

Community Presbyterian Church, Lake Havasu AZ.

Administrative Commission

Proposal – October 1, 2016

BACKGROUND:

Lake Havasu City was founded by Robert P. McCulloch as a planned master community in 1978. The city was officially incorporated in 1978, now has year around population of over 55,000 people (2015 Estimate) and occupies 43 square miles in Mojave County, AZ.

Community Presbyterian Church was founded in 1967, and was officially incorporated in 1969. The main sanctuary was dedicated that same year on land donated by the McCulloch Corporation. The education/fellowship building was completed in 1974. Most of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary were built and designed by church members, and improvements have been made over the years, including a fellowship hall.

According to the current pastor, in recent years Community Presbyterian has identified more with the Presbytery of San Diego than with the Presbytery of the Grand Canyon. A move was initiated to switch to San Diego Presbytery some years ago, but the request was denied at the General Assembly level, due to the fact that it would involve "... a change of Synods within the denomination."

Changes to the book of order have caused ongoing concern to the congregation. This congregation had experienced upheaval as an earlier pastor abruptly identified as gay, divorced his wife, and moved to Washington state. Rev. Bybee indicated that he was committed to uphold "Amendment B" as a condition of his call. He has been Senior Pastor at CPC for 15 years, and despite the national trend of declining church membership, CPC has continued to maintain membership. After "several years" of prayer and discernment, the Session of CPC in a letter dated October 15, 2015 to Rev. Brad Munroe, Presbytery Pastor of Grand Canyon, formally requested dismissal with intent to join the ECO.

During this period of discernment, the Presbytery of the Grand Canyon was not a party to these deliberations. Various small group discussions were held, ECO materials distributed, and straw vote of the congregation taken, all leading up to the decision to request dismissal. According to the Session request, the decision was based on the theological drift between the progressive adherents of the PC (USA) and the bible-based traditional believers. They felt that the PC (USA.) has "...left us in many areas where there was agreement in the 1983 merger of the UPC and the PC (USA.)." The Session listed the following areas that they believe are not in alignment with the current PC(USA.) denomination teachings: The authority of scripture; the Lordship of Jesus Christ; current support of Israel and the Jewish people; Christian ethics; what it means to be Reformed; mission; unity in the Universal Church; sanctity of marriage, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A comparison was drawn up for the congregation showing the differences between the progressive and traditional positions of the Presbyterian Church.

Page one of the current church website (<http://www.havasupresby.org>) states their position very strongly:

WE ARE REMAINING FAITHFUL BY GOD'S GRACE (Luke 19:17)

"In the western world we are seeing a rise in secularism (living our lives apart or void of any Bible based Christian influence.) Many denominations have succumbed to a semi-secular form of Christianity. 'they will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly' (2 Tim. 3:5.) We at Community Presbyterian Church will remain Presbyterian, but 'disassociate in place' with those who blatantly hold these unbiblical positions. We at CPC seek to hold fast to the historic Christian faith. Not limited to the following points, we desire to:

- 1.) Live under the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, Who is the Only means of salvation (Phil.2:9-11; John14:6).
- 2.) Live in loving and holy relationships, honoring marriage between a man and a woman, by ordaining or the participation of only those living in "fidelity in marriage and chastity in singleness." Knowing full well that there is forgiveness for all; following the words of Jesus "to go and sin no more." (Exodus 20:14; John 8:1-11)
- 3.) The final authority in all of Christian living is God's Word, the Bible and being informed by the historic confessions. (2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 119:105)

The Session of Community Presbyterian Church

The Administrative Commission met in Lake Havasu City individually with the staff of Community Presbyterian, the Session, and various members in small groups on May 16, 2016 and May 17, 2016. A letter was mailed to the members inviting them to attend small group discussions on the request by the session to leave the PC(USA.) During this initial visit, the Commission heard from church members of their process to arrive at the Session's request to be dismissed. It was the feeling of the commission that the majority of those attending these small group meetings favored dismissal from the PC(USA) in order to join the ECO. Based upon the Commission's experience, it was decided to pursue financial considerations of dismissal.

The church has been actively courting the ECO for membership, with the application letter sent and a meeting in Lake Havasu is being scheduled for the last week in September to interview Elders on Session for acceptance into ECO. As of this date (September 16, 2016), ECO has not received an application from Pastor David Bybee to transfer to Teaching Elder status in ECO, but it is the understanding of the Commission that this application is forthcoming.

