

Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church

612 JAMES BOULEVARD, SIGNAL MOUNTAIN, TENNESSEE 37377

January 10, 2007

**The Reverend Dr. Daniel Sansbury, Moderator
The Presbytery of East Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee**

Dear Dan:

On behalf of the Session of Signal Mountain Church, we thank you and our fellow presbyters for meeting with us this past Wednesday evening to discuss the differences with our denomination which we, the Session, have determined are major issues for our continued ministry in the Presbyterian Church USA. After prayerful counsel and deliberation, the Session voted unanimously to call a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 28, 2007. At this meeting, the Session will present its unanimous recommendation to request the Presbytery of East Tennessee to dismiss the Signal Mountain Church to another Reformed denomination. Our call of the congregational meeting to make this request to the Presbytery is with our understanding of the rights as provided in the Book of Order – G-11.0103i. The unanimity of the elders reflects the strength of our conviction in recommending this matter to the congregation. Consideration of this issue and of this call of the meeting has been given by both the elders serving as the Session of 2006 and the elders serving as the Session of 2007 – a total of thirty-three persons.

During the fall months there were two congregational gatherings called ‘Let’s Talk’ in which Session members expressed their points of theological and Biblical difference with the General Assembly and congregational members had opportunity for discussion. Presbytery’s Stated Clerk, Frank Jump, attended both of those meetings.

The congregational meeting on Sunday, January 28, 2007 will be held in the sanctuary and will be presented as one for active church members and Presbytery representatives. The purpose of this meeting is to receive the recommendations of the Session and to vote on those recommendations.

While we, as a Session, have had expressed differences within the PCUSA for decades, more recent decisions and theological positions have indicated to us that we are the ones who are out of accord within the denomination. Our differences with the PCUSA exist primarily in both the recognition of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, the unquestionable sole means of salvation for the world through Him, and the recognition of the infallible authority of God’s Word in all matters of faith and life.

Additionally, we find discord in the PCUSA's issue of inclusive language for God, especially as evidenced by the reading paper on the Trinity received by the 2006 General Assembly. The commendation of this reading paper extends far beyond boundaries with which we feel comfort in interpreting and applying Scripture. The name of God, as He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture, remains a major tenet for us both in liturgy and mission. Another major point of contention for us came in the PUP Report's neglect of representative consideration through our presbyteries for constitutional change.

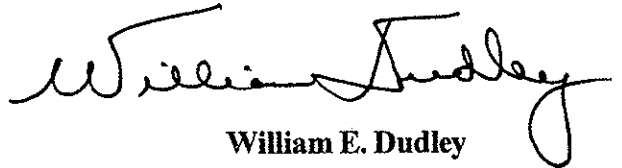
The efforts, energy, and financial resources that we expend acting against these denominational positions certainly should be directed to more fruitful mission endeavors in our community, in our nation, and throughout the world. Since we recognize the differences created by the most recent Assembly meeting and in knowing that these decisions have placed a fetter upon us, we feel the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ will be served in a more honoring manner for all by our request to be dismissed.

While these decisions are ones of deep conviction, the decisions do not diminish the appreciation and affection which the elders of this congregation hold for the brothers and sisters in Christ within the Presbytery of East Tennessee.

Sincerely in our Lord,



**Steven L. Frost
Clerk of Session**



**William E. Dudley
Moderator**

THOUGHTS REGARDING OUR REQUEST FOR DISMISSAL

HERITAGE

We recognize with reverence and thanksgiving the heritage of faith which has been and continues to be ours as a community of believers at Signal Mountain Church. The Reformed faith experience firmly established us 78 years ago with a solid foundation upon the Scriptures being the Word of God and the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ. That foundation has remained a critical point of our worship, practice, mission and ministry.

Our request to be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church USA comes with thanksgiving for who we have been, with whom we have been yoked in this Presbytery, and with reverence for the Body of Christ in this place and throughout the world. The request also comes following an extended time of prayer, deliberation, and Biblical counsel and an affection for our brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we have served in the Presbytery of East Tennessee.

From our perspective, denominational identity congregates us under the canopy of an agreed theological perspective which facilitates a common ministry to serve Jesus Christ in the fulfillment of His commission to us. We openly confess we are no longer in agreement with the changing theological perspective of the Presbyterian Church USA or with the canopy of polity which now governs us. Additionally, our commitment to evangelism and missions throughout the world does not resonate with the priorities and mission actualities of the PCUSA.

