

Resources that come both highly recommended and even greatly encouraged are the following (and in no particular order):

1. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church Leadership Training Guide. Available via phone, web or mail (\$5.00) from the Office of the General Assembly. This resource will become the standard training material at a future time.
2. The Westminster Confession of Faith (<http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/beliefs/westminster-confession/>)
3. The Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (<http://www.epc.org/mediafiles/epc-book-of-order-2011-12.pdf>)
4. The statement of Essentials. Also available from the office of the General Assembly, this document can be downloaded for free. (<http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/beliefs/essentials-of-our-faith/>)
5. Personal Testimonies.
6. *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace*, by Michael Horton. This book is available from a variety of sources.

Included later in this manual are study resources for each of these plans, some have been used and found helpful.

The expectation of those engaging in elder examination is that training has been available. At the time of the examination, Ruling Elders should expect a gracious, yet thorough examination. Of importance is maturity of faith and familiarity of materials. A detailed exposition, as is expected and required of those entering Teaching Elder positions, is not expected.

To this end Ruling Elders must:

1. Know the Essentials of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church
2. Share their personal testimony
3. Have a familiarity with the *Book of Order* and Evangelical Presbyterian Church Polity
4. Have read the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in a fashion as to be able to respond to Ordination Questions
5. Have some familiarity with the distinctives of Reformed Theology

## ***Process***

For those engaged for the very first time in elder examination, the process begins with a call to representative of *The Presbytery of the Alleghenies*. The current contact person is:

### **The Reverend Dr. Bob Stauffer**

Gateway Community Church  
An Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
101 Kaibab Trail  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057  
724-421-8282

The representative will engage in process of conversation and material provision coinciding with collegial inclusion of other presbytery members.

For churches which are already in the Presbytery, materials can be used for ongoing training of current or incoming elders. No other process is required than included in the Book of Order.

## **Study**

We encourage a study method appropriate for the church. Some churches have used time at regular meetings. Some have set aside meetings around meals to allow discussion and questions of the materials. Some have used web and on line availabilities. Use the best means for the people included in the process.

All materials in full document formats are available from the presbytery representatives. They can be retrieved from the contact person or those assigned to the church for assistance.

## **The Examination**

When the time arrives for the examination, the examination will be coordinated so as to include all elders to be examined and assigned representatives for the Church Development Committee, consisting of at least two Teaching Elders and two Ruling Elders.

The agreed upon time and date should be set so as to allow maximum preparation and participation.

We strongly encourage an evening that includes a meal or at least dessert and coffee and tea. Name tags are very helpful. The meeting shall begin with introductions and prayer.

At the close of the meeting the assigned committee will generate a report to *The Presbytery of the Alleghenies*, through the Church Development Committee, concerning the examination and including the recording of all present, time, place, sample questions asked and replies, and appropriate recommendations regarding preparation and inclusion.

## **Sample Agenda and Questions**

The moderator shall commence the meeting with introductions and prayer. Having appointed a recording secretary from the Committee, noting the time, place, and persons present, the moderator shall proceed to the examination.

### Moderator to All

1. What training process have you undertaken to get to this point?
2. To what degree is the congregation aware of this proposed move into the EPC and
3. What are their feelings?
4. Describe the overall Health of the Church, re Spiritual Growth, growth in numbers, and financial health.

### Personal Testimonies

Share your story in a way that shows:

- Your understanding and acceptance of the Gospel-your need for a Savior, God's 'way' to be saved
- Your progress in spiritual growth including your call to be an Elder
- The specific ways you are fulfilling your call at this church

### On the Westminster Confession

1. Do you have any questions or objections to the document?
2. Do you understand that you are seeking admission into a denomination that takes this confessional standard seriously?

