



Congregational Update from your Session  
Gracious Dismissal Process  
September 30, 2016

On June 18, 2015, after nearly two year period of discernment in which the Session met, prayed and explored in depth the many issues involved, the Session of the Presbyterian Church of the Big Wood (PCBW) voted 7-0 (plus 1 abstention) to recommend to the congregation “that we explore with the congregation the Session’s conviction that we should move the church’s denominational affiliation from the PCUSA to ECO.” This vote led to two town hall meetings with the congregation, presentations from both the PCUSA and ECO for the congregation, and then finally a straw poll of the congregation which ended up showing that 83% (192-39) of our congregation’s members, attenders, and affiliates supported moving forward in seeking to move from the PCUSA to ECO. Based on this positive confirmation of the congregation, the Session appointed a negotiating team of Dave Bjerke, Joann Boswell, Mick Halverson, Mark Inouye, and George Kirk (chair), to lead the effort to seek dismissal from Kendall Presbytery, who also put together a negotiating team.

The two teams met for the first time in early March, at which time the Kendall Presbytery team outlined the items they would require of us before any negotiations could begin, in order to perform their due diligence. These items included our financial statements, as well as an appraisal of our real estate (church property and manse). Additionally, they informed us that they had an obligation to shepherd the interests of those within our congregation who might wish to remain affiliated with PC(USA), and would need to send out letters to our members seeking to independently ascertain who might wish to remain.

The final piece of information, appraisal of the real estate was received on July 8, at which point some questions around how to proceed delayed the process. After dealing with those questions, our negotiating team made an offer about possible financial terms of dismissal (Aug. 7). In regards to this offer, you will recall that any “agreement” reached between the two negotiating bodies is subject to approval from both our church membership, as well as the members of Kendall Presbytery. Since making that offer, we have received a counter-offer from Kendall Presbytery, which we do not believe fits the guidelines of Kendall Presbytery’s Gracious Dismissal Policy, and so the negotiations continue.

All of this has made the process proceed at a much slower pace than we expected or desired, and we (unfortunately) anticipate it could carry over into 2017. So, while the process is lengthy and demands perseverance, we wanted you to know that we continue to diligently pursue the will of our congregation in seeking terms for a gracious dismissal, and request your continued prayers.

In the meantime, know that our desire is to continue ministering to our congregation and community in ways that honor Jesus. We ask for your ongoing support both through your prayers and your ongoing financial giving.

Peace,

The Session