An Introduction to the Pacific Conference

PACIFIC CONFERENCE
of the EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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Pacific Conference Superintendent

Dr. Brian Hotrum was elected to be the Pacific Conference Superintendent in 2022 and has been a pastor in the Pacific Conference since 1996. He graduated from Hillcrest Christian College in 1991, Bakke Graduate University in 2006, and Corban University in 2023 with a Doctor of Ministry. He wrote the history book for the denomination as well as a couple of other minor works.

Brian and his wife Donalyn have two daughters who are both grown and married. Brian and Donalyn both grew up as pastor's kids, Brian in the Pacific Conference and Donalyn in Canada. Donalyn works in the office doing scheduling and administrative support.

What is the Foundation of the Pacific Conference?

We <u>focus</u> on Jesus – our Lord and Savior of the world.
We <u>follow</u> God's Word – being committed to Scripture.
We <u>fulfill</u> the Great Commission – our mission to spread the good news of the gospel.

We are committed to the centrality of Christ. He is the one who saved us, and Christ is the only hope for this world. We are committed to the authority of the Scripture. There is no debate on this issue. We are also committed to fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus gave this mission to his followers, and it is still in effect.

What is the Purpose of the Pacific Conference?

The stated purpose of this group is found in the denomination's Book of Discipline.

¶309. The purpose of The Evangelical Church is to glorify God by proclaiming to all people the Gospel message of salvation from all sin in this life through faith in Jesus Christ so that they might be transformed to live the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 22:37-40; 28:18-20; Luke 1:74-75).

What is the Pacific Conference?

The Pacific Conference is a group of about 50 churches in Oregon and Washington and is the regional conference of a small denomination known as The Evangelical Church. This group was born over two hundred years ago out of the Great Awakening, originally ministering among the ethnic German people in Pennsylvania.

Jacob Albright, the son of German immigrants, became a Christian in 1790. He spoke English fairly well and went to the Methodist meetings in the area. By 1796 his burden for the German-speaking people of Central Pennsylvania led him to start preaching. He organized his converts into small groups for Bible study, encouragement and accountability, passing away after just twelve years of ministry, but Albright's followers carried on his work. In 1864 the first Evangelical church planters came to the Pacific Northwest, starting churches in Oregon and Washington.

There was a denominational reorganization in 1968. The majority of the churches joined the Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church. Our group was among a small group of pastors and churches that rejected liberalism and chose to continue preaching an evangelistic message of salvation. They re-formed The Evangelical Church on June 4th, 1968, in Portland, Oregon.

How are we organized?

There are three main forms of church government. Episcopal, Presbyterian (elder led), and Congregational. The Evangelical Church comes out of the Methodist family of churches but has undergone changes over time and is therefore a bit of a hybrid of all three forms of church government. Also, there is variation among the individual churches within the conference regarding the local church operation.

Connectional: We have a connectional system where the churches in the conference work together in a number of different areas such as missions, discipleship, church health, church planting, women's and youth ministries, ministry credentials, pension and insurance for pastors, and support ministries for local churches.

Ordination: A church can be influenced by a charismatic personality, therefore matters of ordination are at the conference level. There is a Board of Ministry who make recommendations for credentials, and they are granted by vote of the ordained elders of the conference.

Superintendent: The Conference Superintendent is elected by the pastors in the conference and the representatives from each member church of the conference every four years. The superintendent supports the ministry of the local churches. It is also ultimately his responsibility to work with local congregations to make the assignment or re-assignment of pastors to churches.

Church Council: There is a lot of variation among churches within the Pacific Conference. However, typically the main governing body of a church is the Local Church Council, which is representative of the various ministries within the church. The idea is similar to a staff meeting of a large church where the leaders of all the various ministries of the church come together under the leadership of the Senior pastor and make the decisions for the direction of the church. In a small church, these are mostly all volunteers, yet still very important parts of the congregation.

Pastoral Accountability: The pastor is accountable to the Conference Superintendent, and the local church's Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. If there is a change in pastors, the

Superintendent will work with the PPRC to assign the best fit for the congregation.

