

FAITH. FORWARD.

transition >>>

September 18, 2018



You are an important part of our mission at NAPC. Below you will find the most important things you need to know about our denominational transition.

WHAT WILL CHANGE?

CHANGES NOW

We are thrilled to be joining the EPC in the next few months, a denomination committed to evangelism, discipleship and church-planting. More details to come!

CHANGES IN 1 YEAR

Within the next 12 months, nothing substantive will change for NAPC. Our location, our worship times, our mission, etc. will remain the same.

THE FUTURE

In September 2019 (if we find an ideal location beforehand, perhaps earlier) our worship location will change.

WHAT WILL NOT CHANGE?

OUR MISSION

We exist to glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ.

STAFF

Our Staff and Pastors will remain.

LEADERS

Elders & Deacons will remain in their roles.

WORSHIP

Our worship services will continue to be at 9:00a & 11:30a.

MINISTRY

All Ministries & Programs will remain intact.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

PRAY

Pray regularly for the unity and momentum of our church.

SUPPORT

Help explain the future to our own people who are confused, angry or hurting, and encourage them to trust the Lord's future that He has for us.

GIVE

If you have reduced or held your giving and tithing to NAPC, restart it; we will be tremendously helped and encouraged by your ongoing giving.

CONTACT US

Let us know how you feel and encourage our leaders.

RESPOND

Sign our Charter & respond to the letter to the PC(USA), indicating that you are remaining with NAPC as we are dismissed from the PC(USA) and join the EPC.



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• FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS •



New Albany
Presbyterian Church

What are the reasons we are leaving the PC(USA)?

There are two main reasons why we are leaving the PC(USA) - **theology** (what we believe about the Triune God, His Gospel, and His Word) and **mission** (what we are to do as a church in light of who God is and what He has done). There is misalignment between what NAPC believes about God and His mission for the church, and what the PC(USA) believes about the same crucial matters.

When did this misalignment begin?

Nearly 100 years ago, the PC(USA) lowered its commitment to the authority of Scripture— placing the individual’s “Spirit-led conscience” in its place. At the time, this change had almost imperceptible effects. As time has gone on, however, numerous troubling incidents have occurred and decisions have been made by the PC(USA). Each incident is merely another symptom of this underlying illness. Without the ability to appeal to Scripture as the sole foundation for theology and mission, the PC(USA) has increasingly elected not to correct its pastors and leaders for espousing views that are expressly at odds with Scripture and the Book of Confessions. Instead, the PC(USA) has continued to ignore such challenges to the faith and often amended its Book of Order in an effort to appease those with conflicting views.

We believe the authority of the Bible and Jesus’ Great Commission make up the identity of the church. The PC(USA) no longer practically shares these views. As a result, the PC(USA) is no longer the most effective path to further NAPC’s mission to glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ.

Why can’t we just ignore the denomination and do what we have been doing? Why do this now?

In truth, we have attempted to ignore the denomination for years. But the theological and missional disconnect between NAPC and the PC(USA) creates a conflicted witness to the world. We are forced to continually explain to newcomers that we are different than our denomination. This makes outreach difficult and also prevents committed believers from joining our fellowship. The theological and missional divide between NAPC and the PC(USA) continues to widen. Ordinations of pastors, deacons and elders are valid throughout the denomination and all churches share in the identity of and provide financial support to the denomination.

Did we know that there were risks involved in leaving?

We did, although we were hopeful for a more favorable outcome. Before we voted as a congregation to leave the PC(USA), we noted the following in a previous FAQ document from 2016:

Who owns the property and other assets used by NAPC?

Under what is known as the “trust clause” in the Book of Order, each local congregation is considered to hold and manage all property and assets for the benefit of the denomination. This means that the PC(USA) considers itself to own the property, no matter how it is titled and no matter who pays for it.

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What is the financial cost of leaving the PC(USA)? How will we pay for it?

This is almost impossible to approximate until the discussions and negotiations with the Presbytery are under way. Some churches have paid thousands while some have paid millions.

