

PRESBYTERY RESPONSE TEAM REPORT

First Presbyterian Church, Templeton a member church of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara, has requested dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (USA) to ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. According to G-3.0301a in the Form of Government, the presbytery has the responsibility and power to dismiss churches.

Church information	First Presbyterian Church 610 S. Main Street, Templeton CA 93465 Telephone (805) 434-1921 Rev. Charlie Little, Pastor
Presbytery Response Team	Rev. Dale Ridenour, Chair Rev. Sean Martin Elder Mike Wesner

PROCESS In keeping with the presbytery's "Guidelines for a Process for Reconciliation or Gracious Separation of a Congregation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" the following process has been followed:

Session vote to request dismissal	Wednesday, July 24, 2013 session meeting (11-0) (Letter from Session, Attachment 1)
Presbytery Council notified by church	July 25, 2013
Presbytery notified by Stated Clerk	September 28, 2013 (Presbytery Consent Agenda)
Church membership rolls received dated	October 17, 2013
Presbytery Response Team (PRT) formed	August 24, 2013
Preliminary questions answered by Session	October 16, 2013 (Preliminary Questions, Attachment 2)
<u>PRT meeting with Session</u>	October 22, 2013

Rev. Dale Ridenour moderated the meeting, other PRT members in attendance were Rev. Sean Martin and Michael Wesner. Session members present included Pastor Charlie Little, Ruling Elders Ric Gahm (Clerk), Margaret Ybarra, Joanne Breffle, Evan Mason, John Doughty, Bill Crout, Daniel Hahn, Debby Price, Scott Scott and Trago Wallace. In addition, two Ruling Elders no longer on Session were in attendance: Mark Ristow and Anne Spohnhauer, members of the church's Denomination Task Force Team; Ruling Elder Pete Perino, Treasurer/Business Manager was also present. Sada Andrews served as Clerk at the request of presbytery's Stated Clerk.

Notification from Session that the church wishes to join ECO	October 22, 2013
PRT report with recommendation to proceed to Presbytery Council	Verbal report at the October 23, 2013 Council

Initial Congregational Gathering

November 17, 2013 at 3:00pm
(Minutes, Attachment 3)

Rev. Dale Paulsen moderated the gathering.

Templeton membership 163 members

Present at this gathering 122 members (75%)

There was a presentation on behalf of the PC(USA) and there was a presentation on the Polity and practice of ECO. A ballot vote was taken.

In response to the question

“Do you, as a member, wish for First Presbyterian Church, Templeton to be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)?”

the counted ballot vote was 101 YES, 15 NO, 5 ABSTAIN, 1 ILLEGAL BALLOT

Ballots were counted by Ruling Elders Deborah Price and Frank Bush from the Templeton church and Sada Andrews, Minute Clerk from the presbytery (Tellers' Report, Attachment 4)

In the three months following the initial congregational gathering, the Response Team

1. Negotiated the terms of separation with the Session in accordance with the presbytery's guidelines (Terms of Dismissal, Attachment 5).
2. Scheduled a meeting on March 4, 2014 with members of the congregation who wished to remain within the PC(USA) but no one from the congregation attended.
3. Communicated with the church's Teaching Elder, Rev. Charlie Little who indicated a desire to be dismissed to ECO; his dismissal will be processed within 90 days following dismissal of the Templeton church.
4. Determined that there were no members of the congregation preparing for ministry and under the care of the presbytery.

Church records (rolls, registers, minutes, etc) The Clerk of Session was notified that the church's official records (rolls and registers, minutes, etc) become the property of the presbytery upon dismissal (see G-3.0107 in the Book of Order). According to the Office of the General Assembly, if a congregation wants to retain their original records, they can send those originals to the Presbyterian Historical Society who will make archival copies – and return the originals to the church. This is done at the expense of the leaving congregation and in conjunction with any final separation agreement. The church will arrange to send their records and registers to the Presbyterian Historical Society as required.

Second Congregational Gathering

March 16, 2014 at 3:00pm (Minutes, Attachment 6)

Notice for this gathering was included in every issue of the church newsletter and posted on the church's website since the initial gathering in November 2013. Notice was included in the Sunday bulletin every week since mid-January, and announcements were made on Sunday morning every week for a month prior to the second gathering.

Committee on Ministry member Elder Larry Lindsay moderated the gathering.

Templeton membership (as of 3/3/14)

168 members

Present at this gathering

96 members (57.1%)

There was a presentation on behalf of the PC(USA); a ballot vote was taken. 96 ballots were returned.

In response to the question

“Shall the membership of the First Presbyterian Church, Templeton request dismissal as a body by the Presbytery of Santa Barbara to ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, another Reformed body in accordance with the terms, including the financial terms as negotiated by the presbytery and Session?”

the counted ballot vote was 90 YES, 4 NO, 2 ABSTAIN.

Ballots were counted by Ruling Elders Deborah Price and John Doughty from the Templeton church and Michael Wesner and Michelle Holmes from the Presbytery of Santa Barbara. (Tellers' Report, Attachment 7)

Ten-day period for any person of the unsuccessful side to contest (by a written notice to the presbytery) the regularity of the call for, or the conduct of, or the manner of the request made at the meeting is from March 16 to March 26, 2014.

Presbytery meeting

April 8, 2014

The Presbytery Council and the Response Team will present their report to the presbytery.

