

ECO

# Leadership Competencies



**ECO**

A Covenant Order  
of Evangelical  
Presbyterians

# Leadership Competencies in ECO

To be faithful to ECO's mission to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ, we have compiled an initial set of competencies (qualities, characteristics, and skills) that we desire to be found in our leaders. These are not hard and fast requirements, but rather suggested guidelines for those serving on various leadership teams within ECO. Presbyteries will want to consider the following qualities when helping candidates prepare for ordination or when elders or deacons are commissioned to pastor a church. Sessions will want to consider seeking these characteristics in commissioned officers who will celebrate sacraments, as well as during new officer selection. In addition, sessions may want to use the following characteristics to help current church officers identify opportunities for growth and development.

## **BACKGROUND:**

One of ECO's key values is Leadership Velocity. The Leadership Velocity value states, "We believe identifying and developing gospel-centered leaders is critical for the church, and a great leadership culture is risk-taking, innovative, and organic." Within our movement, there are certain things that we seek to do to help us advance our Leadership Velocity. First, we need to look at the general types of leaders that are defined in our polity and the roles that they play within the movement. We understand that leadership includes pastors, elders, and deacons. In some instances, our church leaders (and also those elders and deacons who are commissioned for service) may be called to fulfill a greater role than their offices would ordinarily allow. Therefore, we need to define each of those leaders and the roles they play. Second, we need to define the qualities and characteristics that should be present or developing within each of these different kinds of leaders. Some of these qualities need to be present within all types of leaders and some qualities will be specific to certain types of leadership roles.

## **LEADERSHIP FLOWS FROM DISCIPLESHIP:**

It bears repeating that quality leaders are only developed from quality disciples. Our first call is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. If God so chooses to call someone into a leadership role, it is because he or she has a strong foundation as a disciple. Therefore when churches, presbyteries, or mentors are seeking to develop leaders, they must first start with ensuring that a person is qualified in all aspects of discipleship and training.

## **HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT:**

Ideally, all leaders would possess the leadership competencies and characteristics contained in this document prior to assuming their particular offices or roles. We know, however, that in many ways, some of these competencies will be more aspirational in nature for our current leaders. With existing leaders, therefore, it is our hope that these competencies will be instructive so that individuals can discern the places in which they can continue to grow

in their Christian leadership. This document can also be beneficial in determining how to best support and train the emerging leader.

Examples of how the ten competencies might be used:

- To determine areas of personal growth for current pastors, elders, and deacons
- For Ordination Preparation Teams to assess the developmental needs of current or potential candidates
- For Ministry Partnership Teams to help potential leaders get the training they need apart from a traditional seminary experience
- For congregations to develop training ministries for the future leadership development of members

#### **FOUR CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP:**

While there are many types of leaders within the church, we need people to possess different competencies and skills to support their particular congregations. There are four types of leaders specifically identified in ECO polity. Each of the ten general competencies have particular qualities for each of the identified leaders. Leaders should strive to possess the basic competencies associated with their particular role. Those responsible for developing and supporting these leaders should ensure that the leaders are continuing to grow in maturity within each area and proficiency within the competencies.

**Pastor** – Pastors include lead pastors, associate pastors, and assistant pastors who are ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Presbytery Ministry and Ordination Team members can use these qualities when examining the suitability of a candidate for ordination or in evaluating transfer candidates from other denominations.

**Commissioned Officers Serving as Pastors of Churches** – In 2.0503 of our polity, elders and deacons can be trained and deployed by the presbytery to serve as the pastor for a congregation. This situation can occur for a variety of reasons. In all of the categories, it is our feeling that since commissioned officers in such a capacity are functioning as pastors, they should be trained to possess the same competencies as that of an ordained pastor. Ministry Partnership Teams can utilize these competencies when examining potential candidates for commissioning.

**Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church** – In 2.0502 of our polity, elders and deacons can be trained to celebrate sacraments in smaller contexts or extensions of the church. In such a case, they serve under the authority of the pastor and session, thus requiring a greater understanding of the sacraments. This situation also requires additional strength in a variety of competencies because these elders and deacons will be serving as shepherds of their communities. Sessions can utilize these competencies when determining the readiness of officers.

**Elders and Deacons** – The base qualities recommended for elders and deacons are included in this document. When competencies for elders and deacons are mentioned, it is assumed that

they are not being commissioned for additional purposes, in which case they would fall into other categories mentioned above. Sessions and nominating committees can use these competencies when discerning officer nominations.