Local Conference: This is the yearly event where the Conference Superintendent meets with a local church and shares with them the ministry and vision of the conference. Also, at this meeting the Superintendent meets with the local PPRC.

Annual Conference: This is the business meeting held in November for the whole conference. This is mostly an open meeting, however only the ordained representative from each church have voting rights.

General Conference: Every four years there is an assembly for the entire denomination. This is also the time to elect a General Superintendent for the denomination.

Core Values of the Pacific Conference

BIBLICAL FAITHFULNESS

We value the Bible, as God's Holy Word, which we look to as the authority for our beliefs, guide for living, and motivation for mission. It contains absolute truth and infallibly reveals God's plan for our lives. We are committed to faithfully and accurately preach the Word and apply it to our daily lives.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16-17

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

We value the transformation that comes when people put their faith in Christ and are changed by the Holy Spirit. Making disciples is our clear mandate. Our goal is not to be better than others, but to become more like God's Son, Jesus Christ. We embrace our Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine and heritage and emphasize our free will to respond to God's grace and live a Spirit-filled life of holiness.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then

you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:1-2

RELATIONAL CONNECTEDNESS

We value our work together as partners in ministry to achieve together what we cannot do separately. Our desire is to be in relationship with each other, not just part of an organization. We are structured in "connectional" system of elders and leaders under the authority of our Superintendent. We demonstrate heart holiness by our unity, love, and servant leadership.

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body…" 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

LOCAL CHURCH FOCUSED

We value the local church as the most fundamental and strategic centers for evangelism and discipleship. The challenge of the Conference is to find the best ways to resource, serve, and multiply congregations. We are together, but different. We agree on the essentials in doctrine and polity, while understand the differing needs of a variety of congregations in diverse settings.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." 1 Corinthians 3:6

EVANGELISTIC CONVICTION

We value the gospel as the hope for the world. We are compelled to share this good news of salvation in ways that are honoring to God and connect with people in our culture. We are representatives of Jesus sent into our communities as "missionaries," and work to ensure that each congregation aligns itself with the larger mission of God. We partner together as a conference and with other conferences, denominations, and mission organizations to plant churches and to spread and build the Kingdom of God.

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died…To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings." 1 Corinthians 5:14 and 9:22-23.

Policy

Individual churches and pastors in the Pacific Conference are governed by three different written policies. (It is similar to what we see in government at the federal, state, and local level.) The first is “The Discipline,” which is essentially the constitution and bylaws for the entire denomination. The second policy is from the regional conference and is called the BRSR (Business Rules and Standing Resolutions). The third area where there are policies is the local church’s policy manual. The policies in The Discipline, and in the BRSR include some policy that does not directly affect the local church, however, there are several policies that do.

Since the churches are part of a denomination, there is uniformity that takes place giving a common language and, in theory, makes things easier to manage. The local congregation does not necessarily incorporate as a separate entity. Each church derives its non-profit 501c3 stats from the denomination. This needs to be reported yearly in order for each church to maintain their non-profit status.

Local churches will have local policies such as building use, building policies, and job descriptions. The regional conference has policies such as minimum salary for the pastor, vacation guidelines, and it is the regional conference that ordains ministers.

Each conference within the denomination operates fairly independently, yet what holds them together is what is called the Book of Discipline. In this book there are the articles of faith, the spiritual and moral values, the details of how a church, regional conference, and denomination are to operate, as well as the rituals for communion, baptism, marriage, etc.

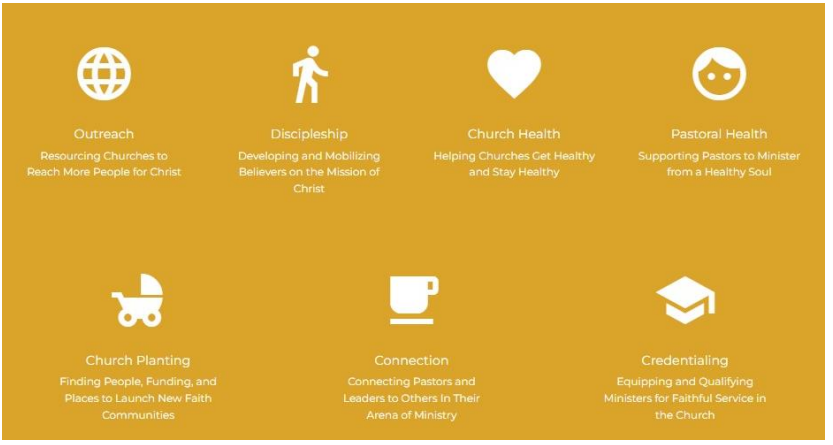
What Does the Pacific Conference Do?

