



May 17, 2021

Dear Covenanters,

As we approach Gather 2021, which includes the 135th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church, we want to provide you with an important update on one of the prominent items on the agenda, Agenda Item 12.a. *Recommendation from the Covenant Executive Board on the Strategic Alignment Team*.

Agenda Item 12.a. relates to the proposal regarding the realignment of leadership and staffing model for the denominational team. This is in support of our five mission priorities (Start & Strengthen Churches; Make & Deepen Disciples; Develop Leaders; Love Mercy & Do Justice; and Serve Globally). We continue to live out the purpose of our shared mission: We join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations, in a more caring and just world.

The Strategic Alignment Team (SAT) began as an avenue through which the denominational team could listen, learn and discern how to better serve our church family. The SAT proposal comes as a result of hundreds of hours of work by the SAT, which engaged approximately 700 individuals, received more than 3000 comments, and held nearly 30 listening sessions across the mosaic of the Covenant.

Initially, the Executive Board's recommendation was to both review the proposal and vote on it at this year's Annual Meeting. However, upon further reflection we believe it would be most beneficial to our Body to separate these two actions over two annual meetings. Therefore, the SAT proposal will only be presented at this year's Annual Meeting and call for a vote will occur at next year's Annual Meeting in 2022. The SAT's proposal remains the same, but the timeline will be extended to allow for further discussion, feedback and refinement before it is presented and voted on in its final form in 2022.

The elements informing this decision include:

- Better window for feedback. Extending the window for dialogue and comment allows a fuller process to present, receive feedback, refine, and continue to build out the specifics of the SAT's proposal.
- Better in-person decision-making. A matter of this importance is better handled in person rather than in a virtual only setting. We have every expectation and hope that 2022 will have an element of in-person gathering.
- Better capacity to process. Our churches and pastors continue to navigate in a fully consuming year between COVID-19 and other matters. Taking a longer horizon on decision-making reduces one pressing item in the immediate season ahead as churches begin to find new footing in a renewed season of ministry.

The following three questions continue to guide us on this and all matters:

- What is honoring to Jesus?
- What is honoring to the Body of Christ?
- What is honoring to the Covenant's process?



Our hope is that between June 2021 when the SAT proposal is presented and June 2022 when it is voted on, fruitful conversations will continue to shape the elements of the SAT.

We are looking forward to a fruitful Gather 2021. May God's blessing pour upon you as we collectively gather to seek God's guidance and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In Gratefulness for Your Partnership in the Gospel,

John S. Wenrich, PRESIDENT

Jon Bonkoski, COVENANT EXECUTIVE BOARD CHAIR