

Denominational Issues Update

A congregational informational meeting regarding denominational issues was held on October 11th in the Sanctuary. Members of the Denominational Issues task force shared information gleaned from the August Gathering of Presbyterians in Minneapolis. The agenda for the meeting consisted of four items: 1) an overview of the Gathering and its host, the Fellowship of Presbyterians, 2) the ways that both the theology and the polity of the PC(USA) are broken, 3) the roadmap ahead and the various options that are available, and 4) a time for questions. I thought it would be helpful to share the answers to some of the questions that were asked for the benefit of those who were not able to attend the meeting.

Are we leaving the PC(USA)?

Ultimately that decision will be made by the members of this congregation. But before that action can take place, the Session will have to make a recommendation. This meeting tonight is a part of the process of gathering and sharing information so that a recommendation can be made.

What are the next steps?

Our church has responded aggressively to the crisis in our denomination that was sparked in May by the unexpected adoption of amendment 10A. In June, the Session passed a resolution that stated in part “our efforts to bring about needed change in the denomination have failed and we must actively pursue other options, including dismissal from the PC(USA).” A denominational task force was created in order to provide the Session with the information necessary to make informed decisions. In July, we worked with other churches in our Presbytery to win the adoption of a gracious dismissal policy. In August, seven members of the church travelled to the Fellowship Gathering in Minneapolis to meet with 2,000 Presbyterians from around the country who find themselves in similar situations. One of the key items to come out of the Gathering was the formation of a New Reformed Body (NRB). The NRB will be formally unveiled during its Covenanting Convention in January. While the Fellowship is still a work in progress, it addresses the theological and Christological issues that have concerned this church for many years. Between now and January, the task force and its working groups will continue to gather information related to property, legal, and financial issues; and will continue research into other denominational options so that the best possible recommendation can be made to the Session and to the congregation.

How do these issues affect our building program?

In 2008, the General Assembly of the PC(USA) approved a resolution “Urging a Gracious, Pastoral Response to Churches Requesting Dismissal from the PC(USA).” Realizing that the adoption of amendment 10A would probably cause a number of churches to consider dismissal, a gracious dismissal policy was adopted by our Presbytery in July. This policy provides a clearly defined procedure for seeking dismissal and it states that property “will not be used to shackle churches to the institution of the PC(USA) if a church genuinely desires to depart” and it “will not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a congregation in keeping with 1st Corinthians 6:1-11 over issues of conscience”. It is the opinion of those within our church who have studied this matter that we are in a very strong position as it relates to property issues and that concerns about property should not stand in the way of needed enhancements to our campus.

- *Mike Lavespere, Clerk of Session*