### Reformed Theology

1. Why the Bible has authority over the church in its role in our lives.
2. The role of God's Sovereignty in the process of anyone accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord.
3. The Role of God grace, faith, and works in our salvation and our lives as Christians.
4. The 5 Solas and Calvin's TULIP
5. The Sacraments

### The Essentials

1. Do you accept them without exception?

### Polity

1. Describe Jesus Christ as head over His church.
2. Describe the role of the Elder as the spiritual shepherd of the local church.
3. Describe the differences or similarities in the EPC polity from your former church.
4. Describe the difference of Ruling Elder and Teaching Elder.

## **EPC Elder Training**

Beaver, Butler and Lawrence Counties, PA

October 8, 2011

### **Session 1-The Scriptural Duty & Faith of an EPC Ruling Elder**

#### ***I. (9:15AM) The Scriptural Duty of the Office of Elder***

##### *A. A Definition of "Elder" from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary:*

1. One living in an earlier period
2. **a:** one who is older: **SENIOR** <a child trying to please her elders> **b:** an aged person
3. One having authority by virtue of age and experience <the village elders>
4. Any of various officers of religious groups: as **a:** **PRESBYTER** **b:** a permanent officer elected by a Presbyterian congregation and ordained to serve on the session and assist the pastor at communion **c:** **MINISTER** **d:** a leader of the Shakers **e:** a Mormon ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood

##### *B. Four Scriptures:*

1. Exodus 18:1-27 -- Elder as Administrator
2. Numbers 11:4-30 -- Elder as Spirit-Filled Leader
3. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 -- Life of an Overseer/Elder
4. Titus 1:5-9 -- Teaching Duties of an Elder

#### ***II. (9:45 AM) The Biblical Teaching to be Embraced by a Ruling Elder***

##### *A. The Five Solas*

1. Sola Scriptura -- Scripture Alone (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. Solus Christus -- Christ Alone (Acts 4:10-12)
3. Sola Gratia -- Grace Alone (Ephesians 2:8-9)
4. Sola Fide -- Faith Alone (Hebrew 11:1-3)
5. Soli Deo Gloria -- Glory to God Alone (John 17:1-3)

##### *B. Reformational Principles (M. S. Horton, Putting Amazing Back Into Grace)*

1. We were created perfect by a Holy, loving God -- Ch. 2
2. We fell from that perfection through sin (Total Depravity) -- Ch. 3
3. We were chosen before foundation of world in Jesus Christ -- Chs. 4, 5
4. We were given Jesus Christ to be "God with us." -- Ch. 6
5. God chooses in sovereign majesty and love -- Ch 7
6. God's calling is irresistible for those on whom he has laid claim -- Chs. 8, 9
7. If we are truly called by God, we will persevere -- Ch. 10
8. The Sacraments were given by God as a means to reveal his grace -- Ch. 11
9. We are saved to serve until Jesus Comes! -- Ch. 12

#### ***Break (10:15 AM)***

## **Session 2-The Doctrine of Our Faith, The Government of Our Faith**

### **III. (10:30 AM) The Importance of Doctrine in tile Life and Work of a Ruling Elder**

#### *A. A Definition of "Doctrine" from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary:*

1. *Archaic: teaching, instruction*
2. **a:** something that is taught **b:** a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief: dogma **c:** a principle of law established through past decisions **d:** a statement of fundamental government policy especially in international relations **e:** a military principle or set of strategies

#### *B. In Praise of Sound Doctrine*

1. The importance of doctrine and danger of subverting it. (1 Timothy 4: 1-15)
2. The application of doctrine (Titus 2:1-15)

### **IV. (11:00 AM) The System of doctrine of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church**

#### *A. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)*

1. The Authority of Scripture and Attributes of its Author (chs. 1,2)
2. Creation (chs. 3,4)
3. Fall (chs. 5, 6)
4. Redemption (chs. 7 -31)
5. Restoration (chs. 32 -35)

#### *B. Other Helpful Documents*

1. The Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms
2. The Essentials of Our Faith
3. Other Reformed Confessions
  - a. The Heidelberg Catechism
  - b. The Second Helvetic Confession
  - c. The Canons of Dort
4. EPC Position Papers and Pastoral Letters

