

Open Letter to the Presbytery of Los Ranchos on March 9, 2015

To our Sisters and Brothers in the Presbytery of Los Ranchos:

Aware that an additional three congregations within our presbytery have now had Joint Solution Teams appointed to them, and that other congregations are nearing this, we feel compelled to articulate our conviction that Los Ranchos must assert its constitutional claim of holding property in trust for the mission of Christ through the PC(USA).

We understand that for some faithfulness to conscience has demanded a formal separation from the Presbyterian Church (USA). To honor those convictions, Los Ranchos has dismissed several congregations and their properties, including our two largest, regional churches, to another Presbyterian denomination. We believe those who are conscience-bound to part from the PC(USA) now have fine congregations within the boundaries of Los Ranchos where they may find fellowship, worship, and serve.

Having made such provision, and mindful of our participation “in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table” (F-1.01), we are committed to our constitutional obligation to hold property in trust for our Presbytery’s mission. Therefore, all remaining resources must now be dedicated to these ends. In particular, the ability to develop new communities of worship and witness to Christ is entirely dependent upon a mixed economy of congregations, including “cathedral” congregations and their properties, which are uniquely able to provide essential resources and expertise. To release conscience-bound members of congregations with existing properties held in trust for benefit of the PC(USA) (G-4.0203) from our bounds would irreversibly diminish the Presbytery of Los Ranchos’ capacity to accomplish the mission to which we are called. Essential to that mission is the witness to the culture and each other that we practice our ordination vows to promote the “peace, unity and purity of the Church” (W-4.4003). To continue to fracture the Presbytery through dismissal with property would damage our witness and mission.

Furthermore, we believe that, for all its faults, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is an integral member of the body of Christ universal, called to a particular role within God’s mission and that this witness should not be lost in the places where it is now established. This witness continues to be enhanced by our commitments to the “Foundations of Presbyterian Polity” in our **Book of Order** (F-1.01 to F-3.04) and our trust in the truthfulness of the “essential tenets of the Reformed faith” as they are articulated in the First Part of the Constitution of the PC(USA), **The Book of Confessions**.

We affirm that the one triune God speaks with authority through the Holy Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. We lift high the cross of Jesus Christ. We trust that "Jesus is Lord." We believe that God's mission is at work through the PC(USA).

For these reasons, above all others, we feel conscience bound to object to the further dismissal of church property. We offer this letter now so as to allow our reasoning to be considered as early on as possible in the JST process.

Seeking to honor Christ to the best of our abilities, we are committed to this continuing mission through Los Ranchos Presbytery.

Grace and peace be with you,

Endorsed by the Generative Catalyst Team

Endorsed by the Strategic Coordinating Team

Endorsed by the Trustees

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