly (can not make motions or vote)*
 - Associate Members (Retired and Not Retired)
 - G.19-2B.1a - Qualifications
 - G.19-2B.1b -Rights and Restrictions
- Non-Voting/Non-Participating Teaching Elders **not able to serve as a commissioner*
 - Inactive Teaching Elders (G.19-2B.2)
 - Inactive Retired Teaching Elders (G.19-2B.3)
 - G.14-3A -Status

Ruling Elders:

- G.20-2 -Membership of the General Assembly
"The basis of representation to the General Assembly shall be the same as representation to Presbytery." (see G.19-2A)
- G.19-2A.4a – Ruling Elders elected by each session.
"The Session shall elect two Ruling Elders for each Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Assistant Pastor. However a local church shall have no fewer than two Ruling Elders for each 500 members or a major portion thereof."

Churches with large membership and a large pastoral staff will calculate the number of Ruling Elders (2 for each Teaching Elder) and compare that number to the number of Ruling Elders for each 500 members. The number of Ruling Elder Commissioners will be the larger of those two numbers.
- G.19-2A.4b – Disparity Correction
In addition to the Ruling Elder Commissioners allowed by the formula above, Sessions are allowed to send additional Ruling Elders according to their Presbytery Parity Correction plan for that year.

Substitute Motions Simplified



PCC 8

- Buck Hill Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Cameronian Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Centre Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Christ Church – Anderson, SC 3 Ruling Elders
- Christ Community Church – Montreat 5 Ruling Elders
- Christ Fellowship Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Garden Memorial EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- Grace Brevard Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Greenville Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Hendersonville Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Kershaw EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- Lake Forest Church 9 Ruling Elders
- Lighthouse EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- McBee Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- McLean Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Nell Townsend Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- New Cut Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Overbrook Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Plumtree Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Riceville Valley Community Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Rourk Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Siler Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- St. Giles Presbyterian Church 5 Ruling Elders

Approved at the February 20-21, 2026, Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas at Benton Heights Presbyterian Church, 2701 Concord Highway, Monroe, NC 28110.

Robert M. Howard

Stated Clerk

Presbytery of Central Carolinas

704-252-2977

Presbytery of Central Carolinas
11th Stated Meeting
February 20-21, 2026
Benton Heights Presbyterian Church
2701 Concord Highway Monroe, NC 28110

11-01. Attendance

Altan Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Robert Childs, Stated Supply (Present)
2. RE: Richard Courtney (Present), Edwina Eubanks (Present)

Asheville Hope Mission Church

1. TE Drew McCarty – Evangelist (Present)

Banks Presbyterian Church

1. TE: John Mikule (Present)
2. RE: (Excused)

Bensalem

1. TE: John Stone, Stated Supply (Present)
2. RE: Carolyn Kidd (Present), Chris Monroe (Present), Dianne Sutphin (Present)

Benton Heights Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Paul Saleeby (Present)
2. RE: Joey Gamble (Present), Dianne Short (Present), Jillian Tucker (Present)

Bethlehem

1. CP: Josh Herrin (Present)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Buck Hill

1. TE: Jim Hoilman (Unexcused)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Cameronian

1. CP: Phil Joines – 05/2029 (Present)
2. RE: Matthew Parker (Present)

Centre Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Logan Keck (Present)
2. RE: Karen Crowell (Present), Don Kirkey (Present), Rick Wagner (Present)

Christ Church – Anderson

1. TE: Ken Hicks, Stated Supply (Present)
2. RE: Dennis Burt (Present), Philip Manly (Present), Nathan Turner (Present)

Christ Community Church - Montreat

1. TE: Richard White (Present), David Taylor (Present)
2. RE: Russell Boardman (Present), Larry Harris (Present), Dan (John) Newcomer (Present), Robert Brown (Present), Robert Brown (Present), Lebo Wall (Present)

Christ Fellowship Church – Southern Pines

1. TE: Jim Thyne, Stated Supply (Present)
2. RE: Steve Adelmann (Present), Lynne Brauch (Present), Charli Thyne (Present)

Garden Memorial EPC

1. TE: Vacant
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Grace Church – Brevard, N.C.

1. TE: Brian Land (Present)
2. RE: Mark Emory (Present), Joe Kirk (Present)

Greenville Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Donovan Campbell (Present)
2. RE: Barney Drake (Present)

Hendersonville Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Rob McClelland (Present)
2. RE: Donald Halliburton (Present), Mimi Jamieson (Present)

Kershaw Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1. CP: Tom Orred – 04/2028 (Present)
2. RE: Thomas Bryant (Present)

Lake Forest Huntersville

1. TE: Mike Moses (Present), Aron Gibson - Assoc. (Present), Andy Cornett - Assist. (Present)
2. RE: Jack Cathy (Present), Harold Cherry (Present), Darrell Lipe (Present), Scott Matson (Present), Mike Rashid (Present), Allen Roes (Present)

Lighthouse Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Andy Schuster (Present)
2. RE: Warren Dumford (Present), Matthew Elrod (Present), David Price (Present)

McBee Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Mark Dickinson (Present)
2. RE: Thomas Middleton (Present)

McLean Presbyterian Church

1. CP: Jamie Smith – 01/2029 (Present)
2. RE: Mark Rhyne (Present), Staci Smith (Present)

Nell Townsend Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Vacant
2. RE: (Unexcused)

New Cut Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Scott Hilborn, Stated Supply (Present)

2. RE: Joeseoph Clark (Present), Joe Ghent (Present)
- Overbrook Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Bill Wade (Present)
 2. RE: (Excused)
- Plumtree
1. CP: Ryan Bridgeo (Present)
 2. RE: Dale Huffman (Present)
- Riceville Valley Community Church
1. TE: Howard Quach (Present)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Rocky River Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Vacant
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Rourk Presbyterian Church
1. CP: Michael Price – 11/2028 (Present)
 2. RE: Riley Puckett (Present), Don Smith (Present)
- Siler Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Michael Krauter (Present)
 2. RE: Dan Barry (Present), Perry Somers (Present)
- St. Giles Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Nate Atwood (Present), Tim Carey - Assoc. (Present)
 2. RE: Frank Bynum (Present), Jerry Dunning (Present), Michael King (Present), Roby Wallin (Present), Jeff Wong (Present)
- St. Matthew Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Vacant
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Storyhill Church
1. TE: Michael Flake (Present), Gray Segars – Assoc. (Present), Katie Mactuk – Asst. (Present)
 2. RE: Rusty Andrews (Present), Daryl Poppen (Present), Drew Richards (Present)
- The Village Church
1. TE: Scott Walters (Present)
 2. RE: Betty Alexander (Present)
- Threshold Church
1. TE: Gabe Swing (Present)
 2. RE: Fred Mellon (Present), Frank Mummert (Present)
- Valley Hope Community Church
1. TE: Anthony Rodriguez (Present)
 2. RE: Tyler Caruso (Present), Ben Lillard (Present)
- Walkersville Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Paul Rankin (Present)
2. RE: Rick Gray (Present), Annie Rose (Present)

Warehouse 242 Church

1. TE: Mike Lawrie (Present)
2. RE: Barry Cutshall (Present), Kathi Graves (Present), Danielle Hughes (Present), Joel Kuehn (Present)

Warrenton Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Vacant
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Active Teaching Elders (Laboring Outside of Bounds)

TE Joe Carvajal	(Excused) – WEC & Chaplin Hearth Hospice
TE Jennifer Cooper	(Present) – U.S. Army Chaplain - 01/2029
TE Mark Hunter	(Excused) – Montreat College, Prof. & Assoc. Dean of Ac. Affairs
TE Michael J. Kruger	(Excused) – Reformed Theo. Sem., Prof. of N.T. – 01/2029
TE Brian Martin	(Present) – PastorServe – 01/2029
TE Rachel Toone Pies	(Present) – Montreat College, Dean of Spiritual Form. – 01/2029
TE Katie Piquette	(Present) – Chaplin Veterans Administration – Asheville
TE Jason Riggs	(Present) – Chaplin Veterans Administration – Salisbury
TE Josh Schatzle – Chaplin, U.S. Navy	<i>(transferred Ordination to Augsburg Lutheran Churches effective March 1, 2026.)</i>
TE George Schwab	(Present) – Erskine Seminary, Prof. of O.T. – 01/2029
TE Nicole Unice	(Unexcused) – How to Study the Bible Podcast/ Pangea Technologies
TE Stephanie Vander Lugt	(Present) – Changing Choices
TE Wesley Vander Lugt	(Present) – Gordon-Conwell, Charlotte – 01/2029
TE Doug Vinez	(Present) - Global Training Network – 09/2028

Presbytery Staff

- TE Eric Bartel, Moderator (Present)
- TE Robert M. Howard, Stated Clerk (Present)

Associate Members (nonvoting)

- TE Michael Boulware *(transfer his Ordination to the Anglican Church of North America effective February 20, 2026.)*
- TE Tom Sheppard (Unexcused)
- TE Jeff Cook (Present)
- TE Joshua Joohyung Jo (Unexcused)
- TE Charles Reed (Unexcused)
- TE Mitch White (Unexcused)

TE Nathan Wolcott (Present)
 TE Christian Zebley (Present)

Associate Members (Laboring Outside of Bounds) (nonvoting)

TE Andrew Brunson
 TE Michael Boulware
 TE Emmett Cooper
 TE Chris Furr, WOM
 TE Brad Long
 TE Adger McKay, WOM
 TE Jim Wilken

Commissioned Pastor Laboring Out of Bounds (nonvoting)

RE Jesse McDonald (Present) – Church (ECO), Barnwell, S.C. – until 01/2029

Associate Member, Retired (Active) (nonvoting)

TE James (Bucky) Brown (Excused)
 TE Don Fortson (Present)
 TE Jim Lankford (Excused)
 TE Larry Pittman (Present)
 TE Ken Thomas (Present)

Associate Member, Retired (Inactive) (nonvoting)

TE Chuck Baynard (Excused)
 TE Carter Blaisdell (Excused)
 TE G. B. (Bud) Brainard (Excused)
 TE James Braswell (Excused)
 TE Rick Brundin (Excused)
 TE Percy Burns (Excused)
 TE James L. Carr (Excused)
 TE Rob Chambers (Excused)
 TE Brian Holt (Excused)
 TE Robert McRae (Excused)
 TE Ronald Read (Excused)
 TE Dick Robinson (Excused)
 TE Jerry Robinson (Excused)
 TE Rick Slate (Excused)
 TE Bill Solomon (Excused)
 TE David F. Steele (Excused)
 TE Andy Wells (Excused)

TE Steve Wilkinson (Excused)

Inactive Roll

TE Kevin Hartley (Excused)

TE Judson Jordan (Excused)

TE Andy Muhich (Excused)

TE Peter Cha (Excused)

Candidates Under Care

Thomas Davis - St Giles		Advisor - TE Nate Atwood
Abby del Rousso - Centre	(Present)	Advisor - Stephanie Van Lugt
Chris Godley - Grace	(Present)	Advisor - TE Howard Quach
Cesar Guerrero - Lake Forest		Advisor - TE Aron Gibson
Caroline Holden - Vally Hope	(Present)	Advisor - (Needed)
Victor Leal - Lake Forest		Advisor - TE Brian Land
Ben Lillard - Valley Hope	(Present)	Advisor - TE Howard Quach
Chandler Owens - Warehouse 242		Advisor - TE Mike Lawrie
Nathan Turner - Christ Church	(Present)	Advisor - TE Donovan Campbell
Robert Wallace – Hendersonville		Advisor - TE Richard White

Observers

W. Tom Brady, Priest Hill Presbyterian Church, Carthage, NC
 Tyler Brady, Priest Hill Presbyterian Church, Carthage, NC
 Renee Campbell, Greenville Presbyterian Church
 Abigail Del Russo, Centre Presbyterian Church
 Chris Godley, Com. Director
 Dona Haney, Siler EPC
 Anita Hill, Siler EPC
 Butch Hill, Siler EPC
 Cyndie Howard, Storyhill
 Sharon Joines, Cameronian Presbyterian Church
 Rebecca Lunceford, World Outreach Missionary
 Laura Morris, Hendersonville Presbyterian Church
 Caitlin Richardson, Walkersville EPC
 TE Kyle Sims, Stated Clerk, Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
 Shawn Stewart, World Outreach
 Magda Thomas, Observer
 Abby Vinez, Observer
 Bob Weir
 Ted Yap, Valley Hope Community Church

- 11-02. The eleventh Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas was called to order by Moderator TE Eric Bartel at 12:30 PM. TE Bartel invited host Pastor TE Paul Saleeby to bring the welcome from the Session and Congregation of Benton Heights Presbyterian Church. TE Saleeby gave the court directions on the use of the facilities and recognized the volunteers who are located throughout the building to render aid on any need anyone may have.
- 11-03. The Moderator invited TE Bill Wade, Overbrook EPC to lead the court in an opening time of prayer and worship.
- 11-04. **Preliminary Matters** – The Moderator, TE Eric Bartel, asked Stated Clerk, TE Robert Howard, if there was a quorum. The Stated Clerk declared that there was a quorum and made a motion to approve the proposed docket for the meeting.

Motion: That the PCC approve the proposed docket for the 11th Stated Meeting

The motion was seconded from the floor and open for discussion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Communications: The Executive Council has communicated with the Ruling Elders of Story Memorial Presbyterian Church in Marion, N.C. that the PCC is suspending discussion of the Congregation being received into the EPC until the legal issues the Church is facing are resolved.

The Moderator invited first-time commissioners and corresponding members to stand and be recognized. The Court also welcomed Ruling Elders W. Tom Brady and Tyler Brady from Priest Hill Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Carthage, N.C. who have come to observe the Presbytery and the EPC.

- 11-05. **The Moderator's Report.** TE Eric Bartel gave the Moderator's Report which included personal remarks and the announcement that the court is without a Vice-Moderator because of the resignation of TE Jonathan Waters of Banks PC for personal reasons. The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.
- 11-06. **Stated Clerk's Report.** The Moderator invited TE Robert Howard to present the Stated Clerk Report. The Stated Clerk opened the report with prayer. It was also explained to the Ruling Elders how they may participate in the discussions during the meeting and how to seek help from the Moderator to do so. The Stated Clerk referenced the proposed update

to the Book of Discipline that is now online and will be presented at this Summer's General Assembly.

The following items were reported:

1. The Stated Clerk referred the court to the GAPRC (Presbytery Review Committee) suggested corrections to previous minutes of the PCC listed below.

First Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 01-18. 2. The minutes **be amended to conclude the information** that *TE Charles Reed was a member of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas without a call and did not need to be examined by the Presbytery.*
- 01-18.2. The minutes **be corrected to** indicate that *Candidate Howard Quach was examined on his position concerning Westminster Confession with the Larger and Shorter Catechism and was approved by the Presbytery.*
- 01-09 That the misspelling of the Church Health Coordinator, Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean **be corrected** to Mark Farrell.

Second Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 02-24, p. 12&13 **was corrected to record:** *TE Dr. Kevin Hartley was examined on the areas of Theology and the Sacraments, English Bible, the Book of Order, the history of the Church and the Reformed tradition, and the nature of the office of the Teaching Elder. (G. 12-2, 12-13 A.) TE Dr. Kevin Hartley affirmed his belief in the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of Reformed Faith. TE George Schwab motioned that this portion of TE Dr. Kevin Hartley's examination be sustained. Motion was seconded from the floor. The voice vote was unanimously approved by the Presbytery.*

Third Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 03-22, p. 10 **paragraph was changed to record:** *As a representative of the Ministerial Committee, TE Eric Bartel introduced Katie Piquette who has been attending for the House of Mercy Mission Group for three years which is under the authority of the Session of Lake Forest Church in Huntersville, NC, and Chandler Owens, who is an active member of Warehouse 242 for five years. After reporting to the Presbytery Ministerial Committee's satisfaction in these two candidates' examination, TE Eric Bartel moved that they be received as Candidates for Ministry of the PCC pending the Presbytery's examination from the floor as to Christian experience and growth, the motive*

for seeking ordination, and their testimony as to the call to the Ministry (G.11-2. B).

- 03-24, p. 11, G. 12-4 **be amended to record:** *TE Gabriel Swing was asked questions relating to Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth (G.12-2. B.) as well as views of Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the Book of Order, the history of the Church and the Reformed tradition, and the nature of the office of Teaching Elder (G.12-2. C.)* **TE Gabriel Swing affirmed his belief in the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechism of Reformed Faith.** *Having satisfied the requirements of the examination TE George Schwab made a motion that the Presbytery close the examination of TE Gabriel Swing pending further questions from the floor.*

Fourth Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 04-33, p. 24&24, G. 10-8B.2a **be amended to record:** *“Call as TE, Outside Bounds serving as Associate Dean/Professor of Psychology & Human Services – Montreat College for a term of three years (G. 10-8. B. 2. a.)*
- 04-35.4A, p. 26 **was corrected to record:** *Approve the dismissal of Ridgecrest Presbyterian, Locust, NC from the EPC per congregational vote unanimously on 6/25/2023 and to become an independent church in accord to G. 5-10. A. B. & C.*
- 04-35. j. **was corrected to record:** *“Approve change in call for TE Logan Keck to Pastor, Centre Presbyterian Church Mooresville, NC effective 1/1/2024.*

Fifth Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 05-19 **was corrected to record:** *Candidate McCarthy was asked by TE George Schwab if he sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? Candidate McCarthy answered in the affirmative.*

Sixth Stated Meeting Minutes Corrections

- 06-25. Service of Ordination. Ms. Katie Piquette was directly ordained by the PCC to serve, Out of Bounds, as a Hospital Chaplain with the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Asheville, N.C. **for a period of three years beginning April 27, 2024** (G. 13-6. A. & B.)
- 06-27 Omnibus Motion
 - Approve the following Teaching Elder Changes:

- Approve TE Rob Chambers, Pastor at Garden Memorial to Retired, active status *(G. 15-1) and the pastoral relationship be dissolved effective May 22, 2024 (G. 14-1).*
- Approve TE Steve Wilkinson, Pastor at Troy Presbyterian to Retired, active status *(G. 15-1) the pastoral relationship be dissolved effective May 1, 2024 (G. 14-1).*

Motion: That the PCC approve the recommended changes the previous minutes of the PCC.

The motion was seconded and open for discussion. Hearing none the Moderator put the question before the Court. The Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

2. The Stated Clerk pointed out the information on members of the Commission and Committees of the PCC on pages 8 and 9 (Correction TE Brian Martin is on Church Development Committee not Missions), the Session Minutes Review Schedule, and the 10th PPC Meeting Minutes on pages 13-39. The following churches have had their minutes reviewed: Riceville Valley Community Church, Rocky River PC, Rourk PC, Siler EPC and Storyhill. Outstanding minutes to still be received are Plumtree PC, St. Giles PC, St. Matthews PC, The Village Church and Threshold.

Motion: That the PCC approve the 10th PPC Stated Meeting Minutes pending additional corrections.

The motion was seconded and open for discussion. Hearing none the Moderator put the question before the Court. The Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

3. The Stated Clerk presented a Parity Report on attendance at the 2026 Stated Meetings. Each Session is charged with sending two Ruling Elders for every Pastor employed by the Congregation and those actively serving out of bounds.
 - a. Active Teaching Elders Serving Member Congregations – 35
 - b. Active Teaching Elders Laboring Out of Bounds – 14

The PCC should see ninety-eight (98) Ruling Elders in attendance at each Stated Meeting from all congregations. If each church sends two Ruling Elders that would total seventy (70) Ruling Elder Commissioners, short of the ninety-eight (98) needed to attain parity. Twenty-Eight (28) more Ruling Elder Commissioners are required.

To relieve this imbalance the Book of Order allows the Presbytery to correct the ratio by assigning to member churches on a yearly alphabetical rotational basis the right to elect additional Ruling Elder Commissioners to the Presbytery. (G. 19-2. A. 4. b.)

G. 19-2 *The Presbytery*

A. 4. b. *Correction When a disproportionate ratio of Teaching Elders to Ruling Elders occurs in a Presbytery, the Presbytery shall move to correct the ratio by assigning to member churches on a yearly alphabetical rotational basis the right to elect additional Ruling Elder Commissioners to the Presbytery. Associate Members are not counted as part of the ratio of Ruling and Teaching Elders.*

For the year 2026 the following 28 Churches are invited to send one (1) additional Ruling Elder Commissioner for the year 2026. The total beside each church includes the two allowed Ruling Elder Commissioners per Pastor plus one (1) additional Ruling Elder Commissioner.

- Altan Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Banks Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Bensalem Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Benton Heights Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Bethlehem Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Buck Hill Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Cameronian Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Centre Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Christ Church – Anderson, SC 3 Ruling Elders
- Christ Community Church – Montreat 5 Ruling Elders
- Christ Fellowship Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Garden Memorial EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- Grace Brevard Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Greenville Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Hendersonville Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Kershaw EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- Lake Forest Church 9 Ruling Elders
- Lighthouse EPC 3 Ruling Elders
- McBee Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- McLean Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Nell Townsend Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- New Cut Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Overbrook Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders

- Plumtree Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Riceville Valley Community Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Rourk Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- Siler Presbyterian Church 3 Ruling Elders
- St. Giles Presbyterian Church 5 Ruling Elders

Motion: That the PCC approve the 2026 Parity Report granting the churches listed permission to send one additional Ruling Elder to be a commissioner at Stated and Called Meetings in 2026.

The motion was seconded and open for discussion. Hearing none, the Moderator put the question before the Court. The Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. The Stated Clerk brought the Court's attention to addressing the Descending and Ascending Overtures scheduled for Saturday morning. Members were briefed on the decorum required during debate. Voice and vote are reserved for Active Teaching Elders and Ruling Elder Commissioners of the Stated Meeting. Those attending as observers who are Ruling Elders of PCC member churches and those recognized as corresponding members are not given permission to have voice unless the Court approves giving voice. The Moderator entertained the following motion from the floor.

Motion: That the PCC to grant voice on an individual basis to those observers who are Ruling Elders of PCC member churches and corresponding members of the Court who wish to speak during the Stated Meeting.

The motion was seconded and open for discussion. Hearing none, the Moderator put the question before the Court. The Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

5. The Stated Clerk informed the Court that the Presbytery may appoint a three-person ad hoc committee to review the two ascending overtures and seek to make a recommendation to the Court on how to address the two Ascending Overture. This committee could recommend one of three courses of action:
 - A. To recommend to the Court to address each Ascending Overture.
 - B. To recommend to the Court one of the Ascending Overture.
 - C. To recommend to the Court a combined version addressing the Ascending Overtures.

After discussion there was no motion from the floor to create an ad hoc committee, so the Court chose to deal with both Ascending Overtures in Stated Meeting.

6. Teaching and Ruling Elders were reminded that the Book of Order instructs all Sessions to annual update the church's Four Membership Rolls in February of each year (G. 8-5). The Session minutes should reflect that action.

11-07. **Commission Reports.** The Stated Clerk asked the Moderator to invite the members of the Judicial Commission to give a report on the case: The EPC vs. TE Rob McClelland and the Administrative Commission appointed to oversee Siler EPC.

Judicial Commission Report

The Judicial Commission Members, TE Tim Carey - St. Giles (Moderator), RE Joe Clark - New Cut, RE Drew Richards - Storyhill and TE John Mikule - Banks PC, were invited by the Moderator to bring their report. TE Ken Thomas who served as Prosecutor also came forward. TE Tim Carey, chair of the Commission, opened the reports with prayer and submitted this report.

[Beginning of Judicial Commission Report]

In our September Presbytery meeting a Judicial Commission was formed to rule on the disciplinary case involving Teaching Elder Robert McClelland. At the same meeting, Teaching Elder Ken Thomas was appointed to represent our presbytery as prosecutor. TE McClelland assembled his own defense team.

In an effort to avoid going to trial, the Commission authorized Prosecutor TE Ken Thomas to represent the presbytery in mediation. Ken was well-suited for this role given that he had reviewed all the evidence, interviewed witnesses, and prepared the charges against TE McClelland. On November 19, 2025, TE Thomas met with TE McClelland and his team for mediation. Attorney and Ruling Elder Steven Aceto served as the mediator. During this meeting, both parties worked together to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. While the Commission initially found the proposed settlement unconstitutional, both parties collaborated to correct the deficiencies. The cured settlement was then submitted to the Commission and deemed constitutional.

The Commission is pleased to report that all charges brought against Teaching Elder Robert McClelland have been settled in mediation. The terms of the settlement remain confidential. TE McClelland's suspension ended effective January 11, 2026, and he is in good standing within the presbytery.

The Commission is grateful for the service of the prosecutor and the defense team. Thank you for your prayerful discernment, time and diligent work. Also, the Commission would

like to express a deep appreciation for Hendersonville Presbyterian Church who endured months of uncertainty. Thank you for your patience through this process.

[End of Judicial Commission Report]

On behalf of the Judicial Commission TE Cary concluded the report and made the following motion.

- **Motion:** That the Judicial Commission be thanked and dissolved.

The motion was seconded from the floor and open to discussion. Hearing no further discussion the question was put before the Court. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Administrative Commission Report.

RE Jimmy Duncan, TE Paul Saleeby, and RE Karen Crowell introduced their report by stating that Siler EPC is a faithful Court that has had a season of conflict over disagreements. RE Jimmy Duncan opened with prayer and he following is their report.

