

Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding the Recommendation to Seek Dismissal from the PCUSA and Affiliation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the PCUSA

We want to hear from you and encourage questions you might have that are not listed below by emailing questions@cpcdanville.org. This will allow us to respond to you and continue to build a thorough listing of FAQ's for our members. (Throughout these FAQ's, the terms "we", "us" and "our" refers to Community Presbyterian Church (CPC), its pastoral staff, Session, Members, ministries, schools and its counseling center.)

About the PCUSA

1. CPC is a Presbyterian Church. What does it mean to be Presbyterian?

Presbyterian churches are based on a representative form of government and a connection to other churches. Each congregation appoints elders to sit with pastors on a Session which governs their own church. Each church belongs to a Presbytery, a regional body designed to supervise and serve the local churches in its area. Representatives from each Presbytery come together every other year at General Assembly, a national meeting, where denomination-wide policies are created or modified by vote. The next General Assembly will be held in July of 2010.

2. What is the PCUSA?

Presbyterian Church (USA) or PCUSA is the branch of Presbyterianism to which CPC belongs. It was born of a merger between two Presbyterian denominations in 1983 to become the fifth largest Protestant denomination in the United States. The PCUSA is one of nine Presbyterian denominations in the United States. The national offices are in Louisville, Kentucky. The PCUSA is governed by its constitution, made up of The Book of Order and The Book of Confessions. For more information visit www.pcusa.org.

3. What influence does the PCUSA have over our church?

The influence of the PCUSA over CPC comes in both how we govern the church (polity) and in our theology.

We have a Book of Order which contains sections on church government, discipline and worship. We also have a Book of Confessions which consists of 11 historic confessions of faith that we agree to be guided by. The continuing tension we live under in the PCUSA is that both of these important documents are subject to change. Many of our differences center on the ongoing proposals for change in The Book of Order and Book of Confessions.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Reasons for Change in Denomination

Reasons for Change in Denomination

3-23-10

1. Is Scott Farmer staying with CPC? What are his long term plans?

Scott Farmer has indicated his intent is to spend the rest of his career as CPC's senior pastor, if that is God's will and supported by the CPC congregation.

3-23-10

2. What are the main reasons, by importance, for CPC wanting to leave the PCUSA?

Many people have asked for the "main" reason(s) why the Session has recommended CPC seek dismissal from the PCUSA and seek affiliation with the EPC. In response we can only say there is no single reason or incident that led to this recommendation. CPC fundamentals of belief are anchored in the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ. For over 20 years a growing minority within the PCUSA has sought to compromise the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ. The key reason as cited in the Session position statement is this **creeping tolerance of theological pluralism within the PCUSA**. Specific examples of this are outlined in the recent paper on Christology. Because the internal conflict in the PCUSA continues to grow it has become clear that our association with the PCUSA is no longer the most effective path to further CPC's mission and Four Fold Purpose. CPC's desire is to be associated with a denomination that supports our efforts to bring People to Christ, rather than to continue to expend energy in an attempt to course correct a denomination that continues to move away from Christ and the Authority of Scripture. *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."* Romans 16:17

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3. Is the primary reason to seek dismissal from the PCUSA due to the push in the PCUSA to ordain homosexuals?

No, this is not the primary reason. There is no single reason or incident that led to the Session's recommendation to seek dismissal from the PCUSA and seek affiliation with the EPC. For over 20 a growing minority within the PCUSA has sought to compromise the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ. The departure of ordination standards from clear biblical principles and the Book of Order is just one of many examples of the trend in the PCUSA to compromise the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ.

3-23-10

4. Please explain what Creeping tolerance of theological pluralism means?

Creeping tolerance of theological pluralism means that increasingly there is a wide range of unbiblical beliefs about Jesus held and affirmed within the PCUSA. Over time an increasing percent in the PCUSA are taking positions that are inconsistent with the historical tenants of our faith. With greater frequency, the moderates that make up the majority of the denomination are voting with the revisionists and are choosing to no longer guard orthodoxy. This is how Jesus becomes **a way** rather than **the way to God**, how compassion becomes unhinged from truth, how theological diversity becomes more

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Reasons for Change in Denomination

important than discipleship and how social action more important than Christian spiritual formation. We believe:

- In the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ
- In the unquestionable means of salvation for the whole world through Him
- In the infallible authority of God's Word in all matters of faith

3-23-10

5. Are all of our pastors in agreement with this change?

Yes! The Session which is comprised of 18 active elders and the ordained pastoral staff are unanimous in the recommendation that that Community Presbyterian Church seek dismissal from the PCUSA and seek affiliation with the EPC.

3-23-10

6. Where do we go to do research? Do we have access to other churches FAQ's so we might see questions we might not be thinking of?

You are encouraged to pursue independent research. There are a number of sources the task force used that are available to anyone and can be accessed from the following link [Additional Resources](#). We have attempted to distill the many sources of information and what we have learned and as a first step we recommend you read the [FAQ'S](#) posted on CPC's website along with [CPC's Position Statement Regarding PCUSA](#) and the Reason for Change papers: #1 [Christology](#) and # 2: ["Why Join the EPC"](#)

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7. Since we have the same ability to make local decisions about whom we choose to invite as pastors and about our theological stance, what is the value of changing?

Both the PCUSA and the EPC provide freedom in the selection of pastors and the theological stance of the local church. However, over a 20 year period within the PCUSA a growing minority has sought to compromise the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ in such a way that it has created a **conflicted witness to the world**. Churches like CPC are continually called to explain that they are not like other parts of the denomination that embrace non-orthodox positions. This defensive posture reduces the impact of the ministries and mission of CPC. In addition, the internal conflict in the PCUSA has continued to grow to the point that CPC leadership has lost hope that we can affect change in the PCUSA. After much study and prayer the Session believes it would be better for CPC to join the EPC in their efforts to bring People to Christ, rather than to continue to expend energy in an attempt to course correct a denomination that continues to move away from historical beliefs regarding Christ and the Authority of Scripture.

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8. Have we talked with other churches that have made this change?

Yes, the Denominational Task Force spoke to all of the larger churches that have been dismissed from the PCUSA and are now affiliated with the EPC. The common response was that their leadership was freed from the investment of time and energy spent on struggles within the PCUSA and has been able to create new alliances for discipleship and mission. They cite an environment of trust, fellowship, peace, unity and mutual support within the EPC based on common goals, beliefs and governance. Their congregations have experienced a renewed interest in evangelism and outreach.

3-23-10

9. What are the potential benefits to staying with the PCUSA?

Three major reasons for staying in the PCUSA were identified:

1. To avoid the cost of leaving in terms of money and turmoil within CPC
2. To avoid a legal dispute over ownership of CPC property
3. To maintain a presence and voice in the SF Presbytery.

The concerns outlined in reasons #1 and # 2 were resolved by the Gracious Dismissal Policy With respect to # 3, the internal conflict in the PCUSA has continued to grow to the point that CPC leadership has lost hope that it can affect change in the PCUSA.

3-23-10

10. Are we concerned about negative publicity?

We believe that standing firm for the authority of scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Jesus Christ is not a reason for negative publicity. We intend to proceed with prayer, care and visible respect for our Christian brothers and sisters in the SF Presbytery and the PCUSA. We expect that the way we seek dismissal from the PCUSA and affiliation with the EPC will bring Jesus joy and those watching will be drawn to Him and CPC.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Gracious Dismissal

Gracious Dismissal

1. Why are we considering leaving the PCUSA?

There are several reasons for our decision to depart the PCUSA. They include:

- a) **A creeping tolerance of theological pluralism.** An increasingly large percentage of PCUSA Pastors and leaders are taking positions that are inconsistent with the historical tenets of our faith. Rather than complying with the Book of Order, the denomination has urged us to live together with an ever-increasing theological diversity.
- b) **A conflicted witness to the world.** CPC is continually called to explain how we are not like other parts of our denomination. This defensive posture both confuses those inquiring about our church and reduces the impact of our ministry and mission.
- c) **Divided loyalty.** Mistrust of our denominational leaders has forced us to limit our financial support to the maintenance of basic church structures. No CPC dollars go toward general mission support because of the expectation that funds would be used for efforts counter to CPC's values.
- d) **Our passion and energy has been diverted.** For years we have been dedicating time, talent and resources to internal struggles. We would like to be released to more effective ministry and mission.

