

# **Report of the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley**

February 19, 2019

## **Request for Dismissal**

In an undated letter from the session of New Albany Presbyterian Church (NAPC) to Rick Hays, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (the Presbytery), the session requested dismissal from the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) under the Presbytery's *Policy for Gracious Separation of Congregations from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley*. The letter was received after November 15, 2017, (the date of the November 2016 meeting of the Presbytery) and before November 28, 2016, according to Rick Hays. In the letter, the session did not specify to which Reformed denomination NAPC was requesting dismissal.

Appendix A contains the letter requesting dismissal.

## **Appointment of the Administrative Commission**

At the Presbytery's meeting on February 21, 2017, the Commission for Congregational Life, having been notified in writing by the session of NAPC of their desire, requested that the Presbytery direct the moderator to form an administrative commission for the gracious separation of NAPC from the Presbytery. The motion was approved.

Moderator Timothy Luoma appointed the following persons to serve as the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (the Commission).

## **Ministers of the Word and Sacrament**

Brian Harroff	First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon
Phyllis Heffner	St. Andrew Presbyterian Church of Columbus
Deb Patterson	First Presbyterian Church of Delaware
Joel Esala	Central College Presbyterian Church of Westerville

## **Ruling Elders**

Jim Hamilton	Covenant Presbyterian Church of Columbus
Tom Ridgely	Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus
Mark Johnson	Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church of Pickerington
Bill Lucas	Glen Echo Presbyterian Church of Columbus
Keith Williams	Bethany Presbyterian Church of Columbus
Yvonne Gustafson	Worthington Presbyterian Church of Worthington
Alice Karen Hite	Outville Presbyterian Church of Pataskala

Brian Harroff resigned from the Commission following its meeting on September 12, 2017, because he had accepted a call in the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia.

## **Moderators**

At its first meeting on March 7, 2017, the Commission selected Joel Esala and Mark Johnson as co-moderators.

## **Recording secretaries**

At its first meeting on March 7, 2017, the Commission selected Keith Williams as the recording secretary and Phyllis Heffner as the vice secretary.

## **Authority of the Administrative Commission**

The *Policy for Gracious Separation of Congregations from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley* (approved November 15, 2011) establishes the following duties and authority for the Commission. Appendix B contains the full text of the policy.

## **Duties**

The Commission will

- Establish communication with the staff and the congregation,
- Work to understand the congregation's concerns and actions,
- Assist the leadership and membership of the congregation in presenting information that is true, fair, and balanced before the presbytery considers any actions,
- Seek a peaceful resolution of all differences and achieve reconciliation where possible, and
- Make any recommendations it deems necessary to the presbytery about further action.

## **Scope of authority**

Powers granted to the Commission include the authority

- To convene boards and committees of the congregation, including the session,
- To interview pastors, staff, leaders, and members of the congregation,
- To have access to pertinent church records,
- To determine whether a congregational meeting is called for to advise the congregation concerning the relationship of the congregation to the presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),
  - To call such a meeting and to provide a moderator and clerk for that meeting,
  - To report the record of this meeting to the Council, the COM, and the Board of Trustees,
- To recommend to the presbytery any action concerning the dissolution or dismissal of the congregation to another Reformed denomination and appropriate disposition of all property, and
- To request such other powers as may be deemed necessary.

The Commission shall have the authority to consult with presbytery, synod, and General Assembly staff as necessary. The Commission may retain legal counsel and consult with appropriate committees of the Presbytery to accomplish its duties.

## **Tasks of the Administrative Commission**

### **Establish communication with the staff and the congregation**

The Commission first established communication with NAPC on April 6, 2017, when Jim Hamilton, Brian Harroff, and Joel Esala met with representatives from NAPC. The representatives included David Milroy (pastor), Ken Rathburn (elder), Anne Liptak (staff member), and Rob Milligan (deacon).

As the work of the Commission was just beginning, the Commission became aware of a group of current and former members of NAPC who were interested in continuing as a congregation of the PC(USA). Appendix C contains the letter informing the Commission of the group and recounting some of the history of NAPC.

### **Work to understand the congregation's concerns and actions**

The Commission conducted a listening session with the NAPC session (without Rev. David Milroy) on June 4, 2017, to understand its concerns and its reasons for requesting that the Presbytery consider dismissing NAPC from the PC(USA).

The Commission conducted listening sessions with individuals, families, and small groups from NAPC on August 24, 26, 27, and 31, 2017. Appendix D contains the letter inviting members of NAPC to attend a listening session. The goal was to talk with as many members of the congregation as possible. During the listening sessions, Commission members asked to hear their thoughts about being dismissed to another Reformed denomination. Some of the questions were:

- How do you feel about leaving the PC(USA) for another Reformed denomination?
- What are the most important issues involved in deciding to seek dismissal?
- What would be the benefits and drawbacks of leaving the PC(USA)?
- If NAPC leaves the PC(USA) and moves to a new building, what would you do?

On October 29, 2017, the Commission conducted a listening session with a group of current and former members of NAPC who wanted NAPC to remain a congregation of the PC(USA). Appendix E contains the letter inviting this group to attend the listening session. During the listening session, Commission members asked to hear what members of this group thought about the request of NAPC to be dismissed to another Reformed denomination. Some of the questions were:

- What is your vision for the future ministry of a PC(USA) congregation in New Albany?
- How would it affect that vision to receive the NAPC building (and mortgage), but little money?
- How would it affect that vision to receive a financial settlement, but not the NAPC building?

- What would be the benefits of gathering as a worshipping community as we continue our work?
- What other issues do we need to consider in our work?

### **Assist in presenting information that is true, fair, and balanced**

The Commission conducted an informational session for members and friends of NAPC on January 14, 2018. Appendix F contains the letter inviting the members and friends of NAPC to attend the informational session. At the meeting Joel Esala presented information that, in the Commission's view, is true, fair, and balanced regarding the issues that led NAPC to seek dismissal. The Commission presented the information to the NAPC session on January 11, 2018, to give the session a preview of what Joel would present to the congregation and to provide the session with an opportunity to comment on the presentation. The Commission made changes to the presentation in response to comments from the NAPC session to avoid misrepresenting their motivation for requesting that the Presbytery consider dismissing NAPC from the PC(USA).

Appendix G contains the text of Joel's presentation, and Appendix H contains the slides that he used during the presentation.

### **Seek a peaceful resolution and reconciliation**

At the listening session with the NAPC session on June 4, 2017, one of the questions that the Commission members asked was: "What would reconciliation with the PC(USA) look like for you?" Some of the answers included having the PC(USA) adopt the NAPC Belief Statement and affirm biblical inerrancy. The NAPC Belief Statement includes the statement: "We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible are God-breathed, without error and authoritative." It goes on to say, "we believe that [the Bible] is completely true." Appendix I contains the NAPC Belief Statement. The Commission members understood the responses to mean that reconciliation was not a possibility.

To ensure that the Commission's understanding that no reconciliation was possible, the Commission raised the topic again at the meeting with the NAPC session on January 11, 2018. At the meeting a Commission member stated that we understood that reconciliation was not a possibility. There was general agreement with that statement and no objection to it.

## **Congregation in Schism**

Because of the competing claims for the NAPC property, the Commission referred to the *Book of Order*, G-4.0207:

If there is a schism within the membership of a congregation and the presbytery is unable to effect a reconciliation or a division into separate congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the presbytery shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property because it is identified by the presbytery as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote within the congregation at the time of the schism.

### **Determination of a schism**

At its meeting on January 23, 2018, the Commission found that a schism had occurred within the membership of NAPC.

The Commission found abundant evidence of a schism that developed over a period of years. An early indication that a schism was developing appears in the NAPC session minutes of January 5, 2011, which state:

Pastor Dave led a discussion on qualifications to be a member at NAPC and to hold a leadership role. Members agreed that both to be a member and to hold a leadership role one must agree with the orthodox beliefs of Christianity. Pastor Dave will speak with one individual who appears not to hold these beliefs and ask them to step down as a small group leader.

Although this entry in the minutes is not, by itself, definitive, the Commission believe that the session's position and its subsequent actions based on this position were in violation of the Constitution of the PC(USA) and *Bush v. Presbytery of Pittsburgh, GA PJC 218-10, 2008*. The criteria for both church membership and for serving in an ordered ministry (deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament) are defined by the whole church. According to *Bush 218-10, 2008*, "no lower governing body can constitutionally define, diminish, augment or modify standards for ordination and installation of church officers." According to the *Book of Order*, G-1.0302:

A congregation shall welcome all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of his Church (F-1.0403). No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith. The Gospel leads members to extend the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the Gospel.

Another indication of a developing schism appears in an exchange recorded in the NAPC session minutes of March 7, 2012:

Garland believes the [Belief Statement] is splitting the church. He feels the Bible has had many translations over the years and therefore many of the statements in the bible are inaccurate or at the least misinterpreted.

Doug responded that the session is not splitting the church but rather certain members within the church are creating dissension.

Session minutes and correspondence between members, the session, Rev. David Milroy, and the Presbytery provide evidence of a schism in which members left, became inactive, or were encouraged to leave. Much of the conflict seems to have centered on a belief statement that the session adopted in its initial form in 2012. The 2015 version of the NAPC Belief Statement from Appendix A of the Denominational Research Committee report appears in Appendix I of this document.

The letter requesting dismissal from the PC(USA) and informing the Presbytery of the congregational vote provides further evidence of a schism within the membership of NAPC. The letter reports that of the active members present and voting, 185 favored dismissal from the PC(USA) while 28 favored remaining a congregation of the PC(USA). Although a large majority of the current membership favored leaving the PC(USA), the vote was far from unanimous, and the *Book of Order* states that the determination does not depend on which faction received a majority vote.

### **Inability to effect a reconciliation**

At its meeting on January 23, 2018, the Commission found that it was unable to effect a reconciliation of the two factions.

The position of the NAPC session was unified and firm. At the Commission's meeting with the session on June 4, 2017, Commission members heard that the NAPC leadership could not reconcile with the other faction, or with the PC(USA), without removing their view of scripture from the belief statement, which they were unwilling to do. The statement regarding scripture from the belief statement says: "We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible are God-breathed, without error and authoritative." The NAPC session insisted that biblical inerrancy is a non-negotiable belief.

### **Inability to effect a division into separate congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

At its meeting on January 23, 2018, the Commission found that it was unable to effect a division into separate congregations within the PC(USA).

The NAPC session, which represents the faction requesting to be dismissed from the PC(USA), insisted that biblical inerrancy is a non-negotiable belief. Because biblical inerrancy is not a belief of the PC(USA), the faction requesting dismissal was adamant about leaving the PC(USA).

### **Determination of the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

At its meeting on January 23, 2018, the Commission found that the faction that has expressed a desire to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) (the loyalist faction) is the true church within the PC(USA).

The Commission met with members and former members of NAPC on October 29, 2017. Many of the former members told of having left or being pushed out during the schism in NAPC that developed over a period of years. The loyalist faction of NAPC that attended the meeting and numerous others who wrote to the Commission expressed a strong desire to remain a congregation of PC(USA).

In support of the finding, the Commission cites:

"Under G-4.0207, a presbytery is obligated to serve the interests and guard the rights of the 'true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),' regardless of who is in the majority of any session or congregational vote." (PJC of the GA Remedial Case 221-08)

The true church retains the right under church law "to be recognized and to act as the congregation of the particular church. Unless and until that church is hereafter properly dissolved or dismissed by presbytery from connection with this denomination in accordance with principles stated in this opinion and that in the Anderson case, such rights will continue indefinitely in such persons and future loyalist members. Their rights under civil law, essentially to control of the church property, follow from church law as embodied in its constitution and the decisions of its courts, including this decision. If these property rights are not voluntarily acceded to by opposing claimants, they may only be vindicated in the civil courts." (Strong and Bagby v Synod of Mid-South, No. 1 – 1976, PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99)

## Entitlement to the property

At its meeting on January 23, 2018, the Commission found that the loyalist faction is entitled to the NAPC property because it is the true church within the PC(USA).