[Beginning of Administrative Commission Report]

Summary of the Administrative Commission Report
Siler Presbyterian Church
January 13, 2026

The Presbytery appointed an Administrative Commission to walk alongside Siler Presbyterian Church during a season of internal tension and strained relationships. The Commission's purpose was not punitive, but restorative — seeking the peace, unity, and health of the congregation in keeping with Presbyterian polity and the vows shared by officers and members.

Over several months, the Commission met with the full Session, conducted individual conversations with each elder, received input from members of the congregation, and spent time in prayerful discernment. The goal throughout was to distinguish between normal differences of opinion and matters that were affecting the unity and well-being of the church.

The Commission found much encouragement. The church has a faithful core, a congregation that has prayed earnestly for leadership, and a pastor with a clear sense of

mission. At the same time, the Commission observed patterns of communication and disagreement that have contributed to division. In some instances, both officers and members struggled to uphold the spirit of their vows, particularly as they relate to maintaining the peace and unity of the church.

The Commission also acknowledged that earlier procedural communication from Presbytery contributed to misunderstandings. That oversight has been recognized, and steps toward greater transparency in the

Actions and Recommendations

To help the congregation move forward in health:

- **Leadership Adjustments:** Changes were made within the Session to strengthen unity and ensure effective governance moving forward. These adjustments are intended to support a cohesive leadership team and reduce ongoing sources of tension.
- **Pastoral Conversations:** Certain individuals will receive pastoral reminders regarding their membership and ordination vows. The aim is reconciliation and clarity, encouraging all members to engage disagreements in ways that build up the body rather than strain it.
- **Pastoral Development:** The Commission affirms the current pastor and does not recommend removal or censure. Instead, it recommends focused leadership coaching, strengthened communication practices, mentoring relationships, and increased intentional engagement with the congregation's history and culture. These recommendations are developmental in nature and are designed to support long-term effectiveness.
- **Presbytery Reflection:** The Presbytery has been encouraged to review its own processes to ensure greater transparency in future pastoral transitions.

Overall Assessment

Despite the challenges, the Commission believes the congregation sought God faithfully in calling its pastor and that this season, though difficult, can ultimately strengthen the church. With humility, coaching, improved communication, and renewed commitment to shared vows, Siler Presbyterian can move forward more unified and more focused on Christ's mission.

The Commission concludes with confidence that this conflict is addressable and that the church has a hopeful path ahead.

[End of Administrative Commission Report]

RE Jimmy Duncan concluded the report and made the following motion.

- **Motion:** That the Administrative Commission be thanked and dissolved.

The motion was seconded from the floor and open to discussion. Hearing no further discussion the question was put before the Court. The motion was approved by voice vote.

The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the Stated Clerk's Report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

11-08. **Order of the Day:** "Survive or Thrive (The Six Relationships Every Pastor Needs)"
TE Brian Martin of PastorServe

TE Martin opened with prayer. The following outline was submitted for the minutes of this Stated Meeting:

PastorServe's mission: "To strengthen the Church by providing both preventative and crisis care to pastors and ministry leaders." We do so in five **areas**:

- 1-Coaching.
- 2-Crisis support.
- 3-Consulting.
- 4-Leadership Development.
- 5-Soul Care.

Today's material: Although I will often relate it to pastors, it very much applies to Ruling Elders, business leaders, stay-at-home parents, etc. It really applies to everyone.

Big Ideas:

- 1 - Isolation is NOT healthy for any of us - Never walk alone. (Gen 2:18)
- 2 - Things aren't always as they seem – **especially with people.**

Quote from Survive or Thrive (Jimmy Dodd), on what is meant by Frontstage/Backstage, p. 27:

"In the case of the church, the frontstage is what the church perceives on a Sunday morning. We hope they see an organized, healthy, vibrant church led by competent, gifted, unified individuals. Meanwhile, in reality, the backstage of a church can be a place of chaos, conflict, miscommunication, and personal agendas

where the staff struggle with the same mundane sins that plague the average believer. The backstage can be filled with contentious ministry meetings, argumentative staff gatherings, and combative board meetings.”

From Pastor-In-Residence (PIR) Article, Isolation & Loneliness, May 2013:

Our culture encourages an individualistic approach to life; the result: many people feel a general sense of loneliness every day...Pastors in particular feel a deep sense of isolation from others.

The PIR article continues to talk about research that has linked social isolation with poor health outcomes, including depression, heart disease, sleep problems, and other disorders. The 2023 US Surgeon General’s report compared chronic loneliness to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

- TE Martin played a Video Clip - Diane Langberg (Psychologist to Clergy) on PastorServe’s Frontstage/Backstage podcast.

Problems:

- There is no place for a pastor to process his/her disappointment in ministry (no safe place to turn), *Survive or Thrive*, p. 24.
- Pastors fear being truly known for who they are; if the congregation knew the “real” me, they might not like me or even reject me. So, the pastor continues to hide, *Survive or Thrive*, p. 43.

The beginning point: Admit your brokenness and absolute need for Jesus

Survive or Thrive, p. 30.

Six Relationships: (**3 for Professional Development; 3 for Personal Development**)

Relationships for Professional Development:

- Boss (Supervision/Accountability)
- Trainer (Expertise/Knowledge)
- Coach (Perspective/Results)

Relationships for Personal Development:

- Counselor (Healing/Health)
- Mentor (Experience/Wisdom)
- Friend (Love/Acceptance)

Conclusion: Never walk alone! Pastoring can be lonely.

Application:

- You do not need 6 different people to fill these 6 roles; you can have 3-4 fill all 6 (or could have 6 different people).
- Determine: “Where am I?” (like on the map at the airport or on a hike). Am I traveling in the right direction? (*Survive or Thrive*, p. 279)
- Next step: Repentance (*Survive or Thrive*, p. 280)
- Next step: Escape Isolation. Acknowledge the Need and let others in. (*Survive or Thrive*, p. 291)
- Which of the 6 roles are currently being filled in your life?
- Which of the roles needs to be filled in your life – immediately?
- What is your plan to fill those roles?

11.09. The Moderator entertained a motion from the floor to move the Stewardship Report to the end of the day because of the excellent job TE Bartel is doing in getting the Court through the afternoon business as Moderator.

Motion: That he docket be adjusted to move the Stewardship Report from Saturday to the end of the business for Friday.

The Motion was seconded and was approved by unanimous voice vote.

11-10. **Missional Director Report.** The Moderator invited TE Brian Land to bring the Missional Director report. TE Land opened the report in prayer. The Missional Director Job Description to help keep the PCC from mission creep. TE Land read....

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” 6 And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant...” 7 ...you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen... 9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people...” (1 Kings 3:5-9)

How do we fulfill our calling to shepherd the Lord’s flock? Solomon focused about God’s greatness, our weakness, high calling and listening hearts. TE Land believes the goal of the Missional Director is to work to build relational ministry with the chairs of the church development, church planning, Global/Local outreach, Ministerial Committee and Stewardship and from that relationship develop each of these groups in working together to accomplish our goals. This encompasses three relational & missional spheres: Truth,

honest and authentic relationships (cohorts) and shared Missional ministry in the areas of the PCC. TE Land believes that the Presbytery must build this kind of culture to successfully carry out the purpose of the PCC. The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

- 11-11. **Church Development Committee** – RE Anita Hill was invited to give an update report on the committee’s work. The Committee members believe the following are important in determining CDC 2026 goals. The CDC will be establishing and implementing a process for churches interested in joining EPC/PCC, Elder Training for Local Congregations and Church Health help. TE Hill gave some samples of updates for the website on information that communicating these goals through media. (Go to website). The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.
- 11-12. **Stewardship Committee** - TE Donovan Campbell, chair of the Stewardship Committee, opened the report with prayer. The committee currently has six members, but would like to add another from the region of western NC. He provided a review of 2025 end of the year finances. Park Ave church building expenses are shown in the balance sheet for information reasons, the actual expenses do not come from the operating budget. They are spent out of the designated funds provided by the Park Ave. congregation when the church closed. POI for the year was \$6,300 above budget. Donovan thanked the presbytery for this support and reminded that our budget is almost entirely dependent on church giving. Not only that, but contributing financially to the work of the presbytery is one way that keep our churches connected. Spending for the year was \$17, 392 below budget, resulting in a year-end net of \$27,207 in unrestricted funds. Presbytery now has online giving available on our website. This can be used for POI. The Committee asks that those using online giving consider doing so through ACH rather than card, and/or consider covering the processing fees. If it is for POI, please use the memo line and state the church name. The body was reminded of the presbytery's Barnabas Fund and it's purpose. Information and a request form are now available on the presbytery website. The presbytery also has funds available from the GA Disaster Relief Committee, available to aid with any expenses or needs associated with Helene. The committee has accepted an offer for the Park Ave. church building, in the amount of \$300,000. An agreement for purchase has been signed, and we are moving towards a closing date. Treasurer Tim Burns began a new job at a church outside of the EPC. This position requires that he be a member of that congregation; so, he will no longer be a member of the EPC or an RE in the EPC. However, the committee feels he should continue as our treasurer. The Executive Council agrees, and our bylaws allow for this. Finally, the Stewardship

Committee currently has three goals for this year: to sell the Park Ave. church building, create a scholarship fund to help candidates in the PCC with seminary expenses, and invest reserve funds to support the strategic vision and efforts of the presbytery.

Motion: The PCC authorizes TE Dan Barry on behalf of the Presbytery to execute the sale of Park Ave Presbyterian and sign necessary paperwork

The Motion was seconded and was approved by unanimous voice vote. The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

- 11-13. The Court reconvened at 7:00 PM with worship and celebration of the Lord's Supper. The music was provided led by praise team and choir of Benton Heights Presbyterian Church. TE Paul Saleeby preached on and led the Court in the observance of the Lord's Supper. The Mission Offering was dedicated to the Barnabas Fund used to aid Pastors of the PCC. At the closing of worship volunteers offered a prayer ministry and fellowship for those needing prayer and encouragement.

Saturday, February 21, 2026

- 11-14. The Court was called to Order by Moderator TE Eric Bartel at 8:30 AM. The Moderator invited TE Paul Saleeby to bring the Devotional Message of the morning. TE Saleeby led the Court through the topic of trials and testing as it is addressed in the Book of James. The message of joy in trials is available to us because we know that God is sovereign and at work in a broken world marred by sin and God is at work redeeming his people. TE Saleeby opened the meeting with prayer for the PCC to settle its mind, heart and soul upon God during the morning business.

- 11-15. **Descending & Ascending Overtures** – TE Robert M. Howard opened with prayer and addressed the Court in the parliamentary procedure from Robert's Rules of Order on how members are to address the Moderator in debate. The Court was also reminded that those who are observers and recognized corresponding members of the Court must be granted permission by the Court to have voice on a case-by-case basis.

- 11-16. Report on the Vote on the Descending Overtures from the 45th General Assembly

The Court heard a reading of the proposed changes to the Book of Order as delineated in the Descending Overtures 45-A, 45-B, 45-C and 45-D and voted to approve all four Descending Overtures.

- 45-A That the *Book of Government* 11-2 be amended. The vote was 100-0.

- 45-B That the *Book of Government* 18-3 be amended. The vote was 100-0.
- 45-C That the *Book of Government* 19-4. B. be amended. The vote was 99 – 0.
- 45-D That the *Book of Government* 21-2. D. 1 be amended. The vote was 100-0.

11-17. Report on the vote on the Ascending Overtures

The Stated Clerk asked the Moderator to clarify the wishes of the Court as to reading the entire Ascending Overture from Bensalem Presbyterian Church, Greenville Presbyterian Church, Lighthouse EPC, St. Giles Presbyterian Church and Rourk Presbyterian Church. The Court only wished the resolve to be read. The Moderator invited the Court in prayer before reading and discussing the Ascending Overture.

Ascending Overture To the 46th General Assembly of the EPC

Whereas, God created Adam and Eve and ordained the first marriage and family consisting of one man and one woman in sexual union, establishing the context for the biblical sexual ethic (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; 4:1), and

Whereas, God has established the one flesh union between a husband and wife, as a great mystery in reference to Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25; 31-32), and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures declare that the sexual union and desire between one man and one woman, in the covenant of marriage, is righteous and holy, and all other sexual activity is condemned by the seventh commandment as unrighteous and sinful including homosexuality (Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11,18; Exodus 22:16; Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:3-5; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 24:1; *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q138-139), and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures teach that not all sins are equally heinous, but some carry much greater consequence than others (John 19:11, Ezekiel 8:6, 1 John 5:16, *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q150-151), and

Whereas, homosexuality is among those sinful sexual activities uniquely defined as “unnatural”, violating not only the moral law of God but the mandates and fabric of Creation itself (Genesis 1:27-28; Romans 1:26-27) and therefore, as with other unnatural sins such as bestiality (Leviticus 20:15-16) and incest (Leviticus 18:6-20), is of greater

heinousness and therefore that which God detests (*Westminster Confession 24:4*, *Westminster Larger Catechism Q139, Q150, Q151*), and

Whereas, the prohibitions against sinful sexuality include not only deeds but also thoughts and desires (Matthew 5:27-28; 15:19-21; Isaiah 55:7), therefore homosexual desire (now often labeled as “same sex attraction”), is inherently both fully sinful and wholly unnatural, and

Whereas, while the Church is to welcome all who desire repentance and relief from their sins, including those whose sins include homosexuality or other unnatural lusts or acts, and offer all new life in Christ with a mind and heart disposed towards sinners and their constant need for grace (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 1:8-9), the biblical qualifications for a church officer are much more demanding, requiring elders and deacons to be “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:20), and

Whereas, officers and candidates for office must therefore conform their lives to biblical sexual ethics, which include denying and mortifying all sexual passions and desires toward anyone to whom they are not married (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5-6), and

Whereas, the Westminster Confession 13.3 teaches: “*Although the old nature temporarily wins battles in this warfare, the continual strengthening of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ enables the regenerate nature in each believer to overcome. And so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,*” indicating that persistent homosexual desire or “same-sex sexual attraction” is inconsistent with a Reformed understanding of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work in regeneration and perfecting holiness in a Christian’s life, and

Whereas, for two thousand years, the historic orthodox Christian churches have been faithful to Biblical teaching which condemns same-sex sexual desire and practice, and never knowingly allowed for the ordination of homosexual persons to church office, and

Whereas, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has faithfully followed the Bible’s teaching on human sexuality, stating in its’ 1996 *Position Paper on Homosexuality*, “The witness of God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments is clear, declaring that the practice of homosexuality, including lust, is a grievous sin, and that any who continue to engage in such activity face the consequences of God’s condemning judgment. However, God’s grace offers love, forgiveness, hope and a new life. The necessary response to this offer is true repentance, including turning from homosexual behavior, and commitment to a faithful obedience to the Lord according to His Word”, and

Whereas, the *Position Paper on Human Sexuality*, adopted by the 37th General Assembly in 2017, declares, “As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves”, and

Whereas, all officers take a vow to “promote the peace, purity, and unity of the church” (*Book of Government* 13-2A.9) and, yet, the LGBTQ+ movement has regrettably influenced many quarters of the church, resulting in widespread confusion and controversy, disrupting the peace and unity of the church, and

Whereas, in response to the consideration of ordained church office for those experiencing ongoing homosexual desire or “same sex attraction”, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must take a definitive, constitutional position on this matter;

Therefore, be it resolved that Central Carolinas Presbytery overture the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to amend the Book of Government 9-3A. as follows:

Current Book of Government 9-3A.

According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.

Proposed Book of Government 9-3A.

“According to Scripture, those who bear office in the church **shall** exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill **these offices shall** exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. **Therefore, persons eligible for church office shall conform in heart, mind, and conduct to God’s design for human sexuality, embracing with gratitude the calling of either chastity in singleness or fidelity within marriage between one man and one woman. Those who profess, persist in, or identify with unnatural desires or affections, contrary to God’s created**

order and condemned by Scripture as against nature, are disqualified from holding office in Christ’s Church.² A presbytery or congregation preparing to elect persons to **these holy offices shall** carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the **Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, and Deacon**, and be very prayerful in **electing** persons to these offices.

2 See Romans 1:26–27 on desires contrary to God’s created order; Genesis 1–2 on the creation of male and female; Westminster Larger Catechism Q.139 on the moral duties of Christians and the proper ordering of affection

11-18. TE Dan Barry, Siler EPC, was recognized by the Moderator and moved an amendment to the proposed Ascending Overture.

Amendment: That the proposed Ascending Overture be amended with the following paragraph inserted into the document.

Whereas, the Christian’s identity is rooted in Christ so that he is a “new creation” in Him, his identity cannot be defined by sexual and any other experiences, desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception (“this is who I am”) and their remaining indwelling sin (“this is what I must daily mortify”) (Romans 6:1-14; I Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-5); and

The Amendment was seconded from the floor and open to discussion. The Moderator recognized Observer Caroline Holden from Hope Valley Community Church who approached the microphone to request permission to speak to the amendment. The Moderator entertained a motion to allow Ms. Holden permission to have voice. A motion from the floor was offered.

Motion: That Observer Caroline Holden be given permission to have voice to address the amendment.

The motion was seconded from the floor and was approved by voice vote.

Observer Holden pointed out that the amendment did not address both male and female individuals and was not consistent with the language of the rest of the Ascending Overture.

The Moderator recognized TE Michael Krauter, Siler EPC, who made a friendly amendment to change the pronouns to be inclusive of him/her so that the Amendment would read in the following:

*Whereas, the Christian's identity is rooted in Christ so that he **or she** is a "new creation" in Him, his **or her** identity cannot be defined by sexual and any other experiences, desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception ("this is who I am") and their remaining indwelling sin ("this is what I must daily mortify") (Romans 6:1-14; I Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-5); and*

The change was made by unanimous consent, and the Ascending Overture was amended.

The Moderator informed the Court that the time allocated for discussion and debate was ending and there would need to be a motion to extend discussion to continue a conversation on the Ascending Overture. The Moderator recognized TE Dan Barry who brought the following motion.

Motion: That the docket be altered to allow a 30-minute extension for debate on the Ascending Overture with possibility of further extension if needed.

The motion was seconded from the floor, opened to discussion and was approved by voice vote.

- 11-19. After 30 minutes of discussion for and against this Ascending Overture the Moderator entertained a motion to Call the Question. The motion to Call the Question was seconded and approved by voice vote. Associate Members TE Larry Pittman and TE Ken Thomas were asked by the Stated Clerk to help the Moderator count the vote as members were asked to stand for or against the Ascending Overture.

The Moderator put forward the question of the Ascending Overture as Amended.

**Ascending Overture
To the 46th General Assembly of the EPC**

Whereas, God created Adam and Eve and ordained the first marriage and family consisting of one man and one woman in sexual union, establishing the context for the biblical sexual ethic (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; 4:1), and

Whereas, God has established the one flesh union between a husband and wife, as a great mystery in reference to Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25; 31-32), and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures declare that the sexual union and desire between one man and one woman, in the covenant of marriage, is righteous and holy, and all other sexual activity is condemned by the seventh commandment as unrighteous and sinful including homosexuality (Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11,18; Exodus 22:16; Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:3-5; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 24:1; *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q138-139), and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures teach that not all sins are equally heinous, but some carry much greater consequence than others (John 19:11, Ezekiel 8:6, 1 John 5:16, *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q150-151), and

Whereas, homosexuality is among those sinful sexual activities uniquely defined as “unnatural”, violating not only the moral law of God but the mandates and fabric of Creation itself (Genesis 1:27-28; Romans 1:26-27) and therefore, as with other unnatural sins such as bestiality (Leviticus 20:15-16) and incest (Leviticus 18:6-20), is of greater heinousness and therefore that which God detests (*Westminster Confession* 24:4, *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q139, Q150, Q151), and

Whereas the prohibitions against sinful sexuality include not only deeds but also thoughts and desires (Matthew 5:27-28; 15:19-21; Isaiah 55:7), therefore homosexual desire (now often labeled as “same sex attraction”), is inherently both fully sinful and wholly unnatural, and

Whereas, the Christian’s identity is rooted in Christ so that he or she is a “new creation” in Him, his or her identity cannot be defined by sexual and any other experiences, desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception (“this is who I am”) and their remaining indwelling sin (“this is what I must daily mortify”) (Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-5); and

Whereas, while the Church is to welcome all who desire repentance and relief from their sins, including those whose sins include homosexuality or other unnatural lusts or acts,

and offer all new life in Christ with a mind and heart disposed towards sinners and their constant need for grace (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 1:8-9), the biblical qualifications for a church officer are much more demanding, requiring elders and deacons to be “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:20), and

Whereas officers and candidates for office must therefore conform their lives to biblical sexual ethics, which include denying and mortifying all sexual passions and desires toward anyone to whom they are not married (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5-6), and

Whereas the Westminster Confession 13.3 teaches: “*Although the old nature temporarily wins battles in this warfare, the continual strengthening of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ enables the regenerate nature in each believer to overcome. And so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,*” indicating that persistent homosexual desire or “same-sex sexual attraction” is inconsistent with a Reformed understanding of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work in regeneration and perfecting holiness in a Christian’s life, and

Whereas, for two thousand years, the historic orthodox Christian churches have been faithful to Biblical teaching which condemns same-sex sexual desire and practice, and never knowingly allowed for the ordination of homosexual persons to church office¹, and

Whereas, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has faithfully followed the Bible’s teaching on human sexuality, stating in its’ 1996 *Position Paper on Homosexuality*, “The witness of God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments is clear, declaring that the practice of homosexuality, including lust, is a grievous sin, and that any who continue to engage in such activity face the consequences of God’s condemning judgment. However, God’s grace offers love, forgiveness, hope and a new life. The necessary response to this offer is true repentance, including turning from homosexual behavior, and commitment to a faithful obedience to the Lord according to His Word”, and

Whereas the *Position Paper on Human Sexuality*, adopted by the 37th General Assembly in 2017, declares, “As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves”, and

Whereas all officers take a vow to “promote the peace, purity, and unity of the church” (*Book of Government* 13-2A.9) and, yet the LGBTQ+ movement has regrettably influenced many quarters of the church, resulting in widespread confusion and controversy, disrupting the peace and unity of the church, and

Whereas, in response to the consideration of ordained church office for those experiencing ongoing homosexual desire or “same sex attraction”, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must take a definitive, constitutional position on this matter.

Therefore, be it resolved that Central Carolinas Presbytery overture the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to amend the Book of Government 9-3A. as follows:

Current Book of Government 9-3A.

According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.

Proposed Book of Government 9-3A.

“According to Scripture, those who bear office in the church **shall** exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill **these offices shall** exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. **Therefore, persons eligible for church office shall conform in heart, mind, and conduct to God’s design for human sexuality, embracing with gratitude the calling of either chastity in singleness or fidelity within marriage between one man and one woman. Those who profess, persist in, or identify with unnatural desires or affections, contrary to God’s created order and condemned by Scripture as against nature, are disqualified from holding office in Christ’s Church.**² A presbytery or congregation preparing to elect persons to **these holy offices shall** carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the **Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, and Deacon**, and be very prayerful in **electing** persons to these offices.

2 See Romans 1:26–27 on desires contrary to God’s created order; Genesis 1–2 on the creation of male and female; Westminster Larger Catechism Q.139 on the moral duties of Christians and the proper ordering of affections.

The Moderator led the Court in voting by standing for and against the motion. The vote on Ascending Overture was 68 in favor and 39 against. The Ascending Overture was approved.

- 11-20. **Report of the Church Planting Committee** – TE Logan Keck opened with prayer and reported on the strategic importance of church planting as a direct response to Christ's command and a vital investment for the Presbytery's future. The Presbytery is currently engaged in four distinct planting models involving five pastors/potential-pastors:
1. **Traditional Book of Order Model:** Presbytery calls an evangelist to lead a new congregation (e.g., Asheville Hope and Storyhill's upcoming daughter church).
 2. **Multi-site/Family of Churches:** On Church establishing new congregations while remaining connected as a single session (e.g., Lake Forest Family of Churches). Andy Cornett is most recent example, launching after last presbytery.
 3. **Cohort/Partnership Model:** Collaborative resource-sharing among multiple churches (e.g., the Western NC residency). Ted Yap is the newly hired resident.
 4. **Residency Model:** A "teaching hospital" approach providing hands-on training for future planters (e.g., LFC-Westlake has committed to train 5 residents in the next six-years). First resident has recently begun.

Future Outlook and Investment

The Committee Head informed the Presbytery that with these current efforts we can reasonably expect to launch around one new church per year for the foreseeable future. The committee highlighted how these plants will transform lives, disciple new leaders, and eventually bolster the Presbytery's mission and budget.

The members of the Presbytery were encouraged to share this news with their congregations and celebrate the role they have played as contributing members of the presbytery.

In light of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:21), the committee recommended that funds from recent property sales be prioritized for church planting to ensure the faithful multiplication of resources. The report concluded with an introduction to Ted Yap and an update from Andy Cornett followed by prayer for each of them.

The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

- 11-21. **World Outreach** - TE Ken Thomas opened with prayer. TE Thomas reported that he will begin to serve the PCC as Chair of the World Outreach Committee. There has been some

confusion as to the committee's name and scope of work it accomplishes on behalf of the PCC.

