

Abbreviated Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Session of First Presbyterian Church recommending to the membership?

After countless hours of research, prayer and discernment, your Session voted unanimously at its April 24, 2012 stated meeting to recommend that our congregation request dismissal from the PC (USA) to join the ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians.

2. Why does the Session of First Presbyterian Church feel it is time to leave the PC (USA)?

The recommendation to leave the PC (USA) has not been a decision that has been entered into lightly by the Session. Because of our history with the denomination, this recommendation has been a very difficult decision to make and one that has not been made without extensive prayer and the seeking of God's guidance. However, the PC (USA) has changed in many ways since its inception in 1983 and it is the responsibility and privilege of your Session and Pastors to speak God's Word clearly during times of theological confusion. In order to be faithful servants of God and to expand His Kingdom, your Session felt it was time to put denominational issues in the past and look ahead to an amazing future God has in store for this church. Throughout this process, we have relied upon the Holy Spirit to guide us.

3. Was there any particular event which triggered the recent crisis and decision of this Session along with so many other Presbyterian churches to leave the PC (USA)?

In May of 2011, Amendment 10-A was passed by a majority of our Presbyteries. This Amendment changed the Ordination standards for those seeking ordination within the PC (USA). No longer are officers required to exhibit "fidelity within a covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness" and to live in "obedience to the scripture." The new standard removes any Biblical understanding of human sexuality; it removes the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman; and the requirement to live in "obedience" to scripture. It simply states, "governing bodies are to be *guided* by scripture."

4. Why has the Session recommended dismissal as opposed to continuing to work to reform the denomination?

For many years these matters have been of concern to us, and sadly with each meeting of the PC (USA) General Assembly, these issues have intensified. We have withheld our per capita payments to the General Assembly for a number of years, although we have continued to make our per capita payments to New Harmony Presbytery and have contributed to their general budget. Members of our church have participated in the life of the PC (USA) and in renewal organizations in the hope that we might be able to produce change from within. Despite all of the prayerful work done, it has become apparent that these issues will not go away. However, the Session believes that it is now time to associate with a new denomination, ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, in order to go about the business of worshiping God in a place that is consistent with our understanding of the Bible and our Confessional standards.

5. To what denomination shall we be transferred?

First Presbyterian Church seeks to join a like-minded, Christ centered denomination that will partner with us in a ministry of being a Biblical, missional and intentional church. The

Session therefore voted unanimously to request dismissal to the ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. Various members of the Session and Task Force attended conferences for this group in August 2011 and January 2012. Dr. Jim Singleton, one of the founding leaders of this denomination attended a congregational meeting on May 24, 2012. To learn more about the ECO, visit www.fellowship-pres.org.

6. What has to occur for First Presbyterian Church to officially seek dismissal to the ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians?

The first step in this process occurred when your Session voted unanimously to seek dismissal from the PC (USA) to the ECO. After the Session vote, New Harmony Presbytery appointed a Presbytery Response Team (PRT) which has met with your Session and also addressed the congregation on June 12, 2012. The next step will require the congregation to vote on the Session's recommendation. The congregational meeting and vote will take place on Sunday, June 24, 2012 at 10:00 a. m. According to the gracious dismissal policy of the Presbytery, there must be a quorum of 50% of active members present and 75% of those present and voting must vote yes for the church to continue with the dismissal process.

7. Should the congregation approve the Session's recommendation to seek dismissal to the ECO, will this be the final step in this process?

No. Should the congregation vote to seek dismissal at the June 24, 2012 congregational meeting, the next step will be for your Session to negotiate the terms of the dismissal with the PRT. Once the terms of the dismissal have been agreed upon by your Session and the PRT, a second congregational meeting and vote will be called for the membership to approve the negotiated dismissal terms. It is anticipated that this meeting will be held in the fall of 2012. The Presbytery will then vote on whether to accept the terms of dismissal to allow the congregation to be dismissed.

8. Should the congregation approve the dismissal to the ECO, will it have any effect on our support of our current ministries, missionaries, Presbyterian Home, PADD, Thornwell, etc.?

No. The Session determines who receives our benevolence dollars and we will be able to continue to support and contribute to those ministries that fulfill our mission and further spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our affiliation with another Presbyterian body will have no impact on our ability to support these ministries along with future ministries.

9. Should the congregation vote to approve the Session's recommendation, how will membership in the ECO differ from the PC (USA)?

There will be no discernable difference from the perspective of members in our congregation. The only substantial change is that we will no longer be at odds with our denomination over the issues outlined above.

10. Where can I obtain additional information?

If you have not already done so, we urge you to visit our church website www.florencefirst.org, and click on the "Denominational Issues" section. You will find a history of the actions taken by your Session, congregational letters, monthly newsletter updates, handouts and a detailed FAQ. You may also speak with any elder or send questions via email to Mike Lavespere, Clerk of Session at questions@florencefirst.org.