



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN ECO

To be faithful to ECO's mission to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ, we have compiled a set of competencies (qualities, characteristics, and skills) that we desire in our leaders.

These competencies serve a variety of purposes within ECO. For example, they can guide a local church in developing mature disciples who could then become officers of the church; they can help nominating committees in their discernment process; and they can help leaders continue to develop in their spiritual, emotional, and professional maturity. In the pastoral ordination process, these competencies serve as a gauge for readiness for ministry and help create a roadmap for a candidate's continued development. This set of competencies allows ECO to stay flexible in how candidates develop qualities, characteristics, and skills for leadership while ensuring a high level of maturity and proficiency needed for ministry.

When looking at the qualities and competencies of a leader, it is important to understand each leader holistically. The 10 Core Competencies of a leader can therefore be grouped according to four larger categories, which are expected of all ordained ECO pastors but also apply to leaders in the church at any level:

♥ HEALTHY SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

- Competency #1: Maturity Of Faith
- Competency #2: Personal Call & Integrity

✓ PROFICIENT IN MINISTRY

- Competency #5: Sacramental Knowledge & Practice
- Competency #6: Preaching & Teaching
- Competency #7: Polity Knowledge & Application
- Competency #8: Missional Engagement & Evangelism

† INTEGRATED BIBLICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY

- Competency #3: Biblical Knowledge & Application
- Competency #4: Theological Knowledge

👤 SKILLED IN LEADERSHIP

- Competency #9: Disciple Making & Leadership Development
- Competency #10: Team Leadership

BACKGROUND

One of ECO's key values is "Leadership Acceleration". The strength of our influence is how we together create vibrant systems for leader multiplication. We believe identifying and developing gospel-centered leaders is critical for the church, and a great leadership culture is risk-taking, innovative, and organic. Within our movement, we seek to do certain things that will help us advance our Leadership Acceleration.

First, we need to look at the general types of leaders defined in our ECO Polity document and the roles they play within the movement. We understand that leadership includes pastors, elders, and deacons. In some instances, our church leaders, including those elders and deacons who are commissioned for service, may be called to fulfill a greater role than their offices would ordinarily allow. Therefore, we need to define each of these leaders and the roles they play. Second, we need to define the competencies—the qualities, characteristics, and skills—that should be present or developing within each of these different kinds of leaders. Some of these qualities need to be present in all types of leaders, while some qualities will be specific to certain types of leadership roles.

LEADERSHIP FLOWS FROM DISCIPLESHIP

Quality leaders are only developed from quality disciples. Our first call is to be disciples of Jesus Christ. If God so chooses to call someone into a leadership role, it is because he or she has a strong foundation as a disciple. Therefore when churches, presbyteries, or mentors are seeking to develop leaders, they must start with ensuring that a person is qualified and has the potential to grow in all aspects of discipleship and training.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Ideally, all leaders would possess the leadership competencies and characteristics contained in this document prior to assuming their particular offices or roles. We know, however, that in many ways these are goals to strive for rather than goals already achieved. With existing leaders, therefore, it is our hope that the competencies will be instructive so that individuals can discern the areas in which they can continue to grow in their Christian leadership. This document can also be beneficial in determining how to best support and train emerging leaders.

Examples of how the 10 competencies might be used:

- To determine areas of personal growth for current pastors, elders, and deacons;
- To assess the developmental needs of current or potential candidates;
- For Ministry Partnership Teams to help potential leaders get the training they need apart from a traditional seminary experience; and
- For congregations to develop training ministries for the future leadership development of members. To participate in further training based on the Core Competencies, [click here](#) for our Free Intro to Core Competencies Course.
- For individuals who want to be more deeply equipped for the ministry positions they already hold or for individuals who are feeling called and want to discern serving as a Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP1 or CLP2). The Core Competencies are the basis of our Commissioned Lay Pastor training.

