

How does the Gracious Dismissal Process work?

- In February Session determined that the membership may be disaffected with PCUSA and requested the Presbytery to provide a Presbytery Engagement Team (PET) to help Session discern the extent.
- In March, Presbytery named three members to the PET and Session is selecting two members. Presbytery will name one more member to the PET. There will be a total of six members:

Presbytery - Rev. Chris Williams, Rev. Bob Butziger, Elder Lizanne Reynolds, & ??

WVPC – Bob Brown & Doug Gips

- The PET will guide Session in the discernment process over the next few months and work with us as we continue to provide accurate information to enable the congregation to make an informed decision.
- The PET will oversee a straw poll or non-binding vote of the **congregation** on whether to leave PCUSA.
- If the straw poll shows that a substantial majority of the membership desires to leave PCUSA, the PET will commence negotiations with the Session on the settlement agreement.
- The PET will find a solution for the members who wish to stay with PCUSA.
- The membership will formally vote on whether to accept the negotiated settlement agreement.
- If the membership vote is in excess of 75% with at least 50% of the voting members physically present, then Presbytery will vote on dismissing the church and accepting the settlement agreement. Presbytery is not required to accept the negotiated settlement and dismiss the church

Why do we have to do anything now?

- Members of WVPC have informed Session that they are considering leaving WVPC if no action is taken.
- The resources of our staff and Session are being consumed by denominational issues, resources that could be better applied to making Christ known.
- PC(USA) is gradually departing from WVPC's long established positions on authority of scripture, the sovereignty of God, and Jesus as the unique way for salvation.
- Presbytery adopted a Gracious Dismissal Policy last year that was not available in the past. Will it be available in the future?
- Ten other churches in our Presbytery are seeking dismissal at this time. These churches support the policy and empowering disaffected churches to leave. These ten churches will not be able to support WVPC's dismissal after they are dismissed.
- Delaying our decision will delay our ability to participate in ECO's Mission Affinity Groups and other intra-church programs. Those programs would have a positive impact on WVPC's mission of making Christ known.

Impact on our Staff of affiliation with PCUSA

- Difficult for Matt to set standards with youth with no fidelity and chastity statement.
- Difficult for Sarah to teach that Jesus is the only way to God when PCUSA leadership doesn't support this.
- Kim will have fewer like-minded colleagues, whom are mostly from churches that are Christ centered and give similar gospel messages, as these other churches seek dismissal from PCUSA (such as Saratoga Pres and Morgan Hill Pres).
- Presbytery meetings are characterized by infighting and distrust. Little gets accomplished and our staff departs demoralized rather than energized.
- National and local PCUSA leaders are focused on political issues that are open to great debate and controversy. With our limited time and resources, we should be focused elsewhere.
- SJ Presbytery recently ordained a ministry candidate living with a partner and vague in their statement of faith; questions to the candidate from the floor were prohibited by the moderator. Failure to follow established protocol fosters ill will and distrust.

Is ECO Pro-Life?

- ECO is neither Pro-Life nor Pro-Choice.
- ECO's Essential Tenets state “...recognize and honor the image of God in every human being from conception to natural death.” There is no other position paper in ECO.
- Life Issues are very complex and go beyond abortion (rape, incest, life of the mother, life support, euthanasia, assisted suicide, war, genocide, capital punishment)
- There are many different kinds of circumstances that warrant prayerful consideration of the life decision. Recognizing and honoring the image of God is an attitude of the heart.
- People of good conscience will differ in their opinions on how to recognize and honor the image of God in a life decision.
- Abortion in the most permissive circumstances (for example solely for the convenience of the mother) would likely be contrary to the Essential Tenets. Does this make ECO Pro-Life?
- Membership in ECO is solely conditioned on faith in Jesus Christ, not the Essential Tenets.

Jesus as the Unique Way for Salvation

- The new Form of Government (“nFOG”) section entitled “Unity in Diversity” states “God unites people through baptism regardless of . . . theological conviction”. Therefore, a belief in Christ is not required for membership.
- When describing those who are part of the church, nFoG deleted the line “who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” which had been in the former Book of Order.
- Landon Whitsitt, Vice-Moderator of GA 2010 -2012, wrote Open Source Church: Making Room for the Wisdom of All which he stated, “Just because God has called you into relationship through the work and person of Jesus Christ doesn’t mean everybody has to be in relationship with God through the work and person of Jesus Christ.
- Some churches in the PCUSA openly state that they do not believe that Jesus is the only way to God (i.e. Montclair Pres in Oakland and First Pres Palo Alto).
- PC(USA) 2011 survey found that 41% of pastors and 27% of specialized ministers strongly agree or agree that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved”.

What if I Disagree With an Essential Tenet?

- Membership in ECO is solely conditioned on faith in Jesus Christ, not the Essential Tenets.
- ECO requirement that an Elder be “bound” by the Essential Tenets does not prohibit an Elder from disagreeing with the Essential Tenets.
- By agreeing to be bound by the Essential Tenets, an Elder should not actively promote a position that is contrary to the Essential Tenets in their position as an Elder.
- By agreeing to be bound by the Essential Tenets, an Elder should not engage in the prohibited behavior (sexual relations outside of marriage, for example)
- Session’s role is to minister to those members and Elders whom do not accept all or a portion of the Essential Tenets.
- It may not be in anyone’s best interest to have an Elder remain as an Elder if the Elder has significant disagreements with the Essential Tenets.

Why hasn't Session Surveyed the Congregation?

- Policy states that “The session of the particular church has the responsibility to determine the nature and seriousness of any congregational disaffection from the PC(USA) which **might** lead to an effort to seek dismissal to another Reformed denomination.”
- Congregants have informed Session of their disaffection with PC(USA) and Session has concluded that this disaffection might lead to an effort to seek dismissal.
- Session does not believe that it is required to conduct a survey before Presbytery is notified of the disaffection within the congregation.
- Session believes that it would be best to conduct a survey after all of the information is shared and the congregation has had a chance to discuss the issues amongst themselves and draw their own conclusions.
- Session is following the same process as a majority of the ten other churches currently seeking dismissal in our Presbytery.

Other San Jose Presbytery Churches Seeking Discernment

Church name	City, State	Member	Affiliate with
Carmel	Carmel, Calif.	374	ECO
Christ Community	Milpitas, Calif	755	ECO
Felton	Felton, Calif.	119	N/A
First	Hollister, Calif.	255	N/A
First	Salinas, Calif.	2,247	N/A
Mayflower	Pacific Grove, Calif.	123	N/A
Morgan Hill	Morgan Hill, Calif.	239	ECO
Saratoga	Saratoga, Calif.	262	N/A
Union	Los Altos, Calif.	182	N/A
Vintage Faith (First)	Santa Cruz	198	N/A

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