The Pacific Conference has boards and committees that organize efforts in these seven areas. The first is outreach evangelism, both local and global. When people are saved, they need to be discipled, so we have a Board of Discipleship to aid churches that need help in this area.

We want people to be part of healthy churches, so we have a Board of Church Health. Healthy churches are led by healthy pastors. We have grant money and a process for pastoral education, coaching, sabbaticals, etc.

We also want to plant new churches, and this is the task of the Board of Church Planting. We encourage connections. We have various pastor connections, as well as youth camps, and women's events.

The final area is credentialing. We have a process in place for screening and credentialing prospective pastors. It is not meant to be oppressive, but it is to provide churches with good pastoral leadership.



Theological Orientation

The following was written and delivered by George Millen and is a summary of the theological orientation of this group given in 1968 at the reorganization of The Evangelical Church:

The Evangelical Church of North America is orthodox in its beliefs, evangelical in its emphasis and Wesleyan-Arminian in its interpretation of the scriptural meaning of salvation. Thus, its mission is to proclaim the glad tidings of a free and full salvation to all men in the present life. In keeping with this purpose, it puts special emphasis upon the following sectors of truth:

1. The Divine inspiration, reliability and authority of the Holy Scriptures as the norm of Christian faith and conduct.

2. The estrangement of man from God, from his fellowman and from his own true being, vocation and fulfillment of life.

3. The necessity of repentance for sin, justification by faith, the new birth, the direct witness of the Holy spirit to adoption into the family of God, and entire sanctification, wherein the Christian believer experiences the reality of full inner cleansing from inherited moral depravity and the indwelling fullness of the Holy Spirit.

4. A life of such inward purity and outward righteousness that marks the Christian as being separate in mind and character from the unregenerate multitudes whom he seeks to win to Jesus Christ.

5. The practice of simplicity and freedom in worship, untrammeled by elaborate ritual or pagan superstition.

6. A life of total dedication to God, making all Christian service to be a responsible stewardship unto Him.

7. The abundant life of "Love, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," through whose indwelling fullness the Christian is enabled to live victoriously, serve Christ effectively and look expectantly for his promised return.

It is the conviction of the membership of the Evangelical Church of North America that the matters mentioned above will be living issues always, and that they shall need to be emphasized to every age, lest this denomination lose its reason for existence… To carry the whole gospel for the whole man to the whole world demands total obedience to the divine mandate, until such time as Christ shall return to this earth and make it 'Holiness to the Lord.'

Summary of Articles of Faith of The Evangelical Church

1. The Triune God: We believe in one eternal God in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus Christ, The Son of God: We believe in Jesus as both truly God and truly man, born of the Virgin Mary, who lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven.

3. The Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit's role in conviction of sin, leading to faith, empowering believers, and sanctifying them.

4. The Holy Scriptures: We believe in the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and written Word of God.

5. Depravity and Prevenient Grace: We believe in human fallenness and emphasize redemption through God's prevenient grace that goes before salvation drawing people to God.

6. Provision for Salvation: We believe in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross as the perfect and sufficient offering for the sins of the world.

7. Justification, Regeneration, Adoption: We believe that justification from the guilt of sin comes through faith, leading to being born again, and adoption as children of God.

8. Sanctification: We believe sanctification begins in the new birth, leading the believer to a moment of full consecration in which the Holy Spirit purifies the heart.

9. Good Works: We believe that good works are necessary evidence of faith but cannot remove sins or avert divine judgment.

10. The Church: We believe in the Church as a community of born-again believers under Christ's Lordship, existing for worship, edification, and the redemption of the world.

