



*David DeBruler
Chair*

**JOINT REPORT OF
THE STUDENT & COLLEGE
MINISTRIES &
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION &
COMMUNICATIONS**
37th General Assembly



*Carolyn Hiller
Vice-Chair*

Members of the Student & College Ministries & Christian Education and Communications Committees are RE David DeBruler (2018; Gulf South / Chair), RE Carolyn Hiller (2018; Pacific / Vice-Chair), TE Drew Henderson (2017; Great Plains), RE Allyson Sveda (2017; Alleghenies), Luke Ahrens (2017; Rivers & Lakes), TE Chris Winans (2017; Midwest), Mr. Tyson Sturgeon (2017; Mid-Atlantic), TE Jim Wilhoit (2017; Rivers & Lakes), D.T. House (2018; Southeast), Ivan Moore (2018; Alleghenies), TE Dustin Jernigan (2018; Florida), TE Mark Hughes (2018; Great Plains), RE Dave Bishop (2019; Pacific), Ms. Jen Burkholder (2019; Alleghenies), TE Andy Koesters (2019; Midwest), Ms. Martha Daniel (2019; Alleghenies), RE David Schoeman (2019; West), RE Enid Flores (2019; Florida).

The Committee met on October 28-29, 2016, and on April 7-8, 2017 in Orlando, Florida, and online on January 7, 2017.

Work of the Committee

At the 2016 General Assembly, both the Student & College Ministries (SCM) and Christian Education & Communications (CEC) committees shared Recommendation #4 from the Committee on Administration, “that the Assembly approve combining the Student and College Ministries Committee with the Christian Education portion of the Christian Education and Communications Committee as a permanent committee titled “Next Generation Ministry Council,” to take effect July 1, 2017. Further, that the Assembly instructs the two current committees, in consultation with the Committee on Administration, to develop appropriate vision, mission, strategy, and structures aligned with the strategic initiatives of the General Assembly and make any necessary implementing recommendations to the 37th General Assembly (2017). These recommendations shall also include how the communications function of the current Christian Education and Communications committee will be handled following July 1, 2017.”

This is the first year of joint meetings of the SCM and CEC committees and our meetings were focused on building relationships and direction as a combined team. There were 18 members in all, 6 from CE&C and 12 from SCM committees, plus EPC staff and ministry partner resources. David DeBruler was elected to serve as Chair, and Carolyn Hiller was elected to

serve as Vice-Chair. We saw that the purpose of our joint committee for this year was three-fold:

- 1) To fulfill the direction of the 2016 General Assembly recommendation for Next Generation Ministries Council: “to develop appropriate vision, mission, strategy, and structures aligned with the strategic initiatives of the General Assembly and make any necessary implementing recommendations to the 37th General Assembly (2017).”
- 2) To ensure that legacy projects and activities underway from the original SCM and CEC committees were identified on a master projects planning list and appropriately resourced.
- 3) To establish and maintain ministry partnerships, such as with RYM, CCO and Families Alive, that serve to advance EPC Next Generation Ministries through reformed resources for training and outreach.

In addition, we prepared to play an informative role in the 2017 GA, as our joint committee’s purpose fit with the theme of “Generation To Generation.”

Actions on the 2016 General Assembly Recommendation:

Our discussions were rich with our purpose of raising strong covenant believers throughout EPC, including how we could serve as champions of Next Generation activities through shepherding a movement as opposed to establishing an institution. Our collective view of Next Generation was forming as a trajectory, or arc, of discipleship to develop faithful maturing disciples at all ages and at all stages of faith. Such an overall discipling process would include benchmarks for Biblical understanding, onramps for different levels of maturity at each life stage, a dimension of service to foster community with fellow believers, and progressively advanced opportunities for leadership.

We resolved that the term “Next Generation” would include people from birth to young adulthood: the young in age and faith. Faithful maturing disciples would be equipped for life, leadership and service. There was agreement that both congregational and family support are essential to developing disciples and to fulfilling our covenant to children at baptism.