4 CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP:

Four categories of leadership are specifically identified in ECO's polity. Each of the types of leaders identified below should strive to possess the basic competencies associated with their particular roles. Those responsible for developing and supporting these leaders should ensure that the leaders are continuing to grow in maturity and proficiency within the competencies. While there are many types of leaders in the church, we need them to possess different competencies to support their particular congregations.

1 PASTORS



As stated in ECO Polity Section 2.0401, the categories of pastors include Pastor/Head of Staff, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, Pastor in a Validated Ministry, Affiliate Pastor, and Honorably Retired Pastor. Presbytery Ministry and Ordination Team members can use these competencies when examining the suitability of a candidate for ordination or evaluating transfer candidates from other denominations.

2 COMMISSIONED OFFICERS SERVING AS PASTORS OF CHURCHES

CLP
2

In 2.0503 of ECO Polity, elders and deacons can be trained and deployed by the presbytery to serve as pastors of congregations. This situation can occur for a variety of reasons. Since commissioned officers in such a capacity are functioning as pastors, they should be trained to possess the same competencies as that of an ordained pastor. Ministry Partnership Teams can utilize the competencies for pastors when examining potential candidates for commissioning.

3 OFFICERS AUTHORIZED TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENTS IN MICRO-EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH

CLP
1

In 2.0502 of ECO Polity, elders and deacons can be trained to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper in smaller contexts or extensions of the church. In such cases, they serve under the authority of the pastor and session, thus requiring a full understanding of the sacraments. This situation also requires additional strength in a variety of competencies because these elders and deacons will be serving as shepherds of their communities. Sessions can utilize these competencies when determining the readiness of officers.

4 ELDERS AND DEACONS



The base qualities recommended for elders and deacons are included in this document. When competencies for elders and deacons are mentioned, it is assumed that they are not being commissioned for additional purposes, in which case they would fall into other categories mentioned above. Sessions and nominating committees can use these competencies when discerning officer nominations.

10 CORE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

When looking at the competencies of a leader, it is important to understand each leader holistically. We have identified 10 Core Competencies, which are grouped under four overarching categories that all ordained ECO pastors and church leaders are expected to be:

- **Healthy Spiritually and Emotionally**
- **Integrated Biblically and Theologically**
- **Proficient in Ministry**
- **Skilled in Leadership**

ECO sees these core competencies as central to Christian leadership. Some of the competencies possess characteristics that should be present in all leaders regardless of their position or role. For example, all leaders should have integrity in their personal lives. Other competencies, however, will need to be present in different degrees depending on the role and position of the leader. For example, in Competency #3, "Biblical Knowledge and Interpretation," elders and deacons would need to possess this competency to a lesser degree than pastors. Each of the competencies are first defined, and then articulated in detail, in order to clearly identify the characteristics that should be present in the four categories of leaders (pastors, officers who serve as pastors, officers who administer the sacraments, and elders and deacons).

HEALTHY SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

- **Competency #1: Maturity Of Faith**
- **Competency #2: Personal Call & Integrity**

INTEGRATED BIBLICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY

- **Competency #3: Biblical Knowledge & Application**
- **Competency #4: Theological Knowledge**

PROFICIENT IN MINISTRY

- **Competency #5: Sacramental Knowledge & Practice**
- **Competency #6: Preaching & Teaching**
- **Competency #7: Polity Knowledge & Application**
- **Competency #8: Missional Engagement & Evangelism**

SKILLED IN LEADERSHIP

- **Competency #9: Disciple Making & Leadership Development**
- **Competency #10: Team Leadership**

#1

MATURITY OF FAITH

The extent to which the leader has an intimate and personal relationship with the triune God that is continually developed through a variety of practices.

Every Leader:

- **Regularly reads and reflects** on God's Word and applies it to his/her life with the help of the Holy Spirit
- **Regularly spends time** in prayer through speaking to and listening to God
- **Incorporates** other spiritual disciplines into his/her life
- **Manifests** the fruit of the Spirit internally and externally
- **Operates** from an identity that is rooted in the gospel
- **Commits** to living within a community of believers for mutual encouragement and support

#2

PERSONAL CALL AND INTEGRITY

The extent to which the leader's actions and attitudes are consistent with the desires of God and the example of Jesus.