### **V. (11:30 AM) The System of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church**

#### *A. The Book of Order (BOO)*

1. The Book of Government (BOG)
2. The Book of Discipline (BOD)
3. The Book of Worship (BOW)

#### *B. The Organization a/Our Church*

1. The Local Church
2. The Deacons
3. The Session
4. The Presbytery
5. The General Assembly
6. Other Bodies

# **AN OVERVIEW OF T.U.L.I.P. AND THE ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH**

## ***TULIP***

Reformed theology is famous for a simple acrostic that has often been dubbed as the Five Points of Calvinism (although these are not Calvin's words they seek to summarize some of his thinking in a memorable way). It spells TULIP.

T – Total Depravity (sin affects every part of who we are)

U – Unconditional Election (God's choice of his people is not condition based on what we do).

L – Limited Atonement (Christ died for all meaning all those who are his, not all meaning everyone)

I – Irresistible Grace (God's saving grace always achieves its end)

P – Perseverance of the Saints (popularized by the phrase "once saved always saved")

## ***TOTAL DEPRAVITY***

Other names: Total inability or Humanity's Radical Corruption

What it does mean: there is no part of us that has not been affected in some way by the Fall (Adam and Eve's sin). Sin affects my will, my heart, my mind, and my body. Because of this I am unable to seek God on my own. The scripture describes us as dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1-3 and Col. 2:13) – think how responsive a corpse is. Apart from the work of God in our lives the scripture describes us as unable to understand the things God (I Cor. 2:14). Standing in great contrast to those who think people are basically good – scripture teaches us that no one is righteous and no one seeks God (Romans 3:10-11 or Mark 10:18).

What this does not mean: that I am as bad as I could be (only that every part of me apart from the work of Christ is affected by sin).

Practically this doctrine serves to magnify God's grace. "If we do not know the seriousness of the diagnosis, we can't appreciate the cure." (Horton) It is also this doctrine that I will refer you to when you object: "that's not fair" – fair is judgment.

See Westminster Confession Chapter 9 Section 3.

## ***UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION***

Other names: Sovereign Election or God's Sovereign Choice

What it does mean: Before the foundation of the earth God chose some to be objects of His undeserved favor. His choice of particular sinners for salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected – that is it was not conditioned on anything that we do.

What it does not mean: It does not mean God is arbitrary (i.e. to do something for no reason). It is not by chance but is rather “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5). This is in no way “fate” for fate is impersonal – election is the loving and free choice of a personal God.

Practically this doctrine rescues us from subtle but real pride. The one who denies unconditional election is hard pressed to answer the question: “Why were you saved and not another person?” without eventually having to say that they were more sensitive to the work of God, chose better, was not as foolish or resistant to God... But there can be no pride in the one who embraces this biblical truth.

The scripture often speaks about God's choosing (or election, or predestination of his people) Ephesian 1:4 (before the foundation of the world), 1 Cor. 1:27-29, John 15:16. And that belief itself is a gift of God not some foreseen condition (Acts 13:48, Phil. 1:29).

## ***LIMITED ATONEMENT***

Other names: Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption

What it does mean: Christ died for the elect (those God without condition chose – i.e. the church) and not for everyone. Part of the issue is did Christ's death on the cross accomplish something or not – if it did then the sins of all those for whom Christ died are atoned for (so if he died for everyone then everyone would be saved – which we know not to be true). The scripture teaches that Christ actually saves (not that he potentially saves) – Matthew 1:21, 1 Tim. 1:15. In John 10:11, 15 Christ died for his sheep; Acts 20:28 for his church; Romans 8:32-35 the elect.

What it does not mean: It does not mean that the value of his death on the cross is limited. Christ's death is of infinite value (it could have been sufficient to save everyone) but it was designed to save those who are His.

