

ECO Synod Council Update



Greetings, ECO brothers and sisters,

I hope you are enjoying your summer and all that God is doing in your lives and your churches. The Synod Executive Council meets a handful of times during the year, and I am going to be giving regular updates on what we are discussing together. As you know, the SEC is a deeply committed group of ECO leaders made up of men and women, both clergy and elders, who come from a broad range of church sizes and ethnicities. Each of us love Jesus and this movement, and we are working prayerfully to see our ECO dream become a reality.

We last met in late spring, and below are some of our major agenda items, which include both actual decisions that need to be made as well as larger questions that need continual processing.

The majority of our time was spent working on our ECO vision that you first heard about at the 2019 National Gathering. We have been drilling in on this vision over the past few years together, and a good amount of time was spent determining what our next five years need to look like in order to keep us on track for a 10 year vision. Here is where we landed.

**In five years we want to be at a place where we
are
seeing the following happening every year:**

- **50 new churches beginning each year.** These churches will have denominational support and in-kind funding that will help to birth these new communities with accountability and connection.
- **100 pastors engaging in learning communities.** Currently we have a pilot group for young pastors in their first call to receive support, mentoring and coaching. We are also supporting a learning community through the Church Transformation Cohort. We are learning a great deal from these communities.
- **200 emerging leaders entering our pipeline through one or more of these three avenues:** our Gordon Conwell Seminary Partnership, our

Ordination Track, or Residency Programs in local ECO churches.

- **1000 lay leaders being formed.** These leaders would be formed through ECO programs such as our Commissioned Lay Pastor training, or as part of leadership groups in their local churches using the Flourishing Disciples curriculum, the Church Transformation Cohort program, or other leadership development tracks.

If our desire is to meet these goals five years from now, then in the next two to three years we will need to build the systems, find the staff, and build our financial capacity to produce these results. To that end, we have authorized our Synod Executive to cast the vision, lay the groundwork for the initiatives, and start raising the necessary funds. You will be hearing much more about these goals in the coming months.

Other important items we addressed:

- We received the report of the Theological Task Force on the language for the Confessions we adopted in January 2018. The TTF was directed at the Synod meeting that year to bring recommendations to the 2020 assembly for specific versions for our Confessions.
- We discussed the role of the denomination in global mission. As we grow as a denomination, there is a heightened need to consider these relationships. Our conclusion at this point is that we will nurture different types of relationships within our global networks. As members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), we are already in relationship with many denominations through these bodies. But also, a need may arise to have a direct relationship with a particular denomination. For example, ECO has been cultivating a relationship with the Brazilian Presbyterians over a number of years. That has resulted in church planting opportunities. Thus, we are exploring different types of relationships globally.
- Finally, we met with the Presbytery leaders. Here we had the opportunity to share about our vision process over the past few years. Together, we mapped out our next steps toward living the vision in our denomination and presbyteries. This was a significant time of dialogue with our Presbytery leaders. We are grateful for the work they do to keep our denomination on track.

As we all prepare to launch into the fall, our prayers are with you and all our ECO churches. God is doing significant work in our midst, and we want to follow where the Spirit leads. Let's continue to tell stories and encourage one another to walk in step with Jesus.

Warmly in Christ,

Rev. Jennifer Holz
President, ECO Synod Executive Council