

# Project 2028 Church Planting Partnership: Standing Rules

## Presbytery of the Southeast (EPC)

### 1.0 Overview

#### 1.1 An EPC Church Planting Partnership

Project 2028 is a voluntary collaboration of local churches of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (hereafter, EPC) to facilitate church planting within the region of the Presbytery of the Southeast (hereafter, PoSE).

We affirm the EPC's call for every local church to be involved in church planting as either a *parent*, *partner*, or *patron*, and we have chosen to work together as partners to facilitate this call by embodying and proclaiming Jesus' love in transformation and multiplication at the local church level.

We commit to one another in a spirit of brotherhood in Christ, partnership in the gospel, and mission to our region through the strategic priority of starting new churches that will advance the kingdom of God in specific communities and neighborhoods.

To that end, our mission is to establish a partnership of church partners, pastors, and planters that results in planting 5 new local churches in the PoSE over the next 8 years (by the end of 2028).

We are committed not only to planting new churches but also to building the necessary pipeline that will lead to future church planting: recruiting and developing church planting residents, researching and identifying sites for new church developments, and raising funds to assist with residents and church plants. Therefore, Project 2028 focuses our activities around the following points of connection:

1. *Partner Gatherings*: regular gatherings of the partner churches, planters, and residents
2. *Residency Training*: a cooperative residency program for church planting residents, hosted at local churches, that aims to provide the on-site education, experience, and exposure necessary to prepare them to plant
3. *Church planters and church plants*: encouragement and support of planters, their spouses, and their ministries.

#### 1.2 Purpose

Project 2028 exists to facilitate the planting of new EPC churches that are Reformed, Evangelical, Presbyterian, and Missional.<sup>1</sup> We will work as a servant organization to assist the Presbytery of the Southeast in (1) inviting and developing partners, (2) raising funds from patrons, (3) recruiting residents and developing church planters, and (4) strategically planting EPC churches, while (5) shepherding and supporting church planters and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://epc.org/values> for a general description of each of these terms and also §4.2 below for what it means for Project 2028 church plants to be missional. Through these commitments we acknowledge that we do not merely want to plant new churches that are affiliated with the EPC, but churches that help renew our denomination while serving Christ and his world by embodying the purposes we stand for as a denomination.

### 1.3 Geographical Area

The precise boundary for member churches or church plants is within the PoSE.<sup>2</sup> Any EPC church may join who is interested in seeing church planting happen within this area and who is able to consistently participate in the Partner Gatherings.

### 1.4 Collaboration with Other Networks

Project 2028 is a relationship of EPC churches, residents, and planters, but we recognize that a number of other church planting networks exist and may offer valuable resources (assessment, coaching, training, administrative and project management services, etc.) that complement or could substitute for resources and services offered through Project 2028 or the EPC. Therefore, Project 2028 member churches and church planters are free to participate in other church planting networks as long as it does not inhibit their ability to fulfill their Project 2028 expectations. When planters or churches are members of other networks, Project 2028 will determine on a case-by-case basis which resources and services will be provided through Project 2028 or outsourced to another network.

### 1.5 Membership and Decision-making in the Partnership

Membership in the partnership is held by EPC local churches who contribute \$6000 or more annually (per calendar year) to the fund and by EPC church plants (mission groups or mission churches) in the PoSE. Churches will have up to two representatives: one of their Teaching or Ruling Elders and one additional individual the church's session determines to involve (preferably a Ruling Elder). Additionally, the current chair of the PoSE's Committee for Church Planting and Receiving will be a full member and the stated clerk of the PoSE will be an *ex officio* member.

Other individuals, church representatives, or agencies are welcome and may be represented at Project 2028 gatherings (e.g., a church planting consultant, a representative of a church planting network, a pastor or elder from an EPC church, etc.), but these individuals will be considered valued guests or advisors with no voting privileges.

Wherever possible Project 2028 will endeavor to make official decisions by consensus. If a vote is required, each of the representatives from each member church will have one vote. A simple majority of members present will be required to pass the motion. Churches affected by a vote will recuse themselves from the vote (e.g., approving or funding a church plant of theirs, or resident, etc.).