2. Why have we decided to depart now, at this time?

Despite our concerns throughout the years about troubling theological diversity, we have actively engaged in the life of our denomination locally and nationally. Internal conflict has continued to grow. Last fall, the San Francisco Presbytery passed a "Gracious Dismissal Policy" which provides a means of amicable dismissal from the PCUSA. We believe that leaving under this process preserves the unity of the church, honors Christ and also those with whom we differ.

3. Why did we begin the Imagine Campaign if we were considering leaving the PCUSA?

We have a strong, clear sense of what God is calling us to be and do as a church in our particular community. IMAGINE has been our response to our calling as a church, which remains unchanged by this re-affiliation.

4. What are the non-negotiable issues that cause us to request dismissal?

Biblical Authority is the primary issue. Over the years, increasingly unique interpretations of Scripture has had a ripple affect and has called into question foundational Christian beliefs such as the Lordship of Christ, the place of Scripture in church discipline, Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation and Biblical teaching on marriage.

5. What was involved in the discernment process that CPC went through to make this decision?

For the past 16 months the Session has labored to understand the theological direction of the PCUSA and considered how CPC should respond to continuing trends. This discernment process has included the formation of a Denominational Task Force which has done extensive research and offered periodic reports to Session. In Fall 2009, our process led us into a 40 day period of Scripture reading, reflection, prayer and discussion.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Gracious Dismissal

6. What is involved in the process of leaving?

The process ahead will involve considerable prayer and discernment from each of our members. The Session of CPC will lead you in a series of informational forums, open Q&A dialogue and prayerful listening, as we together, seek to discern our path ahead. The process will culminate with a Congregational Meeting and official vote to either stay the course with the PCUSA or follow the recommendation of Session and seek dismissal.

In pursuit of dismissal, CPC will follow a series of steps that are part of the San Francisco Presbytery's Gracious Dismissal Policy. Please refer to the Position Paper for this process.

7. How many people need to vote in order for CPC to leave the PCUSA?

The Gracious Dismissal Policy reads:

“While the quorum for congregational meetings is set by the Book of Order and by the bylaws of particular congregations, at least 50% of the active members of the congregation (for CPC about 1,000 members) be in attendance for a congregational meeting where the vote to accept the terms of dismissal agreement are voted on and thereby voting to leave the PCUSA.

If the results of the vote to request dismissal and to accept the terms of the negotiated agreement is 75% or greater, (for CPC about 750 members) the dismissal request is considered validated, and then will be scheduled for a vote at an upcoming Presbytery meeting.”

8. What if not enough people turn out to vote?

This vote is perhaps the most important in CPC's history. Every effort will be made to inform the congregation of its importance and to make a way for all to attend. On the day of the congregation vote, CPC will have one single all campus worship church service that weekend, during Sunday morning, concluding with the congregational meeting for the official vote. All venues will participate from Video Cafe/Multi-Purpose room, The Chapel and the Sanctuary. We believe this approach will result in an adequate number of CPC members in attendance for the vote. However, if not enough people turn out to vote, CPC would not meet the requirements for dismissal and CPC would remain in the PCUSA.

9. Are we going to lose a lot of people over this?

The information, education and discernment process we are engaged in is intended to be unifying, not divisive. It is our prayer that even those who do not agree with the decision will continue to worship and fellowship with us.

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8/30/2010

10. What is the financial cost of leaving the PCUSA?

The San Francisco Gracious Dismissal Policy identifies two actions departing churches are expected, but not required, to take to help mitigate the impact on the SF Presbytery and allow them to adjust to the churches departing.

1. Commit to pay a declining per capita contribution over a 5-year span. This means 100% of the current per capita in the year the church leaves, 80% the first year after departure, 60% the second year, 40% the third year, 20% the fourth year and nothing in the fifth year. Since CPC is already “committed” to the per capita in the current year, the incremental financial impact would be the amounts paid in year two through five. .
 - a. *In August 2010, CPC’s Special Committee of the Congregation (SCC) and the SF Presbytery Engagement Team (PET) agreed on the **Terms of Dismissal** to a one-time payment of \$108,640, instead of the declining per capita contribution spread over a 5 - year span.*
2. The second voluntary commitment is to continue on a similar declining scale, to contribute to the mission budget of the Presbytery. The request permits the departing church to directly contribute to specific ministries in the same manner as CPC does today. Currently CPC supports these ministries not because it is required to, but because we consider these ministries to be worthy of our support. This would continue to be the case post departure, so this commitment would not result in a net increase in CPC’s mission expenditure.

11. How will our relationships with churches in the PCUSA change once we are dismissed?

We will continue to work with PCUSA churches with which we have a theological kinship. We have decades of ministry history with many of these churches and leaders. We believe that our partnership in the Gospel transcends denominational affiliation.

12. How will our missionaries be affected by our departure?

None of our current missionaries should be affected. We do not send any undesignated money through the larger PCUSA denomination; therefore, we will be able to maintain spiritual and financial relationships with all of our current missionaries.

13. Who owns CPC property?

CPC holds legal title to all its property. However, the Presbyterian Book of Order provides that all local church property is held in trust for the whole denomination (the “Trust Clause”). Most recently, the San Francisco Presbytery has adopted a “Gracious Dismissal Policy” in which they affirm the following principles that will guide the Presbytery’s use of the Trust Clause:

- a. It will not be used to shackle churches to the institution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) if a church genuinely desires to depart.
- b. It will not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a congregation over issues of conscience. (G-1.0300)
- c. It reflects a tangible exhibition of the inter-connected relationship organically existing between the Presbytery and its congregations.

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14. Will we lose our property if we leave the PCUSA?

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No. The recently adopted “Gracious Dismissal Policy” of the San Francisco Presbytery states “Because the trust clause is meant as a means of witness to our unity in the covenant of common mission, it is incumbent upon the Presbytery to act ministerially rather than adversarially to its member churches in regard to its provisions.” It is also the right of a congregation to seek and to request dismissal with its property to another Reformed denomination. Further, the Gracious Dismissal Policy establishes a policy for releasing claims to property which in part states, “Prior to the Presbytery voting on the dismissal, the SCC shall provide the PET details regarding to whom the church property shall be transferred, such that the appropriate legal documentation can be prepared. Such transfer should occur no later than 90 days of the vote taken by Presbytery to dismiss.”

3-23-10

15. Is the Gracious Dismissal Policy just for the SF Presbytery or for the whole country?

The Gracious Dismissal Policy that will be used in CPC’s request was created and approved solely for the SF Presbytery in response to a GA (General Assembly) request for each Presbytery to develop a Gracious Dismissal Policy. There is an overture being considered for presentation to the 2010 GA to adopt the SF Presbytery’s Gracious Dismissal Policy as a standard within the PCUSA.

3-23-10

16. How does the Gracious Dismissal Policy work? Who makes the decision as to whether or not we are reconcilable?

First CPC leadership gives notice of CPC’s desire to seek dismissal from the PCUSA and seek affiliation with the EPC. Following the notice the San Francisco Presbytery begins to follow its published “Gracious Dismissal Policy” for Congregations considering leaving the PCUSA. (Reference the SF Presbytery Policy for Congregations Seeking dismissal on the CPC website, at the CPC Library and available at the Hospitality Table).

