

To: The Peace Church Family  
From: Executive Team, prepared by Pastor Ryan  
Date: Monday, May 18, 2020  
Subject: A Response to the EPC Midwest Presbytery's Representatives' Presentations to Peace Church

Peace Church Family,

As we reflect on the presentations from reps of the EPC Midwest Presbytery, our leaders who were present for that meeting all expressed a thankfulness for the heartfelt tone of the presentations from David Brown and Andy Warner. If there is ever to be a "parting of the ways," we pray it would happen like this.

I'm not writing to give an exhaustive response, but to clarify for our congregation some of the things we've already noted, and to give our congregation a chance to hear our thoughts on some of the specifics these brother-in-Christ had mentioned.

### **In Response to David Brown's Presentation**

David spoke to the idea of unity and the EPC's General Synod sentiment that we are better together.

- We are better together at holding historic reformed faith

*Our thoughts: Since the birth of Peace Church, we have held and will continue to hold to a historic reformed faith. This was the truth prior to our adoption into the EPC and will continue as we move to independence. Denominational ties are not the strength of these creeds, nor are denominational ties the reason for our adherence to them.*

- We are better together at church planting and revitalization

*Our thoughts: Peace Church was on the path to revitalization and church planting prior to our adoption into the EPC, and we'll continue to grow stronger and multiply as we find new connections that are more aligned with our ministry philosophy. While we are thankful for the work being done in the EPC in these areas, we have not seen fruit at Peace Church in these areas because of our partnership with the EPC. As recent history has shown us, our hopes of continued growth and church planting are not inherently strengthened by our partnership with the EPC.*

- We are better together at global outreach

*Our thoughts: Again, Peace Church was already engaged in global outreach prior to our adoption in the EPC and this will continue to be a flourishing part of Peace Church as we enter independence. We are so thankful for the connections we've made and happy about the support we've given to the EPC global outreach, but because of the work we have done and will continue to do, this is not a compelling reason to continue to remain an EPC Church, even if we share the same heartbeat for global missions.*

*Concluding thoughts on David's presentation. It was a biblical grounded and passionate word to Peace Church. We are so thankful for David's pastors' heart. While his message to us has not changed our leaders' zeal, it was a wonderful and final word to hear from him.*

### **In Response to Andy Warner's 6 Questions**

1. Are there any theological differences?

*Our thoughts: There are no theological differences that we have with the EPC. Whether holding to the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Standards, we share the same historic faith.*

2. If there are no theological differences, what are the reasons for departure?

*Our thoughts: Just as Paul and Barnabas split (Acts 15:36-41), not over theology, but ministry practice, the same could be said for us. The areas of tension for us have to do more with ministry philosophy rather than Christian theology. This has been noted in previous memos submitted from our elder board: The EPC system for doing things such as ordination and lack of taking a clear stance on gender roles in the church has proven to be a constant frustration for Peace Church and a slowing of our mission.*

3. Why was there no opportunity for discussion?

4. Where is the second chance?

*Our thoughts: We'll give an answer to both questions. This question indicates there was one specific instance that resulted in our leaders' decision to move toward independence. This decision has come from five years' experience in this denomination. Five years is a fair amount of time to realize that while we love the brothers-and-sisters in the EPC, we are not a denominational or philosophical fit. Again, as we look at their changes in pastoral calling (the change in wording of the EPC book of order from when we joined to now), and differing views for biblical roles for pastor/elder, we do not have a desire to offer a second chance, when a "second chance" would mean lengthy and several out-of-state presbytery meetings that would tax our budget and our pastors' and elders' time, as well as numerous mission-distracting conversations for our leaders. Rather than be open to what could be years-long discussions with no certainty of outcome, we decided to acknowledge who the EPC is and how they operate, while also being honest about who we are and how we wish to operate. These acknowledgements are why we are, in love, seeking to move to independence.*

5. Going forward, where will be the accountability?

*Our thoughts: This is an important question for anyone invested in this conversation. It must be stated that our elders take this question seriously and seek to answer it firmly. Our first accountability is to the Holy Spirit inspired authority of Scripture. In addition, we also have our creeds and confessions to clarify our reformed theology. More specifically, we have our church by-laws as well as an elder board who lovingly holds our pastors and our church accountable. Moving forward, our elders will continue to seek accountability through a brotherhood in gospel partners and a sisterhood of churches (all of which is currently being discerned by our elder board as we survey and formalize various partnerships).*

6. What about grace, where has that been extended?

*Our thoughts: The grace we wish to extend is in the approach in which we've sought independence. With nothing but love and charity, we want to thank the EPC for being our denominational home for these past five years. We will always hold unity with them in the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*Concluding thoughts on Andy's presentation: We are thankful for the questions Andy asked as it gave a chance to reiterate to our congregation our heart in this matter. Andy asked important questions, but questions which we've already answered in this process. We've taken the time to answer these again, here, to help you, the Peace Church family, better discern where your vote will land when the time comes this August. We are praying the vote stands in unity with the heart and the direction of our elder board. Our elders are available to you to answer any questions you may have over these next few weeks.*

Blessings to you and thank you for your prayers!