

# *Morgan Hill Presbyterian Church*

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Pastor

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Dear Friends of Morgan Hill Presbyterian Church,

About fifteen months ago I wrote to you on behalf of the Session regarding the concerns our Session was having about the direction the PC(USA) (the denomination we are affiliated with) was headed. That letter (available on our website<sup>1</sup>) was actually one in a series of letters and/or newsletter articles that have expressed the Session's concern with what they have seen happening in the PC(USA) over the years. To be clear, the concerns are focused on our denomination, not on our church in particular – the Session is excited about the wonderful things we see God doing in our midst!

In that letter I told you that the “the Session is thoughtfully and prayerfully considering how to best move forward in the midst of the new reality we face.” Today I write on the Session's behalf with renewed concern, for as we see it, this “new reality we face” today includes ...

... a new PC(USA) constitution with which many feel uncomfortable due to what is perceived to be an intentional theological ambiguity, as well as a shift away from the centrality of the local church toward empowering the presbytery and larger denomination.

... a new ordination “standard” that erases previous clear requirements as to who can be ordained (“chastity in singleness” and “faithfulness in marriage between a man and a wife”) and replaces them with ambiguous ones that are open to a variety of interpretations and immediately allows for the ordination of those in a relationship that does not align with God's plan for his children

... signals that these are just the beginning of the changes that will be coming, including the possibility (probability?) the denomination will recommend changing its definition of marriage

The session believes that these are departures from the historic foundations of the Christian faith, and that what is at stake are very important issues that need to be taken seriously – issues like the authority of Scripture, the Lordship of Christ, the call to holy living, and our ministry and mission in the world. These very issues have led a large number of congregations in the PC(USA) to leave for other denominations, and many others are in the process of leaving.

Because of this, the session has formed a “Denominational Relations Task Force” who has been asked to study the issues involved, and then to bring to the session an analysis of options in order to help the session to be able to make a decision as to how to move forward – options that could include considering the Gracious Dismissal process of San Jose Presbytery and seeking to affiliate with a different Presbyterian denomination. The members of this task force, which is being co-chaired by Mark Markham and Stephen Beard are: Stephen Beard, Pamela Frederick, Sophia Knappe, MJ Heacox, Ray Jimenez, and Mark Markham. I’ll be part of the task force as an ex-officio member.

We are letting you know of this for several reasons:

First, the session wants to be completely transparent about what we have repeatedly kept you informed about over the years – our ongoing concern with what is happening within the PC(USA).

Second, the session wanted you to know that your input to the task force is welcome. If you have input or questions, please feel free to contact any of the task force members and let them know.

Finally, we would like to ask you to be praying for this task force, and for the session as we continue to seek what it means for us to remain faithful to God in the midst of the turmoil in the PC(USA). Pray for wisdom, discernment, and graciousness as we seek God’s best for this congregation.

One last thing. I wanted to emphasize again that while there is turmoil within the denomination, there isn’t turmoil here at MHPC. As I said earlier, things here are going very well – exceptionally well! God has been good to us, and for this we should be thankful. I know I am thankful – for MHPC is a wonderful community of Christ-followers who I believe will continue to thrive as we focus on Him no matter what happens in our denomination! I consider it a privilege to serve with you.

Grace and Peace,

Mark

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.mhpc.org/forms/A%20Pastoral%20Letter%20Regarding%20Amendment%2010-A%20\(2011-05-15\).pdf](http://www.mhpc.org/forms/A%20Pastoral%20Letter%20Regarding%20Amendment%2010-A%20(2011-05-15).pdf)