From the dismissal guidelines:

The presbytery shall act in response to the congregation's action. Following notice of any request for dismissal, the Moderator will follow the normal procedures for calling a meeting of presbytery, provided that there is not already scheduled a stated meeting of presbytery within 45 days of the congregational request for dismissal. It should be noted that renegotiation of the terms for dismissal through use of amendments from the floor of presbytery would invalidate months of work between the PRT and the congregation. Therefore, the proposal shall be presented as a whole, with the understanding that the final agreement has been reached by good faith negotiations between the PRT and the congregation.

The PRT shall report the results of its meeting with the congregation, and the presbytery shall determine whether the process for requesting dismissal was fair and represents the will of the congregation. If so, the congregation shall be dismissed to another Reformed denomination, subject to any agreements that may be reached regarding the fair treatment of those members who do not wish to leave the denomination. If the presbytery determines that the request for dismissal was invalid, the request for dismissal should be denied, and the congregation shall remain a member of the PC(USA), and, ordinarily, no further action should be taken to reconsider the matter for at least 24 months. (lines 246-262)

The question will be presented to the presbytery as follows:

Shall the membership of Templeton Presbyterian Church (PIN 00939), located at 610 S. Main Street, Templeton, CA 93465 be dismissed as a body from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and from the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara to ECO: A Covenant Order of

Evangelical Presbyterians, if the way be clear and in accordance with the terms, including the financial terms, as approved by the congregation on March 16, 2014?

There will be opportunity for discussion, but this question may not be separated.

Comments from the Response Team and Presbytery Council:

- 1) “If the way be clear” means that the congregation has been accepted by and we have received a letter from ECO indicating assumption of ecclesiastical authority over the church and their pastors, pending their dismissal from the Presbytery of Santa Barbara (ECO letter, Attachment 8), and that payment is made according to the terms for dismissal.
 - 2) In accordance with the presbytery’s usual voting procedure, the vote will be by voice (or a counted, standing vote) unless a paper ballot is requested.
 - 3) The Response Team will then make a motion that the officers of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara (officers of the corporation) are authorized to execute the necessary property transfer deeds. This motion will be voted on by the presbytery.
 - 4) Dismissal of the congregation will be effective at the adjournment of the presbytery meeting.
 - 5) Pastors requesting dismissal to ECO will be handled by the Committee on Ministry at the same or later presbytery meeting.
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TEMPLETON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Know Christ — Grow Christ — Show Christ

610 S. Main Street
Templeton, CA 93465

Rev. Charlie Little

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firstpres@fpctempleton.org

July 25, 2013

Presbyter Council
Presbytery of Santa Barbara
6067 Shirrell Way
Goleta, CA 93117

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with no small degree of sadness that the session of the First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, respectfully requests Presbytery Council to begin the process of dismissing our congregation from the Presbyterian Church, USA, according to our presbytery's Gracious Dismissal Policy. This request comes as a result of a unanimous vote at our stated session meeting on July 24, 2013.

We love this presbytery and have shared a mutual commitment to the work of Christ's mission over the 126 years since our inception on May 8, 1887. We have gratefully partnered with SBP through shared pastoral salary support as a mission congregation in the early 80's, through mediation during times of crises in the mid-90's and early 2000's, through Hearts and Hands funding of our re-development vision, and through a host of other expressions of leadership and vision that have made this presbytery a special place to engage in ministry. If the congregation ultimately supports the desire to disaffiliate with the PCUSA, it is our hope to maintain, in some form, a continued relationship with the Santa Barbara Presbytery that will mutually encourage us both in our common call to further the gospel on the Central Coast.

Thank you for your leadership during this difficult time, and we look forward to welcoming the work of the Presbytery Response Team.

Faithfully in Christ Jesus,

Rev. Charlie Little
Pastor, Moderator of Session

Dr. Richard Gahm
Clerk of Session

First Presbyterian Church, Templeton

**Session's written responses to the five Response Team questions,
developed out of the September 11, 2013 Called Session Meeting.**

Submitted October 16, 2013

Question #1: Has the Session and Staff discussed the Gracious Dismissal Policy? What did the Session/staff learn? What questions does Session/staff have for the PRT?

Yes, the Session and staff have read and discussed the Gracious Dismissal Policy. The Session's first edifying exposure to the policy occurred on October 12-13, 2012 when our Session retreat was held in conjunction with the ECO Migration Planning Workshop in Santa Ynez. Subsequently we established our own Denominational Task Force in November 2012 to concentrate on all issues regarding dismissal. Since that time, our pastor, who has attended The Fellowship and ECO meetings, and at least one Session elder have attended all Presbytery meetings and shared the findings and documents with the Session. During the Session discussions, we have acknowledged the importance for our pastor, Session, and the PRT to maintain fidelity to the stated principles of consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, and openness and transparency. It is our greatest desire to honor the mission of God and the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and to pursue reconciliation through a mutually beneficial and accepted solution in the best interest of the congregation, Session, our pastor, and Santa Barbara Presbytery. We have created a flow chart of the dismissal process for our congregation that has been synthesized from the most current available information. Our primary question concerns our financial stewardship in service of the mission of Christ through our congregation and the presbytery. What would constitute a fair and faithful "settlement" that honors both? Part of the answer to that question is to what degree designated and endowed will be treated as assets.

Question #2: What are the primary reasons for wanting to leave the PCUSA?

For faithful Christian people to decide that the denomination to which they have pledged fidelity, and has nurtured many of them since childhood, has become alien to them is an agonizing dilemma.

