

ECO SPOTLIGHT

Entrusted: Reflections on the 2017 National Gathering

Earlier this year, a contingent of leaders from Narberth Presbyterian Church attended ECO's National Gathering, eager for the chance to see the denomination up close and get to know some of its churches.

"ECO seems to be a denomination that is very much about lay leadership—not having the pastor be the main linchpin of all the operations of the church," observed John Chaffee, Director of Youth Ministry. "It was interesting observing and hearing so many people show excitement for the church, desiring to legitimately make the best of their talents in creative ways," he said, adding, "I think ECO is deliberately trying to live up to its values of being a mentoring denomination, and they are not afraid to let the next generation actually lead."

The conference theme, "Entrusted," drew from 2 Timothy 2:2 to reflect on faithful stewardship of the gospel. Dana Allin, Synod Executive, noted in his opening remarks that individual believers are entrusted with passing on the gospel, but, he said, "One of the ways the Lord has been working in my heart through this passage is to realize...that we are also entrusted with the churches God has given us to shepherd and to lead, and [with] this larger movement God has called us into. And it's hard and it's challenging and it's overwhelming, but we need not fret because we know that we have the power of the Spirit with us." That

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Transition Team Update

On April 20, the Transition Team (Elders Emma Shaw, Diane Chen, Meg McKinley and David Bellamy), along with Pastor Steve, met for the first time with the Administrative Commission, appointed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia to walk with our congregation through the discernment and dismissal process.

The charge to the Commission is threefold: to get to know NPC, our congregation and our history; to discern the congregation's support regarding the requested dismissal to ECO; and to work with our Transition Team toward a gracious resolution, culminating in a recommendation to Presbytery.

This initial meeting focused on building relationships between the two teams, reviewing procedure and delivering information about NPC's history and current status to the commission. Commission members are currently digesting this lengthy report; the next meeting of the two teams is expected to occur later in the summer.

Please continue to pray for and with NPC's Transition Team, leadership, and the Administrative Commission, giving thanks for a positive and constructive beginning, and continuing to ask that the process would glorify God, preserve the unity of our congregation, and bless the Presbytery.

power, he said, is “the power to ignite a gospel transformation.”

To that end, ECO has committed, among other things, to providing resources from many different organizations and areas of expertise that can help any church to flourish, from churches that know exactly what they need to churches that have no idea.

“I think what’s nice is that ECO does not have a bunker mentality; they’re willing to adapt to reach society without compromising the good news,” said Terry Weyant, Narberth’s Director of Children’s Ministry. “I had great conversations across the dinner table with people already in ECO on working with families from an apologetics standpoint,” that is, teaching them to know and defend the Christian faith as one tool for sharing the gospel. “The questions are not new, and the answers are there.”

The emphasis on carrying out the Great Commission by planting churches also impressed. “When you have so many church plants in a year and people are really interested in becoming church planters—the bulk of them young people—that’s a good thing,” Terry said. “They’re not interested in becoming mega-churches; they’re interested in spreading the gospel.”

One presentation that particularly impressed Dave Bellamy, elder and NPC Transition Team member, made the biblical case for women in church leadership. To make room in the main conference to address this issue spoke volumes, he said, about the fit that ECO represents for Narberth: “It seemed inconceivable to us to join a denomination that would not embrace women in leadership—not just tolerate them, but embrace them,” he said. “Seeing in the National Gathering a lot of what we had heard about ECO coming in—in terms of supporting women, of being intergenerational and missional—it’s true. The reality matches the press.”

Emphases on lay leadership, risk-taking, and creativity were particularly attractive to John as he reflected on ministry in Narberth. He noted that, in joining ECO, NPC will come into direct contact with churches “that are taking risks and seeking new ways to communicate the unique *euangelion* (Greek for good news) of Jesus.” He added, “I think I came back with an even larger desire to give autonomy and agency to other people” in youth ministry. “The question I have is: how can we at NPC encourage new leaders and give them legitimate responsibilities, while encouraging people to brainstorm and do ministry in ways that match their own personalities—and not merely the personalities of the staff? I think that NPC is in for a good ride!”

The major addresses of the conference covered a lot of ground, including discipleship and mission, leadership development, denominational life, egalitarian ministry, soul-care for pastors, and worship and trust. All of these addresses are available to watch on the National Gathering website (econationalgathering.org). ECO’s blog (eco-pres.org/blog/) is another good way to get to know the denomination and its leaders.

Over the next several months *ECO Spotlight* will further explore ECO’s commitment to the Great Commission and to the development of flourishing churches. Stay tuned!

ECO’s main website, www.eco-pres.org, provides a helpful introduction to the denomination, as well as information about how ECO is organized, foundational documents and resources, and member congregations. Additionally, videos from ECO’s annual national gatherings can be explored at www.econationalgathering.org.

