

## **Proposal for Scottsdale Presbyterian Church Settlement**

### **Scottsdale Administrative Commission – Presbytery of Grand Canyon**

**November 16, 2016**

#### **Background/History**

On April 13, 1958, sixteen souls met for worship in the American Legion Hall of Scottsdale, Arizona. Dr. Claude Morton presided over what was billed as a meeting to form the “East Scottsdale Presbyterian Church.” Seven months later, on the evening of November 16, 1958, Scottsdale Presbyterian Church was formally chartered with about 80 founding members. The Rev. Johnston H. Calhoun was installed as the first pastor.

The first portion of the present church building was completed on June 10, 1960 and dedicated in worship on June 12. This building consisted of a Fellowship Hall (which was used as a sanctuary), an administrative office, pastor's study, and six church school classrooms.

Scottsdale Presbyterian Church continued to grow and broke ground for the second portion of the building on Palm Sunday, March 22, 1964. This addition consisted of a permanent sanctuary, choir room, Pastor's studies and church office. A service of dedication was held at 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 24, 1965. Other major changes to the physical plant include the installations of a pipe organ (1977) and stained glass windows in the sanctuary (1990), and playground equipment in the courtyard (1996).

Scottsdale Presbyterian Church has hosted a variety of ministries to serve the needs of the Scottsdale community. The Church has sponsored Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops since the 1960's. In the early 1970s, the church entered into a contract to host Interfaith Counseling Service on-site. Palo Alto Pre-schools began using the Christian Education wing a year later. More recently the S.P.A.R.K. after school program has been enriching the lives of grade school children. Down through the decades, thousands of young men and women have learned about the love of Jesus Christ through Sunday School, Youth Group and Vacation Bible School programs at Scottsdale Presbyterian Church.

The Scottsdale PC congregation has become involved in missions beyond its local neighborhood. Prominent among these has been partnerships with Native American ministries, including a 1976 mission trip to Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka, Alaska. The nurturing of Christian fellowship through Bible study has also been a recurring theme at SPC, including women's circles, the Kerygma Series, Growth Groups, and the Alpha Course. The love of Christ has become real in the joining together of prayerful human hearts.

Today, the people of Scottsdale Presbyterian Church continue the grand tradition of loving each other, loving their city and loving Jesus Christ most of all. The congregation follows God's word and direction by identifying, nurturing, and using the spiritual gifts of each member, to serve their neighbors and church family, making new disciples for the glory of Christ. The Rev. Dr. Bruce R. Johnson has served as pastor of the Scottsdale Presbyterian Church since 2000.

## **Discernment**

Concern for the future of the Scottsdale Presbyterian Church within the PC(USA) can be traced back in time at least 15 years. Beginning 2001, Session began to examine whether current PC(USA) orthodoxy was consistent with its understanding of basic tenets of the faith. Ultimately Session determined that its beliefs in the essentials of Christian faith were challenged by adherence to the PC(USA)'s current policies, practices and rulings. In October 2015, Session acted to formally enter into a time of discernment regarding the congregation's future within the PC(USA). In response, the Presbytery of Grand Canyon formed the Scottsdale Administrative Commission in late 2015.

The AC formally began its work by meeting with Pastor Johnson and the Session on February 22, 2016. At that time, it was clear that Session had not determined what future direction it would recommend to the Scottsdale congregation. For the next three months, Session continued its discernment process. In a letter dated May 18, 2016, Session made formal notification to the AC that it would seek dismissal from the PC(USA) in order to become affiliated with the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). The AC then began to plan and execute a discernment process involving the entire Scottsdale congregation. Letters explaining the process and a questionnaire were sent to all members of SPC. Small-group meetings were held at the Scottsdale church on Sunday July 10, with 30 members attending. However, the AC received questionnaires from 76 church members, 96% of the current membership. Of the 76 responses, only three did not favor dismissal from the PC(USA) and only one was undecided. Given the overwhelming majority in favor of dismissal, it is clear that there is not a viable remnant to remain with the PC(USA) within this congregation.

## **Items for Consideration**

1. The congregation of Scottsdale Presbyterian Church is small: 79 members.
2. The Presbytery of Grand Canyon, Synod of the Southwest, and/or General Assembly have actively supported the Scottsdale church with loans, grants, and loan guarantees from community financial institutions. Presbytery records show 4 such transactions, dating from 1964, with a total value of \$595,000. The Scottsdale congregation has no outstanding debt.
3. An appraisal of the Scottsdale church campus by Valbridge Property Advisors valued the property at \$1,500,000.
4. The AC and Session agreed to disagree on the subject of per capita. As such, the terms of the financial settlement below do not separate into line items, such as per capita.
5. Scottsdale Presbyterian Church and the AC are mutually committed to Clauses IV.B and IV.D of the Gracious Dismissal Policy.
6. The AC affirms that the Pastor and congregation of Scottsdale Presbyterian Church desire to leave the PC(USA) and become members of the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO).

## **Proposed Dismissal Terms**

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

1. That the Scottsdale Presbyterian Church be dismissed from the PC(USA) and allowed to join the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). ECO has already accepted the Scottsdale congregation.
2. That the Pastor at the Scottsdale church, the Rev. Dr. Bruce Johnson, also be allowed to transfer his pastoral credentials to the ECO. ECO has already accepted Rev. Johnson.
3. That the Scottsdale Presbyterian Church will be responsible for a total financial settlement of \$178,500. The Session of Scottsdale Presbyterian Church has approved this settlement amount. The AC shall make a recommendation regarding the apportionment of the total settlement amount in due course.

Members of the Scottsdale Administrative Commission are: Mary Danforth, Cecil Patterson, Lawn Griffiths, John Poling, Richard Nielsen and George Prohaska (Moderator).