

Gathering, February 8, 2015

Opening Remarks

I am Sally Atchinson, in case any of you don't know me. I am one of your Session and Moderator of these Gatherings.

When we became aware of issues affecting our denomination in the fall, we chose to include

our whole church family in discussion rather than make the decision as a Session.

We **will** need to **ACT as a session;**

but will do that only AFTER we have provided for input from all of you. For that reason we charged Pastor Bill with presenting issues to every small group of the church and are holding these gatherings about whether we should, as your Session, proceed to initiate discussion with the Presbytery about our future affiliation.

Our goal is to raise the concerns that have subsequently arisenWe are ASKING you, though, to help us figure out whether we should live with the problems or seek to make tolerable changes.

You don't have to get even

as old as me

to know every issue has many sides and our congregation certainly does too. We're doing our best to hear all of them.

My husband Tony used to tell his big sister Molly "Sister, you've found something I've been looking for all my life.....something SO THIN it only has one side".

That's a situation we are striving to avoid. Our primary commitment is to have the broadest possible conversation and understanding with

every one of our church family

. Bottom line: what we really care about is

- **THIS CHURCH**
- **OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER** and
- **SERVING GOD HONORABLY and EFFECTIVELY IN FOUNTAIN HILLS**

We do

not

want the issues to be distracting to our ongoing worship or relationships, even though in fairness and growth we believe they should be discussed.

We have chosen to ask Pastor Bill to be here as an important resource and mostly because **he is a part of our family.**

We will be showing a series of slides to present key issues of the discussion. Each of us will present some part of them and respond to questions afterwards. I'm asking you to hold your questions until we complete the slides and then we'll be open to the floor.

We've set up microphones in each aisle. Please walk to the mic and state your question so that everyone in attendance can hear it. If you have more than one question, wait for others at the mic to have their first questions answered before asking a second. We would like to limit each question to

2 minutes

in order to be sure that all questions get answered.

Most of all

we want to preserve the atmosphere of discussion within a family and remember that we want to **continue to be** our loving community of believers here in Fountain Hills **now and into the future,**

despite any decisions that are made about affiliation. Please know that your feedback is crucial. Help us see all sides and find solutions that unite. We cannot represent you well as a Session without knowing how you feel.

Let's look at the slides.....we begin with scripture that affirms our base and our commitment to each other.