

Provisional Minutes

Eleventh Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

February 6-7, 2026

River Oaks Community Church
1855 Lewisville-Clemmons Road
Clemmons, North Carolina 27012

Friday, February 6, 2026

Learning Focus: NRP Identity

As the New River Presbytery continues its fourth program year, it seemed wise to the Holy Spirit and to us to continue spending time intentionally building and developing our identity as a Presbytery, in Christ. To this end we are seeking to focus on what it means for healthy Ruling Elders to be Evangelical, Missional, Reformed, and Presbyterian in a Presbytery that strives to encourage, enable, and equip disciple making churches to plant disciple making churches.

011-01 Call to Order and Prayer

Moderator Ruling Elder (RE) Marion Blackwell called the eleventh Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery to order at 1:13 p.m. and opened in prayer.

011-02 Welcome from Host Church

TE David Beaty, Pastor of River Oaks Church welcomed the New River Presbytery. He briefly introduced the work and ministry of the River Oaks Church, and led the NRP in prayer for the meeting.

011-03 Opening Worship and a Symphony of Prayer

TE Tom Clymer, Chaplain to the Presbytery lead the Presbytery in its opening symphony of prayer. Dr. Clymer reminded the Presbytery of two key facts:

- 1) Prayer is the chief exercise of faith, our first duty.
- 2) Prayerlessness is a chief cause of spiritual weakness

The NRP then leaned into the work of prayer for a dedicated season, and with particular fervency to be made a praying people.

011-04 Declaration of Quorum

Stated Clerk TE Rufus Burton declared a quorum as evidenced by the following record of attendance.

ACTIVE TEACHING ELDER ROLL (BoG 19-2A1)

STATUS

**RULING ELDER
COMMISSIONERS**

Asbury Evangelical Presbyterian Church, West Field, North Carolina

Vacant

Unexcused
Unexcused**Bethel Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Claudville, Virginia**

TE Kevin Easter

Unexcused

Unexcused
Unexcused**Berry Hill Presbyterian Church, South Boston, Virginia**

TE Bill Catoe (Stated Supply)

Excused

Excused

Bouldin Memorial Presbyterian Church, Stuart, Virginia

CP Richard Burnette

Present

RE Rhonda Burnette
RE Lemont Bryant**Buffalo Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina**

TE Brian Marsh

Present

RE Betty Parker
RE Chuck Seeger**Christ Reigns Presbyterian Church, Winchester, Virginia (Mission Group)**

CP Alan Morrison

Excused

Unexcused

Cleveland Presbyterian Church, Abingdon, Virginia

TE Rick Laney

Unexcused

Unexcused
Unexcused**Downtown Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia (Mission Group)**

TE Rich Brown

Present

Elon Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia

TE Shawn Morrison (Stated Supply/See Below)

Present

RE John Oblinger
RE Mark Newman**Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Elkton, Elkton, Virginia**

TE Adam Snow

Present

Excused

TE Dale Hagwood

Present

Falling Springs Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Virginia

TE Mike Matlack

Present

Unexcused
Unexcused**First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia**

Don Hardman (PCMA)

Present

RE Don Andree
RE Michael Ridenhour

		RE David Smith
First Presbyterian Church, Eden, North Carolina		
TE Brad Milks	Excused	RE Paul Sarer
First Presbyterian Church, Martinsburg, West Virginia		
TE Rufus Burton (Stated Clerk)	Present	Excused
TE John W Cushwa	Present	
FORGE Community Church, Greensboro, NC (Mission Church)		
TE Eric Shipton	Present	Excused
Galatia Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Eagle Rock, Virginia		
TE Emily Hook	Present	RE Richard Thompson RE Robin Thompson
Greenwood Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Covington, Virginia		
Vacant		Unexcused Unexcused
Hope Presbyterian Community Church, Waynesboro, Virginia		
TE C. Brown Caldwell	Present	RE Phil Lemcores
Hurley Presbyterian Church, Hurley Virginia		
CP Curtis Stacy (Also Roseann)	Unexcused	Unexcused
Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, Virginia		
Vacant		Excused
Mary's Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia		
CP Danny Whitt	Unexcused	Unexcused
Mebane Presbyterian Church, Mebane, North Carolina		
TE Tom Clymer (NRP/Supply)	Present	RE Jacob Anthony RE Haifa Shahin-Johns RE Ivan Tyre RE Rob Latimer
Memorial Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina (Now Operating as FORGE Community Church) See Above		
New Life Presbyterian Church, Salem, Virginia		
TE Camron Smith	Present	Unexcused Unexcused

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia

TE David Garrison	Present	Unexcused
		Unexcused

Norton Presbyterian Church, Norton, Virginia

TE Michael Porter	Unexcused	Unexcused
		Unexcused

Piedmont Presbyterian Church, Callaway, Virginia

Released to Baptist Independence 010-13.D

Princeton Presbyterian Church, Princeton, West Virginia

TE Edwin Pettus	Present	Unexcused
		Unexcused

Providence Presbyterian Church, Nathalie, Virginia

Vacant		Unexcused
		Unexcused

Restoration Community Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

TE Gary McGhee	Present	RE Andrew Morton
		RE Lewis Johns
		RE Brandon Staton
		RE Ken Trivette
		RE Gordon Miller

Reynolda Church, North Carolina

TE Alan Wright	Excused	RE Marion Blackwell
TE Chris Lawson	Present	RE Stephen Elmore

Kernersville, North Carolina

CP Barrett Johnson	Present	RE Rick Peacock
		RE Joseph Zuiggle

Clemmons, North Carolina

TE Brandon Williams	Present	
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King, North Carolina

TE Chuck Estes	Present	
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Iglesia Reynolda, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

CP Amaury Hernandez	Unexcused	
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River Oaks Community Church, Clemmons, North Carolina

TE David Beaty	Present	RE Mike Bost
TE Sonny Flowers	Present	RE Danny Parrish
TE Andrew Wild	Present	RE Don Coffey
TE David Holcomb	Present	RE Frank Carter