Since we are made in God's image, relationships are fundamental – to God and each other. We make covenants because we serve a covenant-making God. We value the continuity and security in the permanence of our commitments, both large and small. We are more comfortable sitting in the same pew each Sunday morning. We grow attached to our pastor, our fellow congregants, our church buildings and yes, to our denomination. But we know, as followers of Jesus Christ, that these are all things associated with the transient nature of life in this world, and pale in importance when weighed in the balance against the Eternal Word who is our Savior. His teachings must come first in our hearts. Our comfort and our desires do not always reflect His way.

For this reason, when our denomination begins to value the way of the world before Christ's way, when God's teachings which have stood as our rock for millennia are demoted from essential tenants to guidelines, when tolerance and promotion of behaviors which God has clearly condemned are deemed acceptable, the Session felt it must act to remain faithful to Christ and his gospel of love in the struggle against the evil one. Over the past decade, our congregation's endeavor to "not grow weary in doing good"¹ has been increasingly undermined by the necessity of engaging in the "good fight of the faith"² in both the world *and* in our own denomination.

As a result, our Session has unanimously voted to actively "contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,"³ by recommending that we move to a denomination of Reformed congregations which seek to hew more faithfully to our historic confessions, and thereby more faithfully to God's word as given to us in Scripture.

¹Galations 6:9, ²1 Timothy 6:12, ³Jude 3

Question #3: What steps have you taken in this process to determine the will of the congregation so far?

Education of and the discernment of the will of Session regarding dismissal from PC(USA) began in May 2011. Education of and the discernment of the will of the congregation began with the initial gathering of the congregation on March 17, 2013 (78 in attendance) during which time information regarding the Session's concerns with continued membership in the PC(USA) were discussed and notice was given of the March 20-29 elder-led five small group question and answer sessions to be held at various times and locations (58 in attendance). Another opportunity for questions and answers was offered on Sunday evening, April 14, which was conducted by our pastor (22 in attendance). An informational presentation about ECO was held on the evening of April 24 with 28 in attendance. In late June a survey created by our Denominational Task Force was mailed to all members of our congregation in order to determine the need for and ways to disseminate any missing information needed by the members in order for them to make an informed vote on dismissal. The results yielded two additional elder-led question and answer sessions targeting the younger families of our congregation who had not attended the previous information opportunities. This survey also asked for the respondents to indicate their current position on dismissal: 51.7% of the surveys were returned; 66 expressed a desire to dismiss, 23 of those would leave if we do not dismiss; 14 expressed a desire not to dismiss, 4 of those would leave if we do dismiss. At the July 24 Session meeting a motion was made and unanimously approved to notify Santa Barbara Presbytery of our desire to seek gracious dismissal from PC(USA) and seek membership in ECO. On Sunday, July 28 this motion to dismiss was read to the congregation during the morning worship service.

Question #4: What plans has the Session proposed/discussed regarding property and finance, and where do you intend to land in leaving the PCUSA?

As our Session studied and prayed about considering dismissal, it became clear to our pastor and to us that even without full knowledge of the monetary costs to the church and the repercussions to the pastor's retirement benefits, we were committed to dismissal from the PC(USA). However, this comes with more than one regret. We had hoped to be able to maintain our enriching, beneficial, and supportive relationship with the Santa Barbara Presbytery through the formation of the Union Presbytery. Because of the failure of the Union proposal, it is with great sadness that our relationship with the Santa Barbara Presbytery will be hindered in this process; nevertheless, we will uphold for a period of time our Mission Share commitment to the Presbytery, continue ongoing support to several validated ministries (e.g. IMPACT, Front Porch, etc.), and make appropriate payments to ease the burden of Presbytery-wide outstanding loans (the details of which will be established during the dismissal process). As stated in more detail in our response to question #2 above and #5 below, we will seek dismissal to A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) in order to associate with a Presbyterian denomination that more closely commits to the authority of the Bible and the Reformed theology and traditions as stated in the Book of Confessions. ECO's polity will buttress our commitment as individuals and as a congregation to Christ's call to mission in our community and world.

Question #5: Church members have asked, "Are we still going to be Presbyterians? How would you, as a Session, answer this question?"

Yes, we will still be Presbyterians. ECO was birthed to meet the beliefs and needs of PC(USA) churches whose members want to ensure that the denomination honors the authority of the Bible and maintains the Reformed Presbyterian traditions, theology, and form of government. The Book of Confessions will continue to direct our theology in the Reformed tradition, and the ECO Polity document will now serve as our new Book of Order. It is important to our pastor, the Session, and our church members that our internal leadership at the local church level is governed by the pastor (teaching elder) and the Session (ruling elders), as well as beyond the local level by a Synod, and a General Assembly when denomination growth supports it.

Response Team Minutes of the Initial Congregational Gathering
First Presbyterian Church, Templeton
November 17, 2013 – 3:00pm

The initial gathering of the congregation with the Presbytery Response Team (PRT) was held in the Sanctuary at First Presbyterian Church, 610 S. Main Street, Templeton, on November 17, 2013. Presbytery Council appointed Teaching Elder Dale Paulsen to moderate this gathering.

ATTENDANCE Attendance was taken by sign-in sheet at the door; 122 members were present as verified by the Clerk of Session, representing 75% of church membership.

Moderator Paulsen welcomed the congregation and introduced himself at 3:00pm. He announced that a quorum was present and opened the gathering with prayer.