1. The Presbytery appoints a Presbytery Engagement Team (PET) who will meet with CPC leadership.
2. The PET and CPC will then engage in a period of prayerful discussion.
3. If the PET determines that reconciliation is not possible, then the PET and a Special Committee of CPC’s congregation will engage in negotiation regarding terms of dismissal, as outlined in the Gracious Dismissal Policy.
4. The members of the congregation will be given at least 30 days prior notice of a Congregational vote and meeting.
5. The Presbytery of San Francisco calls for a congregational meeting to act on the Session recommendation to be dismissed from the PCUSA and pursue affiliation with the EPC and to approve the terms of dismissal.
6. The SF Presbytery will then vote at a regularly scheduled Presbytery meeting regarding approval of the dismissal and the terms of the negotiated agreement.
7. A transition of CPC people, property and pastors will then occur.

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17. How long will the Gracious Dismissal Policy take to complete?

Our hope is that the SF Presbytery will authorize a vote by our congregation to take place in the fall. The exact timing of the vote will be determined in the weeks and months ahead and is dependent upon the progress of the Presbytery Evaluation Team (PET) and the subsequent response by the SF Presbytery authorizing and calling for a vote. There are four Presbytery meetings remaining in 2010 (April, June, September and November). Under the terms of the Gracious Dismissal Policy the congregation will be given 30 days notice prior to the vote.

3-23-10

18. What does the transition of land, pastors and congregation mean?

The transition of land, pastors and congregation means that the PCUSA releases any claim on CPC's property, graciously releases the CPC pastors' from their PCUSA ordination vows and formally dismisses the CPC congregation from affiliation with the PCUSA.

3-23-10

19. Why do we have to go to another denomination, reformed church, why can't we go independent?

Becoming a non-denominational church is not an option because the PCUSA requires that a church seeking dismissal must be released to a reformed body of believers such as the EPC. In addition the leadership of CPC values the accountability and order called for in the Presbyterian form of government

3-23-10

20. What other churches in the SF presbytery are going through the Gracious Dismissal Policy?

CPC is the first church to go through the Gracious Dismissal Policy in the SF Presbytery and we have no knowledge of any other churches plans regarding the Gracious Dismissal Policy.

3-23-10

21. What happens to people who do not support the dismissal and affiliation with the EPC?

Members who do not vote in favor of dismissal from the PCUSA will be fully welcomed to continue to be a part of the CPC family. Those desiring not to remain at CPC and to continue to be part of the PCUSA denomination will be welcomed into other PCUSA churches of their choice.

3-23-10

22. How do we know that the PET team isn't going to be a loaded deck but will be fair minded?

For several reasons there is very little likelihood that the Presbyterian Engagement Team will consist of anything other than a representative, balanced and open minded set of individuals. First, in the Gracious Dismissal Policy the SF Presbytery is clear that it does not wish to retain any church that truly desires to affiliate with another reformed

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Gracious Dismissal

denomination. Secondly, our pastors and several lay people have been active in the SF Presbytery for many years and CPC enjoys a good reputation and good relationships within the SF Presbytery. Finally the PET will be selected by the Presbytery Council and elected by the SF Presbytery in a very thorough process.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Process of Change – Voting Process

Process of Change

3-23-10

1. Will future town halls replicate the first Town Hall meeting held in February?

The format, presentations and process will be adjusted to reflect what we learn from the comments and questions we receive from the congregation, Session and pastors. If there is a requirement for questions and answers we will probably use the small group approach. It has proven to be very effective, providing the greatest number of people the opportunity to present questions.

3-23-10

2. Will the move to EPC affect SRVCA and CPP? Will moving to the EPC change the curriculum of SRVCA?

No. the move to the EPC will have no impact on the SRVCA and CPP; they will continue to operate as they do now.

3-23-10

3. What things are included in the cost of leaving such as assets, church property, the schools, the People Meeting Christ Foundation?

The only financial cost of dismissal is for CPC to pay a declining per capita contribution for 5 years. This is not a reimbursement for assets, there is no direct relationship between the cost of leaving the PCUSA and any asset, property or CPC related entity such as the schools or the People Meeting Christ Foundation. The net cost over 5 years of leaving the PCUSA and affiliating with the EPC is \$33, 816. (This is detailed in the Financial Issues section)

3-23-10

4. Is it a five year process to move to EPC or just a financial process?

Once the Presbytery has voted to dismiss CPC from the PCUSA the move to the EPC will be immediate. As part of the terms of dismissal CPC will pay a declining per capita contribution for 5 years.

3-23-10

5. Do we have a sense of the number of people we might lose because of the move to EPC?

Based upon the experience of other churches that have moved to the EPC a few people voted against the move but very few people actually chose to leave the local church.

3-23-10

6. What will change within CPC in practical terms?

There will not be any changes in how CPC is organized or conducts itself. One of the reasons the Session recommends affiliating with the EPC is because their form of government is similar to what we have today and the EPC is aligned with CPC's theological beliefs, our mission outreach, our vision and calling to fulfill the Great Commission. A positive change will be a focus on ministry and missions as the significant burden and time demands are lifted from CPC's leadership in attempting to

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Process of Change – Voting Process

correct the course of the PCUSA and their continued move away from the Authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ.

3-23-10

7. How will pastors be called to CPC after affiliation with EPC?

CPC will continue to use the same process we currently use. A pastor nominating committee will be formed to recruit, select and call pastors. This approach provides for broad representation and the benefit of different perspectives in discerning the best fit of candidates to CPC. As in the past we would recruit across the entire spectrum of reformed pastors to find the best candidate for the opening. We expect younger pastors will be more attracted to EPC related congregations than those in the PCUSA.

3-23-10

8. Will representatives of the EPC and the PCUSA come to explain their positions and ideals in their own words?

Both the PCUSA and the EPC will be invited to future town hall meetings to communicate with the CPC congregation.

Voting Process

3-23-10

1. Who can vote?

All active members that attend the congregational meeting called for the purpose of voting on the Session recommendation to seek dismissal from the PCUSA and seek affiliation with the EPC.

3-23-10

2. How many members does CPC have today?

As of the end of February CPC had 1932 active members.

3-23-10

3. What percent of members attend each week?

Based upon past studies of registration at CPC it takes about 6 weeks for 75 % to attend worship.

3-23-10

4. Can the youth vote?

All members are entitled to vote.

3-23-10

5. Do we have a sense of how the congregation will vote?

Based upon the fall 2009 survey, 78% of the respondents rated their attitudes as neutral or negative with regards to the PCUSA. The leadership has not conducted any surveys or straw polls on how people will vote.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Process of Change – Voting Process

5-13-10

6. Where does CPC now stand with those in favor of joining the EPC? Are there members who are opposed to leaving PCUSA?

Until the vote is formally taken we will not know if any people are opposed to leaving or how many. To date CPC leadership has not conducted any surveys or straw polls on how people will vote. Based upon general feedback it appears that the overwhelming preponderance of members support **dismissal and affiliation with the EPC**. Further, in the fall 2009 survey, 78% of the respondents rated their attitudes as neutral or negative with regards to the PCUSA. A few members seem to feel that by seeking dismissal from the PCUSA we risk becoming exclusive and limiting, to the extent of not welcoming those whose views differ from CPC's. CPC's position about our core beliefs remains the same whether we are with the PCUSA or the EPC. CPC has and will continue to welcome and offer the love of Christ to those with different views to be a part of our congregation.

3-23-10

7. What are the mechanics of the vote? Will there be any provision to vote by proxy or absentee ballot for those that cannot be present?

The process for the congregational vote will likely follow the process the presbytery has used for important matters. Upon arriving each member (only active members are permitted to vote) is logged in against a list of valid members and receives a ballot (just like municipal elections). Absentee ballots or ballots by proxy are not permitted; all active members must be present to vote. When the vote takes place, the individually marked ballots will be collected. All ballots are then counted by a team of designated counters. The counting team certifies the results which are then presented to the congregation by the moderator of the meeting. The actual mechanics of the CPC vote regarding dismissal will be determined by the Presbytery Engagement Team (PET) and the special committee of the congregation (SCC).

