



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT TEAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Alignment Team was established in June 2020 by the Covenant Executive Board. The team sought to achieve missional effectiveness and contribute to financial sustainability of the denomination.

At Gather 2021, during the 135th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church, delegates will vote on the SAT recommendation which includes an update to the:

1. Purpose of the denominational team
2. Overall operating philosophy
3. Leadership structure
4. Corresponding Covenant Constitution and Bylaws amendments

This process is not new to the Covenant or to any other organization that engages in discernment processes seeking to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their mission. The Covid-19 pandemic propelled us into this communal discernment process, which took more than seven months to complete.

We are grateful to the Strategic Alignment Team for their service and work on this great endeavor. The members of the Strategic Alignment Team were: Dierdra Clark, John Fanous, Greg Jao, Diane Leavitt, Claire McClun, Glenn Peterson, Doug Stevens, Gustavo Torres, John Wenrich, and Angela Yee. Together, as a mosaic of mission friends we pressed in to learn and familiarize ourselves with the present needs of our conferences and local churches and identify opportunities to further align our structure to become more agile and responsive to our constituency.

The SAT began meeting last July and engaged in an extensive process of listening all across the denomination to discern the landscape of the needs and opportunities before us. We learned through this listening process that there were some services and programs that were highly valued by the denomination while other areas reflected significant challenges and opportunities for growth and improvement.

Critically, we discovered that some of the current structure and systems challenges faced by the denominational team hinder its ability to serve the denomination effectively, including:

- A top-heavy structure of one executive for every 8 people (1:8 ratio) and 1:3 supervisor ratio
- Understaffing of shared services (communications, information services, human resources, and finance)
- Understaffing of support staff and staff who do day-to-day execution
- A divisional structure that contributes to silos, competition, and redundancies

- A leadership structure with five elected executive ministers reporting to one appointed executive director of ministry development who reports to the elected president, contributing to a lack of clarity in who is leading the church
- Lack of financial margin to staff around significant areas of need such as language translation, technology resourcing, and other functions to enable the denominational team to respond to and support needs of conferences and churches
- Granular Bylaws specifying ten executives and specific teams and activities, ultimately creating an inability to flex and adjust

These structural issues lead to bottlenecks, inefficiencies, redundancy, confusion, and poor constituent service.

External uncertainties and unexpected crises require organizations to be adaptable and nimble in order to respond well to new internal or external developments. Effective organizations thrive when they work collaboratively and in synchronization with a wider network. In our context, we seek to partner as mission friends with the entire denomination—conferences, churches, affiliates, and ministry partners alike.

The Strategic Alignment Team recommendation proposes for the denominational team to evolve into the Covenant Collaboration Team, further collaborating with conferences and churches. This recommendation shifts our current inflexible hierarchical model to one that is more organic, flexible, and focused on serving and collaborating with constituents.

The proposal realigns the denominational team for greater missional effectiveness, where all the teams are integrated to achieve the mission priorities together. Mission is the central operating principle, and the delivery of all five mission priorities is a strategic priority for every team.

In the proposed structure, the mission and the five mission priorities (develop leaders, love mercy do justice, make and deepen disciples, serve globally, and start and strengthen churches) are the central organizing principle of the denominational team. The mission, “To join God in God’s mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world,” and the mission priorities remain the same.

Through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, the following functional teams would deliver on all five mission priorities. The Engagement Team would contain Mobilize and Connect personnel who would engage around items such as credentialing, pastoral care, leadership development, relief and development, events, curriculum, marketing/ communications, and technology. The Mission Infrastructure Team with Fund and Organize personnel would include finance, accounting, governance, and operations functions. All teams would contribute to and advance all five mission priorities in a more streamlined system. This would enhance the ability to provide better customer service to constituents, one of the key concerns identified through denominational listening efforts.

The new proposed structure becomes less top-heavy and more financially sustainable, moving from the current model of five elected and five appointed executives to two elected and two appointed vice presidents. Two elected vice presidents would oversee the Mobilize and Connect teams, and two appointed vice presidents would oversee the Fund and Organize teams. In addition, the current role of executive minister of the Ordered Ministry would be elected and retained as part of the Mobilize personnel.

The diagram of the structure is intended to communicate function, not the specifics of programs, ministries, initiatives, or roles. The functional diagram visualizes how the team is organized, but the actual work of the team is focused on what is central—mission. The mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church and five mission priorities are the absolute center of everything that is being done, locally and globally. In the recommended structure, the denominational team will be able to better serve the church and provide better resources, services, and support so desperately needed.

This structure helps eliminate the current internal confusion, competition, and redundant efforts by aligning and streamlining the system to integrate efforts on all the mission priorities. The proposed structure increases missional effectiveness by aligning our staff with the needs expressed by the denomination, while delivering on all mission priorities in a more integrated way. It contributes toward the Covenant goal of financial sustainability by proposing a less top-heavy structure, reducing redundancy, enhancing income generation efforts.

Multiple delegate briefing sessions are scheduled to provide more context for the proposed SAT recommendation. You can find the schedule for those sessions included in this packet. For additional information regarding the SAT recommendation and to read the FAQs, please visit gather.covchurch.org.