The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

- 11-22. **Report of the Ministerial Committee** – The Moderator invited RE Butch Hill to bring the Ministerial Report. RE Hill opened with prayer and introduced Mrs. Abby Del Russo who has been endorsed by Centre Presbyterian Church (G. 11-2. A) to be examined by the PCC to become a Candidate Under Care. RE Hill reported that the Ministerial Committee has interviewed Mrs. Del Russo, determined her fitness and recommended her to be examined by the Court (G. 11-2. B). RE Hill asked TE Howard Quach to lead the PCC in the public examination of Mrs. Del Russo. (G. 11-2. C.)

TE Quach asked Mrs. Del Russo to share with the Court her Christian experience and growth. Mrs. Quach explained how she had come to faith in Jesus Christ while being raised in the Baptist tradition. As she grew in her faith, she recognized a need to draw deeper into the knowledge of the Bible and an understanding of her own personal theology. TE Quach also asked Mrs. Del Russo to explain to the Court what motivated her to seek ordination by a Presbytery of the EPC. Mrs. Del Russo expressed a passion to teach children about faith in Jesus Christ and learning to read the Bible. This passion is what moved her to accept a call from the Session of Centre Presbyterian to develop a children's ministry. The Moderator opened the floor to any questions the Court had for Mrs. Del Russo. Hearing no questions, Mrs. Del Russo was excused from the meeting, and the floor was open to discussion. After a period of brief discussion, RE Hill moved the following:

Motion: That the examination of Abigail Del Russo be closed and that the PCC receive her as a Candidate under Care.

The Moderator asked if there was a second. A person from the floor seconded the motion and the floor was open to any discussion. With no other discussion the Court approved the motion by voice vote. Mrs. Del Russo was welcomed into the meeting as a Candidate under Care of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas.

The Moderator asked Mrs. Del Russo to come forward and respond affirmatively to the following questions (G. 11-2. C.):

1. As you understand God's working in your heart and life, do you continue to believe yourself called to the office of Teaching Elder? Mrs. Del Russo answered in the affirmative.
2. Do you now submit yourself to the care and supervision of this Presbytery as you prepare yourself for this office? Mrs. Del Russo answered in the affirmative.
3. Do you renew your commitment as a Christian, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live as becomes a follower of Jesus? Mrs. Del Russo answered in the affirmative.

The Moderator invited TE Don Kirkey, Centre PC, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving and a blessing for the Candidate (G. 11-2. C.).

The Moderator charged Mrs. Del Russo to be diligent in preparing herself as a Candidate for Ordination as she continues to be a member of the Centre Presbyterian Church and is subject to that Session (G. 11-2. C.). The Moderator declared that Abigail Del Russo has been received as a Candidate of the PCC.

TE Quach informed Candidate Del Russo and the Court that TE Stephanie Vander Lugt would serve as her appointed advisor, and she will be submitting regular reports to the Ministerial Committee on her progress as a Candidate for Ordination (G. 11-2. E.).

- 11-23. TE Butch Hill presented the Omnibus Motion and moved on behalf of the Ministerial Committee for the PCC to approve the Omnibus Motion. The motion did not need a second and the Moderator put the question before the Court.

[BEGINNING OF OMNIBUS MOTION]

1. Approve request to be excused received from TE's, CP's and RE's:
 - a. TE Brian Martin, TE James "Bucky" Brown, Cand Thomas Davis, RE Rick Pfeiffer, TE Mark Hunter, TE Michael Kruger, RE Phil Bartscher – Overbrook PC, RE Rick Ruffing– Overbrook PC, RE Grant Pierron – Grace Brevard, RE Jack Lange – Grace Brevard, RE Ethan Lydon – Grace Brevard, RE Brian Canon, – Grace Brevard.
2. Approve request from the following Church's to be excused: NONE
3. Approve Karen Crowell, RE Centre Church to serve as a member of the Ministerial Committee, effective February 20, 2026.
4. Candidate Changes:

- a. Approve coming under care of **Candidate Abigail “Abby” Del Rousso** of Centre Church, Mooresville, NC. With **TE Stephanie Vander Lugt** as her advisor.
- b. Approve termination of candidacy of **Candidate Holly Worsley**, Storyhill Presbyterian per her request, effective January 26, 2026
- c. Approve termination of candidacy of **Candidate Under Care, Joshua Herrin**, who is no longer seeking ordination in the EPC, effective February 20, 2026

TE Changes:

1. Concur with the congregation and Session of Christ Fellowship Church, Southern Pines, NC to the 2026 yearly renewal of their pastoral relationship with **TE James Thyne** upon attaining the age of 70.
2. Approve **TE Michael Boulware** to transfer his Ordination to the Anglican Church of North America effective February 20, 2026.
3. **TE James Morgan** (Grace Haven Mission Group) has renounced jurisdiction from the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas and the EPC, effective January 24, 2026.
4. Approve **TE Joshua Schatzle** to transfer his Ordination to the Augsburg Lutheran Churches effective March 1, 2026.
5. Approve renewal of commissioned pastorate for one year for **CP Jamie Smith** at McLean Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe, NC effective January 11, 2026...
6. Approve renewal of commissioned pastorate for three years for **CP Michael Price** at Rourk Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe, NC effective November 13, 2025.
7. Approve renewal of commissioned pastorate for one year for **CP Phil Joines** at Cameronian Evangelical Presbyterian, Rockingham, NC effective May 1, 2026.
8. Approve the following TE’s and one RE serving as a CP laboring Out of Bounds to an additional (3) three-year term effective January 2026 due to no substantial change in their call or ministry, **Dr. Eric Bartel, Col Jennifer Cooper, Dr. Michael Kruger, Rev. Brian Martin, CP Jesse McDonald, Rev. Jason Riggs, Dr. George Schwab, Dr. Rachel Toone-Pies, and Dr. Wesley Vander Lugt.**

Dissolving of Grace Haven Mission Church

- Approve the dismissal of Grace Haven Mission Church, Columbia, SC, per their unanimous vote on January 23, 2026, from this Presbytery and the EPC to become an independent house church.

[END OF OMNIBUS MOTION]

The Moderator put the question of approving the Omnibus Motion before the Court. The Omnibus Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

TE Hill invited TE Col. Jennifer Cooper, U.S. Army Chaplin, to give a brief report on her ministry and the opportunity to serve on the EPC's Chaplains Work and Care Committee upon approval by the PCC and the 46th General Assembly. TE Cooper shared her sincere appreciation for the PCC's Tuesday Mornings Prayer Time by zoom offered to members of the Presbytery and highly recommended those who have not attended to do so in the future. She expressed sincerely thanks to the former PCC Chaplin TE Nate Wolcott and the present Chaplin TE Bill Wade for their provision of his vital ministry. On behalf of the Ministerial Committee, TE Butch Hill made the following recommendations:

Motion: That the Presbytery approve and endorse the appointment of TE Chaplain Colonel Jennifer Cooper, US Army to serve on the EPC's Chaplains Work and Care Committee upon approval by the EPC General Assembly at the June 2026 General Assembly at Cherry Creek Presbyterian.

The motion did not need a second coming from the Ministry Committee and was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Finally, TE Hill reported to the Court that the Ministerial Committee is expecting all 2025 TE Annual Reports to be turned in immediately. If a Teaching Elder has not submitted a report, do so in the next two weeks. It only takes 10 minutes to fill it out online.

The Moderator entertained a motion to receive the report. A motion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

11-24. TE Eric Bartel expressed a Moderator's appreciation to Benton Heights Presbyterian Church, its Session and Pastor TE Paul Saleeby for the outstanding job of hosting the 11th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas. The Court gave a round of applause!

The Moderator invited TE Bill Wade, Chaplin, to give the final charge to the Court. TE Wade encouraged unity and fortitude in presenting the Gospel to the geographic area of the PCC. The Court sang the Doxology and TE Wade closed the Court in prayer.

11-25. Moderator TE Eric Bartel declared that the 11th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas was closed and adjourned.

Humbly Submitted,

TE Eric Bartel, Moderator

TE Robert M. Howard, Stated Clerk

Executive Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday March 4, 2026
ZOOM Call
10:00 AM -- 12:00 PM

ZM-01. Present: TE Eric Bartel, RE Anita Hill, TE Brian Land, RE Butch Hill, TE Ken Thomas, TE Donovan Campbell, TE Bill Wade, Chris Godley-Com. Dir.

Excused TE Rob McClelland, TE Logan Keck

ZM-02. The Moderator called to order those attending by Zoom and lead the group in a devotional Mark 15:6-14. The meeting was opened with prayers for Stacie Thomas, TE Campbell's Son-in-law, Malichi who is active USAF.

ZM-03. The Moderator entertained a motion to approval the EC Agenda for the meeting. A motion to approve the agenda was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

ZM-04. Report from the Stated Clerk - Robert Howard - reported that the 11th Stated Meeting Draft Minutes were emailed out for corrections. Descending Overture Voting Report has been sent to the General Assembly Office (GAO). The Ascending Overture that was approved on February 21, 2026, has been signed and submitted to the GAO.

ZM-05. Report from the Missional Director - Brian Land is seeking to form a Collaboration Committee with TE Quach and TE David Taylor to improve the work of the PCC by building a system of communication that enhances the PCC's Committees collaboration. There will be a monthly PCC email. The hope is it would not become heavy email but employ Chris Godley's skill in disseminating information.

ZM-06. The Moderator reported the formation of a Task Force with the following potential members; TE Paul Saleeby – Benton Heights PC, TE Mike Lawrie – Warehouse 242, RE Joe Clark – New Cut, RE Anita Hill – Siler PC, RE Curtis Reinhart – Banks PC.

ZM-07. Presbytery Recap Overture Discussion Other items (what went well, what can be improved)

ZM-08. Committee Reports

- Ministerial Committee - Butch Hill gave an update on annual reports and where the committee stands in following up with Teaching Elders.
- Church Planting Committee - Logan Keck – No Report
- Church Development Committee - Anita Hill reported on the production for the monthly newsletter. Finalizing the CDC manual and present it to the PCC for approval. Work on helping congregations understand the benefit of having a Transitional Pastor. The Church Health Coordinator's job description will be

relieved of responsibility of oversight of the Transitional Pastor model. CDC is waiting for churches interested in the EPC to turn in material.

- World Missions Committee - Ken Thomas reported on the committee gathering information on Missionaries the PCC is supporting and finding creative ways of raising PCC awareness. Finding ways to express through a name what this committee is doing was discussed.
- Stewardship Committee - Donovan Campbell reported on the progress on selling the Park Avenue property. Closing date soon. Discussion on meeting with the Church Planting Committee on funding of future church planting. TE Campbell encouraged the Council to begin to reflect on a proposal of how the PCC might use the income from the sale of the property for the benefit of the entire presbytery's work.

ZM-09. Business Items

- A report was given on receiving a Book of Discipline Form-18 Protest. The protest was filed with the other documents on the Judicial Commission case. That Judicial Commission reported the results; it was thanked and dismissed by the PCC.
- By-Law Review and EC discussed the need to improve the rewriting process.
- Order of the Day - April 24th

ZM-10. Future EC Meetings & Locations

- April 8, 2026, TBD - Zoom Meeting
- July 22, 2026, 9:00 AM - In Person Meeting at Overbrook
- August 19, 2026, 10:00 AM - Zoom Meeting (if needed)
- September 9, 2026, 9:00 AM In Person Meeting at Overbrook
- November 4, 2026, 6:00 PM - Zoom Meeting

Other New Business

The Moderator noticed the meeting was fifteen minutes over and moved by acclamation that if there were no objections he would close the meeting in prayer and adjourn the Zoom Meeting. The Moderator closed the meeting in prayer for the Presbytery's churches, the work of the member of the Executive Council and a reminder of God's promise for His Church.

Humbly Submitted,

Robert M. Howard
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Central Carolinas

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:

- . 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.
- . 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.

Statement of Financial Position

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

As of Mar 31, 2026

	TOTAL
Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
10000 Operating Account	130,338.70
10100 Savings Account	480,978.24
Total for Bank Accounts	\$611,316.94
Other Current Assets	
12000 Deposits in Transit	0.00
Total for Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total for Current Assets	\$611,316.94
Total for Assets	\$611,316.94
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	
Total for Liabilities	
Equity	
33000 Temp. Restricted Net Assets	
33100 Donor Designated	
33110 Barnabas Fund	7,404.00
33115 Disaster Relief	16,099.63
33120 Missionary Emergency Fund	5,076.62
33130 Women's Ministry	3,655.76
Total for 33100 Donor Designated	\$32,236.01
33200 Board Designated Funds	
33210 Benevolence	0.00
33220 Reserves	365,625.42
33230 Park Avenue Presbyterian	16,904.04
Total for 33200 Board Designated Funds	\$382,529.46
Total for 33000 Temp. Restricted Net Assets	\$414,765.47
Unrestricted Net Assets	(58,046.91)
Net Income	254,598.38
Total for Equity	\$611,316.94
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$611,316.94

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

January-March, 2026

	TOTAL
Income	
40000 POI Church Giving	44,400.75
41000 Individual Giving	700.00
43000 Presbytery Offering	395.00
Total for Income	\$45,495.75
Gross Profit	
\$45,495.75	
Expenses	
60000 Executive Council	
60100 Missional Director Salary	9,000.00
60200 Missional Director Travel	1,397.96
60300 Communications Director	3,000.00
60400 Stated Clerk Salary	9,000.00
60500 Stated Clerk Travel	358.42
60600 Church Health Coordinator Salary	3,000.00
Total for 60000 Executive Council	\$25,756.38
61000 Ministerial Committee	
61100 Committee Expenses	2,113.70
61400 Pastoral Needs and Support	1,375.00
Total for 61000 Ministerial Committee	\$3,488.70
62000 Stewardship Committee	
62300 Web & Database Expenses	140.78
62400 Treasurer- Stipend	2,499.99
62500 Payroll Expenses	38.00
62600 Liability Insurance	152.46
Total for 62000 Stewardship Committee	\$2,831.23
63000 Church Development Committee	
63100 Presbytery Meetings	122.26
63200 Cohort Gatherings	49.04
63400 Small Church Network	89.91
Total for 63000 Church Development Committee	\$261.21
64000 Church Planting Committee	
64100 El Buen Samaritano-Lake Forest	2,500.03
64600 GA Church Planting Conference	800.00
Total for 64000 Church Planting Committee	\$3,300.03
65000 Missions Committee	
Disaster Relief	13,405.00
Total for 65000 Missions Committee	\$13,405.00
Total for Expenses	\$49,042.55
Net Operating Income	(\$3,546.80)
Other Income	
47100 Sale of Park Avenue	280,772.00

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

January-March, 2026

	TOTAL
Interest Income	19.74
Total for Other Income	\$280,791.74
Other Expenses	
Bank Service Charges	21.80
Park Avenue Expenses	22,624.76
Total for Other Expenses	\$22,646.56
Net Other Income	\$258,145.18
Net Income	\$254,598.38

Percentage of Income Giving
Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
January-March, 2026

	Total
Altan Presbyterian Church	225.00
Banks Presbyterian	1,500.00
Bensalem EPC	2,011.21
Benton Heights	1,550.00
Centre Presbyterian	1,093.74
Christ Community Church	4,371.31
Christ Fellowship Church	250.00
Garden Memorial EPC	700.50
Kershaw	550.00
Lake Forest	17,890.00
McBee Presbyterian	2,500.00
McLean Presbyterian	1,500.00
New Cut Presbyterian	1,000.00
Storyhill Church	6,937.50
Threshold	834.00
Walkersville	300.00
Warehouse	1,187.49
TOTAL	\$44,400.75

Cash Basis

Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Same-Sex Attraction and Ordination Standards

The 44th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) voted to create a moderator-appointed, Ad-Interim Committee on Same-Sex Attraction and Ordination Standards and for our committee to make a final report and recommendations to the 46th General Assembly. Our committee was formed to address how the EPC should consider the expectations for penitence and sanctification of someone who experiences ongoing same-sex attraction but remains committed to the historic and orthodox biblical sexual ethic, and then to address in what circumstances such a person would be eligible for consideration for ordained office in the EPC.

Summary of Recommendations

Our recommendations in summary are to amend:

- The EPC's "Position Paper on Human Sexuality" to provide greater clarity on how our doctrine of sin and sanctification shapes our ethics of sexual conduct;
- The section "Same-Sex Attraction" in the EPC's "Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality" to provide greater clarity on how our doctrine of sin and sanctification shapes our ethics of sexual conduct, particularly in regards to same-sex attraction and ordination.
- Two sections of *Book of Government* 9-3 (9-3.A, 9-3.B) to clarify character requirements of EPC officers pertinent to sexual ethics;
- Four sections of *Book of Government* 12 (12-2.B, 12-3.A, 12-3.B.1, 12-6) to add requirements to examine nominees to all EPC offices in the area of Christian character;

Summary of Work

We were tasked to clarify, align, and strengthen the EPC's witness in light of our doctrinal standards. The EPC's doctrine and pastoral wisdom in the Position Paper and Pastoral Letter are commendable, and we continue to affirm with them that

- Marriage is instituted by God as a covenant between one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy is reserved exclusively for that union (e.g. Position Paper, page 1 "The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality; page 4, "The Married Life").
- Homoerotic behavior and desires are sinful and must be repented of and mortified. (e.g. Position Paper, page 6, "The Ministry of the Church"; Pastoral Letter, page 2-4, "Contemporary Challenges").

In addition to reviewing the EPC's documents, we were charged to study the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms to bring clarity to our witness regarding the following areas, which we did in our recommended amendments:

1) Theological anthropology, with respect to human sexuality as it pertains to contemporary usage of the sexual self-conception and how such language comports with Scripture and the Westminster standards:

- We affirm that all people are created in God's image, that his design for marriage and sex is present in creation, that the fall into sin did not terminate God's good design, that marriage and sex have been affirmed as good by Jesus our redeemer, that the single life has also been affirmed by Christ, and that the meaning, purpose, and redemption of marriage and sex finds its consummation in our union and communion with God, of which we have a foretaste now (e.g.

Position Paper page, 1-2, “The Divine Purpose and Origin of Human Sexuality; Pastoral Letter, page 6-7, “Our Counsel to the Body of Christ”).

- We affirm that we are new creations in Christ, and all other identities we have must be understood relative to our union with Christ and subordinated to him on his terms as our Lord. We must understand and think of ourselves first and foremost “as dead to sin, with it having no dominion over us because we are alive in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 5, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”)
- We affirm that the language we use to self-describe should reflect our identity as being united to Jesus and should not invite confusion from our own heart, the church, or the world; we affirm for this reason that it is inappropriate to use the term “gay Christian” (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 6, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”)

2) Progressive Sanctification and how it informs the Reformed understanding of the mortification of sin and the doctrine of repentance; 3a) Concupiscence as it relates to a Reformed conception of the Christian’s new nature in Christ:

- We affirm that all of our sinful transgressions emerge from our corrupted sin nature, and this corruption of our hearts, along with all its impulses, is itself sin, and continues in the regenerate all their life long. This is the Reformed doctrine of ‘concupiscence’. (e.g. Position Paper, page 1-2, “The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality”; Pastoral Letter, page 4-5, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”)
- We affirm that in our union with Christ we have been regenerated, receive a new heart and spirit, and are further sanctified. Original sin and its nature remain in the believer all their life long, yet through the continual supply of Christ’s Spirit, the believer is able to resist, deny, repent of and kill sin, and grow in holiness. These spiritual realities are true of same-sex attraction. (e.g. Position Paper, page 2, “The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality”; Pastoral Letter, page 4-5, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”)

3b) and when homosexual temptation, like other temptations disqualifies one from ordained office:

- We affirm that “that our Lord Jesus sympathizes with us in our weaknesses because he both suffered when tempted and was tempted in every respect like us, yet without sin” and that “As our king, Jesus corrects us in our sin and supports us in our temptations and sufferings”. Temptations may come upon us, but Jesus always presents a way of escape and we are enabled to not enter into temptation. The experience of temptation, including the temptation to homosexuality, by itself does not disqualify one from ordained office. Entering into temptation with unrepentant behaviors and lusts does disqualify from ordained office. (e.g. Position Paper, page 2, “The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality”; page 4-5, “A Call to Holiness”; Pastoral Letter, page 4-5, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”; page 7, “Our Counsel to the Body of Christ”; page 11, “Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries”)

4) The Christian hope for those who experience and flee sexual temptation, especially homosexual temptation:

- We affirm that through faith in Jesus we are forgiven all our sexual sins, washed from our impurity, and given the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy of the gospel. This is true for those who continue to experience same-sex attraction as the latent pull and temptation, unindulged, towards homosexuality. (e.g. Position Paper, page 5, “Recovering from Sexual Brokenness”)
- We affirm that even in our experience of same-sex attraction that we must be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Our hope is that if we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus and

suffer with him, we have fellowship with Jesus in his life. (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 6, “Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction”).

- We affirm that God can redeem and heal all corrupted by sin and the Fall, and that may include those who have fled homosexual temptation becoming open to a biblical marriage and developing opposite-sex sexual desires. Whether married or single, God’s promise and our expectation is that ultimate and true healing is found in the return of Jesus. As we repent and are sanctified in this life, God promises to grow us in righteousness and holiness by his Spirit. God promises to enable us to flee every temptation and that Christ will carry us in our weakness (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 7, “Our Counsel to the Body of Christ”).

5) How the answers to these questions might inform standards for officers who have struggled in these areas but have mortified such temptation and desire:

- We affirm that unrepentant sinful behavior and unrepentant lusts disqualify candidates for office, and that officers of the EPC are to believe, practice, and teach the moral standards contained in the Scriptures and the EPC’s Constitution (e.g. Position Paper, page 4-5, “A Call to Holiness”; page 6, “The Ministry of the Church”; Pastoral Letter, page 8-9, “Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries”).
- We affirm that people who struggle with temptation and who may at times sin sexually, yet are grieving those failures and are striving for repentance and growth in sanctification, may be welcomed as members of the church (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 9, “Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries”); but
- We affirm that only those “who conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct should be considered for leadership.” Additionally, we affirm that “Courts may consider for ordination candidates whose ongoing experience of SSA is a corrupted sin nature unindulged, repented of, and mortified; a temptation not entered into, but rather fled; a weakness not embraced, but rather mourned as they rest upon the grace and strength of the Lord.” (e.g. Pastoral Letter, page 9-10, “Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries”; *Book of Government* recommendations).

Date of Meetings

Since the 45th General Assembly, our committee met via Zoom on August 27th, 2025 and December 17th, 2025. We met at the Office of the General Assembly in Orlando, Florida on March 4th-5th, 2026.

The following dates are the times and locations our committee members were invited by the EPC’s various presbyteries to present our work, receive feedback, and provide insight into our drafts:

- Alleghenies, September 9th, 2025 Carol Williams
- Central South, September 26th, 2025 Sandy Willson
- Gulf South, September 26th, 2025 Cameron Shaffer
- Central Carolinas, September 26th, 2025 Rufus Burton
- West, October 2nd, 2025 Shelley Kral
- New River, October 3rd, 2025 Rufus Burton
- Pacific Northwest, October 3rd, 2025 Carol Williams
- Pacific Southwest, October 10th, 2025 Carol Williams
- Mid-America, October 24th, 2025 Tom Werner
- Alleghenies, November 8th, 2025 Carol Williams
- Mid-America, January 6th, 2026 Rufus Burton, Cameron Shaffer, and Sandy Willson
- Rivers and Lakes, January 23rd, 2026 Aaron White

- East, January 24th, 2026 John Dorr and Cameron Shaffer
- Coastal Mid-Atlantic, January 30th, 2026 Rufus Burton
- Great Plains, January 31st, 2026 Tom Werner
- West, February 5th, 2026 Shelley Kral
- Midwest, February 5th, 2026 Aaron White
- Southeast, February 6th, 2026 Cameron Shaffer
- Florida and the Caribbean, February 20th, 2026 Case Thorp

Committee Members

Rufus Burton, TE (New River)
 John Dorr, TE (East)
 Shelley Kral, TE (West)
 Cameron Shaffer, TE (East, Co-Chair)
 Case Thorp, TE (Florida and the Caribbean)
 Tom Werner, RE (Mid-America)
 Aaron White, TE (Midwest)
 Carol Williams, RE (Alleghenies, Co-Chair)
 Sandy Willson, TE (Central South)

Act of Assembly 24-05 from the 44th General Assembly:

(Consolidating the Current overture 44-30 from Mid-America Presbytery with overture 44-32 from The Presbytery of the Central South, overture 44-33 from Presbytery of the Gulf South, overture 44-34 from the Presbytery of the West, 44-35 from the Presbytery of the Alleghenies, Permanent Judicial Commission recommendation 44-36, and overture 44-37 from New River Presbytery)

Resolved that:

Whereas:

The EPC's position paper on Human Sexuality rightly states "The Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its primary purpose is to glorify God. . . . [A]ll humans are obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to God's design, revealed in the Scriptures."