Problems: this more than any other point is where people feel the most uncomfortable (causing some to call themselves “4 point Calvinists”). Keep in mind that texts that describe Christ's saving work in general terms using the words “world” or “all” – they are to show that Christ died not just for the Jews but all people without distinction (Jew and Gentile alike) not all people without exception (not saving everyone).

Practical Value: It leads to our assurance of salvation – to know that his death actually accomplishes something not just potentially so.



## ***IRRESISTIBLE GRACE***

Other names: Effectual Grace, Efficacious Call of the Spirit

What it means: God effectively calls His elect unto salvation. “He effectually persuades us and, in changing our will, gives us the desire for him that is entirely contrary to our sinful nature... He overwhelms us with his love and grace, liberating us to freely embrace what he had before just as freely rejected.” (Horton)

What it does not mean: It does not mean that people cannot resist the grace of God. Rather irresistible grace is to say that God’s saving grace achieves its purpose. Nor does this mean that God brings people into His Kingdom kicking and screaming and excludes those who desperately want to enter – rather what this means is that we will never want to enter into his kingdom without the prior work of God – his inward call on our lives – and his grace to save us always is effective.

Scripture to consider: John 6:37, 44-45, 64-65 – no one can come to Christ unless the Father (through his Spirit) draws them/ Acts 16:14 This is how Lydia was saved (the Lord opened her heart)/ Romans 8:30 everyone who God predestines God calls and everyone who he calls he justifies (so obviously this is not a call that can be resisted).

Practical Value: We are called to proclaim the gospel and be fishers of men – but this gives us a sense of confidence in doing this – it is not up to us but God’s inward call – we need to be obedient and faithful but we cannot change hearts – that is God’s work.

## ***PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS***

Other names: Security of Believers, God’s Preservation of the Saints

What it means: the popular phrase is accurate: “once saved always saved” – the elect are eternally secure in Christ indeed as the Rom. 8:35-39 takes a long time to say forcefully nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. A beautiful picture of this is found in John 10:27-30 in which Jesus refers to his people as his sheep and makes the promise that they will “never perish” because they are in Christ’s hand as well as the Father’s hand.

What this does not mean: this is not based upon our efforts. Paul’s confident statement concerning the Philippian believers (see Phil.1:6) being brought to completion until the day of Christ Jesus was not founded in their efforts but rather – that God finishes what he begins.

Practical Value: This brings a great sense of security that leads to peace in Christ (not laziness as some would claim) and keeps us from constantly striving to win God’s favor in fear of losing our salvation.

## **ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH**

Question # 5 of the Ordination Vows reads as follows: “Do you affirm and adopt the ‘Essentials of Our Faith’ without exception?” If you remember the PC(USA) ordination questions you may remember a similar question (Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenants of the reformed faith). The difference in the EPC is they actually tell us what we are affirming and adopting.

The essentials can be found in the front of your Book of Order or your copy of the Westminster Confession. There are 7 essentials. Since they are things you will need to affirm and adopt verbally I would encourage you to read them. They begin with a preamble of sorts that places an emphasis on the Word of God.

**All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God’s redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:**

Allow me to say that it is refreshing to be in a denomination that is not embarrassed to say: “the infallible Word of God.” One thing they want you to know about the 7 following essentials: “On this sure foundation [the scriptures] we affirm these additional essentials of our faith.”

### **ESSENTIAL # 1**

(bold is the essential/ light type my comments)

1. **We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!**

This is a statement with which all Christians should be able to affirm. We believe in one God (i.e. we are not polytheists) in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Christian doctrine of the Trinity). My hope would be that nothing in these essentials should shock you – for they are all basic to the Christian faith.

### **ESSENTIAL # 2**

2. **Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.**

This is a statement about Jesus that he was born of a virgin, incarnate God (God in flesh), that he died as a sacrifice, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. All of this again is basic to the Christian faith reminiscent of the Apostle’s Creed.