Every Leader:

- **Discerns and articulates** God's call on his/her life and ministry
- **Follows through** with personal commitments to others
- **Has** a genuinely sacrificial love and care for others
- **Understands and lives** within the ethical boundaries set forth in Scripture
- **Expresses** authentic personal humility in his/her relationships with others
- **Demonstrates** a willingness to learn and grow

#3

BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE & APPLICATION

The extent to which the leader understands the entire Bible as well as the ability to study and apply Scripture appropriately.

A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:



CLP
2

- **Has** an understanding of the whole narrative of Scripture
- **Possesses** a general knowledge about the content of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, including major events, themes, and overall purpose
- **Is able** to study a passage of Scripture in its original language by using a variety of tools and then effectively explain its meaning and application to his/her own life and the lives of others
- **Appropriately applies** Scripture to real-life situations with maturity and depth that is beyond simple proof-texting
- **Articulates** how passages of Scripture relate to appropriate biblical doctrine

An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:

CLP
1

- **Possesses** a general knowledge of the flow of Scripture and major events
- **Is able** to study a passage of Scripture using limited tools to determine a general meaning and application to his/her own life and the lives of others
- **Appropriately applies** Scripture when discipling or counseling others.

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Possesses** a general knowledge of the flow of Scripture and major events
- **Is able** to study a passage of Scripture at a basic level with or without tools and to determine a general meaning and purpose for his/her life and the lives of others
- **Appropriately applies** Scripture to current situations

#4

THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

The extent to which the leader understands, embraces, and is able to apply both the core of the Christian faith as well as the Reformed faith of ECO as expressed in our *Essential Tenets and Confessional Standards*.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Fully embraces** the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Articulates** confessional and scriptural support for the themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Pastorally applies** the theology contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets* to real-life situations
- **Has** a working knowledge of basic church history and its impact on the church today
- **Identifies** doctrines that are outside of the classic Christian and Reformed faith and shows how they are incongruent with the Reformed faith
- **Adheres** to all aspects of *ECO's Essential Tenets* in teaching and practice

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Fully embraces** the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Articulates** confessional and scriptural support for the themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Is able** to articulate how the theology contained in the *Essential Tenets* applies to real-life situations
- **Adheres to** all aspects of *ECO's Essential Tenets* in teaching and practice

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Fully embraces** the major themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Articulates** confessional and scriptural support for the themes and the system of doctrine contained in *ECO's Essential Tenets*
- **Adheres** to all aspects of the essentials in teaching and practice

#5

SACRAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE & PRACTICE

The extent to which the leader understands the sacraments from a Reformed perspective and is able to celebrate those sacraments in appropriate circumstances and contexts.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Affirms and is able** to articulate a Reformed understanding of the nature of the sacraments, including their theology and administration
- **Is committed** to a Reformed practice of infant and adult baptism and celebration of the Lord's Supper
- **Is committed and able to** appropriately link worship with the celebration of the sacraments

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Affirms and is able** to articulate a Reformed understanding of the nature of the sacraments, including their theology and administration within a micro-expression of church
- **Is committed to and able** to practice the celebration of the sacraments within micro-expressions of church

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Articulates** a basic Reformed understanding of the sacraments and their practice

#6

PREACHING & TEACHING

The extent to which the leader can preach both topically and exegetically in ways that are true to the meaning of the Scriptures, as well as clear, engaging, well-organized, and contextually appropriate.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Develops** a preaching message that is grounded in and faithful to the biblical text
- **Ensures**, if preaching topically, that the message is firmly rooted in the full counsel of Scripture and is not simply proof-texting
- **Delivers** a message with clarity and conviction and moves the listener to an appropriate response
- **Understands** his/her audience and crafts an appropriate message for the context