During these small group meetings, the members expressed a deep sense of congregational community. Activities included Vacation Bible School, AWANA, Thanksgiving and Christmas potluck dinners, Christmas candlelight services and various other programs. Four separate Bible studies are held for members. During holiday seasons, members contributed and filled gift bags for those in need and for

shut-in's in the community. CPC has allowed community organizations to use their facilities, including Boy Scouts, Stitches group, Colomonde Chorus Choir Alzheimer's/Dementia Connection, and more. A food pantry program for the community has been put in place on the CPC campus as part of the community outreach. The mission outreach is both local and global; Mariners, the Angel Tree Project, food for children in need, the church pantry and gospel outreach in many ways. CPC participates with the Global Fellowship Network, which has an ongoing ministry that reaches many areas of the world in earthquake relief, orphan ministry, and teaching church planting, with some of the CPC members directly participating. A very active, viable Christian ministry was evident during the small group member meetings, as nearly all participating in these meetings had some involvement in the life of the church.

At the meeting with the Session, it was decided to mail a survey to all members, soliciting their views in writing on the request for dismissal from the PC (USA), and to determine interest in leaving the PC(USA.) Since these meetings were held during the day, and those who had employment constraints were not able to voice their views, a mailed survey was agreed upon.

Also, a number of members leave the area during the summer, and would like to be included in the dialogue. The survey was mailed to the member list supplied by CPC, with returned results tabulated as follows:

In favor of dismissal to ECO	- 120 ea., or 90.9%
Remain with the PC(USA.)	- 3 ea., or 2.3%
Undecided	- <u>9 ea., or 6.8%</u>

Total of returned surveys (160 mailed.) 132 ea. - 100%

After the survey results were tabulated by the Administrative Commission, it was decided to continue the process of discernment by proposing a financial settlement per the Gracious Dismissal Policy of the Presbytery. During this process, due diligence per the Gracious Dismissal Policy of the Presbytery was pursued. An appraisal of the church property was ordered and received, with an appraised amount of \$1,075,000.; financial information was requested and received from Community Presbyterian Church and asset and cash flow evaluated; Presbytery supplied information on the participation of the Presbytery in the life of this congregation, beginning with the inception of the church in 1967. The Commission then requested and received by way of e-mail the contact information for the session member appointed to lead the session committee charged with responding to the dismissal proposal. (Mr. John Masden) Several financial dismissal proposals were presented, and responses received with additional information from Community Presbyterian Church provided to the Commission for evaluation. The final financial settlement, as shown below, will allow this Christian community to have a viable, ongoing program (mission work, scholarships, and facility upkeep), while keeping expense consistent with the contributions of their membership. The proposed settlement also recognizes that since the inception of this congregation, they have been faithful in sending per-capita and denomination monies as required, even as they entered a several-year period of discernment to remain in the PC(USA.).

It is the now recommendation of this Administrative Commission, as appointed by the Presbytery of the Grand Canyon, that the Community Presbyterian Church of Lake Havasu City AZ. be dismissed from the PC(USA.) to become a member of the ECO (a Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians,) when the way is clear. Also, that the pastor of this congregation, Rev. David Bybee, a pastor in good standing with the Presbytery of the Grand Canyon, also be allowed to transfer his status as a Teaching Elder to ECO, when the way is clear.

The Commission has satisfied the charge, as outlined in the Gracious Dismissal Policy of the Presbytery, and has determined:

- A. The amount of financial support that CPC has received from the Presbytery.
- B. The amount of financial support that CPC has shared with the Presbytery.
- C. The value of the church property, held in trust by the PC(USA.).
- D. Other current assets, liabilities and operating costs that impact the congregation's ability to continue a viable ministry and mission.

Based upon these considerations, the Commission hereby recommends to the Presbytery that Community Presbyterian Church be responsible for the following expenses as a condition of their dismissal request:

- 1.) \$ 3,500 – Cost of the property appraisal by Valbridge Property Advisors/ MJN Enterprises, Inc.
- 2.) \$ 1,278.37 – Administrative Commission expenses to date, including cost of mailings to CPC members and worshiping visitors in connection with the request by the Session to be dismissed from the PC(USA.).
- 3.) \$ 750 Cost of copying records for the Presbytery, Community Presbyterian Church and the PC(USA.) as required.
- 4.) \$ 1,000 - Estimated cost of property title transfer to Community Presbyterian Church upon final settlement of dismissal.
- 5.) \$ 53,471.63- Final consideration to the Presbytery of the Grand Canyon for property.

The total of the above line items is \$ 60,000.00, and this amount, by agreement, will be submitted to the Presbytery in a one-time payment as a financial condition for dismissal from the PC(USA.).

Prayerful consideration has been given to this proposal by both the Administrative Commission, and the Session of Community Presbyterian Church, and has been approved by both parties as a way for this congregation to continue to serve Christ's mission in this geographical area. Our Commission thanks the Session, and Mr. John Masden as appointed spokesperson, for their cooperation in providing the necessary information for us to fulfill our assignment. It is with a degree of sadness that we wish the Community Presbyterian Church continued success upon their dismissal from the PC(USA.).

Your brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Community Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission

Bob Orf, Moderator

Brown; Rev. Gordon Letizia; Kathryn Owens; Rev. Terry Palmer; Paul Rooker; Gloria Young

Rev. Kelsy