



EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, GHANA

MAJOR DECISIONS OF THE 8TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PREAMBLE:

AS WE AFFIRM IN GOD, THE FATHER, THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ALL SPHERES OUR LIFE AND THOUGHT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, 8TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY SITTING AT TRINITY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LEGON-ACCRA FROM 23RD – 27TH AUGUST, 2017 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD DO HEREBY AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS:

The 8th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, inspired by the theme **Breaking New Grounds revisited, Now it is our Turn**, affirmed our calling in this Kairos to move beyond what we have always done to break new grounds. We were reminded in our reflections about the following words in Ephraim Amu's anthem:

“Eɔo nye kple wò hã dzi be míawɔ míatɔ sinua”

“Aduru me ne wo nso so, se ye be ye bi atoa so”

Now it is our turn to build on the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the groundbreaking actions of those who have gone on before us, by breaking new grounds of our own. Deliberating in the 170th year of the life of the EP Church, Ghana, the 60th year of Ghana's Independence and the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation movement, the 8th General Assembly resolved to seize this moment as our time to break new grounds and to dare to take our church into new groundbreaking directions, and move beyond mediocrity into actions that will place our church to fulfil its calling, vision and mission. These decisions come out of that commitment:

DECISIONS:

1. The General Assembly commends the Standing Committee, the General Assembly Council and the Strategic Planning team for providing the Church with a 5-Year Strategic Plan. General Assembly mandates the Church at all levels to follow the new Strategic Plan meticulously.
2. That Presbytery project committees should assess and regulate all projects embarked upon by districts, congregations and church groups.
 - a. Synod moderators should ensure that presbytery project committees are established.
 - b. There should also be a presbytery monitoring to ensure the adherence to the Policy.
 - c. There should also be intensive education at all levels of the church. (e.g. Congregations, Districts, and Presbyteries.)

3. PRAYER CAMPS

- a. That General Assembly mandates the newly constituted committee on Prayer Camps to examine and regulate the emergence of Prayer Camps within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana.
- b. That the name should be Spiritual Resource and Healing Centre instead of the name ‘Prayer Camp’ and they should operate within the Evangelism Directorate.

4. EPUC

- a. That General Assembly appreciates the efforts of the Standing Committee to resolve the EPUC financial challenges including the payment of the indebtedness of the Evangelical Presbyterian University College to the National Investment Bank and Ghana Commercial Bank. This will enable the University to run efficiently.
- b. That General Assembly urges all congregations and districts to support the EPUC and mandates them to pay EPUC Levy from its operational Accounts at the end of the first quarter each year and then recover as members pay the levies, rather than waiting as and when members contribute the levy before paying. This will make leaders of the congregations to enforce the collection of the levy.
- c. That continuous education be provided to church members to appreciate the need to own the EPUC so that the ownership can be more visible.

5. That General Assembly puts in place the following policy regarding Church land and other Properties.

- a. There shall be established Trustees of the Church hereinafter referred to as “the Trustees”.
- b. The Trustees shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession, a common seal and may sue and be sued in its corporate name.
- c. The General Assembly refers the issue of membership of the Trustee to the Constitutional Review Committee for their consideration
- d. Further
 - i. The Trustees shall hold, manage and or dispose of any property (movable or immovable) of the Church and may enter into such contracts and transactions as may be approved by the General Assembly.
 - ii. For the avoidance of doubt, all and any property hitherto held or owned by any Congregation, individual, body or officer of the Church at whatever level shall be deemed to be held in trust for the Church by the Trustees.
 - iii. The acquisition of any immovable property by any Congregation, District, Presbytery, individual, body or officer for the purposes of the Church shall be expressed to have been done in the name of the Trustees of the Church and the documents of title thereto shall be authenticated or validated by the signatures of the authorized representatives of the Trustees and the Congregation, District, Presbytery, individual, body or officer and the common seal of the Trustees.
 - iv. The original copies of all registered title documents in respect of all or any immovable property acquired for the Church or any constituent thereof shall be forwarded forthwith to the Clerk of the General Assembly for safe custody and a certified true copy thereof retained by the user thereof.”

6. That the General Assembly adopts the new Financial Administration Manual of the Church.

7. POLICY ON THE PRINTING OF A NATIONAL CLOTH

That, the E.P. Church shall have a National Church cloth. The cloth shall be used for all Church anniversaries and Special occasions of the Church; however, individual congregations should be allowed to print other souvenir--- T-shirt, Scarf, etc. to mark any event being celebrated. That the effective date for implementation should be January, 2018.

8. POLICY ON PRESBYTERY SYNOD MEETINGS

“That, Synod Meetings in our various Presbyteries be held biennially. That is to say, in a General Assembly year, there would be no Synod Meetings and vice versa since General Assembly is also biennially held. During the “off years” there should be mandatory Presbytery Retreats, Workshops and/or Seminars.

9. POLICY ON THE DECLARATION OF PRESBYTERIES, DISTRICTS AND PARISHES

“That, a clear-cut policy on the creation of Presbyteries, Districts and Parishes be put in place and implemented, taking into account numerical strength, financial viability, infrastructure, ethnic concerns and where applicable proximity.

