

## **Proposal for Christ Presbyterian Church Settlement**

### **Christ Church Administrative Commission – Presbytery of Grand Canyon**

**August 10,2016**

#### **Background/History**

The history of this congregation goes back to the early days of the development of the City of Maryvale in the late 1950's. The Presbytery of Phoenix took steps to organize a new church in that region and purchased land at Indian School Rd and 64<sup>th</sup> Ave with the hopes of someday having a Presbyterian Church there. That hope came to fruition on Jan. 19, 1958, when Christ Presbyterian Church was chartered with 84 members, under the leadership of the Rev. Leonard Boyd. The first unit of the new church was completed in 1959 and the church continued to grow. However, in 1961, the pastor announced that he was leaving, and the church doubled down to get through that time and call a new pastor and continue to grow through the 1960's, which included another addition to the church building, including a sanctuary. The lot was purchased for \$11,300; there is no record of loans at that time.

In 1970, the Rev. Mike Moxness was called as pastor which led to a long, 20 year pastorate during which time the church continued to grow and expand its ministry. The Rev. Richard Carus was called as Associate Pastor and through the combined efforts of all involved, a vibrant, flourishing ministry developed. Two young men from the church entered the ministry; one is Michael Hartwell, pastor at Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Phoenix at this time. The music ministry grew rapidly during this era as well, with a large youth choir, praise band and other programs, with the church growing to a membership of 804.

Following Rev. Moxness' move to a new church in 1990, the church went through a more challenging and difficult time in the 1990's. A new pastor was called, the Rev. Gary Webster, but the church was challenged by new issues in the community, changes in demographics and older members leaving the church to retire elsewhere. The pastoral leadership was not sufficient to lead the church at a critical time and an Administrative Review committee from Presbytery of Grand Canyon was brought in to help work with the church and get it moving forward. The church asked the Presbytery to forgive \$17,008 of per capita for three previous years, which was granted and the Presbytery also approved an additional \$30,000 grant for Christ Church as they worked to secure a new pastor following the resignation of Rev. Webster. The church continued through a challenging time for the next four years as several interim pastors helped to keep the church moving forward. During that time, the remnant of the failed West Valley New Church development moved to join with Christ Church, bringing 22 new people and \$90,000 to Christ Church. This action helped to provide a needed shot in the arm for the church and its leaders, allowing them to call the Rev. Robert Simmons as pastor in Nov. 2001.

This began a new, refreshing time for Christ Church. Under the leadership of Pastor Bob, the congregation began a season of action and development. The church decided to enter the Redevelopment programs of the PCUSA and in doing so, decided on a plan that eventually would move the church to a new site where the church is now on Sarival Ave. The church worked hard to develop the congregation at a new location in the West Valley while looking for the necessary land for new church. At the same time, they worked on the plan to sell their former building and put the proceeds toward the new facility. The church was sold to the ArizonaKorean Presbyterian Church for \$1.2 million and Christ Church became nomads, worshiping in a Baptist church and then in a Masonic Lodge Hall in Avondale until the first phase building was completed in 2007 and the education building was

completed in 2012. The congregation has grown to a diverse, multi-cultural family of 450 members, with a wide variety of programs and mission outreach programs.

## **Discernment**

In more recent years, especially since about 2010, the session and members have become more concerned about the theological positions of the PC (USA) and have worked to gain greater understanding of those views and how they fit with those held at Christ Church. Members have been concerned enough that 30-40 members streamed the GA meetings of 2012 and 2014. During this time, at least 20 members left because they felt the session was not moving fast enough to deal with the issues and to leave. In early 2015, the church entered a more defined season of discernment by having two pastors from different theological viewpoints come and make presentations about a number of theological issues in the church. These presentations were followed by town hall meetings of the congregation, and a straw poll of the congregation indicated 94% of the congregation agreed with the decision to seek dismissal from the PC (USA). At least 8-10 people have left the church because they disagree with the decision to leave, with an additional 15-20 people staying even though they do not want to leave the PC (USA)

