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THE COVENANT

1. We will move to a regional shared ministry and leadership model without losing the ability to provide the essential functions of the Conference Minister office.

- This change would involve a shift from a full time to part time structure for our Conference Ministers by way of adopting a shared ministry and regional leadership model (as already modeled by our Director of Global Ministries and anticipated by our Susquehanna Region Conference Minister). The goal would be to look to similar changes for other Conference Ministers over the next 2 to 3 years, unless shared ministry opportunities are available sooner.

2. We will reevaluate our denominational relationships with affiliate ministries, particularly our direct financial support.

- This change would involve the release of our affiliates (Evangelical Seminary, Camps, etc.) to secure other forms of financial and leadership support and would ultimately result in a reduction of mandated EC financial support over the next few years. Though we love and recognize the kingdom value of our affiliate ministries, we also believe there are better ways to support their work and fulfill our partnership than direct denominational funding.

3. We will substantially reduce denominational operating expenses; the cost of providing essential administration, connectional ministry and support, and our current resource structure.

- This reduction of costs could include, but not be limited to, changing how we communicate, where we meet or conduct business, essential staffing, as well as sharing space with other ministries.

4. We will significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches over the next few years in response to the concerns of our churches, those struggling to pay their ministry funds and those paying increasingly larger amounts as they grow.

- The above noted changes, shift to a regional leadership model, reevaluated relationships with our affiliates, and a downsizing of our administrative footprint, should all serve to make a significant reduction of our ministry fund percentage a real expectation.

Adopted: National Conference 2014

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AN ENDURING COVENANT

THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Evangelical Theological Seminary was founded by the Evangelical Congregational Church in 1953 out of a vision to train clergy for service in the denomination. Over the years the Seminary has broadened the scope of its mission to include many other broadly evangelical constituencies and other forms of preparation for service to the Church and the world, all with the support and encouragement of the Church. The funding relationship between the Church and Seminary has been changed, as has the Evangelical Congregational composition of the Seminary's board of trustees. Yet the vital relationship between the Seminary and the Church continues enthusiastically today, as delineated and affirmed in this Enduring Covenant.

The Church and Seminary agree that the curriculum, programs, marketing, and operations of Evangelical Seminary are and shall remain designed to promote growth and development in accordance with these shared core values:

- To establish students in the knowledge of God's inspired word, and to teach competency in its interpretation, proclamation, and application in the contemporary world
- To exhibit and model academic excellence in the teaching and learning of all disciplines in the seminary curriculum.
- To promote the process of spiritual formation for every student so that their relationship with the living Christ permeates their character, attitude, and ministry
- To help students evaluate and grow in their relationship skills, commitments, accountability, and Christ-likeness within their marriages, families, friendships, congregations, and communities
- To develop dynamic, creative, and Spirit-filled leaders who will serve Christ and the Church with integrity and skill while equipping others to do the same
- To cultivate in students a passion and ability to take Christ's redemptive work to a lost world by proclaiming the good news of salvation, helping believers grow and mature in the faith and acting to alleviate human suffering and injustice
- To create in students and awareness, sensitivity, and active commitment to the global nature of the mission and ministry of the church.

In order to maintain and continue this vital relationship, the Evangelical Congregational Church and Evangelical Seminary commit to the following components of this Enduring Covenant. The Evangelical Congregational Church will:

1. Regard Evangelical Seminary as the preferred institution of higher education for the training of Evangelical Congregational pastors, missionaries, specialized ministers, and other vocations for which the Seminary provides training and support.
2. Encourage financial support for the Seminary by promoting an awareness that theological education is the responsibility of the whole Church.
3. Encourage ECC member congregations to support the work of the Seminary by permitting Seminary representatives to present the ministry of the Seminary in their local services and programs.
4. Encourage ECC member congregations to support the Seminary financially by including the Seminary's "Fund for Students" in their budget and supporting capital fund drives and/or other special gifts/appeals.
5. Encourage local churches and Districts to consider creating scholarship funds for students from their church/Region.
6. Support the work of the Evangelical Congregational Studies Center of Evangelical Seminary.