INTRODUCTION OF PRESBYTERY RESPONSE TEAM (PRT) Chair, Rev. Dale Ridenour; Ruling Elder Michael Wesner; and Rev. Sean Martin introduced themselves. Rev. Ridenour spoke about the purpose of the initial congregational gathering and the PRT's role in the process. There was an opportunity for questions for the PRT and there were none.

SESSION INFORMATION DISCUSSION ON DISMISSAL

Why has Session voted to move towards dismissal? Ruling Elder Mark Ristow spoke about the meetings and retreats held by Session, their research and study, and the conclusion that

- the denomination that nurtured this congregation is moving away from the church's core beliefs;
- the world is increasingly valued over God's ways, and Essential Tenets are demoted to guidelines;
- and although Session values continuity and commitments, and recognizes its attachment to people, pastors, church buildings and even the denomination, these are associated with the transient nature of life, and the preeminent, permanent reality and loyalty is to Christ.

Session, therefore, unanimously decided to contend for the faith by seeking dismissal and to remain faithful to God's Word as revealed in Scripture.

What process has the Session taken so far? Ruling Elder John Doughty referred to PowerPoint slides and highlighted the following:

- Starting in 2011, there had been discussions within the presbytery, and Session started to engage in discussion about why or how we were drifting away from essential Reformed tenets, and started to look at the issues addressing PC(USA).
- In October 2011, Session held a retreat and a congregational gathering.
- Beginning in 2012, Session reviewed information from the Fellowship and ECO (both newly formed)
- Session supported the Union Presbytery, which was overturned by the Synod PJC.
- Looking for other alternatives in 2012, Session studied ECO doctrine.
- In March 2013, Session had another congregational gathering and many small group events to explain the situation and hear from the congregation.
- On June 14, a survey was taken and 52% of members responded: 74% wanted to be dismissed.
- On July 24, by unanimous vote, Session requested to start the dismissal process.

- Session met with the PRT on October 2 and sent membership rolls, historical documents, and answers to PRT questions. The PRT asked all the elders many questions and supported discussion to be sure we studied all the issues and had kept the congregation up to date on what was being discussed.
- Session sent a letter to the congregation on October 30, inviting everyone to the PRT's initial gathering with the congregation.
- Starting November 3, announcements were made in church; data packets containing FAQs and ECO information were delivered to all members.
- Elders followed up with each member to answer any questions about the data packet or congregational gathering.

Implications of being dismissed from the PC(USA) Ruling Elder Scott Scott spoke about the implications for the congregation and for the church's relationship with the presbytery and other churches in the area.

- While the church may continue to associate with the Presbytery of Santa Barbara in some way, such as in mission with Front Porch and IMPACT, the church won't have access to support for procedure.
- The church's bank loan will no longer be guaranteed by the presbytery.
- Church property will no longer be held in trust.
- The church may be required to pay a settlement to Presbytery, which has not yet been determined.
- The church will no longer be required to send reports or remittances.
- As far as the life of the congregation, the church will join a new vital, and growing denomination, ECO, will eventually include a number of churches from the Presbytery of Santa Barbara – the church will be allied with those churches and other churches in ECO, free from the actions of PC(USA).
- The church will enter into covenantal relations on all levels of church activity, nurture, understanding, correction, and discipline.

The moderator asked if there questions. One question was asked about the church's property and PRT member Mike Wesner spoke about the PC(USA) trust clause.

PRESENTATION ON SANTA BARBARA PRESBYTERY AND PC(USA) Members of the congregation received the handouts "Why Choose the PC(USA)" and "Misrepresentations about the PC(USA)." Executive Presbyter Jan Armstrong spoke about reasons not to seek dismissal from the PC(USA): independence, covenant, connection and money.

- 1) Independence – In the PC(USA), the church has both independence and connection. You elect your elders, you install your pastor. As a congregation, you can set the theological tone for your church. No one has threatened Pastor Charlie for his sermons. We are united with diversity. Some of our fastest growing congregations are immigrant congregations. They read the Book of Order, essential tenets, etc., and although they are much more conservative than this congregation, and many congregations, they find room for themselves inside PC(USA). Every pastor and every ordained person takes the same ordination vows. It is not as simple as Bible-hating fanatics and Jesus-following fanatics. You make talk to people who are very different from you on many theological questions, but you will find people who love God and seek to serve others. You are free to choose all sorts of ways to live your life as a congregation. The presbytery is often called when things go bad. We have boundaries. We have essential tenets. We have a high view of Jesus

and Scripture, and the biblical call to give. The Committee on Ministry has never come here to tell you what to do or who to call, what to believe, who to marry, etc. Both the Westminster and Helvetic Confessions are about freedom, but bounded by obedience to Christ. Vote no because you are free to be who you want to be.