### 1.6 The Project 2028 Entity

Project 2028 does not technically exist as an official organization (e.g., with its own 501(c)3). It represents a partnership that is a mission-driven relationship with an agreed-upon understanding of how we will work together as an Administrative Commission of the PoSE (§6.0 below). Certain structures need to be in place to facilitate this joint activity. Unless Project 2028 grows to the point where it needs to employ staff, Project 2028 functions will be handled through the pastors, staff, representatives, and/or volunteers from the member churches.

- **Handling Funds:** All funds designated for use by Project 2028 will be held by the PoSE in the "Church Development" account which is to be renamed "Project 2028." Churches will contribute

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<sup>2</sup> We recognize existing EPC churches are in a wide variety of urban, suburban, or rural contexts, and we may prioritize efforts within areas of growing population.

their support funds to this account by writing “Project 2028” on the Memo line. This account will be used to disperse financial support to residents, planters, and plants, as well as to cover approved partnership expenses. For rules on allocating funds, see §3.4.2 below.

- **Bookkeeping:** Cutting checks, making deposits, payroll for Residents, and other bookkeeping functions will be handled through the Treasurer of the Presbytery who holds the account. All disbursements of Project 2028 funds must be requested by at least two Project 2028 members in writing or through official action at a Partner Gathering, and approval must be given by the Chairperson.<sup>3</sup> The check will be written and signed through the Treasurer.

## 2.0 Partnership Activities

### 2.1 Partner Gatherings

Partner Gatherings will usually be called every two months and moderated by the Chairperson (see §3.1, 5.1). Member churches (pastors, staff, others), church planters, and church planting residents are all invited to the Partner Gatherings.

While there will be a moderator and agenda for these meetings, the spirit of the meetings should be less of a business meeting and more that of peers meeting together to catch up on their activities, strategize for the future, receive input from the wider partnership, and pray with and for one another and for the work of the gospel in our region.

The type of work that will be handled at the Partner Gatherings may include:

- Receive reports from church planters
- Receive update(s) from the PoSE, the Residents, and/or Member Churches
- Discuss any strategic issues or determine best practices
- Consider recruitment of prospective planters
- Interview any church planter candidates
- Consider allocation of initial or additional funding
- Consider/approve any Project 2028 policy, procedures, or other partnership-wide business

### 2.2 Patrons: Cultivating Relationships and Generating Resources

A strategic part of the work in this partnership will be raising funds from churches, individuals, or other organizations to generate a fund that will help in providing for residencies and be seed money for churches. Partnership members may choose to task a few people to learn from best practices in this area and champion these efforts at the Presbytery, church, and community level.

### 2.3 Interviewing Church Planters

One important function of the Partner Gatherings will be to interview prospective church planters. Member churches may, of course, support church planting outside their commitment to Project 2028, but for a church planter/plant to be considered a Project 2028 work, it must be approved at a Partner Gathering. A consensus is required to approve a church planter/plant. The interview will take into consideration a church planting assessment evaluation,<sup>4</sup> as well as a written project proposal from the

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<sup>3</sup> The requests and approval must be documented. Email or electronic records is acceptable for these purposes.

<sup>4</sup> There are several recommended through the EPC, and the Project 2028 may choose to recommend some or require one.

church planter about the plant.<sup>5</sup> Once a church planter is approved by Project 2028, Project 2028 giving may be designated to their project and Project 2028 may decide to pledge one or more years of undesignated funds to the plant as well (see §3.4, Financial Support and Decisions). Part of the approval of new plants will include the approval of the project budget for the period up through projected self-sufficiency.

## 2.4 The Residents and Church Planting Residencies

One of the first actions of the Project 2028 will be to formalize and adopt a plan for Church Planting Residencies and agreements with Residents themselves for expectations and evaluation. That plan will be noted in this section of these Standing Rules.

## 2.5 Administrative Commissions (for Church Plants)

When a mission church from Project 2028 is approved by the PoSE (see §6.0), it will be assigned an administrative commission<sup>6</sup> by and through the Presbytery consisting of at least 2TEs and 3 REs,<sup>7</sup> at least three of whom should be from Project 2028 member churches. These commissions will meet at least four times per year and act as the temporary sessions for the church plants until such time as the plant is approved as a local church in action before the Presbytery. These commissions will commit to praying for, encouraging, and championing the church planter, spouse (if married), and plant within our presbytery. It is also the responsibility of these commissions to ensure that a plan for church planter coaching is in place for the planter and spiritual mentoring is in place for the planter and spouse. The Administrative Commission for each mission church will evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching and spiritual mentoring and the health of the planter/plant at least annually and make a formal report to Project 2028.