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Evangelical Seminary will:

1. Maintain an educational and spiritual environment consistent with the Core Values and Theological Commitments of Evangelical Theological Seminary and the Discipline of the Evangelical Congregational Church.
2. Grant to the Evangelical Congregational Church, in keeping with the Seminary's By-laws, that the Bishop of the Church shall be a voting member of the Board of Trustees.
3. Consult with ECC leadership when hiring key faculty and staff positions.
4. Make available on a regular basis, through the Center for EC Studies, courses in ECC theology, history and polity, along with other offerings that will provide ongoing support to EC denominational leaders, pastors, and laity.
5. Provide regular reports on the Seminary to the ECC National Conference, denominational leaders, pastors, and other leaders.

The Evangelical Congregational Church and Evangelical Seminary will both:

1. Keep open lines of communication with the Seminary to share concerns and celebrate what the Lord is doing in each other's ministries.
2. Share personnel, resources and facilities when possible and appropriate in order to further the mission of the Church and Seminary.
3. Solicit recommendations from the Church in identifying qualified candidates to be considered for membership on the Seminary's Board of Trustees.

Revision approved by the Evangelical Seminary Board of Trustees, February, 2018, and the National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church, May, 2018.

Adopted: National Conference 2018

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COVENANT BETWEEN THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND NEW DAWN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC. 2015

Preamble:

The National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church (Church) and New Dawn Christian Community Services, Inc. (NDCCS) have had a long and valuable relationship. Since 1924, when the Burd and Rogers families founded a home for seniors and subsequently gave the home to the Church, the denomination has ministered to the needs of seniors. Over the years the Church has provided board members, residents, employees, volunteers, and contributions to NDCCS. NDCCS have provided care for many members of the Church, many of whom had limited financial resources. NDCCS has also provided resources on senior issues to the Church and provided facilities for various Church events.

NDCCS and the Church recognize the value of affiliations with external organizations whose missions are compatible with each other and whose activities will significantly assist each other in advancing and achieving their strategic and ministry objectives. In recognition of this important relationship between the Church and NDCCS and with shared respect and trust for the ministries of each organization, the Board of Trustees of NDCCS and the National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church both agree to the following:

NDCCS covenants to:

1. Promote a compassionate and spiritual home environment consistent with the Church's core values.
2. Prayerfully support the Church and its ministries.
3. Encourage a clear line of communication concerning the needs of seniors within the church community and where we can assist in providing viable solutions.
4. Share personnel resources and facilities where possible to enhance ministry opportunities.
5. Solicit recommendations from the Church when filling chaplaincy and/or employment opportunities.
6. Provide a network of services for older adults through resident communities, community services, and educational opportunities.
7. Provide benevolent care so long as it does not endanger the financial stability of the organization.

The Evangelical Congregational Church covenants to:

1. Promote the identity and ministry of NDCCS within the congregations of the Church.
2. Prayerfully support NDCCS and its ministry.
3. Encourage a clear line of communication about the needs of seniors within the church community and be open to where NDCCS can assist in providing viable solutions.
4. Encourage congregational support through volunteer service.
5. Share personnel resources and facilities where possible to enhance ministry opportunities.
6. Propose qualified candidates to serve on the NDCCS advisory and/or governing Boards.
7. Encourage congregational financial support the benevolent, capital, and other specific fundraising initiatives.

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NDCCS and the Church both covenant to:

1. Maintain a mutually supportive relationship.
2. Keep open lines of communication between leaders in order to build and maintain trust.
3. Work together to identify possible qualified candidates for the NDCCS Board of Trustees.

This statement of covenant is foundational and precedent (in terms of significance if not chronology) to formal legal documents, contractual arrangements, or partnership opportunities. It may be amended as necessary by the consent of both parties when such amendments are deemed good and necessary for their joint mission to glorify God. Nothing contained in this covenant is intended to pass on, directly or by implication, any financial responsibility or liability from one party of this covenant to the other.