- 2) Covenant relationship – In this relationship, we have covenanted to behave in a certain way, have taken vows, for Jesus, under authority of Scripture, governed by the Church's polity. These are promises made to do work together. These are promises that need to be kept.
- 3) Connection – We have been connected in ministry and mission for decades. We're connected in more ways than you can see from the surface. Templeton had a liberal pastor before Charlie and your current pastor was the Associate Pastor in Orcutt, your Music Director, Vern Sanders, was down in Grover Beach. The connections that allowed access to such a good pool of candidates will go away. Presbyterians in the PC(USA) are making a difference all over the world. We have a great process to prepare candidates for ministry in our seminaries. We're connected in ministry. We've built Front Porch, a college ministry, and we're building more. We'd like to help liberate resources for the sake of ministry. Through IMPACT we have shared Jesus around the world together. We trained a new generation of Latino pastors. We planted three biblically-strong churches here. We've committed to two new church plants. We live in an evangelical place. You have stood with us as we have stood with you. We have helped to build this sanctuary. I encourage you to vote no because you are already working with a good crew of people who are working to build the kingdom right now.
- 4) Money – It will probably cost six figures to leave. As a Presbytery, we vote together to start things. Your pastor and elders vote to start things. We don't send out bills, we just count on continued giving. If you leave, we need to be sure your portion of the debt is retired so it's not left to the people staying. We've made commitments to missionaries, and to a church in Albania, and we need to sustain them for years to come. Right now, the cost may be between \$100,000 to \$240,000 (from what we know of two churches).

The moderator asked if there were questions or comments. Some of the questions asked are shown below (responses in *italics*)

- You gave us information about what we owe, but what about what we've paid you? What credit will you give us?
PRT response: We have a 20-step process to go through with each church, including the past three years of statements and ministry shares. Each church is different; we reconcile our records and session's records. We look at past three years and look forward two years; credits and obligations are taken into consideration. Then we come to a number and negotiate with the session. We have a fiduciary responsibility to all money given to the church and presbytery, going way back. We are not deciding that today; today, the congregation is deciding whether to continue with the process.
- You said that our church has independence and control, if they change the Book of Order to something we can't follow, do we ignore the Book of Order?
PRT response: There are churches all over the country not following the Book of Order.
- If we ignore the Book of Order, will we end up in judicial process?
PRT response: None of the congregations here are anywhere close to Book of Order problems. Congregations have more independence than they used to. But if you don't

like somebody else's congregation, you'd want a rule book to tell them what to do. The place where people get really upset is at General Assembly. They see the horror of the moment and forget about the missionaries being sent out, and the 95% of things that are good, and that there is really good Kingdom work going on. Hollywood Pres is staying: they're evangelical and staying to be a light within the PC(USA). They joined the Fellowship of Presbyterians, which gives you community without leaving the PC(USA) and without it costing you what it would to leave. In 2008, all mandate language was removed from constitution. All democratically representative denominations have diminished control of congregations. Denominations are contexts for ministry; they are not who you are. By the time we get to heaven, they'll be gone. I think the denominational conversation has taken us too inward and not outwardly focused.

- What does it mean to the PC(USA) to stay? Why would you want us to stay?

PRT response: The benefits of staying? Connections stay strong, we keep doing ministry, we celebrate unity in diversity, we remain a national church together. If you think of missions and mission funding, it would create the possibility of continuing those. Your elders would remain involved in presbytery meetings. It's a loss of family, and also a nuanced loss because we're gone but still around: we're all friends, so it's an awkward loss of friendship and institutional connection.

- Can we still support Front Porch or IMPACT? Can we attend presbytery meetings?

PRT response: Presbytery isn't going to cut you off completely. You will still be able to support Front Porch. Even the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the biggest missions they support are PC(USA) missions. You can continue to support these ministries. And you can always attend presbytery meetings, but you cannot vote.

- I think we're here because General Assembly has decided to change the principles the people have based their faith on for generations. How does a General Assembly change these things and we have to abide by them? I cannot in good faith say that I can be a part of the PC(USA) when you're changing the basis of everything I believe in.

PRT response: I've been doing this for forty years and through several Books of Order. You need to see that the older Books of Order and the one today do not have much difference. We gained and changed some Confessions. Nowhere in the documents have we lost the core values of Reformed doctrine. In the 70's we inserted language about fidelity and chastity, and two years ago we removed it. "Chastity" occurs on ten pages, 23 times – it's still a part of our theology. What is being watered down is the nature of congregations and Christians, but our theology is sound. Christians are different, and some do better at some parts than others, but we are not called to judge. ECO is using the same theology, but it is a narrower group with a common understanding of what that means. You will remove some diversity in that structure. If I felt the PC(USA) was not solidly Reformed and Christian, I could not be here. We will be saved by the cross of Christ, not by our theory of atonement. I would be cautious about taking one discussion and saying that this is about Jesus when many of your friends who love Jesus are having the same discussion and coming to a different conclusion.

- I almost didn't come today. I love you all so much. I'm different and liberal. I am disappointed with this church's decision to leave. I don't think I can be part of ECO because I believe a woman should have control over her own body. The Lay Commission, a renegade commission, has chipped away at this. The upset at our church goes deeper

than gays in the ministry. It goes back to 1967, and I was proud of that: we talked about the sins of the people and of the nation, and Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. Johnson told his press secretary that they would lose a lot of white people, and he did. I'm upset. I need to leave

PRT response: A piece of clarification: ECO fully supports the full gamut of women in leadership in the church. I do feel for our brother and honor him for the kind way he shared.

- I think the PC(USA) has done many, many good works, but where are the boundaries? Is it true that someone can be ordained who said he doesn't believe in Jesus?

PRT response: They changed the way pastors, elders and deacons are examined. It is actually more rigorous, but different, so people get nervous. All ordained people must affirm vows, like baptismal vows. Who is your Lord and Savior? etc.. There is not just one standard, but a group of ten questions that involve more from the elders.