Yet, this finding alone does not determine the disposition of the property because the Commission also must act in the best interests of the Presbytery and the PC(USA).

## Disposition of Church Property

The guiding principle in the *Book of Order* for determining the disposition of the church property is G-4.0203 (the Trust Cause):

All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

According to the Trust Clause, the disposition of the NAPC property requires an assessment of the financial viability of the loyalist faction and its ability to carry on meaningful ministry and mission while operating the property.

## Property-related expenses

The outstanding balance of the mortgage for the NAPC property was \$1,521,337 as of December 31, 2017. The debt service is \$144,876 per year with the current mortgage.

Other property-related expenses in 2017 include:

Telephone/Internet/Security	\$7,903
Utilities	\$29,396
Insurance	\$4,603
Repairs and Maintenance	\$18,265
Grounds Care—Landscape	\$10,634
Grounds Care—Snow	\$1,800
Cleaning Service	\$12,350

The total property-related expenses in 2017 other than the mortgage payments was \$84,951. The combined property-related expenses for NAPC in 2017 was \$229,827. Building usage and other factors could affect some of the property-related expenses other than the mortgage payments in future years, but these numbers provide a useful guide to the operating costs of NAPC property.

## Pastoral salary and benefits

Because of Rev. David Milroy's expressed desire to leave the PC(USA), the Commission assumed that the costs associated with his position as the installed pastor of NAPC would not continue if the loyalist faction was to retain the NAPC property.

For the purpose of assessing the minimum expense of operating the NAPC property and carrying on meaningful ministry and mission, the Commission used the minimum compensation for a full-time minister. According to the Presbytery's 2018 Minimum Terms of Call, the minimum cost of a full-time minister in 2018 would be about \$67,500. The cost is not exact because it depends on the minister's mileage reimbursement.

### **Other expenses**

The Commission did not attempt to estimate other expenses involved in carrying on meaningful ministry and mission while operating the NAPC property.

### **Assessment of financial viability of the loyalist faction**

At its meeting on February 13, 2018, the Commission determined that it was satisfied with the financial viability of the loyalist faction.

Using the operating costs of the NAPC property, including its mortgage payments, and the minimum cost of a full-time minister in 2018, the minimum annual budget would be about \$300,000. This number assumes no other staff and essentially no other expenses, unless property-related expenses other than the mortgage payments could be reduced. The members of the loyalist faction at the meeting with the Commission on October 29, 2017, were confident that they would be able to sustain an annual budget of at least \$300,000.

## **Preparing to Divide a Congregation**

### **Destination of NAPC dismissal**

The report "Denominational Vision and Recommendations," which the NAPC session presented at town hall meetings with the congregation in 2016 recommended the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) as the receiving denomination following its dismissal from the PC(USA).

### **Interim report to the Presbytery**

At the Presbytery's meeting on May 15, 2018, the Commission presented an interim report on its findings and the options for dismissal. One of the options was to divide the NAPC congregation so that one of the resulting congregations could be dismissed to the EPC while the other congregation would remain a congregation of the PC(USA). It also reported that it was in the process of negotiating a plan for dividing the NAPC congregation, which would include details of how to divide the property. As part of that division, the congregation that would remain in the PC(USA) would receive the real property (the building and land) and assume the mortgage. Appendix J contains the interim report.

## **Implementation through Presbytery Action**

At the Presbytery's meeting on September 18, 2018, the Commission presented a report that recommended a set of actions that would divide the original NAPC congregation, authorize the Commission to administer the plan of division, and dismiss one of the resulting congregations to the EPC. Appendix K contains the report.

The report includes an overview of the plan of division, which covers the major issues involved in dividing the assets of the original NAPC. It also includes a considerable amount of

background information and supporting documentation so that the commissioners at the Presbytery's meeting could make an informed decision on issues that the report raised.

Because the recommended actions were the result of extended negotiations, the motions that the Commission brought to the Presbytery were not to be amended. Although *Robert's Rules of Order* does not recognize main motions that cannot be amended, the practical effect in such a situation is that amending the motion is equivalent to rejecting it.

The Presbytery approved by voice vote and without amendment all the motions that the Commission brought to it in its report. The only change that occurred at the meeting was that the last part of the motion dealing with dismissing the congregation was pulled out as a separate motion by the stated clerk:

The Commission moved that the Presbytery dismiss the New Albany Presbyterian Church resulting from the division to the EPC, pending approval of its petition to be received by the EPC, the transfer of members into that congregation, and its execution of a definitive agreement with the Presbytery that incorporates the terms of the Plan of Division.

After the Presbytery divided the original NAPC congregation, the Commission began contacting the current members of NAPC to request that they assign their membership to one of the congregations resulting from the division. Appendix L contains the letter that the Commission mailed to the list of members that it received from NAPC, and Appendix M contains the postcard that was enclosed with the letter. The letter clarifies that the congregation retaining the name New Albany Presbyterian Church will be dismissed to the EPC, while the congregation that will remain a congregation of the PC(USA) will have the name Rose Run Presbyterian Church (RRPC).

Because many of the people interested in being members of RRPC were not current members of NAPC prior to its division and therefore could not simply assign their membership to RRPC, the Commission sent another letter to those who had expressed an interest in RRPC. Appendix N contains the letter, which explains options for becoming a member of RRPC.

## **Original Jurisdiction**

One of the actions of the Presbytery at its meeting on September 18, 2018, was to authorize the Commission to assume original jurisdiction of Rose Run Presbyterian Church for the purpose of installing a session and a board of deacons and for conducting church business until its session had been installed.

The task of installing a session and a board of deacons was not a simple one. After establishing the membership of RRPC, a congregational meeting was held to elect members of a nominating committee that was formed according to the bylaws that were inherited from the original NAPC. The nominating committee then selected a slate of six elders and six deacons. Another congregational meeting was held to elect the elders and deacons. Because of the difficult history that led to the creation of RRPC, the Commission took its responsibility for training and examining the elders- and deacons-elect very seriously.

After the Commission approved the examinations of all the elders- and deacons-elect, the Commission effectively relinquished original jurisdiction on January 27, 2019, when the elected session and board of deacons were installed at a service of ordination and installation.

## **Dismissal of the Administrative Commission**

Having completed all of its duties, the Commission will be dismissed at the February 19, 2019, meeting of the Presbytery.

## **Appendix A: The Letter from NAPC Requesting Dismissal**



Rick Hays, Clerk  
Presbytery of Scioto Valley  
6230 Busch Blvd Suite 250  
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Dear Rick:

Per our conversation, this letter serves to inform the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (PSV) that New Albany Presbyterian Church has voted to seek ecclesiastical dismissal from the PSV and the Presbyterian Church (USA) under the PSV's Gracious Dismissal Policy.

Over the past two years, the NAPC Session has researched, considered and prayed for discernment related to our place in the PC (USA). As we walked through that effort, it became more and more apparent to the NAPC Session that our congregation has substantial differences from the PC (USA) when it comes to the most crucial of matters: theology and mission. On that basis, the NAPC Session voted unanimously to put to the congregation a recommendation that it vote to seek ecclesiastical dismissal from the PC (USA), and to do so under the PSV Gracious Dismissal Policy. To do this, the NAPC Session led our congregation through the following process:

- Announced at both worship services the recommendations of the NAPC Session;
- Prepared educational materials on this matter and provided them to our congregation;
- Held multiple NAPC Session-led town halls for questions, answers and comments; and
- Had current Ruling Elders visit nearly every small group to answer questions.

At the end of this process, a special congregational meeting was held after worship on Sunday, November 6. At that meeting, active members present voted 185 to 28 (86.8%) in favor of seeking dismissal from the PSV and the PC (USA) under the PSV Gracious Dismissal Policy, as well as provisional ballots cast 9 to 1 in favor.

Please contact the church office at your convenience so we can all move forward in an expeditious and gracious manner. Representatives of the NAPC Session are ready and more than willing to meet with you and/or any other PSV representatives as you see fit.

In Christ,  
The NAPC Session

New Albany Presbyterian Church exists to glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ.

## **Appendix B: The Presbytery's 2011 Gracious Separation Policy**

**PRESBYTERY OF SCIOTO VALLEY**  
**Committee on Ministry**

**POLICY FOR GRACIOUS SEPARATION OF CONGREGATIONS**  
**FROM THE PRESBYTERY OF SCIOTO VALLEY**

Approved by the Presbytery  
November 15, 2011  
Addendum Added May 15, 2012

**Introduction**

As Christians, as the Church, we embody Christ in the here and now. We celebrate Christ's resurrection. We rejoice in the living, Triune God. Our hands, our hearts, our minds, and our spirits become the vessels, the instruments, which God calls and uses to share God's blessings and love with each other and the whole of creation.

*"On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Cor. 12:22-27)*

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:4-7)*

However, when disagreement, sometimes vehement, pulls at the community, God is still with us. As God's children, we are gathered up and asked to extend forgiveness and strive for reconciliation. The gift of grace, which we have been so generously and freely given, is to be shared with one another. The other cheek is to be turned. The merciful and the peacemakers will be and are blessed.

We, individually and corporately, stand in the need of grace. Differences which are untended can become chasms that divide us. As Presbyterians, we have struggled for decades with certain theological and Biblical teachings, and we realize that persons of strong faith and understanding can differ in their understandings of Scripture and in ministry practice. These differences can divide us. We hope that what we share in common – namely, faith in the living God, Father, Son and Spirit; Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer; a deep and rich shared history, and a dedication to the great ends of the

church - will sustain us in communion with one another. We have much to learn from one another. The Spirit is always at work within us, calling us to listen in all humility to one another. We fervently pray to sustain the connectional nature of the faith community called the Presbyterian Church (USA). *"With God, all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26)

If a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) desires to leave the denomination, God first of all weeps for and with us as the body of Christ. The body's gifts are separated from each other; both the congregation and the denomination suffer the loss. To reconcile and to heal is our deepest hope and prayer.

Being members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to reconciliation and unity. A congregation's request to separate from a presbytery and denomination is of great import, and must be considered with compassion, thoughtfulness, and prayer. Our hope is that there may be a way to continue together. Please know that the door will always be open to you and that we in Scioto Valley Presbytery stand with open hands and hearts toward your congregation.

Together, we are the body of Christ; we are God's Church; we are the instruments of the Holy Spirit. As a Presbytery, we pray for unity, but commit ourselves to working with you through any separation in the name of the God who so graciously loves us and as a denomination, as churches and as individuals, gives us the gift of life.

The Book of Order provides the guiding principles under which we operate.