Adopted: National Conference 2015

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LEADERSHIP IN THE E.C. CHURCH A Position Paper of the Evangelical Congregational Church Adopted May 28, 2015

Leadership within the Church is a particular role performed on behalf of the Church and is one to which God calls particular individuals just as he calls all followers of Jesus to roles of service (Col. 1.25). While all followers are called to ministry, we are herein concerned primarily with the call to a particular kind of ministry within the local congregation including, but not necessarily limited to, what has traditionally been called the pastoral role. This call to leadership within the local congregation is to be confirmed through a process of discernment that includes the existing leadership and membership of the local congregation, the Pastoral Assessment Center, and the denominationally established examination process. This calling is then finally affirmed by the National Conference.

The ecclesiology statement of the denomination states that the Church is “the people called by God to his mission.” The ecclesiology document goes on to describe the local church as a community in which God’s blessing and power have been received through Christ and which exists to bless the world by being a witness for God and partner in his mission. This understanding of Church and the work of the local church requires the identification of leaders for the carrying out of that mission. A core set of graces and gifts have been identified that leaders in this Church must possess.

The three core graces we seek to identify in leaders are teachability, humility and the ability to build a team. It is often easiest to initially identify graces before other attributes, since most potential leaders have yet to experience the maturity of their particular assortment of spiritual gifts. Accordingly, each of these three graces needs to be evident in every candidate for ministry. Yet, the presence of these graces is not fully sufficient to constitute a call to ministry in the local church. The Scriptures additionally speak of leadership in terms of categorical gifts.

In Ephesians 4 Paul identifies five categories of leadership that the church is given for effective ministry—“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ...” (vss. 11-12). When Paul speaks of these categories, he already comprehends that there are a variety of other spiritual gifts that will find unique expression and direction based upon these categories of leadership. Because each category ultimately gives shape to the expression of these other gifts, Paul also identifies these categories as gifts. As a result, leaders in local churches will need to learn to identify, employ, and work with other leaders within each category in order to most effectively advance the kingdom of God in each local context.

The model of leadership described here stands in contrast to models that highlight only certain of the categories and then elevate those categories over the others. This model is rooted in team and it acknowledges and legitimizes a wider range of leaders than has traditionally been the case. This model also serves to demonstrate a kingdom paradigm where Jesus is the true and only head of the church (Eph. 5) and King of all creation placing all the rest of us under his authority. Jesus, fully aware of his authority, used his position to model a different picture of what leaders in his kingdom would look like as he washed his disciple’s feet and said in John 13:13-17:

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

Therefore, leaders in the E.C. Church are servants of Jesus, advancing his Kingdom by obediently employing the various graces and gifts in service to His body which, in turn, is to be engaged as His incarnate presence in the world.

To Know Him and Make Him Known!

Adopted: National Conference 2015

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THE CHURCH

We as Evangelical Congregational Church leaders and a Futures Initiative Team affirm the following understanding of and vision for the church:

The Church is the people called by God to his mission. As the church we are a people redeemed through Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit to live in community as witness to God's love and intention for humanity and the whole created order. The church's work is accomplished as we receive God's blessing and bless the world around us in the name of Jesus and in the power of his Holy Spirit.

Though a very general statement, understood in the context of our Articles of Faith and theological tradition, we believe it offers a picture of the church that is faithful to Scripture and applicable to the cultural context in which we find the church today.

Rather than in institution, organization or location, we understand the church to be a community of God's people. Redeemed through his Son, called to his mission, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church is a people of God's own creation (1 Peter 2:9-10). Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the church is enabled to live as witness to God's love and will for his people and the world. (Acts 1:7-8).

This brings us then to the mission for which God called his church into being. As is reflected in our denominational purpose statement – to know Christ and make him known – we understand that the church joins with God in his mission of being known by and in a relationship with the world (Ephesians 3:10). This mission of God is presented to us throughout Scripture in his creation, covenant, the incarnation, Christ's death and resurrection and the final restoration of all things. God's desire to restore the intended relationship between himself and his creation found its highest expression in the death and resurrection of Jesus; through Christ, the broken relationship between God and the world was restored and God's kingdom rule has and continues to come (Revelation 1:5-6). Jesus commissioned his disciples and the church that would follow to go into the world just as he did and share this good news by making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20 and John 20:21-23). Therefore, we receive God's blessing by being disciples enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit and we bless the world around us by living out Jesus' love, teachings and example.

