

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Responses from Springhill Presbyterian Church**

#### **Q) What was the process and what events led to the request from the Session of Springhill Presbyterian Church to initiate dismissal from the PC(USA)?**

A) Conversation began in our congregation after the Peace, Unity and Purity (PUP) report in the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of PC(USA) in 2006. Questions were raised by the congregation and some elders about the future direction Springhill should follow.

After the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in June 2008 serious discussion began within our congregation about leaving PC(USA). In the July 2008 Session meeting moderated by Pastor McNeely a Denominational Issues Team was commissioned. The purpose of this team was to hold 3 "Town Hall Meetings" to discuss with the congregation the issues that concerned us from the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The Denominational Issues Team also hosted a Presbyterians For Renewal area meeting at Springhill. One option proposed concerned the formation of a 17<sup>th</sup> Synod within PC(USA) but that was later abandoned. For more than a year the congregation of Springhill Presbyterian Church has felt the calling by GOD to consider leaving the Presbyterian Church ( USA) and in March of 2009 after the 17<sup>th</sup> Synod issue faded there was serious discussion about joining the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

We were aware that a Process for Separation was being presented for approval in the Presbytery meeting in March 2009. After the Process for Separation was approved, the Denominational Issues Team unanimously voted to ask Session to formally request dismissal. The initiation of this process occurred in a special Session meeting in April 2009.

After much prayer, many meetings, informational talks, presentations by the staff, Pastoral Team and Co-Presbyters of the Yellowstone Presbytery, Dr. James Edwards of Whitworth University and other members of Presbyterian Church ( USA ) and the Stated Clerk and other members of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church a vote of our congregation was held on August 30, 2009.

Prayerful discernment, deep thought and examination of each members own conscience, and thorough consideration of all options and consequences, and above all where we felt God was leading us went into the decision of our congregation. Of 116 active members present who were eligible to vote 114 voted to leave PC(USA) and join EPC. Only 2 voted to stay with PCUSA.

Please understand that we are, and will remain Presbyterians, and like you will continue to worship our Lord Jesus Christ as the head of our church. You may ask why we are leaving and why we chose the EPC. Extensive research and study of various Presbyterian denominations, their beliefs, sacraments , polity, views on ordination of women and above all the fact that they believed in the Bible as the true word of GOD led us to the conclusion that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church best suited our congregation. This is the right decision for us alone.

#### **Q) What was the role of Pastor McNeely in this decision?**

A) Pastor McNeely served as Pastor of Springhill and Moderator of Session when the decision to explore options and form the Denominational Issues Team was made. Following his retirement he served on the Denominational Issues Team. His role was in an informational position reporting on the actions, and meaning of those actions, taken by the General Assemblies referenced above. He did NOT influence our congregation to leave PC(USA). The movement to leave PC(USA) was entirely a "grass roots" initiative of many members of our congregation who felt that God was leading us in a new direction and they indicated their desires to Session and to Pastor McNeely. If we as a congregation had not requested dismissal our church would have been decimated as a great number of individuals and families had said they would leave if we stayed with PC(USA).

**Q) What was the role of Pastor Otey in this decision?**

A) The movement to leave PC(USA) had already gained support of most of our congregation when Pastor Otey was first interviewed by our Pastoral Nominating Committee. When Pastor Otey was called by Springhill he was informed of this movement and was specifically asked to remain neutral and not influence this process. After the Process for Separation was approved, a formal request for dismissal by our Session was conveyed to Presbytery. Pastor Otey inherited the Process and supported continuing with the Process when he realized the unity of Session and the congregation. He then provided information on EPC and arranged visits by key EPC leaders to help our congregation learn the position of EPC on issues critical to our decision. He also served as a member of our Dismissal Team as we negotiated an agreement with the Pastoral Team elected by Presbytery.

**Q) How was the congregation involved?**

A) From the above it is evident that the congregation was vitally involved from the beginning and throughout the entire process. Three "Town Hall" meetings scheduled by our Denominational Issues Team and two scheduled by the Presbytery plus meetings with officials of EPC and the Presbyterians for Renewal meeting were attended by most of the congregation. In addition a Unity Team of Springhill elders phoned every member of the congregation at least once to clarify questions or issues and hear concerns.

**Q) Was the Process for Separation approved by Presbytery in March followed?**

A) In all the meetings and correspondence with the Presbytery Pastoral Team Springhill stressed that it was their intent to follow or exceed the Process in every way. Springhill met every aspect and guideline of the Process in "letter" and "spirit". The specific wording in the Process for Separation was also the format for reaching an agreement during final negotiation with the Pastoral Team.

**Q) What were the Common Goals of Springhill and the Pastoral Team that guided the agreement for dismissal?**

A) The primary Goal was to glorify and honor God as we worked together on the details for dismissal. An agreement was sought to allow the rapidly growing ministry at Springhill to flourish and to allow the Yellowstone Presbytery to continue it's life and mission in a way that the Presbytery can also flourish.

**Q) Will Springhill continue its ministry at its present location? How will continued growth be accommodated?**

A) Springhill Presbyterian Church was founded in 1898 and the current sanctuary was built in 1907. It will continue to be the focus of our ministry. The Lord has blessed Springhill with continued and wonderful growth and the current sanctuary is filled for both services every Sunday. Negotiations are ongoing to purchase additional property abutting the current facilities. It is the hope that a new larger sanctuary can be built next to the current fellowship hall to accommodate this growth while continuing to use the current sanctuary. When the new sanctuary is completed, the current historic sanctuary will be maintained and used for special ceremonies and occasions.