



# The General Synod

## ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

June 11, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As fellow members of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus we write this letter in the fervent hope of securing our future endeavors together to see sinners brought to repentance and faith, through the right preaching of the gospel of peace. We have enjoyed many years of fruitful friendship going back to the very beginning of the EPC. We are grateful for the Lord's work in and through your churches. There are many places in our southeastern heartland and in the northeast and elsewhere where we share common fields. Our aim always is to see the Church everywhere, no matter its denominational affiliation, committed to proclaiming the whole counsel of God and would never wish to damage that common goal.

Yet, we find ourselves in need of expressing our brotherly concern about a couple of issues. We do so not as one standing above, but alongside. There are certainly places where we could take the log out of our own eye. Our hope is this letter is received in the spirit in which it is sent, out of love and humility. We have struggled over the past forty years to regain confessional and scriptural faithfulness after a couple of decades slide at mid-century. Our Lord, by his merciful grace, including the loving confrontation of friends brought us to regain our footing on the solid ground of biblical fidelity. This included the faithful influence of your own ministers and elders during that season.

The subject of our writing to you is serious, and we would not waste your time if it was not.

There is a growing concern among many of our Synod members regarding the direction of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and its churches. Before the Lord and in brotherly love, we need to address the issues at hand and desire in Christian kindness to work with you for biblical recovery.

Our concern is rooted in your understanding and use of the authority of Holy Scripture in relation to two specific practices: (1) the role of women within the ordained ministry and eldership of the EPC and (2) the use and abuse of charismatic gifts in the corporate worship and life of the EPC.

In relation to the first area, we commend to you our position paper approved at the General Synod in 2005 entitled, *Women in the Life of the Church*. Here our Synod has laid out the Biblical teachings on the role of women in the life of the bride of Christ. Our Westminster Larger Catechism Q.158 notes, "*Q. By whom is the word of God to be preached? A. The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.*" We see here that not only is ability central to the work of a preaching ministry, but a biblically grounded calling as well, as stated in our position paper. There is no question that the issue continues to be a significant theological difference between our denominations. If we are to remain as fraternal denominations, then we need to come together with faith seeking understanding and strengthen our bond in truth.

When it comes to the second area, the continued use of Apostolic gifts, the Westminster Confession of Faith in Chapter 1:1 and 1:6 says, "*Those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.*"

and “*The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.*” The theology concerning the work of the Holy Spirit is vital to the church. However, the nature of the charismatic gifts being tolerated within the EPC fall outside the Biblical understanding and practice of the historic Reformed Church. While this is not as great a concern to us, due to its limited practice within the EPC as a whole, it still needs to be corrected.

Even as we share these concerns with you in love, we are also concerned about our weakening relationship over the last few decades. During the early 1990’s there were ongoing talks between our denominations. Since then, we have gradually stopped active cooperation in many areas of ministry. We would like to see the recovery of a renewed relationship with the EPC. The hindrance to this renewed and revitalized relationship is our concern about your view of the authority of Scripture.

We hope you will receive our letter in the spirit of love and concern with which it is sent. We would invite you to join us over the next year in dialogue through our respective Inter-church committees so that we can discuss, pray, and work through our concerns.

May God continue to bless both of our denominations as we seek to be faithful to the Word of God and our common theological heritage.

Sincerely,

*Kyle Sims*

Kyle Sims, Principal Clerk  
General Synod of the  
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church