### **Guiding Principles**

- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is one denomination. [G-1.0102]
- All church property is held in trust for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). [G-4.0203]
- A congregation is required to have written permission from the presbytery
  1. To sell or encumber any of its property.
  2. To lease any property for more than five years. [G-4.0206]
- Presbyteries have the express power to dismiss a congregation. [G3.0301i]
- It is the duty of the presbytery, each congregation and each Presbyterian to follow the biblical model of conciliation and mediation rather than seek judicial solutions to church disagreements. [D-1.0103]

### **Assumptions**

1. Presbyteries are called to consider questions concerning church property in light of the unique circumstances of each situation, and to use good judgment and all appropriate resources to the glory of God.
2. All actions of sessions, presbyteries and their members shall conform to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Nothing in this document will limit or attempt to supersede the Constitution.
3. Our denomination is a connectional church, with a time tested connectional polity. Within that polity the presbytery is the primary unit of governance.
4. All property held by congregations or by the presbytery is held in trust for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The presbytery cannot ignore, abdicate or delegate these stewardship responsibilities. The presbytery has the sole discretion to determine terms and conditions of dismissal, should that be necessary.
5. Neither a session nor a congregation may act unilaterally to separate from the presbytery or the denomination. However it is within the constitution to request proper dismissal. Any actions taken by session or congregation to vote to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are out of order, unless requested by the presbytery.
6. A presbytery has the authority to dismiss a particular congregation to another Reformed body.
7. Before any actions are considered the presbytery is bound to consult with the leadership and membership of the congregation, and to assist it in presenting information, which is true, fair, and balanced.
8. It is the responsibility of everyone to seek peaceful resolution of all differences, and to achieve reconciliation where possible. These actions further the six "Great Ends of the Church" [F-1.0304]. Civil litigation will be avoided unless it is deemed the only way to defend the Constitution.

## **Process**

When the Committee on Ministry or the Executive Presbyter is notified that a particular congregation is experiencing schism or is in a state of dissatisfaction so that it is considering separation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbytery of Scioto Valley will take action in these ways.

1. The Executive Presbyter, the Council, or the Committee on Ministry [COM] may request that the Moderator appoint a Response Team to give immediate pastoral care and to work with a particular congregation in its struggle. This team will be composed of the Executive or the Stated Clerk, a member of council, and a

member of COM [usually the liaison to the congregation]. No one shall be appointed to work with a congregation of which they are a member or where a family member belongs or attends regularly.

2. This team will not enter into any binding agreements on behalf of the presbytery but will
  - a. Through the Session leadership seek ways that the congregation and the presbytery can continue to work together to the glory of God.
  - b. Seek information, working broadly to determine whether a variety of opinions are held within the congregation.
  - c. Will share appropriate presbytery policies and work to establish ways in which the congregation and presbytery can continue to work together.
  - d. Will determine any need to request presbytery to authorize the appointment of an Administrative Commission and will continue to keep Council, COM and Trustees informed of progress.
3. The Response Team will normally complete its work in 120 days and may request more time if necessary.
4. At the direction of the presbytery the Moderator may appoint an Administrative Commission to continue work with a particular congregation. The Commission will be charged to establish communication with the staff and the congregation, to work to understand the congregation's concerns and actions and make any recommendations it deems necessary to the presbytery about further action.
5. Powers to be granted to the Commission may include authority
  - a. To convene boards and committees of the congregation, including Session.
  - b. To interview pastors, staff, leaders, members of the congregation.
  - c. To have access to pertinent church records.
  - d. To determine whether a congregational meeting is called for to advise the congregation concerning the relationship of the congregation to the presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
    - i. To call such a meeting and to provide moderator and clerk for that meeting.
    - ii. To report the record of this meeting to the Council, the COM and the Board of Trustees.
  - e. To recommend to the presbytery any action concerning the dissolution or dismissal of the congregation to another Reformed denomination and appropriate disposition of all property.
  - f. To request such other powers as may be deemed necessary.
6. The Commission shall have the authority to consult with Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly staff when necessary. They may retain legal counsel, and consult with appropriate committees of the presbytery in order to do their work.
7. The commission shall usually complete its job in 9 months but may petition presbytery for additional time.

## **Conclusion**

It is the goal of this policy and of the presbytery to work with its constituent congregations in peace for the glory of God.

*"Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."  
– Matthew 18:20*

Addendum (May 15, 2012)

**Presbytery's Guidelines for implementing  
"appropriate disposition of all property" in Process 5 e of  
"Policy for Gracious Separation of Congregations from the Presbytery of Scioto  
Valley"**

To allow the Presbytery and the departing congregation to act graciously to one another, the Administrative Commission will negotiate clear and specific terms by which the Presbytery will make a gift of the property to the congregation and the congregation will make a financial contribution to the Presbytery. These gifts will tangibly recognize the congregation's and Presbytery's history of ministry together, and will bless one another for their future ministries.

These terms will take into account the following guidelines:

- Consideration shall be given to any denominational grants made to the congregation, either to plant the congregation or to further its mission and ministry.
- Reasonable terms of payment shall be negotiated (e.g. paid over three years, five years maximum), ensuring that the departing church's payment is properly secured prior to departure.
- Final terms shall be determined using one of the following guidelines, being careful not to burden either the congregation or the Presbytery:
  - o 5 times current year's assessed per capita
  - o 5% of total assets (cash, investments, property & equipment)
  - o 20% of prior year's actual offerings
  - o consideration of any outstanding denominational loans.
- If negotiations reach a point of "no progress", it is strongly recommended that final resolution be pursued through binding arbitration as opposed to the courts.

## **Appendix C: The Letter Informing the Commission of a Group Opposing Dismissal**

**From:** Nancy Ferguson  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 09, 2017 7:48 AM  
**To:** Wilson, James A.  
**Cc:** Jeannie Harsh  
**Subject:** New Albany Presbyterian Church

February 8, 2017

Mr. James A. Wilson and  
The Administrative Commission of the Presbytery  
c/o The Presbytery of Scioto Valley  
6230 Busch Blvd Suite 250  
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Dear Jim and Members of the Administrative Commission,

As I am sure you know, the congregation of New Albany Presbyterian Church (NAPC) voted in November to leave the Presbyterian Church USA denomination and join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church denomination. After the vote was taken, many current and former members of NAPC met to discuss the possibility of planting a second Presbyterian church in New Albany--one which would be a part of the PC-USA denomination. The group decided to move forward towards this goal.

It is our understanding that the Administrative Commission of the Presbytery will soon enter negotiations with NAPC in hopes of reaching a separation agreement as provided in the Gracious Dismissal policy. We would like to submit some historical and other information which you and the Administrative Commission might find useful.

#### History of New Albany Presbyterian Church

In January, 1999 the Presbytery of Scioto Valley voted to found a new church in New Albany and it became known as New Albany Presbyterian Church (NAPC). The Presbytery of Scioto Valley hired Rev. Dick Riedel, a retired Pastor from Lancaster Presbyterian Church, to organize the new congregation. Rev. Riedel organized the church and led the services for about 2 and a half years. In 2002, New Albany Presbyterian hired its first permanent Pastor, the Rev. Paul Coats.

Unfortunately, Rev. Coats was not a good fit for our congregation. When the church almost failed in the fall of 2003, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (with the help of Worthington Presbyterian Church) provided temporary pastoral services for New Albany Presbyterian Church enabling it to continue. In the spring of 2004 the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (through Rev. Phil Hazelton) introduced NAPC to Pastor David Milroy. Upon his graduation from

seminary school, Pastor Milroy was ordained by the Presbyterian Church USA and hired by New Albany Presbyterian to serve as its pastor.

In 2005, NAPC members started a building campaign, "Faith Taking Shape", to purchase land and build a new church building. In 2011 the Presbytery of Scioto Valley voted to sell a camp in the Hocking Hills and donate \$500,000 to New Albany Presbyterian for the purchase of land for a church. Under an agreement between the Presbytery and New Albany Presbyterian, the land and building were to be owned by the Presbytery. Ground was broken in June of 2011.

A few months before New Albany Presbyterian moved into its new church building in August of 2012, Pastor Milroy asked the members to adopt a "Statement of Beliefs" for distribution to prospective members. Informational meetings were held and some members objected to the inclusion of certain theological principles set forth in the proposed "Statement of Beliefs". A few weeks later, the "Statement of Beliefs" was "adopted" over the objection of some members. In the coming weeks, some members of NAPC began quietly leaving the church, despite the fact most of them had just made significant contributions towards construction of the new building during the previous year.

As predicted, NAPC membership grew significantly after the doors to the new church building opened in 2012. At the same time, many of the original members of NAPC left to go to other churches in the PC-USA denomination or to other local churches in New Albany.

Although we do not have access to the membership records for 2012, we know that approximately 232 people were listed as contributors to the building campaign in the new church program. Only about 90 of those people (39%) attend NAPC six years later, including 8 members of Pastor Milroy's extended family.

In 2015 and 2016, under the leadership of Pastor David Milroy, the Elders of NAPC began discussing whether NAPC should continue membership in the Presbyterian Church USA denomination or should join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church denomination. Following the recommendation of its Elders, the congregation voted to join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church denomination on November 6, 2016.

#### Formation of a new congregation

In December, 2016 some members and former members of NAPC began discussing the idea of forming a new Presbyterian Church in New Albany-- one that would be affiliated with the PC-USA denomination. After much discussion, thought and prayer, the group decided to move forward with forming a "second congregation" if we could get use of the Presbytery's church building on a full-time or part-time basis.

In January, the group began contacting people who had left NAPC between 2012 and 2016 to see if they would support the formation of a new congregation. As of February 1, 2017 the group had contacted about 50 people who indicated they will support the new congregation. About 12 other people have led us to believe they will join us, but are waiting to see if the new

congregation is formed, before making a final decision. Our group will be reaching out to other former members in February and March, and expect to add at least 25 or 30 more people to the list of supporters.

We also believe many current members of NAPC will choose to join the new congregation, if the new congregation has access to the Presbytery's church building. With the exception of 6 or 8 current members who verbally opposed leaving the PC-USA denomination last November, we have specifically avoided contacting people who are currently attending NAPC. We hope to keep discord between the two congregations to a minimum and wish NAPC the best in serving its followers and mission.

In conclusion, it is our hope that the Administrative Commission will retain the Presbytery's building in New Albany, for use by a new Presbyterian congregation which hopes to affiliate with the Presbyterian Church USA and the Presbytery of Scioto Valley.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Nancy I Ferguson

## **Appendix D: The Invitation for NAPC Members to Attend a Listening Session**



## The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

4131 North High Street, Suite B, Columbus, OH 43214

614-847-0565 • 800-244-7207 • Fax: 614-847-4359

[www.psvonline.org](http://www.psvonline.org)

July 26, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In November 2016, your session requested that the Presbytery of Scioto Valley dismiss NAPC from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In response to the session's request, the presbytery at its meeting on February 21, 2017, authorized the formation of an administrative commission for the gracious separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley.

The administrative commission has been charged

- to establish communication with the staff and the congregation,
- to work to understand the congregation's concerns and actions,
- to assist in presenting information that is true, fair, and balanced, and
- to make any recommendations it deems necessary to the presbytery about further action, including the appropriate disposition of all property.

Members of the administrative commission have met with Rev. Milroy and with the session to listen to their concerns and their reasons for seeking dismissal. Our next step is to meet with the congregation. We will be conducting listening sessions on August 24 (4:00-9:00 PM), August 26 (9:00 AM-noon), August 27 (6:00-9:00 PM), and August 31 (4:00-9:00 PM). Two or three members of our commission will meet with individuals, families, or small groups—whatever works best for you. To schedule a half-hour session, please contact Yvonne Gustafson at [xxxxxxxxx@gmail.com](mailto:xxxxxxxxx@gmail.com) or xxx-xxx-xxxx (but do not call after 9:00 PM). Our goal is to talk with as many members of the congregation as possible.

During our listening sessions, we would like to hear your thoughts about being dismissed to another Reformed denomination. Some of our questions will be:

- How do you feel about leaving the PC(U.S.A.) for another Reformed denomination?
- What are the most important issues involved in deciding to seek dismissal?
- What would be the benefits and drawbacks of leaving the PC(U.S.A.)?
- If NAPC leaves the PC(U.S.A.) and moves to a new building, what would you do?

