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## PD-1 Congregation, Covenants of Accountability, Councils of ECO, MAGs (Polity and Discipline Section 1.01)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved,** That the Constitution be amended in 1.01 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

### Proposed Language:

#### **1.01 The Congregation**

##### *1.0101 Nature and Purpose*

The Church is visible whenever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name. The congregation is composed of members of the body of Christ who have covenanted together to engage in the mission of God in their particular context, with Jesus Christ as Head. Each congregation should strive to be a tangible, if provisional, demonstration of the Kingdom of God. Congregations exist in a variety of forms yet have these ends in common: sharing the Good News of reconciliation to God in and through Jesus Christ, gathering people for divine worship, and nurturing relationships for spiritual accountability and mutual ministry, all the while ~~preparing~~ **making** disciples to be the sent people of God in the world.

##### *1.0102 Covenants of Accountability*

While believers **may** experience their membership in Christ's body in spontaneous and unstructured gatherings, they fulfill the Lord's purposes best when they covenant to fulfill the biblical vision of membership in particular congregations. These covenantal relationships provide the real-life context for the Holy Spirit's ongoing transformation of believers into spiritual maturity, ~~with the belief that these strong relationships by~~ **nurturing** understanding, encouragement, correction, and discipleship-in-mission.

Similarly, though congregations discover that the Holy Spirit leads them to network with a variety of other congregations in order to fulfill the Lord's purposes, they covenant with **other ECO** congregations to form a distinct expression of the Church universal. These covenantal relationships provide the context for the Holy Spirit's continual reformation of the Church into **a** more faithful and effective ~~participation~~ **participant** in God's mission. By submitting to the spiritual authority of their colleagues, leaders of congregations honor Christ as the Lord of the Church and welcome the opportunity for renewal and refinement.

##### *1.0103 Accountability to the Councils of ECO*

A "congregation," as used in this ~~Polity~~ *polity*, refers to a formally organized community which is chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided in this **Polity which is part**

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of the *Constitution* (as defined in 6.01), and which is governed by ~~the~~ *this Constitution* pursuant to a membership agreement entered into between such community and the presbytery. In becoming covenant partners (~~also called members~~) of the congregation, Christ-followers put themselves under the spiritual leadership of the Session and of wider councils of ECO.

1.0104 Accountability within Mission Affinity Groups

A congregation shall also be a part of a Mission Affinity Group, ~~in order~~ to increase accountability, provide encouragement, and ~~in order to~~ spur one another on toward love and good deeds. These Mission Affinity Groups are ordinarily ~~between 3-5~~ **comprised of three to five** congregations ~~organized who share around~~ similar ministry settings and contexts. These contexts ~~may~~ **may** include but are not limited to: size, geographic location, cultural or demographic similarities, or future ministry goals. Mission Affinity Groups consist of session-to-session relationships. They shall meet together face-to-face at **least** once a year. They are also encouraged to find ways to connect throughout the year. ~~In~~ **During** the annual meetings, each session should have at **least** 1/3 of the current elders in attendance. Mission Affinity Groups shall ~~begin with~~ **include** the questions provided in the Narrative on the Health of Congregations, but may appropriately individualize those questions for their particular context.

Mission Affinity Groups may be formed beyond presbytery boundaries. It is the responsibility of the presbytery to ensure that all congregations within its jurisdiction are appropriately participating in these groups.

**Rationale:** The changes to section 1.01 are mostly grammatical, clarifying words, or replacement language to keep the *Polity* consistent with ECO’s ministry development. The only substantive change is in the MAG section, which provides better language for the approach suggested with MAG.

**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

**PD-2 Definitions in ECO Constitution**

(Polity and Discipline 1.01)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended by adding the following before 1.01 and under – Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) in the beginning of ECO Polity.

**Proposed Wording:**

In ECO’s Constitution, “shall” is used to described that which is mandatory, “should” is used to express that which is expected or best practices, and “may” is used to express that which is permissible, but not required.

**Rationale:** To give clarity to meanings of words in the constitution.

**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

**PD-3 Editorial Corrections**

(Polity and Discipline 1.0502, 2.0102, 2.02, 2.0501, 2.0503, 3.0203, 3.0204, 5.0202, and 5.03)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 1.0502, 2.0102, 2.02, 2.0501, 2.0502, 2.0503, 3.0203, 3.0204, 5.0202 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

Replace the term of **“member” or “members”** in reference to a category of constituent in a local congregation with **“covenant partner(s)”** throughout the *ECO Polity* and the rest of the *Constitution*.

**Proposed Language:**

*1.0502 Calling Meetings*

Meetings of the congregation may be called by the session, by the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the **covenant partners** (~~members~~). Adequate notice of the meeting shall be given including **an** announcement in worship a minimum of two **weeks** ~~Sundays~~ prior, as well as the congregation’s other avenues of communication.

*2.0102 Preparation and ordination of officers*

Ordaining bodies shall determine the appropriate course of preparation, ensuring that candidates for ordination meet all the requirements in this ~~Form of Government~~ **Polity**. After demonstrating their readiness for service through an examination process, the candidates shall affirm their vows and be ordained by representatives of that ordaining body in a service of public worship.

*2.02 The Ministry of Elders*

Elders are given authority and responsibility, along with pastors, to oversee the spiritual health of the congregation as well as the congregation’s faithfulness to God’s mission. **Elders may also be asked to preach and teach.** Elders shall be elected by the congregation.

*2.0501 Deployment of officers for greater missional ministry*

In order to better facilitate the mission and ministry of a presbytery and its congregations, as well as to maximize the gifts of the totality of the body of Christ, it is often advantageous to commission elders and deacons to more extensive levels of service than ordinarily afforded these offices. There are two general ways in which officers may be commissioned to provide pastoral leadership and administer the sacraments. First, they may serve in various ways within a congregation under the supervision of the session and a pastor/head of staff or transitional pastor. Second, an elder or deacon may be commissioned to serve in the role of pastor/head of staff for a congregation or a ~~new church development~~ **church plant**. It is appropriate to refer to individuals serving in either capacity as **“commissioned lay pastor” or CLP**. The session shall pre-authorize the administration of the sacraments, and also determine the process by which pre-authorization occurs.

