

Pyung An Discernment Team report to the Presbytery of Seattle – December 30, 2015

Initiation of the process

May 10, 2015 – Pyung An Session voted to enter formal discernment, and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Seattle was notified

Formation of the Discernment Team

- Presbytery of Seattle appointed Teaching Elder Doug Ranney and Ruling Elders Rusty Crim (Bellevue First) and Tom Fox (John Knox). Teaching Elder Kevin Nollette served ex-officio.
- Pyung An appointed Ruling elders Jong-Kun Kim, Choong-Ho Lee, Sung-Chul Lim, and Uh-Jung Choi, all members of Session
- Elder Frederick Chun (Pyung An) served as Translator for the Discernment Team

Meetings

- August 23, 2015 – the full discernment team met with the Session, introducing ourselves, and hearing the story of events that had led to the request to enter formal discernment. The Session communicated that the denominational vote to change the Definition of Marriage created considerable angst among the congregation members, and following a sermon to stay the course in the PC(USA), a significant number of members left the congregation.
- August 30, 2015 – An announcement of meetings with the Congregational were announced at worship services. The announcement included an overview of the process, and the purpose of the meetings.
- September 20, 2015 – The first Congregational Meeting – Listening to the Congregation. The congregation consistently expressed their personal views that the definition of marriage should be between a man and a woman, and provide numerous scriptural references to support their views. All people that spoke at the congregational meeting, spoke for the traditional definition of marriage. Many spoke to the need to leave the PC(USA).
- October 11, 2015 – Second Congregational Meeting – Providing Information. This meeting included a statement on the relevant polity, particularly the change to the definition of marriage, but nothing compels a Session to allow or a pastor to perform a marriage that is contrary to their discernment of the Holy Spirit or their understanding of the Word of God. There was also discussion of the process, and a presentation on advantages and reasons for Pyun An to remain in the PC(USA).
- November 1, 2015 – First Discernment Team Meeting. The discernment team shared faith journeys, and then spent time clarifying the areas of disagreement between the congregation and the PC(USA) denomination. There was discussion of alternative denominations, with the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO) being the likely alternative.
- November 15, 2015 – Second Discernment Team Meeting. The team reviewed the process, summarized observations, and discussed recommendations for presentation to the Session.
- December 6, 2015 – Discernment Team meeting with the Pyung An Session. A synopsis of the Discernment team process and meetings, and the Summary of Findings were provided to the Session in advance. The Session voted unanimously to recommend to the Presbytery of Seattle that the Pyung An congregation be dismissed to another Reformed denomination.

- December 27, 2015 – Congregational Meeting for an Advisory vote. The vote was 282 in favor of dismissal, 16 against dismissal, and 8 abstentions. This represents 92% of the votes in favor of dismissal.

Summary of Findings

- The primary issue between the Pyung An congregation and the PC(USA) is “The definition of Marriage”. The congregation consistently expressed their personal views that the definition of marriage should be between a man and a woman, and provide numerous scriptural references to support their views. All people that spoke at the congregational meeting, spoke for the traditional definition of marriage.
- It appears that the majority of the congregation support the traditional definition of marriage and that the majority believe it is not appropriate to remain affiliated with the PC(USA).
- The congregation believes in a traditional view of the authority of scripture, particularly in the areas of sexuality and marriage.
- As an immigrant congregation, there is a strong cultural perspective toward the traditional definition of marriage, and an appreciation for the PC(USA) denomination as a result of the missionary influence in Korea many decades ago.

Recommendation

The Pyung An Discernment Team recommends that the Presbytery of Seattle form an Administrative Commission to negotiate the terms of separation for the Pyung An congregation to be dismissed to another Reformed denomination.