During this time, the Presbytery of Grand Canyon was not involved in the church's discernment process. Because of this missing element of the process, the Administrative Commission was obligated to conduct new meetings with members of the church to determine their perspective on the church's process, to ascertain their desire to remain in the PC (USA) or not, and to be clear about the direction of the church. The AC first met with the session and Pastor, both individually and together. They highlighted the process mentioned above and gave us a full view of the issues concerning their desire to depart:

- Failure of the church to specify the Essential Tenets of our faith
- The redefinition of marriage and the Authoritative Interpretation to allow same-sex marriage ceremonies in PC (USA)
- Vagueness about the authority of Scripture and its importance in our theology
- Issues related to the divinity of Christ and to the GA refusal to acknowledge the "singular saving Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- GA decisions to replace the Fidelity and Chastity language of the Book of Order to allow "scruples" and in effect create "local option"
- The issue of being fearful that in the event of the pastor's departure/retirement, that they would not be able to find a pastor that fit the evangelical position of their congregation under the PC (USA) system.
- The Administrative Commission conducted 11 small group meetings with members of the church, at which time many of the above issues were repeated. Members also expressed concern about the church being allowed to keep its property, especially due to the significant debt they have from building the new education building. Their current indebtedness is \$2.3 million dollars. All in all, with the meetings and a large number of surveys returned to us, we heard from over 194 members of the church concerning their dismissal. From those, we learned that 186 want to leave and 8 want to stay or are undecided.

## Issues for Consideration

1. As noted in the history above, Christ Church has been well supported by the Presbyterian Church (USA), beginning with the purchase of their first property, which was later developed and sold for the church's relocation to its present site.
2. The church received an early loan in 1977 from GA for \$18,000, received a loan from the Claude Morton fund in 2000 of \$50,000 to help with their transition time so they could do some needed renovation of their building. Both loans were paid in full by Christ Church.
3. In the 1990's, during the ministry of Rev. Gary Webster, the church asked the Presbytery to forgive \$17,008 of per capita for three previous years, which was granted. The Presbytery also approved an additional \$30,000 grant for Christ Church as they worked to secure a new pastor following the resignation of Rev. Webster during what was a very lean time for the church.
4. Christ Church is concerned that the Presbytery may have profited from the sale of their former property which was purchased by Arizona Korean Church and later sold. Arizona Korean paid \$1.2 million for the property and when they could not maintain the campus at 67<sup>th</sup> and Indian School, they sold that building for the same price. With the proceeds, they pay off a debt to Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (PILP) and the balance was used to purchase a new, smaller site in Sun City. In the end, no funds came to the Presbytery for the original Christ Church Property.
5. Outside of the initial outlay of \$1.2 million from the sale of the property on 64<sup>th</sup> and Indian School in 2004; Christ Church has received no additional funding by way of grants, loans, PILP loans, etc. The second addition of a fellowship hall & education building was funded exclusively with offerings and gifts of the members of Christ Presbyterian Church.
6. It is our responsibility to obtain an appraisal of the property, which was provided by Valbridge Property Advisors. After a thorough analysis of the property and the region in relation to church property, it was valued at \$3,275,000.
7. Because there is a significant mortgage on the property, we agree with the Transition Team from Christ Presbyterian Church that it is fair to consider the equity value of the property when determining the settlement amount. The following calculation is used to satisfy the Trust Clause of the PCUSA: The Market Appraisal (\$3,275,000) is made up of 68% debt (\$2,231,520) and 32% estimated equity (\$1,043,480).
8. Christ Presbyterian has surplus cash funds of \$479,119 received from Trivium School rental costs; which ended at the start of the 2015 school year. Those funds are earmarked for the following:
  - a) Using a portion of these funds to offset Christ Church's deficit (\$112,495) tithing budget for 2016.
  - b) CPC has entered into an 8-10-year mission sponsorship project on with Las Aguas, Haiti; the mission work resulting from this ministry will provide a stable infrastructure for this village (clean water access, sanitation, education, agriculture, and health services
  - c) The remaining funds, will contribute to the maintenance of CPC's campus facilities to ensure the safety of members and guests.
9. During the past 4 years (2012-2015) the church has maintained payments for per capita but has not participated in Presbyterian Mission Fund. During this time Christ Church has committed to a number of mission projects in place of our support of the PMF – including critical support for the Spring (a former PCUSA fellowship), as well as support of mission work closely-affiliated with our church membership. Christ Church did participate in some of the PCUSA special offerings including Christmas Joy, Peacemaking and One Great Hour of Sharing.