TE Brian Edmonds	Present	RE Dave Steward RE Wil Warren
Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian, Lynchburg, Virginia		
TE David Weber	Present	RE Eric Vess
TE Brett Eubank	Excused	RE Bert Murphy
TE Shane Whelan	Present	RE Clay Atkins RE Ken Bradford RE Ben Reeves RE Chuck Shaughnessy RE Andrew Shields RE Earl Weaver
Roseann Presbyterian Church, Roseann, Virginia		
CP Curtis Stacy (Counted with Hurley)	Unexcused	Unexcused
Slate Mountain Presbyterian Church, Meadows of Dan, Virginia		
CP Jeff Dalton	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused
Stuart Presbyterian Church, Stuart Virginia		
TE Danny Redman	Present	RE Dave Hoback RE Steve Tobey
Thompson Valley Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia		
CP Danny Whitt (Counted with Mary's EPC)	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused
Walker's Creek Presbyterian Church, Marion, Virginia (Extinct)		
Walker's Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Pamplin, Virginia		
Vacant		RE Bill Hogan RE Nick Waddell
Warm Springs Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Warm Springs, Virginia		
TE Marty Fields	Excused	RE Robert Blevins
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia		
TE Jonathan Rockness	Present	Unexcused Unexcused
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Burlington, North Carolina		
TE Powell Sykes	Present	RE Kathy Sykes RE Jeff Holt

Woodside Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia

Evan Grey (Candidate Under Care)	Present	RE Barry Rakes
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Wylliesburg Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Wylliesburg, Virginia

TE Peter Smith (Supply)	Present	Unexcused
		Unexcused

Teachers (BoG 9-5B)

(None)

Evangelists (BoG 9-5C)

TE Chris Haynes (Missionary PRMI Europe)	Excused
TE Timotheus Global-Worker (Withheld)	Excused

Administrative Members (BoG 9-5D)

(None)

Chaplains (BoG 9-5E)

TE Glen Holman (Augusta Health, Virginia)	Excused
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Serving Outside the Boundaries (BoG 9-6)

TE Rob Buchanan (<i>RUN</i> Ministries)	Excused
TE Andy Koesters (Families Alive)	Present

Transitional Pastor Teaching Elders (BoG 19-2A1)

TE Benjamin Williams	Excused
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Pastors Without a Call (BoG 19-2A1)

(None)

Retired Teaching Elders (Active) (BoG 19-2A2)

TE Robert Barnett	Present
TE Brown Caldwell (Counted with Piedmont)	Present
TE Ron Cox	Present
TE Bucky Hunsicker	Excused
TE Lowell Sykes	Present
TE Barry Tucker	Present

Associate Teaching Elders (BoG 19-2B1)

TE Marina Gopadze	
TE Laura Spangler	Present

Inactive (BoG 19-2B1)

(None)

Retired Teaching Elders (Inactive) (BoG 19-2B3)

TE Clarence Brown

TE Michael Brown

TE Peter Smith (Counted with Wylliesburg)

Present

TE Robert Smith

TE David Wood

Teaching Elders Under Sanction (BoG 19-2B)

Two

Officers of the Presbytery (BoG 19-3)

TE E Pettus

Moderator

Present*

TE A Koesters

Missional Director

Present*

TE R Burton

Stated Clerk

Present*

Mr B. Kanode

IT Director

Present

TE B Eubank

Treasurer

Present*

*(Counted with their ministry above)

Candidates / Ministers to be Examined

TE Shawn Morrison

(Counter with Elon)

TE Jeff Schrage

EPC Presbytery of the Mid-West

Guests & Observers

TE Dean Weaver

Guest

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

RE Shawn Stuart

Guest

EPCWO

RE Lance Lawrence

Guest

EPCWO

TE Phil Trash

Guest

EPCWO

Prof. Leonid Matseyja

Guest

Kyiv, Ukraine TCI

Prof. Syniy Valentini

Guest

Kyiv, Ukraine TCI

Theresa Barnett

Observer

Downtown Presbyterian

Travis Swagerty

Observer

Downtown Presbyterian

Barbara Hardman

Observer

First EPC Roanoke, VA

Carolyn Moore

Observer

First EPC Roanoke, VA

Marcia Ridenhour

Observer

First EPC Roanoke, VA

Giselle Caldwell

Observer

Hope Community Church

Cathy Clymer

Observer

Mebane Presbyterian Church

Brian Johns

Observer

Mebane Presbyterian Church

Barbara Pettus

Observer

Princeton

Scott Carpenter

Observer

Reynolda Church

Debbie Elmore

Observer

Reynolda Church

Patrica Peacock	Observer	Reynolda Church
Carolanne Bost	Observer	River Oaks
Janette Redman	Observer	Stuart
Donald Marsden	Observer	Third, Richmond (ECO)
Becky Blevins	Observer	Warm Springs
Grady Brown	Observer	Westminster, Burlington
Susan Holt	Observer	Westminster, Burlington

Numerical Attendance Summary

	Present	Excused	Unexcused	Total
Teaching Elders (Full Members)	31	9	3	43
Teaching Elders (Retired Active)	5	1		6
Teaching Elders (Associate)	1			2
For Parity	37			54
Ruling Elders	49	10		
Officers of NRP	1			
Commissioned Pastors (counted as REs)	1	2	6	9
Candidates	1			
Guests	6			
Observers	19			
Total in Attendance	112			
Parity Report TE/RE	37/50			

011-05 Approval of the Docket

Moderator Blackwell set before the Presbytery a motion to approve the docket.

Motion was sustained to Approve the Docket

011-06 Approval of the Minutes of the Tenth Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery.

Moderator Blackwell set before the Presbytery a motion to receive the Minutes of the 010 Meeting (10/3-10/4 2025) as they had been presented.

Motion was sustained to Approve the Minutes as they had been received.

011-07 Communications and Referrals

The Stated Clerk reported to the Moderator that the NRP would take up the business referred by the 45th Assembly during the Saturday morning session of the 011 Meeting (011-21 Below). The Descending Overtures could be found on pages 18-24 of the Meeting Packet.

The Clerk also reported receiving an Ascending Overture from the Session of the Rivermont Church for consideration by the NRP. The Ascending Overture could be

found on pages 15-17 of the Meeting Packet and that the Ascending Overture would be processed during the Friday afternoon session of the 011 Meeting (011-16 Below).

011-08 Introduction of Guests and First Time Commissioners

Moderator Blackwell encouraged the presbyters to introduce their guests and for TEs to help introduce any first-time commissioners.

011-09 Moderator's Report

Moderator Blackwell gave a brief report on his work and encouraged the Presbytery to faithful perseverance and exhorted the presbyters briefly from Isaiah 40:28. The Moderator concluded his report with prayer.

011-10 Introduction of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Moderator Blackwell then introduced TE Dean Weaver, Stated Clerk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and invited him to bring greetings from the Office of the General Assembly. Dr. Weaver was greeted warmly. After a brief word of encouragement TE Weaver led the NRP in prayer for the missional effectiveness of the EPC.