Our resulting definition of “Next Generation Ministries” includes all of the ministries in a local church used to partner with parents to equip their children. This term is intended to describe a seamless and consistent approach to training children from birth to young adulthood, and seeks to instill an “end-in-mind” view that guides the planning and processes of all equipping stages.

“Equipping stages” are aligned with the typical three age ranges churches use for:

- Children’s Ministry
- Student Ministry
- Young Adult Ministry

We agreed that the philosophy or basis of approach, for EPC Next Generation Ministries needed to include the following:

- As best as the local church can operate as a covenant community, we encourage all church leadership to emphasize that the ministry of the church is to equip all of the saints into the fullness of maturity in Christ and for ministry.

- This includes instilling a vision that God has given parents the primary responsibility to equip their children to know Christ and to follow Him as a well-equipped, passionate disciple.
- We encourage all Next Generation ministries of a church to provide both a training support to the parents and a direct discipling process in the later equipping stages as they mature to young adults.

We agreed upon the resulting vision, mission and initial strategy for the Next Generation Ministries Council as follows:

Vision:

Every congregation will fulfill God's call* to disciple the next generation into passionate Christ-followers who pursue God's kingdom in every sphere of life.

*Psalm 78, Deuteronomy 6, Matthew 23, 2 Timothy 2, 1 Thessalonians 2, Ephesians 5.

Mission:

The EPC Next Generation Ministries Council is to equip, encourage and shepherd church leadership to evangelize and disciple the Next Generation from birth through young adulthood.

Initial Strategies:

- 1) Focus on churches that have identified needs in discipling the Next Generation.
- 2) Share stories of transformed lives and how congregations have reached the Next Generation, using multiple modes of communications (including GA, Presbyteries, website, and other means).
- 3) Utilize and develop ministry partnerships, leveraging them as strategic resources for equipping disciples in all Next Generation life stages.

We also clarified some operating concepts and structural elements for the NGM Council and identified a few next steps for transition over the next year.

- One EPC staff person - Director level
- Nine volunteer council members, with the following attributes:
 - a. Three members for each of the three Next Generation life stages: children, student and young adult.
 - b. Members have experience and/or expertise in a specific life stage area.
 - c. Members serve 3-year terms, with one member from each life stage rotating annually.
 - d. Members selected through the present EPC Nominating Committee process, with input from Next Generation Director and current council members.
 - e. Members are regionally diverse from throughout EPC congregations.
- July 2017-July 2018 – A transition year, with the 12 remaining members of the combined CEC-SCM committee. Work to complete legacy projects, take actions on recommendations from GA 2017, and continue efforts on forming the NGM Council.
- Formal NGM proposed start date is July 1, 2018, with nine volunteers, possibly utilizing members of the present SCM-CEC Committee.

Actions on the legacy projects from the original SCM and CEC committees:

Our project tracking document was updated to reflect actions taken and those that are remaining to be completed.

Actions regarding ministry partners:

God is working through our gifted ministry partners, and we pray that He will continue to use us together to disciple the next generation of believers. Our current partners are CCO and RYM. CCO is a campus ministry that partners with our local churches to evangelize and disciple college students. For CCO's annual Jubilee Conference in February, this committee funded scholarships to 30 students connected with EPC churches. RYM provides training and support for leaders of youth, in junior high through high school. This committee funded 10 scholarships to RYM's annual leadership training conference in January and a total of 36 EPC leaders attended. FamiliesAlive is a likely new ministry partner for young children through elementary ages, and provides reformed curricula and teaching resources for families to use to disciple their children at home.

Recommendations to General Assembly:

Recommendation SCM-CEC-1

That the Assembly postpone the effective date of the "Next Generation Ministry Council" as a Permanent Committee until July 1, 2018 allowing adequate time for consultation of the joint Student & College Ministries / Christian Education & Communications Committees with the National Leadership Team as required by the action of the 36th General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,


David DeBruler
Chair


Carolyn Hiller
Vice-Chair

June 2017