



Report on the Freedom, Unity, and Responsibility Resource Paper

To the Delegates of the Annual Meeting,

We pray that this report finds you and your families healthy, safe, and resilient in this season. The Apostle Paul opines in his letter to the Galatians in 5:13, “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” Paul speaks of a freedom that transcends the flesh and its desires and points the listener to a freedom that liberates one to serve in love. In freedom, we are called to serve one another in love.

When the Writing Team for the resource paper entitled “Freedom, Unity, and Responsibility” first came together as colleagues, we were focused on “getting the job done well.” We mainly sought the input and voice of a diverse Scope Team and determining what literary styles and theological elements we would utilize in developing the paper.

Since February 2019, however, we have become more than Covenant colleagues working on a resource paper. We have become closer mission friends teamed together to serve our sisters and brothers in love by fully engaging in this important kingdom work.

Below are highlights of the Writing Team and an addendum that speaks to the role and function of resource papers in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

INCEPTION

On June 21, 2018, the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church commissioned the writing of a resource paper entitled Freedom and Responsibility. The paper’s commissioning was initiated by a

recommendation from the Board of Ordered Ministry to the Executive Board. The process of adopting a Covenant resource paper is found in Article II, Section 2.1 of the Covenant Bylaws. In October of 2018, the Executive Board with the counsel and conference of the Council of Superintendents, the Council of Administrators, and the Covenant Offices Leadership Team approved the establishment of a Writing Team which met for the first time on February 11, 2019.

WRITING TEAM

In actively Practicing Solidarity, our selection process entailed the recruitment of Covenanters who vary in gender, contexts, ecclesial practices, and ethnicities. The team includes the following persons:

- Howard Burgoyne, Superintendent of the East Coast Conference
- Hauna Ondrey, representing the faculty of North Park Theological Seminary
- Donn Engebretson, Covenant administrator and participant on the writing team of the two previous Covenant Resource Papers
- Stephen Bilynskij, Covenant pastor and participant on the writing team of the two previous Covenant Resource Papers
- Doug Bixby, Covenant pastor and author
- Nilwona Nowlin, representing the Ethnic Commission
- Angela Yee, executive director of ministry development
- Lance Davis, executive minister of develop leaders and the ordered ministry

These individuals will be the ultimate drafters, editors, and presenters of the third resource paper to be produced in Covenant history, all under the auspices and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

PROGRESS

The purpose of the initial meeting of the Writing Team was to establish intent, direction, and process. Out of this meeting came a request to the Executive Board for a title change and to approve additional members of the Writing Team and Scope Team selection process. The requested change in title was to “Freedom, Unity, and Responsibility” from the previous “Freedom and Responsibility.” The addition of “Unity” to the title speaks to our traditional value of relationality as Covenanters. It also refers to President John Wenrich’s vision of the addition of another “P” to the Five-Fold Test for Multiethnic Ministry: Practicing Solidarity. In March of 2019, the Executive Board, with the concurrence of the Council of Administrators and Covenant Offices Leadership Team approved both the paper’s title

change and membership selection processes.

On August 13, 2019, the Writing Team convened a daylong meeting of the Scope Team participants. The Scope Team was comprised of nearly 30 women and men of the larger Covenant who were diverse in age, ministry context, and ethnicity. The team was charged with speaking into the content of the paper, first reflecting and giving input on the scope and direction of the paper, and later reading drafts and suggesting revisions. The Writing Team then continued its work of reviewing, truncating, and prioritizing the elements of the Scope Team's work.

NEXT STEPS

Covid-19 proved to be a major disrupter of the plans of many; our efforts as a Writing Team were not exempt. Nevertheless, we were able to meet three times throughout the 2020 pandemic season and continue the work of growing together while continuing our work together. We have identified two chief writers of the Writing Team and they will provide the skeletal framework of the resource paper by the end of this summer.

Submitted by:

Lance Davis, Executive Minister of Develop Leaders and the Ordered Ministry

ADDENDUM

Section 2.1 Covenant Resource Papers.

