



ECO

A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians

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ECO Information Packet

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Session 1: History and Culture of ECO

1. **History and purpose of renewal emphasis in the PC(USA)**

2. **Shift in focus on ministry:**

Jim Collins' "Preserve the Core and Simulate Progress"

3. **What is "core" to ECO?**

a. Theological understanding of the authority of Scripture

- i. Scripture should change us. We should not change Scripture.
- ii. The centrality of the work of Jesus for salvation
- iii. Submission to God's desire for our behavior

b. Being a connectional and covenantal denomination

- i. Reclaiming the connectional nature of being Presbyterian
- ii. Every pastor is required to be in a Pastor Covenant Group (PCG)
- iii. Every congregation is required to be in a Mission Affinity Group (MAG)

c. The totality of Jesus' mission

- i. We need to meet physical and tangible needs
- ii. We need to work for human reconciliation
- iii. We need to seek to bring people to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior

4. **What is progress for ECO?**

- a. Flexibility in governing to determine what is best in a particular situation
- b. Understanding of micro-expressions of church outside of regular corporate worship
- c. Emphasis on church planting
- d. Rethinking leadership development

Reflection Questions:

1. After listening to the video, how do you see the birth of ECO as a natural outgrowth of 20 years of seeking renewal within the PC(USA)?
2. In what ways do you resonate with our descriptions of what is core and what is progress?
3. What questions or concerns arise when you think of our understanding of core and progress?
4. How is our understanding of core and progress different from your current environment?
5. How can our understanding of core and progress enhance your ministry?

Session 2: Important Shifts for the Future

Shift #1 – From clergy-centered to unleashed laity

Shift #2 – From safety and preservation to risk taking and expansion

Shift #3 – From homogeneous leadership prepared for Christendom to preparing all of God's people for a post-Christian context

Shift #4 – From a purely attractional model of ministry to a missional and attractional model

Shift #5 – From an addition/subtraction mentality to a multiplication mindset

Reflection Questions:

1. Where are you and your church tempted to make your entry into ECO just about changing denominational affiliation?
2. Looking at the five shifts, which one is most necessary for your church?
3. What possible steps would you want to take to help facilitate the shifts?

Session 3: The Theology of ECO

1. What is contained in the Essentials Tenets of ECO?

- a. The essentials of the Christian faith
- b. The essentials of the Reformed faith
- c. Ten Commandments – living our lives in conformity with the desires of God.

2. How are the Essential Tenets applied to officers?

- a. 2.0101 – “Ordaining bodies must ensure that all officers adhere to the Essential Tenets of ECO”
- b. 2.0103c – Ordination vow states, “Will you receive, adopt, and be bound by the Essential Tenets of ECO as a reliable exposition of what Scripture teaches us to do and to believe, and will you be guided by them in your ministry?”

3. How are the Essential Tenets and Confessions related?

- a. Paragraph 2 of the Essentials says, “Essential Tenets are tied to the teaching of the Confessions as reliable expositions of Scripture.”
- b. 2.0103d – Ordination vow states, “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?”

Reflection Questions:

1. As you read the Essential Tenets, what phrases or words to find particularly meaningful?
2. Are there any parts of the Essential Tenets that raise questions or that you would push back against?
3. How would you express in your own words the confessional nature of ECO?

Session 4: The Polity of ECO

1. What does it mean to be Presbyterian?

- a. Reformed in our theological beliefs
- b. Elder-governed
- c. Connectional - churches are organized into wider councils

2. What is the governing structure of ECO?

- a. The local church session is the primary focus of governing responsibility.
- b. The presbytery – ECO is currently moving from 9 presbyteries to approximately 20. Ordinarily there will be 3-5 churches in a presbytery.
 - i. Mission Affinity Groups can also take on some roles of presbytery.
- c. The Synod – primarily focused on polity and theology overtures
 - i. Synod Executive Council – day to day operations

3. Broad understanding of our polity

- a. Understanding of Church
 - i. Church Universal
 - ii. Denominations and Networks
 - iii. Local Church
 - iv. Micro-expressions of Church
- b. Flexibility and not a “one size fits all” rule
- c. Polity is set up for us to spend less time on business
- d. If polity is silent, it is silent for a reason

Reflection Questions:

1. What parts of the ECO polity or ethos do you find particularly encouraging?
2. What questions do you have about the ECO polity?
3. How would being in ECO allow your church to be able to fulfill your mission more effectively?

Session 5: Accountability and Encouragement

1. Mission Affinity Groups

- a. Three to five churches in a similar context – geographic area, size, mission, etc.
- b. Driving Questions – What has God done? What is God calling you to do?
 - i. Narrative questions could be helpful, but other assessments and questions may be more beneficial
- c. Elders come together and spend time on each church, concluding with 1-3 concrete goals to work on for the following year.

2. What can enhance the MAG experience?

- a. Bringing in an outside coach
- b. Meet 2-4 times per year with all elders or a representative few
- c. Reflect on a resource together

3. The need for Pastor Covenant Groups

- a. 70% of pastors would leave the ministry if they could find an equal paying job
- b. 50% of pastors leave within the first 5 years
- c. Increasing rate of depression, moral failure, and divorce among pastors

4. How to do Pastor Covenant Groups

- a. Three to six pastors to meet regularly in some way
- b. Confidential environment surrounded by a covenant
- c. Share mental, physical, spiritual, relational, and emotional health

Reflection Questions:

1. What kind of churches would your church best fit with for a Mission Affinity Group? Do you have any particular churches in mind?
2. What hesitations do you have about being in a Mission Affinity Group?
3. For pastors, with whom would you like to be in a Pastor Covenant Group (if you don't currently have one)?

Session 6: Joining ECO Well

1. Process for joining ECO

- a. Request congregation application AND pastor application(s) from office@eco-pres.org. At the latest, your request should be made once your session has decided that it wants to join ECO.
- b. Applications should be submitted by the earlier of two dates
 - i. At least 60 days before a congregational vote is taken
 - ii. At least 90 days before your anticipated entry into ECO
- c. Sessions and pastor(s) will be interviewed and receive acceptance into ECO “when the way is clear”. This usually means when they are dismissed from their presbytery.

2. How to join well

- a. Focus on prayerfully discerning God’s will for the congregation
- b. Have an entry plan to make the most of having ECO as your denominational home.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where are you at in the process of discerning or joining ECO? Is your application with ECO where it should be given where you are in your discernment process?
2. How can you finish your process of discernment well with the congregation?
3. How would being in ECO enhance your mission? What changes would you make if you came into ECO?