# 3.0 Member Church Agreements

## 3.1 Partnership Gatherings

Each member church is expected to participate in Partner Gatherings whenever possible. This is important, because the strength of the partnership will be based on the quality of our relationships together, and the vision and engagement of members toward the goals will be hindered by lack of participation. Three should take place concurrent with Presbytery meetings (if so desired), and three others spaced between PoSE meetings.

A quorum for a Partner Gathering shall be a least half of the current calendar-year membership present and is required for official action to be taken. Gatherings may be held and decisions made via electronic meeting tools.

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<sup>5</sup> No standard format is required, but it is typical for these proposals to include items such as background on the church planter and family, description of the target community, core values, purpose for the new church, philosophy of ministry, strategy for establishing various ministry functions, staffing and roles for leaders, and critical milestones for various stages of the planting process. In addition to these more typical factors, every proposal should also include the missiological factors outlined in §4.2.

<sup>6</sup> See the EPC Book of Government (BoG) 5-3 through 5-5, and it will strive for the 1:2 parity of teaching to ruling elders.

<sup>7</sup> in keeping with EPC BoG 21-1.C.2 and PoSE By-Laws VIII.C.2. This Commission is called a “temporary governing body” in EPC circles (see EPC BoG 5-4). It is our expectation that these commissions will strive to meet both at regular times and also as needed (and whose members check in often) with the church planter for purposes of prayer, encouragement, and oversight. The goal here of Project 2028 representation is to help foster the kind of ethos and mission that Project 2028 aims to see take root in our region while making room to involve others in the process. It is vital that other churches to participate in this.

## 3.2 Prayer

Member churches agree to organize their congregations to regularly pray for our Project 2028 residents, church planters, and their ministry region and goals.

## 3.3 Other Partnership Functions

Member churches are encouraged to serve in other ways, such as contributing to the Residencies, hosting Partner Gatherings, recruiting and investing in residents, serving on an oversight commission, recruiting prospective church planters, giving directly to church planters raising support, or any number of other activities that are commended by Project 2028.

## 3.4 Financial Support and Decisions

### 3.4.1 Giving to Project 2028

Each member church is expected to give to the partnership at the minimum of \$6000 per year. Such giving is understood to be over and above existing Presbytery or General Assembly commitments. Churches are urged to make this a significant priority in their missions budget or begin making strides for it to be so. If a church is unable to contribute financially for a calendar year, it may continue to participate as a “guest” without vote (see §1.5).

Each fall, each member church will indicate the pledge that they commit to giving to the partnership in the upcoming calendar year as well as the timetable for contributing (one-time, quarterly, monthly, etc.). These pledges will be combined into a Project 2028 budget, and the membership will agree on how to allocate those funds at a Partner Gathering.

In the event that a member church decides to leave Project 2028, any amounts contributed but not yet dispersed will remain with the partnership, as it is understood that once support has been given it properly belongs there and commitments have already been made through the annual budget based upon these contributions. Fund balances will be reviewed annually by the Treasurer before the next year’s budget is established (see §3.4.2), and any gifts unused after a two-year period will be returned to member churches on a prorated basis by action at a Partner Gathering.

### 3.4.2 Allocating Funds

Project 2028 will jointly decide how to allocate any Project 2028 funds for the fiscal year by approving an annual budget based on a two-thirds vote. This budget may include things such as:

- Support for current residents or planters
- Setting aside funds for future residents or church plants
- Reimbursing expenses for Project 2028 representatives for recruiting trips, training conferences, candidate interviews, travel expenses for such, other church planting-related expenditures, etc.
- Other expenses that are agreed upon at a Partner Gathering

Project 2028 should make multi-year commitments to residents and planters (contingent upon annual evaluations) to help them forecast their own support-raising requirements and account for these long-term commitments in their annual budgeting.