### ESSENTIAL # 3

- 3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.**

If essential #2 was a statement about Jesus then this one is concerning the Work of the Holy Spirit. Notice the personal pronoun – the Holy Spirit is not our conscious – not akin to the force – but the third person of the triune God. Notice as well the actions attributed to the Spirit (an active part of our lives as believers).

### ESSENTIAL # 4

- 4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.**

This is a statement about how we are saved from the condemnation our sins bring us. We are saved wholly by God's free grace.

### ESSENTIAL # 5

- 5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.**

This is a statement about the Church both universal and local (congregations). Notice the marks of the local church: the Word preached, sacraments administered, disciplines practiced, and fellowship maintained.

### ESSENTIAL # 6

- 6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth-personally, visibly, and bodily-to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20)**

Notice the avoidance of a particular brand of eschatology (study of end times) – they stick here in the essentials to facts that all Christians can affirm on this subject.

### ESSENTIAL # 7

- 7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)**

Here is a statement about our marching orders as believers – what is often called “The Great Commission.” Read Matthew 28:18-20. I hope as we come to the conclusion of the essentials you would agree that none of them should be controversial surely all evangelicals should be able to affirm these truths.

## **Five Solas<sup>1</sup>**

### **Sola Scriptura**

Scripture alone. When the Reformers used the words Sola Scriptura they were expressing their concern for the Bible's authority, and what they meant is that the Bible alone is our ultimate authority not the pope, not the church, not the traditions of the church or church councils, still less personal intimations or subjective feelings, but Scripture only. Other sources of authority may have an important role to play. Some are even established by God such as the authority of church elders, the authority of the state, or the authority of parents over children. But Scripture alone is truly ultimate. Therefore, if any of these other authorities depart from Bible teaching, they are to be judged by the Bible and rejected.

### **Solus Christus**

Christ alone. The church of the Middle Ages spoke about Christ. A church that failed to do that could hardly claim to be Christian. But the medieval church had added many human achievements to Christ's work, so that it was no longer possible to say that salvation was entirely by Christ and his atonement. This was the most basic of all heresies, as the Reformers rightly perceived. It was the work of God plus our own righteousness. The Reformation motto Solus Christus was formed to repudiate this error. It affirmed that salvation has been accomplished once for all by the mediatorial work of the historical Jesus Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification, and any "gospel" that fails to acknowledge that or denies it is a false gospel that will save no one.

### **Sola Gratia**

Grace alone. The words Sola Gratia mean that human beings have no claim upon God. That is, God owes us nothing except just punishment for our many and very willful sins. Therefore, if he does save sinners, which he does in the case of some but not all, it is only because it pleases him to do it. Indeed, apart from this grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that flows from it, no one would be saved, since in our lost condition, human beings are not capable of winning, seeking out, or even cooperating with God's grace. By insisting on "grace alone" the Reformers were denying that human methods, techniques, or strategies in themselves could ever bring anyone to faith. It is grace alone expressed through the supernatural work of the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from James Montgomery Boice's *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?*

Spirit that brings us to Christ, releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from death to spiritual life.

### **Sola Fide**

Faith alone. The Reformers never tired of saying that “justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.” When put into theological shorthand the doctrine was expressed as “justification by faith alone,” the article by which the church stands or falls, according to Martin Luther. The Reformers called justification by faith Christianity’s “material principle,” because it involves the very matter or substance of what a person must understand and believe to be saved. Justification is a declaration of God based on the work of Christ. It flows from God’s grace and it comes to the individual not by anything he or she might do but by “faith alone” (Sola Fide). We may state the full doctrine as: Justification is the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

### **Soli Deo Gloria**

Glory to God alone. Each of the great solas is summed up in the fifth Reformation motto: Soli Deo Gloria, meaning “to God alone be the glory.” It is what the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 11:36 when he wrote, “to Him be the glory forever! Amen.” These words follow naturally from the preceding words, “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (v. 36), since it is because all things really are from God, and to God, that we say, “to God alone be the glory.”