The differences which identify this choice rest summarily upon a stricter view of Scripture than that held by the greater portion of the PCUSA. This varied interpretation frequently has placed us at odds with General Assembly actions, priorities, and program directives. We have remained faithfully present in the denomination for the past decades, but recent decisions and experiences in the PCUSA reveal to us that we are no longer in the agreement necessary to be aligned with the denomination. Our primary difference with Scriptural interpretations and applications has multiplied to a larger number of differences. Specifically, we are in conflict with actions of the General Assembly last June which violated our own sense of government, and we are in even stronger opposition to the light consideration of the name of our God.

We find no celebration in the recognition and decisions we, as a Session, have adopted. Yet, we are committed to finding a denominational identity which more readily provides agreement and perspective for who we are as a congregation and, more fundamentally, our call to mission and service.

DISMISSAL

We sincerely trust that the experience of our dismissal may be an exception to the acrimonious norm of church separations. We request to be dismissed in a timely and honorable manner, mirroring the spirit of fellowship which we have shared in Jesus Christ and glorifying Him who is our one Savior, Lord, and Head of the Church.

We request to be dismissed in a manner that blesses both the Presbytery of East Tennessee and our congregation and continues a relationship of mutual respect and integrity. Our intent in departing is not to injure or cause calamity in ministry.

Our mission support for the Presbytery of East Tennessee in 2006 totaled \$125,114. This voluntary mission support is reflected in the contribution to the Presbytery and the Per Capita for Presbytery and Synod.

We, therefore, seek to continue supporting the work of the Presbytery of East Tennessee through the following schedule of financial mission support representing the portion of our 2006 support as indicated per year:

YEAR	PERCENTAGE
2007	100%
2008	80%
2009	40%
2010	40%
2011	40%

The above percentage represents a total of three years of mission support at our 2006 level of giving distributed over a five year period.

It is not our intent that the above proposal would be a precedent or model for any other congregation seeking to be dismissed from the Presbytery of East Tennessee. Our intent is to prevent, inasmuch as we able, immediate interruption of the Presbytery's ministry and program.

The present Presbytery ministries (i.e., Newton Center, Bachman, etc.) to which the Signal Mountain Church contributes and supports will be considered individually by the requests made to us on an annual basis.

PROPERTY

The property of Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church, Inc., remains under the control of the church's Trustees for the majority of the members. This reflects the practice of this congregation from Her inception which was formalized in our corporate charter in 1962.

NAME

We intend to retain the name of our founding community: Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church.

PASTORS

By virtue of ordination, our four pastors are not included in this request to be dismissed. The decisions that represent them are personal and are to be made by them individually.

We do reverence their calls and respect their choices and decisions. With deep appreciation for their ministry to us and with us, we would ask that they be allowed to continue serving at Signal Mountain Church until such time that they accept calls to other congregations or ministries. During this period of time, we will honor the full payment of their terms of call.

We commit ourselves to receive their ministry in Word and Sacrament without any requirement or conformity of their positions and opinions to ours.

MINORITY

In that we are called to represent our congregation at Signal Mountain as a whole, we feel the greater number of church members will respond positively to the unanimous recommendation of the Session. We also know there will be some who do not.

Again, in an effort to be a blessing people, we would offer that any minority group will have the use of church facilities for worship, fellowship, or educational purposes – if they so desire. The pastors and other staff members will be governed by the Session and instructed to serve the minority group in the same manner and spirit as the majority group.

SEMINARIANS

We request that our present seminarians have the time afforded them to discern God's call on their lives, and we shall continue to support them financially and prayerfully as we have in the past. Should any seminarian choose to remain within the PCUSA, we would honor his/her call and ask that whatever allowances be made to facilitate this would be sensitively considered by Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the Presbytery.

MISSIONARY SUPPORT

Our intent is to continue the support of our present PCUSA missionaries and mission work through The Outreach Foundation through whom we have been providing support for the past years. We desire to maintain our covenant with these missionaries and these mission endeavors for the years to come.

SINCERE EXPRESSION

This request for dismissal and our proposed schedule of continued mission support (as outlined above) is contingent upon this process being received and accepted in a timely manner by the Presbytery of East Tennessee as submitted by Signal Mountain Church. As we have previously stated, our desire is to be dismissed in a manner that blesses one another and continues a relationship of mutual respect and integrity for the ongoing ministry and work of each body of believers.