*2.0503 Service within a congregation as the Pastor/Head of Staff*

52  
 53 The presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, may  
 54 authorize an elder or deacon to be commissioned to serve in the role of pastor/head of staff  
 55 of a local congregation or a ~~new church development~~ **church plant**. With approval of the  
 56 presbytery, these individuals could moderate session and congregational meetings, administer  
 57 the sacraments, and where allowed by law, perform marriages. The presbytery shall ensure  
 58 training to include theological education, and ministry skill development as well as continued  
 59 mentorship during this commission. This commission shall be for a period of twelve months  
 60 and may be renewed indefinitely. Because these officers are fulfilling the pastoral role for a  
 61 congregation, they shall be enrolled as members of presbytery during their commission and be  
 62 given voice and vote at presbytery meetings.  
 63

64 3.0203 Meetings of Synod Commissioners  
 65

66 The synod commissioners shall meet at least bi-annually. The meetings shall serve the purpose  
 67 of encouraging presbyteries and churches in their mission as well as conducting the business  
 68 necessary for the mission of ECO. Meetings of the synod, including its quorum shall be  
 69 governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by its own rule the  
 70 synod has adopted other procedures and practices. The Synod commissioners shall have the  
 71 authority to elect and remove members of the synod executive ~~committee~~ **council** and to  
 72 amend and vote on proposed amendments to this *Constitution*, submitted to the synod by at  
 73 least two presbyteries. Voting members of the synod are those individuals commissioned by  
 74 and from their presbyteries. Presbyteries shall commission an equal number of ~~ministers~~  
 75 **pastors** and elders. The synod, by its own rule, shall determine the number of commissioners  
 76 from each presbytery, and each presbytery shall be entitled to at least one elder and one pastor  
 77 commissioner.  
 78

79 3.0204 Synod Executive Council  
 80

81 The synod executive council shall consist of between six and nine individuals, with at least  
 82 three being elders and the remainder being ordained pastors. The synod executive ~~committee~~  
 83 **council** shall have the power to:  
 84

85 ~~5.0202 Union Presbyteries~~  
 86

87 ~~A presbytery of ECO may unite to form a union presbytery with one or more comparable councils or~~  
 88 ~~governing bodies, each of which is a member of another Reformed body, with the approval of the governing~~  
 89 ~~body of which each is a part. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, any mandatory~~  
 90 ~~provisions of one shall apply in all cases where the other is permissive. A union presbytery shall be created by~~  
 91 ~~the adoption of a plan of union by two thirds vote of each presbytery or governing body that is party to the~~  
 92 ~~union. The synod and/or governing body having jurisdiction over each of the uniting bodies shall approve~~  
 93 ~~the plan of union.~~  
 94

95  
 96 5.03 Other denominations  
 97

98 Out of our common Protestant heritage, partnership and joint congregational witness will be  
 99 encouraged where mission, ministry, and collegiality ~~can~~ **may** be coordinated and approved by  
 100 the appropriate governing bodies, and where the *Constitution* and *Essential Tenets* of ECO ~~can~~  
 101 **may** be followed.  
 102

103 Rationale: These are all minor corrections to a number of areas in the Polity. The corrections proposed  
 104 are correcting errors and clarifying language.  
 105

106 5.0202: This was originally intended as a pathway forward for PC(USA) and ECO presbyteries.  
107 Unfortunately, it was never materialized into a viable option. It is no longer applicable today.  
108 Membership  
109  
110 Recommended change to eliminate the term “member” from the Polity and the Constitution when in  
111 reference to covenant partnership. The term “member” was originally placed in parentheses after  
112 “covenant partner” in order to clarify meaning as ECO was developing. After almost six years it is felt  
113 that the clarification is no longer necessary.  
114  
115 **Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

**PD-4 Organizing of a New Congregation**

(Polity and Discipline 1.02, 1.0201 and 1.0202)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved,** That the Constitution be amended in 1.02 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following.

**Current Wording:**

**~~1.02 — Organizing of a New Congregation~~**

~~A congregation in ECO can be organized only by the authority of a presbytery and shall function under the provisions of this *Constitution*. When a group of Christ followers discern that the Holy Spirit is leading them to become a congregation, they shall craft a covenant which reflects their desire to be bound to Christ and one another as a part of the body of Christ according to the government of ECO. After receiving this covenant and its signatures, it shall be the sole discretion of the presbytery to declare them an organized congregation, after which the congregation and the presbytery shall enter into a membership agreement. After receiving the presbytery’s approval of these initial candidates, the congregation shall then proceed to elect its pastor(s), elders, and (if utilized) deacons. The presbytery shall prepare, examine, ordain, and install these newly elected individuals in this new congregation.~~

**Proposed Wording:**

**1.02 Church Planting and the Organizing of a New Congregation**

**1.0201 Church Planting**

Jesus sent his disciples into the world to share the Gospel, baptize, and build the church. Today we continue to order our lives by that “Great Commission” in ECO by planting new churches. Church planting and becoming a church planter in ECO are guided by the latest edition of ECO’s Church Planting Manual. ECO churches may support church plants and church planters in a variety of ways and each ECO church is encouraged to create its own policy of how it will do so.

**1.0202 Organizing a New Congregation**

A congregation in ECO ~~can~~ may be chartered only by the authority of a presbytery and shall function under the provisions of the *Constitution*. Ordinarily, new congregations will be formed from established church plants. New congregations may also be formed from campuses of existing ECO congregations or church plants formed, supported, and nurtured by an ECO congregation. In order for a new congregation to be chartered there shall be a pastor and elected elders leading the church body who fully meet the criteria of those offices as described in this *Polity*. It shall be the sole discretion of the presbytery to declare them an organized congregation upon the examination and approval of the pastor and elders who form the session. After the presbytery’s approval, the congregation and the presbytery shall enter into a membership agreement and the officers and pastor shall be ordained and installed by the presbytery.

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50

51 **Rationale:** The ECO *Polity* did not use the language of “Church Planting,” which ECO has adopted over the last  
52 five years. These changes provide guidance to presbyteries and the synod, through its church planting ministry  
53 department. It also clarifies the original language and intent; that presbyteries approve church plants, planters, and  
54 new congregations, while the Synod Church Planting Staff and Programs serves as a resource and guide for the  
55 presbytery, church plant, and church planter in assessing suitability and development plans for church plants.

56

57 **Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the**  
58 **words added.**



**PD-5 Expectations of Covenantal Partners & The Responsibilities of the Session**

(Polity and Discipline Section 1.0305 & 1.0603c)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 1.0305 & 1.0603c by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

**Proposed Language:**

***1.0305 The Congregation’s Expectations of Covenantal Partnership***

Each covenant partner (~~member~~) shall strive to be faithful to Christ by participating in the congregation’s worship, fellowship, and service on an ongoing basis. Faithfulness in Christ, ~~involves each as a covenant partner’s, involves a commitment to growth into spiritual maturity as a disciple of Christ and~~ dedication of time and talents ~~for to~~ the congregation’s mission and ministry, in accordance to the gifts that God has bestowed upon him or her. Faithfulness also involves the stewardship of finances. As each covenant partner grows in the grace of giving, financial support of the congregation’s mission and ministry should grow, along with tangible support for other ministries that advance God’s Kingdom. ~~Faithfulness to Christ also involves each covenant partner’s dedication of time and talents for the congregation’s mission and ministry.~~ Those who are invited to take significant leadership roles in the congregation shall ~~agree with the~~ **should** be spiritually mature, ~~be carefully selected, be trained and/or mentored, and be supervised, and should ordinarily be covenant partners~~ **members** for at least a year, ~~and shall agree and adhere to the Essential Tenets of ECO. Covenant partners (members) of the congregation have differing abilities, varied spiritual gifts, and various levels of commitment. The session shall strive to create an effective disciple-making, ministry-discernment process, and equip covenant partners~~ **Covenant partners (members) to be missional Christians, being faithful to nurture covenant partners** ~~Covenant partners (members) into spiritual maturity and significant ministry.~~