3-23-10

8. What are CPC's plans to get more than 50% of the membership, approximately 1000 people, to attend the congregational meeting and 75 % to approve for the vote?

Prior to the vote we are asking all members to attend a number of Town Hall meetings and teaching seminars to become fully educated on the issues. These meetings will be highly publicized and all members will be strongly encouraged to attend. We believe the information being shared is compelling and will properly prepare our membership to interact with the PET and ultimately to achieve overwhelming concurrence with the Session recommendation to seek dismissal from the PCUSA and affiliation with the EPC. On the date of the meeting CPC will follow the successful example of Fair Oaks church in Sacramento and hold a single all campus worship service concluding with the convening of the congregational meeting for the official vote. Average attendance at weekend worship services this year is about 1300 with over 1500 people on some weekends.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Process of Change – Voting Process

3-23-10

9. What will happen if we do not get a quorum? What will happen if we do not get 75% affirming dismissal?

In the event we do not have a quorum of 50% of CPC's active membership (1932 / 2 = 966) or more than 75 % of those present do not vote to seek dismissal from the PCUSA, CPC will remain in the PCUSA. All efforts, including letters, personal contact etc., will be made to assure the CPC membership is aware of and requested to participate in the vote. CPC leadership is confident that through these efforts and the help of interested members a significant percentage of the membership will attend the congregational vote and there will be overwhelming concurrence with the Session recommendation to seek dismissal from the PCUSA and affiliation with the EPC.

3-23-10

10. What happens after CPC takes the vote? How soon will we actually be in the EPC?

Following an affirmative vote of at least 75% of the CPC members present at the meeting requesting dismissal from the PCUSA, the SF Presbytery by a majority vote at a regularly scheduled Presbytery meeting will formally dismiss CPC to the Evangelical Presbyterian denomination. The exact timing is unclear as there are only four Presbytery meetings remaining in 2010 (April, June, September and November). Immediately following SF Presbytery approval CPC will be received by the EPC. This will be possible because CPC's session has already begun communication with the EPC and their Presbytery of the West and all preliminary steps toward affiliation will be in place before the final SF Presbytery vote.

3-23-10

11. If we vote 75% to leave how likely is it that the Presbytery will approve the dismissal and give us their blessing?

The Gracious Dismissal Policy is a formal policy of the SF Presbytery that was adopted with only one dissenting vote. CPC is the first church to go through the Gracious Dismissal Policy and is proceeding in "good faith" with the expectation that the SF Presbytery will abide by their policy. CPC leadership has complete confidence that the SF Presbytery will adhere to the Gracious Dismissal Policy and following all required steps approve CPC's dismissal to the EPC.

3-23-10

12. What percent vote do you have to have and not lose the property?

The Gracious Dismissal Policy does not set a percentage for the property separate from that required for dismissal. If the 75% threshold is reached CPC leadership has complete confidence that the SF Presbytery will adhere to the Gracious Dismissal Policy and following all required steps approve CPC's dismissal to the EPC with a complete release of all claims on CPC's property.

3-23-10

13. Why was 75% selected versus 2/3rds or some small majority?

The 75% threshold was set by the collective judgment of the team that drafted the Gracious Dismissal Policy to be large enough to assure that the will of the congregation was not in question but not so great as to create an insurmountable hurdle for change.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Financial Issues – Pensions and Pastoral Compensation

Financial Issues

8/30/2010

1. **What is the actual financial cost of leaving? Please provide a side-by-side analysis of the costs we will be paying PCUSA and EPC over five years.**

The Terms of Dismissal agreed to between the CPC's Special Committee of the Congregation (SCC) and the SF Presbytery Engagement Team (PET), settled on a one-time payment of \$108,640.

The net cost of leaving the PCUSA and affiliating with the EPC is \$15,000 over 5 years.

This is calculated by taking three numbers into consideration:

- If we were to stay in the PCUSA the 5-year cost is \$318,640.
- If we leave the PCUSA the lump sum agreed to payment is \$108,640.
- The EPC 5 year cost is \$225,000.

Therefore, the \$15,000 net cost of leaving is the difference between the \$318, 640 and the combined $\$108,640 + \$225,000 = \$333, 640$. In the sixth year and beyond CPC will pay approximately \$18,500 less per year.

3-23-10

2. **Does CPC have any outstanding loans to the PCUSA?**

No. CPC has no outstanding loans from the PCUSA nor is any of CPC's indebtedness guaranteed by the PCUSA.

3-23-10

3. **Given our history of budget shortfalls, how do we plan on paying a per capita to both EPC and PCUSA for five years?**

While CPC has experienced giving short falls during the course of the fiscal year the giving, by the Grace of God and the generosity of members of our congregation, has met or exceeded our needs in recent years. The costs of the PCUSA declining per capita and the additional cost of the EPC annual contribution will be managed within the CPC budget. We believe that as long as we remain in Gods will, He will supply our needs.

3-23-10

4. **Is there a plan for long-term debt?**

Yes. CPC will continue to make annual principle and interest payments on existing indebtedness as it has in the past.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Financial Issues – Pensions and Pastoral Compensation

3-23-10

5. Where did all of the Imagine money go? Are monies for the Imagine Campaign affected by the request for dismissal?

The request for dismissal has no affect on Imagine. The Imagine monies all went to complete the improvements and missions projects as outlined in Phase 1 of the Imagine plan:

- Remodeled Chapel, and Annex,
- new book store and Library,
- upgraded and additional parking lots,
- improved access to CPC,
- new play field and ground for the school and the
- 3 mission projects.

All Imagine funds are designated to pay for these much needed improvements.

Pensions and Pastoral Compensation

5-18-10

1. Will there be any impact on pastor's retirement benefits?

No. The pastor's retirement benefits accrued to date are fully protected and managed separately. The EPC has its own retirement plan which our pastors will join. The Session will evaluate the impact of the change and, if needed, make available options that will maintain our pastors contributions at a level equal to or better than the current PCUSA plan.

3-23-10

2. Will there be any impact on pastor's salary?

No. Pastor compensation is determined by our local congregation so there is no impact from the change to EPC.

3-23-10

3. How will the pastor's health benefits be affected?

The EPC has an array of health plan choices that is reported to be broader than what our pastors currently have.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

About the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

4/7/10

1. What is the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is a growing family of churches that seek to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and Biblical Authority. The EPC is a Reformed denomination which started in 1981 and is one of nine Presbyterian denominations in the United States. The EPC upholds the standards of traditional reformed and biblically-based Presbyterian form of government, maintaining a consistent witness to the world. The EPC continues to have a deep desire to see the kingdom of God extended through energetic church planting and evangelism. (www.epc.org/vision-21/). The Office of the General Assembly is located in Livonia, Michigan outside Detroit. The EPC motto is: "In Essentials, Unity; In Non-Essentials, Liberty; In All Things, Charity." Underneath this motto on the church seal, the EPC adds "truth in love" from Paul's words in Eph. 4:15. For more information, visit www.epc.org.

2. Where is the EPC headquarters located?

The headquarters of the EPC is in Livonia, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.

3. How many EPC churches are there in California and is there an EPC Presbytery in Northern California?

There are currently 17 EPC churches in California. These churches are part of the EPC's Presbytery of the West, which reaches from California all the way east to the Mississippi River. There is currently discussion about establishing a Presbytery of the Pacific in the EPC. The Presbytery would consist of churches in California, Oregon and Washington. We expect this new Presbytery to be in place soon after CPC is dismissed from the PCUSA.