We understand that the process of seeking dismissal is slow and challenging, both emotionally and spiritually. We pray with you that the Spirit would guide all of us in our discussions. With our focus firmly on Jesus Christ, let us seek to discern God's will for the future of NAPC, that all may be to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Brian Harroff, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams, Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson,

the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley

Please feel free to contact either of the co-moderators:

Joel Esala	<a href="mailto:xxxxxxxxx@xxxx.us">xxxxxxxxx@xxxx.us</a>	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Mark Johnson	<a href="mailto:xxx@xxxxxxxxx.com">xxx@xxxxxxxxx.com</a>	xxx-xxx-xxxx

## **Appendix E: The Invitation for the Group Opposing Dismissal to Attend a Listening Session**



## The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

4131 North High Street, Suite B, Columbus, OH 43214

614-847-0565 • 800-244-7207 • Fax: 614-847-4359

[www.psvonline.org](http://www.psvonline.org)

October 9, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In November 2016, the session of New Albany Presbyterian Church requested that the Presbytery of Scioto Valley dismiss NAPC from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In response to the session's request, the presbytery at its meeting on February 21, 2017, authorized the formation of an administrative commission for the gracious separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley.

One of our tasks is to determine if there exists a faction within the membership of the congregation that wishes to remain in the PC(U.S.A.). The *Book of Order* says: "the presbytery shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property because it is identified by the presbytery as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote within the congregation" (G-4.0207). Yet, this statement alone does not determine the disposition of the congregation's property because the commission also must act in the best interests of the presbytery and the PC(U.S.A.). For instance, it would not be in the presbytery's best interest to approve the mortgage on a building without being confident that a congregation is able to make its payments. Neither would it be in the best interest of the congregation. Having an appropriate building for church activities is quite beneficial, except if the financial burden of its property prevents a congregation from doing effective ministry.

Because a faction within the membership of New Albany Presbyterian Church wishes to remain in the PC(U.S.A.), we would like to meet with as many members of this group as possible. We will be conducting a listening session on October 29 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM in a large meeting room at the New Albany branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. Its address is 200 Market Street in New Albany.

During our listening session, we would like to hear your thoughts relating to the request of NAPC to be dismissed to another Reformed denomination. Some of our questions will be:

- What is your vision for the future ministry of a PC(U.S.A.) congregation in New Albany?
- How would it affect that vision to receive the NAPC building (and mortgage), but little money?
- How would it affect that vision to receive a financial settlement, but not the NAPC building?
- What would be the benefits of gathering as a worshipping community as we continue our work?
- What other issues do we need to consider in our work?

We understand that the process that we must follow for a church seeking dismissal is slow and challenging, both emotionally and spiritually. We pray with you that the Spirit would guide all of us in our discussions. With our focus firmly on Jesus Christ, let us seek to discern God's will for the future of NAPC, that all may be to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams, Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson,

the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley

## **Appendix F: The Invitation to Attend the Informational Session**



## The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

4131 North High Street, Suite B, Columbus, OH 43214

614-847-0565 • 800-244-7207 • Fax: 614-847-4359

[www.psvonline.org](http://www.psvonline.org)

December 27, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In November 2016, your session requested that the Presbytery of Scioto Valley engage with NAPC in its process of determining whether to seek an action from the Presbytery dismissing NAPC from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In response to the session's request, the Presbytery at its meeting on February 21, 2017, authorized the formation of an administrative commission to consider whether or not to recommend dismissal of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley under the Presbytery's gracious separation policy.

To date, among its various activities, the commission has met with the leadership and the congregation of NAPC to understand their concerns and their reasons for requesting that the Presbytery consider dismissal. Our next step is to present information that, in the commission's view, is true, fair, and balanced regarding the issues that have led NAPC to seek dismissal. An essential part of the Presbytery's process is a willingness on the part of members of the congregation to hear and consider this information. The commission will conduct an informational session for members and friends of NAPC on January 14 from 3:00 to 4:30 PM. We have listened to your concerns and your reasons for seeking dismissal; we request that you consider our response before we proceed with the next steps in our process.

The process of seeking dismissal by the Presbytery continues to be emotionally and spiritually demanding for everyone involved. We pray with you that the Spirit would guide all of us in our discussions. With our focus firmly on Jesus Christ, let us seek to discern God's will for the future of NAPC, that all may be to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams, Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson, the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley

Please feel free to contact either of the co-moderators:

Joel Esala	xxx-xxx-xxxx	xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com
Mark Johnson	xxx-xxx-xxxx	xxx@xxxxxxxx.com

## **Appendix G: The Text of the Presentation at the Informational Session**

**Informational Meeting with New Albany Presbyterian Church and the Administrative  
Commission of the Presbytery of the Scioto Valley**

**January 14, 2018**

Thank you for coming today. On behalf of the Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of the Scioto Valley, we appreciate you taking time to hear from us. For the better part of the past year we have been tasked by the Presbytery to evaluate the request made by your Session to be graciously dismissed from the PC(USA). This request was made by your Session in November of 2016, and our Commission was formed at the next Presbytery meeting in February 2017. We have been meeting every other week since March 2017. It has been a lot of work, but we are honored to do it. Church unity is of the utmost importance, and difficult though it may be, we consider this work the work of Christ.

Since our first meeting with David Milroy on April 6, 2017, we have sat down and heard the concerns of your staff, Session, and church members. In August we hosted listening sessions with 76 people from NAPC for over 40 hours of total listening time. It is important that we base our work on what we hear from you directly. Too often in discussions across theological divides, Christians talk about each other but do not take the time to actually listen to one another. It takes courage to listen to one another, no matter where you stand on the issues. It takes courage for you to be here today. The Apostle Paul tells us to patiently bear with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2b-3). Maintaining unity and peace has been the explicit goal of our work.

In listening to you, it's clear that there is much to be admired about NAPC. Your stated mission is "to glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ." It is clear that this is not a mission statement on paper alone. It is lived in your life together. There is a passion for Christ that is evident at this church. A common refrain we heard were people saying things like "I grew up in church, but until I came to NAPC, I didn't know what it truly meant to follow Christ." What a beautiful testimony! There is a passion for the Word of God at NAPC and a desire to actively follow Christ in your daily life.

I personally relate to many of your experiences. I grew up in a Lutheran church that gave me a strong foundation in the faith, but when I went to college I joined a passionate, discipleship-oriented church, where it felt like I learned what it really meant to follow Christ. As a Resident Advisor at Ohio State, I would stay up at night and walk through the halls of my 50 residents and lay a hand on each person's door, praying that Jesus might enter their lives and bring them to a saving faith. I would get up early with my friends and meet at the Ohio Union to read Scripture and pray. At night, my friends and I would go up to the top of the parking garage on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and pray that God might open the hearts of students across the campus. I feel a similar passion for Christ here at NAPC.

## Denominational Considerations

In addition to telling us about the culture of NAPC, some of you shared concerns about the Presbyterian Church (USA). In August of 2014, the Session of NAPC formed the Denominational Research Committee (DRC) to explore the “core principals and future goals of both NAPC and the PCUSA.” In September 2015, the DRC submitted their findings in a paper entitled “The Report of the Denominational Research Committee.” Those of you who have read it know that it is a lengthy document that if addressed point by point would have us here for hours. Yet we would be remiss if we did not spend some time addressing the report’s primary concerns.

### *Biblical Authority and the Confession of 1967*

The DRC report states that NAPC and the PC(USA) have different understandings of Biblical authority. The evidences cited as the basis of this claim do not tell the whole story. The NAPC Belief Statement affirms the 66 books of the Bible as God-breathed, without error and authoritative, not as one authority amongst many but the authority over the rest of the created world. The PC(USA) in contrast is said to place individual conscience above the authority of the Bible. **We strongly dispute this claim.** The DRC report’s primary piece of evidence is as follows:

The Confession of 1967 used different language to describe the Bible than the confessions that preceded it, saying that it **contains** the Word of God but that it is “nevertheless the words of men.”<sup>1</sup>

The report puts particular emphasis on the word “contains” placing it in bold font. Yet the Confession of 1967, which was part of the Book of Confessions long before this congregation was formed, never says the Bible contains the word of God. A simple word search of the confession will reveal that neither “contain” nor “contains” appears. It is true that the Confession of 1967 says the Scriptures are “nevertheless the words of men” but it helps to understand this phrase in context. The full quote is:

The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel... The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God’s work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the

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<sup>1</sup> “The Report of the Denominational Research Committee,” 8.

cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding.<sup>2</sup>

In context we see that contrary to the DRC report's claim, **the Confession of 1967 does affirm the Scriptures as the written word of God**, the authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, not as one witness amongst others but the witness without parallel. In this regard, the "Sources of Authority" pictorial used in NAPC membership classes agrees with the Confession of 1967.

The Confession's statement about the Scripture being the words of men, conditioned by the times they were written **does not weaken Biblical authority** but serves as a helpful interpretive key. When God speaks in Isaiah 41:9 that he called Israel from the earth's "farthest corners," we recognize that the ancient world understood the earth to be flat and having corners. As cosmology advanced, more people believed the earth is round and without corners. What is the Christian to do? One approach is to continue to affirm a flat earth in spite of scientific evidence. Another approach is to say the Bible is full of errors and cannot be trusted. A third way is to affirm with the Confession of 1967 that the Scriptures are both the written word of God and written by people in specific times and places with their cultural lenses. Recognizing this does not weaken scriptural authority, but simply honors the Bible's purpose—to lead us to Christ and God's work of reconciliation in him, not to teach cosmology. Or as Galileo said, "The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." The Confession of 1967 is not an innovative liberal development but a faithful restatement of John Calvin's doctrine of accommodation outlined in the *Institutes of Christian Religion*. Calvin says that like a nurse with an infant, God speaks to us in a "lisp" accommodating divine knowledge to us in a way we can understand.<sup>3</sup> The way God lisps to us is through the words of people. What other words do we have? God graciously accommodates divine revelation to us that we might hear the word of God. This is what the Confession of 1967 affirms concerning the Bible and is classic Reformed theology.

The NAPC Belief Statement says the Scriptures are "without error." The Book of Confessions never uses these words to describe the Bible. This is in large part because the doctrine of inerrancy was a 20<sup>th</sup> century interpretation of 2 Timothy and is not historic Reformed theology. The Westminster Confession of Faith says the Bible is, "given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life" and speaks of the Word of God as "infallible truth" but never says it is without error.<sup>4</sup> If the language of inerrancy is essential to NAPC, you should know that the EPC will be of no help in this matter. Neither the Westminster Confessions, nor the EPC essentials document speak of the Scriptures as inerrant. Perhaps there is room for reconciliation on this matter between NAPC and the PC(USA) after all.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Confessions*, "The Confession of 1967," 9.27, 9.29.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.13.1.

<sup>4</sup> *The Book of Confessions*, "The Westminster Confession of Faith," 6.002, 6.005.

## *Ordination Questions in the PC(USA)*

The DRC report also claims, “Ordination candidates were to vow only that they be guided by the Scriptures and the confessions of the church.”<sup>5</sup> I am not sure exactly what the committee had in mind here, but this is not what ordination candidates are asked in the PC(USA). The constitutional question concerning the Scriptures asks the following: “Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?”<sup>6</sup> Those who do not affirm this question are not ordained, be they ruling elders, deacons or ministers of Word and Sacrament. This question says nothing about being guided by Scripture but to accept them as authoritative in the Church and in one’s own life.