10. Christ Presbyterian Church has volunteered to repay the three years of forgiven Per Capita (\$17,008) and also the \$30,000 grant given to help sustain the church in the 1990's.
11. The Gracious Dismissal Policy of Grand Canyon Presbytery and the Trust Clause of the Book of Order require that the AC take into account the value of the church's property and also recognize the burden of history which allows the congregation to get to the place where it is now. In this case, we recognize that all congregations emerge and grow from the collective gifts of God's people, and they often include the direct gifts of individuals (through their labors or their money); gifts from other congregations (furniture and supplies), along with the work of the Synod and GA. As highlighted above, this church has been richly blessed by the support and connection with the PC (USA) since it was birthed until now.
12. We also affirm that the Pastor and Christ Presbyterian Church desire to leave the PCUSA and become members of ECO (Evangelical Covenant of Presbyterians)

**Therefore: the Christ Presbyterian Church commission concludes....**

**Proposed Dismissal Terms:**

In keeping with the Gracious Dismissal Policy of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon and in keeping with the charge to our commission, especially item (e): "in consultation with the session, to seek a mutually agreeable proposal for the disposition of all property, contents, and historical documents, with the aim of furthering the mission of Christ through good stewardship of resources", we propose the following:

1. That the Christ Presbyterian Church be dismissed from the PC (USA) and allowed to become a member of ECO(Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians) when the way is clear.
2. That the church's pastor, The Rev Robert Simmons, also be allowed to transfer his status as a Teaching Elder to ECO, when the way is clear.
3. That the church will be responsible for the following costs for this process:
  - \$3000 – Appraisal cost
  - \$1000 – Cost for Commission operations (approx.)
  - \$1500 - Cost for copying all of church documents for historical records – all records concerning membership records, session minutes, lists of officers/pastors, all legal transactions, etc. (approx.)\*
  - \$1000 - cost for transfer property ownership to Christ Presbyterian Church (Est)\*
  - \$16,116 – per capita for 2016
  - \$17,008 – Per Capita reimbursement for 3 forgiven years (1990's)
  - \$30,000 - Reimbursement of funds previously given to help call a pastor
  - \$104,340 – This is the value of the PC (USA)'s portion of the property valuation based on the equity value of the property (10% - A biblical tithe) – This may be paid in yearly payments for 5 years in the amount of \$20,868 each year. At Closing, a Deed of Trust will be signed which includes the terms of this agreement, which states that if payments are not completed, The Presbytery of Grand Canyon has the right to foreclose on the property. Upon payment of these funds, the church's responsibility to the Presbytery is concluded. These funds are to be placed in the Mission Endowment Fund of Grand Canyon Presbytery.

\$ 173,964 -Total Settlement Amount

\*\*\*We are grateful for the continued work toward a Gracious Dismissal Process. Both the Church and the AC have tried to work together for the future of both the church and the Presbytery. Both parties have appreciated the spirit and effort of all involved.

Additional information: The Commission wishes to note, that while the church asked for an amount equal to 8% of their equity value in the property, the Commission disagreed and felt that a Biblical tithe was more in keeping with the spirit of the Gracious Separation policy.

Members of the Commission are: Edward Spence, Jeanette Miller, Martha Sadongei, Martha Esther Lopez Loreda, Hilbert Schouten, Susan Goe, and James Crelin