4/7/10

4. What does it mean to be "Evangelical"? A "Reformed" denomination?

"Evangelical" means to believe in the importance of sharing the good news that through Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, freeing people from the guilt and power of sin through personal faith and repentance. The EPC emphasizes its priority on evangelism in its governing documents as "the first work of the church." This high priority is evidenced in the EPC's initiatives in church planting and world missions. This emphasis aligns with our passion that people meet Christ, through the members and ministry of CPC. To be "Reformed" means several things. Historically, it means that CPC traces our roots to the Reformation, when John Calvin and others led the movement to reform the Church according to Scripture. Theologically, it means belief in the absolute sovereignty of God and that the highest good is God's glory. The historical and theological heritage is often expressed in the 'solas' of the Reformation. These five theological truths were consistent across the reformed movement. God's *grace alone* as the only way to be reconciled to God, *faith alone* as the only means of receiving God's grace, *Christ alone* as the ground of God's saving grace, *Scripture alone* as the only infallible authority for belief and *God's glory alone* as the ultimate purpose for the lives of men and women.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

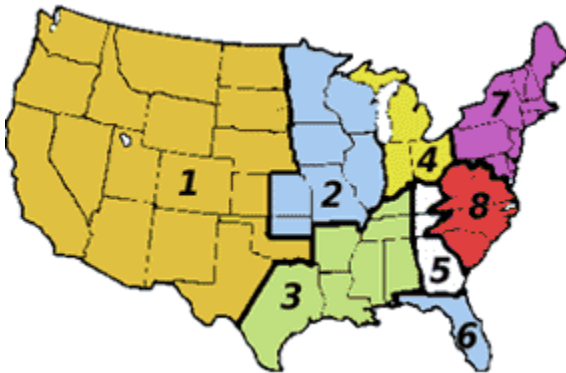
5. What is governance like in the EPC?

The EPC has a similar structure as the PCUSA, with Presbyteries overseeing regions and a general assembly that oversees Presbyteries. Though smaller, it is still accountable to one another and connected in discipline. Ordination of church leaders is handled on the Presbytery and Session levels.

4/7/10

6. What is the current size of the EPC?

Today, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has grown to 279 churches with over 85,000 active members in eight (8) geographic presbyteries spread across the United States and has 90 missionaries serving in roughly 20 different countries.



EPC's Presbytery of the West serves congregations in 17 western states, including California churches. Presbytery of the West recently affirmed plans to begin a new Presbytery of the Pacific by 2011 to serve California, Oregon and Washington States. There are currently 17 EPC churches in California. These California churches are part of the EPC's Presbytery of the West, which is headquartered in Denver, Colorado and oversees churches in states from the Mississippi River west to the Pacific Ocean. As an EPC member church, CPC would be one of the largest congregations in the Presbytery of the West. There are seven (7) EPC churches within 100 miles of Danville, San Ramon Presbyterian Church and Clayton Community Church being the closest.

4/7/10

7. How is the EPC organized and governed?

The EPC is based on a representative form of government and a connection to other churches. Each congregation appoints elders to sit with pastors on a Session which governs their own church. Each church belongs to a Presbytery, a regional body designed to supervise and serve the local churches in its area. Representatives from each Presbytery come together every other year at General Assembly, a national meeting, where denomination-wide policies are created or modified by vote. The next EPC General Assembly will be held in June of 2010.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The EPC is governed by its Constitution, made up of The Book of Order and The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Ordination of church leaders is approved at the church Session and Presbytery levels. The EPC does not own any denominational schools and looks to a number of evangelical colleges and seminaries across the countries, many of which annually attends the EPC General Assembly and have EPC trustees.

CPC would become part of the Presbytery of the West headquartered in Denver, Colorado. Active work is progressing to establish a new EPC Presbytery of the Pacific. The Pacific Presbytery would consist of churches in California, Oregon and Washington. We expect this new Presbytery to be in place soon after CPC is dismissed from the PCUSA and may be located in Northern California.

4/7/10

8. How was the EPC started?

“The EPC began in the fall of 1980 and spring of 1981 when a group of pastors and elders held meetings in St. Louis, Missouri for planning and prayer. They came from mainline Presbyterian denominations like the United Presbyterian (northern churches) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (southern churches). These leaders had become increasingly distressed by liberalism within their denominations. They wanted to form a church that took seriously the words of Scripture, the theology of the historic confessions of the faith, and the evangelical fervor of Presbyterian founders. They envisioned a denomination that was truly evangelical and truly Presbyterian; hence the name.” (Source: EPC website: <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/history/>)

9. Does the EPC have a Book of Confessions?

The essential beliefs of the EPC are contained in the Westminster Confession. By contrast, The PCUSA Book of Confessions contains 11 historic confessions of faith.

10. Does the EPC have a Book of Order?

Yes. The EPC Book of Order is similar to what we know in the PCUSA. CPC’s Session has received copies and is beginning the process of learning and understanding the EPC Book of Order.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions EPC Beliefs and Theology

EPC Beliefs and Theology

4/7/10

11. What are the EPC core beliefs or “Essentials”?

The EPC has developed a one-page document called “The Essentials of Our Faith”. This document sets forth the core beliefs of the Christian faith upon which there must be agreement. A copy of the document is available at <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/beliefs/essentials-of-our-faith/>
The EPC Essentials are well-aligned with CPC’s core beliefs and support CPC’s purpose, strategic direction and mission as well as our Sanctity of Life and Witness for Biblical Morality statements.

4/7/10

12. What is unique about the EPC?

The EPC is unique among American Presbyterians with its self-conscious attempt to balance essential and non-essential matters within a confessional heritage. The EPC is unified in its commitment to the essentials of the historic Christian faith taught in the Bible, but allows liberty of conscience on those matters which are not central to the Bible’s teaching.

4/7/10

13. What does the EPC believe and how different is it from the PCUSA?

The EPC has a more consolidated statement of beliefs, choosing the Westminster Confession as their core belief document, including the longer and shorter catechisms. By contrast, the PCUSA has a Book of Confessions which includes 11 historic confessions of faith (one of which is the Westminster Confession).

14. What is the position of the EPC regarding the property of the local church?

The congregation has the exclusive, inalienable right to own and control its own property.

15. How is the EPC's position on marriage, divorce and remarriage different than that of the PCUSA? What is CPC’s position?

It is not different. The EPC uses The Westminster Confession of Faith as their standard of doctrine. Marriage is covered in Chapter 24 - 24:1 to 24.7 which is verbatim to the PCUSA Book of Confessions - The Westminster Confession of Faith - Chapter 26 - 6:131-6:137. EPC’s position papers on Sanctity of Marriage (www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/sanctity-of-marriage/) and on Divorce and Remarriage (www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/divorce--remarriage) is gender neutral holding both men and women accountable to their marriage promise. EPC’s effective steps to member churches on these issues are offered as suggestions to be considered and are not mandated.

Pastor Scott Farmer and Laura Taggart spoke to marriage, divorce and remarriage in fall of 2006 and the transcription of **Sermons on Sexual Intimacy** can be found on our Denomination Web page at <http://cpcdanville.org/pdf/sexsermons.pdf>.

5-13-10

16. Does EPC allow divorced and remarried persons to hold any position of authority?

Yes. Divorced and remarried persons can hold positions of authority as ordained ministers, Elders and Deacons.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions EPC Beliefs and Theology

5-13-10

17. Under what circumstances is divorce & remarriage accepted by the EPC for the ordained as well as church members?

The EPC believes marital unfaithfulness for which there is no repentance and is beyond remedy, are circumstances when divorce should be considered. This standard is based on The Westminster Confession which states unfaithfulness can be physical or spiritual. Although EPC's position paper quotes Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-9 "marital unfaithfulness" as the sole grounds for divorce and remarriage, the EPC believes unfaithfulness applies to all sexual sin (and not just adultery), including ongoing physical abuse and attempted murder. The EPC's position paper (page 7) further notes, "...divorce and remarriage, serious though they are, are not unforgivable sins, but, as with all other transgressions, are covered by the blood of Christ."

5-17-10

18.

a. How do the EPC requirements for those seeking Divorce and Remarriage compare to PCUSA and CPC?

