

PACIFIC CROSSROADS CHURCH

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: 8/10/2021

SPEAKER NOTES

Paul Hahn: PCC Interim Pastor

“Why Keep the PCA as Our Home?”

Wise Christians across the years have often counseled: When you come to a decision on whether to pursue a change or not, and the matter is not clearly and directly determined by Scripture itself, then **the burden of proof needs be upon the choice for change, rather than the choice to remain or to continue the course you are already upon.** [There is connectivity here to Sir Isaac Newton's First Law of Motion — a body will continue in the motion in which it is moving, unless a force is exerted to stop it or redirect it.] So, to me, the burden of proof to leave the PCA, which has been our home since our church's inception, must be strong enough to move us off the course we are on. Perhaps we will hear that in the presentations to come. If so, we should respond accordingly, and move in a different direction.

But, I don't think that will happen for me. If it does, I will let you know, and redirect my advice to you. That's why we are here tonight, to listen and process, to be open to the directing/redirecting work of the Holy Spirit. I look forward to hearing what Tom and others will share tonight.

But, my perspective is this: Not only would I need to feel bumped off our current course. There are strong pulls — like the gravitational pull of a star on an orbiting planet — that would have to be overcome for me. The first of these pulls is **the checks and balances of PCA polity**: I think our system of governance and oversight worked in this case — far from perfectly, perhaps especially if you side with Pastor Wilbourne's perspective in all this. But, it did in fact work. Our general assembly court of appeals, the Standing Judicial Commission, helped all parties get to the most just resolution for Rankin and his family, along with those deeply wounded by him. Rankin really came confessing significant sins and failings and he was significantly disciplined for these, functionally serving a seventeen month suspension from pastoral office.

The second reason to stay is the **PCA offers us connectivity for growth**, in all the ways Lloyd Kim shared with us. Global missions partnerships, church planting efforts city-wide, regionally, and nationally. RUF at USC and UCLA. RUF at USC and UCLA is such a significant part of who we are missionally at PCC, and that relationship will be formally and significantly changed. The PCA's church planting movement has been one of the better stories in North American church growth across the last 40 years.

Third, the **PCA gives us opportunity to pursue reconciliation in deeper and fuller ways**, built into the fabric of our lives, as members of the Pacific Presbytery. Beautiful beginnings have been made here, particularly at the August 7th called meeting of

presbytery. We need time and space to pursue reconciliation at all levels of church life, and that happens best by staying in relationship, rather than running from it.

Finally, the **stability the PCA provides for us**. There might be a time to leave the PCA at some point — if it cannot address effectively women in the diaconate, if it uses self-righteous or unnecessarily isolating approaches toward those wrestling through same-sex attraction by faith and in faithfulness who seek pastoral or officer roles, if it loses its ability to culturally/missionally engage (which has been a great strength historically). But, that time is not now. With as much upheaval as PCC has faced, we shouldn't choose to seek more. As my beloved father used to say, "Son, you don't need to borrow trouble. There will be plenty of it coming on its own." We really don't need another change to destabilize us further. Particularly this change — which severs us from missional opportunity, from doctrinal and disciplinary accountability for our pastors, which gives us numerous opportunities for shared ministry and fellowship, and is a huge part of our history as a congregation.

Shawn Gendall: PCC Pastor of Discipleship

I wanted to speak briefly from the perspective of a pastor who left a long-time post to pursue ministry within the PCA.

I served for 18 years in a non-denominational setting, but in late 2017 pursued the opportunity to serve with all of you at PCC. Even though my family and I had established deep and permanent relationship in my last context, I have often described my arrival here as something of a homecoming, largely because of the rootedness and security provided by a Scripturally faithful denomination. This was a move that I had been hoping to make for the second half of my career.

I was drawn to the PCA because of its reliable theological moorings provided by its confessions, and its shared commitment to the authority of Scripture. From the outside looking in, the PCA seemed to provide a nurturing workspace for the constellation of thinkers and preachers who brought all the claims of the Gospel in an intelligible way to a culture that had the most difficult questions about it. This constellation of preachers was personified, to me in those days, by Tim Keller and Rankin Wilbourne. In other words, the most compelling thoughts about what a church *could* be, even in the post-modern west, were springing forth from PCA churches in city centers. Redeemer New York and Pacific Crossroads had created deeply substantive, discipleship-oriented churches, intent on equipping people for church-planting, faith and work integration, and engaging the big questions of a skeptical culture.

I have always thought that the PCA, in its ideal forms, was a type of "headwaters" denomination, helping generate the rigorous theological engagement that fed its own churches while also supplying water to all churches pursuing the cause of the Gospel. That same generative principle applies to the denomination's earnest commitment to church planting, global mission, and justice.

