



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 13, 2014

California Presbyterian Mega-church Votes to Leave Liberal PC-USA

One of the largest congregations in the beleaguered Presbyterian Church USA has voted to leave the denomination over doctrinal issues and the church's philosophy of evangelistic outreach.

Over 90 percent of the 4,000-member Menlo Park Presbyterian Church near San Francisco voted to sever ties with the denomination, even though the move will cost the church \$8.89 million to purchase its facility back from the denomination, which by church law owns the property of individual churches.



In a statement explaining the rationale behind the move, the church's leadership, headed by popular pastor John Ortberg, said that the congregation was growing increasingly at odds with its denomination over such issues as the deity of Christ and the authority of Scripture — core elements that define a church and its members as “evangelical.”

“For years we have referred to ourselves as a ‘Jesus church,’” the leaders declared in the statement. “We believe that God has expressed himself uniquely in his son Jesus, who lived, taught, died, and rose again for our sakes.”

The leaders went on to explain that the collective congregation believes that “God has revealed the truth about himself in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which are our unique and authoritative guides in faith and action.”

Additionally, the leaders said that the PC-USA “increasingly represents a wide range of beliefs on who Jesus is and on his relationship to our salvation,” with many of those beliefs denying the deity of Jesus and discounting His role in man's salvation.

[Baptist Press News](#) reported that in a 2011 denominational survey, only 41 percent of PC-USA pastors agreed or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved,” while 45 percent said they “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the biblically inspired statement.

Baptist Press noted that while “same-sex marriage and the ordination of homosexual ministers were not cited as reasons for the church's departure from the denomination ... in spite of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) upholding the traditional definition of marriage in 2012, the denomination dropped its prohibition on non-celibate homosexual ministers in 2010.”

The departure of the California mega-church represents a troubling trend for the PC-USA, with the denomination reporting that it lost 61,000 members in 2010, 64,000 in 2011, and a shocking 103,000 members in 2012.

In severing ties with the PC-USA, the Menlo Park congregation voted to join a new denomination calling itself the [ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians](#), composed thus far of approximately 115



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breakaway congregations.

[ChristianHeadlines.com](#) noted that Menlo Park Presbyterian is by no means the first large church to bolt from the PC-USA fold. Last year, Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas voted to leave for the ECO, and is embroiled in a legal battle with the PC-USA over the congregation's property. Similarly, a majority of members from Houston's First Presbyterian Church voted to leave for the ECO, "but the vote fell short of a required two-thirds majority by 36 votes," reported the Christian news site. "The church is the seventh largest in the denomination, with more than 4,000 members."



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