### 3.4.3 Support Commitments to Residents and Planters

Recognizing that funding may not always be consistent and different models may be used to plant (urban, suburban, launch large, scratch start, large focus on the unchurched, etc.) requiring different levels or durations of commitment, Project 2028 desires a typical benchmark for contributing to residents and church plants as a starting place for consideration.

#### Residents

- Project 2028 will develop an annual salary package for residents that is up to ⅔ funded from Project 2028 and the remainder personally raised by the resident.
- Residents are expected to raise personal support (demonstrating their ability to do so for a future church plant) and/or work as tentmakers (per Residency agreement) to make up their remaining salary needs. Support may come as additional giving from PoSE churches outside Project 2028 commitments.

#### Planters

- Project 2028 will develop budget guidelines that reflect a decreasing percentage given from Project 2028 over the first three years of a project budget. Consideration for additional years will be based on the model and context of the plant

Funding includes an annual review from each Oversight Commission to be shared at a Project 2028 Partner Gathering. Decisions for additional funding beyond the initial commitment will be made only upon request after a joint assessment of the viability of the work by the members at a Partner Gathering.

## 4.0 Church Planter Agreements

### 4.1 Reinvesting Support

One of the priorities for Project 2028 is to plant churches that plant churches—establishing future churches that are enthusiastic participants in the ongoing work of the partnership. Toward that end, Project 2028 support given to church plants are revolving funds. Each church plant will be required to work toward (within 3 years) contributing back to Project 2028 5% of their prior year’s annual revenue. This practice will continue for a period of 10 years, even if the church leaves Project 2028. This encourages church plants to actively cooperate in planting churches.

### 4.2 Missional Priorities

It is our desire not simply to plant a new church or raise the EPC flag in a new location. Rather, we desire to plant EPC churches that are committed to and embody the ideals of our denomination. Alongside commitments to our Reformed, Evangelical, Presbyterian heritage, this includes the commitment to be missional.<sup>8</sup> We recognize that *missional* is too often a buzz word or slogan that quickly loses its meaning. Nevertheless, we believe it is an important word representing an important philosophy of ministry. While different church plants can adopt different models or approaches to planting, all Project 2028 church plants will give expression to a missional philosophy of ministry in their project proposal,<sup>9</sup> which will be submitted along with their request to be considered for being a Project 2028 planter.

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<sup>8</sup> See “Missional Resources” under <https://epc.org/downloads/>

<sup>9</sup> *Missional* is not a *model* for church planting. Any number of models can be missional if they understand the church to be the primary agent God uses in fulfilling his own mission; that it is not so much that God has a mission for his church as he has a

Part of the consideration for Project 2028 approval of a church planter will be based on the planter's philosophy of church planting in light of the priorities identified in their project proposal. To better evaluate if the planter is a good fit for Project 2028, the church planter will provide written rationale for why a new church is needed in a particular site on the basis of a site assessment/profile that takes into account:

- Demographic information, including the presence and kind of other churches
- Identification of major areas of brokenness and need within the target community
- Personal observations and experiences in the target community addressing the need for a new church and what kind of church is needed for that context
- Identification of the typical idols that characterize the culture and ways in which the church will seek to embody an alternative lifestyle within the culture/community

The proposal will also articulate responses to each of the above criteria that demonstrate how this new church will join God's mission for gospel witness and kingdom expansion. It should stress relational priority with the unchurched, show a clear commitment to evangelism, mercy, and justice, and seek indigenous expressions of church dynamics and practices.

## 5.0 Project 2028 Personnel

### 5.1 Chairperson

The Chairperson will be a teaching or ruling elder of a member church elected at a Partner Gathering by a two-thirds vote for a one-year renewable term corresponding to the calendar year. The Chairperson will moderate the Partner Gatherings, shape the agenda, and coordinate Project 2028-wide activities. The first meeting of a calendar year will be the Annual Meeting, at which Project 2028 will elect the Chairperson, Residency Director, Clerk, and approve the Annual Budget. The Chairperson will then be approved by PoSE Council. The Chairperson and the calendar year Membership of Project 2028 will be presented and approved at the next Stated Meeting of PoSE (ordinarily the first of a new calendar year, usually in February) and its Annual Report entered into the record.<sup>10</sup>

### 5.2 Residency Director

The Residency Director will be a teaching elder elected at a Partner Gathering by a two-thirds vote for a two-year renewable term corresponding to the calendar year. He or she will give primary oversight to developing residencies' form and content, coordinating with pastors/churches who are hosting residents and the residents themselves, and will organize any resident gatherings.