The local Evangelical Congregational Church congregation, then, should see itself as a community in which God's blessing and power have been received through Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10) and which exists to bless the world by being a witness for God and partner in his mission. Therefore, the local church will be profoundly committed to fulfilling the commission Christ has given. Ever open to the Holy Spirit's working within the church, we look for God's kingdom to come in all aspects of life even as we anticipate his final and eternal reign (Romans 8:18-24). The local church enjoys enhanced opportunities to bless the world through denominational connections and receives resources through those same connections that further enable the local church to fulfill its commission.

Adopted: National Conference 2014

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THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE A Position Paper of the Evangelical Congregational Church Adopted May 28, 2015

For many generations American Christians have been accustomed to the blessing of living in a culture and under a political system that shared many of their basic values and assumptions about life. That blessing, however, has slowly given way to a new situation. We now find an ever expanding gap has developed between American cultural ways and Christian ways. This gap is clearly manifested in the rapid shift in the understanding of the most foundational institution in any society. That foundational institution is marriage.

Contrary to all human experience, marriage is being redefined in western courts and cultures. The redefinition has actually taken place over the past several decades, silently and without much objection from most Christian circles. But the shift, if permitted, leaves us helpless in stemming the tide that has grown from a few marginal voices into a seemingly unstoppable force.

What is marriage?

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman who together establish a home for themselves and any children born of their union. Where does that definition come from? Is it just one of many possible definitions? By what authority is it established?

Christians turn to the earliest chapters of the Bible, where we read that “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24) The pattern is universally affirmed, as marriage is acknowledged in all cultures. The account in Genesis is prior to any divisions into races and cultures, and its outline can be seen wherever one looks among the peoples of the world.

Marriage is the arrangement cultures have used to protect their succeeding generations, thus the future sustainability of the culture itself. Even though there is significant variety in different cultures, such as polygamist arrangements, the unit consisting of parents and children remains; and when the children become of age, they continue the traditions by forming families of their own. In almost every case, a cultural ceremony or ritual is performed which declares the union to be inviolable. Penalties are implied for those who either do not uphold their responsibility to spouse and children and to those who pursue the spouse of another.

Biblical grounding for marriage begins even earlier in Genesis. When we seek God's perspective on human nature from the Bible, we learn a few things very quickly from the first two chapters of Genesis. Let's list them for simplicity and in order to refer to them at later points:

1. We are created in the image of God.
2. We are created male and female.
3. Man and woman are united by leaving parents and, at least in potential, creating offspring.

What we learn in these few simple statements from the opening chapters of the Bible is corroborated in many ways through human history and anthropology. All cultures have some way of recognizing and protecting the relationship between the parents and potential parents of the next generation; it is essential to the survival of the culture into the future, the protection and continuation of what they have made into a future beyond their own lifetime. In all cultures, a man has left father and mother in order to be united with his wife and create a family of their own. It is a creation-wide mandate to which the Bible gives voice.

With respect to the second statement, human psychology and physiology concur. There is difference between the way in which the image of God is exhibited by male and female. The male and female bodies are different; the brain chemistry is different, as science has repeatedly demonstrated. Yet these differences between male and female are complementary; and both male and female characteristics have their origin in God. Some conclusions follow from this. As designed, humans are to be God's image-bearers, that is, the icons of God. And since this image is born jointly by male and female, it is through their difference and in their combination that children born to them are to see God represented to them. It is how they learn of God, however imperfectly. This is an idea primitively stated in Adam's having a helper (better: complement) suitable for him; it is one more sophisticatedly stated by research that

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demonstrates that children of two-parent (male-female) households thrive better than those in other situations. It is the reason all cultures, with or without the Bible, with or without the research, have protected in some significant ways the relationship between man and woman. It's in our nature as created to do so. What this demonstrates is that God's revealed designs for life are not arbitrary; they are for our good.