011-11 Missional Director's Report

TE Andy Koesters, the Missional Director, encouraged the NRP to faithfulness, and cast a vision of faithfulness to all generations. To foster a greater sense of unity and community across the NRP TE Koesters encouraged the six networks of the Presbytery to share in the work of ministry and be intentional in kingdom planting partnerships. He especially encouraged networks #1 and #5 to be intentional in getting off the mark. TE Koesters then concluded his report with prayer.

011-12 Stated Clerk's Report

TE Rufus Burton began his report with a brief prayer. He then gave the following report:

A Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install
Timotheus Globalworker as Evangelist Serving as Missionary
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia
 5:00PM 5 October 2025 Bluefield, West Virginia

The Commission, according to the appointment of the Presbytery of New River, met at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia with Teaching Elders: Jonathan Rockness, Robert Barnett, and Ruling Elders: Dave Thomas, Rick Peacock, and Aaron Phillips, and was opened with prayer by TE Rockness. There was a quorum present. TE Robert Barnett was elected as Moderator and RE David Thomas as Clerk. Also sitting with the Commission was TE Ed Pettus, TE Jeff Chadwick, RE Rod Gillespie, RE Chip Hurley, and RE Gabriel de Guia, Executive Director of EPCWO (Presbytery of Florida & the Caribbean).

TE Jonathan Rockness presided and led the congregation in a worship service. TE Chadwick preached from a sermon from Acts 2:22-41, after which TE Robert Barnett recited the proceedings of Presbytery leading up to this service, and propounded the constitutional questions to the minister and TE Rockness put the constitutional questions to the congregation. These being answered in the affirmative, Timotheus Global-Worker was ordained with prayers and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery as Evangelist serving as Missionary, agreeably to the Word of God and the form of government. The charge to the Missionary was delivered by RE de Guia. The service was concluded with the benediction pronounced by the newly ordained Evangelist. The minutes were read and approved, and the commission was adjourned with prayer by TE Barnett.

/S/Robert Barnett, Moderator /S/Dave Thomas, Clerk 5 October 2025

B Exhortation to Good Order

TE Burton then reminded the Presbyters of the important reporting deadlines and encouraged Sessions to submit their Annual Reports and Minutes in a timely way. He concluded this portion of his report by highlighting the importance of theologically informed polity among the church courts.

The Clerk then concluded his report with a prayer for the peace and good order of the New River Presbytery.

011-13 Church Alive Team (CDC cf. NRP VII.3.B)

Moderator Blackwell then invited the Church Alive Team to make its report. TE Chuck Estes led the NRP in prayer for the work of church health, church multiplication, and church vitality. After a brief presentation on the committee's work and the progress of God's kingdom in the NRP, TE Estes made the following report:

A Resources for Church Health

TE Estes re-introduced the presbyters to the various resources available to enable the work of ministry in the NRP. TE Estes made particular mention of *Transitional Pastors* and their usefulness to congregations in the midst of transition, and encouraged Teaching Elders to attend a *Transitional Pastor Training Seminar*.

B Resources for Church Multiplication and NRP Networks

TE Estes spent significant time on the barriers to church planting and encouraged the NRP to pray for the planting of new churches. He spoke with excitement about the growing communities of North Carolina within the bounds of the NRP and encouraged Sessions to think small and start small:

- 1) Small Bible Study groups in a new area.
- 2) Mission focused small groups.
- 3) Established Church supported outreach.

The Chair particularly encouraged the elders to “plant the kingdom” in order to foster its growth. As a part of this work, the NRP now has access to demographic and psychographic data allowing Sessions to better know their communities. The resource is available to Sessions at the heavily discounted price of \$100 through the CAT.

C Church Vitality

TE Estes highlighted the work of the NRP’s *Church Health Coaches* and their ability to enter a collaborative ministry with sessions in order to help train Elders and Members to plant the gospel in local contexts.

Of particular importance was the announcement of the EPC’s partnership with **APLHA USA** to make the Alpha Course available at no cost to EPC churches. TE Estes encouraged the NRP to explore the opportunity on alphausa.org.

The chairman then pointed to the resources available to Sessions to pursue vitality and a missional posture, and invited the NRP to the next round of ReFOCUS training on 25 April, 2025 at First Church, Eden, North Carolina.

TE Estes then concluded his report with a season of prayer.

011-14 World Outreach Committee

The Moderator invited TE Robert Barnett, Chair of the World Outreach Committee to the podium to give his report. TE Barnett opened his report with prayer and turned the NRP’s attention to Psalm 67 and the Psalmist’s prayer that all the nations of the earth would know the saving power of the Lord. He then directed the Elders to the written report the Assistant Clerks had distributed.

A EPC ENGAGE

TE Barnett walked the elders through the beautifully printed materials and highlighted the ways in which the NRP can live into its ENGAGE commitments to evangelize the Uzbek and Punjabi peoples. In particular TE Barnett highlighted the work of the US-based Home Teams that meet monthly, coordinated by RE Rick Peacock for the central Asian work, and TE Brown Caldwell for the south Asian work. Worthy of particular mention was the news that *Serve Pakistan* has begun a partnership with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes International. TE Barnett also outlined the ways in which the NRP is supporting work among the Uzbeks by partnering with Frontier Fellowship, Virginia-based Advancing Native Missions, and the Tavrizki Christian Institute, a Christian post-secondary institution engaged in theological education and training in central Asia. E Barnett encouraged participation in the KAIROS course and spoke to the ways the at the World Outreach Committee would like to see every congregation in the NRP fully engaged in World Outreach by 2030. For the bulk of his report, however, TE Barnett introduced three Global Workers who each addressed the Presbytery.

B Phil Thrash, EPCWO

The Chair introduced TE Phil Trash, to bring greeting from EPC World Outreach, who gave a brief update on his missionary endeavors in the midst of the wider context of EPC Mission and outreach.

C Lance L., Global Worker

TE Lance L, a Global Worker with EPCWO in the 10-40 window gave an update on the ways in which the Word of God is penetrating into the hardest to reach places of the world, and gave tremendous witness to the ways in which the Lord multiplying the global church and pointed to the importance of enabling the harvest of disciples from the uttermost parts of the earth.