Whereas:

The 44th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is agreed that the only proper context in which human sexuality is fully and rightly expressed is in the covenant union between one man and one woman. Any expression of sexuality outside this biblical norm is sin, and this includes the unmortified corruption and disordered inclinations of original sin that give rise to homosexual desires and impulses as well as the particular acts of sin that proceed from original sin such as same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual intimacy and acts of lust.

Therefore,

to clarify our witness to the world that has increasingly denied God's design for sexuality, and to strengthen our understanding of biblical norms and standards—especially as they apply to our standards for officebearers in the Church, the General Assembly directs the moderator to appoint a nine member *Ad-Interim* committee made up of:

- TE Rufus Burton
- TE John Dorr
- TE Shelly Kral
- TE Cameron Shaffer

- TE Case Thorp
- RE Tom Werner
- RE Carol Williams
- TE Sandy Willson
- TE Aaron White

And charges them to study the Scriptures, The Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms to bring clarity to our witness regarding:

- 1) Theological anthropology, with respect to human sexuality as it pertains to contemporary usage of the sexual self-conception and how such language comports with Scripture and the Westminster standards;
- 2) Progressive Sanctification and how it informs the Reformed understanding of the mortification of sin and the doctrine of repentance;
- 3) Concupiscence as it relates to a Reformed conception of the Christian's new nature in Christ and when homosexual temptation, like other temptations disqualifies one from ordained office;
- 4) The Christian hope for those who experience and flee sexual temptation, especially homosexual temptation; and
- 5) How the answers to these questions might inform standards for officers who have struggled in these areas but have mortified such temptation and desire.

The Committee is further charged to review our Position Papers, Pastoral Letters, and the *Book of Order* and to recommend potential changes that will clarify, align, and strengthen our witness to the larger world.

The Committee shall make an interim report to the 45th General Assembly, and a final report and recommendations to the 46th General Assembly.

The General Assembly commits to fund this committee's work. The National Leadership Team shall review and approve any necessary expenses.

Be it further resolved that it is the opinion and wish of the 44th General Assembly that no presbytery shall take action on petitions or matters before them that might touch on these areas of inquiry and exploration until the final report is received and acted upon by the 46th General Assembly.

Current Wording	Proposed Amendments (03/05/26)
<p>BoG 9-3.A (Life and Character of Officers)</p> <p>According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.</p>	<p>BoG 9-3.A (Life and Character of Officers)</p> <p>According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church shall exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office shall exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. Whether single or married, officers must conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity (see Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 138-139)¹ in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct. A congregation preparing to elect persons to these holy offices shall carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to these offices and be very prayerful in selecting persons to them.</p>
<p>BoG 9-3.B (Life and Character of Officers)</p> <p>As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.</p>	<p>BoG 9-3.B (Life and Character of Officers)</p> <p>As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all. Officers in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. While office bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this life to confess and to mortify remaining sins in light of God's work of progressive sanctification. Therefore, to be qualified for office, they must affirm the sinfulness of fallen desires, the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, and be committed to the pursuit of Spirit-empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions.</p>

¹ See D.1-6C.

<p>BoG 12-2.B (examination of candidates for ordination as a Teaching Elder):</p> <p>The Candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth</p>	<p>BoG 12-2.B (examination of candidates for ordination as a Teaching Elder):</p> <p>Candidates shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady progress in spiritual growth.²</p>
<p>BoG 12-3.A (examination of an EPC TE transferring into another EPC Presbytery)</p> <p>EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2 and they shall relate their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth</p>	<p>BoG 12-3.A (examination of an EPC TE transferring into another EPC Presbytery)</p> <p>EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2, shall relate experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady progress in spiritual growth.³</p>
<p>BoG 12-3.B.1 (examination of a Reformed Minister transferring into an EPC Presbytery)</p> <p>The Minister shall be examined on views and beliefs and may be examined on knowledge</p>	<p>BoG 12-3.B.1 (examination of a Reformed Minister transferring into an EPC Presbytery)</p> <p>Ministers shall be examined on views and beliefs, may be examined on knowledge, and shall relate experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady progress in spiritual growth.⁴</p>
<p>BoG 12-6 (examination of candidates for RE and Deacon)</p> <p>The Session shall confer with each person elected to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on 1) personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth, 2) theology and Sacraments of the Church, 3) the government, discipline, worship, and</p>	<p>BoG 12-6 (examination of candidates for RE and Deacon)</p> <p>The Session shall confer with each person nominated to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on 1) personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, their faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady</p>

² See D.1-6C.

³ See D.1-6C.

⁴ See D.1-6C.

<p>history of the Church, and 4) an understanding of the office to which one is elected.</p>	<p>progress in spiritual growth,⁵ 2) theology and Sacraments of the Church, 3) the government, discipline, worship, and history of the Church, and 4) an understanding of the office to which one is elected.</p>
--	---

⁵ See D.1-6C.

Current Pastoral Letter Same-Sex Attraction ¹	March 5 th , 2026 Edition Homosexuality and Same-Sex Attraction
<p style="text-align: center;">Biblical/ Theological Foundations</p> <p>We know from the Scriptures that God made the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and formed the first woman, Eve, from the rib of Adam.² He bound them together in a marriage covenant intended to endure as long as they both lived.³ From that primeval union, God has willed that all marriages would consist of one man and one woman in a</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Biblical/ Theological Foundations</p> <p>We know from the Scriptures that God made the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and formed the first woman, Eve, from the rib of Adam.³⁰ He bound them together in a marriage covenant intended to endure as long as they both lived.³¹ From that primeval union, God has willed that all marriages would consist of one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment.³² In marriage, the two sexes were</p>

~~¹ While various terms such as same-sex attraction, homosexuality, LGBT, etc., could be used, each has various connotations and sometimes specific agenda. This Letter uses primarily the former and its abbreviation SSA in an effort to be merely descriptive and not pejorative or ideological. Other terms will be used at times, but with the same intent. "LGBTQ" will be used in part of the discussion because of the context to which it refers, but also without pejorative or ideological intent.~~

² Genesis 1:27; 2:18-22.

³ Genesis 2:24.

³⁰ Genesis 1:27; 2:18-22.

³¹ Genesis 2:24.

³² Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:22-33.

lifelong commitment.⁴ In marriage, the two **genders** were made to be mutually compatible—spiritually and physically—and also to have the potential for conceiving, bearing, and rearing children.⁵ God has explicitly forbidden sexual intimacy outside the bounds of this marriage covenant.⁶

After the fall of humankind, many perverse distortions of God’s order were conceived and practiced by men and women.⁷ Among these sinful distortions was the practice of sexual relations between persons of the same **gender**. The Scriptures **mention** this phenomenon in **seven different** texts, all of which speak negatively of homosexual conduct.

The men of Sodom sought to have intercourse (perhaps by force) with the angels who visited Lot, and this was one demonstration of the depravity of that city.⁸ The Mosaic Law explicitly forbade homosexual intercourse **in two places**.⁹ And in Romans, Paul mentioned homosexual acts among both men and women as evidence of God’s abandoning them to their sin.¹⁰ In 1 Corinthians, Paul included those engaged

made to be mutually compatible—spiritually and physically—and also to have the potential for conceiving, bearing, and rearing children.³³ God has explicitly forbidden sexual intimacy outside the bounds of this marriage covenant.³⁴

After the fall of humankind, many perverse distortions of God’s order were conceived and practiced by men and women.³⁵ Among these sinful distortions was the practice of sexual relations between persons of the same **sex**. The Scriptures **address** this phenomenon in **multiple** texts, all of which speak negatively of homosexual conduct.

The men of Sodom sought to have intercourse (perhaps by force) with the angels who visited Lot, and this was one demonstration of the depravity of that city.³⁶ The Mosaic Law explicitly **twice** forbade homosexual intercourse.³⁷ And in Romans, Paul mentioned homosexual acts among both men and women as **shameless and contrary to nature**, evidence of God’s abandoning them to their sin **and a debased mind**.³⁸ In 1 Corinthians, Paul included those

⁴ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:22-33.

⁵ Genesis 2:23; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Song of Songs; Malachi 2:15; Ephesians 6:1-4.

⁶ Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 5:15-22; Matthew 5:27-30; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

⁷ Genesis 6:5, 6; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

⁸ Genesis 19:4-11. The text makes it clear that the men of Sodom believed the angels to be men.

⁹ Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

¹⁰ Romans 1:26-~~27~~.

³³ Genesis 2:23; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Song of Songs; Malachi 2:15; Ephesians 6:1-4.

³⁴ Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 5:15-22; Matthew 5:27-30; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

³⁵ Genesis 6:5, 6; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

³⁶ Genesis 19:4-11. The text makes it clear that the men of Sodom believed the angels to be men.

³⁷ Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

³⁸ Romans 1:26-~~32~~.

in same-sex relations in a list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God.¹¹ (It should be noted, however, that this statement was not simply a word of condemnation, but rather an invitation to live in the reality of being “washed,... sanctified,... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”¹²) Similarly, in 1 Timothy, Paul mentioned **homosexual** men among those who are doing things which are contrary to the gospel.¹³ Finally, Jude pointed to the sexual immorality **of Sodom and Gomorrah** as an example to warn us of God’s judgment.¹⁴ Although Jesus is not quoted on this specific topic in the gospel accounts, He repeatedly endorsed the sexual standards as well as the law as a whole given in the Old Testament,¹⁵ which includes a ban on all homosexual conduct.

Contemporary Challenges

Biblical teaching on homosexual practice has come under severe attack in recent decades. It is important, therefore, for the church to be prepared to respond to these several objections.

engaged in same-sex relations in a list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (It should be noted, however, that this statement was not simply a word of condemnation, but rather an invitation to live in the reality of being “washed,... sanctified,... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”³⁹) Similarly, in 1 Timothy, Paul mentioned men **who practice homosexuality** among those who are doing things which are contrary to the gospel.⁴⁰ Finally, Jude pointed to **Sodom and Gomorrah’s indulging in sexual immorality and pursuing of unnatural desires** as an example to warn us of God’s judgment.⁴¹ Although Jesus is not quoted on this specific topic in the gospel accounts, He repeatedly endorsed the sexual standards as well as the law as a whole given in the Old Testament,⁴² which includes a ban on all homosexual conduct.

Contemporary Challenges

Biblical teaching on homosexual practice has come under severe attack in recent decades. It is important, therefore, for the church to be prepared to respond to these several objections.

~~11 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.~~

¹² 1 Corinthians 6:11.

¹³ 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

¹⁴ Jude 7.

¹⁵ Matthew 5:27-32; 19:7-9.

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

⁴¹ Jude 7.

⁴² Matthew 5:27-32; 19:7-9.

<i>Exegetical Challenges</i>	<i>Exegetical Challenges</i>
<p>The objections to historic biblical teaching which may well have the most insidious long- term effect upon the church are the so-called “revisionist interpretations” of Scripture. In seeking to justify homosexual behavior, these revisionists employ innovative exegetical methods to avoid the intended meanings of multiple biblical texts. Their methodology not only undermines the biblical sexual ethic, but also the clarity and authority of the Scriptures themselves. They suggest that Sodom was not judged for homosexual conduct but for lack of hospitality, that Levitical laws against homosexual conduct no longer apply in our New Testament age, that Jesus’ lack of specific mention of homosexuality is an implied approval of it, that Paul’s explicit condemnations of homosexual behavior are culturally conditioned and linguistically ambivalent. All of these interpretations are contrary to a good faith reading of the texts. Those who use their intellectual prowess to deceive others through revisionist reinterpretation fall under the same severe condemnation as those who did the same during the age of the apostles.¹⁶ Integrity requires that someone who disagrees with biblical teaching simply say so rather than attempt to distort the plain meaning of Scripture.¹⁷ As Jesus warned the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira, He will not condone or tolerate such behavior by His Church.¹⁸</p>	<p>The objections to historic biblical teaching which may well have the most insidious long- term effect upon the church are the so-called “revisionist interpretations” of Scripture. In seeking to justify homosexual behavior, these revisionists employ innovative exegetical methods to avoid the intended meanings of multiple biblical texts. Their methodology not only undermines the biblical sexual ethic, but also the clarity and authority of the Scriptures themselves. They suggest that Sodom was not judged for homosexual conduct but for lack of hospitality, that Levitical laws against homosexual conduct no longer apply in our New Testament age, that Jesus’ lack of specific mention of homosexuality is an implied approval of it, that Paul’s explicit condemnations of homosexual behavior are culturally conditioned and linguistically ambivalent. All these interpretations are contrary to a good faith reading of the texts. Those who use their intellectual prowess to deceive others through revisionist reinterpretation fall under the same severe condemnation as those who did the same during the age of the apostles.⁴³ Integrity requires that someone who disagrees with biblical teaching simply say so rather than attempt to distort the plain meaning of Scripture.⁴⁴ As Jesus warned the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira, He will not condone or tolerate such behavior by His Church.⁴⁵</p>

¹⁶ Romans 16:17-19; Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:13; Revelation 2:20; 1 John 4:6.

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 3:8; 2 Peter 3:1b; Jude 4.

¹⁸ See Revelation 2:14-16l 20-23.

⁴³ Romans 16:17-19; Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:13; Revelation 2:20; 1 John 4:6.

⁴⁴ 2 Timothy 3:8; 2 Peter 3:1b; Jude 4.

⁴⁵ See Revelation 2:14-16l 20-23.

Evangelical scholars have written excellent exegetical analyses of relevant Scripture texts that help guide those who are genuinely seeking the truth from God’s Word.¹⁹ Pastors and elders must be proactive in countering these deceptive teachings, especially because the revisionism appeals to a view of truth based upon individual happiness that is pervasive among younger people, as well as increasingly among older believers. We must call our people back to the truth of God’s Word.

Scientific Challenges

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a disorder, thus normalizing it among American physicians and psychologists. Arguments are often made that same-sex attraction is genetic and no different from simply **being left-handed**. The Christian’s response is that regardless of what social scientists may declare as “normal,” we believe that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Furthermore, we are all born with many innate tendencies which must be resisted or controlled—the tendency toward anger, greed, lust, and pride all can be inherited, but that does not make them acceptable. The nature/nurture debate should not alter the ethical assessment of homosexual behavior, except that by these studies we are made more deeply sympathetic toward **those** struggling with the temptations and sins involved. In instances where there **has** been childhood sexual abuse or other environmental influences, these need to be compassionately recognized and taken into account in

Christian scholars have written excellent exegetical analyses of relevant Scripture texts that help guide those who are genuinely seeking the truth from God’s Word.⁴⁶ Pastors and elders must be proactive in countering these deceptive teachings, especially because the revisionism appeals to a view of truth based upon individual happiness that is pervasive among younger people, as well as increasingly among older believers. We must call our people back to the truth of God’s Word.

Scientific Challenges

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a disorder, thus normalizing it among American physicians and psychologists. Arguments are often made that same-sex attraction is genetic and no different from **any other fixed physical trait**. The Christian’s response is that regardless of what social scientists may declare as “normal,” we believe that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Furthermore, we are all born with many innate tendencies which must be resisted or controlled—the tendency toward anger, greed, lust, and pride all can be inherited, but that does not make them acceptable. The nature/nurture debate should not alter the ethical assessment of homosexual behavior, **sexual lusts, desires to sin, or the duty to flee temptation**, except that by these studies we are made more deeply sympathetic toward **any** struggling with the temptations and sins involved. In instances where there **have** been childhood sexual abuse or other environmental influences, these need

¹⁹ See especially DeYoung, Gagnon, and Via **and Gagnon** in the recommended readings.

⁴⁶ See especially DeYoung, Gagnon, and Via in the recommended readings.

counseling ~~the SSA person. The thrust of the Christian concern is not with one's sexual orientation, but rather with one's sexual beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and actions as they reveal one's attitude toward God.~~

Social Challenges

In 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriages must be allowed and recognized in all 50 states.²⁰ This highly controversial action by the United States' highest court was the culmination of many years of growing dissent among those who believed the prohibition was discriminatory against those of the LGBTQ community, including (for example) violence and housing discrimination. The Christian response should begin with our whole-hearted endorsement of granting all legitimate civil rights equally to all citizens of our country. We should be grateful when true injustice is addressed. At the same time, we believe that sexual conduct is a moral issue for individuals, churches, and

to be compassionately recognized and taken into account in counseling **those who experience SSA. The Christian's primary concern is about their relationship to God, and their need for his grace to save them from their sexual sin, sinful lusts and behaviors, and deliverance from temptation and evil, whether these arise from their corrupted nature or the fallenness of creation. Love for and loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ compels us to flee temptation and rely upon the life of his Spirit within us.**

Social Challenges

In 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriages must be allowed and recognized in all 50 states.⁴⁷ This highly controversial action by the United States' highest court was the culmination of many years of growing dissent among those who believed the prohibition was discriminatory against those of the LGBTQ community, including (for example) violence and housing discrimination. The Christian response should begin with our whole-hearted endorsement of granting all legitimate civil rights equally to all citizens of our country. We should be grateful when true injustice is addressed. At the same time, we believe that sexual conduct is a moral issue for individuals, churches, and

²⁰ Obergefell v. Hodges, 576, U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 2015. www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf (accessed 12/19/2017).

⁴⁷ Obergefell v. Hodges, 576, U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 2015. www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf (accessed 12/19/2017).

nations. Therefore the church would be unfaithful to her mission were she not to speak out clearly and boldly. We live in a strongly secularized, human-centered, morally relativistic culture, and we should, therefore, expect many challenges from our society to our belief system, our standards of conduct, and our views on healthy public policy. To those who say that the evangelical church is on the wrong side of history, we would say that our hope is in the Lord and not in human approval.

Missional Challenges

In recent years, the evangelical church has experienced a growing concern that our historic theological and ethical beliefs regarding homosexual conduct have marginalized us in our culture and minimized our ability to reach the LGBTQ community for Christ. As a result, a number of former evangelicals have announced a change in their views and have led some churches openly to endorse same-sex marriage and to invite unrepentant, practicing homosexuals to join those churches and **even** to serve in positions of leadership. Many have questioned whether the evangelical church will survive in our times without adapting its beliefs on sexual morality. The Christian response is that we believe we must adhere faithfully to the Scriptures, no matter what it costs us, no matter whether we grow or shrink, and no matter how the world will view us. Furthermore, we must insist to those former evangelicals that the Scriptures place our sexual conduct at the core of our ethical behavior as Christians.²¹ To believe otherwise is to put one's self outside

nations. Therefore the church would be unfaithful to her mission were she not to speak out clearly and boldly. We live in a strongly secularized, human-centered, morally relativistic culture, and we should, therefore, expect many challenges from our society to our belief system, our standards of conduct, and our views on healthy public policy. To those who say that the evangelical church is on the wrong side of history, we would say that our hope is in the Lord and not in human approval.

Missional Challenges

In recent years, the evangelical church has experienced a growing concern that our historic theological and ethical beliefs regarding homosexual conduct have marginalized us in our culture and minimized our ability to reach the LGBTQ community for Christ. Many have questioned whether the evangelical church will survive in our times without adapting its beliefs on sexual morality. As a result, a number of former evangelicals have announced a change in their views and have led some churches openly to endorse same-sex marriage and to invite unrepentant, practicing homosexuals to join those churches and **be eligible** to serve in positions of leadership. **This is a rejection of the lordship of Jesus Christ which requires faithful adherence** to the Scriptures, no matter what it costs us, no matter whether **the church grows or shrinks**, and no matter how the world will view us. Furthermore, we must insist to those former evangelicals that the Scriptures place our sexual conduct at

²¹ **For example see** 1 Corinthians 6:9 where sexual immorality epitomizes ungodliness.

the boundaries of historic orthodox Christianity. We believe ultimately that the only ones who can effectively reach this generation are those who radically and sacrificially follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that our very marginalization gives us a prophetic stance for a faithful, biblically compassionate ministry to our LGBTQ neighbors.

Pastoral Guidance

*Our counsel to those who **are** same-sex **attracted** (SSA)*

Our commitment to same-sex **attracted people**, both within the church and without, is that we shall love them as God loves them, and God helping us, we promise them our unequivocally loyal friendship. We want them to know that we believe that we are all sinners, bruised and broken by the fall, and in need of God’s pardoning and transforming grace. We have all violated the Seventh Commandment—and every other commandment.²² None of us has the right to condemn another, but rather to encourage each other to find

the core of our ethical behavior as Christians.⁴⁸ To believe otherwise is to put one’s self outside the boundaries of historic orthodox Christianity. We believe ultimately that the only ones who can effectively reach this generation are those who radically and sacrificially follow the Lord Jesus Christ. **Many Christians who experience SSA are committed to the biblical sexual ethic, while continuing to experience SSA. We stand alongside them offering support as each of us seeks to die to ourselves and live to Christ. We believe rather than marginalization being our missional undoing,** that our very marginalization gives us a prophetic stance for a faithful, biblically compassionate ministry to our LGBTQ neighbors.

Pastoral Guidance

*Our **Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction** (SSA)*

Our commitment to **those who experience same-sex attraction** both within the church and without, is that we shall love them as God loves them, and God helping us, we promise them our unequivocal loyal friendship. We want them to know that we believe that we are all sinners, bruised and broken by the **F**all, and in need of God’s pardoning and transforming grace. We have all violated the Seventh Commandment—and every other commandment.⁴⁹ None of

²² Matthew 5:27.

⁴⁸ **Acts 15:19-20. See also** 1 Corinthians 6:9 where sexual immorality epitomizes ungodliness.

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:27.

forgiveness, healing, and guidance from the Lord Jesus Christ. But one aspect of the gospel message is to remind ourselves and others that a rejection of Christ's lordship leads to eternal misery.²³

~~We believe that an individual should not condemn himself or herself because of his or her sexual attractions or orientations; rather he or she should concern himself or herself with one's affections, beliefs, attitudes, and deeds.~~ Without exception, we all must continually repent of our lusts and sinful desires and turn in faith and obedience to the Lord. ~~It is important that we all find our true identity as human beings solely in our relationship with God; therefore, we are not ultimately gay or straight, but rather sons and daughters of God. Those who make their SSA tendencies their primary identity are not comprehending and embracing their full identity as image bearers of God.~~

[[PARAGRAPH BREAK INSERTED HERE FOR CLARITY]]

us has the right to condemn another, but rather to encourage each other to find forgiveness, healing, and guidance from the Lord Jesus Christ. But one aspect of the gospel message is to remind ourselves and others that a rejection of Christ's lordship leads to eternal misery.⁵⁰

All of the Christian life is one of repentance, and we are called to compassionately urge all our neighbors to such radical obedience. Without exception, we all must continually repent of our lusts and sinful desires and turn in faith and obedience to the Lord. **The human heart is sinfully corrupt and gives rise to disordered desires, which are also sin. Consequently, the corrupt heart, its lusts, and desires, including unbidden sinful thoughts, are to be repented of, mourned, and mortified.⁵¹ Same-sex sexual lusts and desires are an example of such sin. Both our corrupted hearts and our fallen world tempt us to sin: being tempted is an appeal to engage the desires our hearts to commit sin.⁵² We must not enter into temptation, but rather flee all temptation to same-sex sexual desires and carefully guard against any latent propensity to that temptation.⁵³ It is encouraging to remember that our Lord Jesus sympathizes with us in our weaknesses because he both suffered when tempted and was tempted in every respect like us, yet without**

²³ Luke 19:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

⁵⁰ Luke 19:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

⁵¹ See Westminster Confession of Faith 6.5 and 13.1-3, along with the EPC's Position Paper on Human Sexuality; this is the Reformed doctrine of 'concupiscence'.

⁵² Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Luke 17:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-15; James 1:13-15; Westminster Confession of Faith 5.5; 17.3; 18.4; Westminster Larger Catechism 78-79; 81; 195.

⁵³ Matthew 6:13; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46; Romans 6:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:13-15; Westminster Larger Catechism 167; 195.

	<p>sin.⁵⁴ As our king, Jesus corrects us in our sin and supports us in our temptations and sufferings.⁵⁵</p> <p>As a follower of Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me — and the life we now live in the body we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. Any other identities or loyalties we have are subordinate to and must be understood relative to our union with Jesus through and with whom we are now sons and daughters of God. The dominion of sin has been broken and now grace reigns – we are being made new! We who are redeemed must identify sin remaining in us as that which must be repented of, renounced, and expunged. Our bodies, desires, temperaments, personalities, emotions are all being sanctified, and though not all the miseries of sin with which we are afflicted will be healed in this life, those broken conditions will eventually pass away and our union with the resurrected Christ will remain.</p> <p>Any experience of same-sex attraction then must be subordinated to our identity in union with Christ: our besetting sin may be same-sex lust, but we need to be repenting of that and seeking growth in sanctification as we turn away from it to Christ in a new obedience. A persistent temptation to same-sex lust may be our on-going struggle, but we are united to Christ, who has empowered us by his Spirit to mortify the flesh and he will ultimately deliver us from even that misery. How we</p>
--	---

⁵⁴ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16; Westminster Larger Catechism 48.

⁵⁵ Psalm 103:13-14; Isaiah 63:9; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 12:6-7; 1 Peter 4:1-2; Westminster Larger Catechism 45; 149.