EPC's position on divorce and remarriage is very similar to that of CPC. When considering divorce or remarriage, the EPC recommends Christian guidance and counseling for accountability to biblical standards and continued attempts to reconcile towards healing of relationships. Considering 2nd marriages fail at a 60% rate, the EPC seeks to protect church members as well as ordained leadership by guiding them through thorough counseling towards Godly decisions and lives that reflect the holiness of Christ. CPC affirms EPC's position paper on Divorce and Remarriage and we currently offer or have offered programs, classes and seminars consistent with the EPC. Our Position Statement **Witness for Biblical Morality** outlines CPC's beliefs as do the transcribed sermons of Sermons On Sexual Intimacy which is available online at <http://cpcdanville.org/pdf/sexsermons.pdf>. Although the PCUSA follows the same Westminster Confessions of Faith on this topic, it does not have a policy for accountability to biblical standards for ministers, Elders, Deacons or church membership.

8-8-10

b. Will CPC have to change our process for considering Divorced and Remarried men and women as ordained church officers?

No, CPC will not change. The EPC concurs divorced and remarried persons in accord with biblical principles (physical and spiritual infidelity) can serve as church officers. The EPC defers to local Church Session to make these decisions by embracing a decentralized form of government vesting in the local church broad authority and autonomy to manage its affairs in the way that is consistent with God's leading for the individual church. CPC will continue our criteria and standards for ordained leadership. We will continue to employ our long-standing process of a nominating committee, comprised of diverse representation from the ministries and body of CPC, to discern those called to leadership positions. [Click here](#) to view a letter from Cathy Burkholder, CPC Associate Pastor, responding to this question.

19. What are the EPC views on homosexuality?

The EPC views on homosexuality are stated in one such position paper which can be found at: <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/homosexuality/>. The EPC has developed a system whereby the denomination can speak clearly and distinctively to member congregations on issues

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions EPC Beliefs and Theology

facing society. The EPC does not believe in political positions, but does believe that the Church has an obligation to speak its mind to congregations on important issues. To this end, the EPC has instituted a method whereby 'position papers' are developed. Initially set forth as 'preliminary,' the position paper is given to the denomination for response and input. Then, a committee studies the paper and makes final recommendations to the EPC General Assembly. A number of other EPC position papers may be found on topics such as abortion, divorce and remarriage, the Holy Spirit, Ordination of Women, and Sanctity of Marriage may also be found on the EPC website at <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/>

4/2/10

20. What is the EPC Ordination process?

All candidates for ordination are asked to affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception or reservation. The EPC Ordination Process is fully described in the EPC Book of Government, Chapter 14 at <http://www.epc.org/mediafiles/epc-book-of-order-2009-2010.pdf> .

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The Process of Selecting the EPC

The Process of Selecting the EPC

21. Why has the CPC Session recommended the EPC?

Reason of Change #2, *Why Join the EPC* sets out in detail the compelling reasons why the CPC Session and pastors recommend affiliation with EPC:

- CPC and EPC are better aligned on core beliefs, mission and outreach
- EPC churches have common theological values and the EPC actively upholds their denominational standards
- CPC and EPC are both committed to extending God's Kingdom
- CPC and EPC churches can grow together and learn from each other based on common goals, beliefs and governance in an environment of trust and mutual support

(See http://cpcdanville.org/pdf/denomination_whyjoinepc.pdf)

The CPC Session and pastors sought to recommend affiliation with a reformed denomination that aligned with CPC's core beliefs, mission outreach, vision, and our calling to fulfill the Great Commission. The Session and Pastors unanimously came to the conclusion that the best fit is found within the EPC.

In the EPC, CPC's theology will be supported, our commitment to evangelism will be encouraged, and CPC's commitment to the Presbyterian form of church government and Reformed Theology will continue. Changing denominations from one Presbyterian body to another will remove the tension over denominational issues, the distraction from CPC's mission, and the time demands on CPC pastors required to deal with PCUSA developments.

After considerable investigation, discussion, prayer and discernment, the CPC Session and Pastors are convinced that the EPC represents the best denominational affiliation.

4/7/10

22. What other denominations were considered?

Several reformed denominations were evaluated including: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Christian Reformed Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, and Presbyterian Church in America. The EPC clearly stood out over other alternatives.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions The Process of Selecting the EPC

4/7/10

23. Why were other denominations rejected?

The CPC Session and pastors made a thorough investigation of all the reformed and Presbyterian denominations with which CPC could affiliate. Multiple factors were considered in this evaluation process including their form of government, their confessions of faith, history, and their positions on key issues, such as women in leadership, biblical morality, peace and unity, and the sanctity of life. The EPC is the best fit and is well aligned with CPC's core beliefs, purpose, direction, and mission when compared across all of these dimensions and therefore represents the best path forward for CPC and its ministries.

It is important to note that the PCUSA Gracious Dismissal Policy requires that a church seeking dismissal must be released to a reformed body of believers such as the EPC in order for the church to retain its property. (Becoming a non-denominational church is not an option.)

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions CPC's Future in the EPC

CPC's Future in the EPC

4/7/10

24. What assurance do we have that the EPC will not have the same problems (as PCUSA) in a few years?

First and foremost, the future is in the hands of the One who made it all. Likewise, the future of the EPC is in the hands of the Lord. Through prayer and intercession, we can call on the Lord to lead, guide and protect the EPC from spiritual attack and deterioration and He will answer our prayers.

As a new member of the EPC, CPC will be actively involved in the leadership, theology, polity and growth of the new Presbytery of the Pacific and will have a major influence on the direction, management and operation of the Presbytery. CPC pastors and leadership have decades of first-hand experience working with issues and problems within a conflicted denomination, knows the warning signs and is committed to working within the EPC to build unity and to stand firm on the Essentials that bind EPC churches together.

EPC is committed to holding all Teaching Elders and those in authority in the church accountable to the "Essentials of Our Faith" and the Westminster Confession of Faith and to the (doctrinal, ethical and ministry practices) that are vital to the church's integrity and witness to the world. If for any reason ordained Teaching Elders whose views no longer support EPC's core beliefs, and who in good conscience, cannot affirm the "Essentials of Our Faith" and the Westminster Confession of Faith, they will be dismissed after a time of counsel is carried out with love, respect and grace as they have done in the past"

The EPC also recognizes that many things change over time. However, there are certain features of EPC government that are unique and distinctive, and should never change. Among these are the rights of a church over its own property and to elect its own officers. To insure that such features are not the victims of time or circumstance, there is written into their Book of Government, a section called, "Limitations in Perpetuity". Here are identified certain rights held in perpetuity by Christians, both individually and in congregations. These rights must always be guaranteed by the Church. Additions to this section may be made, but nothing can be taken away.

25. How will membership in the EPC differ from the PCUSA?

There will be no discernable difference from the perspective of the average member in our congregation.

26. What types of changes might we see in our CPC structure if we affiliate with EPC?

There would be no changes in the CPC church structure required to join and participate in the EPC.

27. In the EPC, who owns the property of a local church?

The congregation has the exclusive, inalienable right to own and control its own property

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions CPC Missions within the EPC

CPC Missions within the EPC

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28. Will CPC's missions and outreach change as part of the EPC? If so, how?

CPC has missions and outreach will be able to continue and expand as part of the EPC. The EPC is a "Missional Church" and focuses a great deal of its time and resources on spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, the EPC spells out missions specifically as "the first duty of the Church." The Book of Government reads, *"The first duty of the Church is to evangelize by extending the Gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."* We see their primary focus being "Evangelical" which simply means sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. It makes clear that "good works" are not the Gospel, but the fruit of the gospel. The statement concludes, *"...The Church must never confuse its primary task of evangelism (the Gospel) with the fruit of faith (good works)."* This affirmation settles for them the dispute that has caused much division in our day when churches become preoccupied with social change to the neglect of true spiritual change.