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Leads** a group in a study of the text that reveals truth and moves the listener to action
- **Delivers** gospel truth to both the believer and nonbeliever

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Communicates** the truth of Scripture effectively to others

#7

POLITY KNOWLEDGE & APPLICATION

The extent to which the leader understands ECO's polity, ethos, and values, as well as his/her ability to appropriately apply this knowledge in various situations.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Displays** a comprehensive understanding of ECO's polity and is able to apply it appropriately in the local church context
- **Upholds** the values of ECO when working within the presbytery and within the national movement
- **Instructs** officers in ECO's polity and how it applies at the local church level
- **Adheres** to ECO's polity while facilitating the larger vision for the congregation

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Displays** a full understanding of the first two chapters of ECO Polity and understands the nature of their particular commission within ECO
- **Adheres** to ECO's polity when celebrating the sacraments within their appropriate contexts

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Displays** a full understanding of the first two chapters of ECO Polity

#8

MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT & EVANGELISM

Missional engagement is the extent to which the leader is able to take the incarnational posture of Christ into a surrounding context in order to bring about transformation in the Kingdom. Evangelism is the extent to which a leader is able to teach, share, and proclaim the gospel, with the goal of persuading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

A Pastor, Commissioned Officer Serving as Pastor of a Church, or An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:



- **Approaches** the surrounding context within which God has placed him/her with the same love and attitude that was manifest in Jesus
- **Brings about** God's redemption in the world by working to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, meeting physical needs, and working for reconciliation and justice
- **Leads** a community of believers toward a Kingdom purpose
- **Shares** a brief personal testimony in an engaging and effective way
- **Explains and invites** someone to receive the Good News of the gospel
- **Trains and equips** others to effectively communicate the gospel
- **Has** the tools and desire to create a corporate culture of evangelism in the church he/she leads

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Approaches** the surrounding context within which God has placed him/her with the same love and attitude that was manifest in Jesus
- **Brings about** God's redemption in the world by working to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, meeting physical needs, and working for reconciliation and justice

#9

DISCIPLE MAKING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Disciple making is the extent to which the leader is able to help individuals grow in their faith and create a disciple making culture. Leadership development is the extent to which the leader is able to help others determine their giftedness and calling, as well as their ability to help other leaders develop greater competency.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Is able** to help people grow in their own skill acquisition to enhance their strengths and improve on their weaknesses
- **Is able** to teach others how to develop disciples
- **Is able** to create systems that help people determine, discover, and deploy their gifts for the sake of the Kingdom

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Disciples** those within his/her community at all different places in their journeys towards spiritual maturity
- **Develops** a disciple making culture that ensures that all people are growing in their own discipleship

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Is able** to help others discover their gifts and calling

#10

TEAM LEADERSHIP

The extent to which the leader is able to work with and lead others (both individually and corporately) who have a variety of gifts, personalities, and experiences.

**A Pastor or Commissioned Officer
Serving as Pastor of a Church:**



CLP
2

- **Works** with challenging personalities and those with whom he/she disagrees
- **Knows** when to forge ahead with a new direction and when it is prudent to wait
- **Puts** personal desires and positions aside for the sake of the group and the larger mission
- **Demonstrates** emotional Intelligence (is aware of his/her own emotions and the emotions of others and can regulate and respond appropriately)
- **Possesses** the managerial and administrative skills to oversee a project/ministry/church
- **Effectively oversees** staff and volunteers in the execution of ministry
- **Leads** change by creating buy-in to a vision or plan

**An Officer Authorized to Celebrate the
Sacraments in Micro-Expressions of Church:**

CLP
1

- **Effectively** leads a group discussion and process
- **Works** with challenging personalities and those who disagree with him/her
- **Helps** the group move toward a common goal and vision
- **Puts** personal desires aside for the sake of the group and the larger mission

An Elder or Deacon:



- **Leads** groups and ministry teams as appropriate
- **Actively supports** decisions that he/she would not have chosen, for the sake of church unity and the advancement of the Kingdom