### **TULIP**

Reformed theology is famous for a simple acrostic that has often been dubbed as the Five Points of Calvinism (although these are not Calvin’s words they seek to summarize some of his thinking in a memorable way). It spells TULIP.

T – Total Depravity (sin affects every part of who we are)

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L – Limited Atonement (Christ died for all who are his, not all meaning “everyone”)

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**THE BOOK OF ORDER OF THE EPC IN COMPARISON WITH THE BOOK OF  
ORDER OF THE PC(USA)**

## THE BOOK OF ORDER OF THE EPC IN COMPARISON WITH THE PC(USA)

There are many similarities between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Book of Order (EPC) and the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order (PCUSA). After all, they both came from the same roots in the Reformation at Geneva, Switzerland of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that was founded by John Calvin and then spread to Scotland and Northern Ireland through one of Calvin's disciples, John Knox.

Nevertheless, in the last several years, especially, the EPC and PC(USA) Books of Order have some differences that are reflections of the different paths they have chosen to take as organizations and fellowships of faith. The differences might be categorized briefly as: 1) Terminology, 2) Emphasis and 3) Procedure.

### **1) TERMINOLOGY**

Terminology may seem to some a minor matter: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. .. However, what we name something does have an effect on how we view it. The EPC draws heavily on Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) terminology throughout, beginning with Chapter One of the Book of Government, when it talks of the visible and invisible churches. *Unlike the PCUSA, which intimates that every person in the church who professes faith in the Lord Jesus is a believer (G-4. 0100), the EPC is much more realistic about the human heart and people's motives for being in the church.*

Some are true believers and some are there for other reasons, and it uses WCF to say so. The PCUSA begins by lifting up the Reformed Confessions it holds as part of its constitution, and then largely ignores them throughout the rest of the document.

*The EPC also uses the terms Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder throughout. Like the PCUSA, it also uses Ministers and Pastors to refer to clergy, but the PCUSA only refers to those terms once in a parenthetical statement and uses instead Minister of the Word and Elder. The EPC seems to want to emphasize the similarities in office and responsibility and joint duties of both rather than their differences and the authority of the one over the other. The same can be said of the use of the term "court of the church" for Session, Presbytery and General Assembly. Again, the PCUSA refers to the term once, opting for governing body as its usual term, while the EPC uses "court" constantly, reminding the reader of the duties of the governing body to deliberate decisions.*

### **2) EMPHASIS**

As to emphasis: *It is clear from early on in the EPC, that the primary task of the church, after worshipping God regularly, is evangelism. It is said in BOG Chapters 4-3 (duties of a particular church), 16-10.B (duties of a Session), 16-16.F (duties of a Presbytery), 16-22.F (duties of a General Assembly) of the Book of Government, Chapter 2-1 of the Book of Discipline(!!!) and Chapter 7-2 of the Book of Worship. The PCUSA enumerates it as one of the duties of Session in Chapter 10 (G-10.0102a) of its Book of Government, and in its list of services in Chapter 7 (W-7.2000) of the Directory for Worship.*

As the above use of terminology suggests, there is a greater emphasis on Ruling Elders' participation in the life of the church in the EPC than the PCUSA. *Ruling Elders are to be involved in a two-to-one ratio to Teaching Elders in governing bodies in EPC, rather than one-to-one in PCUSA.*

The terminology "court" reminds those who read the EPC, that the Ruling and Teaching Elders are to exercise

discipline for the good of the church and the glory of God. *Both BOO's have a Book of Discipline, but the PCUSA is a much more technical document, seemingly written by lawyers, for lawyers, with an eye toward protecting governing bodies against civil lawsuits, while the EPC understands it is a moral and spiritual court. The PCUSA speaks of two types of judicial cases: remedial and discipline. The EPC makes those distinctions as well, but enumerates the three types of disciplinary cases, Heresy, Immorality and Contempt for the Court, while the PCUSA is more vague, leaving the charge in the hands of "the harmed."*

### **3) PROCEDURE**

This is where Terminology and Emphasis "grow legs." The terminology of the WCF, Visible and Invisible Church, Teaching and Ruling Elders and Court, the emphasis on Evangelism, Scriptural Discipline and the Integrity of the office of Ruling Elder lead to certain actions being laid out for EPC churches.