In a world of so much dynamic change, I believe that one of the great gifts – offered by a church to its people – is the stability offered by shared leadership and shared commitments. In the PCA, pastors are credentialed through an ordination process, usually represented as a series of examinations. It took me over a year of intensive study to complete the ordination transfer process for the PCA, but I appreciated the care and attentiveness that was required by the examinations. This careful process, I believe, helps safeguard the church by ensuring that the pastoral office is held to a high standard. The stability of the congregation is further ensured by the great feature of Presbyterian polity: shared leadership. As a pastor, my role in your lives not only requires a faithfulness to the Scriptures and to our confessions. It also requires a faithfulness to the Session. This shared accountability, I truly believe, in its most authentic expressions will lead to the flourishing of congregations through its commitment to Scripture, historical confessions, and mutual accountability.

The PCA, like every denomination, has its imperfections, and I have experienced some of these in my first four years here. There are certainly some things about it that I would like to see changed as I continue to serve within it. Fundamentally, though, the foundation is strong, and I believe that it will offer PCC the best context for our future of flourishing.

Cheryl Baker: PCC Director of Community

I am so grateful to be a member of a PCA Church for 30 years. It has been PCA pastors, teachers, and mentors who have had the most influence in my life. It is their focus on the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty that gives me the most comfort and understanding of scripture. The Westminster Confession phrase I learned to love so well is "God from all eternity did ... His own will, freely and immutably ordain whatsoever comes to pass;" (See WCF Chapter 3.1) No surprises, no accidents, no chance.

Another doctrine of the PCA church is Covenant Theology¹. The continuity of the Bible in covenantal theology from Genesis to Revelation, keeps me reading and learning about God's continued covenant faithfulness to His people, His church, our church, our pastors, our elders, our presbytery etc. It also keeps me hopeful when times are really hard, like the current times not only in our church but also in the world. God is still sovereignly on His throne and with His people though we are confused and may disagree on outcomes.

The first reason I am a PCA church member is sound doctrine and the second reason is the system of government. PCA Church government is the form of church government found in the New Testament, the Apostolic Church².

So what is the system of governance in the apostolic church? We are an elder rule church - that means our elders have God-given spiritual oversight of the church. The elders (plural) are nominated and voted for by the congregation. When an elder is ordained and installed, the church is to recognize that God, Himself in His absolute

sovereignty has given them responsibilities and duties and has called the church to submission to their leadership role. (See Acts 6:6; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; Hebrews 13:17)

What are the duties of PCA elders? Elders are commissioned to oversee and support the fulfillment of the church's ministry plan, shepherd and protect the church, pray for her and her members, be examples, exercise discipline and instruction, guard the gospel - all in submission to the only head of the church Jesus and the authority of the Bible. This is what our session was doing when problems arose a few years ago and what they do today. (See Acts 6:1-6; James 5:14; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28)

Our system of governance with the privilege of appeal to a higher council of elders is found in Acts 15. I believe, in our case, the system worked. In actuality, no one had the final say when it came to Rankin, not the elders, not the presbytery, not the BCO, not the SJC, but God Himself sovereignly at work in His beloved bride. God is faithful, lessons were learned, repentance and forgiveness took place, reconciliation and healing is pursued and everyone involved has spent time in prayer and has been prayed for. This is the kind of church I want to be a part of.

We are a PCA church, with 2 PCA pastors and many unique PCA resources available to us. In my opinion leaving the PCA would cause unnecessary and undue hardship for our church community, our officers, our staff and the fulfillment of PCCs ministry plan (Gather, Grow, Send). I am grateful to be a member of the staff at PCC and of a PCA Church for over 30 years.

¹ See Williams, Michael D. Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption [HERE](#)

² See Witherow, Thomas. The Apostolic Church: Which Is It? [HERE](#) Chapter 2 is particularly helpful.

Lloyd Kim: Mission to the World

First point, the PCA offers accountability. Now for most people in the church, 99% of the time being a part of the PCA probably does not affect your week-to-week church life. So maybe you're thinking, being a part of the PCA is irrelevant. Until... you have problems – big problems and you need help. This is when being part of the PCA is worth its weight in gold. If you become an independent church, you simply will not have the accountability structures in place to guard against the sin and brokenness, we know exists in all of us. Some may say, we want to leave because we are disappointed in our Presbytery and how they handled the situation with our pastor. But there was an appeal and the higher court reversed the decision of the Presbytery. You can say, the system worked (not to say it only works when you get what you want, but there are checks and balances). First point, the PCA offers much needed accountability.