11. The Sacraments: We believe in water Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments ordained by Christ, symbolizing faith, repentance, and redemption.

12. The Second Coming and Future State: We believe in Christ's bodily return, inspiring hope and anticipation among believers. We believe in the resurrection, judgment, and eternal states of reward or punishment in either heaven or hell.

For more information, the Full Articles of Faith along with the moral standards and polity are in The Discipline of The Evangelical Church and can be found on the Conference website.

www.ThePacificConference.com/resources

Pastors

Each church has its own unique situation and personality depending upon size, setting, and other factors. However, the denomination has standards and expectations for pastors.

The expectation is that pastors will have competency in five different areas. There is the organizational part. Each church is a non-profit organization and as such there are legal, financial, and insurance issues to manage. The pastor has a responsibility to the local church, to the regional conference, and to the denomination. The pastor is also expected to be a preacher/teacher. They are to have knowledge of the Scripture and be able to explain the Scripture to the church. The pastor is expected to be the leader of the congregation. They are to ensure that ministries are taking place in the church. These are age level ministries, outreach ministries, personal ministry, as well as sacraments and ceremonies. Most importantly the pastor is to have high character, both personal and professional integrity.

Ordination

Pastors of Conference churches will be expected to be ordained by the Pacific Conference. This process is done through the Conference Board of Ministry, voted on by the ordained elders in the Conference, and the ordination takes place at the Annual Conference session.

Pastors are "Ordained into the Itinerancy." This is a Methodist term that is not always easily understood, but the Itinerancy is a self-disciplining body of ordained Elders who accept the priority of the cause of Christ in service to the Lord and who are committed to a lifetime of service under the authority of The Evangelical Church.

If the ministry candidate already has some credentials, then they will work with the Board of Ministry on how to transfer those credentials. That way they do not have to start from the very beginning of the process but to work with where they are already at in their credentialing journey.

Summary of Ordination Process

1. CONVERSION

We are "evangelical" and believe in evangelism and the conversion experience of finding salvation in Christ and have that as a basic starting point for our pastors.

2. EXPLORATION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

You are familiar with the Articles of Faith and the Moral Standards and basic structure of The Evangelical Church. These are found in chapters one and two of The Discipline.

3. DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

You fill out the "Declaration of Purpose for the Christian Ministry" form and send it to the Board of Ministry.

4. LOCAL CHURCH RECOMMENDATION
Part of being in a connectional relationship is to have a Conference church recommend you for ministry. This is normally done at a Local Conference meeting with the Superintendent present.

5. FIRST MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF MINISTRY
They have received your Declaration of Purpose, and this is your introductory meeting with the Board. You will then be assigned an advisor who will help you navigate your way through the process. You are now an official Ministerial Candidate.

6. EXAMS
There are some exams to do in order to be credentialed. This simply let the Board know where you stand on matters of Bible, theology, leadership, and evangelism. There is also the course to learn about the history and organization of The Evangelical Church.

7. SECOND MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF MINISTRY
Once you've completed the exams, the board will do another meeting before they recommend you for a License to Preach.

8. LICENSING
The License to Preach is a temporary authorization by the Conference and is eligible to be renewed each year until you are ordained. The Board recommends to the Ordained Pastors in the Conference who then vote to give you a License.

9. EDUCATION
We have high expectations for pastors and require a Masters level degree or completion of the Pacific Evangelical School of Ministry.

10. DOCTRINAL EXAM (3rd MEETING WITH THE BOM)
The Doctrinal Exam is for ordination or transferring credentials. The exam is in ¶831 in The Discipline. There are a series of questions. You have a written document that you submit to the Board of Ministry, and then an in-person meeting for follow up questions.

11. BOARD RECOMMENDATION
When you've been licensed, have the educational component, and passed the doctrinal examination, then the Board of Ministry recommends to the Ordained Pastors that you be ordained. This happens at an Annual Conference session.

12. ORDINATION CEREMONY
There are high expectations of pastors, and to make it known that you have been examined and are determined to serve as a pastor we have vows we take as pastors. These vows are the rituals section of The Discipline. This is a sacred and important time where the Conference leadership lay hands on you for ordination in the ministry.