*First is the matter of the relationship of the denomination to its particular churches in issues of conscience, property and finances. Both the EPC and PCUSA would argue for "review and control" responsibilities of higher governing bodies or courts to lower ones. The PCUSA claims from WCF the "God alone is Lord of the conscience," in GJ.030J but would bind that conscience in electing officers according to quotas in secular "Equal Employment Opportunity" guidelines that put another layer of expectations over and above seeking and doing the Lord's will in calling and/or hiring officers in the Church. The "hook" that can enforce this extra burden on courts of the church is in the "Trustee Clause" (G-B.020J) which says all property held by churches and courts of the church "are held in trust... for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)." This same item makes it increasingly harder for particular churches and their Sessions to give to expenses and benevolences they deem important without increasing "oversight" from the PC(USA).*

The EPC, by contrast, has placed in its Book of Government of the Book of Order "Limitations in Perpetuity" (BOG 17-5) which makes it clear that the Church may make no laws that bind the conscience with respect to interpretation of Scripture, or reject persons for membership or ordination unless what they believe has been declared a heresy by the Church or obstructs constitutional governance of the Church. *The Church may not infringe upon particular churches right to elect their own officers, own and control their own property or determine their own budget and benevolences as long as it does not violate the constitution of the Church. None of these limits may be overturned.*

Second is the regular oversight of the church rolls. *Rather than a mild admonition to review the rolls annually in the PCUSA (G-5.0502), the EPC charges churches to review them annually, especially early in the year (February) as in BOG 9-8. It also charges the churches with being very intentional about finding out why people are not attending worship and placing people on the appropriate rolls accordingly.*

Third is Baptism. Both the EPC and PCUSA have guidelines for who may be baptized, which are remarkably similar. *The difference may be that where the PCUSA comes extremely close to baptismal regeneration (W-2.3001-007), EPC makes clear "God's grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to this sacrament. Some who are baptized will be lost and some not baptized will be saved. Nevertheless, it is a great sin to make light of or to neglect this sacrament." (BOW 3-2. C.) Both would encourage children of believers to be baptized, but EPC would emphasize evangelizing baptized children in a way that PCUSA does not.*

Fourth is Lord's Supper. Both EPC and PCUSA invite baptized believers to come to the Table of the Lord and be in communion with him and with each other. Both invite baptized children of believers who are receiving instruction to come to the Table as well.



*The PCUSA is much more vague about the mechanism for doing this, allowing that children's "understanding of participation will vary according to maturity," (W2.4011b) and instructing Session to "take note of this and provide an occasion for recognition and welcome." (W-4.2002) The EPC is much more directive: "Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's table provided they have appeared before the Church Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Church Session. At its discretion, the Church Session may admit such persons to full membership." (BOW 3-3.1)*

Fifth is the authority of the Pastor in governing and worship. It is clear from much of the EPC material in contrast to the PCUSA, the Ruling Elder is to have at least an equal footing in governance with the Pastor in Session and high courts. The PCUSA would say this is true for its governance as well, but the ratio of Ruling Elder to Teaching Elder is much more favorable to the Ruling Elder in EPC versus PCUSA courts.

However, in matters of worship, the EPC Pastor has a little more authority. *In EPC, the Pastor (although encouraged to consult with Session) "has the duty and responsibility to determine order, sequence, elements and proportion of the service that each shall have in public worship." (BOW 2-4.A) In PCUSA, Session has clear oversight of order, sequence and elements, except the Pastor is responsible for Scripture read, sermon preached, prayers, music to be sung, use of drama and other art forms. (W-4.1005)*

There are undoubtedly more differences, but these are ones that come to the forefront immediately in terms of affecting terminology, emphasis and, by extension, procedure.