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE Rev. Charlie Little addressed the gathering, and spoke about

- His gratitude for the privilege of serving as pastor
- His pride in the way the congregation talked about the question of dismissal and honored one another in the process, and his pride in the leadership of the church
- His resistance to seeking dismissal for a good deal of the process
- His recognition of both diversity and disagreement, and that the ordination vows could be parsed conservatively or liberally, "unique and authoritative" could be read strongly or not strongly; our foundational documents are strong but interpreted in a weak way – or if nobody bothers to protect or defend them, they are weak.
- The Book of Order which says there are essential tenets, but the judicial committees say we can't enforce them, and asked "where is the integrity?"
- His concern that, as the PC(USA) gets more diverse, the church just continues to accept greater diversity; you can believe so many things that you almost believe nothing.
- The diversion of energy from mission due to fundamental battles of faith
- His experience at a Fellowship of Presbyterians gathering where the experience was encouraging, uplifting, sustaining.
- His need to be in a context in which his beliefs are embraced, encouraged and strengthened for the battle we have with the world, and that he no longer felt he had that place of home in PC(USA).

SESSION PRESENTATION ON WHY THE COVENANT ORDER OF EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIANS (ECO) Ruling Elder Anne Spohnhauer referred to PowerPoint slides and highlighted the following:

- ECO's Reformed theology, Essential Tenets, ordination vows and the Book of Confessions
- Each congregation is required to be in a Mission Affinity Group, with congregations organized around similar mission interests
- ECO's self-reflective questions and greater accountability
- ECO's requirement for an annual "state of the congregation" report
- ECO's polity is historically Presbyterian
- Each church has freedom, but is accountable to other churches

- First Pres Templeton can own its own property
- Per capita is 1% of the budget
- The church will be in the Presbytery of the West
- Covenant partners emphasize each person's ministry; small group ministry is empowered
- Pastors and elders participate in peer review
- Laity empowered for ministry
- The church can still support Front Porch and IMPACT

The moderator asked if there were questions and members of the PRT and the Session responded.

The Moderator Paulsen led the congregation and the PRT in prayer and members of the congregation voted.

The ballot read:

The Session of your church has requested dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). The Presbytery's Response Team expects that at least fifty percent of the active membership is present today. This first congregational gathering is to determine that a significant portion of those members present today (estimated at more than 2/3) wish to be dismissed, and to ensure that the members of the congregation have been informed regarding the Polity and practice of the denomination to which they may be going, including any practical considerations this might mean for the congregation. This is **not** the final vote of the congregation, but a preliminary indication of whether or not the presbytery will proceed with the dismissal process.

**Do you, as a member, wish for First Presbyterian Church, Templeton
to be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)?**

_____ YES, I am in favor of dismissal _____ NO, I am not in favor of dismissal
_____ I wish to ABSTAIN and understand that my abstention vote
will be counted as a NO

The question was answered in the affirmative by more than 2/3 (two thirds) of those present.

Church membership	163 members
Members present	122 members (75% of church membership)
Ballots cast	122 ballots
Two-thirds of those in attendance	81 YES votes required to proceed with the process
	101 YES
	15 NO
	5 ABSTAIN
	1 ILLEGAL BALLOT

The congregational gathering ended with a closing prayer by the moderator at approximately 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sada Andrews, Minute Clerk

Tellers' Report – Congregational Gathering
Initial Gathering of the Congregation

Presbytery of Santa Barbara

“Guidelines for a Process for Reconciliation or Gracious Separation
of a Congregation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

“The PRT expects that at least fifty percent of the active membership will participate in this initial gathering meeting which will be moderated by a teaching or ruling elder appointed for this purpose by the Presbytery Council. The members of the PRT will attend this gathering and will be allowed sufficient time to speak on behalf of the PC(USA). During this gathering the PRT will ensure that the members of the congregation have been informed regarding the Polity and practice of the Reformed body to which they may be going, including any practical implications this might mean for the congregation.”

“If the PRT determines that a significant proportion (estimated at more than 2/3) of the attending members wish to be dismissed, a second gathering will be convened. After the initial congregational gathering, at least three months will pass before this second gathering.”

Church **First Presbyterian Church, Templeton** Date: **November 17, 2013**

Time: **3:00pm**

Current Membership **163** 1/2 (50%) of current membership **82**

Number of members in attendance 122 Is this at least 50% YES
of current membership?

2/3 (two-thirds) of those in attendance 81

- 1) All ballots that indicate a preference are taken into account in determining the number of votes cast
- 2) Blank ballots and abstentions do indicate a preference, and are counted as NO votes
- 3) Unintelligible ballots, or ballots with more than one choice are treated as *illegal ballots*. They are counted as votes cast, but are not credited to one side or the other.

Total number of votes cast 122 (1 illegal ballot)

Number of YES votes 101

Number of NO votes 15 + ABSTAIN votes 5 = 20

Is the number of affirmative (YES) votes at least 2/3 (two-thirds) of those in attendance? YES

Signature

Print your name

Deborah Price

Deborah Price

Frank Bush

Frank Bush

ADA

SADA ANDREWS

Terms for Dismissal of First Presbyterian Church, Templeton

The Presbytery Response Team for First Presbyterian Church, Templeton (hereinafter Templeton) met with Session's financial elders and negotiated the terms for dismissal. The following were considered during these negotiations.

