



January 30, 2012

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you may know, the leadership of Sierra Vista entered a period of discernment and prayer concerning our denominational alignment with the Presbyterian Church (USA) following the adoption of new ordination standards known as the 10A amendment.

To seek a way forward with other like-minded churches, Pastor Paul De Pledge and Elder Jim Smith participated in a recent conference in Orlando, Florida, organized by the Fellowship of Presbyterians. Nearly 2,100 people from over 500 churches in the PC (USA) collaborated on a shared mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Paul and Jim were very impressed with the leaders' commitment to strengthening congregations with new and streamlined structural processes while maintaining a strong commitment to biblical integrity. The conference has resulted in what is functionally a new Presbyterian denomination known as the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO) whose mission is "*to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.*"

There are two essentials worth noting about ECO:

- The practical building blocks are in place: clear essential tenets of the Reformed faith, a solid polity, including ordination standards that hold to the teachings of Scripture, and a clear vision of a deeper life of discipleship. If you want to know more, you can check out their website at www.fellowship-pres.
- The Orlando gathering had the feeling of a **launch, an initiative, a movement, a new thing that God is doing in Presbyterian churches.**

This gathering of Presbyterians are passionate for mission and worship, for meaningful evangelical theology, and for a church that is tied together by relationships – all united behind a common cause to reach a hurting world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a session, we are committed to being *a community for the community*. In order to maintain our biblical integrity, we are seriously considering realignment with the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO). Please keep in mind that we are not interested in leaving one denomination and running to another. Our sense of increasing estrangement from the trajectory of the PCUSA reached a breaking point with the recent changes in ordination standards.

Your session is diligently praying and seeking God's guidance while seeking to advance the kingdom of God in the mountain community and beyond.

Throughout its history the church of Jesus Christ has been no stranger to disagreement or controversy. Its institutional forms have come and gone, and are being renewed and refined by Jesus Christ, its head. As we reflect on our denominational ties, our firm commitment is that Jesus Christ will be our center; that we will grow through humble faith in his Word; that grace will draw people of diverse opinions and experiences into a shared journey; and that God's extravagant love will keep our focus on the call to share hope in Jesus Christ with our neighbors and friends.

As we investigate further what it may mean to be affiliated with ECO, we ask that you partner with us in prayer and conversation. We have sensed the Holy Spirit leading us through this period, and we appreciate your patience as we seek to be obedient to God's timing and guidance, and not our own. We will keep you posted on new developments. May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

In Christ,

The Session of Sierra Vista Church

Elders

Spinner Allen
Jeff Altimus
Kelly Davis
Sophia Ewert
Karen Fruth
Jason Meyer
Graham Ottley
Lee Pounds
Rob Simpson
Jim Smith

Pastors

Rick Lemberg
Paul De Pledge

Clerk of Session

Betty Strain