

Presbytery of St. Augustine
Denominational Discernment
Information Dated: 08/24/21

***Implications for Leaving and Reasons for Staying
in the Presbytery of St. Augustine***

For the Process

- The decision to dismiss a congregation must be approved by majority vote of the commissioners in attendance at a presbytery meeting. This will follow the presbytery Administrative Commission's presentation as to the reasons for leaving and the circumstances leading up to the request. The Administrative Commission will make a recommendation whether or not to dismiss, and there will be time for discussion before the vote is taken.
- Some of the related matters subject to the presbytery's vote, if dismissal is approved, include: use of the church name, disposition of church real and personal property, payment as part of the dismissal, and provisions concerning the pastors and staff.
- The church will need to make changes in its corporate structure (articles of incorporation and by-laws), maintain its tax exempt status after it is no longer connected to the PC(USA)'s tax exempt status, and navigate other legal, insurance, tax, and financial considerations, including benefit changes affecting employees. These are examples only (the church will rely on its own attorneys and financial advisors).
- The presbytery will minister to the members who wish to remain in the PC(USA), and - depending on the number and desires of these members - it may (a) establish a group of members as the continuing church, (b) set aside funds to establish a new church development, (c) assist the members in finding a church home in an existing congregation, and/or (d) determine another appropriate option.

For the Current Pastor

- At its July 2021 meeting, the Call Commission of the presbytery reviewed a proposal by Jonathan Lovelady to serve as SJPC's pastor while remaining on the minister rolls of the presbytery. The Call Commission voted to recommend against that proposal. The presbytery understands that Dr. Lovelady plans to retire from the PC(USA), has made a transfer request to ECO, and that his benefits with the PC(USA) will not continue to accrue in the same way after the date of dismissal.

For the Worship and Life of the Congregation and the Presbytery

- The congregation will sever its history of covenant with the PC(USA) and the sister churches and ministries in the presbytery. Relationship with the missions of the presbytery will be impacted at Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center, the Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission, the Highlands Regional Ministry Center, and the Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network.
- ECO is in its infancy. The congregation's future (worship, mission and financial matters) will be determined by its local leaders and the polity of ECO.
- The congregation and its leaders will no longer have a voice in shaping the future of the PC(USA).
- PC(USA) welcomes more diversity of opinion with regard to scriptural interpretation.
- If the congregation desires to be served by ECO pastors, there will be a smaller pool to draw from for future calls.
- If the congregation is participating in the Presbyterian Women's ministries, its role in that organization will cease or change.
- Many of our PC(USA) related colleges and universities offer financial assistance to members and children of staff of PC(USA) congregations. The individual institution would need to be consulted to determine the extent of the impact.
- The congregation will not have a voice in the governance of the presbytery (worship and mission), which includes the largest number of Presbyterians in the region.
- The congregation would not be able to participate in PC(USA) programs for financial assistance, grants, loans, etc., such as the grant program of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program (PDA) that funds church damage following natural disaster.
- The congregation's dismissal will cause significant injury to the presbytery - loss of the leadership of its ruling and teaching elders, loss of participation in the direction of the presbytery, loss of time in fellowship at presbytery events, and loss of financial giving, among many other losses.
- The congregation's dismissal damages the public view of the unity of the body of Christ in this area and in the world.