***1.0603 The Responsibilities of the Session***

~~e. Plan for and provide means of discipleship for the congregation and new believers; provide for and nurture the common life of the congregation; receive and dismiss Covenant partners members; exercise oversight of all programs and finances of the congregation; train, examine, ordain and install those men and women chosen to serve as elders and deacons; lead and teach the congregation in matters of stewardship and Christian living; direct the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all other organizations of the congregation; bear witness against error in doctrine and practice; and serve in judicial matters pertaining to the congregation as specified in the Rules of Discipline.~~

**c. Plan for and provide an effective disciple-making, ministry-discernment process for the congregation and new believers, equipping them to be missional Christians and being faithful to nurture them into spiritual maturity and significant ministry.**

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42 **Provide for and nurture the common life of the congregation; receive and dismiss Covenant**  
43 **Partners; exercise oversight of all programs and finances of the congregation; train, examine, ordain**  
44 **and install those men and women chosen to serve as elders and deacons; lead and teach the**  
45 **congregation in matters of stewardship and Christian living; direct the ministry of deacons, trustees,**  
46 **and all other organizations of the congregation; bear witness against error in doctrine and practice;**  
47 **and serve in judicial matters pertaining to the congregation as specified in the *Rules of Discipline*.**  
48  
49

50 **Rationale:** 1.0305 had descriptions that were more appropriate in 1.0603. There were some deleted lines  
51 or words that duplicated concepts or whole thoughts.  
52

53 **Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the**  
54 **words added.**

**PD-6 The Ministry of Pastors, Categories Responsibility of Pastors, and Honorably Retired Pastor**

(Polity and Discipline 2.04, 2.0401 & 2.0401g)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

Resolved, That the Constitution be amended in 2.04 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

**Proposed Language:**

2.04 The Ministry of Pastors

Pastors are to use ~~the~~**their** spiritual gifts for ministry, with a particular emphasis on the gifts of **apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, and teaching. (Ephesians 4:11-12) teaching and leadership.**

*2.0401 Categories and responsibilities of pastors*

Pastors are members of the presbytery. Thus, their ministry and calling is ~~confirmed~~ **approved** by the presbytery or its authorized ~~committee~~ **team** that is responsible for examining and credentialing pastors. All members of the presbytery have voice in its deliberations **and the right** to vote is given to those serving in a pastoral capacity in a congregation. In order to ensure maximum deployment for the kingdom of God, as well as ensuring the core integrity of theology and ministry, categories, and responsibilities of pastors are as follows:

2.0401 Categories and responsibilities of pastors

f. *Affiliate Pastor* – A pastor may be ordained in a different body and ~~may~~ become an affiliate member of ECO. Affiliate pastors ~~must~~ **shall** adhere to the *Essential Tenets* of ECO. The presbytery shall determine the suitability of an affiliate pastor. If an affiliate pastor serves as pastor/head of staff of a non-union ECO congregation, then the affiliate pastor shall have voice and vote in presbytery; otherwise the affiliate pastor shall just have voice. **Affiliate membership ends when the pastor completes their call in the local ECO church.**

g. *Honorably Retired Pastor* – Pastors may request the status of honorably retired. ~~Honorably~~ **Honorably** retired pastors will have voice but no vote in presbytery unless they are serving as an assistant or transitional pastor. ~~Otherwise~~ **Each** honorably retired pastor is encouraged to become ~~active-covenant partner in the life~~ **active-covenant partner in the life** of a congregation, ~~with voice and vote.~~ **A church session may commission an honorably retired pastor to administer the sacraments within that session’s congregation. Such commission shall be for a defined period not to exceed twelve months and may be renewed indefinitely in increments of twelve month or less.**

**Rationale:** APEST or apostles, prophets, evangelist, shepherds and teachers are given to the church to equip the saints for service. Each of these designations have leadership qualities and therefore, it is important that our understanding of pastor includes more than a teacher or shepherd.

The Affiliate Pastor amendment is to clarify the temporary nature of the category.

**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

**PD-7 Required Committees, Council, and Records**

(Polity and Discipline 3.0102, 3.0104, 3.0105, 3.0106, & 3.0107)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 3.0102, 3.0104, 3.0105, 3.0106, and 3.0107 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

**Proposed Language:**

**Replace the name or abbreviation Committee of Ministry (COM) throughout the ECO Constitution with Ministry Partnership Team (MPT).**

*3.0102 Membership*

The members of the presbytery are its congregations, pastors installed in service to member congregations, pastors serving in validated ministries, and pastors honorably retired. Ordinarily, a presbytery shall be constituted of at least 10 but no more than 20 congregations, and geographically connected ~~(affinity networks are non-geographically connected groups (see 5.0201)).~~ A group of congregations may petition the Synod Executive ~~Committee~~ **Council** to form a non-geographical presbytery for ~~reasons of~~ **first language and cultural considerations.**

*3.0104 Meetings*

The presbytery shall organize itself to accomplish these tasks and fulfill these responsibilities, and may delegate authority to elected committees, **ministry teams**, and commissions. The presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice a year. Meetings of the presbytery, including its quorum, shall be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by its own rule the presbytery has adopted other procedures and practices. Each elder commissioner elected by a member congregation shall be entitled to vote at stated meetings. In addition, member pastors with voting authority as set forth in Section 2.0401 shall also be entitled to vote at stated meetings. The voting members of the presbytery shall have the authority to elect a governing council and to vote on all matters set forth in Section 3.0103. The voting members may also delegate to the presbytery governing council authority with respect to any such matter, other than the ~~chartering or dissolution of congregation~~ **election of members to the presbytery governing council and permanent judicial commission, or the approval or concurrence of proposed amendments to the Constitution. Notwithstanding the above, in the case of a vacancy in a position on a presbytery's governing council or permanent judicial commission, the presbytery's governing council may appoint a person to fill that vacancy until the next called meeting of the presbytery.** Each presbytery shall develop a manual of administrative operations setting forth its structures and procedures.

*3.0105 Required ~~Committees~~ Teams and Commissions*

*a. ~~Committee on~~ Ministry Partnership Team*

Each presbytery shall elect a ~~Committee on~~ **Ministry Partnership Team** which shall have broad responsibility for the pastoral relationships of the presbytery. The ~~Committee on~~ **Ministry Partnership Team** shall have at least eight members, all elected by the presbytery, with membership being made up of an equal number of elders and pastors. No more than two members may be from the same congregation. **Presbyteries who are unable to fulfill the minimum membership of the Ministry Partnership Team (MPT) may request an annual exception from the Synod Executive**

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52 **Council.** The ~~Committee on Ministry~~ **Partnership Team** shall be available to any session or ~~pastor~~  
53 **member** of the presbytery. The presbytery shall, by its own rule, delegate and determine the authority and  
54 functions of the ~~Committee on Ministry~~ **Partnership Team**. Included in this authority that may be  
55 delegated to the ~~Committee on Ministry~~ **Partnership Team** is the ability to approve ordination of  
56 candidates, transfer of pastors to and from its jurisdiction, and approve commissions for installation and  
57 ordination.  
58

59 *b. Permanent Judicial ~~Committee~~ Commission*

60  
61 Each presbytery shall elect a Permanent Judicial ~~Committee~~ **Commission** as specified in the *Rules of Discipline*.  
62