29. Does the EPC have a commitment to missions?

Yes! The EPC has a World Church Committee that oversees about 90 missionaries who are serving in 20 different countries. Some of our best and brightest EPC members are serving with the generous support of their congregations because the EPC believes that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. The EPC has one full-time missionary for every 2.3 churches; PCUSA has only one full-time missionary for every 43.7 churches. Refer to www.epc.org/vision-21/.

One of the values that CPC celebrates within the EPC is the strong focus on both church planting and frontier missions. CPC would look forward to joining the EPC in these Kingdom building efforts.

As part of the EPC, CPC plans to maintain its long-term commitment to over 90 mission partners and to the opportunity to explore new mission partnerships within the EPC.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Implications of Transition to EPC

Implications of Transition to EPC

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30. What is the annual cost of the EPC?

EPC Distinctive #9 is Voluntary Giving. As a result, the EPC has no 'per capita tax' and does not believe that one court has the right to put a 'tax' with obligation on another lower court. The Presbytery or GA may have a "per member" asking, which is voluntary contribution of the particular congregation to support the administrative and benevolence work of the denomination. The suggested annual contribution to the EPC by a congregation is one percent (1%) of donations. At that voluntary level, the recommended annual CPC contribution to the EPC would be \$45,000 versus over \$63,000 for PCUSA. It will cost less to be affiliated with the EPC than with PCUSA.

31. Will pastor salaries or pensions be affected?

No, pastoral salaries will continue to be approved by CPC congregational vote and will be unaffected by the denominational transition. The EPC and PCUSA use the same independent pension administrator and there will be no interruption of pension contributions or adverse changes affecting the CPC pastors.

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32. What kind of changes will the congregation see and experience with this potential affiliation?

Our purpose as a church will remain the same as part of the EPC. The congregation will see no change in the leadership and operation of the church, its ministries, schools or counseling center. CPC is committed to continuous improvement in all that we do and will continue in the EPC. As part of the EPC, CPC will continue and improve its worship services, sermons, biblical interpretation, baptisms, calling of pastors, ordination of elders, reception of new members, church processes and procedures, compassionate handling of personnel transitions, employee benefits, use of sacred music, its ministries, schools, counseling services, community outreach, support of mission partners and many other aspects of the life of CPC. The EPC does not seek to alter the ministries of CPC rather to join together as like-minded churches to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and carrying out the Great Commission.

33. Do PCUSA ordained Pastors, Deacons and Elders have to be "re -ordained" into the EPC?

No. Pastors do have to be received by the EPC. Pastors are examined regarding the EPC essentials of the faith and affirm and acknowledge the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Ruling Elders will be interviewed by an EPC selected group and asked to answer basic questions pertaining to the reformed faith and to reaffirm the vows they took upon ordination. As a part of EPC, the EPC delegates the examination of future Elder candidates to the Session of the local church.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Relationship with San Ramon Presbyterian Church (SRPC)

Relationship with San Ramon Presbyterian Church (SRPC)

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34. Which denomination is SRPC in? Are they an EPC church?

Yes, SRPC has been an EPC church since it was planted and became independent of CPC in 1996.

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35. Why did SRPC choose to join the EPC?

The main reason SRPC chose to affiliate with the EPC had mainly to do with the reluctance of the local San Francisco Presbytery to recognize SRPC as an independent self-sustaining church. SRPC sought diligently to be recognized as an independent self-sustaining PCUSA church. When this independence was withheld due to lack of women serving as elders at the time, other options were considered and the EPC was selected. Every class of SRPC Elders since the first class has included women Ruling Elders.

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36. Will CPC rejoin SRPC after joining the EPC?

No, there are no plans to combine CPC and SRPC at any time in the future. CPC and SRPC are separate self-sustaining congregations. If CPC votes to align with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, CPC would of course remain separate from SRPC. As EPC churches, CPC and SRPC will have the opportunity to work more closely to expand the Kingdom in the San Ramon Valley. We at CPC are on good terms with our friends at SRPC including the Senior Pastor, staff, elders, and members of the congregation.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Women in Leadership – Minorities in the EPC

Women in Leadership

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37. What scripture verses support women as ordained pastors, Elders and Deacons?

The best answer to this question is the accumulation of passages that represent the role of women in the New Testament. In the formation of the church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men alike, predicted long before the coming of Christ (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:18). Women as well as men exercise prophetic and priestly functions (Acts 2:17-18, I Corinthians 11:4-5, I Peter 2:9-10). Further, the Spirit bestows gifts on all members of the New Community sovereignly, without giving anyone preferential treatment based on gender (Acts 2:1-21, I Corinthians 12:7-12). Every believer is to offer his or her gifts for the benefit of the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-8, I Peter 4:10-22). To prevent believers from using their spiritual gifts is to quench the work of the Spirit.

3/7/10

38. Does the EPC embrace women in leadership?

The EPC embraces women in leadership and encourages women to get involved in the local church, presbytery and denomination, including taking leadership roles at the annual General Assembly.

4/7/10

39. Does EPC's position reflect a lesser role of women in ministry? Are women encouraged to be in ministry leadership in the EPC?

No, the EPC does not see a lesser role for women in ministry and encourages women to fully participate in EPC ministry leadership and missions. The EPC recognizes the giftedness and worth of women. The EPC acknowledges and encourages the utilization of the many gifts of women in partnership with the whole body of Christ for the building of God's Kingdom. Jacky Gatliff, member of Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, has been hired by the EPC as the national Director of Women in Ministry, www.epcwomeninministry.org. This ministry inspires all women, ordained or not, who have callings and gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit and for use in the church. Jacky's role includes implementing a program called REAL - Reaching, Equipping, Advancing Leaders – Women in a full range of ministries within local congregations, presbyteries, denomination and missions.

4/7/10

40. Why does the EPC refer to the ordination of women as "non-essential"?

Non-essential does NOT mean that women are NOT essential to the church. When the EPC began in 1981, they determined to agree on the seven basic essentials of the Christian faith found in the "Essentials of Our Faith" regarding those beliefs essential to salvation through Jesus Christ. To affirm and support the "Essentials of Our Faith", EPC also adopted a motto; "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." In this context, the word "essential" and "non-essential" refer to whether a belief or practice is "essential" to a person's salvation.

In 1980-81, when the EPC was forming as a reformed denomination, there were discussions around the ordination of women as Teaching (pastors) and Ruling Elders. Different viewpoints existed about obedience to the authority of Scripture. The two sides to this disagreement were both seeking to be pleasing to God and obedient to His word and therefore felt strongly about their interpretation of Scripture. It was decided the differences around women (to ordain or not to ordain) was not going to be beneficial to the foundation of their (EPC) faith and their call to the Great Commission. The EPC

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Women in Leadership – Minorities in the EPC

founders agreed to delegate this decision to the local church and, that being so; the ordination of women was considered “non-essential”. It is in this context the EPC states in its *Book of Government*, Chapter 7, entitled “Rights Reserved to a Particular Church” ”The particular church has the right to elect its own officers” (7-2). This right is guaranteed in perpetuity (**forever**).

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41. On the website it sounded like women in leadership is a non-essential. With each church having the liberty to make decisions around this issue, will chaos result within the denomination?

No. The heart of the denomination represents love and mutual respect for each other and therefore why there is liberty in non-essentials. Non-essentials include charismatic gifts (speaking in tongues), age of baptism, worship styles and women. Presbytery of Mid America did experience some tension and the churches proposed a split of the presbytery to create 2 affinity presbyteries, one for churches who accept ordained women and a presbytery for those who do not. This was ruled unconstitutional at the 2009 General Assembly (GA). The GA was quick to appoint an Interim Committee to explore ways to rally support and respect for those churches with conflicting positions.

42. How many ordained women pastors (Teaching Elders) are there in the EPC? What percentage of ordained women pastors are represented by EPC churches?

