

Background for the requested action on Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser, MT

This journey with the Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser began in the Fall of 2014 when their sister congregation on Stanford began dialogs concerning actions taken by the General Assembly of the PC(USA). First Presbyterian Church in Stanford and Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser were at that time yoked congregations sharing a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) pastor Editha McKay. The Stanford congregation, and to some extent Geyser congregation as well, were struggling with remaining in the PC(USA).

In November 2014 the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) established a Pastoral Team of TE Susi Ennis, Elder Jim Tarr, and staff George Goodrich to work with the Sessions of both congregations as they worked to address these struggles and whether one or both congregations would enter into the discernment process. As the Pastoral Team met with members of both churches and both Sessions it became obvious that Geyser was not struggling as much with the issues as the Stanford congregation. There were a number of listening meetings held during the early months of 2015 during which the Stanford congregation aired their questions and struggles. The Pastoral Team provided answers to their questions and addressed their concerns. Members of the Geyser congregation were invited to and attended these meetings.

In April 2015 Editha McKay sent correspondence to the Presbytery indicating her desire to withdraw her membership from the PC(USA) and specifically from the Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser. Editha felt that she was not in agreement with some decisions of the PC(USA) that she was no longer comfortable remaining in the church. Since a CRE is commissioned by the Presbytery to a specific ministry in a particular place and a CRE must be a member of a PC(USA) congregation; this meant that she was also resigning from her position as pastor to these two congregations. In the following months the Pastoral Team of the PMT worked extensively with Editha and both Sessions to determine future actions. At a meeting in May 2015 the PMT discerned that due to Editha's desire to leave the PC(USA) she would no longer be able to serve as CRE for these two churches. June 7, 2015 was Editha's last day as the pastor for these congregations.

In July 2015 Fern Kaiser, Clerk of Session at the Geyser church, attended the Pastoral Ministry team meeting. She told us that there was much weariness on the part of the members in Geyser. They had made the decision to take a break from worship for the summer and re-evaluate for the fall. PMT informed Fern that Jack Bell, CRE, was being called to Stanford and that he was happy to work with the Geyser church as well. Fern told us that she would pass the information on and they would pray on it.

By October 2015 the Session had met with Jack and decided that there was still no desire to hold worship services in Geyser. Many people were now attending at other churches. Subsequently, the Pastoral Ministry team received a letter from the Session dated November 30, 2015 asking to be dissolved as a congregation. The letter indicated that this request was from the Session. When asked, Fern said that the

congregation had not be a part of this decision but that due to their small size it was a significant number of the members.

At the February 2016 meeting of the PMT it was decided that the Pastoral Team would continue to work with the Session in Geyser to determine what the future would look like for them. Again it was recommended that they contact Jack Bell in Stanford to see how he could be a part of their ministry.

As 2016 proceeded it became clear that at this time there is no energy in Geyser for the PC(USA). It was at the November 2016 meeting that a Presbytery Administrative Commission was established to work with the Session of the Community Presbyterian Church. The members of the Administrative Commission are TE Susi Ennis, Elder Jim Tarr, Elder Charlie Brown, Elder Fern Kaiser (Geyser contact, non-voting member) and staff George Goodrich.

During their work with the Session in Geyser the Administrative Commission found that there continues to be a lack of energy around the PC(USA) in the Geyser community. In April 2017 a letter was sent to each of the 11 member on the rolls of Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser asking their desire; either to remain a congregation and have the Presbytery work with them to find a pastor or to close the church. Of the 11 members; 9 indicated they would like the church to close, 1 was divided on the issue, and 1 did not respond.

At the same time Fern Kaiser contacted an appraiser who came out to Geyser. The appraisal report places a value of \$40,000-\$60,000 on the property with the caveat that it is difficult to appraise churches.

The Administrative Commission met by conference call on July 3, 2017 and determined that the only possible actions at this point are to close the church and to list the property for sale. Therefore the Administrative Commission would like to make the following two motions for the Presbytery to take action.

Motion 1

The Geyser Administrative Commission moves that the Community Church in Geyser MT be closed with an effective date of July 13, 2017.

Motion 2

The Geyser Administrative Commission moves that the property known as the Community Church in Geyser MT be listed for sale as soon as possible. That the Administrative Commission be given permission to negotiate the sale price with any potential buyer keeping in mind the appraised value of the property.

07.25.17