For Christians, the position is confirmed by Jesus, who referred to the creation of male and female and the union between them when answering a question about divorce (Matt. 19:4-6). It is given greater weight when the apostle Paul uses marriage as an analogy for the relationship between Christ and his church (Eph. 5:22-33). In this passage, the relationship is true of all marriages, not only Christian ones.

Missing the Mark

The God-ordained meaning of marriage was described above. There are, of course, other accountings of human life in the world. And the alternatives are offered with varying degrees of compatibility or agreement and disagreement with the biblical-theological model sketched above. As thinking beings or, if one must say it, rational animals, we can think of other ways. And it is our right to do so. That may seem like an odd thing to affirm, but it follows from our being made in the image of God. We can think and draw conclusions, but our conclusions can be mistaken; and they do not in any way change what is really the case, the way things were from the beginning. But to the extent that these alternative conclusions differ from the created order, they miss the mark. And they miss the mark with consequences following in their train. While this is true for all deviations (and there are many we could discuss), we are focusing on the specific matter of referring to marriage as another kind of union.

Many people have come to think of the essence of marriage as the love that has developed between two people. This is a good starting point, but it is not sufficient. It is not sufficient because it does not include, at least on the surface, a desire to represent God by the union of the differences between male and female, a union open to, even if not always resulting in, offspring. Note that this does not argue that other relationships, including homosexual relationships, cannot be loving relationships. As candidates for marriage, however, other relationships miss the mark; they cannot represent by their union the image of God, nor can they bear offspring.

Missing the mark is the essence of sin. When we miss the mark, we are caught in the consequences that follow from living in a way out of keeping with the goodness planned by the Creator. We are not talking at this point about culpability or personal responsibility; we are talking about living in ways that miss the intention of the One who made us, whether those ways are personally chosen or are the ways that have been handed to us, such as through culture. We all too quickly jump from the idea of sin to personal worthlessness and devaluation. At this point, that's not what's at stake here. When we miss the mark we bring consequences on ourselves and on those we influence, as individuals and as societies who establish those alternative ways. And when ways and patterns of life that are sinful become entrenched in the thinking of a culture there will be significant harm to many people as a result.

What Marriage Is Not

Virtually every couple seeking a solemnizing of their marriage counseling has been asked why they desire to be married. Invariably, the answer is that the two individuals love each other and make each other happy; therefore, they want to spend the rest of their lives together. To be sure, romantic love is a strong and highly desirable force in the maintaining of a marriage. But it is not the essence of the marriage, nor is it a sufficient reason for entering into marriage.

Failure to appreciate the true essence of marriage has led to several destructive consequences. For one, if love, particularly romantic love, is understood as the primary element in a marriage, it is too easily assumed that the marriage is no longer binding if that love has dissipated. It has also placed the burden of creating and maintaining personal happiness upon one's spouse. Christians have carried these assumptions as well as non-Christians, as evidenced by the similar rates at which believing couples divorce when compared to non-believing couples. Our society has suffered untold consequences in the maladjustment and incomplete emotional development of the children of divorce. Divorce is nonetheless defended as the responsible choice—because the love that supposedly creates the marriage is no longer present, nor is it recoverable.

Redefining marriage as essentially a loving relationship has also opened the possibility of any two (or more?) people who love one another to claim the status of a married couple. When this happens, marriage is no longer about the procreation and raising of children and continuation of the culture, nor

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about becoming the living representation of Christ and the church. Instead, it has become a matter of one's personal rights and the pursuit of happiness.

Marriage, Rights, and Laws

Most of the discussion about same-sex "marriage" has centered on the notion of rights. It is claimed that these couples have the right to marry, a right that is granted by the government. There are several things about which to be concerned within this claim and in the assumptions behind it.

First of all, everyone has the God-given right to enter into a true marriage, i.e., the union between a man and a woman. It is not true that persons who identify themselves as homosexual do not have the same rights in this regard as persons who identify as heterosexual; the former are as free to marry a person of the opposite sex as are the latter. What they do not have the right to do is to redefine the meaning of marriage grounded in creation. No one has that supposed right, and that includes all who have changed the definition into the pursuit of personal happiness.

