

What if MDPC became an Independent church with no denominational affiliation?

Are there any independent Presbyterian Churches?

There are very few. Some that started independent actually ended up joining a Presbyterian denomination. One church that is still independent is not completely independent because their pastors belong to the PCA denomination. This shows that they still are tied to a denomination.

MDPC functions fairly independently now. **What would the concerns be if we were not affiliated with any Presbyterian denomination?**

Polity and Theology:

Our Polity (structure) and theology are by nature and history very connectional. The core of our DNA is to be connected with the larger body of believers. To set ourselves up completely separate from other churches goes against some of our basic understanding about what it means to be the church in the world.

Conflicts among and between pastors and congregations:

In our current system, if there was a major conflict in the church or a conflict with a pastor, the presbytery would step in as a third party to help us mediate that conflict. The involvement of the presbytery (or a higher denominational body) serves as a type of safety net for both the pastor and the congregation so that everyone has the opportunity to be treated fairly and have due process. Without this third party, the congregation and pastors are vulnerable to splits, factions and unfair processes that can damage a congregation for many years to come.

Ordination process

The ordination process helps to vet those seeking to be ordained in the Presbyterian church. They must go before committees to explore their call, take part in psychological evaluations, ordination tests, etc. These are all important components to insure we have people prepared to serve our congregation and that the community has affirmed that call in a person's life. Without a denomination we potentially would have to oversee and develop a process on our own.

Calling Pastors

If MDPC was independent, it might limit the pool of pastors to draw from during a pastor search. Because Presbyterian pastors feel called to serve in the Reformed tradition, which is by nature connectional, many may not want to serve at an independent church. Also, Presbyterian pastors are not members of the churches they serve (they are members of Presbytery). This makes things more complicated to bring a pastor in to an independent church. Do they give up their ordination in the denomination they came from? Do we develop a separate ordination process? These are all issues we would have to work through and they could be difficult to navigate.

Health Plans and Benefits

Practically speaking, in terms of providing health plans and benefits to our church staff, not being connected to a denomination could be very costly for the church.

Church Constitution:

Right now we have as our guiding documents the Book of Order and the Book of Confessions. These are not deemed as important as the Bible, but they are important parts of our church structure. The Book of Order outlines how we work and worship together, how we do sacraments, church conflict, membership, etc. The Book of Confessions contains the creeds of the church that we affirm-The Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Westminster Confession, etc. If we were an independent denomination, we would have to look at all these things and essentially create a new order of doing things. In essence we would have to create a mini-denomination within the church to determine how we would do the life and ministry of the church.

Other thoughts:

As Presbyterians we believe in being part of a great body of believers. We celebrate the body of Christ and want to be connected in a larger way than just our local church. To become independent would be quite a move from this fundamental part of our beliefs.