

PRT Report of QUESTIONS TO WIDER PRESBYTERY COMMUNITY, WITH RESPONSES

Gracious Dismissal Policy – Lines 93-98

Questions and Responses regarding “interests of the Presbytery to be considered...in a dismissal...” (GDP lines 93-98) were emailed to Council members to discuss and return answers from their committees.

1) *With respect to the work of your committee and the Santa Barbara Presbytery as a whole, how might the dismissal of the El Montecito Presbyterian Church "affect the larger Mission and Ministry of the Presbytery?"* Ex: the human factor of committee members or persons under care of the SB Presbytery; mission work; less funding available for the Presbytery overall budget, including any future staffing.

2) *How does your committee envision that the Presbytery might possibly continue PC(USA) worship and/or undertake ministry at the El Montecito property?* Ex: a new PC(USA) worshipping community; community service location; school; Presbytery retreat center.

3) *How does your committee envision ways that the “value” of the El Montecito property could be used for other new or continuing opportunities for ministry in the Presbytery?* Ex: funding support of a new church development in another location within the Presbytery boundaries, Impact, Front Porch, Living Hope Ministry, Cambria Remnant.

Committee Responses to above Questions:

CDC

1) From my perspective as chair of CDC, we have not engaged specifically with El Montecito in the past 3 years with any Grants, Mission Study requests, or New Worshipping Communities, so there are no loose ends right now or particular CDC related communication. Any time a church is dismissed it leaves a gap in that relationship and geographic awareness of what God is doing. It affects the larger mission and Ministry of the Presbytery through collegiality and a reduction of the financial contributions to IMPACT and Front Porch. While very significant, it is no more or less impactful than the number of other churches who have been dismissed in recent years from a CDC perspective.

* No impact

2) There seems to be many opportunities there since the physical property is pretty centrally located in our Presbytery and a beautiful place for retreats and gatherings. I am not sure if there is a stay PCUSA remnant expressed but this would be an interest of CDC if so. This does not require a building however.

* The first would be the pre-school they operate, if they choose to continue to operate at that location, there could be rental income. If they choose not to continue, the Presbytery could take over the operation as a service to the community.

3) I have not heard a significant amount of energy or new life from El Montecito recently but the church community has been there a long time and God has used El Mo I imagine powerfully through the years. I imagine those opportunities still exist for those called there, and there is so much to do right there in Montecito. There is still a lot of people to care for. I heard at the last presbytery meeting a significant portion of the congregation unable to make meetings because they are shut-in or fatigued from the process and detached. There is opportunity there to reach out and love students at Westmont University, SB City

College. Within the SB Presbytery, I do not know if there is more value in continuing there in EL Montecito or using that "value" elsewhere. No doubt there are exciting new growth opportunities in Ventura, Santa Maria, Santa Paula, Camarillo, and Cambria. * If the Presbytery retain the property and sell it, as you point out, there are many other opportunities that could be funded with that resource.

Personnel we see the biggest need for the Presbytery as support for staffing to maximize our ministry. Both presbytery and Front Porch are in need of additional staff resources and without more income, we are concerned that both will fail long-term.

Our thoughts would be to keep the property for now & rent back to EIMo. This would allow time for discernment on whether we should re-purpose the property, sell to EIMo for 50%? Of its value payable over several years or sell it ourselves. Again, our primary concern is the long-term viability of the Presbytery.

Property and Finance Between Property and Finance and Treasurer good, additional questions were raised: (1) When they (ELMO) were first founded, did the Presbytery underwrite the loan – or did anything come from them? (2) Have we (Presbytery) continued to make payments on their loan? (3) Is this the mission that Presbytery started – or did part of the funding come from Synod or ? How much is still on the loan?

ELMO ANSWERS: When ELMO was founded the first church building was funded by its members...I believe \$2000, 130 years ago. Presbytery has made no payments to our church or to our loan. We have received no payments or funds from Synod. The balance of our PILP loan is approximately \$400,000.