D Donald M., Frontier Fellowship

TE Barnett then introduced Donald M, and with him a Minister of the Gospel and Professor Divinity from Ukraine, with whom Frontier Fellowship partners to teach ministerial candidates and train evangelists for work in central Asia. Donald and his colleague spoke of the discouragements arising from the Russian invasion and the difficulties of the work in their context. Nevertheless they pointed to the faithfulness and provision of God who has given them a vision and enabled them to make the Tavrizki Christian Institute the “Light of the East.” After a moving presentation they presented the NRP with the gift of a banner of truth, which is now housed in the River Oaks Church. TE Barnett closed his portion of the report with prayer for Donald, our brethren in the TCI, and the unreached people of special concern to the NRP.

TE Barnett then encouraged support for the work of TE Chris Haynes, the NRP global worker in Europe, and TE Timotheus Global-Worker the NRP global work in Central Asia. The Chair thanked the Presbytery for its work in World Outreach and World Mission. He thanked the speakers and concluded his report by praying for the evangelization of the world.

Break**011-15 Order of the Day**

At the invitation of Moderator Blackwell, the Rev Dr. Wes Tuttle, a minister on the staff of the River Oaks Church presented a testimony and a case study River Oaks intentional outreach to an unreached people group in the mountains of south-central Asia. After describing the fields of the 10-40 Window as ripe for harvest. Underscoring the fact that “Little is much when God is in it,” Dr. Tuttle spoke meaningfully and movingly about the way in which the Lord enable the congregation to engage with an unreached people group. At the conclusion of his report Dr. Tuttle displayed a new copy of the just completed New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs translated in the language of the unreached group to which River Oaks has been ministering. Encouraged by Dr. Tuttle, and profoundly grateful to God for His grace, the Moderator led the NRP in prayer for the work of global outreach, and for the international ministry of the River Oaks Church.

011-16 Ascending Overture from the Rivermont Presbyterian Church

The Moderator then directed the attention of the NRP to pages 15 to 17 of the 011 Meeting Packet and informed the Presbytery that it had the opportunity to concur with the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest in overturing the 46th General Assembly to amend the constitution. The Moderator then called on TE David Weber, Moderator of the Rivermont Session, who introduced the overture and made the opening affirmative speech.

Overture to the 46th General Assembly

Whereas, God created Adam and Eve and ordained the first marriage and family consisting of one man and one woman in sexual union, establishing the context for the biblical sexual ethic (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; 4:1); and

Whereas, God has established the one flesh union between a husband and wife, as a great mystery in reference to Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25; 31-32); and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures declare that the sexual union and desire between one man and one woman, in the covenant of marriage, is righteous and holy, and all other sexual activity is unrighteous and sinful, including homosexuality, which the Holy Scriptures describe as “degrading passions” (Romans 5:18-19; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 24:1; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 138, 139); and

Whereas, the application of the Seventh Commandment forbids the sins of homosexuality, unnatural lusts, and unclean affections, affirming that homosexual acts and the desires to commit those acts are both sinful (Matthew 5:27-28; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 139); and

Whereas, the Christian’s identity is rooted in Christ so that he is a “new creation” in Him, his identity cannot be defined by sexual and any other experiences, desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception (“this is who I am”) and their remaining indwelling sin (“this is what I must daily mortify”) (Romans 6:1-14; I Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-5); and

Whereas, identification or ongoing experience as “Same Sex Attracted” or any other identification or ongoing experience contrary to the biblical sexual ethic is sinful, is against nature itself, is something God detests, and is not fitting for an officer of the Church of Christ (Leviticus 18:22; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5-6); and

Whereas, the biblical qualifications for a church officer require him (or her) to be “above reproach,” officers and candidates for office must conform their lives to biblical sexual ethics, which include denying and mortifying all sexual passions and desires toward anyone to whom they are not married (I Timothy 3:2); and

Whereas, for two thousand years the Church of Jesus Christ has at no time doctrinally allowed for the ordination of those engaged in homosexual activity or experiencing homosexual desire and thus has been faithful to the Holy Scriptures teaching on human sexuality, sanctification and the offices of the church, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has faithfully followed that teaching since its inception; and

Whereas, the *Position Paper on Homosexuality*, adopted by the 16th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in 1996, affirms, “The witness of God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments is clear, declaring that the practice of homosexuality, including lust, is a grievous sin, and that any who continue to engage in such activity face the consequences of God’s condemning judgment. However, God’s grace offers love, forgiveness, hope and a new life. The necessary response to this offer is true repentance, including turning from homosexual behavior, and commitment to a faithful obedience to the Lord according to His Word;” and

Whereas, the *Position Paper on Human Sexuality*, adopted by the 37th General Assembly in 2017, declares, “As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves;” and

Whereas, the LGBTQ+ movement has infiltrated many quarters of the church, resulting in widespread confusion and controversy and has disrupted the peace and unity of the church; and

Whereas, the question of ordination of those who, on an ongoing basis experience homosexual desire, is sufficiently grave so that should any court in the EPC ordain someone who acknowledges ongoing homosexual desire, there is likely to be widespread rejection of the validity of that person’s ordination resulting in significant disruption of the peace and unity of the church; and

Whereas, promoting the peace and unity of the church is a vow all church officers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church make (*Book of Government* 13-2A.9); and

Whereas, in response to the consideration of ordained church office for those currently experiencing Same Sex Attraction, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must take a definitive, constitutional position on this matter;

Therefore, be it resolved that The New River Presbytery overtures the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to amend the Book of Government 9- 3A. as follows:

Current Book of Government 9-3A.

Proposed Book of Government 9-3A.

According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain

“According to Scripture, those who bear office in the church **shall** exhibit certain

characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.

characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill **these offices shall** exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church.

Therefore, persons eligible for church office shall conform in heart, mind, and conduct to God’s design for human sexuality, embracing with gratitude the calling of either chastity in singleness or fidelity within marriage between one man and one woman. Those who profess, persist in, or identify with unnatural desires or affections, contrary to God’s created order and condemned by Scripture as against nature, are disqualified from holding office in Christ’s Church.¹ A presbytery or congregation preparing to elect persons to **these holy offices shall** carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the **Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, and Deacon**, and be very prayerful in **electing** persons to these offices.

1. See Romans 1:26–27 on desires contrary to God’s created order; Genesis 1–2 on the creation of male and female; Westminster Larger Catechism Q.139 on the moral duties of Christians and the proper ordering of affections.

At the conclusion of debate, RE Blackwell led the New River Presbytery in prayer. Moderator Blackwell then put the question to the body: Shall the NRP concur with the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest and advance the overture to amend G.9-3A to the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

By a vote of 40 to 33 the motion to concur with PNW and advance the overture to amend G.9-3A to the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church was approved.

