

Background for Presbytery to the Process of Blackhawk Presbytery Administrative Commission to Dismiss First Presbyterian Church of Aurora

- The Administrative Commission was elected by Presbytery, May 2009. The members of the Commission are: Rev. Carl Gray, Geneva, Fox Valley, Rev. Terry Hennesey, Oswego; Rev. Gary Huffman, HR, Rev. Chuck Legvold, Aurora, Westminster, Elder Beth Elbersen, Woodstock; Elder Fred Parker, Plainfield, Wheatland, Elder Lois Ramon, Belvidere.
- The authority of the Commission is to include:
 - Identifying, working with and providing continuing pastoral care for those members of the congregation wishing to remain with the PCUSA.
 - Recommending to Presbytery whether there is a continuing congregation of the PCUSA at FPC Aurora that should be awarded some, or all, of the property, assets, name and titles associated with FPC Aurora. (G.8.0601)
 - Consulting with the leadership of FPC Aurora and recommending to Presbytery an orderly dismissal of those wishing to leave and the terms of dismissal including transferring ministers, officers and members, and to recommend which, if any, of the property, other assets, name and titles may be acquired by the departing members.
 - Examining whatever records may be relevant including how money is held, title to property, insurance documents, corporate officers, corporate articles, bylaws and charters. (G-9.0408)
 - To act as the Administrative Commission determines is necessary to protect the interests of the Presbytery in this process and to retain legal counsel should that become necessary. This authority is granted with the affirmation of all parties that we wish to be guided by 1 Corinthians 6 to settle matters within the church refraining from either engaging legal counsel or resorting to civil action.
- Prior to its election the Commission functioned as a Special Committee of COM. In that capacity we:
 - Attended as observers the informational meetings held by the Session of FPC Aurora for members of their congregation.
 - In April 2009 held an informational meeting at the Oswego Presbyterian Church to present the Presbytery's concerns and to answer questions that

members of the congregation might have. About 60 FPCA members attend.

- In April 2009 attended FPC Aurora's Congregational Meeting where 334 votes were cast, 317 for dismissal, 17 to remain in the PCUSA.
- Subsequently a letter was sent to the congregation to learn the position of the more than 500 who did not attend the Congregational Meeting. Of 384 responses: 2 expressed desire to remain with the PCUSA and seek a letter of transfer; 12 wished to remain with the PCUSA and to seek further information about continuing as FPC Aurora; 322 in agreement with the majority vote; 6 had no position; 36 no longer active in the congregation; 3 responses were returned blank; and 3 confused responses.
- April/May the Committee communicated with phone calls to all who indicated they wished to remain with the PCUSA.
- Acting as a Commission representing the interests of Presbytery, the Commission interpreted *the interests of Presbytery* to include:
 - that responsible agreement be reached for property held in trust with Presbytery
 - that the ministry of FPCA be affirmed and continued at its current location in Aurora
 - that the historical nature of 150 years of ministry be affirmed
 - that litigation be avoided
 - that precedent setting which would either encourage or aggravate other churches to leave the PCUSA be avoided
 - that dismissal be achieved at the least possible cost to the Presbytery
 - that the integrity of the per capita apportionment be affirmed
 - that the process for dismissal from Blackhawk Presbytery be reviewed at the conclusion of this process in order to establish guidelines for a Commission charged with a similar task in the future

- In order to achieve a responsible agreement for the property
 - An audit was done cooperatively with both the Commission and FPC Aurora providing an auditor for the process. An Elder from Oswego Presbyterian Church whose profession is as an FDIC auditor represented the Presbytery.
 - A professional appraisal was obtained by the Commission with the value of the properties set at 2.6 million dollars. FPC Aurora also obtained an appraisal with value set at 2.2 million dollars. For purposes of discussion, we mutually agreed to a property value of 2.4 million dollars.
 - It was further noted that use of the church property is restricted by being in an historic district
 - Real estate comparables indicated that at most half the appraised value could be realized in the sale to the property.
- With that preparation, and with months of discussion and negotiation, the Commission representing the range of theological and eccleasical positions of the Presbytery, arrived at the Agreement for Dismissal with FPC Aurora that is before you.