10. EPDRA

That Appreciating the work and contribution of EPDRA in the Church’s Ministry and in order to address the gap between the work of EPDRA and the congregations, General Assembly calls on EPDRA to:

- a. Take steps to showcase their work at all levels of the church.
- b. Disseminate information on how the church can benefit from their programmes.
- c. Submit Audited Financial statements to General Assembly through the Central Finance Committee.

11. REFORMATION 500

- a. That the E.P. Church, Ghana gives thanks to God for the Reformation movement initiated in 1517 as ground breaking. That the church at all levels makes new commitment to be agents of transformation in our communities, breaking new grounds as the 16th century Reformers did.
- b. That congregations celebrate the 500th Anniversary from October 22nd to 31st 2017.
- c. That fundraising should not be part of the celebration. Rather it should be a time to be educated on the history of the Reformation. The latter should be repeated annually.

- 12. a) That the Church identifies areas it can participate meaningfully in as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of Ghana’s independence, and urge every member of the E. P. Church, Ghana to be patriotic and be a good example of the Freedom and Justice vision of the nation Ghana.
- b) That celebration should inspire the church to perform a more prophetic role in being the voice of the voiceless and engage in education to eschew corruption and other social vices, and to stand for justice.

13. That E. P. Church Private schools should be accountable to the E. P. Church, work under the supervision and monitoring of the Church's Education unit (General Manager's office, regional managers' offices and local managers' offices), and participate in all programmes designed by the Education Unit in conformity with the unit's provisions in the Strategic Plan of the Church.

OTHER INPUTS

The Discernment groups also gave invaluable advice on the policies which could be useful in the implementation. While they are not decisions of the General Assembly as a whole, they can serve as possible resources for implementers to choose to draw from. These are recorded here:

EPUC Indebtedness

1. It is good that the Church and all its congregations are being given the prompt alert the challenges of the University.
2. Acknowledges that the debt is a serious obstacle to EPUC so we must have plans for generating funds quickly
3. Need to have/continue greater awareness creation for church members to own EPUC and to become aware that the fortunes of every member is tied to it. District pastors have roles to play.
4. Need to find strategic ways of collecting the EPUC levy
5. It must be compulsory that the levies are collected weekly by the Synod moderators.
6. There should be a third collection every Sunday for the EPUC or a 2% to 5% levy on every money realized by congregations every Sunday.
7. This does not rule out the 2 cedis a month levy being paid by each congregant.
8. We should commission professional fundraisers who would sell the institution and take a percentage. We should contact our partners abroad for such persons.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION, POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. There is a need for the policy since a portion of the church's constitution spells out a call for good financial administration.
2. With the new Manual, the EPCG will follow a uniform standard.
3. The main manual contains more detailed policy statements done the Executive summary does.
4. Budgeting aspects of the policy can be implemented if only the church engages technocrats to train desk officers to make it more viable.
5. Audit committees at various levels and well equipped with tools to carry out duties to expectation levels.
6. There should be proper budgeting and clear financial transactions of the church.
7. The church should operate on centralized accounting system at all levels of the church.
8. Decentralisation of training process of officers down to district levels (Finance committees and district pastors).
9. District pastors should make sure they render quarterly financial transactions both locally and at presbytery levels up to headquarters.

SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT FUND

1. Appreciates the efforts of the Sustainable Investment Fund Committee and its plans.
2. Notes with gratitude the land offered by the Chair of the Board in Sokode and the plans for construction of a Students' Hostel.

EPDRA

1. The Church should be a beneficiary of the projects by duplicating and intensifying the projects at the various levels.
2. The EPDRA Development wing must be raised to meet national challenges to leverage our income-generating goals of the congregations, and also to empower members of the congregations financially.
3. EPDRA should collaborate with the EPUC effectively in terms of students' practical attachment in areas of Agriculture and social services.
4. Presbyteries in which EPDRA has its establishment, the Synod Moderator, Council members, and the local pastor must have a monitoring role over these establishments
5. District Pastors and two appointed members of the local congregations must be members of the management of the EPDRA establishments at local levels.
6. EPDRA should put their programmes and activities before the Presbyteries, Districts and Congregations for the entire church to benefit from these programmes appropriately.
7. EPDRA by way of advertising its programmes must pay regular visits to the congregations, Districts and Presbyteries and distribute posters, fliers and pamphlets on the various activities of EPDRA.

NATIONAL CLOTH

1. The common cloth will give the church a common identity
2. This applies to congregations and groups

CELEBRATION OF REFORMATION 500

1. That members of the Church should be educated on the History of the Reformation
2. That the Theological Education Desk should be mandated to develop a teaching manual on the Reformation. This material should be simple enough for the laity to understand.
3. That the history of the Reformation should form part of our catechism – our confirmation lessons.
4. That fundraising should not be part of the celebration
5. That during the celebration of the Reformation, the founding members of the church – those who broke new grounds – should be honoured.
6. That the celebration of Reformation be an annual affair and be done as week-long activities.

PARTICIPATION IN GHANA'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

1. That there should be education on sanitation
2. That there should be civic education to eschew corruption and other social vices
3. That the church should engage in charity programmes: Visitations to hospital, prisons, free medical screening, etc.
4. That there should be education on Climate change, afforestation and pollution.
5. That the church should perform her prophetic role being the voice of the voiceless.