

June 2017

## Members and friends of Centreville Presbyterian Church,

The trajectory of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PC (USA) denomination has been causing concern among many members and your leaders for many years. In July of 2015 the Session of Centreville Presbyterian Church (CPC) voted to begin the process to disaffiliate from the PC(USA) and join a denomination committed to biblical authority. While we are excited about the future transition to the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO), our disaffiliation journey is not over and we believe that it may be helpful to summarize the major areas of distress about the PC (USA) that your past and present leadership has struggled with.

The “Denomination Matters” section of our website is designed to help you monitor the process and provide you detailed information on the reasons for this transition.

### Reasons for CPC’s Continuing Distress

#### **1. Doctrinal Differences and Theological Identity**

Denominations are formed around a shared understanding of truth that leads to a shared understanding of how we live out our faith. Sadly, there is less shared understanding of truth and practice between CPC and our denomination, the PC(USA), than ever before. The denomination is on a trajectory that will only widen the chasm between us and it is traveling that trajectory at an accelerated rate.

Session is particularly distressed by the untenable diversity in a common understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, authority of the Bible, and historical Reformed theology. Once known for scholarly theology, biblical teaching, and adherence to core Christian orthodoxy and practice; the PC(USA) is adrift from its Biblical moorings and confused in its theological identity.

Having largely abandoned the authority of Scripture, the PC(USA) has depended more on cultural arguments than biblical understanding for recent decisions. It has embarked on a decades-long search for a progressive identity by broadening its definition of orthodox belief and practice, while simultaneously refusing to define essential tenants of the Christian faith.

The denomination has waffled on affirming faith in Jesus as the exclusive means of salvation and has given precedent to personal freedoms over the clear teaching of Scripture.

Finally, the Presbytery and the denomination have been unable to address this growing divergence in a way which alleviates Session’s distress or facilitates CPC’s mission.

#### **2. Mission and Witness**

CPC is passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world. We believe in the transforming power of the Gospel to mold individuals into God’s image as revealed in Jesus. CPC’s mission to love Christ, love people, and serve the world is accomplished when together we are ignited by the Holy Spirit, active in ministry, and growing in becoming more and more like Jesus. CPC desires to be in affiliated with a denomination that supports, nurtures, and resources the local congregation to this end as a shared mission.

Yet, we find ourselves in a denomination where evangelism is not universally accepted as the central mission of the Church, is seldom the focus of efforts, and to some in leadership is even seen as coercive. Rather than multiplying the witness of our congregation, the denomination is often an impediment to our witness.

More and more the denomination's energies are shifting from evangelism and the Gospel's transformative redemptive impact on individuals and communities to controversial political activism.

Our own witness has been compromised as we have divided our limited energies between proclaiming the Gospel and differentiating ourselves from the denomination where we believe it has strayed from the Gospel.

This divided focus has led to the loss of membership and the loss of opportunities for both CPC and the PC(USA).

### **3. Polity (church governance) and the Role of the Denomination**

The essential function of a denomination is to facilitate and magnify the Church's mission through the unified witness of its congregations. It accomplishes this by an infrastructure (polity) that connects churches with shared theology, doctrine, and practice; combines resources; and provides nurture and accountability.

As the PC(USA) has moved away from a shared understanding of doctrinal truth and its implication on how we live, its infrastructure has become a burden rather than a source of encouragement and empowerment.

Over the years and in response to our denomination's theological drift and its persistent inaction to make a course correction; we aligned ourselves with renewal movements like Presbyterian's for Renewal, the Confessing Church, and the Fellowship of Presbyterians. These movements have shrunk and consolidated as more evangelical congregations leave the PC(USA).

Locally, our leadership has sought fellowship, accountability, and encouragement through a smaller gathering of evangelical churches because we do not find these elements at Presbytery meetings where we seem to be more tolerated than embraced.

The energy expended in this reverse role of protesting against the erosion of the Church's witness to biblical truth, when it is the denomination that should be providing defense against false doctrine, is frankly exhausting and apparently fruitless.

As witnessed by the 2014 General Assembly's failure to follow the church's own polity, the infrastructure which used to be the means of accountability is no longer relevant.

### **4. Fellowship and Future**

The result of the PC(USA)'s confused identity and divided household is reflected in an ordained leadership where many pastors and elders deny the unique atoning death of Jesus Christ while others affirm it; where many leaders deny the doctrine of the Trinity and others believe it; where many see the Bible only as a guide while a shrinking group of other leaders seek to be obedient to the Bible's authority as the uniquely inspired word of God.

In this environment, far fewer individuals called to ministry are choosing to be ordained in the PC(USA) and still fewer evangelical candidates are seeking ministries in the denomination.

It is difficult to imagine a future within the PC(USA) where CPC will be able to readily identify, call, and retain Biblically orthodox, evangelical pastors and staff.

It is essential that we raise up future Reformed, thoughtful, evangelical leaders especially as society struggles with moral relativism. Yet, it is difficult to recommend the denomination to our own sons and daughters sensing God's call to ministry when the denomination is not fulfilling its role in preserving truth or providing shelter from false doctrine.

The Gospel must be proclaimed and we desire to help plant new churches, but it is difficult to enthusiastically support the planting of other PC(USA) churches.

Should anyone have any questions or wish to discuss any of these areas of distress please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Rob or any elder or your deacon. Or, call the church office and they will be happy to put you in touch with one of them.

In His holy name,

Pastor Rob Bromhead  
The CPC Session

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