The fourth ordination question asks, “Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?”<sup>7</sup> If this is what the DRC report is referencing, it does so mistakenly. The question requires obedience to Christ under the authority of Scripture while being guided by the confessions. In effect the question assumes a hierarchy of authority—we obey Jesus Christ above all and do so under the authority of the Scripture while being guided by the confessions. The question rightly implies the confessions have a secondary status to the authority of Scripture and Christ. Despite what the DRC report says, candidates for ordination in the PC(USA) are never asked to be merely guided by Scriptures. ***They are required to live under Scripture’s authority.***

## *Scandalous Events and Surveys*

The DRC report mentions a series of specific events intended to illustrate the PC(USA) believes in “just about anything and absolutely nothing, all at once.”<sup>8</sup> None of these events are given a context, and context matters greatly. The 1993 “Re-Imagining God” conference is cited where worship leaders are alleged to have prayed to a pagan goddess Sophia. What is not mentioned is that this was not a PC(USA) conference at all but an interfaith conference with over 40 denominations represented. PC(USA) supported the conference financially, but subsequently repudiated it. The director of the Women’s Ministry Unit of the PC(USA) was removed from her job as a result, and the 1994 General Assembly said the conference went “beyond the boundaries” of Reformed Theology. What else does church discipline look like but this? The denomination repudiated the conference, removed staff and officially stated the conference was beyond orthodoxy. If anything, this is an example of church discipline working properly and a sign that the PC(USA) takes the boundaries of its theology seriously.

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<sup>5</sup> “The Report of the Denominational Research Committee,” 8.

<sup>6</sup> *The Book of Order*, W-4.0404b.

<sup>7</sup> *The Book of Order*, W-4.0404d.

<sup>8</sup> “The Report of the Denominational Research Committee,” 12.

In addition the report cites a 2011 survey of wherein 41% of PC(USA) pastors agreed with the statement, “Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.” This is said to be evidence that the PC(USA) does not affirm Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation. Yet surveys are only as good as they are written, and the statement “Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved” is problematic at best. Instead of assuming the worst of these pastors, we might ask, “how would a Christian answer ‘false’ to that statement without diminishing the work of Christ?” One might think of Abraham and all the covenant people of the Old Testament, born before Christ appeared in flesh. During his own lifetime, Abraham would likely have answered false to this question since he knew only of Yahweh and not Jesus Christ. We can do some theologizing with the Apostle Paul and say that though he did not know the name of Jesus, Abraham’s justifying faith was in substance the same as our faith in Christ (Romans 4:1-25). Yet such an argument takes nuance and development as Paul demonstrates in Romans. Such nuance is precisely what the survey question did not allow.

We can also imagine answering false to this question when thinking of children who die before they profess faith in Christ. It is not obvious that a child who dies at birth or in infancy is a follower of Christ. Must we then conclude that all children who die before they profess faith will be eternally damned? Once again we can theologize as to how God’s grace might reach people beyond the ordinary means of an outward profession of faith, but this takes nuance and explanation, which the survey question does not allow. We should note that the Westminster Confession maintains that salvation can extend beyond the ordinary means to reach those whom God calls by stating, “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.”<sup>9</sup> Westminster makes room for people to be saved by Christ through the Spirit without an outward call to faith. Surely one can answer false to the statement, “Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved” with such people in mind.

In 2002 the 214<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PC(USA) voted with 97% approval the document *Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ*, which outlines a clear and nuanced understanding of salvation through Jesus Christ. It states, “Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in him. No one is saved by virtue of inherent goodness or admirable living, for “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” [Ephesians 2:8]. No one is saved apart from God’s gracious redemption in Jesus Christ.” Clearly the PC(USA) affirms Jesus Christ as God’s only means of salvation.

The survey question, like all of the events cited as evidence of aberrant theology need to be understood in context. Each could be dealt with at length, but it is safe to conclude that the DRC report takes these specific events out of context and puts the worst interpretation

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<sup>9</sup> *Book of Confessions*, The Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. XII, 6.066.

upon them, leading NAPC to falsely conclude that the PC(USA) no longer affirms the authority of Scripture and theologically makes all things permissible. This is simply not true.

The problem with this entire section of the DRC paper is its relevance for NAPC. None of these events took place since the founding of NAPC in 2001. The report claims that the undermining of scriptural authority began over 100 years ago, yet NAPC has only existed for 17 years. Did the pastor and elders of NAPC not understand who the PC(USA) was prior to taking their ordination vows to be governed by the PC(USA)'s polity? If everything the DRC report claims had already taken place prior to the founding of NAPC, we should ask, what has changed in the PC(USA) since the founding of NAPC? The answer is same-sex marriage, so to that we must turn.

### *Same-Sex Marriage in the PC(USA)*

In June 2014 at the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the PC(USA), amendment 14-F for the Directory for Worship in the Book of Order was approved. This amendment allows Ministers of Word and Sacrament wider discretion in whose weddings they may conduct and Sessions wider discretion in whose wedding it may host. That discretion could now include same-sex marriages. **There is nothing in the amendment that compels any minister to conduct a wedding against his or her judgment, nor a Session to host one against its judgment.** The amendment makes space for those ministers and Sessions who wish to participate in same-sex marriages without compelling any pastor or church to do so.

In August 2014, at the very first Session meeting of NAPC after the General Assembly, the Session formed the Denominational Research Committee. The timing of these two events is connected as attested in the minutes of that meeting. Though the expressed reasons to seek dismissal from the PC(USA) are not simply same-sex marriage, this is the most significant polity change since the formation of NAPC. For many, this issue is a crisis of conscience wherein our love for the LGBTQ community and understanding of scripture collide.

Can a Christian affirm same-sex marriage not in spite of the Bible but because of it? Not that many years ago, I would have said absolutely not. I had read the Bible cover-to-cover multiple times over. I had studied every Scripture passage relevant to the issue. The answer as far as I was concerned was clearly no. I have since changed my mind, as have many others in our denomination and in the church at large. The reason I changed my mind was because of those same Scriptures, which when reexamined led me to the conclusion that the Bible supports same-sex marriage. Clearly, the PC(USA) is not in agreement on these matters. Not everyone in this room is in agreement on these matters. NAPC is not the only church in the denomination that opposes the actions taken at the General Assembly in 2014. The question is, must we separate in light of our different interpretations, or can we stay together because of our common faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

In my journey to move from non-affirming to affirming of same-sex marriage, I read many very helpful books that clearly demonstrate one need not forsake the Bible to affirm same-sex marriage. In particular, I commend to you Mark Achtemeier's book, *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*. Achtemeier is a self-proclaimed evangelical and was one of the leaders in the PC(USA) preventing LGBTQ ordination until he changed his mind. His short but helpful book addresses all of the relevant Scriptures in the debate. If you are here today and have never heard a defense for same-sex marriage based on the Bible, you owe it to yourself to hear one. The issue is too important to leave unexamined.

In brief, the Biblical argument for same-sex marriage is that the seven or eight scriptures that appear to address same-sex behavior do speak negatively about it. Yet in each case what is being condemned is not at all analogous to two people committing themselves to one another in a covenant relationship. Whether it is the gang rape condemned in Genesis 19 or the idolatrous activity of Romans 1, the prohibitions speak of something other than committed, covenant love between two people. In light of the trauma endured by those who have tried to change their orientation, and the fact that celibacy is a gift in the Bible not a punishment, blessing a committed relationship between two people of the same sex is the most loving way to care for some members of our church. You may not find this argument convincing. I did not the first time I heard it, but it is worthy of taking time to carefully reflect on whether passages like Genesis 19 and Romans 1 really do apply to people seeking to honor God by faithfully committing to one person in marriage.

What we can say for sure is that the church has changed its mind about many things over the years, from the institution of slavery, to the inclusion of women in ministry. The church is always reforming and doing so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the authority of Scripture. It is worth listening to the voices of those who wish to uphold both Biblical authority and same-sex marriage, even if we do not ultimately agree. The question that you the people of NAPC must decide is not about conferences from the 90s or whether the PC(USA) believes the Bible. The question you must decide is if a Christians can remain in fellowship with one another while reaching different conclusions concerning same-sex marriage? That is the decisive question.

Theological disagreement, even on important matters, is not a reason to separate. Doctrinal differences have always existed in Christ's church, and they are addressed with right teaching, not separation. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul addresses the very heart and soul of Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apparently, there were some in Corinth who denied the resurrection. Paul does not say such differences are of no matter. He clearly affirms Christ's resurrection in the most extended theological discussion of the resurrection in all of the New Testament. Yet he does not recommend church discipline in this case, nor does he hesitate to call the Corinthian church, "those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours."<sup>10</sup> Paul does not hesitate to identify himself with a church

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2.

that has huge theological errors, even heresy. This is also in line with how he treats those in Galatia who are, “turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.”<sup>11</sup> Paul cares about these errors, and corrects them, but he does not recommend church discipline, nor schism. In this Paul reflects the character of Christ, who fully identifies with us in our sin, while lovingly and firmly calling us to a better path.

### Next Steps

Based upon what we have heard to this point from Session and the leadership of NAPC, we do not believe reconciliation is possible. To that end, where do we go from here? We hope that you will think about what you have heard tonight and explore some of the resources we provide you. The decision before you is too important not to consider another side. In Jesus’ high priestly prayer of John 17, he prays that his follower’s may be one, which means Jesus is praying for us that we might find a path to unity. So we ask you think, listen, learn and pray. If you choose to continue your path to leave the PC(USA), here is what you can expect.

The Presbytery’s Gracious Separation Policy requires that we assess several things of a congregation that has indicated an interest in exploring whether to leave, collectively, the PC(USA) before it can make a recommendation to the Presbytery. But before I review those steps, I want to make clear that any individual who in good conscience does not believe that they can remain a member of the PC(USA) is free to peaceably depart to a congregation of another denomination. However, **this congregation itself, like all congregations, can only be dismissed by an action of the Presbytery.** Under our policy, one of the things we need to assess is whether the congregation as a whole has engaged in a discernment process in which it has sought to gain an accurate understanding of the PC(USA)’s positions that concern members of the congregation. That is what we are about today, and we will continue to engage in conversation with members and leaders of the congregation to ascertain if that is the case here.

One of our other duties is to determine whether the congregation is divided on this issue. In doing so, we have to determine not just the views of those who are currently active in the congregation. We must also determine whether formerly active members desire to remain in the PC(USA), and whether those that may want to remain could constitute an ongoing viable PC(USA) congregation. Having listened to both former and current NAPC members and friends, the Administrative Committee believes there may be a viable number of people to maintain NAPC as a PC(USA) church even though there may be a significant number of those currently attending who may feel called to an EPC affiliation.

You can be assured that we are undertaking this work prayerfully, seeking to listen and discern for ourselves the full circumstances at NAPC. When we have finished this work, we

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<sup>11</sup> Galatians 1:6.

will inform your leadership of the recommendations we intend to make to the Presbytery, and before doing so, seek to resolve any remaining issues in a way that respects your right of conscience and the responsibilities of the Presbytery for this congregation.

Thank you for your attention this evening. If you have any questions or concerns, you can come speak to us after the meeting or reach out to Mark Johnson or me. In particular, if you have heard this presentation and wish to remain in the PC(USA), we would love to hear from you. May God lead us all in a manner that is worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

#### For Further Reading:

Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible's Yes to Same Sex Marriage* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2014).

- The best, most-accessible primer on the issue.

James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

- The most comprehensive book on same sex marriage and the Bible that has been written to date.

Justin Lee, *Torn* (New York: Jericho Books, 2013).

Andrew Marin, *Love Is an Orientation* (Downer's Grove: IVP Books, 2009).

- A book that does not take a position but is about building bridges between the church and the LGBTQ community.

Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2009).