63 *3.0106 Presbytery Governing Council*

64  
65 The presbytery governing council shall consist of a number of individuals determined by the presbytery, ~~with~~  
66 ~~an equal number of elders and pastors~~ **and shall be composed of pastors and elders in numbers as nearly**  
67 **equal as possible. When the presbytery council consists of an odd number of members, the additional**  
68 **member may be either a pastor or an elder.** The presbytery council shall be responsible for the records,  
69 finances, policies, and procedures of the presbytery and shall perform any functions delegated to such  
70 council by the presbytery. The presbytery council shall have the authority to elect corporate officers  
71 (including a chief executive officer) and to hire staff to perform any such functions. The council shall review  
72 the chief executive officer’s performance annually.  
73

74 *3.0107 Records*

75  
76 The presbytery shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and make them available on request to  
77 any session or ~~pastor~~ **member** of the presbytery. Each presbytery shall annually arrange for an independent  
78 financial review and shall publish the report in its minutes.  
79

80  
81 **Rationale:** The phrase “Committee on Ministry” or COM is currently used in the *Constitution*. ECO  
82 presbytery leaders, have agreed on and are now only using “Ministry Partnership Team (MPT)” as the  
83 name for what the *Polity* describes.  
84

85 In 3.0102, a line was deleted that was no longer applicable and there is a clarification of why ECO would  
86 set-up a non-geographic presbytery. This type of presbytery is intended for churches whose primary  
87 language and cultural context are different from English language speaking geographic presbyteries.  
88

89 The current *Polity* allows a presbytery to delegate all matters except the chartering or dissolution of  
90 congregations. It seems incongruous that the receiving and dismissing of congregations can be delegated  
91 but not chartering or dissolution. The proposed amendment eliminates the prohibition on delegation of the  
92 chartering or dissolution of congregations. In addition, the current language, does not exclude election of  
93 members to the presbytery governing council and permanent judicial commission or originating,  
94 concurring or voting on amendments to the ECO Constitution. The proposed change makes it clear that  
95 these powers are reserved for the presbytery voting in assembly.  
96

97 The Permanent Judicial Commission change, is just a correction and keeping the *Polity* consistent with  
98 the *Rules of Discipline*.  
99

100 **Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the**  
101 **words added.**

PD-8 Judicial Commissions, Remedial Cases

(Rules of Discipline 3.2, 3.3 & 4.3)

Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:

Resolved, That the Constitution be amended in Rules of Discipline 3.2, 3.3 and 4.3 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

Proposed Language:

3.0 JUDICIAL COMMISSIONS

3.1 Each presbytery shall elect a permanent judicial commission from the pastors and elders within the presbytery. Once five (5) presbyteries have been established, the synod shall elect permanent judicial commission. In the event five (5) presbyteries are not established, the synod shall elect a judicial commission to act in specific cases. Each commission shall be composed of pastors and elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a pastor or an elder. The synod commission shall be composed of no fewer than five members distributed equally, insofar as possible, among the constituent presbyteries. The presbytery commission shall be composed of no fewer than five members, with no more than one of its elder members from any one of its constituent churches.

3.3 No person who has served on a permanent judicial commission for a full term of six years shall be eligible for reelection until four years have elapsed after the expired six-year term. No person shall serve on more than one judicial commission at the same time. No person shall serve on a council's judicial commission while serving on that council's governing council or the ministry partnership team.

4.3 Remedial complaints shall be filed within ninety days. Those eligible to file such a complaint are: (a) a pastor or an elder enrolled as a member of a presbytery, against that presbytery, and the complaint is filed with the synod; (b) a session against the presbytery, and the complaint is filed with the synod; (c) any council against any other council of the same level, and the complaint is filed with the council immediately wider than the council complained against; (d) a member of a church against the session of that church, and the complaint is filed with the presbytery; (e) a presbytery against the synod, and the complaint is filed with the synod.

Rationale:

3.1 This deleted line was necessary when ECO started, but is no longer relevant.

3.3 Currently there is no restriction against a person simultaneously serving on a council's permanent judicial commission and on that council's governing council or committee on ministry (or the equivalent committee). Since the council's permanent judicial commission may be called to rule on an action taken by that council's governing council or committee on ministry, serving in both places creates an inherent conflict. The proposed amendment makes it clear that a person could not hold both offices simultaneously.

4.3 Under the current Rules of Discipline there is no provision for a session or presbytery to file a remedial case against the synod. The proposed language allows a presbytery to file a remedial case against the synod. Sessions are excluded and would have to convince their presbytery that such action is warranted.

Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.



**PD-9 Assistant Pastors**

(Polity and Discipline 1.0503, 1.0601 & 2.0401c)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 1.0503, 1.0601, and 2.0401c by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

**Proposed Language:**

1.0503 Business that must be conducted at a Congregational Meeting

**f. Authorizing assistant pastors to serve on session with voice and vote by the congregation’s own rule.**

*1.0601 Purpose and Composition*

Every congregation is governed by its session. The session consists of the elders duly elected by and from the **covenant partners** (~~members~~) of the congregation, along with the congregation’s ~~in-stalled~~ **installed** pastors, ~~and~~ associate pastors, **and in accordance with the congregation’s own rule assistant pastors who have been elected by the congregation.** Also, by its own rule, the congregation shall determine the number of elders, their length of service, and the ordering of the session. The minimum number shall be three active elders plus the moderator.

*2.0401 Categories and responsibilities of pastors*

c. *Assistant Pastor* – Assistant pastors are called by the session or pastor/head of staff according to rule of the session. The session, acting as a pastor nominating committee, may propose to the congregation that an assistant pastor be called as an associate pastor. Assistant pastors are members of presbytery with voice and vote, **and may, upon election by the congregation, serve on the session with voice and vote in accordance with the congregation’s own rule.**

**Rationale:** The Assistant Pastor category allows a session or a pastor/head of staff, by the rule of session, to hire ordained staff directly without an independent pastor nominating committee or a congregational vote. This has been incredibly helpful for large and small churches. It has allowed for the calling of part-time pastor positions, pastors in validated ministry to serve local ECO churches with flexible terms of call, and ways to include Honorably Retired Pastors on the pastoral staff of a local ECO congregation.

Some ECO churches have found it helpful to have Assistant Pastors part of the session, and yet at the same time, it would not make sense to call them to an Associate Pastor position. This provides a way forward for a congregation, should they desire, to extend voice and vote on the session for an Assistant Pastor or all of their Assistant Pastors. This gives a local congregation more freedom to organize their staff appropriately for their context and needs.

**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

**PD-10 Covenant Partnership, Membership and Baptism**

(Polity and Discipline 1.0301 & 1.04)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 1.0301 and 1.04 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

Proposed Language

1.03 The Membership of a Congregation

*1.0301 Baptism and ~~Membershi~~ Covenant Partnership*

Through baptism an individual (**infant, child, youth or adult**) is joined to the Church universal, the body of Christ. **The sacrament of baptism shall be approved for an individual, by a session, one time and all Christian baptisms will be recognized by ECO congregations.** Through ~~the covenant~~ **partnership** ~~of membership~~ an individual is joined to the local congregation, and is able to be fully involved in its mission to the local community and the world.

