

A COVENANT ORDER OF EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIANS

WHAT IS THE ECO?

- ECO is one of the 6 major Presbyterian denominations in the USA. They include: PCUSA, ECO, EPC, PCA, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Associate Reformed Presbyterian. Out of the 15 largest PC(USA) churches: 7 have left for ECO, 1 has left for EPC, 1 is in a legal dispute, 1 is going through a dismissal process. Of the remaining, 2 of the 5 are part of the Fellowship.
- ECO consists of 272 Congregations, 100,081 Covenant Partners, 444 Pastors, 35 Church Plants, with more than 150 churches in the process of joining ECO.
- ECO grew out of the Fellowship of Presbyterians, established in 2011 by 7 PCUSA pastors, including our own Pastor Emeritus Dave Peterson.
- Some pastors and congregations responded to God's call to leave PCUSA and formed ECO in 2012.

ECO'S CORE COMMITMENTS AND VALUES

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF ECO?

To build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.

ECO'S NINE CORE VALUES

- **Jesus-shaped Identity:**
We believe Jesus Christ must be at the center of our lives and making disciples of Jesus at the core of our ministry.
- **Biblical Integrity:**
We believe the Bible is the unique and authoritative Word of God, which teaches all that is necessary for faith and life.
- **Thoughtful Theology:**
We believe in theological education, constant learning, and the life of the mind, and celebrate this as one of the treasures of our Reformed heritage.
- **Accountable Community:**
We believe guidance is a corporate spiritual experience. Eco wants to connect leaders to one another in healthy relationships of accountability, synergy, and care.
- **Egalitarian Ministry:**
We believe in unleashing the ministry gifts of women, men, and every ethnic group.
- **Missional Centrality:**
We believe in living out the whole of the Great Commission – including evangelism, spiritual formation, compassion, and redemptive justice – in our communities and around the world.
- **Center-focused Spirituality:**
We believe in calling people to the core of what it means to be followers of Jesus – what “mere Christianity” is and does – and not fixate on the boundaries.
- **Leadership Velocity:**
We believe identifying and developing gospel-centered leaders is critical for the church, and a great leadership culture is risk-taking, innovative, and organic.
- **Kingdom Vitality:**
We believe congregations should vigorously reproduce new missional communities to expand the Kingdom of God.

Those Core Values result in FOUR Core Commitments in ECO:

- Eco is committed to connecting leaders in accountable relationships; **(COVENANT)**
- They are committed to a shared way of life and unity around a shared theological core; **(ORDER)**
- ECO is committed to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ and plant new missional communities; **(EVANGELICAL)**
- And they are committed to stand within our Reformed heritage and celebrate the life of the mind. **(PRESBYTERIAN)**

So, how are those core commitments and values expressed in the culture of ECO?

- **ECO's core commitments and values are expressed in a theological understanding of the authority of Scripture.**
 - Scripture should change us. We should not change Scripture.
 - The core commitments and values are expressed in the understanding of the centrality of the work of Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - The core commitments and values are expressed as we submit to how God wants us to act as Christians.
- **Secondly, the core commitments and values of ECO are expressed in the fact that they are a connectional and covenantal denomination.**
 - ECO wants to reclaim the connectional nature of what it means to be Presbyterian.
 - That means that every pastor is required to part of a Pastor Covenant Group (PCG).
 - And, every congregation is required to be part of a Mission Affinity Group (MAG). *A Mission Affinity Group is a group of 3-5 congregations that's organized around similar ministry settings and contexts.*
- **Thirdly, the core commitments and values of ECO are expressed in the belief in the totality of Jesus' mission.**
 - That, as Christians, we are called to respond to the physical and tangible needs of those around us.
 - That we are called to work for human reconciliation.
 - And, that we are called to lead people to a relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

INTRODUCTION TO ECO POLITY

Let me give you just a brief overview of ECO Polity or what's equivalent to the PC(USA) Book of Order.

- There are three layers to the ECO polity structure; the session, the presbytery, and the synod. Synod is the widest council in ECO. There's NO General Assembly. Each council is designed to have a small staff. Presbyteries are made up of a limited number of congregations (maximum of 20). The primary role of the ECO staff is the mission and ministry of local congregations, facilitating the multiplication of worshiping communities and the expansion of the Gospel.
- ECO congregations include baptized members and covenant partners. Baptized members have received the Sacrament of Baptism, but have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Covenant Partners are members who have been baptized, made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and have been received into the membership of the church. Covenant Partners are eligible to vote in congregational meetings.

- The local church session is the primary focus of governing responsibility. Sessions are pretty much structured the same as they are now and responsibilities are listed in the ECO Polity and Discipline.
- Elders and Deacons are ordained and installed by the session. Pastors are ordained and installed by the Presbytery.
- Presbyteries are covenant communities that exercise apostolic authority by and for the nurture and benefit of its congregations.
- Presbyteries consists of at least 10 but no more than 20 congregations. They can be geographically connected or non-geographically connected.
- Presbyteries hold stated meetings at least twice a year. Voting is done in a 1-1 parity at all levels (1 elder and 1 pastor) and only people connected with a local congregation can vote. Validated ministry pastors and Honorably Retired pastors can only vote if they are serving an ECO congregation in some capacity. Otherwise, they have voice but no vote.
- Presbyteries meet to do business but mostly for Fellowship, Nurture and Support.
- Synods are the highest judicatory. Again, there's NO General Assembly.
- The Synod's purpose is to give support and guidance to the presbyteries and congregations.
- The Synod assesses and proclaims the missional vision and theology of ECO.
- The Synod provides presbyteries with an opportunity for mutual support and encouragement.
- They correspond and connect with global mission partners, other denominations and ministry partners.
- They maintain the Constitution and Essential Tenets of ECO.
- 1% of a congregation's budget goes to support the work of the Synod.
- ECO's Polity and Discipline includes Civil Authority and Property responsibilities, the relationship we have with other denominations and the Rules of Discipline.
- ECO's Polity is designed to be flexible. They realize that "one size fits all" doesn't always work and polity is set up so that we can spend less time on business and more time on our call to share the love of Jesus Christ with the world.

That gives you a brief overview of the ECO, it's structure and polity. If you want more information, be sure to go to the ECO website (<http://eco-pres.org>). All of this information is included on the website plus any additional information you might be curious about.

SIX MAJOR PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATIONS STATISTICS

Presbyterian Denomination	Number of Churches	Number of Members
Presbyterian Church, USA	9,829	1,667,767
Presbyterian Church of America	1,831	358,516
Cumberland Presbyterian	709	74,853
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	575	150,000
Associate Reformed Presbyterian	296	39,681
ECO	272	100,081 Covenant Partners