What was the process by which NAPC has sought dismissal from the PC(USA) (and the Presbytery of Scioto Valley within the PC(USA))?

- In October 2014, sensing a growing distance between NAPC and our denomination, the NAPC Session (the elected Elder body of the church) appointed a Denominational Research Committee (DRC) to study the trajectory of the PC(USA) and that of NAPC.
- The DRC conducted extensive research over the span of a year and concluded its work with a report to NAPC Session in which it relayed its findings: there was significant and increasing misalignment between the PC(USA) and NAPC as to both theology and mission.
- Following a time of discernment and prayer, the NAPC Session voted to recommend to our congregation that NAPC seek dismissal from PC(USA) and affiliate with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC).
- On November 6th, 2016, after an educational period for our church, we held a congregational meeting and vote. 87% of those members in attendance voted in favor of seeking dismissal from the PC(USA) and pursuing affiliation with the EPC (185 to 28 actual votes).
- The NAPC Session immediately notified our presbytery, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (PSV), of our request for dismissal under PSV's own "Policy for Gracious Separation of Congregations from the PSV." The PSV responded in writing that they would process our request under the Gracious Separation Policy and, in February 2017, formed an Administrative Commission (AC) to review the request of NAPC.
- The AC spent approximately a year's time gathering information, conducting 1-1 interviews with our members, and holding an informational meeting. They saw great unity in our church behind our mission of "glorifying God through lives changed by Jesus Christ."
- At some point in 2017, the AC was approached by a group of former attendees who expressed interest in our church building. The former attendees had stopped attending either after the vote to leave the PC(USA) or had left 6 years prior to that, in 2012.

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- On March 6th, 2018 the AC met with the NAPC Session to present its findings:
 - (1) The AC announced that it was not going to follow its own Gracious Separation policy. Up until this point, we had understood and operated under the idea the policy would be followed.
 - (2) The AC believed a “schism” had occurred within NAPC, such that there were two factions of the congregation: 1) Our current NAPC congregation of approximately 500 attendees that meet every Sunday and 2) The group of approximately 75 former attendees.
 - (3) In its discussions with the two factions, the AC came to the determination that a reconciliation of the two factions was not possible.
 - (4) Because of this, the AC found that the faction of former attendees constituted the “true church.”
 - (5) The AC found that it was satisfied with the “financial viability” of this faction of former attendees.
 - (6) Based on findings 1 through 5 above, the AC found that under Section G-4.0207 of the PC(USA)’s Book of Order, it had no choice but to give the church building to the faction of the former attendees.
- On Sunday April 8th, 2018 we shared these findings with the congregation at an informational meeting. Due to the nature of the negotiations process, we did not share that in addition to the building, the AC also found that the former attendees should receive a gift from our congregation in the amount of \$300,000 to help them begin their congregation, and that the intellectual and actual property were to be negotiated. At the time of their findings, there was no definitive timetable for our departure from the building.

What has happened since the April congregational meeting?

Countless hours have been spent by NAPC’s negotiations committee to work towards a more favorable outcome. In truth, we never possessed a lot of leverage. We know of many situations where presbyteries acted with hostility towards congregations seeking dismissal, locking them out of their building and freezing their accounts. Yet, the negotiations committee began with the assumption that the building should remain with our congregation. Several attempts were made to convince the AC to see our perspective. We threatened to elevate our case to the next ecclesiastical level within the PC(USA), and even to pursue civil litigation. We offered a far more generous than necessary payment to the Presbytery of \$901,000 over and above the remaining debt on the building (as of July 2018, \$1,483,357.87) in exchange for keeping the building. Each time we made this attempt, the AC dismissed our arguments out of hand. In their eyes, the fact that 50-75 former members were loyal to the PC(USA) and were “financially viable” were the only justifications necessary. Because of their unbending position, along with the overwhelming likelihood that going to court (ecclesial or civil) would draw the conflict out for years and end in defeat (based on many previous cases), as well as the significant long-term hindrance to our mission such a plan of action would cause, our committee simultaneously set forth an alternative - that of having enough time to leave the building with enough resources to not only survive but to be able to plan for a viable future for our congregation.