*1.0302 Openness to All*

The congregation’s fellowship shall be open to all who seek to explore spiritual life by participating in the fellowship of the risen Lord. The congregation shall be gracious in providing pastoral care to all who consider themselves a part of the congregation, in the hope that these spiritual friends might become members of Christ’s body. All who put their trust in Jesus Christ are welcomed to receive the Sacrament of ~~Holy Communion~~ **the Lord’s Supper.**

*1.0303 Entry into Membership as Covenant Partners*

After completing a meaningful preparation process as determined by the session, those who wish to embrace the congregation’s covenantal expectations may become covenant partners (~~members~~) by action of the session after hearing testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. For those not previously baptized, the Sacrament of Baptism is to be provided for these new **covenant partners** ~~members~~ and offered to children under their care. Individuals may testify to their faith in one of the following ways:

- a. Public profession of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, after the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit yields personal faith in Christ.
- b. Reaffirmation of faith, for those previously professing faith publicly and already baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If they are **members or covenant partners** of another congregation, this transfer of membership/**covenant partnership** shall be communicated to the former congregation.

**1.04 Categories of Membership**



## CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

52                    *1.0401 Baptized Members and Covenant Partners*

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A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, but **either** has not **yet** made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior **or has not become a covenant partner.**

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**Rationale:** Over the last five years, there has been repeated confusion over baptism in ECO churches. These additions to the polity are meant to clarify the differences between baptized members and covenant partners. This has been requested due to the number of people in ECO churches who continue to find it difficult to take the next step of commitment to “covenant partnership,” but have an active and faithful life following Jesus Christ. It is also meant to clarify ECO’s commitment to a reformed theological understanding of baptism. The new language clarifies acceptance of baptisms from other Christian churches and that no local congregation’s session will approve a so called “rebaptism.”

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**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words added.**

## ET-1 Baptism

(Essential Tenets, Essentials of the Reformed Tradition, Section C, Covenant Life in the Church)

*Proposed by the Florida Presbytery and Concurred in by the Texas Presbytery:*

*Resolved, That Essential of the Reformed Tradition, Section C, Covenant Life in the Church, third paragraph be amended by inserting the following after Sentence #5: “Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a mark of entrance into the visible church, and it is the Holy Spirit who ~~that~~ makes this sacrament efficacious in God's time to those whom God ~~he~~ has called.”*

*So that if adopted the section would read:*

Within the covenant community of the church, God’s grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline. First, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the word proclaimed may indeed become God’s address to us. The Spirit’s illuminating work is necessary both for the one who preaches and for those who listen. Second, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are signs that are linked to the things signified, sealing to us the promises of Jesus. In the Baptism of infants, we confess our confidence in God’s gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit; in the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God’s grace can make us new creations at any stage of our lives. Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a mark of entrance into the visible church, and it is the Holy Spirit makes this sacrament efficacious in God's time to those whom has called. In the Lord’s Supper, we confess that as we eat the bread and share one cup the Spirit unites us to the ascended Christ, so that His resurrection life may nourish, strengthen, and transform us. Third, the community of the Church practices discipline in order to help one another along the path to new life, speaking the truth in love to one another, bearing one another’s burdens, and offering to one another the grace of Christ.

**Rationale:**

The Essential Tenets of the ECO has been an effective document in uniting churches around the common reformed heritage that we embrace and has served as a bridge to greater theological engagement across denominations. The words that have been crafted flow out of the language of the confessions and attempt to communicate many truths in a concise and effective way. In regard to our sacramental theology much burden was placed upon a few well-constructed sentences, however the brevity of the construction left some opportunity for misunderstanding. Some have interpreted our statement to allow for an understanding of baptismal regeneration. This is most certainly not an intended understanding of the sacrament. To address this concern a combination of phrases and ideas from the Westminster Confession's statement on Baptism in Chapter XXX/XXVII have been selected. This statement will add additional substance to the existing text and further anchor the statement to our confessions.

The third paragraph of Section III. C. of the Essential Tenets would receive an additional line of text, that would expand upon our convictions regarding baptism and clarify our reliance upon the confessions for our understanding of its effectiveness.

# OVERTURES RELATED TO CONFESSIONAL STANDARDS

## CS-1 Confessional Standards

*Proposed by the Texas Presbytery and Concurred in by the Upper Midwest, Florida, Heritage and South Presbyteries:*

### **RESOLUTION 1 – God’s Word: The Authority of Our Confessions**

**Resolved,** That the final sentence of ECO Essential Tenets, Section I – I. God’s Word: The Authority for Our Confessions be amended as follows:

In particular, we ~~join with other members of the Presbyterian and Reformed community to affirm~~ the secondary authority of the ~~Book of Confessions~~ *Confessional Standards* as a faithful exposition of the Word of God.

**Rationale:** The *Book of Confessions* as initially reference in the *Essential Tenets* is a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) document and its content is determined by the PC(USA) and not ECO. The proposed change changes the reference to an ECO document, the content of which will be determined by ECO. Note: This resolution establishes the authority of the *Confessional Standards*, (which is not the confessional standards of the ECO pamphlet *Essential Tenets and Confessional Standards*, but is a new document) but does not state what confessional documents are included. Which documents are included is the subject of resolutions 3 to 8 that follow.

### **RESOLUTION 2 – Establishing a Special Rule of Order concerning the adoption and amendment of the ECO Confessional Standards**

**Resolved,** That the following special rule of order be adopted concerning the adoption and any amendment of the ECO *Confessional Standards*:

Subsequent to the initial adoption of the *Confessional Standards*, any presbytery or the Synod Executive Council may overture the Synod of ECO for changes in the *Confessional Standards*. For overtures originating with a presbytery, at least one additional presbytery must concur with the proposed overture. The initial establishment and any change to the *Confessional Standards* shall require approval by a majority of those commissioners voting at a meeting of the Synod followed by the ratification by a majority vote of the members voting in at least two-thirds of the presbyteries in existence at the time of the Synod vote. The ratification by the presbyteries must occur prior to the first anniversary of the adjournment of the Synod meeting during which the initial vote occurred.

**Rationale:** The ECO *Polity* establishes the requirements for amending the ECO *Constitution* which include the *Polity* and the *Essential Tenets* but there is no provision made for the confessional documents. In the absence of any such provision, the amendment of any confessional document will be governed by the latest edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, which requires only a majority vote at a meeting of the Synod assembly. The proposed special rule of order establishes an approval process for

47 adopting and amending the *Confessional Standards*. It has been proposed by some that any confessional  
 48 standards should be made part of the *ECO Constitution*, however there are potential governance issues  
 49 created by the possibility of conflicting provisions within any documents included with any confessional  
 50 standard with constitutional authority. These issues warrant more careful consideration of this issue than  
 51 the current time period allows.

52

### 53 **RESOLUTION 3 – On Including Various Confessions**

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55 **Resolved**, That the following documents as they exist (excluding any added commentary) in *The ECO*  
 56 *Book of Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional Standards*:

57

- Nicene Creed
- Apostles' Creed
- Heidelberg Catechism
- Westminster Confession (the Presbyterian Church in the United States wording)
- Westminster Shorter Catechism
- Westminster Larger Catechism

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59 **Rationale**: A review of the various proposals arising out of the review of the confessional documents by  
 60 the different presbyteries indicates unanimity on around the inclusion of these six documents. The  
 61 resolution fixes the language to match that of the documents contained in *The ECO Book of Confessions,*  
 62 *Version 1: Spring 2017* until an orderly process to build consensus around any language changes can be  
 63 implemented.