Dinner Break

011-17 Evening Worship & Celebration of the Lord's Supper

At 7:00, in the sanctuary of the River Oaks Church, TE David Beaty called the New River Presbytery to worship. During the service TE Chuck Estes, Campus Pastor of Reynolda Church's King Campus, and Chair of the Church Alive Team, preached a sermon from Luke 9 entitled, "Where is My Car?" After the sermon and a season of prayer TE David Beaty presided at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Saturday, February 7, 2026**011-18 Call to Order and Prayer**

Moderator Blackwell reconvened the meeting at 8:35 a.m., declared a quorum and opened the session in prayer.

011-19 Morning Devotion

EPC TE Shawn Morrison, and hospice social worker was introduced by TE Powell Sykes, who opened the morning worship with prayer and invited TE Morrison to bring the word. After a brief prayer of inspiration, TE Morrison preached a sermon on Psalm 88 entitled "Crying Out Day and Night." At the conclusion of his sermon he led the Presbytery in an extended season of prayer for the people of God to know the peace and comfort provided by the Lord.

011-20 Ministerial Committee Report

At the invitation of the Moderator, TE Powell Sykes, Chair of the Ministerial Committee began his report by leading the Presbytery in prayer for the work of the ministry and the ministry of the congregations of the NRP. He exhorted the NRP to fully live into an evangelical, missional, Reformed and Presbyterian ministry.

The Chair then gave the NRP two items for information:

A For Information

1 Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, Virginia has begun the G.5-10 process of leaving the EPC for Reformed independency. TEs Andy Koesters, Glen Holman, and Robert Barnett have agreed to represent the NRP at the meetings of the Lebanon Congregation.

2 007-11.A/010-13.A

No Session has yet received a request from the recently disciplined member of the NRP for membership. This is a material violation of the sanctions imposed by the Judicial Commission.

B Ministerial Committee Omnibus Motion

TE Sykes then moved the Omnibus motion on behalf of the Ministerial Committee:

1 To excuse those members and commissioned pastors who had requested to be excused because of hard providence: TEs Rob Buchanan, Timotheus Global-

Worker, Christopher Haynes, Bill Catoe, Brett Eubank, Marty Fields, Glen Holman, Benjamin Williams, Alan Wright, retirees Bucky Hunsicker, Peter Smith, Barry Tucker, and CP Alan Morrison.

- 2 To excuse the sessions that had requested to be excused because of hard providence: Berry Hill; EPC Elkton; First Church, Martinsburg; FORGE; and Lebanon.
- 3 Appoint TE **Bucky Hunsicker** Moderator of the Session of the Asbury Presbyterian Church.
- 4 TE **Tom Clymer** is 70 and therefore retired. He and the Session of the Mebane Presbyterian Church, Mebane, North Carolina, request the NRP to authorize his Call as Transitional Pastor for another year expiring February 2027.
- 5 **Authorizing Resolution**
That the New River Presbytery grant the Ministerial Committee authority to appoint members of the NRP to act as Moderators or Interim Moderators of Sessions (G.18-2.A.4) for eight (8) months, expiring at the 013 Meeting of NRP, October 2026.

The omnibus motion was sustained.

C The Examination of TE Shawn Morrison and TE Jeffrey Schrage

TE Sykes then conducted the examination of **TE Shawn Morrison**, to be received from the inactive roll of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic to the NRP as Pastor of the Elon Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia (G.10-4), and **TE Jeffrey Schrage**, member of the Presbytery of the Mid-West, to be Pastor of First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia (G.10-4).

TE Sykes led the NRP in examining **TE Shawn Morrison** and **TE Jeffrey Schrage**. They were examined with respect to:

- 1) Their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
- 2) Theology and Sacraments
- 3) English Bible
- 4) The Book of Order
- 5) The History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition
- 6) The nature and work of the office of Teaching Elder.

TEs Morrison and Schrage took one exception a piece to the *Westminster Standards*, and then explained their exceptions to the Elders. The Moderator then put the question to the body.

The Motion was sustained to allow TE Morrison's and TE Schrage's exceptions to the Westminster Standards.

The Examination was closed, and TEs Morrison and Schrage, and their families were excused. The body deliberated and prayed before the Moderator put the

question to the body: Shall TE Shawn Morrison and TE Jeff Schrage be received as Members of the NRP?

The Motion was sustained to receive TE Shawn Morrison and TE Jeffrey Schrage as Teaching Elders of the New River Presbytery.

D The Call of TE Jeffrey P. Schrage

1 To Call TE Jeffrey P. Schrage as Pastor of the Frist Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Roanoke, Virginia.

- 1) Effective Salary
 - A. Annual Cash Salary: \$70,000.00
 - B. Use of the Manse and Housing Allowance: \$32,000.00
- 2) Amount for retirement plan \$10,200.00 (being 10% of Salary)
- 3) EPC Group Insurance
- 4) FICA allowance up to \$7,800.00
- 5) Reimbursable Accounts
 - A. Study Leave/Books \$2,500.00
 - B. Mileage – Covered by the Church
 - C. Ministry Expenses – Covered by the Church
 - D. Travel to Presbytery and Assembly – Covered by the Church
 - E. Other – Covered as incurred for the Church
- 6) Annual Vacation: *Four (4) weeks or One (1) Month*
- 7) Study Leave: *At least Two (2) weeks, cumulative up to Six (6) weeks*
- 8) Relocation Expenses of up to the cost of moving to Roanoke.

Motion was sustained to call TE Jeff Schrage as Pastor of First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia.

2 An Administrative Commission comprised of:

- 1) TE Mike Matlack, (Falling Springs)
- 2) TE Emily Hook (Galatia)
- 3) RE Don Andree (FEPC)
- 4) RE Barry Rakes (Woodside)
- 5) RE David Smith (FEPC)

To conduct a service of installation at 3:00 PM on March 15, 2026, in the sanctuary of First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia. Further, that the NRP invite NRP Candidate Evan Gray (Woodside), to sit with the commission.

Motion was sustained to Authorize the named commission to conduct the service of installation.