	<p>think of ourselves matters, and shapes the way we go about our lives. And we must first and foremost think of ourselves as dead to sin, with it having no dominion over us because we are alive in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p> <p>There are some who view the experience of SSA, excluding the temptation to sexual sin, as something that comes with additional blessings. We must be clear here: since SSA is a result of the fall into sin, it is never inherently accompanied by any advantage to the individual that is pleasing to God. Any experience or affection that is good and pleasing to God (close friendships, hobbies, personalities, interests, etc.) that appears to be connected to SSA or LGBTQ, is not a product of that experience, but rather is a good gift from God independent of the brokenness of SSA. Any experience or affection that seems good, but enables or encourages same-sex lust or temptation must be fled and mortified, respectively. Same-sex friendships are good and a blessing from God; however, formalizing such friendships with unique intimacy or assumption of vows (beyond those taken as church members) is inappropriate. We rather encourage same-sex friendships be lived in the context of the church as the covenant family of God.⁵⁶</p> <p>Yet even in our experience of SSA we must be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. In our union with Christ, we have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Because of this, God uses our experience of sorrow and temptation to conform us more and more into the image of Jesus.</p>
--	---

⁵⁶ **Matthew 19:11-12, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23; Westminster Confession of Faith 22.7.**

	<p>That does not make the sufferings good, but what we and the world mean for evil, God can use as he works all things together for the good of those who love him. God can sanctify to us even our deepest distress as we cast ourselves upon the grace of our Father. The denial of self and our deep-seated desires when we repent of same-sex sexual lusts and flee from same-sex temptations for the sake of Christ are the sufferings of taking up our cross to follow Jesus. And if we suffer with him, we have fellowship with Jesus in his life.⁵⁷</p> <p>That means that how someone who experiences SSA describes themselves requires the exercise of wisdom in light of who they are in Christ. Consider for example the language of “gay Christian”. Someone who experiences SSA may want to use the term “gay Christian” in order for the church and world to more readily understand their experience of a persistent, latent pull towards same-sex sexual temptation, even as they make every effort by God’s grace to think and act according to His will. In light of this, the church should exercise patient sympathy rather than reflexive condemnation when Christians who experience SSA self-describe as a “gay Christian”.</p> <p>However, in our culture, the term “gay” is normally understood as affirming or engaging in homosexual practice. Although the term “gay” may refer to more than sexual activities and attractions to persons of the same sex, it does not communicate less than that. It is sinful to intentionally approve of sin and missionally foolish to</p>
--	---

⁵⁷ **Genesis 50:20; Matthew 16:24; Romans 8:17, 28; Galatians 2:20; Westminster Confession of Faith 26.1.**

<p>God has provided His church as the community in which we all must give and receive affection, encouragement, and accountability.²⁴ SSA persons should exercise great care and wisdom when it comes to disclosing their sexual orientation publicly. They are well- advised to share initially only with trusted, wise advisers including godly friends, pastors, and counselors. The culturally-shaped process of “coming out” is often complicated by motives such as seeking same-sex partners, relieving guilty consciences, or publicly pronouncing the rejection of biblical ethics. During a time period of wrestling with same- sex attraction and the Bible’s teachings, it is not dishonest to wait and be discerning in how and to whom one discloses one’s struggles. In some cases, after receiving wisdom from godly counselors, it could be helpful for some Christians to make known publicly their ongoing, largely fruitful struggle with</p>	<p>invite that misunderstanding. Our identity is in Christ as his new creation, and we should not inadvertently communicate to the world that Jesus approves of sin. It is inappropriate to use terminology, including “gay Christian”, that welcomes confusion from the church and world.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Our Counsel to the Body of Christ</i></p> <p>God has provided His church as the community in which we all must give and receive affection, encouragement, and accountability. Christians who experience SSA should exercise great care and wisdom when it comes to disclosing that experience publicly. They are well-advised to share initially only with trusted, wise advisers including godly friends, pastors, and counselors. The culturally-shaped process of “coming out” is often complicated by motives such as seeking same-sex partners, relieving guilty consciences, or publicly pronouncing the rejection of biblical ethics. It is not dishonest to wait and be discerning in how and to whom one discloses one’s struggles. In some cases, after receiving wisdom from godly counselors, it could be helpful for some Christians to make known publicly their ongoing, largely fruitful struggle with same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria.</p>
--	---

²⁴ ~~While controversial in some circles, Wesley Hill has suggested that non-sexual physical affection is a missing element to some proposals that address same-sex attraction. See his *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015). For a less controversial suggestion, see Ed Shaw, *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 71-80. We are fully aware of the controversy surrounding the use of the term “gay Christian,” a controversy that at times has been unproductive. This is a semantic issue meaning that the merit of the term depends upon how it is being used. If “gay Christian” refers to a Christian who affirms and/or engages in same-sex sexual activity, it is an oxymoron. But if it refers to a same-sex-attracted Christian who is making every effort by God’s grace to think and act according to God’s will, then it is a genuine descriptive term. For our purposes in this Letter, we choose to focus on the substance and not the semantics.~~

same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria.

One of the pressing questions of the church concerns expectations for change. What expectations of change (if any) should be presented to Christians who experience SSA, to their families, to their churches? God’s design for marriage and sex in creation is good, and healing from the misery of the Fall in this life may include godly desires for biblical marriage and sex. But God promises that ultimate and true healing from the misery of the Fall is only found in the return of Christ; Jesus is the yes and amen to God’s promises, and we rest our hope upon him, not in the change of our broken condition now. The absence of opposite-sex sexual desires is not evidence of lack of sanctification. God promises that in this life he will, by his Spirit, grow us in holiness in conformity to Christ. Whether we continue to experience SSA, enter into a biblical marriage, or are single all our life, God promises we will grow in grace and that Jesus will never leave nor forsake us

With this in mind, through the promised presence of the sanctifying Holy Spirit:

- 1) We can expect ongoing growth in righteousness and holiness as our fellowship with Christ deepens. Though we often stumble and fall, we can expect increased strength in resisting sin, including same-sex lusts.**
- 2) We who are united to Christ and growing in grace should expect increased intensity in satanic assaults of temptation. The latent pull toward SSA may continue as a providential thorn in the flesh; but in our weakness, the Lord’s grace is sufficient.**

<p>In some cases, SSA persons experience a transformational healing of orientation. While this should not be held out as a universal expectation for all (since God does not always grant it), we should not fail to invite God to do so. We can fervently pray and seek such healing, but must do so in a way that helps rather than harms and in a way that is open but without suggesting it is the norm.</p> <p>There can be a peculiar and intense loneliness that accompanies SSA Christians who have committed themselves to a life of celibacy. It can be a loneliness more intense than that of the celibate heterosexual, who may someday have opportunity and choose to marry. The church must grant special understanding and sympathy toward those who bear this burden, while at the same time confidently calling all her members to sacrifice all things joyfully for the sake of Christ, knowing that we shall all one day be rewarded beyond our most extravagant dreams, and that we even now experience the pleasure of His presence and favor. Like the Apostle Paul, by God's grace we can learn to be content in all circumstances <i>in Christ</i>.²⁵</p>	<p>The ongoing experience of temptation and weakness is not necessarily a sign of sin or lack of sanctification. Yet, we are enabled by the Spirit to flee every temptation, including the temptation to same-sex lusts, and are able to rest our weakness upon the power of Christ.</p> <p>3) In some cases, those who experience SSA will not only grow in resisting same-sex desires, but may be open to biblical marriage and/or develop opposite-sex sexual desires. While this should not be held out as a universal expectation for all (since God does not always grant it), we should not fail to invite God to do so. We can fervently pray and seek such change but must do so in a way that helps rather than harms.</p> <p>There can be a peculiar and intense loneliness that accompanies Christians who experience SSA and who have committed themselves to a life of celibacy. It can be a loneliness more intense than that of the celibate heterosexual, who may someday have opportunity and choose to marry. The Church must confidently proclaim the good news of repentance while granting special understanding and sympathy toward those who bear this burden, while at the same time confidently calling all her members to turn from sin, grow in holiness, and to sacrifice all things joyfully for the sake of Christ. We know that we shall all one day be rewarded beyond our most extravagant dreams, and that we even now experience the pleasure of His presence and favor. Like the Apostle Paul, by</p>
---	---

²⁵ Philippians 4:10-13.

<p><i>Our counsel to family and friends of those who are SSA</i></p> <p>With the increasing frequency, openness, and popularity of homosexual relationships, evangelical Christians are confronted with some difficult decisions to make: how shall we relate to our sexually active homosexual family member? Shall we invite his or her partner to dinner? ...to spend the night? ...to holidays and family vacations? Shall we attend his or her wedding to a same-sex partner? Do we celebrate births and adoptions of same-sex partners and marriages of friends, family members, and co-workers? In making these decisions we want to be fully faithful to the Scriptures in our words, actions, and attitudes, while at the same time expressing genuine love and acceptance to our SSA family member or friend. This can be a challenge.</p> <p>Perhaps the place to begin is with our mental framework. We must be rigorously gracious. We must communicate love consistently to our loved ones, letting them know that nothing they believe or do will ever quench our love for them. In fact, our love for them demands that we urge them to make Jesus Christ Savior and Lord over every aspect of their lives so that they may enjoy eternal life. We also want to continue to enjoy their company and be involved in their lives. At the same time, they will need to be fair to us and understand that our differences of belief and practice about</p>	<p>God's grace we can learn to be content in all circumstances <i>in Christ</i>.⁵⁸</p> <p><i>Our Counsel to Family and Friends of Those who Experience SSA</i></p> <p>With the increasing frequency, openness, and popularity of homosexual relationships, evangelical Christians are confronted with some difficult decisions to make: how shall we relate to our sexually active homosexual family member? Shall we invite his or her partner to dinner? ...to spend the night? ...to holidays and family vacations? Shall we attend his or her wedding to a same-sex partner? Do we celebrate births and adoptions of same-sex partners and unions of friends, family members, and co-workers? In making these decisions we want to be fully faithful to the Scriptures in our words, actions, and attitudes, while at the same time expressing genuine love and acceptance to our member or friend who experiences SSA. This can be a challenge.</p> <p>Perhaps the place to begin is with our mental framework. We must be rigorously gracious. We must communicate love consistently to our loved ones, letting them know that nothing they believe or do will ever quench our love for them. In fact, our love for them demands that we urge them to make Jesus Christ Savior and Lord over every aspect of their lives so that they may enjoy eternal life. We also want to continue to enjoy their company and be involved in their lives. At the same time, they will need to be fair to us and understand that our differences of belief and practice about</p>
---	--

⁵⁸ Philippians 4:10-13.

sexual morality will mean that, at times, we will be unable to participate with them in ways that would compromise our own convictions. We should freely ask them to accept us in the same way that we strive to accept them. For those who would say that any disagreement with their view of sexuality is inherently hateful, ~~we would say that no one should be coerced into following Christ and that~~ we are committed to a common civic life ~~with all who are willing to live peaceably with one another.~~²⁶

What are ways that our participation in the lives of **SSA** family and friends could compromise our commitment to Christ? In general, anything that communicates, either explicitly or implicitly, support for sexual immorality of any sort would be inappropriate for the Christian. Surely, there is room for discussion and debate on how to handle various situations pastorally, but generally speaking, we advise the following.

When people are old enough to be on their own, their parents, siblings, and friends should not presume to have the authority over their moral decisions; but neither should the ones in immoral relationships seek to manipulate the moral decisions of their parents, siblings, or friends. It is the Christian’s moral obligation to respond appropriately to the sin in other people’s lives, and the closer our relationship to the one sinning, the greater the obligation. If, for example, a family member chooses to date someone of the same

sexual morality will mean that, at times, we will be unable to participate with them in ways that would compromise our own convictions. We should freely ask them to accept us in the same way that we strive to accept them. For those who would say that any disagreement with their view of sexuality is inherently hateful, we would **beg** to say that **our love for the Lord and our love for others requires us to obey the Scriptures and to encourage others to do the same, while** we **also** are committed to a common civic life **in which all people who disagree are able to live peaceably with mutual respect.**⁵⁹

What are ways that our participation in the lives of **LGBTQ** family and friends could compromise our commitment to Christ? In general, anything that communicates, either explicitly or implicitly, support for sexual immorality of any sort would be inappropriate for the Christian. Surely, there is room for discussion and debate on how to handle various situations pastorally, but generally speaking, we advise the following.

When people are old enough to be on their own, their parents, siblings, and friends should not presume to have the authority over their moral decisions; but neither should the ones in immoral relationships seek to manipulate the moral decisions of their parents, siblings, or friends. It is the Christian’s moral obligation to respond appropriately to the sin in other people’s lives, and the closer our relationship to the one sinning, the greater the obligation. If, for example, a family member chooses to date someone of the same **sex**, we

²⁶ Romans 12:18.

⁵⁹ Romans 12:18.

gender, we must love both the family member and his or her partner with Christian love, but we should be sure to lovingly and appropriately communicate to our family member our disagreement with the romantic, sexual, and marital aspects of the relationship and not participate in any way that would signal our approval of it. If a family member chooses to **marry** someone of the same **gender**, once again we would love both people in the relationship but should strongly consider excluding ourselves from participating in the immoral union, including attending or participating as a guest in the wedding ceremony. In no way should we officiate the service or actively give sanction to the union (The same would be true of a wedding involving heterosexual individuals who were not biblically suited for marriage.) We cannot endorse the **marriage** after the ceremony, for example, in allowing them to share the same bed while hosting them in our home (any more than we would allow an unmarried heterosexual couple to do so). Making these detailed decisions is very challenging, subject to misunderstanding, and must be done within the context of clearly affirming our love for all involved and so these decisions are not **be** made lightly or done thoughtlessly.

must love both the family member and his or her partner with Christian love, but we should be sure to lovingly and appropriately communicate to our family member our disagreement with the romantic, sexual, and marital aspects of the relationship and not participate in any way that would signal our approval of it. If a family member chooses to **publicly celebrate their union with** someone of the same **sex**, once again we would love both people in the relationship but should strongly consider excluding ourselves from participating in the immoral union, including attending or participating as a guest in the wedding ceremony. In no way should we officiate the service or actively give sanction to the union (The same would be true of a wedding involving heterosexual individuals who were not biblically suited for marriage.) We cannot endorse the **union** after the ceremony, for example, in allowing them to share the same bed while hosting them in our home (any more than we would allow an unmarried heterosexual couple to do so). Making these detailed decisions is very challenging, subject to misunderstanding, and must be done within the context of clearly affirming our love for all involved and so these decisions are not made lightly or done thoughtlessly.

We know the pain of loved ones holding our relationships hostage, demanding affirmation of their lifestyle as a condition for continued contact. We lament the effects sin has on our relationships and encourage followers of Jesus to remain faithful: Do not be the one to cut off contact and do not allow relational extortion compel you to abandon your stated belief in Christ's teachings. Remind your loved ones who experience SSA that you are always ready to have a relationship with them. And above all,

When minor children or youth express **homosexual** desires or tendencies, we should listen carefully and sympathetically to their feelings and experiences. We should thank them for sharing with us and reassure them that we shall always love and support them. At the appropriate moments, we should also help them understand what God’s Word says to all of us—that we are to be chaste in all **of** our relationships (with **males and females**) and remain celibate unless married to a biblically suited spouse. Our children may experience transient SSA as well as gender dysphoria which may be more related to developmental issues, assertion of independence, peer influences, and other factors. Discerning this requires patience and wisdom. But if children and/or youth are convinced of their **homosexual orientation** and show no interest in potential opposite **gender** romance, we should help them to understand that they can live very faithful Christian lives as single persons. We would probably also advise them to disclose their struggle only to those who would edify them and to demonstrate modesty and restraint in their public lives. And we should pledge our lifelong support to walk with them in their weakness just as we hope from them in our own.

Our counsel to pastors, elders, and congregations

It is incumbent upon the local church to minister faithfully in

remember through the pain that our hope is in Christ and his kingdom, which is good and endures forever.⁶⁰

When minor children or youth express **same-sex** desires or tendencies, we should listen carefully and sympathetically to their feelings and experiences. We should thank them for sharing with us and reassure them that we shall always love and support them. At the appropriate moments, we should also help them understand what God’s Word says to all of us—that we are to be chaste in all our relationships (with **boys and girls**) and remain celibate unless married to a biblically suited spouse. Our children may experience transient SSA as well as gender dysphoria which may be more related to developmental issues, assertion of independence, peer influences, and other factors. Discerning this requires patience and wisdom. But if children and/or youth are convinced of **the persistence of** their **SSA** and show no interest in potential opposite **sex** romance, we should help them to understand that they can live very faithful Christian lives as single persons. We would probably also advise them to disclose their struggle only to those who would edify them and to demonstrate modesty and restraint in their public lives. And we should pledge our lifelong support to walk with them in their weakness just as we hope **to receive** from them in our own.

Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries

It is incumbent upon the local church to minister faithfully in situations involving LGBTQ issues. We advise church

⁶⁰ **Matthew 10:35-37; Mark 10:28-30.**

<p>situations involving LGBTQ issues. We advise church Sessions explicitly to endorse the EPC “Position Paper on Human Sexuality” as well as this Pastoral Letter to provide a general theological, ethical, and pastoral framework for its ministry. While we welcome anyone to attend our churches and to participate in our various ministries, it is essential that our churches admit into their membership and into positions of leadership only those who have a credible testimony of repentant faith in Jesus Christ. One involved in unrepentant homosexual or heterosexual misconduct does not have such a credible testimony.²⁷</p> <p>When same-gender marriage couples become believers and desire to join the local church and baptize their children, each case must be carefully assessed; but normally we believe that those who genuinely receive Jesus Christ will</p>	<p>Sessions explicitly to endorse the EPC “Position Paper on Human Sexuality” as well as this Pastoral Letter to provide a general theological, ethical, and pastoral framework for its ministry. While we welcome anyone to attend our churches and to participate in our various ministries, it is essential that our churches admit into their membership and into positions of leadership only those who have a credible testimony of repentant faith in Jesus Christ. People who knowingly and persistently adopt, practice, or promote sexual behaviors or desires in direct contradiction to biblical teaching and show no evidence of repentance do not have such a credible testimony.⁶¹ Such persons are to be loved and ministered to with pastoral care, but they are not eligible for either church membership or ordination.</p> <p>People who struggle with temptation and may, at times, sin sexually, but who grieve those failures, show ongoing repentance, and are progressing in sanctification, may be welcomed as members. They are to be shepherded pastorally and held accountable as they grow in holiness. When same-sex couples who are legally married become believers and desire to join the local church and baptize their children, each case must be carefully assessed; but we believe that those who genuinely receive Jesus Christ will want their repentance to be more notable than their</p>
--	--

²⁷ Church Sessions are already responsible to exercise this type of discernment under G-8, including “The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ” (G-8-2-C).

⁶¹ Church Sessions are already responsible to exercise this type of discernment under G.8, including “The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ” (G.82-C).

want their repentance to be more notable than their sin.²⁸ This would mean that a same-sex couple who commits themselves to following Christ would come to acknowledge their **marital** union was contrary to His will, would take steps to renounce all inappropriate conduct, and seek to remove even the appearance of evil.²⁹ In the case of children, when the parents become believers, one of the parents would assume parental custody and the other would continue to be an influence for good in the children’s lives. Only the parent who assumed custody of the child would present the child for baptism and assume the parental vows.

sin.⁶² This would mean that a same-sex couple who commits themselves to following Christ would come to acknowledge their union was contrary to His will, would take steps to renounce all inappropriate conduct, and seek to remove even the appearance of evil.⁶³ In the case of children, when the parents become believers, one of the parents would assume parental custody and the other would continue to be an influence for good in the children’s lives. Only the parent who assumed custody of the child would present the child for baptism and assume the parental vows.

In examining candidates for membership on Boards of Deacons, Sessions, and in Presbyteries, we believe examining courts should exercise their authority in a spirit of gentleness, compassion, and understanding. The courts of the church should always listen charitably and consider carefully the testimony of those who experience SSA and are seeking office in the church. We urge Sessions to consult with the Ministerial Committee of their Presbytery when considering candidates to the Board of Deacons or Session who experience SSA.

All courts will do well to ensure that candidates are “above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things.” (BoG 9-3.A-B) The Scriptures teach that “an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for

²⁸ Luke 19:1-10.

²⁹ Ephesians 5:7, 11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

⁶² Luke 19:1-10.

⁶³ Ephesians 5:7, 11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

	<p>gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:7-9)</p> <p>Only those who conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct should be considered for leadership. (WLC 138-139)⁶⁴ If candidates for office have disclosed that they experience SSA, the examining elders must first confirm that the candidates have a long record of living chaste sexual lives in their identity, behavior, desires, and attitudes. Ordination is not appropriate while habitual or unresolved sexual sin persists; discernment on the part of the court should be exercised in light of repentance, fruit of sanctification, and proven character over time. Courts may consider for ordination candidates whose ongoing experience of SSA is a corrupted sin nature unindulged, repented of, and mortified; a temptation not entered into, but rather fled; a weakness not embraced, but rather mourned as they rest upon the grace and strength of the Lord.</p> <p>All Sessions and Presbyteries exercise judgment in how they examine candidates. After confirming the proven record of chastity for candidates who experience SSA, we believe it wise and helpful for ordaining courts to ask question of the candidates in the following areas: 1) their grasp of their identity in Christ as new creatures in</p>
--	---

⁶⁴ G.9-3A-B; D.1-6C.

communion with the Lord, 2) their ethical views concerning homosexual desires and practice, 3) their experience of God’s transforming grace in their own sexual lives and affections, along with progress they have made in their walk with Christ, 4) their manner of counseling and discipling others who struggle with sexual sin and dysfunction, 5) their rationale regarding their suitability, as those experiencing SSA, to serve as officers within the church, 6) the mistakes they have made and the lessons they have learned in the past in this area, and 7) their ability and strategy, as those who experience SSA, whether single or married, to appropriately model godly relationships. These are not the only questions that may be asked, but are recommendations we believe will help ordaining courts. Similar questions should not only be asked of candidates who experience SSA, but of all candidates for church office.

Church officers who experience SSA must continually honor their ordination vow to promise subjection to their fellow presbyters. When Sessions and Presbyteries provide wise guidance on how officers within their jurisdictions publicly describe their experience of SSA and how they shepherd others who experience SSA, those officers should have a posture of humility, seeking the peace, unity, and edification of the Church.