### 5.3 Treasurer

The Treasurer of the PoSE will receive the support payments sent in by member churches, make deposits, arrange bookkeeping if needed, and cut checks as approved by Project 2028 when requested through the appropriate procedure (see §1.6). The Treasurer will also prepare the following financial statements for the Chairperson to present at each Partner Gathering:

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church for his mission; that every local church is *sent* as the agent of God's kingdom for the sake of the world, not a place where spiritual services are provided to members or attenders; and that God's mission is at the core of a church's existence, and partnership in that mission is its reason for being.

<sup>10</sup> Annual membership must meet the minimum number and distribution of members as specified in BoG 21- 1.C.2.

- Current Balance Sheet
- Support Contributions (including the church name, date, and amount for each contribution)
- Support Payments (including the recipient, date, and amount for each)
- Other Expenses (including the date and purpose for each expense)
- An Annual Report for the previous calendar year of income and expense.
- An Annual Budget for the current year and commitments as approved at a Partner Gathering (see §5.1)

## 5.4 Clerk

The Clerk will be one of the two representatives of a member church and elected at a Partner Gathering by a two-thirds vote for a one-year renewable term corresponding to the calendar year. He or she will be tasked with facilitating communication among the Partnership including:

- creating and sending agendas,
- keeping and submitting the official minutes,
- any formal communication with Presbytery Council,
- and summarize an annual report (shared at the Annual Meeting) for member churches and for Presbytery consonant with PoSE By-Laws on reporting (VIII.D.2).

If the Clerk cannot be present at an individual Gathering, the Chairperson may appoint a temporary recorder for minutes.

## 6.0 Relationship with the Presbytery of the Southeast (PoSE)

Project 2028 is an Administrative Commission of the PoSE, approved on xx/xx/xx and operating until December 31, 2028 or earlier if Presbytery deems the task complete.<sup>11</sup> It consists of members of the PoSE and operates under PoSE jurisdiction by fulfilling its mandate to establish new churches. It will report annually at a Stated Meeting of PoSE (including previous year financial report, current year budget, and future planned work) and have membership put forth by Council to be approved annually in renewal by the PoSE. Both these actions will ordinarily take place at the first stated meeting of a calendar year.

Prior to moving forward with a new church plant, Project 2028 commits to:

1. Notify the Church Planting and Receiving (CPR) Committee as a new church plant is being seriously contemplated and consult with any sessions of other EPC churches near the proposed target area.
2. Ensure the planter satisfies the credentialing requirements through the Ministerial Care Committee (MCC) (for either Commissioned Pastor or Ordination as a Teaching Elder) and do the same for a Resident if he or she is already a Teaching Elder. Arrange for an interview of the church planter with the MCC to receive its endorsement of the candidate and place before Presbytery.
3. Coordinate with CPR for who might be willing to serve on the administrative commission for the church plant as a mission church and have it approved in action by Presbytery (see §2.5).

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<sup>11</sup> See EPC BoG 21-1.C.1.

## 7.0 Changes to these Rules and the Life of the Partnership

These Standing Rules may be temporarily over-ridden or changed at any Partner Gathering by a three-quarters vote excepting any statements in these Standing Rules that would then contradict the original motion specifying the powers and duration of this Administrative Commission, the PoSE By-Laws, or the PoSE Operating Guidelines. All changes will be published in a revised edition.

Project 2028 will continue in operation unless it recommends to the Presbytery by a three-quarters vote of member church representatives at a regularly scheduled Partnership Gathering that the commission be terminated. If this happens, PoSE Council will be notified to take action at the next Presbytery meeting.

In the event of the termination of Project 2028, all money, property, or other assets of Project 2028 received from or funded by participating churches will, after payment of all legal debts and obligations (including commitments to church planters and residents), be distributed back to the participating churches on a prorated basis relative to the amount of money each paid into Project 2028 in the current fiscal year. Churches may elect to have their monies remain with a PoSE church development fund instead.