E The Call of TE Shawn Morrison

- 1 To Call TE Shawn Morrison to be Pastor of the Elon Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia.
 - 1) Effective Salary
 - A. Annual Cash Salary: \$43,000.00
 - B. Manse and Utilities: \$5,000.00
 - 2) Amount for retirement plan \$5,000 (being in excess of 10% of Salary)
 - 3) EPC Group Insurance
 - 4) FICA allowance ½ SECA upon request
 - 5) Automobile Mileage Reimbursement at the current IRA rate up to \$6,000.00.
 - 6) Ministry expenses up to \$2,000.00
 - 7) Annual Vacation: *Four (4) weeks or One (1) Month*
 - 8) Study Leave: *At least Two (2) weeks, cumulative up to Six (6) weeks*

Motion was sustained to call TE Shawn Morrison as Pastor of the Elon Presbyterian Church.

- 2 An Administrative Commission comprised of:
 - 1) TE Brett Eubank, (Rivermont)
 - 2) TE David Garrison, (Northminster)
 - 3) RE Matt Schubert, (Rivermont)
 - 4) RE John Lange, (Northminster)
 - 5) RE Mary McAlister, (Elon)

To conduct a service of installation at 3:00 PM on February 15, 2026, in the sanctuary of Elon Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia.

Motion was sustained to Authorize the named commission to conduct the service of installation.

TE Sykes then thanked the NRP for its piety, diligence, and attention. He then concluded his report with prayer.

Break**011-21 Descending Overtures**

At the invitation of Moderator Blackwell, the Stated Clerk moved the Descending Overtures on behalf of the 45th General Assembly.

Overture 45-A Amending BoG 11.2	52	Affirmative	5	Negative	Approved
Overture 45-B Amending BoG 18.3	53	Affirmative	4	Negative	Approved
Overture 45-C Amending BoG 19.4	56	Affirmative	1	Negative	Approved
Overture 45-D Amending BoG 21.2	55	Affirmative	2	Negative	Approved

When the NRP had concluded processing the Descending Overtures, the Moderator led the NRP in prayer and authorized the Stated Clerk to communicate the ballot to the Office of the General Assembly.

011-22 Stewardship Committee Report

RE Andrew Morton, member of the Stewardship Committee began his report by leading the Presbytery in prayer for the work of the Stewardship Committee and for the financial health of the NRP and her congregations. After describing the ways in which the Stewardship Committee was working to advance the cause and purpose of the NRP, RE Morton gave the following detailed financial report:

A

Church	2025 POI YTD	2025 POI GIVEN IN 2026	TOTAL IN 2025
Asbury		\$553.00	\$553.00
Bethel		\$0.00	\$0.00
Berry Hill			
Bouldin Memorial	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$1000.00
Buffalo	\$4,450.00	\$0.00	\$4,450.00
Christ Reigns (MG)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Cleveland	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Elon	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Elkton	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$6,000.00
Falling Spring	\$1,296.63	\$0.00	\$1,296.63
First EP Roanoke	\$0.00	\$5,735.00	\$5,735.00
First Eden	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First Martinsburg	\$451.50	\$0.00	\$451.50
Galatia	\$0.00	\$863.67	\$863.67
Greenwood	\$793.76	\$0.00	\$793.76
Hope	\$2,850.00	\$0.00	\$2,850.00
Hurley	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lebanon	\$1,825.00	\$0.00	\$1,825.00
Mary's	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mebane	\$3,600.00	\$0.00	\$3,600.00
Memorial/FORGE (MC)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
New Life	\$958.50	\$0.00	\$958.50
Northminster	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Norton	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Piedmont	Dismissed	Independency	2025
Princeton	\$1,850.00	\$0.00	\$1,850.00

Providence	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Restoration	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Reynolda	\$13,020.96	\$0.00	\$13,320.96
River Oaks	\$25,125.00	\$0.00	\$25,125.00
Rivermont	\$19,471.92	\$0.00	\$19,471.92
Roseann	\$1050.00	\$0.00	\$1050.00
Slate Mountain	\$1,425.00	\$0.00	\$1,425.00
Stuart	\$3,150.00	\$0.00	\$3,150.00
Thompson Valley	\$419.03	\$0.00	\$419.03
Walker's	\$1,310.45	\$0.00	\$1,310.45
Warm Springs	\$1,489.93	\$0.00	\$2,429.01
Westminster, Bluefield	\$3,806.76	\$0.00	\$3,806.76
Westminster, Burlington	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00
Woodside	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Wyliesburg	\$750.00	\$0.00	\$750.00
Total	\$98,794.44	\$8,590.75	\$107,385.19

POI Comparison

2024	\$99,238.00
2025	\$107,385.00

B NRP Balance Sheet (through 12/31/2025)			
ASSETS			
Current Assets		12/31/2025	12/31/2024
	Operating: Pinnacle Bank	\$16,407.85	\$22,414.98
	Money Market: Pinnacle Bank	\$41,159.82	\$41,117.32
	CD: Pinnacle Bank	\$108,516.22	\$104,166.18
Total	Current Assets	\$166,083.89	\$167,698.48
 LIABILITIES			
		\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	Liabilities	\$0.00	\$0.00
 EQUITY			
Unrestricted Net Assets			
	General Fund	\$52,408.84	\$61,335.80
Total	Unrestricted Net Assets	\$52,408.84	\$61,335.80
 Restricted Net Assets			
	Grace and Mercy Fund	\$2,281.23	\$2,281.23
	Church Development Committee Fund	\$80,814.82	\$80,018.36
	Chaplain Fund	\$575.39	\$575.39
	Missions Fund	\$2,808.18	\$5,513.67
	Missionary Emergency Fund	\$4,576.62	\$4,576.62
	Women's Fund	\$4,352.56	\$4,352.56
	Church Health Fund	\$10,766.25	\$8,044.85
	Emergency Relief Fund	\$7,500.00	\$0.00
Total	Restricted Net Assets	\$113,675.05	\$106,362.68
Total	Equity	\$166,083.89	\$167,698.48
Total	Liabilities and Equity	\$166,083.89	\$167,698.48

C New River Presbytery Income Statement (Through 12/31/2025)