<https://staypcusa.info/stay-resources/>

<http://www.themarinfoundation.org>

<https://www.reformationproject.org>

<https://www.gaychristian.net/faq>

<http://chapman.id.au/evangelical-same-sex-marriage>

## **Appendix H: The Slides for the Presentation at the Informational Session**

# THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE SCIOTO VALLEY

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*January 14, 2018*



## LISTENING TO NEW ALBANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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- 76 People from NAPC attended listening sessions
- Over 40 hours Listening Time
- “New Albany Presbyterian Church exists to glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ.”
- Passion for the Word of God
- Commitment to discipleship

# BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND THE CONFESSION OF 1967

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“The Confession of 1967 used different language to describe the Bible than the confessions that preceded it, saying that it **contains** the Word of God but that it is ‘nevertheless the words of men.’” DRC Report

“The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel... The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God’s work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding.” The Confession of 1967

# BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND THE CONFESSION OF 1967

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- The Confession of 1967 does affirm the Scriptures as the written word God



## BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND THE CONFESSION OF 1967

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- “Nevertheless the words of men” does not weaken Biblical authority but serves as an interpretive key
- “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.” John Calvin
- The EPC does not confess the Bible to be “without error” either

## ORDINATION QUESTIONS IN THE PC(USA)

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- “Ordination candidates were to vow only that they be guided by the Scriptures and the confessions of the church.” DRC Report
- “Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?” *The Book of Order*
- “Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?” *The Book of Order*
- To be ordained in the PC(USA), one must live under the authority of the Scriptures

## SCANDALOUS EVENTS AND SURVEYS

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“The PCUSA’s theological foundation reduces to just about anything and absolutely nothing, all at once.” The DRC Report

### The 1993 Re-Imaging God Conference

- Not a PC(USA) Conference
- Mary Ann Lundy was fired
- 1994 GA repudiated the conference as “beyond the boundaries of Reformed Theology.”

## SCANDALOUS EVENTS AND SURVEYS

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41% of PC(USA) Pastors agreed, “Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.”

- Abraham and other Old Testament people of faith
- Children who die before professing faith
- “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.” *The Westminster Confession of Faith, XII*

## SCANDALOUS EVENTS AND SURVEYS

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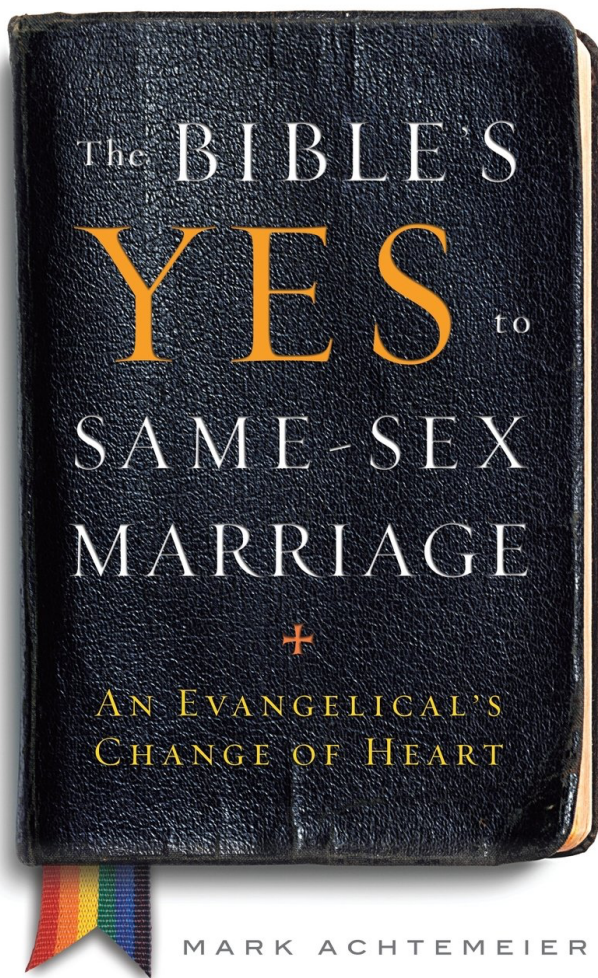
Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ—Adopted at the 214 GA in 2002

- “Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in him. No one is saved by virtue of inherent goodness or admirable living, for “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” [Ephesians 2:8]. No one is saved apart from God’s gracious redemption in Jesus Christ.”
- None of the events cited by the DRC Report took place after the founding of NAPC except one

## SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN THE PC(USA)

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- In June of 2014, the 221st GA approved amendment 14-F allowing **(and not requiring)** pastors and sessions to participate in same-sex marriage services
- In August 2014, NAPC creates the DRC
- A crisis of conscience: how do we love the LGBTQ community and live under the authority of scripture?



## HOW CAN THIS BE?

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- The Bible's 7 prohibitions of same-sex activity are not analogous to two people committing themselves to one another before God
- The trauma caused by trying to change one's orientation along with the fact that celibacy is a gift and not punishment in Scripture means blessing same-sex marriages is the most loving approach a Christian can take

## SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN THE PC(USA)

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- The question: Can Christians remain in fellowship while reaching different conclusions concerning same-sex marriage?
- Theological disagreement is not a reason to separate
- In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul does not recommend church discipline or schism but instead gives right teaching

## NEXT STEPS

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- Based upon what we have heard to this point from Session and the leadership of NAPC, we believe reconciliation is not possible.
- Think, listen, learn and pray.

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

John 17:20-21

- This congregation can only be dismissed by an act of the Presbytery
- We believe there may be a viable number of people to maintain NAPC as a PC(USA) congregation

## QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

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- If you are interested in remaining in the PC(USA), we would love to hear from you

Contact Joel Esala

Contact Mark Johnson

- Further reading:

Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible's Yes to Same Sex Marriage* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2014).

James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

Justin Lee, *Torn* (New York: Jericho Books, 2013).

Andrew Marin, *Love Is an Orientation* (Downer's Grove: IVP Books, 2009).

Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2009).

<https://staypcusa.info/stay-resources/>

<http://chapman.id.au/evangelical-same-sex-marriage>

## **Appendix I: The NAPC Belief Statement (2015)**

# NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT



From the time that Jesus rose from the dead and his followers went out into the world to proclaim the greatest news of all-time, Christians have held to statements that summarize what they believe. The amazing love that God has for his people in spite of human sinfulness compels Christians to continue to share this wonderful Gospel message. The earliest statement of faith was “Jesus is Lord.” Throughout time, as the church endured external persecutions and internal debates about the nature and content of the Christian faith, more extensive statements, catechisms and creeds developed. The PC (USA) Book of Confessions is an historic collection of these statements that our denomination endorses. Below, we have highlighted the most important of these beliefs.

We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible are God-breathed, without error and authoritative. The Bible is unlike anything else ever written. It is the revelation of God’s character and God’s ways, seen most clearly in the person, work, life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible contains much that is difficult and challenging to us today, yet we believe that it is completely true. It shows us the great love of the All-Powerful Creator, who sent His Son to save us.

In the Bible we find that God reveals Himself as One God, supreme and sovereign over everything that exists. He does not share his deity or His glory with any other, nor is He one god among many. We also find that God is Trinitarian—eternally existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

We believe that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God, which is the unique source and foundation of human dignity and value. God created us “very good,” and created us for relationship with Him. This is why we love and value all people, welcoming any who would come to NAPC, regardless of any differences we might have.

In spite of this gift of creation and relationship with God, humans have without exception turned from God, rebelling against His loving authority. The Bible calls this “sin,” and every one of us stands condemned, by nature and choice, guilty of willfully turning away from God. Devastatingly, there is nothing that we can do ourselves to remedy this position of sinful rebellion. Many times we are warned by Jesus and the apostles that the penalty of sin against a perfectly just and righteous God is death—both physical death and eternal death apart from God in a horrible place called Hell.

If this were the end of the story, what an unremittingly bleak story it would be. But it isn’t! The amazing reality of God’s love for us and His plan to redeem us is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. Jesus Christ, who has existed for all eternity, through whom and for whom all things were created, was born humbly into the world in an obscure small town in Judea. He lived a perfect life, showing compassion to the poor and the outcast, and challenging the religious leaders to turn from their self-righteousness. He preached that all must repent of sin and believe the good news of the Gospel. He was unjustly condemned, brutally beaten, executed in the most excruciating and shameful of ways on a wooden cross, and died. His death was a substitute for our own. By submitting to his Father’s will to die for us, he paid the penalty for our sin. Three days later, he literally and victoriously rose from death, having conquered the power of sin and Satan, and appeared among his disciples. Forty days later, he ascended into heaven, and at the Jewish festival of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer who repents of their sins and by faith trusts in Jesus Christ alone to reconcile them to God the Father.

# NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT

As Peter said in an early sermon, “there is only one name under heaven by which we must be saved.” Salvation from an eternity of separation from God depends wholly and completely upon the free gift of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection (which we call grace). We receive this free gift only by faith. This gift is offered to any who would repent of sin and trust in Jesus. It is for good reason that we call this the greatest news of all-time!

All of those who follow Jesus are commanded to “put away sin” and lead lives of increasing obedience to God. This will never happen perfectly in this life. Yet, as Christians, continued repentance of sin and faith in Christ over time should lead to an increasingly joyful, sacrificial, compassionate and purposeful life. We should increase in generosity, love and commitment to the truth of the Gospel. We should decrease in fear, in sinful behavior, and in self-centeredness. This will happen not through an effort to earn God’s love, but in response to His love which has already been freely given.

Every follower of Christ is called to belong to and participate in a local church. The local church is the physical, tangible representation of the invisible Church made up of all believers in Jesus throughout time. Elders are appointed to lead God’s church, but they are the undershepherds to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Joyful obedience to him and his Word are the first priority for leaders of God’s church. God has given two sacraments to His church: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is the sacrament of confirming one’s faith in Jesus Christ (either as a believer or as the believing parent(s) of their children). The Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of eating and drinking in communion with the Risen Christ.

Finally, all believers in Jesus hopefully and patiently await the time when Jesus Christ will return. He will not return in the way he came to Bethlehem. He will come in glory and power, to judge the living and the dead. Those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation by faith will go to their eternal reward with God in Heaven; those who have rejected Jesus Christ will go to eternal punishment.

We believe in these truths that the Bible reveals to us. Because of God’s great worth, glory and love, we commit ourselves to proclaiming and embodying these truths in word and deed. To Him be the glory forever and ever!

(see below for all supporting Scriptures)

## Paragraph 2

2 Timothy 3:16 - <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:21 - <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 24:35 - <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

John 3:16 - <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

## Paragraph 3

Deuteronomy 6:4<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Isaiah 46:9-10 - for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, <sup>10</sup>declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,

saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’

1 Timothy 2:5 - <sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

# NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT

2 Corinthians 13:14 - <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Matthew 28:19 - <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

## Paragraph 4

Genesis 1:26-27, 31 - <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Luke 19:10 - <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

## Paragraph 5

5. Romans 3:23 - <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Ephesians 2:1-4 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—  
<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us . . .

Psalms 51:5 - <sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

James 2:10 - <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

Revelation 20:12-15 - <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

## Paragraph 6

Romans 5:12 - <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans, 6:23 - <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16-18 - <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Matthew 5:17 - <sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

John 1:1-4 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Colossians 1:15-20 - <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

# NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT

Hebrews 1:1-3 - Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . .

Isaiah 53:5 - <sup>5</sup>But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 5:8 - <sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:10 - <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 - <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Timothy 1:15 - <sup>15</sup>The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>1</sup>

Acts 17:30-31 - <sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Ephesians 2:8-9 - <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 John 5:11-12 - <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

John 14:6 - <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Romans 3:21-26 - <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup>It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

## Paragraph 7

John 10:10 - <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Titus 2:11-14 - <sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup>waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Galatians 5:16-24 - <sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I

# NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT

warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

## Paragraph 8

Colossians 1:18 - <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Ephesians 1:22-23 - <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

1 Corinthians 12:27 - <sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

2 Timothy 2:19 - <sup>19</sup> But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his . . ."

1 Peter 5:1-4 - So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Matthew 28:18-19 - <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Matthew 26:26-28 - <sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 - <sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. <sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

## Paragraph 9

Revelation 19:11-16 - <sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Matthew 25:31-46 - <sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you

## NAPC BELIEF STATEMENT

hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' <sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

John 5:25-29 - <sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

## **Appendix J: The Interim Report to the Presbytery on May 15, 2018**

## **Administrative Commission for New Albany Presbyterian Church**

Although the work of the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (the Commission) is not yet complete, the Commission has made several findings that it would like to report.

The Commission cites the *Book of Order* (G-4.0207) regarding a congregation in schism:

If there is a schism within the membership of a congregation and the presbytery is unable to effect a reconciliation or a division into separate congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the presbytery shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property because it is identified by the presbytery as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote within the congregation at the time of the schism.

The Commission has found that

- a schism had occurred within the membership of New Albany Presbyterian Church (NAPC),
- it was unable to effect a reconciliation of the two factions,
- it was unable to effect a division into separate congregations within the PC(U.S.A.),
- the faction that has expressed a desire to remain a PC(U.S.A.) congregation (the loyalist faction) is the true church within the PC(U.S.A.),
- the loyalist faction is entitled to the property because it is the true church within the PC(U.S.A.), and
- it is satisfied with the financial viability of the loyalist faction.

The faction requesting to be dismissed from the PC(U.S.A.) is not by itself a separate congregation and therefore cannot be dismissed to another Reformed body. Although the Commission found that a schism had occurred within the membership of NAPC, it remains a single congregation. Instead of being dismissed as a congregation, individuals wanting to join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) denomination could request that their membership be transferred to an existing EPC congregation.

The Commission believes that a better approach, one that would honor the request of the faction requesting to be dismissed from the PC(U.S.A.), is to divide the NAPC congregation into two congregations. According to the *Book of Order* (G-3.0303), the presbytery has authority to divide congregations in consultation with their members. Although dividing the congregation for the purpose of dismissing one of the resulting congregations may not seem to make much sense, this approach offers several benefits:

- Both factions include charter members of NAPC; dividing the congregation would preserve the historic ties of the resulting congregations to NAPC as it was originally organized.
- The faction requesting to be dismissed from the PC(U.S.A.) could be dismissed as a congregation, which would allow it to be received by the EPC as a congregation.

- One of the tasks of the Commission is to consider the status of each member of the NAPC congregation and whether they wish to be transferred or remain in the PC(U.S.A.). Dividing the congregation would clarify the membership options for current members of NAPC.

The Commission has already reported its findings to both factions. It is now in the process of negotiating with the faction requesting to be dismissed from the PC(U.S.A.) a plan for dividing the congregation, which would include details of how to divide the property. Although the congregation wishing to remain in the PC(U.S.A.) would receive the real property (the building and land) and assume the mortgage, many details still must be resolved. When the plan for dividing the congregation is complete, the Commission will bring the plan to the presbytery for its approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams,  
Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson

## **Appendix K: The Recommendations for Presbytery Action on September 18, 2018**

# **Administrative Commission for New Albany Presbyterian Church**

September 18, 2018

## **Recommendations for Presbytery Action**

The Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (the Commission) recommends that the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (the Presbytery) take the following actions.

### **Dividing the congregation**

Whereas the Commission desires to honor the request of the group wishing to be dismissed from the PC(USA) and to facilitate an orderly dismissal, the Commission moves that the Presbytery:

- Declare that the congregation of New Albany Presbyterian Church be divided into two congregations of the PC(USA),
- Declare that the resulting congregation that wishes to be dismissed to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church be known as New Albany Presbyterian Church,
- Declare that the resulting congregation that wishes to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) be known as Rose Run Presbyterian Church,
- Assign the existing session, clerk of session, board of deacons, treasurer, and staff of New Albany Presbyterian Church prior to its division to the New Albany Presbyterian Church resulting from the division,
- Confirm the call of Rev. David Milroy's installed pastoral position to the New Albany Presbyterian Church resulting from the division,
- Authorize the Commission to act within the scope of the Plan of Division to divide assets between the two congregations resulting from the division,
- Authorize the Commission to administer the process of dividing the congregation, and
- Authorize the Commission to assume original jurisdiction of Rose Run Presbyterian Church for the purpose of installing a session and a board of deacons and for conducting church business until its session has been installed.

### **Dismissing the congregation**

Whereas the group requesting to be dismissed from the PC(USA) has requested dismissal to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Commission moves that the Presbytery:

- Find the EPC to be doctrinally consistent with the essentials of Reformed theology as understood by the presbytery,
- Find the EPC to be governed by a polity that is consistent in form and structure with that of the PC(USA),

- Find the receiving EPC presbytery (the Presbytery of the Alleghenies) to be of sufficient permanence to offer reasonable assurance that the congregation is not being dismissed to de facto independence, and
- Dismiss the New Albany Presbyterian Church resulting from the division to the EPC, pending approval of its petition to be received by the EPC, the transfer of members into that congregation, and its execution of a definitive agreement with the Presbytery that incorporates the terms of the Plan of Division.

## **Plan of Division**

This Plan of Division is an outline that covers the major issues involved in dividing the assets of the existing NAPC. A more detailed plan that follows this outline is being drafted by lawyers representing the new NAPC and the Presbytery to ensure that both sides clearly understand how and when the division of assets will occur.

- The new NAPC will bear the building and property costs associated with the real property located at 5220 Johnstown Road in New Albany until the date it relinquishes possession of the property.
- The new NAPC will relinquish possession of the real property no later than September 1, 2019.
- The new NAPC shall receive and retain full ownership and usage rights to the name “New Albany Presbyterian Church” and shall receive full ownership of all intellectual property produced by the existing NAPC prior to the division, provided that such intellectual property is not derived from intellectual property owned by the PC(USA), with the Presbytery receiving a license for a few items as negotiated by the Commission.
- The PC(USA) will retain possession the original session minutes and membership lists of the existing NAPC while allowing the new NAPC access to those records.
- The new NAPC shall retain 100% of its current cash and future offerings, but it shall withhold cash sufficient to meet the mortgage payment obligations until it relinquishes possession of the property.
- In consideration of the sum of \$25,000 to be paid by the Presbytery, the new NAPC agrees to relinquish any claim to all non-cash personal property within the NAPC buildings, with the exception of the following list of items.
  - All portable technology (laptop computers, iPads, portable sound system, and printers)
  - Rev. David Milroy’s microphone (donated)
  - Two pianos (one on loan and one donated)
  - Handbells, including cases, tables, and related materials (donated)
  - All books, Bibles, and sheet music
  - Narthex decor and furnishings
  - Baptismal bowl

- Communion pitcher and cup
- All worship supplies—offering baskets, communion supplies, etc.
- Children’s ministry decorations, sets, paintings, and costumes
- Heartland Bank will consent to all transactions in this Plan of Division and will release its lien against all cash and property transferred to the new NAPC. Rose Run Presbyterian Church will assume the mortgage obligations, and the Presbytery will continue as guarantor.

## Background

In an undated letter from the session of NAPC to Rick Hays, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the session requested dismissal from the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) under the Presbytery’s *Policy for Gracious Separation of Congregations from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley*. The letter was received after November 15, 2016, (the date of the November 2016 meeting of the Presbytery) and before November 28, 2016, according to Rick Hays. The report *Denominational Vision and Recommendations*, which the existing NAPC session presented at town hall meetings with the congregation in 2016 recommended the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as the receiving denomination following its dismissal from the PC(USA).

As the work of the Commission was just beginning, the Commission became aware of a group of current and former members of the existing NAPC who were interested in continuing as a congregation of the PC(USA).

The Commission conducted listening sessions with all parties during the course of its work, including the existing NAPC session and members of both groups, those wanting NAPC to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) and those wanting NAPC to be dismissed to the EPC. The Commission found that reconciliation between the two groups was not a possibility.

The group wanting NAPC to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) has 75-100 members. Although the group is not large, its financial resources are considerable, and it expects to grow as it establishes an identity and begins to meet weekly. The outstanding balance of the mortgage for the NAPC property was \$1,521,337 as of December 31, 2017. The debt service is \$144,876 per year for the current mortgage. Although this debt service would be a large commitment for the group wanting NAPC to remain a congregation of the PC(USA), its members feel confident in their ability to meet this commitment. The Commission agrees that this group would be able to meet its financial obligations.

## Resolution

Because reconciliation between the two groups was not a possibility, the Commission began looking for ways of honoring the requests of both groups while continuing to act in the best interests of the PC(USA). An approach that would honor the request of the group requesting to be dismissed from the PC(USA) is to divide the congregation. According to the *Book of Order* G-3.0303, the presbytery has authority to divide congregations in consultation with their members. Dividing the congregation would have a several benefits:

- Both groups include charter members of the existing NAPC; dividing the congregation would maintain their historic ties to NAPC as it was organized.

- Dividing the congregation would allow the group requesting to be dismissed from the PC(USA) to be dismissed as a congregation and to be received by the EPC as a congregation.
- The Commission must consider the membership status of each member of the existing NAPC and whether they wish to be dismissed to the EPC or remain in the PC(USA). Dividing the congregation would clarify the membership options for current members of NAPC.

## **Dividing the congregation**

Dividing the congregation requires that the Presbytery declare that the congregation of the existing NAPC be divided into two congregations. One of the two congregations may continue to use the existing name, New Albany Presbyterian Church, or both resulting congregations may choose new names. Because an existing congregation is being divided, the originating documents of NAPC do not need to be rewritten, except to reflect such changes as name and address.

Because the current leadership of NAPC has indicated its desire to be dismissed to the EPC, the current leadership of NAPC will transfer to the congregation requesting to be dismissed to the EPC. The leadership that is specified in the by-laws effective January 17, 2010, includes the pastor, the session, the clerk of session, the treasurer, and the board of deacons. All standing committees, such as the nominating committee, would be reestablished following the division of the congregation.

The congregation wishing to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) would have to begin functioning as a church immediately, yet it would not have any installed officers initially. At a minimum, it would have to pay bills, such as those associated with pulpit supply, and it would have to be able to record and deposit donations and any other income. Because it would not have a session, the Presbytery would authorize an administrative commission to assume original jurisdiction of that congregation. The administrative commission would assume the duties of the session, including the selection of an interim treasurer. In its role as the acting session, the administrative commission would be able to establish a checking account and ensure that bills are being paid, while maintaining appropriate financial controls. Once a session and other officers of the congregation are elected and installed, the administrative commission will cease to exercise original jurisdiction.

The process of dividing a congregation must include a determination of the membership status of each member of the congregation being divided. That is, members cannot be assigned as a group; they must be assigned as individuals. Following the division of the existing NAPC, the Commission will request that all of its members request to assign their membership to one of the congregations resulting from the division. The Commission cannot assign members to the congregation being dismissed to the EPC without an explicit request. Therefore, all members of NAPC prior to its division would be assigned to the congregation wishing to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) unless they request otherwise. Of course, nothing prevents individuals from transferring their membership at any future date.