<p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Reading</p> <p>Allberry, Sam. <i>Is God Anti-Gay?: and Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction</i>. Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2015.</p> <p>Barr, Adam T. and Ron Citlau. <i>Compassion Without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth</i>. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014</p> <p>Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. <i>The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: Expanded Edition</i>. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2014.</p> <p>———. <i>Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ</i>. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015.</p> <p>Citlau, Ron. <i>Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted: Biblical Direction for Friends, Family Members, and Those Struggling with Homosexuality</i>. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2017.</p> <p>Dallas, Joe. <i>Speaking of Homosexuality: Discussing the Issues with Kindness and Clarity</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016.</p> <p>Dallas, Joe and Nancy Heche, eds. <i>The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality. A Biblical and</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Reading</p> <p>Allberry, Sam. <i>Is God Anti-Gay?: and Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction</i>. Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2015.</p> <p>Barr, Adam T. and Ron Citlau. <i>Compassion Without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth</i>. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014</p> <p>Beeke, Joel R and Paul M. Smalley. <i>One Man & One Woman: Marriage and Same-Sex Relations</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016.</p> <p>Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. <i>Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age</i>. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023.</p> <p>———. <i>Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ</i>. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015.</p> <p>———. <i>The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: Expanded Edition</i>. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2014.</p> <p>Citlau, Ron. <i>Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted: Biblical Direction for Friends, Family Members, and Those Struggling with Homosexuality</i>. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2017.</p>
--	--

<p><i>Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction.</i> Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2010.</p> <p>DeYoung, Kevin. <i>What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?</i> Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.</p> <p>Fortson, S. Donald and Rollin G. Grams. <i>Unchanging Witness, The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scriptures and Tradition.</i> Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.</p> <p>Gagnon, Robert. <i>The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.</i> Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001.</p> <p>Hayes, Richard B. <i>The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, a Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics.</i> San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1996.</p> <p>Hill, Wesley. <i>Washed and Waiting, Reflection on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality.</i> Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.</p> <p>———. <i>Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian.</i> Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015.</p> <p>Jones, Stanley L. and Mark Yarhouse. <i>Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate.</i> Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.</p> <p>Keller, Timothy. “The Bible and Same Sex Relationships: A Review Article.” www.redeemer.com/redeemer-</p>	<p>Cook, Becket. <i>A Change of Affection: A Gay Man’s Incredible Story of Redemption.</i> Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019.</p> <p>Dallas, Joe. <i>Speaking of Homosexuality: Discussing the Issues with Kindness and Clarity.</i> Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016.</p> <p>Dallas, Joe and Nancy Heche, eds. <i>The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality. A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction.</i> Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2010.</p> <p>DeYoung, Kevin. <i>What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?</i> Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.</p> <p>Fortson, S. Donald and Rollin G. Grams. <i>Unchanging Witness, The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scriptures and Tradition.</i> Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.</p> <p>Gagnon, Robert. <i>The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.</i> Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001.</p> <p>Gilson, Rachel. <i>Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next.</i> Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2020.</p> <p>Gordon, Christopher. <i>The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality.</i> Greenville, SC: Gospel Reformation Network, 2022.</p> <p>Hayes, Richard B. <i>The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, a Contemporary</i></p>
---	---

<p>report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article, June 2015.</p> <p>McNeil, John J. "Homosexuality: Challenging the Church to Grow." In <i>Homosexuality in the Church</i>, ed Jeffrey S. Siker. Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox, 1995. xx-53.</p> <p>Schmidt, Thomas. <i>Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.</p> <p>Shaw, Ed. <i>Same Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.</p> <p>Via, Dan O. and Robert A. J. Gagnon. <i>Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.</p> <p>Yarhouse, Mark. <i>Homosexuality and the Christian</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.</p> <p>Yuan, Christopher and Angela Yuan. <i>Out of the Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A Broken Mother's Search for Hope</i>. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2011.</p>	<p><i>Introduction to New Testament Ethics</i>. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1996.</p> <p>Hill, Wesley. <i>Washed and Waiting, Reflection on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.</p> <p>Jones, Stanley L. and Mark Yarhouse. <i>Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.</p> <p>Keller, Timothy. "The Bible and Same Sex Relationships: A Review Article." www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article, June 2015.</p> <p>Lefebvre, Michael. <i>The Gospel & Sexual Orientation</i>. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012.</p> <p>McLaughlin, Rebecca. <i>Does the Bible Affirm Same-Sex Relationships?: Examining 10 Claims About Scripture and Sexuality</i>. Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2024.</p> <p>McNeil, John J. "Homosexuality: Challenging the Church to Grow." In <i>Homosexuality in the Church</i>, ed Jeffrey S. Siker. Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox, 1995. xx-53.</p> <p>Owen, John. <i>Sin and Temptation. Vol 15 of The Complete Works of John Owen</i>, edited by Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024.</p>
---	--

	<p>Perry, Jackie Hill. <i>Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and Who God Has Always Been</i>. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2018.</p> <p>Pinson, Cooper. <i>Helping Students with Same-Sex Attraction: Guidance for Parents and Youth Leaders</i>. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017.</p> <p>Roberts, Matthew P W. <i>Pride: Identity and the Worship of Self</i>. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2023.</p> <p>Schmidt, Thomas. <i>Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.</p> <p>Shaw, Ed. <i>Same Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.</p> <p>Stott, John. <i>Same-Sex Partnerships?: A Christian Perspective</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1998.</p> <p>Via, Dan O. and Robert A. J. Gagnon. <i>Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.</p> <p>Yarhouse, Mark. <i>Talking to Kids About Gender Identity: A Roadmap for Christian Compassion, Civility, and Conviction</i>. Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2023.</p> <p>———. <i>Homosexuality and the Christian</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.</p>
--	---

	<p>Yarhouse, Mark and Julia Sadusky. <i>Emerging Sexual Identities: Navigating the Landscape with Today's Children</i>. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2025.</p> <p>Yarhouse, Mark and Olya Zaporozhets. <i>When Children Come Out: A Guide for Christian Parents</i>. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2022.</p> <p>Yuan, Christopher and Angela Yuan. <i>Out of the Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A Broken Mother's Search for Hope</i>. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2011.</p>
--	---

Homosexuality and Same-Sex Attraction

We begin by defining the terms we are using. The terms “gay” and “homosexuality” are umbrella terms used here to describe homoerotic worldview, lifestyle, conduct, and desires. The term “same-sex attraction” (SSA) is used in this paper to describe one’s inward desires or proclivities. Additionally, we speak of “latent propensity,” which applies to persons who know themselves to be especially vulnerable to homosexual temptations but who are repentant of all their homosexual lusts.

Biblical/ Theological Foundations

We know from the Scriptures that God made the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and formed the first woman, Eve, from the rib of Adam.¹ He bound them together in a marriage covenant intended to endure as long as they both lived.² From that primeval union, God has willed that all marriages would consist of one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment.³ In marriage, the two sexes were made to be mutually compatible—spiritually and physically—and also to have the potential for conceiving, bearing, and rearing children.⁴ God has explicitly forbidden sexual intimacy outside the bounds of this marriage covenant.⁵

After the fall of humankind, many perverse distortions of God’s order were conceived and practiced by men and women.⁶ Among these sinful distortions was the practice of sexual relations between persons of the same sex. The Scriptures address this phenomenon in multiple texts, all of which speak negatively of homosexual conduct.

The men of Sodom sought to have intercourse (perhaps by force) with the angels who visited Lot, and this was one demonstration of the depravity of that city.⁷ The Mosaic Law explicitly twice forbade homosexual intercourse.⁸ And in Romans, Paul mentioned homosexual acts among both men and women as shameless and contrary to nature, evidence of God’s abandoning them to their sin and a debased mind.⁹ In 1 Corinthians, Paul included those engaged in same-sex relations in a list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (It should be noted, however, that this statement was not simply a word of condemnation, but rather an invitation to live in the reality of being “washed,... sanctified,... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”¹⁰) Similarly, in 1 Timothy, Paul mentioned men who practice homosexuality among those who

¹ Genesis 1:27; 2:18-22.

² Genesis 2:24.

³ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:22-33.

⁴ Genesis 2:23; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Song of Songs; Malachi 2:15; Ephesians 6:1-4.

⁵ Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 5:15-22; Matthew 5:27-30; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

⁶ Genesis 6:5, 6; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

⁷ Genesis 19:4-11. The text makes it clear that the men of Sodom believed the angels to be men.

⁸ Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

⁹ Romans 1:26-32.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

1 are doing things which are contrary to the gospel.¹¹ Finally, Jude pointed to Sodom and
2 Gomorrah's indulging in sexual immorality and pursuing of unnatural desires as an example
3 to warn us of God's judgment.¹² Although Jesus is not quoted on this specific topic in the
4 gospel accounts, He repeatedly endorsed the sexual standards as well as the law as a whole
5 given in the Old Testament,¹³ which includes a ban on all homosexual conduct.

6 7 **Contemporary Challenges**

8
9 Biblical teaching on homosexual practice has come under severe attack in recent decades. It
10 is important, therefore, for the church to be prepared to respond to these several
11 objections.

12 13 *Exegetical Challenges*

14
15 The objections to historic biblical teaching which may well have the most insidious long-
16 term effect upon the church are the so-called "revisionist interpretations" of Scripture. In
17 seeking to justify homosexual behavior, these revisionists employ innovative exegetical
18 methods to avoid the intended meanings of multiple biblical texts. Their methodology not
19 only undermines the biblical sexual ethic, but also the clarity and authority of the
20 Scriptures themselves. They suggest that Sodom was not judged for homosexual conduct
21 but for lack of hospitality, that Levitical laws against homosexual conduct no longer apply
22 in our New Testament age, that Jesus' lack of specific mention of homosexuality is an
23 implied approval of it, that Paul's explicit condemnations of homosexual behavior are
24 culturally conditioned and linguistically ambivalent. All these interpretations are contrary
25 to a good faith reading of the texts. Those who use their intellectual prowess to deceive
26 others through revisionist reinterpretation fall under the same severe condemnation as
27 those who did the same during the age of the apostles.¹⁴ Integrity requires that someone
28 who disagrees with biblical teaching simply say so rather than attempt to distort the plain
29 meaning of Scripture.¹⁵ As Jesus warned the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira, He will
30 not condone or tolerate such behavior by His Church.¹⁶ Christian scholars have written
31 excellent exegetical analyses of relevant Scripture texts that help guide those who are
32 genuinely seeking the truth from God's Word.¹⁷ Pastors and elders must be proactive in
33 countering these deceptive teachings, especially because the revisionism appeals to a view
34 of truth based upon individual happiness that is pervasive among younger people, as well
35 as increasingly among older believers. We must call our people back to the truth of God's
36 Word.

37
38
39

¹¹ 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

¹² Jude 7.

¹³ Matthew 5:27-32; 19:7-9.

¹⁴ Romans 16:17-19; Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:13; Revelation 2:20; 1 John 4:6.

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:8; 2 Peter 3:1b; Jude 4.

¹⁶ See Revelation 2:14-16| 20-23.

¹⁷ See especially DeYoung, Gagnon, and Via in the recommended readings.

Scientific Challenges

1
2
3 In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a disorder,
4 thus normalizing it among American physicians and psychologists. Arguments are often
5 made that same-sex attraction is genetic and no different from any other fixed physical
6 trait. The Christian's response is that regardless of what social scientists may declare as
7 "normal," we believe that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
8 Furthermore, we are all born with many innate tendencies which must be resisted or
9 controlled—the tendency toward anger, greed, lust, and pride all can be inherited, but that
10 does not make them acceptable. The nature/nurture debate should not alter the ethical
11 assessment of homosexual behavior, sexual lusts, desires to sin, or the duty to flee
12 temptation, except that by these studies we are made more deeply sympathetic toward any
13 struggling with the temptations and sins involved. In instances where there have been
14 childhood sexual abuse or other environmental influences, these need to be
15 compassionately recognized and taken into account in counseling those who experience
16 SSA. The Christian's primary concern is about their relationship to God, and their need for
17 his grace to save them from their sexual sin, sinful lusts and behaviors, and deliverance
18 from temptation and evil, whether these arise from their corrupted nature or the fallenness
19 of creation. Love for and loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ compels us to flee temptation and
20 rely upon the life of his Spirit within us.

Social Challenges

21
22
23
24 In 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriages must be allowed
25 and recognized in all 50 states.¹⁸ This highly controversial action by the United States'
26 highest court was the culmination of many years of growing dissent among those who
27 believed the prohibition was discriminatory against those of the LGBTQ community,
28 including (for example) violence and housing discrimination. The Christian response
29 should begin with our whole-hearted endorsement of granting all legitimate civil rights
30 equally to all citizens of our country. We should be grateful when true injustice is
31 addressed. At the same time, we believe that sexual conduct is a moral issue for individuals,
32 churches, and nations. Therefore the church would be unfaithful to her mission were she
33 not to speak out clearly and boldly. We live in a strongly secularized, human-centered,
34 morally relativistic culture, and we should, therefore, expect many challenges from our
35 society to our belief system, our standards of conduct, and our views on healthy public
36 policy. To those who say that the evangelical church is on the wrong side of history, we
37 would say that our hope is in the Lord and not in human approval.

Missional Challenges

38
39
40
41 In recent years, the evangelical church has experienced a growing concern that our historic
42 theological and ethical beliefs regarding homosexual conduct have marginalized us in our

¹⁸ Obergefell v. Hodges, 576, U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 2015.
www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf (accessed 12/19/2017).

1 culture and minimized our ability to reach the LGBTQ community for Christ. Many have
2 questioned whether the evangelical church will survive in our times without adapting its
3 beliefs on sexual morality. As a result, a number of former evangelicals have announced a
4 change in their views and have led some churches openly to endorse same-sex marriage
5 and to invite unrepentant, practicing homosexuals to join those churches and be eligible to
6 serve in positions of leadership. This is a rejection of the lordship of Jesus Christ which
7 requires faithful adherence to the Scriptures, no matter what it costs us, no matter whether
8 the church grows or shrinks, and no matter how the world will view us. Furthermore, we
9 must insist to those former evangelicals that the Scriptures place our sexual conduct at the
10 core of our ethical behavior as Christians.¹⁹ To believe otherwise is to put one's self outside
11 the boundaries of historic orthodox Christianity. We believe ultimately that the only ones
12 who can effectively reach this generation are those who radically and sacrificially follow
13 the Lord Jesus Christ. Many Christians who experience SSA are committed to the biblical
14 sexual ethic, while continuing to experience SSA. We stand alongside them offering support
15 as each of us seeks to die to ourselves and live to Christ. We believe rather than
16 marginalization being our missional undoing, that our very marginalization gives us a
17 prophetic stance for a faithful, biblically compassionate ministry to our LGBTQ neighbors.

Pastoral Guidance

Our Counsel to Those who Experience Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)

23 Our commitment to those who experience same-sex attraction both within the church and
24 without, is that we shall love them as God loves them, and God helping us, we promise them
25 our unequivocal loyal friendship. We want them to know that we believe that we are all
26 sinners, bruised and broken by the Fall, and in need of God's pardoning and transforming
27 grace. We have all violated the Seventh Commandment—and every other commandment.²⁰
28 None of us has the right to condemn another, but rather to encourage each other to find
29 forgiveness, healing, and guidance from the Lord Jesus Christ. But one aspect of the gospel
30 message is to remind ourselves and others that a rejection of Christ's lordship leads to
31 eternal misery.²¹

33 All of the Christian life is one of repentance, and we are called to compassionately urge all
34 our neighbors to such radical obedience. Without exception, we all must continually repent
35 of our lusts and sinful desires and turn in faith and obedience to the Lord. The human heart
36 is sinfully corrupt and gives rise to disordered desires, which are also sin. Consequently,
37 the corrupt heart, its lusts, and desires, including unbidden sinful thoughts, are to be
38 repented of, mourned, and mortified.²² Same-sex sexual lusts and desires are an example of
39 such sin. Both our corrupted hearts and our fallen world tempt us to sin: being tempted is

¹⁹ Acts 15:19-20. See also 1 Corinthians 6:9 where sexual immorality epitomizes ungodliness.

²⁰ Matthew 5:27.

²¹ Luke 19:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

²² See Westminster Confession of Faith 6.5 and 13.1-3, along with the EPC's Position Paper on Human Sexuality; this is the Reformed doctrine of 'concupiscence'.

1 an appeal to engage the desires our hearts to commit sin.²³ We must not enter into
2 temptation, but rather flee all temptation to same-sex sexual desires and carefully guard
3 against any latent propensity to that temptation.²⁴ It is encouraging to remember that our
4 Lord Jesus sympathizes with us in our weaknesses because he both suffered when tempted
5 and was tempted in every respect like us, yet without sin.²⁵ As our king, Jesus corrects us in
6 our sin and supports us in our temptations and sufferings.²⁶

7
8 As a follower of Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me — and the life
9 we now live in the body we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for
10 us. Any other identities or loyalties we have are subordinate to and must be understood
11 relative to our union with Jesus through and with whom we are now sons and daughters of
12 God. The dominion of sin has been broken and now grace reigns – we are being made new!
13 We who are redeemed must identify sin remaining in us as that which must be repented of,
14 renounced, and expunged. Our bodies, desires, temperaments, personalities, emotions are
15 all being sanctified, and though not all the miseries of sin with which we are afflicted will be
16 healed in this life, those broken conditions will eventually pass away and our union with
17 the resurrected Christ will remain.

18
19 Any experience of same-sex attraction then must be subordinated to our identity in union
20 with Christ: our besetting sin may be same-sex lust, but we need to be repenting of that and
21 seeking growth in sanctification as we turn away from it to Christ in a new obedience. A
22 persistent temptation to same-sex lust may be our on-going struggle, but we are united to
23 Christ, who has empowered us by his Spirit to mortify the flesh and he will ultimately
24 deliver us from even that misery. How we think of ourselves matters, and shapes the way
25 we go about our lives. And we must first and foremost think of ourselves as dead to sin,
26 with it having no dominion over us because we are alive in Christ Jesus our Lord.

27
28 There are some who view the experience of SSA, excluding the temptation to sexual sin, as
29 something that comes with additional blessings. We must be clear here: since SSA is a
30 result of the fall into sin, it is never inherently accompanied by any advantage to the
31 individual that is pleasing to God. Any experience or affection that is good and pleasing to
32 God (close friendships, hobbies, personalities, interests, etc.) that appears to be connected
33 to SSA or LGBTQ, is not a product of that experience, but rather is a good gift from God
34 independent of the brokenness of SSA. Any experience or affection that seems good, but
35 enables or encourages same-sex lust or temptation must be fled and mortified,
36 respectively. Same-sex friendships are good and a blessing from God; however, formalizing
37 such friendships with unique intimacy or assumption of vows (beyond those taken as

²³ Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Luke 17:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-15; James 1:13-15; Westminster Confession of Faith 5.5; 17.3; 18.4; Westminster Larger Catechism 78-79; 81; 195.

²⁴ Matthew 6:13; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46; Romans 6:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:13-15; Westminster Larger Catechism 167; 195.

²⁵ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16; Westminster Larger Catechism 48.

²⁶ Psalm 103:13-14; Isaiah 63:9; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 12:6-7; 1 Peter 4:1-2; Westminster Larger Catechism 45; 149.

1 church members) is inappropriate. We rather encourage same-sex friendships be lived in
2 the context of the church as the covenant family of God.²⁷

3
4 Yet even in our experience of SSA we must be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. In our union
5 with Christ, we have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Because of this, God uses our
6 experience of sorrow and temptation to conform us more and more into the image of Jesus.
7 That does not make the sufferings good, but what we and the world mean for evil, God can
8 use as he works all things together for the good of those who love him. God can sanctify to
9 us even our deepest distress as we cast ourselves upon the grace of our Father. The denial
10 of self and our deep-seated desires when we repent of same-sex sexual lusts and flee from
11 same-sex temptations for the sake of Christ are the sufferings of taking up our cross to
12 follow Jesus. And if we suffer with him, we have fellowship with Jesus in his life.²⁸

13
14 That means that how someone who experiences SSA describes themselves requires the
15 exercise of wisdom in light of who they are in Christ. Consider for example the language of
16 “gay Christian”. Someone who experiences SSA may want to use the term “gay Christian” in
17 order for the church and world to more readily understand their experience of a persistent,
18 latent pull towards same-sex sexual temptation, even as they make every effort by God’s
19 grace to think and act according to His will. In light of this, the church should exercise
20 patient sympathy rather than reflexive condemnation when Christians who experience SSA
21 self-describe as a “gay Christian”.

22
23 However, in our culture, the term “gay” is normally understood as affirming or engaging in
24 homosexual practice. Although the term “gay” may refer to more than sexual activities and
25 attractions to persons of the same sex, it does not communicate less than that. It is sinful to
26 intentionally approve of sin and missionally foolish to invite that misunderstanding. Our
27 identity is in Christ as his new creation, and we should not inadvertently communicate to
28 the world that Jesus approves of sin. It is inappropriate to use terminology, including “gay
29 Christian”, that welcomes confusion from the church and world.

30 31 *Our Counsel to the Body of Christ*

32
33 God has provided His church as the community in which we all must give and receive
34 affection, encouragement, and accountability. Christians who experience SSA should
35 exercise great care and wisdom when it comes to disclosing that experience publicly. They
36 are well-advised to share initially only with trusted, wise advisers including godly friends,
37 pastors, and counselors. The culturally-shaped process of “coming out” is often complicated
38 by motives such as seeking same-sex partners, relieving guilty consciences, or publicly
39 pronouncing the rejection of biblical ethics. It is not dishonest to wait and be discerning in
40 how and to whom one discloses one’s struggles. In some cases, after receiving wisdom from
41 godly counselors, it could be helpful for some Christians to make known publicly their
42 ongoing, largely fruitful struggle with same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria.

²⁷ Matthew 19:11-12, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23; Westminster Confession of Faith 22.7.

²⁸ Genesis 50:20; Matthew 16:24; Romans 8:17, 28; Galatians 2:20; Westminster Confession of Faith 26.1.

1 One of the pressing questions of the church concerns expectations for change. What
2 expectations of change (if any) should be presented to Christians who experience SSA, to
3 their families, to their churches? God's design for marriage and sex in creation is good, and
4 healing from the misery of the Fall in this life may include godly desires for biblical
5 marriage and sex. But God promises that ultimate and true healing from the misery of the
6 Fall is only found in the return of Christ; Jesus is the yes and amen to God's promises, and
7 we rest our hope upon him, not in the change of our broken condition now. The absence of
8 opposite-sex sexual desires is not evidence of lack of sanctification. God promises that in
9 this life he will, by his Spirit, grow us in holiness in conformity to Christ. Whether we
10 continue to experience SSA, enter into a biblical marriage, or are single all our life, God
11 promises we will grow in grace and that Jesus will never leave nor forsake us
12

13 With this in mind, through the promised presence of the sanctifying Holy Spirit:
14

- 15 1) We can expect ongoing growth in righteousness and holiness as our fellowship with
16 Christ deepens. Though we often stumble and fall, we can expect increased strength
17 in resisting sin, including same-sex lusts.
- 18 2) We who are united to Christ and growing in grace should expect increased intensity
19 in satanic assaults of temptation. The latent pull toward SSA may continue as a
20 providential thorn in the flesh; but in our weakness, the Lord's grace is sufficient.
21 The ongoing experience of temptation and weakness is not necessarily a sign of sin
22 or lack of sanctification. Yet, we are enabled by the Spirit to flee every temptation,
23 including the temptation to same-sex lusts, and are able to rest our weakness upon
24 the power of Christ.
- 25 3) In some cases, those who experience SSA will not only grow in resisting same-sex
26 desires, but may be open to biblical marriage and/or develop opposite-sex sexual
27 desires. While this should not be held out as a universal expectation for all (since
28 God does not always grant it), we should not fail to invite God to do so. We can
29 fervently pray and seek such change but must do so in a way that helps rather than
30 harms.

31
32 There can be a peculiar and intense loneliness that accompanies Christians who experience
33 SSA and who have committed themselves to a life of celibacy. It can be a loneliness more
34 intense than that of the celibate heterosexual, who may someday have opportunity and
35 choose to marry. The Church must confidently proclaim the good news of repentance while
36 granting special understanding and sympathy toward those who bear this burden, while at
37 the same time confidently calling all her members to turn from sin, grow in holiness, and to
38 sacrifice all things joyfully for the sake of Christ. We know that we shall all one day be
39 rewarded beyond our most extravagant dreams, and that we even now experience the
40 pleasure of His presence and favor. Like the Apostle Paul, by God's grace we can learn to be
41 content in all circumstances *in Christ*.²⁹
42
43
44

²⁹ Philippians 4:10-13.

Our Counsel to Family and Friends of Those who Experience SSA

1
2
3 With the increasing frequency, openness, and popularity of homosexual relationships,
4 evangelical Christians are confronted with some difficult decisions to make: how shall we
5 relate to our sexually active homosexual family member? Shall we invite his or her partner
6 to dinner? ...to spend the night? ...to holidays and family vacations? Shall we attend his or
7 her wedding to a same-sex partner? Do we celebrate births and adoptions of same-sex
8 partners and unions of friends, family members, and co-workers? In making these
9 decisions we want to be fully faithful to the Scriptures in our words, actions, and attitudes,
10 while at the same time expressing genuine love and acceptance to our member or friend
11 who experiences SSA. This can be a challenge.

12
13 Perhaps the place to begin is with our mental framework. We must be rigorously gracious.
14 We must communicate love consistently to our loved ones, letting them know that nothing
15 they believe or do will ever quench our love for them. In fact, our love for them demands
16 that we urge them to make Jesus Christ Savior and Lord over every aspect of their lives so
17 that they may enjoy eternal life. We also want to continue to enjoy their company and be
18 involved in their lives. At the same time, they will need to be fair to us and understand that
19 our differences of belief and practice about sexual morality will mean that, at times, we will
20 be unable to participate with them in ways that would compromise our own convictions.
21 We should freely ask them to accept us in the same way that we strive to accept them. For
22 those who would say that any disagreement with their view of sexuality is inherently
23 hateful, we would beg to say that our love for the Lord and our love for others requires us
24 to obey the Scriptures and to encourage others to do the same, while we also are
25 committed to a common civic life in which all people who disagree are able to live
26 peaceably with mutual respect.³⁰

27
28 What are ways that our participation in the lives of LGBTQ family and friends could
29 compromise our commitment to Christ? In general, anything that communicates, either
30 explicitly or implicitly, support for sexual immorality of any sort would be inappropriate
31 for the Christian. Surely, there is room for discussion and debate on how to handle various
32 situations pastorally, but generally speaking, we advise the following.

33
34 When people are old enough to be on their own, their parents, siblings, and friends should
35 not presume to have the authority over their moral decisions; but neither should the ones
36 in immoral relationships seek to manipulate the moral decisions of their parents, siblings,
37 or friends. It is the Christian's moral obligation to respond appropriately to the sin in other
38 people's lives, and the closer our relationship to the one sinning, the greater the obligation.
39 If, for example, a family member chooses to date someone of the same sex, we must love
40 both the family member and his or her partner with Christian love, but we should be sure
41 to lovingly and appropriately communicate to our family member our disagreement with
42 the romantic, sexual, and marital aspects of the relationship and not participate in any way
43 that would signal our approval of it. If a family member chooses to publicly celebrate their
44 union with someone of the same sex, once again we would love both people in the

³⁰ Romans 12:18.

1 relationship but should strongly consider excluding ourselves from participating in the
2 immoral union, including attending or participating as a guest in the wedding ceremony. In
3 no way should we officiate the service or actively give sanction to the union (The same
4 would be true of a wedding involving heterosexual individuals who were not biblically
5 suited for marriage.) We cannot endorse the union after the ceremony, for example, in
6 allowing them to share the same bed while hosting them in our home (any more than we
7 would allow an unmarried heterosexual couple to do so). Making these detailed decisions is
8 very challenging, subject to misunderstanding, and must be done within the context of
9 clearly affirming our love for all involved and so these decisions are not made lightly or
10 done thoughtlessly.