64

### 65 **RESOLUTIONS 4 – 8**

66 The following resolutions are designed to offer a separate vote on each of the confessional documents  
 67 around which there is less consensus on their inclusion or exclusion from any ECO confessional standard.

68

#### 69 **RESOLUTION 4**

70 **Resolved**, That the Scots Confession as it exists (excluding any added commentary) in *The ECO Book of*  
 71 *Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional Standards*.

72

#### 73 **RESOLUTION 5**

74 **Resolved**, That the Theological Declaration of Barmen as it exists (excluding any added commentary) in  
 75 *The ECO Book of Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional Standards*.

76

#### 77 **RESOLUTION 6**

78 **Resolved**, That the Second Helvetic Confession as it exists (excluding any added commentary) in *The*  
 79 *ECO Book of Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional Standards*.

80

#### 81 **RESOLUTION 7**

82 **Resolved**, That the Confession of 1967 as it exists (excluding any added commentary) in *The ECO Book*  
 83 *of Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional Standards*.

84

#### 85 **RESOLUTION 8**

86 **Resolved**, That A Brief Statement of Faith – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as it exists (excluding added  
 87 commentary) in *The ECO Book of Confessions, Version 1: Spring 2017* be included in the *Confessional*  
 88 *Standards*.

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**RESOLUTION 9**

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97 **Resolved #1**, That the ECO Synod Executive Council, after consultation with the ECO National  
98 Theological Task Force, shall implement a process that, drawing upon the work done in the last year by  
99 the different presbytery theological task forces and the National Theological Task Force, works to  
100 develop a consensus around the proper composition and role of the *Confessional Standards* within ECO  
101 with a goal of considering any changes to the *Confessional Standards* at the 2020 Synod Business  
102 Meeting. The process shall address, among others, the documents to be included in the *Confessional*  
103 *Standards* (including the recommended language of such documents whether existing or new) and the  
104 constitutional authority of the standards. The process may include one or more Synod wide colloquies  
105 with broad participation organized around review of any existing or proposed confessional standards.  
106 That upon the completion of this process, the Synod Executive Council shall prepare a recommendation  
107 on revisions to the *Confessional Standards* for consideration by the 2020 Synod Business Meeting; and be  
108 it further

109  
110 **Resolved #2**, That the Synod Executive Council or their designee is authorized and directed to take any  
111 action necessary to effectuate this resolution and any other resolutions concerning the *Confessional*  
112 *Standards* approved at this assembly; and be it further

113  
114 **Resolved #1**, That no further action is taken on the ECO *Confessional Standards* at the current time and  
115 that consideration of any overtures or motions regarding the confessional documents of ECO currently  
116 pending before the Synod assembly be postponed indefinitely.

117  
118 **Rationale**: The intent of Resolution 9 is to empower the Synod Executive Council, with the assistance of  
119 the National Theological Task Force, to design and implement a process that draws upon the prior work  
120 of the various theological task forces to further review and build consensus on the *Confessional Standards*  
121 to serve ECO in the future.

122  
123 **Parliamentary Note**: The language “postponed indefinitely” in Resolution 9 is to allow any overtures on  
124 the Confessions that are pending before the assembly to be rejected without a specific vote on each  
125 overture.

## CS-2 Amending and Adopting Revisions to the Book of Confessions

*Proposed by the East Central Presbytery and Concurred in by the North California/Nevada Presbytery:*

Whereas, In 2012, when ECO adopted the PC(USA) *Book of Confessions*, as it was at that time, as the church's guiding theological documents, the understanding was to eventually give congregations and presbyteries within the newly established Reformed body a voice in the selection of the confessional standards; and

Whereas, In 2016 ECO's National Theological Task Force introduced a process to allow churches and presbyteries to consider the value and significance of our confessional standards and to prepare reports of these efforts to be submitted for consideration; and

Whereas, The East Central Presbytery, through an established presbytery-level theology task force, has worked with its churches and presbyters to review the current contents of the *Book of Confessions*, as well as other such statements of faith; and

Whereas, The Presbytery Theology Task Force has reviewed all submitted reports and offered its analysis and recommendations in a report to East Central Presbytery, which is attached hereto along with each of the individual church reports; therefore, be it

**Resolved #1**, That the ECO Synod include the following in the ECO *Book of Confessions*:

- a. The Nicene Creed,
- b. The Apostles' Creed,
- c. The Scots Confession,
- d. The Heidelberg Catechism,
- e. The Westminster Confession of Faith (a single version in contemporary English),
- f. The Westminster Shorter Catechism,
- g. The Westminster Larger Catechism, and
- h. The Theological Declaration of Barmen; and be it further

**Resolved #2**, That the following be excluded from the ECO Book of Confessions:

- a. The Second Helvetic Confession,
- b. The Confession of 1967, and
- c. The Brief Statement of Faith; and be it further

**Resolved #3**, That through an appropriate task force, prepare a new Reformed evangelical confession for ECO consistent with the Essential Tenets of ECO and take the necessary steps to include this new confession in the *Book of Confessions*; and be it further

**Resolved #4**, That the *Book of Confessions* have included a preface to explain the nature and purpose of the *Book of Confessions*, rationale for the selection of its various confessions, the relationship of the Essential Tenets to the confessions, and the meaning of subscription to the Essential Tenets and the confessions within the context of ECO; and be it further

**Resolved #5**, That before each creed/confession/catechism in the *Book of Confessions* a short summary of its historical context, theological value, and significance be given; and be it further

50 **Resolved #6**, the *Book of Confessions* include a “For Further Study” section, listing documents that—  
51 while neither binding nor authoritative—the ECO Synod deems commendable to those desiring a  
52 broader understanding of the Christian faith, especially in the Reformed tradition. ( The following  
53 documents are just a few that the Synod may want to list: the Athanasian Creed, the French Confession,  
54 the Belgic Confession, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Canons of Dort, A Brief Statement of Belief  
55 (PCUS), the Lausanne Covenant, Our World Belongs to God, and the Manhattan Declaration.)



## CS-3 Proposed Amendment to ECO Book of Confessions

*Proposed by the Northwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the West Presbytery:*

**Resolved #1,** That ECO's *Book of Confessions* be renamed *Foundational Statements of Faith* and be it further

**Resolved #2,** That ECO's *Essential Tenets*, article I, paragraph two, final sentence, that the words "*Book of Confessions* as a faithful exposition" be struck out and the following words be inserted in their place, "*Foundational Statements of Faith* as faithful expositions," making that sentence, "In particular, we join with other members of the Presbyterian and Reformed community to affirm the secondary authority of the *Foundational Statements of Faith* as faithful expositions of the Word of God."