Presbytery debt The presbytery has, over the years, voted to purchase property for the Grover Beach and Paso Robles churches, and to assume liability for the ministry at Front Porch/Casa Veranda; these liabilities were included in the negotiations:

Grover Beach GA site mortgage	23,547.07
Grover Beach GA bldg mortgage	58,468.45
Paso Robles GA site mortgage	342,474.28
Casa Veranda Synod loan	500,000.00
Casa Veranda presbytery loan	<u>414,592.49</u>
TOTAL PRESBYTERY DEBT	\$1,339,082.29

This is \$176.52 per person based on the presbytery's recorded 12/31/12 membership of 7,586

In addition, the presbytery voted to guarantee repayment of debt assumed by several of our churches. These liabilities were not included in the negotiations:

Moorpark GA loan	144,282.32
Pismo Beach mortgage	1,177.75
St. Andrew's PILP loan	135,129.05
Newbury Park PILP loan	759,114.94
Grover Beach PILP loan	259,113.04
Moorpark PILP loan	2,396,508.33
El Montecito PILP loan	671,610.43
Solvang PILP loan	<u>2,430,694.21</u>
TOTAL GUARANTEED DEBT	\$6,797,630.07

This \$6.8 million debt was not included in Templeton's share of long-term debt liability.

The church's verified congregational membership as of 12/31/12 was 178 members. This is 2.35% of the presbytery-wide membership as of 12/31/12. This percentage was taken into consideration when the Response Team looked at Templeton's share of the presbytery debt. Templeton's share of the presbytery debt is \$31,420.56 (178 members as of 12/31/12 x \$176.52). The church's membership as of 3/16/14 was 168 members.

On-going support of the presbytery budget With the possible departure of 10 of our 32 churches, the viability of the presbytery budget, staffing and ministry support for the next two years is seriously compromised. Templeton has paid their 2011, 2012 and 2013 Ministry Share in full. Projected Ministry Share for 2014 and 2015 was calculated at \$24,920.00.

Other specific or unique factors: The Session at Templeton has committed to the support of Front Porch Campus Ministry and IMPACT for \$15,000 over 5 years (\$3,000 per year).

Consideration of the value of the congregational property for the use and benefit of the PC(USA) The Response Team considered the following:

Current tax assessor value of real property (land, 2013/2014 assessor's statement)	\$412,294.00
Current tax assessor value of improvements (2013/2014 assessor's statement)	1,041,382.00

SETTLEMENT MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING between the Presbytery Response Team (PRT) of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara (SBP) and the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Templeton (Templeton) as approved by the congregation on March 16, 2014:

Financial Terms:

1. Templeton agrees to \$42,200 to settle costs of dismissal. Although these funds may be allocated in any manner as desired by the PRT between the Ministry Share, debt calculations, and property considerations, the following formed the basis for this agreement:

2014 & 2015 Ministry Share	\$21,700.00
Property and other considerations, including PRT costs	20,500.00

2. Templeton agrees to continuing mission support of Front Porch and IMPACT at \$3,000/year for five (5) years 15,000.00

Deed Considerations:

1. Templeton accepts a reversion deed (property would revert to SPB) of 10 years' duration.
2. Reversion clause could be triggered by one of the following events:
 - a. Templeton's failure to fulfill financial obligations to SBP.
 - b. Templeton ceases to operate as a church in the Reformed tradition.
 - c. The property ceases to be used as an asset dedicated to a church of the Reformed tradition.
3. Templeton, at dismissal, desires to become a part of ECO. Should ECO fail to operate as a Reformed denomination within the 10 year period, Templeton may satisfy the requirements of membership by affiliating with a denomination of the Reformed tradition as defined by the PC(USA) and recognized by the WCRC.

Response Team Minutes of the Second Congregational Gathering
First Presbyterian Church, Templeton
March 16, 2014 – 3:00pm

The second gathering of the congregation with the Presbytery Response Team (PRT) was held in the Sanctuary at First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, 610 S. Main Street, Templeton, CA 93465 on March 16, 2014. Committee on Ministry member Ruling Elder Larry Lindsay moderated this gathering; the Moderator introduced himself, convened the gathering and opened with prayer at 3:08pm. A quorum was present.

Written notice for this gathering was sent to all church members at least 30 days prior to this date, and announcements were made on Sunday morning every week for a month prior to the second gathering. Notice was included in the Sunday church bulletin since mid-January, and published on the church's website and in every issue of the church newsletter since the initial gathering (Attachment A).

Current church membership was verified by the Clerk of Session at 168 active members. All deletions and additions of active members of the congregation since the initial congregational gathering were reviewed by the PRT and determined to be appropriate.

ATTENDANCE Attendance was taken by sign-in sheet at the door; 96 members were present as verified by the Clerk of Session, representing 57.1% of the membership of the church.

Presbytery Response Team (PRT) chair, Rev. Dale Ridenour introduced himself and announced the purpose of this gathering. He introduced Ruling Elder Michael Wesner, a member of the PRT. PRT member Rev. Sean Martin was unable to be present. Executive Presbyter, Rev. Jan Armstrong, and former Stated Clerk Elder Michelle Holmes were also present. There were no questions from the congregation.

REMARKS FROM SESSION, PROPOSED TERMS OF DISMISSAL AND SESSION RECOMMENDATION Rev. Charlie Little introduced three members of the session, each of whom spoke. Elder Debbie Price summarized the discernment process the session and church followed over the past several years which led to the request for dismissal. Elder Scott Scott spoke about the dismissal terms which had been distributed to the congregation (Attachment B). Elder and Treasurer Peter Perino spoke about the church's finances. There were no questions from the congregation.

PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE PC(USA) The PRT asked Executive Presbyter, Rev. Jan Armstrong, to speak on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Rev. Armstrong spoke about

- why some PC(USA) congregations and leaders feel they can stay in the denomination and not worry;
- the risks departing churches face as they participate in a new denomination and the need to honor each other as people who love Jesus and the church;
- and the challenge to continue to do mission together and to give grace to one another as we build bridges within this geographic area.

Rev. Armstrong reminded the congregation that Jesus' disciples were not like-minded, except that they all loved Jesus. He charged the congregation to care for their pastor and his family.

Rev. Armstrong closed by reading from the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20, section 6.108. There were no questions from the congregation.

CONGREGATIONAL DISCUSSION There was an opportunity for open discussion by members of the congregation. There were questions concerning the pastor's pension; Elder Scott Scott emphasized Session's unanimity in their desire to make sure the pastor's benefits remain as they have been. Rev. Little expressed his appreciation of the presbytery's Dismissal Guidelines and the fairness of the process. He thanked the PRT and presbytery staff for their support throughout his ministry, and expressed his endorsement of remaining friends and colleagues in ministry with the presbytery.

Following prayer by the Moderator, a reminder that only active members of the congregation were entitled to vote, and that a 2/3 vote was required to proceed with the dismissal process, the congregation proceeded to vote. The ballots had been distributed as members checked in at the door, and read:

"Shall the membership of the First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), request dismissal as a body by the Presbytery of Santa Barbara to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, another Reformed body in accordance with the terms, including the financial terms as negotiated by the presbytery and Session?"

_____ YES

_____ NO

_____ ABSTAIN

The ballots were counted twice by three elders from the congregation and two representatives of the presbytery.

The question was answered in the affirmative by more than 2/3 (two-thirds) of those present.

Church membership	168 members
Members present	96 members (57.1% of church membership)
Ballots cast	96 ballots
Two-thirds of those in attendance	64 YES votes required to request dismissal
	90 YES
	4 NO
	2 ABSTAIN

With a closing prayer by the Moderator, the congregational gathering ended at 4:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Holmes, Minute Clerk

The below notice ran in the Sunday bulletin on:
2/16/14, 2/23/14, 3/2/14, 3/9/14 and 3/16/14.

CONGREGATIONAL GATHERING



Sunday, March 16th in the afternoon

This is the second Congregational Gathering for the final vote
with the Presbytery Response Team in the dismissal process.

It is required that a minimum of 50% of our membership attend this meeting.

**Financial Separation Terms
for
First Presbyterian Church, Templeton.**

Ministry Share: \$ 21,700

All other property considerations: 20,500

Total Due: 42,200

Addition Consideration for IMPACT and/or Front Porch: Church intends to continue its support of both IMPACT and Front Porch in the future.

Tellers' Report – Congregational Vote on Dismissal
Second Gathering of the Congregation

Presbytery of Santa Barbara

“Guidelines for a Process for Reconciliation or Gracious Separation of a Congregation
from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

“There shall be at least 1/2 (50%) of the current active membership in attendance.
An affirmative vote of at least 2/3 (two-thirds) of those in attendance is required in order to
further the dismissal process.”

“The ballots shall be counted by two elders from the congregation and two representatives of
the presbytery. Only ballots clearly legible shall be counted. In case of ambiguity, the ballot
will be counted as “No.” Abstentions count as “No” votes. The ballots shall be counted twice
and the results shall be announced at the meeting...”

Church **First Presbyterian Church, Templeton**

Date: **March 16, 2014**

Time: **3:00pm**

Current Membership **168**

1/2 (50%) of current membership **84**

Number of members in attendance 96

2/3 (two-thirds) of those in attendance 64

Instructions to tellers Blank ballots count as abstentions; blank ballots and abstentions
count as NO votes; ambiguous ballots or illegible ballots count as votes cast, and are
treated as NO votes.

Total number of votes cast

~~96~~ 96 (mh)

Number of YES votes

90

Number of NO votes 4 plus number of ABSTAIN votes 2 = 6

Is the number of affirmative (YES) votes 2/3 (two-thirds) of those in attendance? yes

Signature

Deborah Price

John Doughty

Michael H. Wesner

Michelle Holmes

Print your name

Deborah Price

JOHN DOUGHTY

MICHAEL H. WESNER

Michelle Holmes



ECO

A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians

The Presbytery of the West

February 26, 2014

RE Michelle Holmes
Stated Clerk
The Presbytery of Santa Barbara
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Re: First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, CA (the "Church")

Dear RE Holmes,

We are pleased to inform you that, pursuant to the constitution of ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians ("ECO"), ECO Presbytery of the West has agreed to assume ecclesiastical authority over the First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, CA, and their pastor, Rev. Charlie Little, pending their dismissal from the Presbytery of Santa Barbara.

We agree to assume such authority immediately upon the Presbytery of Santa Barbara's dismissal of the Church and their pastor from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to ECO.

It is our understanding that Rev. Little will continue his service to the First Presbyterian Church of Templeton, CA. He has already completed his application and interview process with ECO Presbytery of the West, in order to facilitate the transfer.

I truly appreciate your gracious cooperation through this process. Please contact me if any questions or concerns arise.

In His Service,

Rev. Rory A. Gillespie
Stated Clerk, Presbytery of the West
First Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 958
Lamar, CO 81052