Secondly, one must ask about the interests of government in this matter. Most of the world's governments, though not all of them, have laws protecting marriage and family. They have the laws because it is in the interest of the society to provide for its own continuation through the protection of each succeeding generation of children. In our own context, it is the reason for taxation policies that recognize the needs of families, for laws regulating divorce, for providing adoption and foster care guidelines for those instances in which marriages fail. Marriage then becomes a legal status bestowed by a governing body, accompanied by whatever benefits deemed appropriate. It is with the continuation of society in mind that such benefits are granted.

However, because of the change in the definition of marriage, the interest of the government in preserving marriage becomes unclear. Persons who have chosen not to marry as defined in creation have wanted the status and benefits granted to couples in marriages that do honor the creation intent of God. If marriage is simply a means of pursuing personal happiness and having a loving relationship, it may be that governments have reasons for sanctioning other kinds of relationships; perhaps it is a necessary step in the context of a broken world. But any such relationships or unions should not be understood as holy matrimony, whatever they may be called.

Questions, Implications, and Challenges

There are several issues that call for serious thinking and praying. Christian living and ministry in today's world cannot ignore what is happening in a culture that is not centered in God's design for life. Some of these are listed below.

1. We are people of God, called to know the truth that sets us free. We must take every thought captive to Christ, which means we must measure all ideas from the perspective of the biblical narrative.
2. We are people of God, called to be ministers of a new and better covenant, one of grace. It is not our task to condemn those caught in sinful ways, but to demonstrate the love of God by coming alongside those who have been caught up in destructive ways of thinking about life in this world.
3. We must be prepared to be marginalized when our message is unpopular with the ways of this world. It is untrue that disagreement with the world's narrative means hatred of those who live by that false narrative; it is untrue that tolerance requires agreement. Yet the untruthfulness of these ideas will have to be demonstrated by our conduct if they are to be dispelled.
4. Churches should be prepared to minister to persons in same-sex relationships, who are legally married in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world. We must be welcoming toward the persons, even though not affirming of the relationships. Only if such persons become disruptive and divisive should they be asked to leave after due warning and attempts at conciliation.
5. We must maintain our distinction from the world in terms of what marriage is. We solemnize marriages that follow God's creation intent; we refuse to grant the sanction of the church upon other kinds of relationships. We may find it wise to withdraw from participating in state-sanctioned "marriages" at all. This might be a drastic measure, but will need to be carefully considered.

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The Remaining Questions

This position has not addressed the issue of homosexuality itself. Nor has it spoken about how we should respond to monogamous relationships between practicing homosexual couples. Regarding the first of these, the biblical story is clear and consistent in regarding homosexual behavior as sin. Attempts to mitigate or blunt their force fail on exegetical grounds and/or introduce a hermeneutic that would render consistent biblical interpretation pointless, if not impossible.

Regarding the second, we must ask where and how we speak the prophetic word about homosexuality. Should it be quietly within the bounds of the church, or should we speak as much and as civilly as possible to the wider communities of which we are part? One thought must be kept in mind as we consider what to say and to whom.

Specifically, the spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological health of people for whom Christ came to this world is at stake. If we love people, we must be concerned about their fate. The presently reigning cultural story is one of individual rights and pursuits of happiness without any boundaries drawn by a loving Creator. It is a culture that claims to be based on science; but when science points to conclusions at odds with the desired ways, it is strangely muted. Science clearly points to the health-compromising effects of male homosexual practices; yet these data are rarely, if ever, told as part of the story of individually defined happiness. The church should be diligent in using the scientific data to underscore the fact that it is not arbitrary prejudice that leads the church to speak against homosexual behavior; it is the word of a loving Creator whose designs and purposes for human life are never arbitrary. Our desire to keep young people from falling into a devastating way of life—one encouraged upon them by a false cultural narrative—will not allow us to remain silent.

There is every reason for us as the church of Jesus Christ to hold firm on our understanding of marriage as God's gift to a man and a woman. There will be accusations of fear and hate cast against Christians. Our response must be a demonstration of the love of God for all persons. We must also be willing to work toward a better understanding of the people with whom we disagree. We have nothing to fear from objective scientific findings; they will not change the way God has designed us. God so loved the world—the God-defying, rebellious world—that He gave His son on its behalf. This love must also guide us through the Holy Spirit sent to work in us and through us.