The following are the ordination vows that are taken for all who are ordained in the denomination. These are found in the Rituals section in The Discipline of The Evangelical Church.

Presentation:

My brother, after due examination your fellow ministers are confident that you are called of God to the Christian Ministry, and as a testimony of their confidence and trust have authorized your ordination. This hour contains great spiritual significance. Its meaning to you will be determined largely by your own attitude and response. We ask you, therefore, to accept in the spirit of true humility and sincere dedication both the honor and the responsibility of this holy office.

Ordination Vows:

1. Do you believe that you are called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Christian Ministry and the Order of Elder? If so, answer: I do.

2. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, and are you persuaded that therein only is revealed the way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, answer: I do and am so persuaded.

3. Are you determined to instruct the people out of the Holy Scriptures, and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation but what is taught in the Scriptures? If so, answer: I am so determined.

4. Will you faithfully administer the sacraments of the Church as the Lord has commanded? If so, answer: I will.

5. Will you loyally maintain the doctrines and polity of The Evangelical Church? If so, answer: By the help of God, I will.

6. Will you be diligent in prayer, reading and searching the Holy Scriptures, and will you pursue such studies as aides in helping you increase your knowledge of God and his kingdom? If so, answer: I will.

7. Will you earnestly endeavor to regulate your conduct and the conduct of your family according to the spirit and teachings of Christ that you may be godly examples for all people to follow? If so, answer: I will endeavor to do so.

8. Will you maintain and promote peace, quietness, love and unity among all Christians, and especially among those committed to your charge? If you will do this, answer: I will endeavor to do so.

9. Will you reverently nurture with a glad heart and a willing mind, those committed to your care according to the regulations of The Evangelical Church? If so, answer: I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

10. Will you devote yourself with all zeal and faithfulness to the extension of the kingdom of God in the place that you are assigned to? If so, answer: I will endeavor through the grace of God to do so.

11. The Almighty Who has given you the will to do all these things, also grant you strength and power to perform the same, that He may accomplish the good work which He has begun in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Quick Guide to the Pastoral Search and Placement Process in The Pacific Conference

The Pacific Conference is a connectional system where the pastoral search and placement is a joint effort between the Conference Superintendent and the local church's Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. This is the team that hires a pastor and does a yearly review of the pastor with the Superintendent.

1. PREPARATION PHASE
This is where the PPRC puts together a job posting to advertise for the position. We want to have one uniform process for all applicants to ensure fair employment practices.

2. SEARCH PHASE
Normally, a job is posted and then there is a waiting period of at least six weeks for applications. This is normally on the Conference website as well as national pastor search websites.

3. SELECTION PHASE
When we have some candidates there is a light screening in the Conference office. Those candidates have a conversation with the Superintendent. If the PPRC wishes to proceed after an initial interview, there are checks (background, reference, Board of Ministry, and possibly a credit check).

4. INTERVIEW PHASE
This looks different in each situation depending on several different factors. There are initial interviews with the PPRC and the pastoral candidate. The Superintendent will try to be a part of those interviews as his schedule permits.

5. APPOINTMENT PHASE
When the Superintendent and the PPRC have prayerfully chosen a candidate, have done their due diligence, and both Superintendent and PPRC agree on a candidate, then we move to the appointment phase. The PPRC have a written and signed agreement with the incoming pastor as to duties & expectations, salary, vacation time, etc. The Superintendent will come for a Sunday morning service to do an installation with the new pastor.

6. CREDENTIALING PHASE
If the new pastor is not credentialed with the Pacific Conference, the Superintendent is to give them a letter of authorization for ministry. The new pastor will be engaged with the Board of Ministry in order to begin the ordination process or to have a transfer of credentials.

7. FOLLOW-UP PHASE
Each new pastor has six months of a monthly phone call with the Superintendent. There is also an orientation for incoming pastors in the Conference. It is expected that the new pastor goes through the Conference Coaching program. Then there will be the regular yearly check-in with the PPRC at Local Conference.