11
12 We know the pain of loved ones holding our relationships hostage, demanding affirmation of
13 their lifestyle as a condition for continued contact. We lament the effects sin has on our
14 relationships and encourage followers of Jesus to remain faithful: Do not be the one to cut off
15 contact and do not allow relational extortion compel you to abandon your stated belief in
16 Christ's teachings. Remind your loved ones who experience SSA that you are always ready to
17 have a relationship with them. And above all, remember through the pain that our hope is in
18 Christ and his kingdom, which is good and endures forever.³¹

19
20 When minor children or youth express same-sex desires or tendencies, we should listen
21 carefully and sympathetically to their feelings and experiences. We should thank them for
22 sharing with us and reassure them that we shall always love and support them. At the
23 appropriate moments, we should also help them understand what God's Word says to all of
24 us—that we are to be chaste in all our relationships (with boys *and* girls) and remain
25 celibate unless married to a biblically suited spouse. Our children may experience transient
26 SSA as well as gender dysphoria which may be more related to developmental issues,
27 assertion of independence, peer influences, and other factors. Discerning this requires
28 patience and wisdom. But if children and/or youth are convinced of the persistence of their
29 SSA and show no interest in potential opposite sex romance, we should help them to
30 understand that they can live very faithful Christian lives as single persons. We would
31 probably also advise them to disclose their struggle only to those who would edify them
32 and to demonstrate modesty and restraint in their public lives. And we should pledge our
33 lifelong support to walk with them in their weakness just as we hope to receive from them
34 in our own.

35

36 *Our Counsel to Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries*

37

38 It is incumbent upon the local church to minister faithfully in situations involving LGBTQ
39 issues. We advise church Sessions explicitly to endorse the EPC "Position Paper on Human
40 Sexuality" as well as this Pastoral Letter to provide a general theological, ethical, and
41 pastoral framework for its ministry. While we welcome anyone to attend our churches and
42 to participate in our various ministries, it is essential that our churches admit into their
43 membership and into positions of leadership only those who have a credible testimony of
44 repentant faith in Jesus Christ. People who knowingly and persistently adopt, practice, or

³¹ Matthew 10:35-37; Mark 10:28-30.

1 promote sexual behaviors or desires in direct contradiction to biblical teaching and show
2 no evidence of repentance do not have such a credible testimony.³² Such persons are to be
3 loved and ministered to with pastoral care, but they are not eligible for either church
4 membership or ordination.

5
6 People who struggle with temptation and may, at times, sin sexually, but who grieve those
7 failures, show ongoing repentance, and are progressing in sanctification, may be welcomed
8 as members. They are to be shepherded pastorally and held accountable as they grow in
9 holiness. When same-sex couples who are legally married become believers and desire to
10 join the local church and baptize their children, each case must be carefully assessed; but
11 we believe that those who genuinely receive Jesus Christ will want their repentance to be
12 more notable than their sin.³³ This would mean that a same-sex couple who commits
13 themselves to following Christ would come to acknowledge their union was contrary to His
14 will, would take steps to renounce all inappropriate conduct, and seek to remove even the
15 appearance of evil.³⁴ In the case of children, when the parents become believers, one of the
16 parents would assume parental custody and the other would continue to be an influence
17 for good in the children’s lives. Only the parent who assumed custody of the child would
18 present the child for baptism and assume the parental vows.

19
20 In examining candidates for membership on Boards of Deacons, Sessions, and in
21 Presbyteries, we believe examining courts should exercise their authority in a spirit of
22 gentleness, compassion, and understanding. The courts of the church should always listen
23 charitably and consider carefully the testimony of those who experience SSA and are
24 seeking office in the church. We urge Sessions to consult with the Ministerial Committee of
25 their Presbytery when considering candidates to the Board of Deacons or Session who
26 experience SSA.

27
28 All courts will do well to ensure that candidates are “above reproach, sound in the faith,
29 wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things.” (BoG 9-3.A-B) The Scriptures teach
30 that “an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or
31 quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good,
32 self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as
33 taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke
34 those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:7-9)

35
36 Only those who conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their
37 descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct should be considered
38 for leadership. (WLC 138-139)³⁵ If candidates for office have disclosed that they experience
39 SSA, the examining elders must first confirm that the candidates have a long record of
40 living chaste sexual lives in their identity, behavior, desires, and attitudes. Ordination is not

³² Church Sessions are already responsible to exercise this type of discernment under G.8, including “The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ” (G.8-2C).

³³ Luke 19:1-10.

³⁴ Ephesians 5:7, 11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

³⁵ G.9-3A-B; D.1-6C.

1 appropriate while habitual or unresolved sexual sin persists; discernment on the part of
2 the court should be exercised in light of repentance, fruit of sanctification, and proven
3 character over time. Courts may consider for ordination candidates whose ongoing
4 experience of SSA is a corrupted sin nature unindulged, repented of, and mortified; a
5 temptation not entered into, but rather fled; a weakness not embraced, but rather mourned
6 as they rest upon the grace and strength of the Lord.

7
8 All Sessions and Presbyteries exercise judgment in how they examine candidates. After
9 confirming the proven record of chastity for candidates who experience SSA, we believe it
10 wise and helpful for ordaining courts to ask question of the candidates in the following
11 areas: 1) their grasp of their identity in Christ as new creatures in communion with the
12 Lord, 2) their ethical views concerning homosexual desires and practice, 3) their
13 experience of God’s transforming grace in their own sexual lives and affections, along with
14 progress they have made in their walk with Christ, 4) their manner of counseling and
15 discipling others who struggle with sexual sin and dysfunction, 5) their rationale regarding
16 their suitability, as those experiencing SSA, to serve as officers within the church, 6) the
17 mistakes they have made and the lessons they have learned in the past in this area, and 7)
18 their ability and strategy, as those who experience SSA, whether single or married, to
19 appropriately model godly relationships. These are not the only questions that may be
20 asked, but are recommendations we believe will help ordaining courts. Similar questions
21 should not only be asked of candidates who experience SSA, but of all candidates for church
22 office.

23
24 Church officers who experience SSA must continually honor their ordination vow to
25 promise subjection to their fellow presbyters. When Sessions and Presbyteries provide
26 wise guidance on how officers within their jurisdictions publicly describe their experience
27 of SSA and how they shepherd others who experience SSA, those officers should have a
28 posture of humility, seeking the peace, unity, and edification of the Church.

30 **Recommended Reading**

31
32 Allberry, Sam. *Is God Anti-Gay?: and Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible, and*
33 *Same-Sex Attraction*. Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2015.

34 Barr, Adam T. and Ron Citlau. *Compassion Without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to*
35 *Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House,
36 2014

37 Beeke, Joel R and Paul M. Smalley. *One Man & One Woman: Marriage and Same-Sex*
38 *Relations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016.

39 Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway,
40 2023.

41 ———. *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity*
42 *and Union with Christ*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015.

- 1 ————*The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: Expanded Edition*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown
2 & Covenant Publications, 2014.
- 3 Citlau, Ron. *Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted: Biblical Direction for Friends, Family Members,*
4 *and Those Struggling with Homosexuality*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2017.
- 5 Cook, Becket. *A Change of Affection: A Gay Man’s Incredible Story of Redemption*. Nashville,
6 TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019.
- 7 Dallas, Joe. *Speaking of Homosexuality: Discussing the Issues with Kindness and Clarity*. Grand
8 Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016.
- 9 Dallas, Joe and Nancy Heche, eds. *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding*
10 *Homosexuality. A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction*.
11 Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2010.
- 12 DeYoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* Wheaton, IL:
13 Crossway, 2015.
- 14 Fortson, S. Donald and Rollin G. Grams. *Unchanging Witness, The Consistent Christian*
15 *Teaching on Homosexuality in Scriptures and Tradition*. Nashville, TN: B&H
16 Academic, 2016.
- 17 Gagnon, Robert. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville, TN:
18 Abingdon, 2001.
- 19 Gilson, Rachel. *Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next*.
20 Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2020.
- 21 Gordon, Christopher. *The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality*. Greenville, SC:
22 Gospel Reformation Network, 2022.
- 23 Hayes, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, a*
24 *Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco, CA: Harper,
25 1996.
- 26 Hill, Wesley. *Washed and Waiting, Reflection on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*.
27 Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- 28 Jones, Stanley L. and Mark Yarhouse. *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the*
29 *Church’s Moral Debate*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- 30 Keller, Timothy. “The Bible and Same Sex Relationships: A Review Article.”
31 [www.redeemer.com/redeemer-](http://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article)
32 [report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article](http://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article), June 2015.
- 33 Lefebvre, Michael. *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant
34 Publications, 2012.

- 1 McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Does the Bible Affirm Same-Sex Relationships?: Examining 10 Claims*
2 *About Scripture and Sexuality*. Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2024.
- 3 McNeil, John J. "Homosexuality: Challenging the Church to Grow." In *Homosexuality in the*
4 *Church*, ed Jeffrey S. Siker. Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox, 1995. xx–53.
- 5 Owen, John. *Sin and Temptation*. Vol 15 of *The Complete Works of John Owen*, edited by Kelly
6 M. Kopic and Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024.
- 7 Perry, Jackie Hill. *Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and Who God Has Always Been*.
8 Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2018.
- 9 Pinson, Cooper. *Helping Students with Same-Sex Attraction: Guidance for Parents and Youth*
10 *Leaders*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017.
- 11 Roberts, Matthew P W. *Pride: Identity and the Worship of Self*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian
12 Focus, 2023.
- 13 Schmidt, Thomas. *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate*.
14 Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
- 15 Shaw, Ed. *Same Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life*.
16 Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- 17 Stott, John. *Same-Sex Partnerships?: A Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1998.
- 18 Via, Dan O. and Robert A. J. Gagnon. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis,
19 MN: Fortress Press, 2003.
- 20 Yarhouse, Mark. *Talking to Kids About Gender Identity: A Roadmap for Christian Compassion,*
21 *Civility, and Conviction*. Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2023.
- 22 ———. *Homosexuality and the Christian*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- 23 Yarhouse, Mark and Julia Sadusky. *Emerging Sexual Identities: Navigating the Landscape*
24 *with Today's Children*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2025.
- 25 Yarhouse, Mark and Olya Zaporozhets. *When Children Come Out: A Guide for Christian*
26 *Parents*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2022.
- 27 Yuan, Christopher and Angela Yuan. *Out of the Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A*
28 *Broken Mother's Search for Hope*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2011.

Current Position Paper

March 5th, 2026 Proposal

Human Sexuality

Human Sexuality

In a time when views of human sexuality and marriage are rapidly changing, we believe it is necessary and helpful to state clearly and compassionately to the church and the world our beliefs about God’s design for human sexuality. We wish to do so with love toward all as we attempt to imitate God’s love for us.¹ We long for the Church as well as society to conform to biblical standards of sexuality; but our ultimate desire is that, through the gospel, all may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and receive His gift of eternal life. We also know that, having come to believe in Him, we enjoy His blessing by walking with Him according to His Word. We believe the Bible to be God’s Word and that to understand and obey His will leads to the greatest human flourishing.² What follows is what we believe the Scriptures teach and the Christian Church has held to be true since the time of the apostles, and what therefore holds the greatest prospects for human happiness and well-being, even as we strive and long for a time when God will make all things new.³

In a time when views of human sexuality and marriage are rapidly changing, we believe it is necessary and helpful to state clearly and compassionately to the **Church** and the world our beliefs about God’s design for human sexuality. We wish to do so with love toward all as we attempt to imitate God’s love for us.⁴¹ We long for the Church as well as society to conform to biblical standards of sexuality; but our ultimate desire is that, through the gospel, all may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and receive His gift of eternal life. We also know that, having come to believe in Him, we enjoy His blessing by walking with Him according to His Word. We believe the Bible to be God’s Word and that to understand and obey His will leads to the greatest human flourishing.⁴² What follows is what we believe the Scriptures teach and the Christian Church has held to be true since the time of the apostles, and what therefore holds the greatest prospects for human happiness and well-being, even as we strive and long for a time when God will make all things new.⁴³

The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality

Human sexuality is a gift from God. **Being made in the**

The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality

All men and women are made in the image of God and

¹ 1 John 4:10; John 15:12; 1 John 3:10; Ephesians 5:1-2

² Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4

³ Revelation 21:5

⁴¹ 1 John 4:10; John 15:12; 1 John 3:10; Ephesians 5:1-2

⁴² Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4

⁴³ Revelation 21:5

likeness of God⁴ as male and female, we reflect the loving complementarity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Scriptures present a grand vision of husband and wife **mirroring the intimate fellowship of the Trinity** through union with a covenant partner who is both similar (human) and different (opposite **gender**), leading to fruitful procreation of humanity. In this profound mystery, we discover God's purposes for our sexuality and His will for how we are to express our sexuality.⁵

At the fall of humankind, recorded in Genesis 3, we began to distort and misuse the gifts of God to our own demise, but through His gracious redemptive work in Jesus Christ, God is leading us from brokenness and rebellion to a full and beautiful restoration of our relationship with Him and of our human dignity and purpose.⁶

human sexuality is a gift from God. The Scriptures present a grand vision of husband and wife **who are to have intimate fellowship through union with a covenant partner who is both similar (human) and different (opposite **sex**) leading to fruitful procreation of humanity.** In this profound mystery, we discover God's purposes for our sexuality and **how He wills it to be expressed in our union and communion with Him.**⁴⁴

The fall of humankind, recorded in Genesis 3, corrupted our nature, and this corrupted nature made us utterly indisposed, disabled, opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.⁴⁵ We began to distort and misuse the gifts of God to our own demise and entered into the conditions of sin and misery: we desire the good things the wrong way and also desire the wrong things. All of our sinful transgressions emerge from this corrupted nature, and this corruption of our hearts, along with all its impulses, is itself sin.⁴⁶ The Fall also broke our world and everything in it, including our relationships, bodies, and affections, such that we suffer by facing many weaknesses and temptations to sin.⁴⁷

⁴ Genesis 1:27

⁵ Genesis 2:18-25; Song of Songs; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

⁶ John 10:10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8

⁴⁴ Genesis 2:18-25; Song of Songs; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

⁴⁵ **Genesis 6:5; 8:21; John 3:6; Romans 3:10-19; 5:6; 7:18; 8:7; Colossians 1:21; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.3-4; Westminster Larger Catechism 28**

⁴⁶ **Matthew 15:19; Ephesians 2:2-3; James 1:14; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.4-5**

⁴⁷ **Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Romans 8:20; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.6; Westminster Larger Catechism 23; 27-28**

Because God made us and redeems us, He alone has sovereign authority to define us and to regulate our sexual practice. **[[PARAGRAPH BREAK INSERTED HERE FOR CLARITY]]**

Therefore, because God made us and redeems us, He alone has sovereign authority to define us and to regulate **the right ordering of our desires and** our sexual practice, **and empowers us to align with His good will.**

Our Father does this through the gracious redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ, and the provision of His Holy Spirit, by which He leads us from brokenness and rebellion to a full and beautiful restoration of our relationship with Him and of our human dignity and purpose.⁴⁸ **In our union with Christ, our transgressions are pardoned, our corrupted nature is being mortified; we are enabled by His Spirit to recognize, confess, repent, and mortify our sins and flee temptation.⁴⁹ By faith we enjoy now a taste of the consummation for God's purpose: the experience of union and communion with God through the redemption of Jesus and indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the children of the Father. This present inbreaking of the kingdom of God into our lives brings restoration from our condition of sin which includes both an affirmation of marriage and sex along with the validation of the single life. Redeemed sexuality is grounded in God's good creation and looks forward to its eschatological consummation in union and communion with God.**

Until Christ returns, the corrupt nature remains in the regenerate during this life and while pardoned, the corruption itself and all motions proceeding from it

⁴⁸ John 10:10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8

⁴⁹ **Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4**

We, therefore, must resist every temptation and renounce every attempt to subvert God's purposes and His commandments concerning our sexuality. **[[PARAGRAPH BREAK INSERTED HERE FOR CLARITY]]**

remain truly and properly sin.⁵⁰ As our king, Jesus corrects us in our sin and supports us in our temptations and sufferings.⁵¹ Both our corrupted hearts and our fallen world tempt us to sin: being tempted is an appeal to engage the desires our hearts to commit sin.⁵² We, therefore, must continually repent of our sin, resist every temptation, and renounce every attempt to subvert God's purposes and His commandments concerning our sexuality. We must not enter into temptation, but rather repent of our corrupted hearts, sinful lusts, and indulging temptation.⁵³ We have been made alive in Christ by His Spirit, by whom Christ sanctifies us and raises our affections to Himself; therefore we must keep in step with the Spirit, mortifying the passions of the flesh.⁵⁴ We acknowledge that any sexual desires apart from God's design for marriage are sinful, arise from our sinfully corrupted nature, and we must repent of them all. We also acknowledge that any temptations to fulfill sexual desire apart from God's design for marriage must be resisted, regardless of how persistent or seemingly innate the temptation or desire is.

Confession of Sin

⁵⁰ Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:5, 7-8, 14, 17-18; Galatians 5:17; 1 John 1:8-10; James 3:2; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.5; 13.1-3; This is the Reformed doctrine of 'concupiscence'.

⁵¹ Psalm 103:13-14; Isaiah 63:9; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 12:6-7; Westminster Larger Catechism 45

⁵² Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Luke 17:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-15; James 1:13-15; Westminster Confession of Faith 5.5; 17.3; 18.4; Westminster Larger Catechism 78-79; 81; 195

⁵³ Matthew 6:13; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46; Romans 6:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Westminster Larger Catechism 167; 195

⁵⁴ Romans 6:2-5; Galatians 5:16-25; Colossians 3:1-12; Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1-3; Westminster Larger Catechism 53; 105; 138-139

At the same time, we, as evangelical Presbyterians, readily and sorrowfully confess our manifold violations of His Word: as a people, we have engaged in premarital sex, adultery, ungodly divorce, and sexual lusts of every sort, not only before coming to faith in Christ, but also afterward. As churches, we have at times sanctioned unbiblical marriages, violating the expressed will of God revealed in the Scriptures; and we sometimes have self-righteously condemned others for their sexual sins while committing our own. We stand in need of God's forgiveness and of His power to live holy lives. Our churches desperately need revival and a humble return to godly sexual practice. And so, with humble and repentant hearts, we return to the Lord, and we invite those both inside and outside the Church to join us in seeking God's blessing in our sexual lives.⁷

We believe that the fundamental problems with most contemporary views of sexuality are, first, that the focus is limited to individual pleasure, relational intimacy, and self-fulfillment; **and**, second, that biblical marriage is rejected as the exclusive context for sexual intimacy. While the Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its primary purpose is to glorify God.⁸ Whether young or old, male or female, single or married, **whether attracted to the same, the opposite, or both**

We, as evangelical Presbyterians, readily and sorrowfully confess our manifold violations of His Word: as a people, we have engaged in premarital sex, adultery, ungodly divorce, and sexual lusts of every sort, not only before coming to faith in Christ, but also afterward. As churches, we have at times sanctioned unbiblical marriages, violating the expressed will of God revealed in the Scriptures; and we sometimes have self-righteously condemned others for their sexual sins while committing our own. We stand in need of God's forgiveness and power to live holy lives. Our churches desperately need revival and a humble return to godly sexual practice. And so, with humble and repentant hearts, we return to the Lord, and we invite those both inside and outside the Church to join us in seeking God's blessing in our sexual lives.⁵⁵

We believe that the fundamental problems with most contemporary views of sexuality are, first, that the focus is limited to individual pleasure, relational intimacy, and self-fulfillment; second, that biblical marriage is rejected as the exclusive context for sexual intimacy. While the Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its primary purpose is to glorify God.⁵⁶ Whether young or old, male or female, single or married, all humans are obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to God's design **as** revealed in the

⁷ Psalm 85:4-7; Matthew 7:4-5; Acts 3:19-20

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Philippians 1:20

⁵⁵ Psalm 85:4-7; Matthew 7:4-5; Acts 3:19-20

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Philippians 1:20

sexes, all humans are obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to God's design,⁷ revealed in the Scriptures.

We desire to adhere fully to biblical sexuality. Out of love we share with others the message of God's judgment upon all forms of sexual immorality.⁹ We also believe that there is no place for any form of cruelty, hate or denigration of those who either disagree with these positions or hold to other positions. We unequivocally condemn all injustices, sinful intimidation, and physical violence perpetrated against anyone because of sexual attraction or practice.

The Single Life

The New Testament commends the single life.¹⁰ As followers of Jesus, we are bound in spiritual union with Him as Bridegroom, in Whom we are to be complete and content.¹¹ By expressing our maleness or femaleness, even apart from romantic relationships, we enrich human community and contribute to the well-being of society. Single men and women are also given the opportunity to serve the Lord with undivided devotion. They are free, in a particular way, to dedicate their entire lives to the Lord and find their greatest fulfillment in pleasing Him. This

Scriptures.

We desire to adhere fully to biblical sexuality. Out of love we **remind ourselves and** share with others the message of God's judgment upon all forms of sexual immorality.⁵⁷ We also believe that there is no place for any form of cruelty, hate or denigration of those who either disagree with these positions or hold to other positions. We unequivocally condemn all injustices, sinful intimidation, and physical violence perpetrated against anyone because of sexual attraction or practice.

The Single Life

The New Testament commends the single life.⁵⁸ As followers of Jesus, we are bound in spiritual union with Him as Bridegroom, in Whom we are to be complete and content.⁵⁹ By expressing our maleness or femaleness, even apart from romantic relationships, we enrich human community and contribute to the well-being of society. Single men and women are also given the opportunity to serve the Lord with undivided devotion. They are free, in a particular way, to dedicate their entire lives to the Lord and find their greatest fulfillment in pleasing Him. This

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 21:8; 22:15

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-35

¹¹ John 15:5; Ephesians 5:25, 32; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 21:8; 22:15

⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-35

⁵⁹ John 15:5; Ephesians 5:25, 32; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

was true for our Lord Jesus and for the Apostle Paul, who exemplified and elevated the godly single life. God intends both married and single men and women to live in vibrant community together, rather than isolation and loneliness. In this sacred community of deep and committed friendships, we encourage single persons to live out loving, holy, celibate lives. We, in the EPC, encourage all of our churches to nurture holy and missional community among and with single members.

The Married Life

When God created us male and female, He also instituted the ordinance of marriage in which one man and one woman are bound together for life in a solemn covenant, which beautifully illustrates God's covenantal relationship with His chosen people.¹² God directs His people who marry to wed only fellow believers—those who trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation and have joined His Church.¹³ It is within the covenant of marriage alone that God—for His own glory, the mutual encouragement of the spouses, procreation, the strengthening of the family, and the welfare of humankind—has instructed husbands and wives to engage in regular, intimate sexual love.¹⁴ In this **uniquely sexual** relationship, the married couple seeks to remember, celebrate, and model Christ's love for His

was true for our Lord Jesus and for the Apostle Paul, who exemplified and elevated the godly single life. God intends both married and single men and women to live in vibrant community together, rather than isolation and loneliness. In this sacred community of deep and committed friendships, we encourage single persons to live out loving, holy, celibate lives. We in the EPC encourage all our churches to nurture holy and missional community among and with single members.