**Resolved #3,** That paragraph 2.0103d of ECO's Polity and Discipline document be amended by striking out the word "confessions" and inserting in its place the following: "foundational statements of faith," making that sentence, "Relying on the Holy Spirit, do you humbly submit to God's call on your life, committing yourself to God's mission, and fulfilling your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our foundational statements of faith?" and be it further

**Resolved #4,** That the Synod designate seven (7) statements to comprise what is currently called the *Book of Confessions* in the Confessional Standards of ECO: The Apostles' Creed; The Nicene Creed; The Heidelberg Catechism; The Westminster Standards including The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Longer Catechism, and The Shorter Catechism; and the Theological Declaration of Barmen; and be it further

**Resolved #5,** That the text of the Heidelberg Catechism currently found in the *Book of Confessions* be replaced by the updated translation adopted in 2011 by the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, if appropriate permission is obtained from the copyright holder; and be it further

**Resolved #6,** That the National Theology Task Force advance a unified, modern-language version of the Westminster Standards to be voted on at Synod 2020, and, at a minimum, one cogent version of the Westminster Confession be developed, instead of having two amended versions side-by-side with this effort, at the discretion of the NTTF, also include small adjustments in wording to the Apostles' Creed and/or Nicene Creed to make them more comprehensible in the present context; and be it further

**Resolved #7,** That We move that in ECO's Polity and Discipline document, paragraph 2.0101 be amended to read as follows:

Elders and deacons are ordained and installed by the session. Pastors are ordained and installed by the presbyteries. Ordaining bodies must ensure that all officers adhere to the *Essential Tenets* of ECO and are guided by ECO's *Foundational Statements of Faith*. Failure of officers to continue to adhere to ~~these standards~~ the *Essential Tenets* is grounds for a session or presbytery to remove an officer from service according to the *Rules of Discipline* in this *Constitution*.

**Resolved #8,** That under the direction of the National Theological Task Force and the Synod Executive Council, the following introductions in ECO's current *Book of Confessions* continue to be updated and included in the Confessional Standards of ECO as resource documents:

- ▶ "Preface to Historic Documents," amended both to reflect the new name for these documents and the deletion of some current documents, and also to include the substance of the statement adopted by the PCUSA regarding Roman Catholics. Suggested wording for the latter is "Specific statements in 16th and 17th century confessions and catechisms contain



52 condemnations or derogatory characterizations of the Roman Catholic Church.

53 While these statements emerged from substantial doctrinal disputes, they reflect 16th and 17th  
54 century polemics. Their condemnations and characterizations of the Catholic Church are not  
55 the position of ECO and are not applicable to current relationships between ECO and the  
56 Catholic Church.”

- 57 ▶ All individual introductions which relate to those specific statements which are retained in  
58 the new *Foundational Statements of Faith*. Such “Preface” and introductions will be adjusted  
59 as needed to reflect all actions of ECO’s 2018 Synod Business Meeting and all future Synod  
60 Business Meetings.

### 61 **Rationale:**

#### 62 *Retitling Book of Confessions to Foundational Statements of Faith*

63 A renaming is appropriate because most of these statements are not actually confessions, and because  
64 most people today associate that word primarily with confession of wrongdoing. “Foundational” is an  
65 appropriate word that conveys historical importance without the higher status conferred by the word  
66 “essential.”

#### 67 *Selection of Statements*

68 First, we give our reasoning for retaining the seven statements mentioned:

69 The Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds connect us with Christians throughout the centuries and around the  
70 globe, and should certainly be a part of our foundational statements.

71 The Heidelberg Catechism is an exceptional document, full of pastoral wisdom, mostly free of polemic,  
72 and shared with many Reformed Christian groups.

73 The Westminster Confession, Larger Catechism, and Shorter Catechism contain much important  
74 theology, and are an important part of our Presbyterian heritage. While we might quibble with some  
75 items, their historic position in our tradition and overall theological value merit their inclusion for ECO  
76 going forward. While the criticism of “German Christians” in the Theological Declaration of Barmen  
77 references something distant, it serves as a Christ-centered reminder in our time when many “American  
78 Christians” are tempted toward idolatrous nationalism. Its prophetic voice on the roles of church and  
79 state is also needed today.

80 Second, we give our reasoning for omitting four of the existing documents:

81 It is appropriate to remove the Scots Confession and Second Helvetic Confession because of their length  
82 (especially the Second Helvetic), their inaccessible language, their condemnation of women in ministry  
83 (in opposition to a core value of ECO), and especially their highly polemic nature when ECO wants to  
84 focus more on what we are “for” than on what we are “against.”

85 While there is some good material in the Confession of 1967 (such as its call to pursue justice) and in the  
86 Brief Statement of Faith (such as its affirmation of egalitarian ministry), their association with the  
87 ascendancy of theological liberalism in the PCUSA makes their removal appropriate.

88 Finally, we note that we do not recommend producing a new ECO confession. While we are not strongly  
89 opposed to the idea, we feel the effort would mostly be redundant. ECO has recently stated what it  
90 believes to be doctrinally important in adopting the Essential Tenets.

#### 91 *Updating language*

92 To be able to guide the church going forward, the Reformation-era statements should be made  
93 understandable for the 21st Century. This already exists for the Heidelberg Catechism; we can simply  
94 adopt the translation recently completed by the CRC and RCA. We should only have one version of the  
95 Westminster Confession; the current parallel versions with numerous footnotes is confusing and renders it  
96 nearly unusable for devotion and education. The pre-Reformation creeds might also be made more  
97 understandable in a few places without losing their historic feel. Examples in the Apostles Creed might

103 include changing “Holy Ghost” to “Holy Spirit” and changing “the quick and the dead” to “the living and  
104 the dead.”

105

106 *Amendment to Polity 2.0101*

107 The suggested language in the third sentence of 2.0101 makes this part of the polity consistent with the  
108 ordination vows of 2.0103d, while maintaining ECO’s important distinction that only the Essential Tenets  
109 have Constitutional authority (thus “guided by” rather than a stronger term such as “adhere to”). With  
110 this change in the third sentence, the change in the fourth sentence becomes necessary to clarify that only  
111 the Essential Tenets are required standards in ECO polity.

112

113 *Introductory statements*

114 The existing introductions to the individual statements are helpful and should be retained. The current  
115 Preface is also helpful, but will need significant revision if other Motions are adopted. The specific  
116 statement about Roman Catholics was adopted by the PCUSA after several decades of positive dialogue  
117 between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. This expression of  
118 grace toward our Catholic brothers and sisters leads to greater acceptance, understanding and love within  
119 the kingdom of God.

## CS-4 National Theological Task Force Confessional Study

*Proposed by the Great Lakes Presbytery and Concurred in by the Rivers of Life Presbytery:*

**Resolved #1**, That the Synod adopt the ECO's National Theological Task Force Recommendation (NTTF)<sup>1</sup>

affirming the Essential Tenets codified as our binding confessional document and agreeing to include the following collection of creeds-confessions as advisory and teaching documents —

Historic Foundations of Reformed Heritage.

- The Nicene Creed
- The Apostles' Creed
- The Scot's Confession
- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Westminster Confession, the Larger, and Shorter Catechism; and be it further

<sup>1</sup>As of January 2017, the National Theological Task Force recommended the removal of all 20th C documents and the Second Helvetic Confession.