Second point, staying in the PCA will help you fulfill your mission to reach the lost there in LA, Southern California, and across the world. How? Denominational committees and agencies like MNA, MTW, RUF are here to serve you. The fact that Paul Hahn is your interim pastor is because you are in the PCA. Furthermore, MNA can come alongside you in your church planting mission, MTW can come alongside you in your global

missions efforts, RUF can come alongside you in your campus ministry work. But there is more. The PCA has a foundation to help you and your members make tax smart donations, we have a Retirement, Benefits, annuity agency that serves your pastors and staff, we have a Christian Discipleship Ministries agency to help you with children's programs, women's ministry, publications, etc. All these resources are at your disposal because you are in the PCA. Not only are there resources for you as a community, but there are opportunities for PCC to contribute to the national and the global growth of the gospel in partnership with these committees and agencies. Second point: staying in the PCA will help you fulfill your mission.

Final point: PCC has an opportunity to demonstrate the power of the gospel by staying and working through broken relationships. I've spent a lot of time doing pastoral ministry in the Los Angeles area. One of the unique challenges is fighting against a consumer mentality so prevalent in the culture and in the church. If Pacific Crossroads leaves the PCA, I'm afraid it will only fuel this unhealthy mentality. That is, "If things don't go how I like, I'm walking." Let's be honest, there is no perfect church, presbytery, or denomination – no matter where you go you will have problems. So then what does staying in the PCA communicate? Patience, graciousness, commitment to gospel reconciliation – something we all want to see in all our individual relationships and certainly in our church community.

So why stay in the PCA? 1) PCA offers accountability; 2) PCA will help fulfill your mission; 3) Staying in the PCA and working through broken relationships communicates the power of the gospel.

Jerrard Heard: Pastor, Instructor, Minister-at-Large, Part of Pacific Presbytery

I am thankful for the privilege to speak to you this evening about why I believe PCC should remain in the PCA and in Pacific Presbytery. PCC has enjoyed a good relationship with many leaders in the PCA, and it has benefited over the years from the supportive investment of those leaders. I personally, as one who attended PCC for 6 years, have witnessed how the church has been instrumental in many coming to Christ as well as to a more developed understanding of the doctrine of the church. I have much confidence in the current leadership of the church, and I have witnessed their sincere desire to continue to serve you with the presbytery as together we commit ourselves to pursuing the purity and peace of the church at large.

I am pleased to report that a special meeting of the presbytery was held in Glendale this past Saturday, and for nearly 3 hours, with a total of 28 men present, brothers spoke openly about feelings and struggles. It was a particular blessing for me to hear PCC's elders speak from the hearts and confess sins, as well as to listen as individuals in the presbytery voiced a range of sentiments, including expressions of the need for introspection all around, and the necessity of repentance of unconfessed sins, all toward the goal of reconciliation.

Before the meeting concluded, the presbytery, **without objection**, approved a letter addressed to your pastors and elders in which the presbytery as a body both acknowledged several facts and made certain commitments. I'd like to highlight some of those for you now.

First, the presbytery expressed its grief over the pain that the elders and many in the congregation have suffered the last year and a half, and further stated its sympathy with the frustration and hurt we know you have felt as a congregation in the loss of a beloved pastor.

Second, presbytery made its strong desire as a body for PCC to remain with us, and how heart-breaking it would be if you chose to depart. Pastor Hahn, Pastor Gendall, and 3 of your elders, Alex Chung, Harold Shin, and Glyn Milburn, spoke humbly and repentantly to us as a presbytery, and asked our forgiveness for ways in which they had sinned. The court was humbled by such expressions and requests, and forgiveness was readily granted. Several men reached out to your elders and embraced them, thankful for these displays of such humility and the desire to be right with all of us.

Third, the presbytery communicated the realization that while its work was undertaken in good faith at the beginning of the whole process in the Fall of 2019, there is now understanding that mistakes were made. But more importantly, the presbytery wishes to know in earnest and to explore its actions in retrospect, and to be convicted of, as one minister put it, our "particular sins, particularly," and to have opportunities to repent of those and seek the forgiveness of those harmed.

Finally, the presbytery truly hopes that in the future we can more fully engage to the end of rebuilding unity and trust. The presbytery has called for a day of prayer and fasting on August 21st, one day before your congregational meeting to take a vote. May each of you know that we are lifting you up regularly in prayer, and we commit you to God and to the word of His grace. May the Lord bless you all.

Tom Ramsey: PCC Member + Director of The Gospel Story Ministry

Presentation + 6 Minute Video Overview Available on PCC Website