

# Escalon Presbyterian



March 5, 2013

Dear Escalon Presbyterian Church Members,

As stated in the official congregational letter dated February 7, 2013, the Congregation of Escalon Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of Stockton Engagement Team (PET) officially call a March 10, 2013 date to conduct a congregational vote. Specifically, this vote is an advisory vote (not a final vote) on the following question:

**Are you in support of the recommendation from the Session of Escalon Presbyterian Church that we seek dismissal from the Presbyterian Church USA [PCUSA] into another Reformed [Presbyterian] body [denomination]?**

An advisory vote helps the PET determine the degree of Congregational support for the recommendation of the Session. The results of the advisory vote allow the PET to report to the Presbytery of Stockton regarding their findings and helps determine whether or not a final vote shall be called for and dismissal negotiations commenced.

The Session and the PET held an informational meeting on Sunday February 24, at 11:30 to hear presentations from members of Session outlining their reasons for supporting the motion for dismissal. The PET also presented reasons for our church to stay in the PCUSA. Attached you will find the minutes of that meeting. To view all published information go to: <http://escalonpres.org/learn/denomination/>

The desire of the Session is that all members be afforded the opportunity to vote and we have many young parents with children whose schedule we would like to accommodate. Our Youth Ministries team will coordinate child-care during this time for all members.

Here is the schedule for the Advisory Vote to be held on March 10, 2013:

- 9:00 am** Members can begin signing-in to indicate their attendance and receive an official ballot.
- 10:00 am** Members will meet in the Sanctuary where the congregational meeting will begin, the motion will be presented and a time of Question and Answer will follow concerning the information presented by the Session and the the PET at the February 25 meeting. Voting must occur in person, by official ballot, in the sanctuary.
- 10:30 am** Regularly scheduled Sunday Worship
- 11:30 am** The results of the Advisory Vote will be announced.

In Christ,

The Session of Escalon Presbyterian Church

# Time-Line of EPC Denominational Discernment

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## November 2011

Session presentation/discussion on denominational issues

## January 2012

Pastor Troy attended first national meeting of Fellowship/ECO in Orlando (14 representatives from Presbytery)  
Session video presentation/discussion on denominational issues

## March 2012

**Presbytery Town Hall meeting** on denominational issues

## May 2012

Session discussion pre-General Assembly on denominational issues

## July 2012

PCUSA General Assembly meeting in Pittsburgh

Session discussion / post-General Assembly on denominational issues

**Presbytery Town Hall meeting** / post-General Assembly on denominational issues

## August 2012

**First EPC Congregational Forum** on denominational issues

Pastor Troy, Dick & Ellen Nelson attended regional meeting of the Fellowship/ECO in Colorado Springs

Session discussion on denominational issues

## September 2012

**Second EPC Congregational Forum** on denominational issues

Session discussion on denominational issues

Session voted to request a Review Team from the Presbytery to discuss concerns

## October 2012

Session met with Presbytery Review Team separately from Pastor

Review team recommended a Presbytery Engagement Team be assigned in accordance with the

Gracious Dismissal Policy of the Presbytery of Stockton

## November 2012

Session met with Presbytery Engagement Team

Session voted unanimously to recommend that EPC seek dismissal from the PCUSA\*

## January 2013

Pastor Troy attended second national meeting of the Fellowship/ECO in Orlando

## February 2013

**First Called Congregational Meeting** to discuss Session' recommendation for dismissal. The Presbytery Engagement Team presented reasons for staying in the PCUSA.

## March 2013

**Second Called Congregational Meeting** to conduct an advisory congregational vote on Session's recommendation to seek dismissal from the PCUSA

\* *Session Members Voting:* (alphabetical) Laura Alcantor, Sherry Branscombe, Jerry Houglund, Michele Hood, Jeff Jarchow, Rick Jones, Bob McCune, Dick Nelson, Ellen Nelson , Steve Reader, Sal Sandoval, and Margy Sawyer

*New Session Members who also support the motion:* Rick Dodge, Dave Hall, Jeff Hood

# EPC February 24, 2013 Congregational Meeting

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ESCALON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - February 24, 2013

## **Opening Prayer**

The Congregational Meeting held in The Sanctuary with Presbytery Engagement Team was opened with Prayer by Pastor Troy J. Onsager at 11:30 a.m. 72 were in attendance for the meeting.

## **Introductory Comments**

Troy introduced Julia Leeth and David McGurk from Presbytery. David opened the meeting with an overview and purpose of the meeting.

David McGurk explained the previous and current Session Elders involved in seeking gracious dismissal. David opened the meeting to the Session Elders who wanted to present at this meeting; Laura Alcantor, Dick Nelson, Margy Sawyer, Jeff Jarchow, and Bob McCune.

## **Session Presentation**

Laura Alcantor –

- Concern that now our national affiliation is a detriment to our mission and ministry
- Concerns about the decline of the PCUSA numerically and turn of direction theologically
- Concern of cultural accommodation to remain relevant – yet Proud of our Presbyterian Heritage and have other options available to us

Dick Nelson –

- Concerns of erosion of Spiritual Authority
- Concerns with lack of theological ordination standards for the candidates in ministry
- Concerns related to the Global Church frustration with PCUSA

Margy Sawyer –

- Concerns with Book of Order changes related to removal of the profession of faith in Christ as members
- Changes related to the watering down the person of Jesus Christ and salvation found only in Him now having greater authority than our Book of Confessions

Jeff Jarchow –

- A Church will grow when Christ-centered truth is taught.
- There is a disconnect between the growth of our Church and the decline of PCUSA
- The exciting possibility of what great synergistic possibilities may exist if we align with a Presbyterian body that we have theological and mission affinities with

Bob McCune –

- The Session has been actively involved in this process for significant period of time
- Our focus is to continue what we are doing and keep growing as a congregation in Jesus Christ as our Savior
- Session was unanimous in this focus spoken from various perspectives more than once
- Concern that failing to make a decision is actually making a decision. We recommend making this decision for the future ministry of our church

### **Presbytery Engagement Team Presentation**

Julia Leeth -

- Detailed the Gracious Dismissal process and the respective role of the Presbyterian Engagement Team that PET and Session are following

Dave McGurk –

- Reasons for staying with PCUSA from the perspective of the Stockton Presbytery
  - i. Historic connection
  - ii. Financial resources
  - iii. Rich polity and theology
  - iv. Large pool of ministers to draw from
  - v. Established systems to draw from
  - vi. Established policies and procedures
  - vii. Web of relationships
  - viii. Opportunity for witness and evangelism
  - ix. Mission partnerships and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
- There are 6 Churches in the Stockton Presbytery engaged in Gracious Dismissal
- Where do we go from here?
  - i. First step is a straw polling of the Congregation is support of Session's recommendation
  - ii. Followed by a Congregational meeting to validate Gracious Dismissal (40% of active membership) with two thirds approval required
  - iii. Followed by a second vote to determine who would stay and who might move to a PCUSA affiliated church

### **Question and Answer Session**

Troy opened a Question and Answer period.

Troy wrapped up the Q&A portion suggesting that anyone can reach out to any of the Session Elders at any time, or himself at any time and that there is a link on the Escalon Presbyterian Church website to access any of the materials shared over the past 18 months. (<http://escalonpres.org/learn/denomination/>)

Moderator Troy Onsager adjourned the Called Congregational Meeting in prayer at 12:43 PM.

Attest: Jeff Hood, Clerk of Session

Attest: Rev. Troy Onsager, Moderator