## **10 Core Leadership Competencies**

Below are ten general core competencies that are central to Christian leadership. Some of the competencies possess characteristics that should be present in all leaders regardless of their position or role. For example, all leaders should have integrity in their personal lives. Other competencies, however, will need to be present in different degrees depending upon the role and position of the leader. For example, under “Biblical Knowledge and Interpretation”, elders and deacons would need to possess this competency to a lesser degree than a pastor.

Below are the ten core competencies with descriptions of the qualities and characteristics that should be present within the different types of leaders in ECO. Before these competencies are articulated, each leadership role is first defined so that the reader will be able to identify characteristics that should be present within those individuals.

### **Foundational Comments:**

When looking at the qualities and competencies of a leader, it is important to understand each leader holistically. The 10 Core Competencies of a Leader could therefore be grouped according to three classifications of “HEAD – HEART – HANDS”.

- HEAD – The competencies associated with the character and integrity of the leader in his or her relationship with God and with others
- HEART - The competencies associated with what the leader knows intellectually and is able to apply it in various situations
- HANDS – The competencies associated with a leader’s skill and ability

**COMPETENCY #1 - MATURITY OF PERSONAL FAITH AND PERSONAL CALL** – The extent to which the leader has an intimate and personal relationship with the triune God that is continually formed through a variety of practices.

### **All Leaders**

- Regularly read and reflect upon God’s word and apply it to their lives
- Regularly spend time in prayer through speaking and listening to God
- Incorporate other spiritual disciplines into their lives
- Manifest the Fruit of the Spirit internally and externally
- Operate from an identity that is rooted in the Gospel
- Commit to living within a community of believers for mutual encouragement and support
- Able to discern and articulate God’s call on their life and ministry

**COMPETENCY #2 PERSONAL INTEGRITY** – The extent to which the leader’s actions and attitudes are consistent with the desires of God and the example of Jesus.

### **All Leaders**

- Follow through with personal commitments to others
- Have a genuinely sacrificial love and care for others
- Understand and live within the ethical boundaries set forth in Scripture
- Expresses authentic personal humility in their relationships with others and demonstrate a willingness to learn and grow

**COMPETENCY #3 - BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE AND INTERPRETATION** – The extent to which the leader understands the entire Bible as well as the ability to study and apply Scripture appropriately.

### **Pastors and Commissioned Officers serving as pastors of churches:**

- Have an understanding of the whole narrative of Scripture
- Possess a general knowledge about the content of all of the books of the Old and New Testaments including major events, themes and overall purpose
- Study passages of Scripture using a variety of tools and can then articulate meaning, purpose, and application to their own lives and the lives of others
- Appropriately apply Scripture to real life situations with maturity and depth that is beyond simple proof texting
- Articulate how passages of scripture relate to appropriate Biblical doctrine

### **Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro Expressions of Church:**

- Possess a general knowledge of the flow of Scripture and major events
- Can study a passage of Scripture using limited tools to determine a general meaning and purpose for their lives and an application for others
- Can use Scripture appropriately when discipling or counseling others

### **Elders and Deacons:**

- Possess a general knowledge of the flow of Scripture and major events
- Can study a passage of Scripture at a base level with or without tools, and determine a general meaning and purpose for their lives and the lives of others
- Can find basic ways of applying Scripture to current situations

**COMPETENCY #4 - THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE** – The extent to which the leader understands, embraces, and is able to apply both the core of the Christian faith as well as the Reformed Faith of ECO as expressed in our Essential Tenets and Confessions.

### **Pastors and Commissioned Officers serving as pastors of churches:**

- Fully embrace the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in our Essential Tenets

- Can articulate confessional and scriptural support for the themes and the system of doctrine contained in the Essential Tenets
- Can pastorally apply the theology contained in the Essential Tenets to real situations
- Have a working knowledge of basic church history and its impact on the church today
- Are able to identify doctrines that are outside of the classic Christian and Reformed faith and show how they are incongruent with the Reformed faith
- Are willing to adhere to all aspects of the Essentials in teaching and practice, even if there is not full embrace on minor aspects

**Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

- Fully embrace the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in our Essential Tenets
- Can articulate scriptural support for the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in the Essential Tenets
- Can articulate to others how the theology contained in the Essential Tenets applies to real situations
- Are willing to adhere to all aspects of the Essentials in teaching and practice, even if there is not full embrace on minor aspects

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Fully embrace the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in our Essential Tenets
- Can articulate scriptural support for the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in the Essential Tenets
- Are willing to adhere to all aspects of the essentials in teaching and practice, even if there is not full embrace on minor aspects

**COMPETENCY #5 - POLITY KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION** – The extent to which the leader understands ECO’s polity, ethos, and values, as well as their ability to appropriately apply this knowledge in various situations.