Account	2025 YTD ACTUAL	2024 YTD ACTUAL	VARIANCE
Income			
Per Member Asking/POI	\$98,794.44	\$96,523.88	\$2,270.56
Per Member Asking Prior-Year	\$2,713.91	\$2,370.19	\$343.72
Presbytery Offering	\$1,734.00	\$2,874.09	-\$1,104.09
Individual Giving	\$300.00	\$945.00	-\$645.00
Church Giving	\$51.80	\$2,750.00	-\$2,698.20
GA Church Health Initiative	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00
Interest Income	\$4,392.54	\$3,607.87	\$784.67
Total Income	\$119,986.69	\$121,071.03	-\$1084.34
Expenses			
Compensation			
Missional Director Stipend	\$39,000.00	\$39,000.00	\$0.00
Stated Clerk Stipend	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$0.00
IT Director Stipend	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00
Treasurer Stipend	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00
Total Compensation	\$69,000.00	\$69,000.00	\$0.00
Personnel			
Travel-Missional Director	\$5,864.45	\$5,453.55	\$410.90
Travel-Stated Clerk	\$5,514.99	\$6,138.43	-\$623.44
Office Expense	\$415.80	\$15.77	\$400.03
Total Personnel	\$11,795.24	\$11,607.75	\$187.49
Professional Fees			
IT Expenses	\$1,344.83	\$852.57	\$492.26
Treasurer Expenses	\$1,758.18	\$1,678.79	\$79.39
Liability Insurance (D/O)	\$2,910.53	\$2,869.68	\$40.85
Licenses/Fees	\$872.76	\$1,116.66	-\$243.90
Bank Fees	\$25.80	\$6.11	\$19.69
Total Professional Fees	\$6,912.10	\$6,523.81	\$388.29
Committees/Commissions			
Commissions	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Executive Council	\$2,477.13	\$2,944.55	-\$467.42
Ministerial Committee	\$2,738.82	\$1,626.33	\$1,112.49
Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
World Missions (Outreach)	\$6,605.49	\$6,084.70	\$520.79
Presbytery	\$855.11	\$692.02	\$163.09
General Assembly	\$889.81	\$0.00	\$889.81
Total Committees/Commissions	\$13,566.36	\$11,347.60	\$2,218.76

Benevolence			
Minister's Assistance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Presbytery Offering	\$1,735.00	\$2,874.09	-\$1,139.09
Commissioner's Assistance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Benevolence – Other	\$0.00	\$750.00	-\$750.00
Total Benevolence	\$1,735.00	\$3,624.09	-\$1,889.09
Church Development Committee			
New Church Plant Support	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Church Planter Health Insurance	\$3,126.47	\$0.00	-\$3,126.47
Church Plant Coordinator	\$5,000.00	\$1,250.00	\$3,750.00
Church Planter <small>Assessment/Coaching</small>	\$200.00	\$3,450.00	-\$3,250.00
CDC Travel	\$1,276.88	\$0.00	\$1,276.88
Church Planting Team Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Church Health Team Travel	\$990.81	\$722.38	\$268.43
Transitional Pastor <small>Coaching/Training</small>	\$493.86	\$3,559.46	-\$3,065.60
Church Revitalization	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Presbytery Equipping	\$2,504.56	\$1,549.03	\$955.53
Total Church Develop. Comm.	\$18,592.58	\$10,530.87	\$8,061.71
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$121,601.28	\$112,634.12	\$8,967.16
NET INCOME/LOSS	-\$1,614.59	\$8,436.91	-\$10,051.50

After explaining the contents of the detailed financial reports, RE Morton then answered specific questions from the floor. The NRP was encouraged by the good order and health of its finances.

RE Morton then concluded his report with prayer.

BREAK

011-23 Westminster Standards Equipping Time

Moderator Blackwell reminded the NRP of the relevance of the *Westminster Standards* for encouraging, equipping, and enabling disciple making churches to plant disciple making churches. RE Blackwell then invited TE Ed Pettus, founding father of the New River Presbytery, to address the NRP on the nature and importance of the Standards as a present help for ministry. After a brief prayer for our unity in the truth, and our growth in grace as the people of God, Dr. Pettus give the following lecture:

Westminster Confession of Faith FOCUS

I am serving today as an apologist. It is a role for which I have little to no training. I see these guys on YouTube who stand in front of hostile crowds and answer questions about the Bible and Christianity. Of course, as believers, we are all apologists in that we are all charged with the task of defending the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3.15). My defense today is for a regular practice of New River Presbytery. From the beginning, our leadership decided to bring before us some teaching either about or from the Westminster Confession and/or the Catechism.

Every Saturday we spend some time in our Confession. I was one of the adamant voices who suggested that we keep the confession before us at every meeting. My reasoning was that denominations, and one particular denomination from which many of us have some background, have lost sight of their confessional standards. For one reason, they have too many confessions and, partly because of the number, they give little to no attention to any of them. I would suggest they handle the Word of God with a similar looseness. Their authority seems to be the Book of Order and anything else comes second, if at all. But my purpose is not to criticize former denominations, even though I just did! My experience has led me, and our leadership, to pursue everything possible to keep the NRP on track with our confessional convictions and, more recently, keep the EPC on track.

First and foremost, above all, most importantly, (can I stress this even more?!) we acknowledge and confess that the WCF is subordinate to Scripture – we must always remember this. The Confession is before us to help us understand Scripture, never to replace Scripture. This could go without saying, but sometimes when things go without saying they are long forgotten. I want to go through seven affirmations for this practice. These have come from various sources and what I personally believe to be crucial for every Presbytery and for the EPC on the whole.

1. My hope is that we never forget our Confession. I know that may sound ridiculous, but with what has been happening in the last 2-3 years in the EPC, it may not be too far fetched. Israel lost their memory many times and had to be reminded of all that God had done for them. I would sight Deuteronomy 8.1-20, just to read a short section,

¹¹“Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...

¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ¹⁹And if you forget the Lord

your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Men are sometimes accused of selective hearing and perhaps we could call Israel's situation in Deuteronomy as "selective amnesia". In the same way that failing to keep commandment may lead to forgetting God, so failing to keep our Confession before us has the capacity to lead us astray. I have played the guitar for many years and learned many tunes that I used to play regularly, but over the years did not play them and I have forgotten how to play them!

Let us take care lest we forget the Lord's teachings by forgetting our Confessional statement in the Westminster Confession and Catechism. Take care lest, when our denomination has grown larger, that we lower our standards to accommodate cultural norms that have brought about numerous heresies in other denominations. Take care that you not think you can do ministry apart from the inspired Word of God and the historic doctrine of the Westminster Divines who gave us our foundation in Reformed Faith and practice. Take care...

Let us not forget our Confession.

2. Solution to #1: keep the Confession always before us.

So, #1 is never forget. #2 – Keep it always before us. **Psalm 119** speaks of storing up the Word for a purpose, **"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."**

We store up the Word and, in a similar manner, not on the exact same level, but in similar manner, we store up the Confession of our Faith so that we will not sin against God. We simply keep it before us as a constant reminder of what we believe the Scriptures teach.