- a. The ECC may adopt Covenant Resource Papers to provide context and clarity on critical issues of concern in matters of faith, doctrine, and conduct for the ECC, ECC congregations, and corporations established by the ECC.
- b. The purpose of a Covenant Resource Paper is to inform ongoing discipleship and practice in the lives of members of ECC congregations in matters of faith, doctrine, and conduct. Since the ECC confesses that scripture is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct, a Covenant Resource Paper is not binding and is not to be used as a basis for the discipline of ordained and licensed ministers of the ECC, commissioned staff ministers of the ECC, or consecrated missionaries of the ECC; the dismissal of an ECC congregation from membership in the ECC; or the discipline of members of ECC congregations.
- c. The ECC may adopt a Covenant Resource Paper only upon a two-thirds vote of the delegates present and voting at an Annual Meeting of the ECC. Amendments to a proposed Covenant Resource Paper shall not be in order; however, a proposed Covenant Resource Paper may be referred back to the Executive Board of the ECC for the purpose of addressing specific
- d. questions concerning its substance or wording.
- e. All proposed Covenant Resource Papers must initially be commissioned by a two-thirds vote of either (i) the delegates present and voting at an Annual Meeting of the ECC or (ii) the Executive Board of the ECC. Once commissioned, a proposed Covenant Resource Paper must be adopted or rejected by an Annual Meeting before another proposed Covenant Resource Paper
- f. on any topic may be commissioned. The commissioning of a Covenant Resource Paper may be requested by a member congregation, regional conference, board, commission, corporation, institution, or department of the ECC.
- g. All proposed Covenant Resource Papers shall be drafted according to a procedure approved by the Executive Board of the ECC.

- h. A proposed Covenant Resource Paper may be brought to the Annual Meeting of the ECC only upon the joint recommendation of the Executive Board of the ECC, the Board of the Ordered Ministry, the Council of Superintendents, and the Council of Administrators.
- i. After adoption by an Annual Meeting, a Covenant Resource Paper shall remain in effect until its replacement or removal by a subsequent Annual Meeting. A Covenant Resource Paper shall have the nature of a resolution under the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised.

Covenant Resource Paper Process

The overarching by-law provisions for the purpose, commissioning, writing, and approval of a resource paper are appended in their entirety below*. While the by- laws provide the general flow, by-law 2.1.e. also provides for the executive board to approve a particular procedure within that framework: “All proposed Covenant Resource Papers shall be drafted according to a procedure approved by the Executive Board of the ECC.”

Each of the first two resource papers have proceeded accordingly:

1. Upon commissioning, a writing team is nominated by the Council of Administrators and approved by the Executive Board. The writing team would ordinarily include a member of the North Park Seminary faculty. Note: the writing team has been 6-8 in size in addition to the Executive Vice President (who provides coordination and staff support), and the Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry. Given the reconfiguration of EVP roles during Organizing for Mission, the Executive Director of Ministry Development most approximates the EVP role in this process.
2. The writing team in turn convenes a scope team meeting inclusive of itself and other invited guests. The purpose of the scope team is to identify biblical and historical themes that can provide impetus for the development of content and outline. Note: this has been in a 24-hour retreat setting, with roughly 20 people.

3. The writing team develops a first draft. Note: the previous teams have appointed a principal author from among its members.
4. The draft is circulated to a representative group of “readers” for comment and feedback. Redrafts may be undertaken. Note: the “reader” group has been around 40 people.
5. A draft is then forwarded to the Board of the Ordered Ministry (OM) for comment, reflection, and approval. Redrafts may be undertaken.
6. The approved draft is then forwarded to both the Council of Administrators (COA) and Council of Superintendents (COS) for comment, reflection, and approval. Redrafts may again be undertaken based on feedback by these two bodies. Redrafts are routed again first through OM for approval before action by these councils.
7. That approved draft is forwarded to the EB for comment, reflection, and approval. Redrafts may again be undertaken based on feedback of the EB. Redrafts are routed again first through OM and both Councils for approval before action by the EB. Redrafts are repeated as often as necessary to reach final action by all four entities.
8. The final approved draft goes to the Annual Meeting in draft form for one year engagement and feedback. Any adjustments must again be approved by each of OM, COA, COS, and EB.
9. Action by the Annual Meeting occurs the year subsequent to the draft being presented.