After the membership of the congregation wishing to remain a congregation of the PC(USA) has been established, the administrative commission would complete the process of dividing the congregation by conducting elections of a session and a board of deacons for that congregation. Conducting elections would include the following steps:

- Calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a nominating committee in accordance with the by-laws of the congregation,
- Calling and moderating meetings of the nominating committee for the purpose of nominating a slate of elders and deacons,
- Calling a second congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a session and a board of deacons,
- Calling a commission meeting for the purpose of examining the elders- and deacons-elect, and
- Ordaining and/or installing the elders and deacons to active service on the session and the board of deacons.

After the installation of the session, the administrative commission would relinquish original jurisdiction of the congregation to its session. The congregation would then be under the care of the Commission for Congregational Life.

### **Negotiating the Plan of Division**

Negotiating teams from both existing leadership of NAPC and the Commission worked over a period of months to reach an agreement. As with all such negotiations, neither side got everything that they wanted or felt entitled to. Even so, the negotiations were conducted with sensitivity and awareness of the larger purpose that both parties are serving.

The congregation that is vacating the property is taking longer to do so than many would like. Yet, we recognize the reality that such a move could not reasonably happen in just a few months. On the other hand, the agreed date of September 1, 2019, is sooner than the departing congregation would like.

Both parties are very sensitive to issues relating to a cash settlement. The Presbytery could assert a claim to a cash settlement, as well as the real property, yet the congregation requesting dismissal to the EPC could assert the same claim. In the absence of a negotiated settlement, the conflicting claims would be settled in ecclesial court or civil court. Avoiding the resulting delays, cost, and damage to our witness to the gospel was a high priority for both parties.

The Plan of Division includes a payment by the Presbytery of \$25,000 to the departing congregation in exchange for the new NAPC for relinquishing their claim to most of the non-cash personal property. This payment would recognize the considerable amount of non-cash personal property that the congregation would be leaving within the buildings. The Commission approved a small list of items that the congregation will take with them.

Members of the departing congregation have a strong sense of ownership and an emotional attachment to many of the items that they are leaving behind. For instance, even though the outdoor playground equipment is part of the real property (having been permanently installed) it is the result of a special fund-raising campaign and some special donations. Recent security upgrades to the building were also expensive. The congregation will leave behind a considerable amount of furniture, as well. The \$25,000 payment would offer some recognition of what the congregation is leaving behind. This payment also avoids a long and contentious negotiation over who gets to keep what property. In the interest of good will, expediency, and fairness, the Commission recommends that the Presbytery approve this payment.

## Requirements for the dismissal of congregations and ministers

The General Assembly has adopted the following interpretation regarding the *Book of Order* requirements for dismissal of congregations and ministers (Item 07-13, approved by the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) regarding the Transfer of Ministers and Congregations to Transitional Presbyteries in response to a question from the General Presbyter/Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Charlotte):

Presbyteries may dismiss congregations to other ecclesiastical bodies of this denomination, and to denominations whose organization is conformed to the doctrines and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). No congregation may be dismissed to independent status, or to the status of a nondenominational congregation. It is the responsibility of the dismissing presbytery to determine whether the receiving body meets these standards, and this responsibility cannot be delegated to any other entity within the presbytery (such as an administrative commission). Thus the General Assembly may not determine in advance whether a particular denomination or its constituent bodies qualify under these standards.

The provisions of [then] G-15.0203 a and b [currently G-3.0303] do, however, require that the General Assembly, as the highest governing body of this denomination, advise its presbyteries in this matter. The 218th General Assembly (2008) therefore advises the presbyteries that they must satisfy themselves concerning the conformity with this denomination of a transitional presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in matters of doctrines and order. Presbyteries may facilitate the exploration of conformity by means of an administrative commission, although such commissions may not be empowered to approve the dismissal of the congregation. In exploring this matter, presbyteries should consider such questions as whether the receiving EPC presbytery is

- doctrinally consistent with the essentials of Reformed theology as understood by the presbytery;
- governed by a polity that is consistent in form and structure with that of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A);
- of sufficient permanence to offer reasonable assurance that the congregation is not being dismissed to de facto independence.

Failure on the part of the presbytery thoroughly to explore and adequately to document its satisfaction in these matters may thus violate, however unintentionally, the spirit of the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## Statement on EPC doctrine

The EPC and the PC(USA) affirm three of the same confessional standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Shorter Catechism, and The Larger Catechism. These are the only confessional standards of the EPC, while they are three of twelve confessional standards of the PC(USA). Rather than being “guided by our confessions” (*Book of Order*, W-4.0404d), the EPC requires all officers (teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons) to “sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures” (EPC *Book of Order*, G.13-2A3).

Although the EPC does not require strict subscription to its confessional standards, any deviations are taken very seriously. Prior to ordination as a teaching elder, a candidate “shall

provide a written statement of any exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of this Church, and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow the exceptions. The Presbytery shall not allow any exception to the ‘Essentials of Our Faith.’ Following ordination, should the Teaching Elder develop exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, he or she shall report those exceptions to the Ministerial Committee and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow these exceptions.” (EPC *Book of Order*, G.12-4)

In assessing whether the EPC is doctrinally consistent with the essentials of Reformed theology as understood by the Presbytery, it is appropriate to examine the issue of ordaining women. The motto of the EPC is: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” The EPC does not consider the ordination of women to be an essential issue of its faith. Therefore, each council of the church has the liberty to decide whether or not to ordain women. This position is clearly opposed to the requirement of the PC(USA) that all councils of the church affirm the ordination of women.

The confessional standards of the EPC are a subset of the standards of the PC(USA). Because the standards of the EPC are a subset, they do not hold the doctrine of the EPC in as much tension as do the confessional standards of the PC(USA). In addition, the EPC requires much stricter adherence to its standards than does the PC(USA). Leaving the decision about the ordination of women to each council of the church is a difference with far-reaching consequences. Yet, the Commission does not believe that these differences are sufficient to find that the EPC is doctrinally inconsistent with the essentials of Reformed theology as understood by the Presbytery.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Presbytery find the EPC to be doctrinally consistent with the essentials of Reformed theology as understood by the Presbytery.

### **Statement on the form and structure of EPC polity**

The polity of the EPC is very similar to that of the PC(USA) in form and structure. The councils of the church (called Church Courts) are representative assemblies of teaching elders and ruling elders. The councils of the EPC are the session, the presbytery, and the General Assembly. A major difference from the PC(USA) is that the EPC attempts to maintain a ratio of two ruling elders to one teaching elder in the voting membership of the presbyteries and the General Assembly instead of a one-to-one ratio.

Additional significant differences from the PC(USA) include:

- a congregation “has ownership of its own property. It may buy, sell, lease, rent or otherwise determine the use of its property.” (EPC *Book of Order*, G.6-5)
- a congregation can be dismissed to independent status. “If [the motion requesting dismissal] passes by a two-thirds majority, the Presbytery shall dismiss the congregation as requested with all of its property and assets.” (EPC *Book of Order*, G.5-10C)

Despite these significant differences, the overall form and structure remains very similar to that of the PC(USA).

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Presbytery find the EPC to be governed by a polity that is consistent in form and structure with that of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### **Statement on the permanence of the receiving EPC presbytery**

The receiving EPC presbytery would be the Presbytery of the Alleghenies. Because this presbytery is not a transitional presbytery of the EPC, the concern that Item 07-13 addresses regarding transitional presbyteries does not apply.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Presbytery find the receiving EPC presbytery to be of sufficient permanence to offer reasonable assurance that the congregation is not being dismissed to de facto independence.

## **Appendix L: The Letter Requesting Membership Assignment**



## The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

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September 19, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At its September 18, 2018, meeting, the Presbytery of Scioto acted to divide the congregation known as New Albany Presbyterian Church. What had been a single congregation is now two congregations. One of the congregations will continue to use the name New Albany Presbyterian Church, and the other congregation will have the name Rose Run Presbyterian Church. The purpose of dividing the congregation is to facilitate an orderly dismissal of one congregation to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church while the other congregation remains a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

One of the steps in dividing a congregation is to determine the membership of each of the resulting congregations. The administrative commission is requesting that all members of NAPC prior to its division request to transfer their membership to one of the congregations resulting from the division. We cannot transfer members to the congregation being dismissed to the EPC without an explicit request. Therefore, all members of NAPC prior to its division will be transferred to Rose Run Presbyterian Church unless they request that their membership be transferred to the New Albany Presbyterian Church resulting from the division. Of course, nothing prevents transferring membership at any future date.

The two options for membership are:

**Rose Run Presbyterian Church** This congregation is remaining a congregation of the PC(USA). It will initially meet in temporary facilities in New Albany. It will then move into the building currently occupied by NAPC no later than September 1, 2019. An administrative commission will facilitate the election, ordination, and installation of a session and a board of deacons.

**New Albany Presbyterian Church** This congregation is being dismissed to the EPC. It will initially meet in the building currently occupied by NAPC, but will vacate the building by September 1, 2019. It will then move to another location. Pastor David Milroy, the session (elders), the deacons, the other corporate officers, and the staff of NAPC prior to its division will transfer to this congregation.

Please respond to Rev. Phyllis Heffner by email at [xxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.net](mailto:xxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.net) or return the enclosed postcard to the presbytery office with your choice by October 19, 2018. We thank you for your patience with this process. We hope that you choose to remain in the PC(USA), but regardless of your decision, we pray that God will richly bless your life, that all may be to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams, Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson, the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley

## **Appendix M: The Postcard for Indicating Membership Selection**

Following the division of the congregation  
of New Albany Presbyterian Church, please  
assign my membership to:

- ☐ Rose Run Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
- ☐ New Albany Presbyterian Church (EPC)

Name:

Address:



## **Appendix N: The Letter Explaining Options for Becoming a Member**



## The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

4131 North High Street, Suite B, Columbus, OH 43214

614-847-0565 • 800-244-7207 • Fax: 614-847-4359

[www.psvonline.org](http://www.psvonline.org)

September 19, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At its September 18, 2018, meeting, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley acted to divide the congregation known as New Albany Presbyterian Church. The purpose of dividing the congregation is to facilitate an orderly dismissal of a group requesting to be dismissed to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. What had been a single congregation is now two congregations. The congregation that will be dismissed will retain the name New Albany Presbyterian Church, and the congregation that will remain a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will have the name Rose Run Presbyterian Church.

For those who are interested in Rose Run Presbyterian Church, becoming a member is important because the members of the congregation will soon be electing its elders and deacons. Members of NAPC prior to its division may request to have their membership assigned to Rose Run Presbyterian Church in response to a letter from our commission.

Yet, many persons who would like to become members of Rose Run Presbyterian Church are not on the current membership roll of NAPC. Their options for becoming a member of Rose Run Presbyterian Church are:

- Certificate of transfer (for persons who are currently members of another Christian church),
- Reaffirmation of faith (for persons previously baptized in the name of the triune God and having publicly professed their faith), and
- Public profession of faith (for all others).

Until the congregation elects and installs a session, our commission will be serving as the session of Rose Run Presbyterian Church and will be receiving new members. We will soon schedule several meetings to receive new members. Some persons may not be able to attend any of those meetings; we ask them to contact Yvonne Gustafson at [xxxxxxxxx@gmail.com](mailto:xxxxxxxxx@gmail.com) to make other arrangements. After October 19, 2018, we will consider the initial membership of Rose Run Presbyterian Church to be established and begin moving forward with the process of electing and installing its elders and deacons.

We look forward to working with you during this exciting time of building Rose Run Presbyterian Church into a thriving congregation. God's grace and peace be with you.

Yours in Christ,

Alice Karen Hite, Bill Lucas, Deb Patterson, Jim Hamilton, Joel Esala, Keith Williams, Mark Johnson, Phyllis Heffner, Tom Ridgley, and Yvonne Gustafson,

the Administrative Commission for the Gracious Separation of New Albany Presbyterian Church from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley