



July 21, 2017

Dear ASCS Family:

First, the Board and Administration of ASCS would like to thank our Shores family for the tremendous outpouring of support we have received in the last several days. The way our community has rallied together has been overwhelming. Many of you have reached out to encourage us and offer your help and we could not be more grateful. It is clear that your love for the school is very much the same as ours. At the same time, we know that you have questions that you would like answered. We have compiled a list of the most common questions asked over the last several days. We hope this will be helpful to you!

1. *Was it the School's desire to separate from the Church?*

A: Absolutely not. We have had a positive working relationship with the Church until recent months under the new Church leadership. The School's only desire was for the relationship to continue as it has for many years with both ministries having their own independent boards. The School became a separate entity in 1995 when the Church purposefully "carved out" the School from the Church. The School's desire was for that relationship to continue. Disappointingly, the Church did not give the School an option that would enable that to happen.

2. *Were there any options other than the School and the Church separating?*

A: The School was surprised and very disappointed that the Church did not propose more conciliatory options which would allow the Church and the School to maintain their relationship. Each of the proposed options given by the Church provided for a poor outcome for the School. The Church has tried to portray their Option 1 as its "Restoration of Relationship" option. For the Church to require that the School completely terminate its independent existence (as created by the Church in 1995) and come under the complete authority of the Elder Body was not a reasonable option. The School owns millions of dollars of assets at the Secondary Campus which under Option 1 would have immediately become the property of the Church giving the Church all of the funds in the School's bank accounts, our land, and our facilities. The Church would have had no accountability to the School and its families allowing the Church to use these assets as it sees fit including selling the land or using our funds to cover any shortfall in the Church's budget. It is disappointing that the Church would characterize this as a "Restoration of the Relationship". Considering these concerns, the School Board was left with the only other alternative provided by the church...to agree to terminate the relationship at the conclusion of the 2017-18 school year.

3. *Were there other reasons why the School accepted the option of separating from the Church?*

A: Besides the concern for turning over all of its assets to the Church under Option 1, the School believes that remaining independent better serves the local Christian families. There are approximately 100 Bible believing churches represented by families attending the School. The Church has a more narrow reach and understandably a fundamental Baptist doctrine as defined by the Church's Statement of Faith and its past internal debates regarding spiritual gifts. Because we serve a broad range of denominations, the School did not believe that coming under the fundamental Baptist doctrine was in the School's or its families' best interest. Although members of the School leadership respect and may even support this doctrine, the School's mission is different as it serves the broader Christian community. It is interesting to note that some of the local Christian schools which have struggled most are those that are Church run. This is most often because the mission of the School is not the church's primary focus.

In addition, Option 1 would have given the Church direct control over the hiring, firing, and all School policies impacting our families and staff.

4. *Does the School want spiritual oversight by Spiritual leaders?*

A: Absolutely. If you personally know the current Board Members and School Administration, you know how much they love the Lord and are led by Him. The School has never shunned spiritual oversight and has had two pastors on its Board: Pastor Scott Dishong, Executive Pastor of Ministries for ASBC, who has a son at the School and has served as a board member for three years; and Pastor Allen McFarland, a highly respected man of God whose children graduated from ASCS and has faithfully served on the ASCS Board for more than twenty years. To leave the impression that the School is drifting away from the Church's spiritual oversight is not accurate. The Church has always had an important voice and vote on the School board. It should be noted that the Church Elders interviewed and approved the Head of School and every new Board Member including all of those who currently serve.

5. *What vote or role does or has the Church had on the School Board?*

A: Since the School's creation as a separate entity in 1995, the Senior Pastor of ASBC was given the position of Chairman of the Board. Even though this was provided in the School's bylaws, no Senior Pastor from the Church has ever actually served as Chairman; the Senior Pastor has always delegated that responsibility to someone else. Regardless of who served on the Church's behalf, the Church has always had a representative on the School Board and a vote on all School matters. The School's current bylaws continue to provide a Board position for the Church; however the Church has made the decision not to be represented on the School Board in the future.

6. *The Church says that the school is vulnerable from a Religious Liberties perspective by separating from the Church. Is that true?*

A: The Church believes that the School would have a greater level of protection if it were under the Church's authority. We respect their opinion. The School believes that both the Church and the School will face the same attacks with similar risks to both groups. Before we allow fear to prevail, it should be noted that all of the largest Christian schools and many other very prominent ones in Hampton Roads are not under the authority of a local church. This is also true for most Christian colleges including Regent University. There are multitudes of Christian organizations that are not under the authority of a local church including Focus on the Family, Awana, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association just to name a few. We share the same Religious Liberty protections as these Christian organizations, and like them we will vigorously defend our Religious Liberties.

7. *Do I have to go to the Religious Liberty meeting the Church is calling?*

A: No. You are welcome to go if you choose, but it is not sponsored by the School and will have no bearing on the future of ASCS. However, it should be noted that the School fully understands the issues surrounding Religious Liberties and the School's protection under the law. Over the past 4 years, our School Administration has worked closely with ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International – the premier Christian school accrediting and support association in the U.S.) and their legal team to insure that ASCS has implemented all necessary actions to protect the School and its Religious Liberties. It is inaccurate for the Church to imply that the School does not fully understand this issue or that it has not taken appropriate actions to protect its Religious Liberties.

8. *Is the Church treating the School differently than it does other ministries operating in the Church's facilities?*

A: In the Church's letter to its congregation, the Church states: "If you are not accountable to the church, you cannot receive the benefits that a ministry of the church receives. To say it another way, you cannot operate under the church's roof and not be under the church's authority." As a condition to the continued use of its facilities, the Church insists that the School terminate its corporate existence and its independence and come under the complete authority of the Church. However, it does not appear that the Church requires this of other ministries using its facilities. By way of example, the ministry "Recovery for Life" meets in the Church but is a separate, independent organization led by an individual who does not attend the Church. In addition, even the lead pastor maintains a separate ministry (Ron Jones

Ministries/Something Good Radio) that operates out of the Church by broadcasting its messages from the pulpit of Atlantic Shores Baptist Church. We understand that Ron Jones Ministries has its own board of directors which has the right to act independently of the Church, and that the lead pastor actively raises money in the community for his independent ministry. In addition, if this ministry is an independent ministry and does not operate under the authority of the Elder Body, then his ministry would also have the same Religious Liberties concerns that the Church has deemed so critical for the School. The School finds nothing inappropriate about the Church's willingness to allow these independent ministries to operate out of the Church's facilities. However, the Church's treatment of these ministries certainly is inconsistent with the Church's treatment of the School.

9. *Will Atlantic Shores Christian School have to change its name?*

A: No. The Elder Body of ASBC has requested that the School change its name. However, the School has had the name Atlantic Shores Christian School for over 30 years and intends to keep it. Our School's name is a trusted name in the community and we will not be giving up the rights to "Atlantic Shores Christian School".

The School will continue to be a Christian non-profit charitable institution with its own 501(c)(3) status and all of the Religious Liberties protection provided to the School as a Christian institution.

10. *What property is owned by the School and what is owned by the Church?*

A: The Church owns the buildings at the Elementary Campus; this is the property the Church has advised the School it must vacate at the conclusion of the 2017-18 school year. The School, however, has full ownership of the secondary campus which includes 25 acres of land and all of the educational and athletic facilities located there. The School's long-term plan has always included the addition of academic facilities at the secondary campus to house some or all of the grades currently at the elementary campus. That will not happen all in one year but it is our ultimate goal.

11. *What will this mean for my student?*

A: For the coming year, nothing will change for the School at either the elementary or secondary campuses. If your student is already on the secondary campus then nothing will change either now or in the future since the School owns the secondary campus. If your student is at the elementary campus, the upcoming 2017-2018 year will be completely the same. However, beginning the 2018-2019 year, our elementary campus will be housed at another location. Since convenience for our school families is important, it will be our goal to provide facilities either on our secondary campus or near it. The School is not able share any specific details at this time, but let us assure you that the Lord is working and will provide. Please also be assured whatever location is selected, your child will receive the same Biblically grounded, excellent education that you have come to expect from ASCS.

12. *What is the plan for 2018-2019 and beyond?*

A: The School Board and Administration are hard at work putting a transition plan together for our elementary campus. God is already going before us as we have had parents and pastors with connections and resources reach out to us. Since the School owns approximately 25 acres at the secondary campus, we hope to add classrooms on this property as cost effectively as possible while the School also explores all other options that will best serve the School and our families. As stated earlier, the School's long-term plan has always included the addition of academic facilities at the secondary campus to house some or all of the grades currently at the elementary campus. We are a strong school and believe wholeheartedly that ASCS will come out of this stronger than ever.

13. *Who is in charge of the school now?*

A: Nothing has changed in the leadership of the School. The School's Board of Directors is still responsible for making all policy governance and strategic decisions for the School. The day-to-day leadership and operations of the School will continue to be managed by our Head of School, Gary Carlson. Over the past nine years, the School, through God's wonderful blessings, has flourished. We have established a solid Godly environment where Jesus is proclaimed and God is glorified. Because of God's blessings, the School has grown in enrollment and is now the largest Christian school in all

of Hampton Roads. It has high academic standards as reflected in our national test scores and has had 15 prestigious National Merit Scholars in the past nine years. We have acquired additional land for expansion of our facilities at the secondary campus. Under this leadership, the School has added college level dual enrollment courses, collegiate level science labs, additional classrooms and cutting edge technology in every classroom. The School created its own tuition foundation and has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support great Christian families who need financial help in attending the School. Our accrediting agency, ACSI, has praised ASCS for being one of its premier Christian schools in the entire southeastern United States. With the School's singular focus being Christian education, we have been able to excel without being controlled by the Church.

For those associated with the Church, you know how tumultuous the last 10 years have been for ASBC. The Church has experienced frequent leadership turnover, internal battles over doctrine, and financial instability. The School's leadership on the other hand has been very strong and has guided ASCS on its path of becoming a preeminent Christian Educational Institution. The School prayerfully requests that you stand with the School and its leaders whom you have come to trust and respect.

*14. Is the School concerned about providing security at both campuses?*

A: The School takes seriously the importance of assuring a safe educational environment. In addition to having locked facilities and security cameras, the Church's facilities team has provided a security presence at the elementary campus. With all due respect to the Church, the Church has never provided a security document to the Head of School and therefore could not have rejected it. In early May, one of the Church pastors informed the Head of School that the Church intended to hire one of its members as a security officer for both the Church and School. In late June, that same Church pastor asked the School if it wanted to contract out security to an unfamiliar security company. Knowing that the Church had already informed the School that it would be hiring a security officer on a full time basis, the School therefore saw no need to pursue a contract with that outside security firm.

*15. Will there be a parent meeting to discuss this matter?*

A: Yes, we will certainly be having a meeting. The recent demands from the Church came very unexpectedly last week. Our announcement was a letter instead of a meeting by necessity. As more details become clear, we will continue to communicate with you.

As we stand together in unity, we ask that you pray for the School and its leadership. Pray for the Church and unity among believers. Pray for God to open up wonderful new opportunities for our elementary campus. As you pray, pass along any ideas or personal connections you have that will help the school as we transition into an exciting new future. We are blessed to be in partnership with your family and will serve our God and you faithfully at ASCS.

In Christ,

The ASCS School Board and Administration