**Resolved #2**, That the National Theological Task Force Confessional study resources be made available on the ECO website; and be it further.

**Resolved #3**, That the Synod request that the National Theological Task Force provide additional counsel and guidance to the ECO in the following areas:

- a. Propose a frequency to ask the Church to once again consider the Confessions,
- b. Clarify the Role of the ECO Mission Statement and The ECO Values,
- c. Develop ways in which the ECO Essential Tenets might be understood so that the distinctives of the 20th Century Confessions (removed) might be addressed,
- d. Address the wisdom of the ECO adding a Directory for Worship and other non-confessional resources; and be it further.

**Resolved #4**, That the ECO National Theological Task Force engage the ECO to produce a Confession.

### Rationale:

**Resolved #1:** The benefits of this proposed action are to (1) *amplify* the binding nature of the ECO Essential Tenets and (2) *reinforce* the wisdom of using the Historic Creeds and Historic Reformed Confessions in worship and teachings to accomplish ECO's Mission *to make disciples of Jesus Christ*. In general, creeds-confessions promote apostolic teaching as enjoined by St Paul (2 Tim 4:3). The theological basis of the ECO Essential Tenets can be found in the confessions listed. By adding more confessions *at this time*, we risk diluting these historic foundations and risk divisiveness when we're called to unity.

**Resolved #2:** The National Theological Task Force has provided excellent study resources for *Considering the Confessions*. These must not be *lost*. Portions of 'Considering the Confessions' and the related PowerPoint presentations with long-term value should be edited and retained as teaching/preaching aids online at ECO-pres.org (Other Helpful ECO Resources).

### **Resolved #3:**

- a. Establishing a *normal* future period of time for reconsidering our confessions keeps the need to use and teach the confessions before the church...based on our experience as a denomination. Such reconsideration should be perceived as a healthy part of our denominational maturity.

- 49           b. Both of these documents have served ECO in articulating the Vision of the *Movement*. However, the  
50           relationship of these two visionary documents to the *ECO Essential Tenets* and the *Confessions* is  
51           unclear.
- 52           c. Concerns that prompted the 20th Century confessions remain—the Church’s witness and biblical  
53           justice in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, post-Christian World. Quality resources for the  
54           21st Century are vital to equip pastors and laity in teaching and interpreting the ECO Essential Tenets.
- 55           d. In simplifying ECO’s theology and polity, we have lost extremely useful portions of the *PCUSA Book of*  
56           *Order...* portions that have historically guided the church as faithful expressions of the Christian gospel  
57           and as what God calls the church to be and do in the Reformed tradition. Two examples are ‘The  
58           Directory for Worship’ and ‘The Six Great Ends of the Church.’  
59

60           **Resolved #4:** The National TTF has done an excellent job of leading the denomination in Considering  
61           the Confessions. The ECO, as a new creation, needs a new and distinctive Confession consistent with  
62           Scripture, ECO’s Essential Tenets, Vision & Core Values, and the Historic Foundations of Reformed  
63           Heritage — one that faithfully guides the 21st Century ECO to build flourishing churches that make  
64           disciples of Jesus Christ.

## CS-5 Confessional Standards and New Confession

*Proposed by the Rivers of Life Presbytery and Concurred in by the Great Lakes Presbytery:*

**Resolved #1**, That ECO designate seven documents to comprise *The Confessional Standards*: The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed, The Scots Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and The Westminster Standards including The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Longer Catechism, and The Shorter Catechism; and be it further

**Resolved #2**, That a new confession be written under the direction of the National Theological Task Force and the Synod Executive Council for potential inclusion in *The Confessional Standards* of ECO with this document to be prepared for consideration at the next Synod Business Meeting.

### Rationale:

After thoughtful consideration we are pleased to endorse and move for approval the recommendation of the National Theological Task Force. We appreciate the simplicity of the proposal and believe that these documents are an appropriate foundation for our reformed and evangelical denomination. These documents uniformly hold to an orthodox view of the faith and a high view of Scripture, both of which are necessary and essential to the future flourishing of our movement. The three twentieth century documents currently in our Book of Confessions, while having significant value in some areas, have been set aside due to a variety of concerns spoken to in *Considering the Confessions* and in our Detailed Rationale.

A conviction not to include the twentieth century confessions in the Confessional Standards of ECO leaves us with an opportunity to address important matters of faith and practice that were spoken to in those confessions. The topics of justice, reconciliation, women in ministry, evangelism and others are not addressed adequately in the patristic creeds or the reformation documents. Therefore, it would be of great value to the church to have these topics and more addressed in a manner consistent with ECO Essential Tenets and Core Values. We commend the writing of this document to be of great assistance in contemporary study, teaching, and corporate worship.

# OVERTURES RELATED TO AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

## CON-1 Composition of the Constitution and Amending the Constitution

(Polity and Discipline Section 6.0, 2.0, 6.01, 6.02, 2.0103d & 3.0202)

*Proposed by the Upper Midwest Presbytery and Concurred in by the Northern California/Nevada Presbytery:*

**Resolved**, That the Constitution be amended in 6.01, 6.02, 2.0103d, and 3.0202 by striking out the current wording and inserting in its place the following:

### **Proposed Language:**

#### **6.01 Composition of the Constitution**

The *Constitution* of ECO includes the *Essential Tenets*, the ~~polity~~ *Polity*, the *Rules of Discipline*, and the *Confessional Standards*.

#### **6.02 Amending this Constitution**

Presbyteries may overture the synod of ECO for changes in this *Constitution* as follows:

- a. Two presbyteries must concur in the proposed changes and overture the larger body with changes.
- b. The synod may amend **by a majority of voting members of the synod present and voting**, and transmit the proposed changes to the *Constitution* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote, and a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries shall be required for adoption.
- c. Any amendment to the *Essential Tenets* shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the synod present and voting. In addition, the affirmative vote of each presbytery for such amendment shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of such presbytery present and voting.
- d. **Any amendment to the *Confessional Standards* shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the synod present and voting. In addition, the affirmative vote of each presbytery for such amendment shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of such presbytery present and voting.**

#### *2.0103 Ordination vows*

- d. Relying on the Holy Spirit, do you humbly submit to God's call on your life, committing yourself to God's mission, and fulfilling your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our ~~confessions~~ *Confessional Standards*?

#### *3.0202 Duties and Authority*

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The synod shall:

c. Maintain the *Constitution*, ~~and~~ **comprising of ECO's Polity, Rules of Discipline, Essential Tenets, and the Confessional Standards.**

**Rationale:** The *Confessional Standards* are currently part of the *Essential Tenets* of ECO. They are, however, treated differently in our *Polity*. In 2.0103c officers vow to receive, adopt and be bound by the *Essential Tenets* which currently include all of the confessions according to the *Constitution* of ECO. However, in 2.0103d, we vow to be under the authority of Scripture guided by our confessions. It makes sense for ECO to have a thorough time of prayer and study to consider what place the confessions should have in our *Constitution*, but for now the *Essential Tenets* and *Confessional Standards*, should be separated for clarification and consistency throughout the *Constitution* of ECO.

**Amendments from the floor of the Synod convention may only be to the words struck out or the words add**