



New Hanover

P R E S B Y T E R I A N C H U R C H

February 11, 2013

To all members of New Hanover Presbyterian Church,

Grace and peace be to you. The Administrative Commission (AC) from the Presbytery of the James (POJ) has been working with New Hanover Presbyterian Church since December, 2012. During that time, we have met with Session, individually with the Ministers, and with a group of members who wish to stay with PC(USA). In addition, we have been communicating with many members in NHPC who have reached out to us.

Three of the members of the AC were on the Listening Team that the POJ assigned to NHPC. Three members are new to the process. The AC consists of three Teaching Elders and three Ruling Elders.

Our task at NHPC, was assigned to us by the POJ in the following motion:

"That the Presbytery establish for New Hanover Church; (1) an Administrative Commission with the powers of G-3.03, in order to discern the future viability of a PCUSA congregation at NHPC; and, (2) that the following persons compose the AC: Martha Singdahlsen, Don Osborne, Edna Banes, Alex Evans, Larry Diebold, Allen Fisher."

One of our members (Don Osborne) has been active in worship in your church and is a member of the "Concerned Members" Facebook group. He also attended the informal pastoral meeting set up for those concerned about the process at the Church on January 27th.

Many at NHPC have expressed to the AC the strong desire for any process toward dismissal to proceed quickly as possible. The AC has endeavored to comply with those desires, while also working with diligence and care on these delicate matters.

After much prayer and thoughtful discernment, the AC made a determination that there is indeed a viable PC(USA) congregation at NHPC. We are confident that these devoted members who are willing and interested to continue as New Hanover Presbyterian Church, with the support of the Presbytery, and the power of God's Spirit, can continue to be a faithful witness to Jesus Christ in the PC(USA) in this location and for the foreseeable future.

Because the recent leadership of NHPC, including the Session and two Associate Pastors, expressed their intention to depart from the PCUSA, the AC called a meeting with Session on Sunday afternoon (February 10, 2013). At that meeting, Session was very gracious and expressed their unanimous intent to leave the PC(USA). They also indicated that it is their desire to help the AC to transition members wishing to leave the church and to pray for those members who wish to stay. Since Session is not willing to remain at NHPC to serve the viable congregation, the AC acted to dissolve the Session (technically, to assume 'original jurisdiction'). Those ruling elders and teaching elders who desire to leave are welcome to leave, along with other members who also desire to walk toward another church and denomination. We hope that the transition will be orderly and occur over the week or two.

To grow families in our community to serve Christ in the world.

As we move forward with those who desire to remain at NHPC and within the PCUSA, the AC will be appointing a Steering Committee to lead the church in the coming weeks until new leadership can be elected. The Steering Committee will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the church. This Steering Committee will report directly to the AC, who has the ultimate responsibility for the church. The Steering Committee consists of a combination of Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders with one of the members also being a member of the AC.

Since the Associate Pastoral Staff also expressed a desire to leave the PC(USA), there were members of the Committee on Ministry (COM) present at the meeting between Session and the AC. The COM members and the associate pastors had a separate meeting and the associate pastors have expressed that they intend to resign their position at NHPC. The POJ will provide supply ministers to cover the time until NHPC elects a new session and completes the process of hiring new staff. Rev. Dr. Louis Williams may provide some pastoral support during this transition period, but preaching will be supplied through the POJ.

During this period of transition, members wishing to be dismissed can let the Steering Committee know that is their desire and the Steering Committee will remove those members from the church rolls. We hope to make a quick orderly transition of members wishing to leave.

We understand that this time is a traumatic and frustrating time for all involved and the AC hopes that those who wish to leave NHPC for a new denomination find joy, comfort and peace in their decision. We know that the leadership of those who are leaving is capable and truly concerned for your spirit. We know that they are faithful to your spiritual growth and building a church separate from the PC(USA). We will continue to pray for them as they make the transition.

For the members who will be staying with NHPC, the POJ is committed to helping you to grow the church and be part of a connected church that is part of the PC(USA). Unfortunately, many of the activities that are on the calendar will have to be cancelled until such time as the Steering Committee and AC can determine the viability of each program and the availability of volunteers to keep the programs in place. Please keep an eye out for announcements regarding cancellations.

Because of the significant amount of time, effort, advanced planning and devotion to the Disciple Now program, the AC agreed with the former Session that it is in the best interest in our commitment to the service of Jesus Christ, that the program continue. Services, as planned will not be held at NHPC this Sunday. We look forward to seeing those who wish to worship with us as normal services resume on February 24, 2013.

We hope that all members, whether you stay or go, attend the church that fits your spiritual needs and your continued religious growth. We pray that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is felt by each member as they make the determination of where they wish to worship.

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you and yours, through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of the James
for New Hanover Presbyterian Church

Edna Banes
Larry Diebold
Alex Evans
Allen Fisher
Don Osborne
Martha Singdahlsen

