



My initial involvement in ECO was as part of the team that was developing ECO's polity. When the team began looking at the part of the polity that would address standards for ordination, there was very rich discussion. All of us were in agreement that we wanted to set a high bar on the quality of person whom we were launching into pastoral leadership. At the same time, we wanted to live into our value of Leadership Velocity. It was actually Rich Mouw, former President of Fuller Seminary, who encouraged us not to require the Master of Divinity degree for ordination. He saw too many stellar candidates who, because of a variety of responsibilities in their lives and ministries, did not complete an M.Div, and thus did not pursue ordination in mainline denominations.

I think over time we have often assumed that we can simply delegate the role of training pastors to other institutions. We have assumed that if someone has a degree, then he or she is ready for ministry. While seminaries can do a phenomenal job at developing certain characteristics in leaders, we need to take more responsibility in assuring that our pastors have the totality of qualities and characteristics needed for ministry.

So, ECO has developed a list of ten core leadership competencies. ([SEE ATTACHED COMPETENCIES](#)) These competencies include areas of “head, heart and hands”. Head, heart and hands means that there is certain knowledge that a person must have (head). There should also be a level of spiritual maturity (heart), and proficiency in skills that are needed for ministry (hands). We have further defined these competences as they related to the different leadership roles of pastor, elder, and commissioned lay pastor. For example, when it comes to the skill of preaching, a pastor needs to be able to develop a message exegetically and topically that will communicate truth to a wide audience. An elder doesn't necessarily have to have the ability to present such a message, but he or she ought to be able to communicate the truth of the gospel in conversation. We hope and pray that these leadership competencies will do the following:

1. Assist the ordination teams of presbyteries as they seek to prepare candidates for ministry. These teams are getting people from a variety of educational, experiential and denominational backgrounds. These competencies will help the ordination teams assess candidates as well as give them opportunities for further ministry development that is tailored to their individual needs.
2. Help pastors who are currently ordained in ECO or are seeking to transfer their ordination to ECO. As we created these competencies, I was personally able to identify areas where I needed to grow in my ministry competency.
3. Help raise the bar for what it means to be an officer in the church. Many leaders, when reviewing these competencies, wanted to take them to their church nominating committee to help in the process of officer nomination.

They understood that all of their elders may not fit these competencies, but by articulating them as the goal it will help to raise the bar of what it means to be an officer.

4. Help identify needs for training opportunities. These can be training opportunities that churches might provide for their officers, but they also may present occasions for us in ECO to develop training that can be used by the wider body.

I should also mention that these leadership competencies are not written in stone. We want our leaders to live with the competencies for a period of time and provide feedback on areas that are missing. Or, if there are areas on the current competencies that don't rise to the level of what should be expected of a leader, then we will continue to revise, update, and improve them.

I firmly believe that we need to ensure that our leaders are spiritually mature and capable for ministry in our postmodern context. I am thankful for those who are seeking to make maturity and growth a reality in their churches, in their presbyteries, and throughout ECO.

In Christ,

Dana