



CEDAR HILLS FUTURE (May 2022)

Overview

Cedar Hills Community Church has been part of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) since 1959. For most of this time, most of the churches in the RCA have held to the authority of the Bible absolutely. In recent years, a growing number of churches have embraced a viewpoint of Biblical interpretation that redefines the authority of Scripture. Every church must decide for itself where it fits within a planned restructuring or if it no longer fits in the RCA.

We believe we are called to leave the RCA and join the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC). The Consistory believes that partnership with the ARC will help us move into God's preferred future for our congregation. We recommend this change to the congregation.

Frequently Asked Questions #2:

1. Q. What is required of each local RCA congregation?
A. Each congregation must discern their future relationship with the RCA. We must affirm our desire to remain a member or we must choose to leave.

2. Q. Does the congregation have a say in this?
A. Staying in the RCA requires no action but leaving requires a congregational vote with at least 75% affirmation of the recommendation to leave. Over the next several months we will follow a process established by the RCA. This vote will likely come in the fall of 2022.

3. Q. Does the Consistory at Cedar Hills have a recommendation about this?
A. Yes, we recommend leaving the RCA. Because of the shift in the definition of Biblical authority, and because of bureaucratic gridlock, we believe that the RCA is no longer a good partner in ministry.

4. Q. Who would be a better partner?
A. We recommend changing our denominational affiliation to the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC). The mission and vision of ARC aligns very closely with our vision and mission and the simple structure of ARC will help us stay focused on essentials.

5. Q. Key question: Does joining ARC help us become more faithful and fruitful?
A. We believe that a partnership with ARC will help us make disciples. We take the call to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 seriously. We believe that ARC will help us “go make disciples.”

6. Q. Where can I find out about the ARC?
A. The ARC describes itself as friends and partners in Christ, seeking first the Kingdom of God with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Pursuing unrelentingly innovative ways to engage a changing world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Embracing the diversity of the human experience under obedience to Christ our King. Find out more at www.arc21.org.

7. Q. Is leaving the RCA to join the ARC divisive?
A. We believe “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.” This vision is driving our decisions about gracious separation. By remaining clear and firm on the essentials of the faith while encouraging freedom in non-essentials, we encourage loving and charitable dialogue among people with differing viewpoints. The Bible warns us not to be quarrelsome, but to be gracious towards those who disagree.

8. Q. Does joining ARC make us less reformed?
A. No. We believe in the authority of the Bible and are guided in our understanding of the Bible by Reformed theological perspectives. The ARC maintains this perspective by affirming the historic Reformed Confessions: The Heidelberg Catechism, The Canons of Dort, and The Belgic Confession.

9. Q. Does Joining the ARC make us less welcoming?

A. No. We believe in hospitality that welcomes all. Our call as a congregation is to be welcoming and discipling. Everyone can come just as they are, but everyone needs to be transformed by the gospel.

10. Q. How has this process helped us and how will it help us in the future?

A. As fallen people, we remain humbled by the reality of our shortcomings. Life together can be complicated. We follow to the best of our ability - the truth revealed to us. We also offer love and support to those who disagree. Engaging questions about our future has shown that we are well equipped to have difficult discussions.

11. Q. Key Question: What does the Bible say about new wine?

A. Jesus said in Matthew 9:16-17, *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."* Some have suggested that this moment is a "new wine" moment. We believe that the attempts to repair the RCA will not be sufficient to hold the new wine that God wants to do in our future. Instead, we are convinced that God is creating new networks and new partnerships to pour out his spirit in a new way. Our hope is not diminished by the opportunity before us but enhanced - God has plans for us and we believe that the ARC is the new wineskin that God has prepared for us.

12. Q. What are the next steps?

A. We will have a sequence of face to face congregational question and answer sessions over the next several weeks. If we discern no changes in God's calling for Cedar Hills based on these conversations, the Consistory will submit a "Notification of Desire to Leave the RCA" to our Classis in early June. The Classis will then follow up with the Consistory, the Staff, and the Congregation over the summer to ensure that everything is done in good order. Over the summer we will also submit an application to join ARC. This process will take several months but our transfer should be completed by early 2023.

13.Q. What can I do?

A. Please pray and discuss and ask questions. We want a lot of conversation with God and each other. Our best hope of discerning God's preferred future for our congregation comes when we talk to God and listen to his voice. We also must talk to each other and listen well in all of our conversations.

14.Q. What prayer requests do we have?

Pray for God to be honored.

Ask for wisdom and discernment.

Ask God to give us listening ears and listening hearts.

Pray for strength for our Consistory as they manage extra work.

Pray that we remain united in our focus on proclaiming Jesus.

Ask God to guide and protect the RCA.

Ask God to guide and protect the ARC.

Pray thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Thank God for the years of faithful witness we have enjoyed as a congregation.

Praise God for his hand of providence.

Pray for revival!