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After many meetings, offers and counter-offers, by the grace of God and through the tireless work of the negotiations committee, NAPC will leave the PC(USA) with as positive an outcome as possible in light of the circumstances.

What exactly is the outcome of this process of leaving the PC(USA)?

- As a congregation, we have the option to remain in the building until September 2019.
- All financial resources given to NAPC by our congregation will remain with our congregation. No money will be lost to the PC(USA).
- All present and future giving and tithing to NAPC will remain ours.
- All intellectual property, branding, and the name of our congregation will remain ours.
- We will leave the building with various pieces of property that are important to our staff and elders.
- In exchange for other items within the church, the Presbytery will pay a sum of \$25,000 to our congregation.

Additionally, all of NAPC's staff will remain with our church.

Considering how combatively and acrimoniously other PC(USA) Presbyteries have acted towards congregations leaving the PC(USA) in the past, this is a more favorable outcome than we expected after the AC shared its initial findings with us.

Where do we go from here?

In spite of this real and significant trial, the future of NAPC is bright. Considering the recent uncertainty about the denominational transition and the questions about giving, the fact that we have continued to grow in attendance this year is a great sign of health. Now that all of our current financial resources and future giving are secured, we hope that tithing to NAPC will continue to grow as well.

Our transition team is now empowered to diligently search our community for the best possible intermediate home to worship and have 7-days a week office and meeting space, as well as for a long-term home. The 12 months of time to complete the move helps tremendously. By God's grace we will leave with a considerable amount of money to help secure our future home.

Our staff will not change. Each of our pastors and staff will continue to serve Christ at NAPC, hopefully for many years to come.

Our mission will not change. The cost of obeying Christ and His Word is very different in our time and place than in other parts of the world where the Gospel is outlawed, or other times in history when Christians were persecuted violently.

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Yet, there is still a cost for us. In our case, it is the cost of losing our physical building in order to remain true to the Word of God. But this building, while it has served us well for 6 years, was never the ultimate goal or final destination. We will leave here with an incredible family of believers on a great mission to “glorify God through lives changed by Jesus Christ.” Truly the church is not a building but the people called by God.

What about the EPC denomination?

We are very excited about the denominational home to which we are going! The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is committed to the truth of the Bible and the mission of planting churches, sharing the Gospel and making disciples. We will be helped and empowered by our denomination well into the future. Already, our mission to serve our city has been bolstered by the training we have received from the EPC. By God’s grace this church will be an anchor and leader in our new denomination in this part of the world.

In the immediate future, Pastor David will stand before the EPC Presbytery floor (the “Presbytery of the Alleghenies”) to be examined as a teaching elder in late September, and the elders of NAPC will be welcomed into the Presbytery the next day.

What will change?

Within the next 12 months, nothing substantive will change for NAPC. Our location, our worship times, our mission, etc. will remain the same.

Our denomination will change, officially, sometime in the next few months.

In our new denomination, we will control our property and financial resources completely. This church will never be in this situation again.

In September 2019 (if we find an ideal location beforehand, perhaps earlier) our worship location will change.

What will not change?

- our mission
- our staff and pastors
- our elders and deacons
- our two worship services
- our ministries and programs

How can I help?

There are several things you can do to help us in the next year:

- Pray regularly for the unity and momentum of our church.
- Help explain the future to our own people who are confused, angry or hurting, and encourage them to trust the Lord's future that He has for us.
- If you have reduced or held your giving and tithing to NAPC, restart it; we will be tremendously helped and encouraged by your ongoing giving.
- Let us know how you feel.
- Encourage our leaders.
- Sign our charter for the new EPC congregation that we are forming!
- Respond to the letter to the PC(USA), indicating that you are remaining with NAPC as we are dismissed from the PC(USA) and join the EPC.