

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (EPC)**

For more information go to [www.epc.org](http://www.epc.org)

### **1. What is unique about the EPC?**

We are unique among American Presbyterians with our self-conscious attempt to balance essential and non-essential matters within a confessional heritage. We are unified in our commitment to the essentials of the historic Christian faith taught in the Bible, but allow liberty of conscience on those matters which are not so plain in or central to the Bible's teaching.

### **2. What is the EPC's view of the Bible?**

We believe that the Bible is fully inspired by God the Holy Spirit to lead people to a saving knowledge of God and to help them understand their world rightly. By its very nature, the Bible is infallible.

### **3. What does the EPC believe?**

The EPC is Presbyterian in government, Reformed in theology and Evangelical in spirit.

### **4. What does it mean to be "Presbyterian?"**

To be Presbyterian is to be governed according to the pattern of elders seen in the Old and New Testaments. We are ruled neither by bishops in a hierarchical model nor by members in a congregational model. Biblically qualified elders are recognized through congregational election and, along with ministers, rule the church corporately. It also means being connected in mutual accountability and responsibility. Just as individual Christians are connected to one another as members of the body of Christ, so also individual congregations are connected under Christ as the great Head of the Church.

### **5. What does it mean to be "Reformed?"**

To be "Reformed" means several things. Historically, it means that we trace our roots to the Reformation, when John Calvin and others led the movement to reform the Church according to Scripture. Theologically, it means belief in the absolute sovereignty of God and that the highest good is God's glory. This historical and theological heritage is often expressed in the "solas" of the Reformation-God's grace alone as the only way to be reconciled to God, faith alone as the only means of receiving God's grace, Christ alone as the ground of God's saving grace, Scripture alone as the only infallible authority for belief and God's glory alone as the ultimate purpose for the lives of men and women.

### **6. What does it mean to be "Evangelical?"**

To be "Evangelical" means to believe in the importance of sharing the good news that through Jesus Christ the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, freeing people from the guilt and power of sin through personal faith and repentance. We express this priority on evangelism by stating it in our governing documents as the first work of the church. This priority is evidenced in our emphasis on church planting and world missions.

### **7. Does the EPC believe in missions?**

Absolutely! Our World Outreach Committee oversees the sending of over 90 missionaries to over 20 different countries. Some of our best and brightest members are serving with the generous support of our congregations because we believe that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations.

### **8. What is your relationship to other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations?**

We lie in the middle area of a continuum of American Presbyterian denominations. The EPC believes in historic Christianity as taught in Scripture, thus looking to the Bible as our guide on moral issues and believing in the reality of sin, salvation and judgment. At the same time, we want to give evidence of what we consider a mark of the true church-loving fellowship-by holding our convictions with charity toward others and charitably allowing a diversity of views within the EPC on non-essential issues. Thus we identify positively with those Presbyterian denominations which hold to biblical authority.

### **9. How does the EPC view the gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

The EPC believes the Holy Spirit is active today in applying the benefits of Christ's redemption and equipping the Church for service through the granting of spiritual gifts, including the gifts of office (Eph. 4:8ff.). The EPC believes the church should encourage God's people to serve Him with all the gifts the Spirit gives. The EPC consists of churches which believe the charismatic gifts are still given today as well as churches which do not. This would be a prime example of what the EPC believes is a "non-essential." We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is part of the new birth (1 Cor. 12:13), but that every believer is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit as part of the ongoing work of God's grace (Eph. 5:18). For more on the EPC's view of the Holy Spirit, consult our "Position Paper on the Holy Spirit."

**10. What is the EPC's position on social issues such as homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia?**

The EPC looks to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice on such issues. For example, we believe that homosexual practice, like many other things, is sinful. Regarding abortion, we believe the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life, attributing personhood to an unborn child. Our positions on these and other issues can be found in position papers available on our web site or in print from the Office of the General Assembly.

**11. What is the EPC's view of women in office?**

While this is a topic about which many Christians feel strongly, the EPC believes that there can be genuine unity amid diversity on the subject. Each congregation has the right to decide whether to have women officers. The local congregation, subject to presbytery approval, determines whether they will have women as pastors. We believe that, whatever a congregation's view of office, women should be encouraged to serve as God has called and gifted them. For more on this topic, you may obtain our "Position Paper on the Ordination of Women."

**12. In the EPC, who owns the property of a local church?**

The congregation has the exclusive, inalienable right to own and control its own property.

**13. How are churches represented in the EPC?**

Every church has a right to send representatives to presbytery and general assembly meetings. Further, our form of government attempts to achieve a two-to-one ratio between lay delegates (elders) and ministers at those levels. This provision helps keep the EPC from being a clergy-dominated denomination, out of touch with the needs and interests of the average person in the pew.

**14. How big is the EPC?**

The EPC consists of approximately 230 churches representing approximately 80,000 members.

**15. Does the EPC have its own colleges and seminaries?**

No, the EPC does not own any denominational schools. We look to a number of evangelical colleges and seminaries across the country, many of whom annually attend our General Assembly and have EPC trustees.

**16. What is on the horizon for the EPC?**

Since our beginning we have felt that we represented a unique move of God. We have been blessed with a fervent beginning, a warm spirit and an uncommon oneness of heart. While the EPC has grown through the transfer of many existing churches, we have a deep desire to see the kingdom of God extended through energetic church planting and evangelism. Our Vision 21 strategic plan through the year 2010 sets ambitious objectives for doing so. Our growth has varied over the years, but has always been positive. We expect our intense efforts in church planting to breed a church planting mentality that will produce significant growth in the next decade.

**17. Where are your denominational offices?**

The Office of the General Assembly is located in the Detroit area in Livonia, Michigan.