

Springhill Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of Yellowstone A timeline

PRIOR TO MARCH 2009

The session of the Springhill Presbyterian Church had been discussing concerns over denominational issues as well as options for the congregation for a number of months.

MARCH 2009

Following the March 2009 presbytery meeting at Springhill Presbyterian Church, the session of Springhill Presbyterian Church notified Ron Hanson, stated clerk, that at their regular meeting on March 23, 2009, they would consider a vote to present the congregation's membership with a request for dismissal from the PC(U.S.A.).

A subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry consisting of Phil Maxwell, Freeman McCall, Debbie Funke, Ron Hanson, Mike Gapay, Kathy Goodrich and George Goodrich attended the March 23 session meeting. Letters asking the session not to move ahead were read from Susan Thomas, presbytery moderator, and Lanny Rounds. The session did not vote on the issue.

At a special meeting on March 29, 2009, the session voted to place the question of dismissal from the PC(U.S.A.) to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church before the congregation at a later date. The vote was 8 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention. Kathy and George Goodrich were present, representing the COM.

APRIL

COM named Freeman McCall as liaison to the session, to attend all session meetings or name someone in his place.

At the April 13 regular session meeting, Kathy Goodrich represented the COM.

On April 27, B.J. Otey and the session sent a multi-page letter to all congregation members detailing the reasons why they are in favor of separation from the PC(USA) and dismissal to the EPC. The following quotation, underlined in the letter, names the central concern.

“Because THE issue is the fact that the PCUSA has left the Bible as the infallible Word of God in favor of going along with the culture.”

MAY

A meeting with a COM-designated group was set with B.J. Otey and Dick McNeely for May 1. Because of sickness and last minute conflicts, those able to be present were George Goodrich, Kathy Goodrich, and Ted Williams.

On May 16, a Pastoral Team was elected by the Presbytery of Yellowstone, meeting at Rocky Mountain College, in accordance with the Process for Separation policy of the presbytery which was approved at the March 2009 meeting. Team members, nominated by the COM, are:

Phil Maxwell, chair	Jody McDevitt
Freeman McCall	Sally Ralston

In addition, these people serve as ex-officio members of the team:

George Goodrich, co-general presbyter
Kathy Goodrich, co-general presbyter
Ron Hanson, stated clerk.

The team, absent Ron Hanson, attended the regular session meeting of the Springhill Presbyterian Church on Monday evening, May 18, and presented a covenant for the purpose of prayerful discernment. After much discussion and some clarifying amendments agreed to by the pastoral team, the session voted to accept the covenant. (SEE BELOW)

The session discussed possible dates for the congregational meeting and vote. Later in the week, they settled on **August 30, 2009**.

Covenant between the Session of Springhill Presbyterian Church and the Pastoral Team of the Presbytery of Yellowstone.

May 18, 2009

The Yellowstone Presbytery on May 16th, 2009 invited the Session of Springhill Presbyterian Church to enter into a Covenant for Prayerful Discernment with the Pastoral Team of the Presbytery of Yellowstone.

In the covenant the Pastoral Team asks for these agreements:

- 1) an invitation to all regular session meetings involving action items;
- 2) an invitation to all congregational meetings, formal and informal;
- 3) that the session would consult with the pastoral team prior to all congregational mailings, whether print or email;
- 4) shared planning and participation in all meetings (formal & informal) of the congregation;
- 5) a shared commitment to an open process of congregational discernment, in which minority voices are heard and respected;
- 6) shared development of a plan of mission (as described in dismissal policy) should the congregation or a portion of the congregation request dismissal from the presbytery;
- 7) shared development of a plan for ministry with the minority constituency;
- 8) to listen for and expect to hear /discern God's voice through each other and others in the process;
- 9) and through mutual prayer seek God's guidance of this process, that we might understand one another and love one another as Christ has loved us.

The Pastoral Team asks that all members of the Springhill Session (including the moderator and clerk of session) and the Pastoral Team (including the ex-officio members) sign this document.