Kate Wiebe Responses to PRT questions

It should remain a church or ministry. Yes, this is beyond the scope of what SBP foreseeably could do at this time, given the information available up to Sept 5th. However, a significant ministry need has been burgeoning in the SB region for some time. Namely, there exists a great need for housing substantial Christian mental and spiritual health services (i.e., a center for Christian psychologists, marriage and family therapists, spiritual directors, to engage in education, practice, and service in partnership with congregation leaders and seminaries/universities). Several leading Christian psychologists have retired in the last five years or so, or, are very near retirement. Among available psychologists and MFTs, lengthy waiting lists exists.

In the last five years Santa Barbara area churches have experienced significant crises, including:

- A pastor's wife's suicide
- A youth ministry director's sexual misconduct
- A pastor's husband's affair
- Incidents of depression, addiction, and burnout
- Ministering to families affected by suicide, drug overdoses, addictions, sudden deaths, and terminal illnesses
- Loss of homes from wildfires

Additional area needs include:

- Several Westmont students approached Kate Wiebe last year saying that the wait list for the counseling office was so long they were unable to get in within a semester.
- Faculty and administrators at all the area colleges suggest they have not seen such high rates of anxiety among students within their entire careers.

- COM is in need of an expanded mental and spiritual health referral base to make available to Presbytery pastors and churches.
- Over the last two years, numerous ordained and lay leaders have made clear to Kate that mental and spiritual health professionals have waiting lists that are too long (i.e., six to nine months), if they are receiving clients at all. Moreover, when mental and spiritual health practitioners are receiving clients, clergy and clergy family members, in particular, repeatedly find them unequipped to address fully (i.e., theologically, spiritually) pastoral family needs.
- Ordained and lay leaders have expressed repeatedly to Kate dire need of more mental and spiritual health opportunities throughout the Santa Barbara region and beyond.
- La Casa De Maria, a local retreat center, provides excellent retreat services, but only has limited ability to supply mental and spiritual health services. The two directors, Steve Jacobsen and Katherine Collis, have reached out to Kate to help provide additional services, particularly for clergy and clergy spouses. Having a close geographic partner agency would be a great benefit.
- Local Christian counseling center, Cliff Drive, through the Free Methodist Church, recently diminished its services significantly when former Pastor Denny Weyman, and his wife, both retired. Hope Counseling Center, a small agency with four service providers and only one psychologist on staff, currently is the only Christian counseling center in Santa Barbara.
- Presently, the only opportunities for Christian mental health practicums and internships in the Santa Barbara area are the Rescue Mission, Westmont counseling center, or assisting in the private practice of one of the few Christian psychologists or MFTs in the area.

There is a great need to produce more Christian mental and spiritual health providers, including opportunities for more Christian internships and practicums. Kate has been praying over this need for many months and actively searching for a facility to house therapy, internships, practicums, and mental and spiritual health education opportunities in partnership with local therapists, counseling schools, Westmont, and La Casa De Maria Retreat Center. She feels strongly called to providing and developing pastoral mental and spiritual care services, particularly as a PCUSA ministry, and believes this could be an opportunity for a new validated ministry of the Presbytery. In terms of funding, Kate has been actively seeking funding opportunities and believes staffing and maintenance needs could be met through grants, donated funding for subsidized therapy, and fees for service. Given the surrounding geographic needs, the property at El Montecito appears ideally located to serve as a therapeutic ministry center to develop and offer Christian mental and spiritual health services, education for pastors and spiritual directors, and community health gatherings for the Presbytery and the greater regional community. A more in depth mission study would make these needs and the ministry opportunity more clear.

Worshipping community(ies) could continue or begin to use the facility on Sundays (as well as some other times), while health services and education were provided during the week and on Saturdays. Additional ministries, like a school, could be negotiated.

El Montecito church has consistently honored its relationship with the Presbytery. They have hosted Presbytery meetings and committee meetings, and even other church leadership day retreats. Their minister members and elder leaders have regularly

participated on committees (CPM, COM, Personnel, Council). Currently there is no leadership on Presbytery Committees – however, El Montecito continues to be involved in the life of Santa Barbara Presbytery.