

# ESG

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## Governing Council Meeting Minutes

**Date:** January 20, 2026

**Time:** 7:00–8:25 p.m. (approx.)

**Location:** Hybrid (in person and online)

### Attendance

Present: Paul Hutchison, Sarah Chapman, Hugh DesBrisay, Simon Cummings, Caren Cate, Kathleen Hull, Gord Thompson, Marion Axmith, Peter Wilkins, John Blevins, Carolyn Woodland, Gord Brookes

Regrets: Maggie Wilkinson

### 1. Opening

Sarah Chapman called the meeting to order and lit the Christ candle. She offered an opening reflection framed by an Epiphany theme of Light, using a Jan Richardson poem that imagined the year ahead as a 'house,' inviting members into a season marked by openness, welcome, and attentiveness to grace. The reflection set a pastoral and reflective tone for the meeting.

### 2. Opening Prayer Marion Axmith

### 3. Approval of Previous Minutes

Motion: That the minutes of the December 16, 2025 Governing Council meeting be approved.

Moved by Marion Axmith. Seconded by Peter Wilkins. Carried.

### 4. Minister's Report and Strategic Leadership Update (see email full report)

Paul Hutchison reported on the substantial pastoral demands at the start of the year, including several funerals currently in planning, one involving an upcoming MAID death (Bob Anglin). He noted both the emotional weight of this work and its centrality to ESG's ministry of presence and care.

Paul reflected positively on the energy and participation throughout Advent and Christmas, highlighting strengthened hospitality practices and a more intentional participant journey. He noted that these efforts were widely experienced as welcoming and well-coordinated, both by long-time members and by newer participants.

Looking ahead, Paul identified several strategic priorities emerging from ESG's Strategic Design work, including deepening invitation and welcome, strengthening care networks, enhancing communication systems, and improving long-range worship planning. Council received the report with appreciation for its clarity and integration of pastoral, operational, and strategic concerns.

### **5. Remembrance Day Community Poppy Initiative, Heroes Among Us**

Paul introduced a proposal to partner with Urban Roots, a local historical research group focused on honouring Eglinton-Lawrence community members who served in the First and Second World Wars. The initiative would involve placing commemorative poppies, each accompanied by researched historical information, on ESG's property and potentially throughout the surrounding neighbourhood on properties where soldiers lived.

Council discussed the initiative's strong alignment with ESG's public witness, educational goals, and longstanding commitment to meaningful Remembrance Day worship. The group noted the value of serving as a community hub for remembrance and the manageable costs involved. The possibility of a multi-year partnership was also discussed, allowing the project to grow over time.

By consensus, Council affirmed support for proceeding with the Remembrance Day poppy initiative, with further planning and coordination to continue.

### **6. Communications and Participant Engagement (CRM)**

Paul outlined plans to pilot a more relational and personalized communications model through text messaging integrated with PowerChurch. This approach is intended to shift ESG's communications from primarily informational announcements toward more intentional invitation and engagement.

Council recognized this as both a technical and cultural shift, supporting clearer pathways into community life and follow-up with participants. An initial pilot will focus on Love Alive programming, with learning and evaluation to inform future use.

### **7. Care Network Development**

Further updates were shared regarding the strengthening of ESG's care network. Building on the recent Care and Action Roundtable, plans include the development of a lay pastoral listening team and regular gatherings to support volunteers engaged in caregiving ministries.

Council affirmed the importance of this work as both a pastoral and strategic priority, noting its role in sustaining those who offer care throughout the community.

### **8. Worship Planning**

Paul noted that initial work has begun on next program year (starting September) worship planning, with early 'dreaming' conversations among staff. Emphasis will be placed on

preparing the fall season well in advance, while maintaining a flexible, iterative planning approach.

### **9. Sarah's Ministry Report**

Sarah has felt welcomed back by the congregation in January. She is restarting programs like Storytelling and Love Alive in January. She is rethinking the support role that Marnie left to see what activities and skills will be most important before posting a new job description. Sarah plans to be more involved in worship planning, the participant journey, and vibrant spirituality.

### **10. Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Report**

Carolyn Woodland reported on the implementation of the approved 2.6% cost-of-living adjustment for permanent staff and ongoing work organizing contracts and documentation into a more accessible digital format.

She also reported on recent liaison meetings with Shining Waters Regional Council and noted upcoming work related to job descriptions flowing from the strategic design process. Council was advised of current capacity pressures on M&P, including the need for additional members or advisory support with HR and legal expertise.

### **11. Finance Report**

Gord Thompson reported that December financial results (sent by email) were strong and highlighted the usefulness of summarized financial indicators provided to Council. Council expressed appreciation for the clear presentation of financial information.

### **12. Council Meeting Dates**

Council reviewed upcoming meeting dates. Due to March Break, Holy Week timing, and member availability, Council agreed to cancel the March 2026 Governing Council meeting. Note the April meeting is moved up to April 14 to avoid Rummage week.

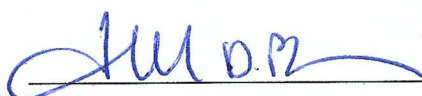
Next meeting is scheduled for February 17, In Person & Teams

### **13. Other Business**

Paul noted the current in-the-round seating configuration in the sanctuary for the January-February period. Initial feedback has been positive, and Council acknowledged this as an area for future reflection regarding worship space and congregational identity.

### **14. Closing Prayer and Adjournment**

Paul closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m. Next meeting Feb. 17, 2026 with closing prayer by Gord Brookes.



Hugh DesBrisay, Chair



Peter Wilkins, notetaker