Adopted: National Conference 2015

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INTRODUCTION TO THE “ESSENTIAL QUALITIES FOR A PASTOR IN THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH”

The Evangelical Congregational Church is grateful to the Lord for his continued leading in the lives of individuals called to His service as pastors. The Holy Spirit speaks and men respond to that call by placing themselves into His hands, answering the call to pastoral ministry. Through His Holy Spirit He calls and gives gifts so they can serve Him and His church. We recognize that it is our heavenly Father, working through His Holy Spirit, who gives various gifts to those He calls. Those gifts differ from person to person. Through the Evangelical Congregational Church’s Pastoral Assessment Center we have developed a process to confirm the call, the gifts and the graces present in the life of pastoral candidates.

In addition, the Assessment Center, in cooperation with established leaders both inside and outside the denomination, has developed a list of “Essential Qualities” for a pastor in the Evangelical Congregational Church. These are not spiritual gifts or graces, but are essential qualities that must be evidenced in the life of a pastor in order to serve effectively in the context of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

This list of thirteen “Essential Qualities” is a valuable resource for pastors as they examine themselves for healthy ministry and as a resource to share with those who are sensing a call to pastoral ministry within the Evangelical Congregational Church.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES FOR A PASTOR IN THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Approved August 2004

1. **Empowering Leadership**

- Helping people to “buy in” and feel responsible for the growth and success of the church
- Gaining commitment of the people to the vision
- Establishing a congregational identity
- Avoiding stereotyping of congregation by imposing unrealistic goals for which it cannot claim ownership
- Committing to numerical growth within the context of spiritual and relational growth (more and better disciples)
- Encouraging functional structure for congregational health/ministry

2. **Need-oriented Evangelism**

- Communicating in style that is understood by the pre-Christian
- Understanding the mentality and culture of the pre-Christian
- Moving and functioning in the “personal space” of the pre-Christian without fear
- Quickly getting to know the pre-Christian on a personal level
- Breaking through the barriers erected by the pre-Christian
- Handling crises faced by the unchurched
- Identifying and assessing community needs and culture

3. **Spousal Cooperation**

- Having an explicit agreement regarding each partner’s respective role and involvement in ministry
- Having explicit rules regarding the use of home as an office
- Evaluating the consequences of ministry demands upon the children
- Functioning as a team through individual and collective action
- Having a strategy for dealing with strangers
- Modeling wholesome family like before the church and community

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- Agreeing upon and sharing the ministry vision
 - Deliberately planning and protecting private family life
- 4. Loving Relationships**
- Displaying God's love and compassion to people
 - Quickly incorporating newcomers into a network of relationships
 - Engaging others in meaningful church activity
 - Responding with urgency to expressed needs and concerns of people
 - Getting to know people on a personal basis
 - Making others feel secure and comfortable in one's presence
 - Not responding judgmentally or prejudicially to new people
 - Appreciating and accepting a variety of persons
 - Spending quality time with present parishioners without overstepping them for new people
- 5. Gift-Oriented Ministry**
- Discerning of spiritual gifts in others
 - Matching the gifts of people with ministry needs and opportunities
 - Releasing and equipping people to do the task of ministry
 - Delegating effectively in areas of personal limitations
 - Avoiding personal overload by delegating effectively
 - Not prematurely assigning ministry assignments before people are adequately equipped
 - Not placing unwarranted restrictions on other's spiritual giftedness
- 6. Passionate Spirituality**
- Regularity of devotional life, including prayer and Bible study
 - Reading of appropriate books/magazines
 - Involvement in an accountability group
 - Possessing a conviction regarding one's call to ministry
 - Believing in God's actions
 - Having expectation and hope
 - Having a willingness to wait for answers to specific prayer needs
 - Dealing with conflict assertively, constructively and tactfully
- 7. Visionizing Capacity**
- Being a person who projects into the future beyond the present
 - Seeing the congregation within the larger context of God's kingdom
 - Developing a theme which highlights the vision and philosophy of ministry
 - Persuasively selling the vision to people
 - Approaching challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles
 - Coping effectively with non-visionizing elements
 - Not erecting artificial walls or limits wither overtly or subconsciously
 - Establishing a clear church identity related to the theme and vision
 - Believing in God's capacity to do great things
- 8. Intrinsically Motivated**
- Having a desire to do well and a commitment to excellence
 - Stick-to-itiveness and persistence
 - Having initiative and aggressiveness without the negative connotations
 - Having a willingness to work long and hard
 - Being a self-starter with a willingness to build from nothing
 - Having a high energy and vitality level, good physical stamina

