

Conservative, evangelical, charismatic-friendly: Evangelical Presbyterian Church established in 1981

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The Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which is offering a refuge for breakaway PCUSA churches, began 26 years ago with 12 churches and currently has 182 congregations in eight geographic presbyteries embracing 75,000 members.

The EPC, according to moderator Paul Heidebrecht, also considers itself committed to avoiding strife and very open to charismatic expressions of worship. In St. Paul's letters, such gifts include speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing.

"When we started our denomination in 1981 we determined that on the basic essentials of the Christian faith, we would not disagree, but on anything that was not essential, such as the issue of ordaining women as officers or practicing charismatic gifts, we would give each other liberty," said Heidebrecht in a message on the EPC Web site.

"Above all, we committed ourselves to loving each other and not engaging in quarrels and strife," he said. "The result is that when we get together in our regional and national meetings, we spend most of our time in worship and fellowship and almost none in arguing with each other."

The Web site also says the EPC believes that the Holy Spirit equips churches "for service through the granting of spiritual gifts." Yet the EPC has churches "which believe the charismatic gifts are still given today as well as churches which do not."