Psalm 119.30, "I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me."

We set the Word before us and, *in a similar manner, not on the exact same level, but in similar manner*, we set the Confession of our Faith before us as a way of faithfulness. Anything less is a temptation to compromise. Anything less is a betrayal of our vows to the church and to God.

3. WCF enables us to get our bearings when things go awry. In that way, second to Scripture, WCF serves as a compass. The idiom that I don't particularly care for is that when things are "going south" it means not going the right way or not according to plan. Being born and raised in the South I think going South is the best direction! But that is another discussion.

The compass helps us find our way when lost. First is Scripture, then the Confession. We will hold true to the Reformed doctrine of *sola Scriptura* holding the Scripture always as the final authority in all areas of faith and life. As a compass, the WCF helps us not be **"tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine"** (Ephesians 4:14).

The WCF is our doctrine, our teaching on the Scriptures. Therefore, it is of vital importance to keep it before our eyes and ears so that we do not lose our way. How many denominations have we seen blown about by winds of false doctrines? Our current fight in the EPC is to prevent those false doctrines from entering into our denomination on the matter of ordination as they have elsewhere.

4. WCF keeps our focus on being Reformed. We are constantly bombarded with other theologies floating around in the world. The WCF keeps us reformed. This is important on all levels but especially so when it comes to examining those coming under care and those seeking ordination. We study and teach the WCF in NRP at every meeting to refresh our Reformed theology and remind ourselves of who we are as a people. Perhaps future GA meetings could spend more time in the Confession rather than holding seminars on woke ideologies or producing racial lament papers or focusing time on “rebranding” the EPC. One of the blessing of coming into the EPC was the emphasis on Reformed Theology that was missing elsewhere. Our Confession lends itself to greater discipline for study and learning our beliefs and our past.

5. The WCF opens our eyes to a deeper understanding of the Bible and faith. It broadens our perspective from the standpoint of traditional/historic church doctrine. Church leaders in the past were brilliant people and while they may have simply been speaking to the issues of their time, those issues are not far removed from all times. The WCF met for several years (1643-1648), 1163 sessions in all to set forth the teaching of the Reformed Protestant Church. That’s a lot of Zoom meetings! It is our primary biblical doctrine and extremely useful to this day for life in the church and in the world. It teaches us about saving faith, repentance, perseverance, assurance of salvation, just to name a few. I don’t know about you but I’ve had people wanting to know about their assurance of salvation. It is still a concern today.

(WCF 18.1) However, those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, who honestly love him and try to walk in good conscience before him, may in this life be assured with certainty that they are in a state of grace. They may also rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and they will never be ashamed of that hope.

In one sense the WCF is our backup, it is our go to document for teaching the saints. It is our go to document for our own study and edification. It is our doctrine for the sake of sanctification and glorifying God.

6. The WCF has stood the test of time. While we have adjusted some language for the sake of modern English, the basic meaning behind these teachings has remained unchanged. Take for example the teaching on Sabbath (where so many take exception). It emphasizes how important it is, especially in a culture that ignores the Sabbath, to take the Sabbath more seriously and with more vigor. The Sabbath is one of our witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath might be the most broken commandment of the Ten!

(WCF 21.8) The Sabbath is kept holy unto the Lord when men prepare their hearts for it; arrange for their daily affairs to be taken care of beforehand; rest the whole day from their own works and words, and from thoughts about their worldly activities and recreations; and take up the whole time in public and private worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

How many of us prepare our hearts for the Sabbath?

How many make arrangements beforehand? (Not just in preparing a sermon!)

How many rest from works? Even more so, rest from words?

And what about the exception that is taken from recreation? It states clearly “from thoughts about their worldly activities and recreations... “worldly”, depending on how we interpret or define “worldly”, should we be engaged in anything worldly? I digress!

How many of us take up the Sabbath for both public and private worship?

These are crucial questions from centuries past and the current century.

Since the Confession has stood the test of time, it also serves to bind us to generations past and serves as an ongoing connection with one another today. It is part of what makes us a connectional faith community.

7. The WCF is what we teach! Right behind the Bible, this is it. The Gospel Coalition says this in one article,

The Westminster Assembly carefully preserved [the] doctrinal division of faith and service—a distinction the Shorter Catechism more expressively rendered as “what we are to believe concerning God” and “what duty God requires of man.”

NRP believes that it is important for us to teach the WCF that we all might know the Bible and the doctrinal foundations given us by God.

These are some of the reasons, there may be more, that we have decided to bring the WCF before us at every NRP meeting. Let us hope that we all stick around on Saturday to renew our hope and faith by the study and appreciation of our Confession. Can we truly say, “This is what we believe,” if we do not know what is in this document?” In preparing for today, I spent time in the WCF taking up a chapter per day. Start today or tomorrow and refresh your memory in the doctrines of faith given us in our Confession. Peace and grace to all.

Sources:

<https://www.challies.com/sponsored/why-you-should-read-the-westminster-confession-of-faith/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-westminster-confession/>

<https://richardfloyd.com/2022/10/27/reflections-on-the-legacy-of-the-westminster-confession-of-faith/>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/why-read-westminster-confession>

<https://rts.edu/resources/why-is-the-westminster-confession-of-faith-important-in-my-christian-life/>

Having delighted and encouraged the NRP with his presentation, Dr. Pettus concluded his time with prayer.

Break

011-24 Recognition of Retirement

The Moderator then invited TE Robert Barnett to the pulpit where he gave a brief testimony and admonition to the New River Presbytery. RE Blackwell then invited TE Andy Koesters, the Missional Director to pray for TE Barnett who had retired in January.

011-25 Small Church Summit

TE Mike Matlack, Pastor of the Falling Spring Church invited the Presbyters to learn more about, and attend the 2026 annual EPC Small Church Summit, February 24-26, 2026 at Hope Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

011-26 Expression of Thanks to the Host Church

RE Blackwell, the Moderator, then led the Presbytery in an expression of thanks to the host church, and prayed for the minister, elders, deacons, members, and friends of the River Oaks Community Church, praising God for their generous hospitality.

011-27

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

October 2nd and 3rd 2026, New Hope Presbyterian Church, Salem, Virginia

011-28 Adjournment

Having been successfully moved, seconded, and sustained, Moderator Blackwell adjourned the 011th Meeting and closed with Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/ Rufus T Burton

Rufus T Burton, Stated Clerk

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**A global movement of
evangelistic presbyterians**