At this time there are 10 ordained Teaching Elders (pastors) in the EPC, including those who have been received from other denominations in the last 6 months. This number represents approximately .03% among the 274 EPC churches. Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church, Signal Mountain, TN recently issued a call to a woman to be an associate pastor upon her graduation from Gordon-Conwell. The number of ordained Teaching Elders (pastors) is expected to grow significantly as more churches request dismissal from the PCUSA to the EPC. The EPC plans to propose the addition of Presbytery of the Pacific to the General Assembly, June 2011, anticipating growth in the number of churches joining the EPC in California, Oregon and Washington.

43. How many ordained women Ruling Elders in the EPC?

There are approximately 2000 ordained Elders in the EPC and approximately 300 are women representing 15%. According to our Stated Clerk, about 30-35% of EPC churches have women serving on Session as Ruling Elders. At the EPC there is not a required quota for women Ruling or Teaching Elders-this is left in trust to the leading of the Spirit and the decision of the local churches.

44. How many Presbyteries in the EPC do not affirm the ordination of women?

Only 2 Presbyteries (Florida and South Central) of 8 EPC Presbyteries do not receive Women Teaching Elders (pastors). There are some churches in these locations that do allow women Ruling Elders and Deacons, based solely on the decision of the local church.

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45. Are there EPC Presbyteries divided about the ordination of women?

In June of 2009, at the EPC 29th General Assembly (GA), a proposal was presented by Presbytery of Mid America to divide their Presbytery because of differences among their member churches about the ordination of Teaching Elders. Their request was ruled unconstitutional by the Permanent Judicial Committee (PJC) referring back to the “Essentials of Our Faith” and the Book of Order that refers to the right of the local church to elect its own officers, guaranteed in perpetuity (See Question 31 above) The EPC is committed to protecting the integrity and unity of the “Essentials of Our Faith”. At the 2009 29th General Assembly, an Interim Committee on Women Teaching Elders was therefore elected to “explore ways to include those pastors and churches with conflicting positions on Women Teaching Elders in the Presbyteries of the EPC.” After six months of study and meetings, a Report of the Interim Committee on Women Teaching Elders was submitted March 2010. The report recommends that the 30th General Assembly instruct the Committee on Administration to enter into conversation with the Mid-America Presbytery for the purpose of considering becoming two geographic presbyteries. Creating two geographic presbyteries out of Mid-Atlantic has for a long while been considered for reasons related to geographic size. Should this realignment occur roughly along the line of the Mississippi River, the EPC expects that one of the new presbyteries would be able to ordain/elect women as Teaching Elders while the other would not ordain/elect women as Teaching Elders. Further recommendations include that the Book of Order, Chapter 5 be amended giving churches the right to petition a geographically adjacent presbytery for membership.

46. Does the current EPC moderator affirm women as ordained Pastors, Elders, and Deacons in ministry leadership?

Yes. The current moderator of the EPC 2010 GA is Rob Linden and he affirms ordained women as Pastors, ruling Elders, Deacons and at all levels of leadership at the EPC

47. What is the Presbytery of the West view of ordained women?

EPC Presbytery of the West believes strongly in the authority of scripture and the great Commission, as we do. They also believe strongly, as we do, in identifying, equipping and supporting men AND women to be inwardly strong and outwardly focused. The Presbytery of the West encourages, accepts and equips both men and women as pastors, ordained officers and active leaders of the church, as God gifts them to do so. Along with the EPC’s view of ordained women, the Presbytery feels strongly that there can be genuine unity amid diversity on the subject. For more on this topic, see the written statement by the EPC... "Position Paper on the Ordination of Women" at <http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/ordination-of-women/> and www.epcwomeninministry.org.

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48. Can CPC ordained women Teaching and Ruling Elders be received by the EPC? Yes. All current Teaching and Ruling Elders (men AND women) are examined by the EPC in order to transfer to the denomination. EPC resources are given to help prepare for examination. At this time some of EPC Presbyteries require women to complete an additional step of including an essay statement about their call to ministry. The Presbytery of the West practices equality of process and does not require this additional essay statement from women.

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49. How will CPC guarantee that women can always serve in leadership?

Ordained women serving as Teaching Elders (pastors), Ruling Elders, and Deacons are essential to CPC and this will not change for our church. CPC has in the past and will continue to encourage women to serve in all areas of leadership at CPC. Under the umbrella of the denomination, the EPC states in its *Book of Government*, “The particular church has the right to elect its own officers” (7-2). This right is guaranteed in perpetuity (**forever**). Those leadership roles, which do not require ordination, the EPC recognizes the giftedness and worth of women and the utilization of their gifts in partnership with the whole body of Christ. EPC churches that don’t affirm ordained Teaching Elders (pastors) and Ruling Elders do have women as Directors of ministries and in leadership roles within the local church.

3/7/10

50. Why do certain congregations in the EPC fail to receive and ordain women?

The issue around ordained women is based on their interpretation of Scripture (primarily...1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-36), and seeking to be obedient and pleasing to God. There are two sides to how these verses are understood, those who interpret the Scripture literally (do not affirm ordained women) and those who interpret the Scripture in a historical context (do affirm ordained women). Churches who do not accept ordained women do not have malice towards women nor do they question a woman’s competence or qualifications. It is strictly a biblical issue and translation.

8/8/10

51. Explain how local churches can ordain women pastors yet the EPC does not favor ordained women?

The EPC does not take a position on ordaining women as Teaching Elders; Ordination of Pastors is overseen by the presbytery and ordination of Ruling and Teaching Elders and of Deacons is conducted by the local church. Within the EPC there are six (6) of the nine (9) presbyteries, which represent churches affirming women as Teaching Elders - 66% of presbyteries. The decision to accept ordained women as Teaching Elders (pastors) lies with the local church where the local church has the liberty to call a woman as a pastoral candidate. The affiliated Presbytery examines and approves the candidate for ordination. The EPC’s steadfast requirement is “unity” in the “Essentials of Our Faith.”

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52. Given the EPC allows local presbyteries to decide about women becoming pastors, down the road could the presbytery decide that women cannot be received as pastors?

No, The EPC allows local churches to decide about receiving women as a Teaching Elders (pastors) and this is a congregational Right in Perpetuity on a geographic presbytery basis. It is therefore highly unlikely that a presbytery which had been receiving women as Teaching Elders would ever reverse that practice and policy. The Presbytery of the West affirms ordained women as Teaching Elders and it is anticipated that the new Presbytery of the Pacific will also affirm women as Teaching Elders.

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53. Explain the program “REAL” by Women In Ministry?

REAL is a training guide for EPC Women in Ministry that they might be equipped to serve and lead to the glory of God. The authors of REAL include those who have attended seminary and those who have many years of service and experience in their fields of ministry. The plan behind this program is to train and equip women to be theologically driven and to identify giftedness that will encourage all women to want to serve as leaders.

54. How many ordained women Deacons are currently serving at the EPC?

These numbers are not available at this time. Women Deacons are allowed to serve at most EPC churches, including, in some cases, those that currently do not receive ordained women Teaching and Ruling Elders. These numbers will be added to this FAQ when they become available. **4/7/10**

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55. Does the EPC differ in any way to the PCUSA in regard to the ordination of women?

Yes. The PCUSA encourages all churches to have pastoral staff, Elders, Deacons, directors of ministries and candidates for hire that include women. The EPC leaves this decision solely to the local church. However, the EPC does recognize the giftedness of women in leadership and provides educational opportunities (REAL) for women to serve as leaders.

Minorities in the EPC

56. Does the EPC differ in any way to the PCUSA in regard to the ordination of women?

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57. How many minorities are represented in the EPC?

The EPC does not track numbers that represent a minority population. The EPC welcomes all people of all racial backgrounds and therefore does not limit ethnic diversity by setting quotas. In fact, Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis is now a national example of the EPC in reaching out to local ethnic communities by planting churches in three communities. Although the doors to their church are wide open they were not seeing diversity among their membership. Three local churches were planted and are thriving today, by meeting ethnic communities in their geographic locations. These churches represent the gospel of Jesus Christ in the familiarity of their language and culture.

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