APPENDIX

- 9. Flexible and Adaptable**
- Coping effectively with ambiguity
 - Coping effectively with constant and abrupt change
 - Adapting oneself and one's methods to the uniqueness of the particular congregation
 - Shifting priorities and emphasis during various stages of church growth
 - Doing whatever is necessary whenever necessary
- 10. Resilience**
- Experiencing setbacks without defeat
 - Riding the ups and downs (attendance)
 - Expecting the unexpected
 - Rebounding from loss, disappointments and failure
 - Matching the gifts of people with ministry needs and opportunities
- 11. Theological Distinctives**
- Agreement with the Articles of Faith
 - Willingness to work with leadership
- 12. Financial Stability**
- Agreement with spouse on spending
 - Proper balance between income and expenditures
 - Need for the wife to work outside the home
 - Realistic financial expectations from the church
 - Disclosure of financial statement
- 13. Wellness Issues**
- Physical health concerns that would hinder effectiveness in ministry
 - Exercise program to keep the body healthy
 - Involvement in hobbies as an outlet/escape from ministry pressures

Approved: August 2004

APPENDIX

**ABBREVIATED STATEMENT OF FAITH
FOR THE
EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
(Prepared by the National Conference Faith and Doctrine Committee)
Approved January 6, 2005**

Believing the Bible to be our final authority for faith and Christian living, we affirm the following:

That the universe is the purposeful creation of a personal, loving, almighty God.

That all human beings are made in the image of the Creator and are of infinite worth.

That our world is under the sway of sin as a result of a historical and a personal human rebellion against God, so that suffering, death and separation from God are the experience of humankind; and that without the intervention of God's grace, this will be the eternal state of all persons.

That Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, through his virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death on the Cross, and glorious resurrection and ascension, graciously offers new life to all who receive him by faith.

That the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, gives them a desire and an ability to follow biblical standards of conduct in their personal lives and in society.

That the Christian faith is lived in the community of the church, where worship and witness are embodied through the spiritual gifts of its members.

That Jesus Christ will return to this world, bring an end to history as we know it, inaugurate the final judgment, and welcome believers into his eternal kingdom.

Approved January 6, 2005

APPENDIX

PROFILE OF AN EC PASTOR

Pastors in the EC Church must understand their own identity in Christ, as well as their calling and gifts in relation to the body of believers so that the church is engaged for the work of ministry in the 21st century. **They must know** how to interpret their cultural setting and properly communicate kingdom values and instructions from God's Word in order to form and lead a healthy community of believers.

They must **be** shaped by a character that reflects God's love in their lives through authenticity, patience, compassion, integrity, and spiritual fervor. They must participate in a disciplined lifelong pursuit that reveals teachability, hospitality, forgiveness, and most of all how to disciple others into these same Christ-like character traits.

They must be able to effectively communicate the faith—what it looks like and how it works—within and beyond their community of believers, while also recognizing and discerning false claims to the Gospel. They must demonstrate a disciple's life through their own ways of living the faith—serving, directing, giving, listening, and laughing with others in order to cultivate and empower flourishing among the community of believers and make an impact on the greater community.

They must see God at work around them, enabling others to grasp hold of God's intentional love for them, and each person's own individual potential for ministry. They must not neglect the opportunities and threats in their midst, but rather reveal how God's kingdom intersects with the life of the church and their surrounding community.

Approved May 24, 2017