The Married Life

When God created us male and female, He also instituted the ordinance of marriage in which one man and one woman are bound together for life in a solemn covenant, which beautifully illustrates God's covenantal relationship with His chosen people.⁶⁰ **God's design for marriage and sex in creation is affirmed by Christ, and** God directs His people who marry to wed only fellow believers—those who trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation and have joined His Church.⁶¹ It is within the covenant of marriage alone that God—for His own glory, the mutual encouragement of the spouses, procreation, the strengthening of the family, and the welfare of humankind—has instructed husbands and wives to engage in regular, intimate sexual love.⁶² In this

¹² Genesis 2:23-25; Isaiah 61:10-62:5; Matthew 19:3-12

¹³ Malachi 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴ Proverbs 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

⁶⁰ Genesis 2:23-25; Isaiah 61:10-62:5; Matthew 19:3-12

⁶¹ Malachi 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14

⁶² Proverbs 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Church and His Church's devotion to her Lord and to serve one another with godly affection.¹⁵

A Call to Holiness

We believe God has called us to live holy lives.¹⁶ The Christian believer's body is a temple of God's Spirit;¹⁷ therefore rather than stealing sexual privileges from one another outside of marriage, we are called to edify one another in multiple ways that we may all become more like Christ. Those who are married must avoid every temptation that would diminish the loving faithfulness they vowed in their marriage covenant. Those who are unmarried, **regardless of sexual attraction**, must seek to honor God through diligently avoiding temptation, restraining ungodly sexual impulses, focusing their energies on serving Christ and neighbor, and eagerly anticipating the new heavens and the new earth, when all things will be restored and every godly human longing beautifully fulfilled.¹⁸ Those who find themselves desiring to be a person of the opposite gender face painful emotions and weighty consequences. With heartfelt

relationship **for which sex is uniquely reserved**, the married couple seeks to remember, celebrate, and model Christ's love for His Church and His Church's devotion to her Lord and to serve one another with godly affection.⁶³

A Call to Holiness

We believe God has called us to live holy lives.⁶⁴ The Christian believer's body is a temple of God's Spirit;⁶⁵ therefore rather than stealing sexual privileges from one another outside of marriage, we are called to edify one another in multiple ways that we may all become more like Christ. Those who are married must avoid every temptation that would diminish the loving faithfulness they vowed in their marriage covenant. Those who are unmarried must seek to honor God through diligently avoiding temptation, restraining ungodly sexual impulses, focusing their energies on serving Christ and neighbor, and eagerly anticipating the new heavens and the new earth, when all things will be restored and every godly human longing beautifully fulfilled.⁶⁶ Those who find themselves desiring to be a person of the opposite **sex or gender** face painful emotions and weighty consequences. With heartfelt sympathy and a deep desire to love and

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:25-33

¹⁶ Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:3-5

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁸ Psalm 16:11; Revelation 19:6-9

⁶³ Ephesians 5:25-33

⁶⁴ Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:3-5

⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

⁶⁶ Psalm 16:11; Revelation 19:6-9

sympathy and a deep desire to love and encourage them in their circumstances, we believe they must find their contentment in Christ alone, accepting His wise and gracious providence, and looking to Him for strength to glorify Him and to serve his or her neighbor through the **gender** given at conception.¹⁹

It is encouraging to remember that our Lord Jesus **suffered every human temptation without sinning**²⁰ and that God always provides His people a way of escape from every sin.²¹ Unrepentant sinful behavior **is** incompatible with the confession of Jesus as Lord required of all members of the EPC. Additionally, it is required of ordained officers in the EPC that they believe, practice, and teach the moral standards contained in the Scriptures and Constitution of the EPC and reflected in this position paper.

encourage them in their circumstances, we believe **all people** must find their contentment in Christ alone, accepting His wise and gracious providence, and looking to Him for strength to glorify Him and to serve his or her neighbor through the **sex** given at conception.⁶⁷

It is encouraging to remember that our Lord Jesus **sympathizes with us in our weaknesses because he both suffered when tempted and was tempted in every respect like us, yet without sin.**⁶⁸ **Extended seasons of bodily weakness and sexual temptation may weaken our sense of God's grace and assurance of salvation, yet God's Spirit never abandons his children, and our Father** always provides His people a way of escape from every sin **and temptation.**⁶⁹ Unrepentant sinful behavior **and unrepentant lusts are** incompatible with the confession of Jesus as Lord required of all members of the EPC. Additionally, it is required of ordained officers in the EPC that they believe, practice, and teach the moral standards contained in the Scriptures and Constitution of the EPC, **which are** reflected in this position paper.

¹⁹ We understand that in rare cases, physiological gender ambiguity at birth calls for special care and wisdom.

²⁰ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16

²¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13

⁶⁷ We understand that in rare cases, physiological gender ambiguity at birth calls for special care and wisdom.

⁶⁸ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16; **Westminster Larger Catechism 48**

⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:13; **Philippians 2:12-13; Westminster Larger Catechism 81**

Recovering from Sexual Brokenness

Because of universal human corruption emanating from the fall of Adam and Eve, we are all broken sexually in one or more ways and to varying degrees.²² We have all sinned. While we call upon fellow sinners everywhere to repent of their sins,²³ ~~as followers of Christ we are also committed not to condemn others for their brokenness—their sexual attractions, sexual dysfunctions, or sexual addictions.~~²⁴ Since we all are disoriented by sin in one form or another, it is right and good for us to live in continual personal and corporate repentance, humbly seeking God's help for ourselves and for our neighbor.²⁵ Through ~~repentance and~~ faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, we are forgiven all our sexual sins, washed from their impurity, and given the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy of the gospel, setting an example for the watching world and inviting them to join us in walking with Jesus.²⁶

Recovering from Sexual Brokenness

Because of universal human corruption emanating from the fall of Adam and Eve, we are all broken sexually in one or more ways and to varying degrees.⁷⁰ We have all **sinned, live in a world full of sin and temptation, and yet have been saved by the sheer grace of God in Christ. Therefore,** while we call upon fellow sinners everywhere to repent of their sins,⁷¹ **we must do so in a spirit of gentleness⁷², acknowledging** it is right and good for us to live in continual personal and corporate repentance, humbly seeking God's help for ourselves and for our neighbor.⁷³ Through faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, we are forgiven all our sexual sins, washed from their impurity, and given the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy of the gospel setting an example for the watching world and inviting them to join us in walking with Jesus.⁷⁴

Those in and out of the Church struggling with various

²² Romans 3:22b-23

²³ Acts 17:30

²⁴ Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:10

²⁶ Romans 8:1ff.; 1 Peter 2:9-12

⁷⁰ Romans 3:22b-23

⁷¹ Acts 17:30

⁷² Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1; **Galatians 6:1-2**

⁷³ 2 Corinthians 7:10

⁷⁴ Romans 8:1ff.; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Those in and out of the Church struggling with various forms of sexual disorientation or gender dysphoria should **experience from God's people a deep desire to identify with them in their struggles, to walk lovingly with them,** and to invite them to join us in following the Lord. Together as a people, we must all seek healing for our own lives and for each other's lives, discovering what it means to be godly men and women in the circumstances decreed by His providence. Glorifying God in our sexual lives will at times entail suffering or persecution of various sorts, but, by God's empowering grace, we aspire to obey Him with joy.²⁷

The Ministry of the Church

The Church belongs to God.²⁸ He called us out of the dominion of darkness with its sin and degradation into the glorious light of His love.²⁹ He has called us to reflect His glory by displaying His character and proclaiming His Word to ourselves and the world. As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves. To do otherwise would be a failure of love.

forms of sexual disorientation or gender dysphoria should **find God's people ready to walk lovingly** with them in their struggles and to invite them to join us in following the Lord. Together as a people, we must all seek healing for our own lives and for each other's lives, discovering what it means to be godly men and women in the circumstances decreed by His providence. Glorifying God in our sexual lives will at times entail suffering or persecution of various sorts, but, by God's empowering grace, we aspire to obey Him with joy.⁷⁵

The Ministry of the Church

The Church belongs to God.⁷⁶ He called us out of the dominion of darkness with its sin and degradation into the glorious light of His love.⁷⁷ He has called us to reflect His glory by displaying His character and proclaiming His Word to ourselves and the world. As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves. To do otherwise would be a failure of love.

²⁷ Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:2-4

²⁸ 1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

²⁹ Colossians 1:13; John 12:46, 1 Peter 2:9-10

⁷⁵ Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:2-4

⁷⁶ 1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

⁷⁷ Colossians 1:13; John 12:46, 1 Peter 2:9-10

<p>We will strive by God’s grace to discipline our personal lives and our local churches in accordance with God’s Word. God helping us, we shall continue, within our churches and in the public arena, to teach against and to refuse to condone or participate in any sinful form of sexual practice³⁰—including sexual abuse,³¹ pornography,³² sexual lust,³³ extra-marital sex,³⁴ adultery,³⁵ polygamy,³⁶ unbiblical divorce and remarriage,³⁷ homosexual conduct,³⁸ same-sex union and marriage,³⁹ and gender reassignment.⁴⁰ At the same time, we resolve to continue to love those who have</p>	<p>We will strive by God’s grace to discipline our personal lives and our local churches in accordance with God’s Word. God helping us, we shall continue, within our churches and in the public arena, to teach against and to refuse to condone or participate in any sinful form of sexual practice⁷⁸—including sexual abuse,⁷⁹ pornography,⁸⁰ sexual lust,⁸¹ extra-marital sex,⁸² adultery,⁸³ polygamy,⁸⁴ unbiblical divorce and remarriage,⁸⁵ homosexual conduct,⁸⁶ same-sex union and marriage,⁸⁷ and gender reassignment.⁸⁸ At the same time, we resolve to continue to love those who have</p>
---	---

³⁰ Romans 13:13, 14; Ephesians 5:3

³¹ Deuteronomy 22:25-27; Ephesians 5:28-31

³² Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 8:5-13; Ephesians 2:3

³³ 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5; Colossians 3:5

³⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:6

³⁵ Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22; Proverbs 6:32; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9

³⁶ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5; 1 Timothy 3:2

³⁷ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

For more, see the EPC “Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage.”

³⁸ Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7

³⁹ Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 1:32; 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:11-13

⁷⁸ Romans 13:13, 14; Ephesians 5:3

⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 22:25-27; Ephesians 5:28-31

⁸⁰ Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 8:5-13; Ephesians 2:3

⁸¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5; Colossians 3:5

⁸² 1 Thessalonians 4:6

⁸³ Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22; Proverbs 6:32; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9

⁸⁴ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5; 1 Timothy 3:2

⁸⁵ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

For more, see the EPC “Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage.”

⁸⁶ Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7

⁸⁷ Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 1:32; 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:11-13

<p>committed these sins and for suffered from them. And we shall wait with eager longing for the day of our Savior's return, when all shall be made right with us and the world. In the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior, we tenderly welcome all—regardless of their beliefs or lifestyles—to attend our churches. Further, we invite into the membership of our churches all those who—bruised and broken by the fall—seek now, through sincere faith and genuine repentance, to live in obedience to the Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>To God's Name be glory forever.</p>	<p>committed these sins and suffered from them. And we shall wait with eager longing for the day of our Savior's return, when all shall be made right with us and the world. In the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior, we tenderly welcome all—regardless of their beliefs or lifestyles—to attend our churches. Further, we invite into the membership of our churches all those who—bruised and broken by the Fall—seek now, through sincere faith and genuine repentance, to live in obedience to the Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>To God's Name be glory forever.⁸⁹</p>
---	---

⁸⁹ The EPC's "Position Paper on Human Sexuality" was adopted by the 37th General Assembly in June, 2017 and then amended by the 46th General Assembly in June, 2026. The EPC previously held two other Position Papers, on Homosexuality (1986, amended 1994) and on The Sanctity of Marriage (2004). The 35th General Assembly in June, 2015 voted that the "position paper on homosexuality be revised and placed within a revised sanctity of marriage position paper addressing other like items like singleness." This "Position Paper on Human Sexuality" is the official update and revision of both the older "Position Paper on Homosexuality" and the "Position Paper on The Sanctity of Marriage". Those older editions are archived by the Office of the General Assembly.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34

Human Sexuality

In a time when views of human sexuality and marriage are rapidly changing, we believe it is necessary and helpful to state clearly and compassionately to the Church and the world our beliefs about God’s design for human sexuality. We wish to do so with love toward all as we attempt to imitate God’s love for us.¹ We long for the Church as well as society to conform to biblical standards of sexuality; but our ultimate desire is that, through the gospel, all may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and receive His gift of eternal life. We also know that, having come to believe in Him, we enjoy His blessing by walking with Him according to His Word. We believe the Bible to be God’s Word and that to understand and obey His will leads to the greatest human flourishing.² What follows is what we believe the Scriptures teach and the Christian Church has held to be true since the time of the apostles, and what therefore holds the greatest prospects for human happiness and well-being, even as we strive and long for a time when God will make all things new.³

The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality

All men and women are made in the image of God and human sexuality is a gift from God. The Scriptures present a grand vision of husband and wife who are to have intimate fellowship through union with a covenant partner who is both similar (human) and different (opposite sex) leading to fruitful procreation of humanity. In this profound mystery, we discover God’s purposes for our sexuality and how He wills it to be expressed in our union and communion with Him.⁴

The fall of humankind, recorded in Genesis 3, corrupted our nature, and this corrupted nature made us utterly indisposed, disabled, opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.⁵ We began to distort and misuse the gifts of God to our own demise and entered into the conditions of sin and misery: we desire the good things the wrong way and also desire the wrong things. All of our sinful transgressions emerge from this corrupted nature, and this corruption of our hearts, along with all its impulses, is itself sin.⁶ The Fall also broke our world and everything in it, including our relationships, bodies, and affections, such that we suffer by facing many weaknesses and temptations to sin.⁷

Therefore, because God made us and redeems us, He alone has sovereign authority to define us and to regulate the right ordering of our desires and our sexual practice, and

¹ 1 John 4:10; John 15:12; 1 John 3:10; Ephesians 5:1-2

² Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4

³ Revelation 21:5

⁴ Genesis 2:18-25; Song of Songs; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

⁵ Genesis 6:5; 8:21; John 3:6; Romans 3:10-19; 5:6; 7:18; 8:7; Colossians 1:21; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.3-4; Westminster Larger Catechism 28

⁶ Matthew 15:19; Ephesians 2:2-3; James 1:14; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.4-5

⁷ Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Romans 8:20; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.6; Westminster Larger Catechism 23; 27-28

1 empowers us to align with His good will.

2

3 Our Father does this through the gracious redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ, and the
4 provision of His Holy Spirit, by which He leads us from brokenness and rebellion to a full
5 and beautiful restoration of our relationship with Him and of our human dignity and
6 purpose.⁸ In our union with Christ, our transgressions are pardoned, our corrupted nature
7 is being mortified; we are enabled by His Spirit to recognize, confess, repent, and mortify
8 our sins and flee temptation.⁹ By faith we enjoy now a taste of the consummation for God's
9 purpose: the experience of union and communion with God through the redemption of
10 Jesus and indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the children of the Father. This present
11 inbreaking of the kingdom of God into our lives brings restoration from our condition of sin
12 which includes both an affirmation of marriage and sex along with the validation of the
13 single life. Redeemed sexuality is grounded in God's good creation and looks forward to its
14 eschatological consummation in union and communion with God.

15

16 Until Christ returns, the corrupt nature remains in the regenerate during this life and while
17 pardoned, the corruption itself and all motions proceeding from it remain truly and
18 properly sin.¹⁰ As our king, Jesus corrects us in our sin and supports us in our temptations
19 and sufferings.¹¹ Both our corrupted hearts and our fallen world tempt us to sin: being
20 tempted is an appeal to engage the desires our hearts to commit sin.¹² We, therefore, must
21 continually repent of our sin, resist every temptation, and renounce every attempt to
22 subvert God's purposes and His commandments concerning our sexuality. We must not
23 enter into temptation, but rather repent of our corrupted hearts, sinful lusts, and indulging
24 temptation.¹³ We have been made alive in Christ by His Spirit, by whom Christ sanctifies us
25 and raises our affections to Himself; therefore we must keep in step with the Spirit,
26 mortifying the passions of the flesh.¹⁴ We acknowledge that any sexual desires apart from
27 God's design for marriage are sinful, arise from our sinfully corrupted nature, and we must
28 repent of them all. We also acknowledge that any temptations to fulfill sexual desire apart
29 from God's design for marriage must be resisted, regardless of how persistent or seemingly
30 innate the temptation or desire is.

31

32 **Confession of Sin**

33 We, as evangelical Presbyterians, readily and sorrowfully confess our manifold violations

⁸ John 10:10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8

⁹ Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4

¹⁰ Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:5, 7-8, 14, 17-18; Galatians 5:17; 1 John 1:8-10; James 3:2; Westminster Confession of Faith 6.5; 13.1-3. This is the Reformed doctrine of 'concupiscence'.

¹¹ Psalm 103:13-14; Isaiah 63:9; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 12:6-7; Westminster Larger Catechism 45

¹² Matthew 18:7; Mark 14:38; Luke 17:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-15; James 1:13-15; Westminster Confession of Faith 5.5; 17.3; 18.4; Westminster Larger Catechism 78-79; 81; 195

¹³ Matthew 6:13; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46; Romans 6:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Westminster Larger Catechism 167; 195

¹⁴ Romans 6:2-5; Galatians 5:16-25; Colossians 3:1-12; Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1-3; Westminster Larger Catechism 53; 105; 138-139

1 of His Word: as a people, we have engaged in premarital sex, adultery, ungodly divorce,
2 and sexual lusts of every sort, not only before coming to faith in Christ, but also afterward.
3 As churches, we have at times sanctioned unbiblical marriages, violating the expressed
4 will of God revealed in the Scriptures; and we sometimes have self-righteously
5 condemned others for their sexual sins while committing our own. We stand in need of
6 God's forgiveness and power to live holy lives. Our churches desperately need revival and
7 a humble return to godly sexual practice. And so, with humble and repentant hearts, we
8 return to the Lord, and we invite those both inside and outside the Church to join us in
9 seeking God's blessing in our sexual lives.¹⁵

10
11 We believe that the fundamental problems with most contemporary views of sexuality are,
12 first, that the focus is limited to individual pleasure, relational intimacy, and self-fulfillment;
13 second, that biblical marriage is rejected as the exclusive context for sexual intimacy. While
14 the Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its primary
15 purpose is to glorify God.¹⁶ Whether young or old, male or female, single or married, all
16 humans are obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to
17 God's design as revealed in the Scriptures.

18
19 We desire to adhere fully to biblical sexuality. Out of love we remind ourselves and share
20 with others the message of God's judgment upon all forms of sexual immorality.¹⁷ We also
21 believe that there is no place for any form of cruelty, hate or denigration of those who
22 either disagree with these positions or hold to other positions. We unequivocally
23 condemn all injustices, sinful intimidation, and physical violence perpetrated against
24 anyone because of sexual attraction or practice.

25 26 **The Single Life**

27 The New Testament commends the single life.¹⁸ As followers of Jesus, we are bound in
28 spiritual union with Him as Bridegroom, in Whom we are to be complete and content.¹⁹
29 By expressing our maleness or femaleness, even apart from romantic relationships, we
30 enrich human community and contribute to the well-being of society. Single men and
31 women are also given the opportunity to serve the Lord with undivided devotion. They
32 are free, in a particular way, to dedicate their entire lives to the Lord and find their
33 greatest fulfillment in pleasing Him. This was true for our Lord Jesus and for the Apostle
34 Paul, who exemplified and elevated the godly single life. God intends both married and
35 single men and women to live in vibrant community together, rather than isolation and
36 loneliness. In this sacred community of deep and committed friendships, we encourage
37 single persons to live out loving, holy, celibate lives. We in the EPC encourage all our

¹⁵ Psalm 85:4-7; Matthew 7:4-5; Acts 3:19-20

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Philippians 1:20

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 21:8; 22:15

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-35

¹⁹ John 15:5; Ephesians 5:25, 32; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

1 churches to nurture holy and missional community among and with single members.

2

3 **The Married Life**

4 When God created us male and female, He also instituted the ordinance of marriage in
5 which one man and one woman are bound together for life in a solemn covenant, which
6 beautifully illustrates God’s covenantal relationship with His chosen people.²⁰ God’s
7 design for marriage and sex in creation is affirmed by Christ, and God directs His people
8 who marry to wed only fellow believers—those who trust in Jesus Christ alone for
9 salvation and have joined His Church.²¹ It is within the covenant of marriage alone that
10 God—for His own glory, the mutual encouragement of the spouses, procreation, the
11 strengthening of the family, and the welfare of humankind—has instructed husbands and
12 wives to engage in regular, intimate sexual love.²² In this relationship for which sex is
13 uniquely reserved, the married couple seeks to remember, celebrate, and model Christ’s
14 love for His Church and His Church’s devotion to her Lord and to serve one another with
15 godly affection.²³

16

17 **A Call to Holiness**

18 We believe God has called us to live holy lives.²⁴ The Christian believer’s body is a temple
19 of God’s Spirit;²⁵ therefore rather than stealing sexual privileges from one another outside
20 of marriage, we are called to edify one another in multiple ways that we may all become
21 more like Christ. Those who are married must avoid every temptation that would
22 diminish the loving faithfulness they vowed in their marriage covenant. Those who are
23 unmarried must seek to honor God through diligently avoiding temptation, restraining
24 ungodly sexual impulses, focusing their energies on serving Christ and neighbor, and
25 eagerly anticipating the new heavens and the new earth, when all things will be restored
26 and every godly human longing beautifully fulfilled.²⁶ Those who find themselves desiring
27 to be a person of the opposite sex or gender face painful emotions and weighty
28 consequences. With heartfelt sympathy and a deep desire to love and encourage them in
29 their circumstances, we believe all people must find their contentment in Christ alone,
30 accepting His wise and gracious providence, and looking to Him for strength to glorify
31 Him and to serve his or her neighbor through the sex given at conception.²⁷

32

33 It is encouraging to remember that our Lord Jesus sympathizes with us in our
34 weaknesses because he both suffered when tempted and was tempted in every respect

²⁰ Genesis 2:23-25; Isaiah 61:10-62:5; Matthew 19:3-12

²¹ Malachi 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14

²² Proverbs 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

²³ Ephesians 5:25-33

²⁴ Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:3-5

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

²⁶ Psalm 16:11; Revelation 19:6-9

²⁷ We understand that in rare cases, physiological gender ambiguity at birth calls for special care and wisdom.

1 like us, yet without sin.²⁸ Extended seasons of bodily weakness and sexual temptation
2 may weaken our sense of God’s grace and assurance of salvation, yet God’s Spirit never
3 abandons his children, and our Father always provides His people a way of escape from
4 every sin and temptation.²⁹ Unrepentant sinful behavior and unrepentant lusts are
5 incompatible with the confession of Jesus as Lord required of all members of the EPC.
6 Additionally, it is required of ordained officers in the EPC that they believe, practice, and
7 teach the moral standards contained in the Scriptures and Constitution of the EPC, which
8 are reflected in this position paper.

9

10 **Recovering from Sexual Brokenness**

11 Because of universal human corruption emanating from the fall of Adam and Eve, we are
12 all broken sexually in one or more ways and to varying degrees.³⁰ We have all sinned, live
13 in a world full of sin and temptation, and yet have been saved by the sheer grace of God in
14 Christ. Therefore, while we call upon fellow sinners everywhere to repent of their sins,³¹
15 we must do so in a spirit of gentleness³², acknowledging it is right and good for us to live
16 in continual personal and corporate repentance, humbly seeking God’s help for ourselves
17 and for our neighbor.³³ Through faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, we are
18 forgiven all our sexual sins, washed from their impurity, and given the power of the Holy
19 Spirit to live lives worthy of the gospel setting an example for the watching world and
20 inviting them to join us in walking with Jesus.³⁴

21

22 Those in and out of the Church struggling with various forms of sexual disorientation or
23 gender dysphoria should find God’s people ready to walk lovingly with them in their
24 struggles and to invite them to join us in following the Lord. Together as a people, we
25 must all seek healing for our own lives and for each other’s lives, discovering what it
26 means to be godly men and women in the circumstances decreed by His providence.
27 Glorifying God in our sexual lives will at times entail suffering or persecution of various
28 sorts, but, by God’s empowering grace, we aspire to obey Him with joy.³⁵

29

30 **The Ministry of the Church**

31 The Church belongs to God.³⁶ He called us out of the dominion of darkness with its sin
32 and degradation into the glorious light of His love.³⁷ He has called us to reflect His glory
33 by displaying His character and proclaiming His Word to ourselves and the world. As
34 repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to

²⁸ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16; Westminster Larger Catechism 48

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; Westminster Larger Catechism 81

³⁰ Romans 3:22b-23

³¹ Acts 17:30

³² Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1; Galatians 6:1-2

³³ 2 Corinthians 7:10

³⁴ Romans 8:1ff.; 1 Peter 2:9-12

³⁵ Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:2-4

³⁶ 1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

³⁷ Colossians 1:13; John 12:46, 1 Peter 2:9-10

1 teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen,
2 with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves. To do otherwise
3 would be a failure of love. We will strive by God’s grace to discipline our personal lives
4 and our local churches in accordance with God’s Word. God helping us, we shall
5 continue, within our churches and in the public arena, to teach against and to refuse to
6 condone or participate in any sinful form of sexual practice³⁸—including sexual abuse,³⁹
7 pornography,⁴⁰ sexual lust,⁴¹ extra-marital sex,⁴² adultery,⁴³ polygamy,⁴⁴ unbiblical
8 divorce and remarriage,⁴⁵ homosexual conduct,⁴⁶ same-sex union and marriage,⁴⁷ and
9 gender reassignment.⁴⁸ At the same time, we resolve to continue to love those who
10 have committed these sins and suffered from them. And we shall wait with eager
11 longing for the day of our Savior’s return, when all shall be made right with us and the
12 world. In the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior, we tenderly welcome all—
13 regardless of their beliefs or lifestyles—to attend our churches. Further, we invite into
14 the membership of our churches all those who—bruised and broken by the Fall—seek
15 now, through sincere faith and genuine repentance, to live in obedience to the
16 Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
17
18 To God’s Name be glory forever.⁴⁹

³⁸ Romans 13:13, 14; Ephesians 5:3

³⁹ Deuteronomy 22:25-27; Ephesians 5:28-31

⁴⁰ Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 8:5-13; Ephesians 2:3

⁴¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5; Colossians 3:5

⁴² 1 Thessalonians 4:6

⁴³ Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22; Proverbs 6:32; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9

⁴⁴ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5; 1 Timothy 3:2

⁴⁵ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

For more, see the EPC “Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage.”

⁴⁶ Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 1:32; 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:11-13

⁴⁹ The EPC’s “Position Paper on Human Sexuality” was adopted by the 37th General Assembly in June, 2017 and then amended by the 46th General Assembly in June, 2026. The EPC previously held two other Position Papers, on Homosexuality (1986, amended 1994) and on The Sanctity of Marriage (2004). The 35th General Assembly in June, 2015 voted that the “position paper on homosexuality be revised and placed within a revised sanctity of marriage position paper addressing other like items like singleness.” This “Position Paper on Human Sexuality” is the official update and revision of both the older “Position Paper on Homosexuality” and the “Position Paper on The Sanctity of Marriage.” Those older editions are archived by the Office of the General Assembly.