

Pastor Ryan's Departure & What It Means For Geneva

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q = Question A = Answer

(1) Q: **Why is Pastor Ryan leaving?**

A: The PC(USA) as outlined in the Presbyterian Book of Order, requires an Interim Pastor work with Session and the Congregation to help prepare a church to "call" a new pastor. The timeline for this Interim "season" is traditionally twelve to fifteen months. Pastor Ryan could have been considered for the Interim pastor position, but upon deep reflection, discerned that he was not the best person to lead Geneva through this process.

Given this situation, when an opening for the position of Pastor at Placentia Presbyterian Church presented itself, it was God's timing that he accept the call. It is important that the congregation understand that this was Pastor Ryan's decision alone. We are happy and proud that his time at Geneva prepared him for this exciting Solo Pastor position. We send him off with love, blessings and gratefulness for our time together.

(2) Q: **When is he leaving?**

A: Friday, December 1st, Ryan starts at Placentia Presbyterian Church as their Pastor.

(3) Q: **What is the next step?**

A: A Special Congregational Meeting will be held **Sunday, November 26th** immediately after worship for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Pastor Ryan and the Congregation effective Thursday, November 30th.

(4) Q: **Will we have a special event to honor Ryan and his family before he leaves?**

A: Yes! We will celebrate Ryan and his family in Simpson Hall immediately following the Special Congregational Meeting **Sunday, November 26th**.

(5) Q: **So we will be without a Pastor in 2024?**

A: Perhaps for a short time, but our goal is to have an Interim Pastor by the beginning of the year. A search committee has already been formed which is made up of the following session members¹: *Elena Bennett, Joanna Capelle, John Pomery, Kwang Seo, Linda Erickson, Tom Jenkins and Watt Prichard.*

(6) Q: **Why is the Interim "season" so long? Why can't we just hire a new pastor?**

A: With the retirement of Pastor Steve and the departure of Pastor Ryan, Geneva now more than ever needs to regroup and determine what our direction will be going forward. The Interim

¹ An Interim Pastor is technically hired by session, therefore the search committee is made up of session members.

Pastor will be tasked to lead the church through the following developmental tasks before it is determined that we are ready to “call” a new pastor. These “5 Steps”² are:

- a) Coming to terms with history
- b) Discovering a new identity
- c) Managing shifts of leadership
- d) Rethinking denominational linkages, and
- e) Commitment to new leadership and a new future

It will take time to do this properly and it is very important that we thoroughly and honestly evaluate our ministry and discern God’s purpose for us going forward.

(7) Q: **When will we have a new permanent Pastor?**

A: When Session and the Interim Pastor decide the “Five Steps” have been successfully completed and the necessary system, culture and mission changes are identified.

(8) Q: **Who makes the final decision as to who our new Solo Pastor will be?**

A: The very short answer is, Geneva will form a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) when the Interim Pastor and Session believes we are ready to take this step. The PNC will make a recommendation to the congregation at which time a Congregational Meeting will be held to “call” a new pastor. We will explain this process in more detail as we get further down the road.

(9) Q: **With both pastors gone, who will be preaching?**

A: Again, our hope is to have an Interim Pastor hired by the beginning of the year, but in the event this search is delayed, the Geneva session will work with the Los Ranchos Presbytery to provide stated supply³ pastors and teaching elders to preach until an Interim Pastor is hired.

(10) Q: **In the absence of an Interim Pastor, who will be caring for our people?**

A: It has always been, and will always be, God’s will for us to care for each other. This has never been the sole responsibility of our pastors. We have a very caring and faithful congregation which has proved time and again that we understand this mandate, so we all need to continue to do so throughout this transitional season.

That being said, for those with specific and additional needs, our dedicated deacons are still serving their parishes, Stephen Ministers continue to be available and our Prayer Warriors are very active. As officers of the church, our session members will also step up and serve in additional ways during this transitional period. If you have specific needs, please let us know by emailing our care team at caring@genevapres.org or call the church office at 949-837-2323.

² For descriptions of each step in this process, read *The Work of the Congregation During the Interim Period: Focus Points*. Copies are in the church office.

³ The definition of “stated supply” in the *Presbyterian Book of Order*: A stated supply is a teaching elder appointed by the presbytery, after consultation with the session, to perform the functions of a pastor in a church which is not seeking an installed pastor or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties.

(11) Q: **What if I have a Pastoral emergency?**

A: Pastor Steve will continue to be the Pastor on call through the end of the year. If there is any lag time between our pastors leaving and the hiring of an Interim Pastor, emergency calls will be handled by the session member on call. (Our **24-Hour Emergency Line is the church office number, 949-837-2323**. Press “1” when prompted and leave a message.)