**Pastors and Commissioned Officers serving as pastors of churches:**

- Display a comprehensive understanding of the polity of ECO and are able to apply it appropriately in the local church context
- Uphold the values and DNA of ECO when working within the presbytery and within the national movement
- Are able to instruct officers in the polity of ECO and how it applies at the local church level
- Are able to adhere to the polity of ECO while facilitating the larger vision for the congregation

**Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

- Display a full understanding of the first two chapters of ECO polity and particularly understand the nature of their particular commission within ECO
- Adhere to the polity of ECO when celebrating the sacraments within their appropriate contexts

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Display a full understanding of the first two chapters of ECO polity

**COMPETENCY #6 - SACRAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE** – The extent to which the leader understands the sacraments from a Reformed perspective and is able to celebrate those sacraments in appropriate circumstances and contexts.

**Pastors and Commissioned Officers serving as pastors of churches:**

- Affirm and are able to articulate a Reformed understanding of the nature of the sacraments including their theology and administration
- Are committed to a Reformed practice of infant and adult baptism and celebration of the Lord’s Supper
- Are committed and able to appropriately link worship with the Celebration of Sacraments

**Officers authorized to celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

- Affirm and are able to articulate a Reformed understanding of the nature of the sacraments including their theology and administration within a “micro-expression” of church
- Are able and committed to practicing the Celebration of Sacraments within micro-expressions of church

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Are able to articulate a basic Reformed understanding of the sacraments and their practice

**COMPETENCY #7 - MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT**– The extent to which the leader is able to take the incarnational posture of Christ into a surrounding context to bring about transformation in the Kingdom.

**Pastor and Commissioned officers serving as pastors of churches and officers authorized to celebrate Sacraments in micro-expressions of church:**

- Approach the surrounding context within which God has placed them with the same love and attitude that was manifest in Jesus
- Are committed to and able to bring about God’s redemption in the world by working to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, meet physical needs, as well as working for reconciliation and justice
- Are able to lead a community of believers toward a Kingdom purpose

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Approach the surrounding context within which God has placed them with the same love and attitude that was present in Jesus
- Are committed and able to bring about God's redemption in the world by working to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, meet physical needs, as well as working for reconciliation and justice

**COMPETENCY #8 - LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**– The extent to which the leader is able to help others determine their giftedness and calling, as well as their ability to help leaders develop greater competency.

**Pastors and Commissioned Officers Serving as Pastors of Churches:**

- Are able to help people determine their giftedness and calling
- Are able to help people grow in their own skill acquisition to enhance their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses
- Are able to create systems that help people determine and discover their giftedness and calling to then be utilized in ministry
- Are able to teach others how to develop disciples

**Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

- Are able to disciple those within their community
- Are able to develop a system within their community that ensures all people are growing in their own discipleship and ability to be utilized in ministry

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Are able to help others discover their giftedness and calling

**COMPETENCY #9 - TEAM LEADERSHIP**– The extent to which the leader is able work with and lead others (both individually and corporately) who have a variety of gifts, personalities and experiences.

**Pastors and Commissioned Officers Serving as Pastors of Churches:**

- Are able to lead a team of people toward a common goal and vision
- Are able to lead change
- Are able to work with challenging personalities and those with whom they disagree
- Know when to forge ahead with a new direction and when it is prudent to wait
- Are able to create buy-in to a vision or plan
- Are able to use the strengths of others in a team process
- Are able to put personal desires and positions aside for the sake of the group and the larger mission

**Officers Authorized to Celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**



- Are able to lead a group discussion and process
- Are able to work with challenging personalities and those that disagree with them
- Are able to help the group move toward a common goal and vision
- Are able to put personal desires aside for the sake of the group and the larger mission

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Are able to lead groups and ministry teams as appropriate
- Are able to actively go along with decisions that they would not have chosen themselves

**COMPETENCY #10 – PREACHING** – The extent to which the leader can preach both topically and exegetically in ways that are true to the meaning of the Scriptures, as well as clear, winsome, well-organized, and contextually appropriate.

**Pastors and Commissioned Officers Serving as Pastors of Churches:**

- Are able to develop a preaching message that is based in a biblical text
- If preaching topically, can ensure that the message is firmly rooted in the full counsel of Scripture and is not simply proof-texting
- Are able to clearly deliver a message winsomely and passionately, and move the listener to an appropriate response
- Are able to understand one's audience and craft an appropriate message for the context

**Officers Authorized to celebrate Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

- Are able to lead a group in a study of the text that reveals truth and moves the listener to action
- Are able to deliver gospel truth to both the believer and the non-believer

**Elders and Deacons:**

- Are able to communicate the truth of Scripture to others