

MDPC Pastors' Summary Statements

from Monday's Informational Meeting (in the order in which they spoke)

Rick Myers

I've been a Presbyterian for 55 years, 22 years in the United Presbyterian Church, USA and 33 years in the PC(USA). I'm in my 46th year as an Elder and Pastor. In 18 months, I'll be retiring, so at this point, it really makes no sense for me to join another branch of the Presbyterian Church and start all over again. To be clear, should MDPC decide to join ECO, I will remain in the PC(USA). But if I were 10 or 15 years younger, with what I know now, and if MDPC chooses to go with ECO, I would have to prayerfully consider transferring my ordination. Why? Because the Mission of ECO and the Nine Core Values of ECO clearly articulate my own theological beliefs and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in today's world. In my opinion, MDPC's ministry and mission fit well with ECO. I love this congregation! I love our ministry together. God has blessed us in the past and God will continue to bless us as we move forward into a future filled with hope!

Mauricio Chacón

I have been an ordained Presbyterian pastor since 1993. My work has mostly been with immigrants. I have accompanied them for many years, learning about their struggles – and I know they only want to work. The church gives them a sense of security. I am glad that MDPC opened their doors and their hearts to this community. I love the PC(USA), even though I sometimes struggle with them on certain issues. The PC(USA) “has been like my mother.” The church has nurtured me – giving me an education and the opportunity to learn firsthand about the struggles of others, as well as the vision of justice that the Word of God requires of me (Micah 6:8). I've participated at the national level on different committees, and have seen through my travels how people suffer injustices. I have seen how the PC(USA) is taking a stand with those who are suffering. What I have learned during this time of discernment is that ECO does not take an official stand on political and justice issues. (*Note from MDPC: In ECO, these decisions are left up to the individual congregations.*) I will cooperate with any denomination in the expansion of God's kingdom and I am willing to do it with ECO, if it is possible, but I am not going to leave the principles that God has given me – to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with my God.

Rachel Poysky

When I became a Presbyterian I fell in love with the polity, connectional nature of the church and Reformed theology. I believe that whether we stay PC(USA) or go ECO the fundamental things about how we are as a body of believers will not change. I believe that we can serve the greater church no matter which denomination we decide to affiliate with now and in the future. PC(USA) provides us with a rich heritage and connection to other churches, but I fear that its structure is not designed to be innovative in the future. I also worry that some foundational theology does not hold as high of a priority for all as it does for me. ECO is new and

that can be a great thing in terms of charting new paths, but it also leaves a lot of unknowns. I also hope that ECO is able to be a denomination that is welcoming and inviting to the diverse group of people that Christ, by His example, calls us to serve. Through it all our primary focus should be on worshipping and serving Jesus Christ. This is far more important than any denominational allegiance.

Brandon Gaide

I believe there are faithful, God-honoring Christians in the PC(USA), and faithful, God-honoring Christians in ECO. I am concerned, though, about the ongoing health of the PC(USA) as an organization intended to provide spiritual guidance and truth. I've witnessed at least one instance in which a candidate for ordination was plainly in violation of a basic tenet of faith—the centrality of Scripture—but was publicly approved for ordination nonetheless. This kind of integrity gap between what we say we believe and what we actually believe is only permissible so long as we confess and repent. But my experience suggests this denomination is more likely to redirect attention to its new initiatives than to own its past failures. An organization that cannot own its failures is unhealthy; a Christ-centered organization that cannot own its failures is alarming. Can we, or should we, trust an organization that struggles to admit its weaknesses? That said, I do not believe PC(USA) is beyond repair. But if we choose to remain in the PC(USA), I would only do so with a clear plan to work toward confession and repentance within this denomination.

Kristin Huffman

Life and faith are an adventure, a journey with twists and turns, ups and downs, and uncertainties and messiness. My journey has brought many joys, struggles, questions and a deep dependence on Jesus. In this denominational discussion, I hear different viewpoints, opinions, emotions, hopes and fears, all pointing to the fact that we as a congregation are in many different places. That fact was one of the things that attracted me to MDPC 19 years ago and is still one of our strengths. We are different and yet united in bringing the light of Christ to this city and the world. I believe that the PC(USA), my denominational home for almost 33 years, is the place to live out God's huge and amazing love for all people. The PC(USA) is not perfect, but for me it has encouraged dialogue, differences of opinion, and shared ministry as it has tried to live out faith in Christ. I am hopeful about the future of MDPC, not because we are a member of any denomination but because we trust Jesus. I still find life, faith, ministry, denominations and even my desk, a bit messy. So, I, for one, will keep my ordination in the PC(USA).

Brett Hurst

Even though I'm not Presbyterian myself, I accepted a call from MDPC in 1997 to serve as one of your pastors. As a Reformed Baptist, I share the vast majority of spiritual beliefs and principles with my fellow gifted MDPC pastors. It is a tremendous honor to be part of such a committed team and to co-shepherd such a loving and warm church. And I take very seriously the call to lift up the gospel of Jesus Christ. In almost two decades of pastoral service at this church, I have witnessed firsthand the transformational power that the Word of God can have on a

congregation that desires to grow closer to Jesus. The Bible describes itself in the book of Hebrews as being sharper than any two-edged sword, with great power to penetrate hearts. During my tenure here, it has become obvious to me that many hearts have moved closer to Jesus as a result of MDPC's faithfulness to Scripture. After much examination, I am convinced that ECO is the denomination that will best allow this church to be more deeply nurtured and empowered in our ongoing faithfulness to Christ's gospel.

Dave Steane, Executive Pastor

I have been a PC(USA) Pastor for nearly 30 years, and in that time I've served in five different ministries and presbyteries. I have served on multiple presbytery committees, including attending General Assembly several times. I have also worked hard for the renewal of the PC(USA), but with little or no success. There are some very disturbing facts about the PC(USA), which include a sharp decrease in churches and membership, along with a sharp increase in political activity. MDPC is a remarkable church and people are concerned how MDPC might change if we left the PC(USA). I cannot think of any way that MDPC would change. We would continue being who we are, and continue to do what we do. It's who MDPC is. Therefore, my personal view is that MDPC would be better to affiliate with *A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians* (ECO), which would encourage MDPC to continue to be the church God has called us to be.

Alf Halvorson, Senior Pastor

I have been praying, listening, and weighing this decision since I arrived. I am now convinced we need to move to *The Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians* (ECO) for three reasons. First, if you want to stay the same (be MDPC), it will be difficult in PC(USA) because the PC(USA) is moving consistently to the left, theologically and politically. There has been a consistent *theological/biblical drift*, such that several of our international partners (like Mexico, Ghana, and Brazil) have said they can no longer partner with PC(USA). Second, I recommend a *structural shift* to ECO because we are losing members at a rate of over 100,000 a year; if that continues, the last PC(USA) member turns off the light in 2032. I expect it will slow down, but no one is predicting a reversal. You would not put your retirement savings in a business with that downward and negative trajectory. Third, we are currently a Fellowship Church within the PC(USA). ECO's polity and theology are identical to the Fellowship, so there are no additional requirements, and no changes to outreach or radical generosity. We would get a *strategic lift* by joining ECO because it is lean and entrepreneurial organizationally, with the first goal of building "flourishing congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ," the same goal Charlie Shedd articulated upon arrival here through Christ's Great Commission.