(12) Q: **Who is going to be the acting Head of Staff until an Interim Pastor is hired?**

A: There will be no official Head of Staff until the Interim Pastor is hired. In the meantime, Geneva Business Manager, Gary Pado, and Office Manager, Laura McCallum, will be in the office functioning as usual.

(13) Q: **Are there going to be more staff changes?**

A: Yes. The *Communications Director* position has been eliminated so Edie Robertson will not be returning to the Geneva staff in 2024. The most important duties of the Communications Director will be absorbed into the Office Manager position⁴.

(14) Q: **How will these changes affect current ministries?**

A: There is no doubt that our current staff changes will have an impact on our ministries and programs. Church leadership is currently evaluating everything we do so that we may use our resources most efficiently and effectively. We will keep the congregation informed as changes occur. However, this is a time where lay leaders will be asked to step up and a great opportunity for new volunteers to emerge.

(15) Q: **Is the church going under?**

A: Mainline churches throughout the country are struggling just as we are. Twenty years ago we had 850 members. We now have 214 active members. Part of the Interim season will be to try to determine what we can do to reverse this trend while keeping in mind that the health of a church is measured in more than just membership figures.

(16) Q: **Why has the church declined so dramatically?**

A: Many reasons, some of which are beyond our control. Here are a few we identify: 1) a cultural shift away from Christianity and organized religion, 2) most recently, a 50% decrease in worship attendance resulting from the pandemic, 3) the aging of our current congregation, 4) a reluctance to return to a campus which has had a violent incident, and 5) Geneva being slow to adapt to cultural changes.

(17) Q: **What is our current financial situation?**

A: In 2023, we struggled to overcome a \$315,000 deficit for the operating budget. In 2024, even with recent personnel changes, the projected deficit is approximately \$62,000. Contributing factors: 1) a declining membership, 2) although our givers are faithful⁵, for which we are very

⁴ For more information about this, read the article in the November issue of *The Geneva News* newsletter which can be found online on the homepage of our website, genevapres.org.

⁵ Our fulfillment numbers are sky high. For the years 2019-2021, the average pledge fulfillment was 112%. For 2022 it was 105%. This means that those who pledged exceeded their pledge commitment.

grateful, only 65%⁶ of our current members and regular attenders are active pledgers, 3) a high personnel budget given the number of members we are serving, 4) a cultural shift toward giving to causes rather than giving to a general fund of any kind, and 5) personal economic concerns.

Generosity Campaign Update: We have received **78%** of the donations needed to reach our pledge income goal for 2024. It's not too late to contribute to this year's campaign. You may do so online at genevapres.org/give or call Geneva Business Manager, Gary Pado, at 949-837-2323.

(18) Q: **Is Geneva going to be closing our doors soon?**

A: No, but in order to ensure this does not happen, part of our process going forward must be to discern new and innovative ways to do church. The good news is, we have a strong foundation and a faithful congregation. It is through faith that church leadership firmly believes we can adjust our path to become more relevant to our community.

(19) Q: **Is it too late for Geneva?**

A: No! Geneva has much to offer. We have just weathered the pandemic and a campus shooting, so we are resilient and faithful! However, "business as usual" is not going to keep our doors open. We are still operating from a 1965 ministry model, and God is challenging us to become a church that is relevant for people in 2023. This is an exciting time, and we have faith that together we will meet this challenge.

Questions and/or comments are encouraged! Please direct them to info@genevapres.org. Pastor Steve and Pastor Ryan are also available to meet with anyone who feels the need for pastoral support. Call the church office at 949-837-2323 to make an appointment.

Our session members are also available to hear your comments and concerns. They are:

Elena Bennett	velvethammer10@cox.net	Administration: Personnel
Joanna Capelle	joanna.capelle@gmail.com	Worship Celebration
Elizabeth Carlisle	elizabethjay41@yahoo.com	Missional Life
Linda Erickson	lindaericksonart@gmail.com	Congregational Life: Caring
Patty Georges	patty@georgesandmoore.com	At Large
Tom Jenkins	tomjudyj@cox.net	Congregational Life: Fellowship
Barb Lorenzen	lorenzenbarbara75@gmail.com	Faith Formation: Children
Ray Miller	foystreet@aol.com	Administration: Finance
John Pomery	pomerywl@aol.com	Administration: Membership & Generosity
Watt Prichard	wattprichard@cox.net	Faith Formation: Adult
Kwang Seo	kseo1948@gmail.com	Worship Celebration

⁶ The goal for the percentage of active pledgers is always 100%.