

Presbytery of the Highlands
Stated Meeting
Administrative Commission of
the Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church Report
March 8, 2022

Introduction

On April 27 the Administrative and Coordinating Team, acting on behalf of the Presbytery, appointed an Administrative Commission ("AC") to implement the charge of dissolving the congregation and selling the land, building, and contents of the Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church ("PVPC"). The Commissioners appointed were Ruling Elder Ken Nickel, Ruling Elder Cindy Riggs, Rev. Bill Stone, and Rev. Dr. Ellen Clémot, who was designated as the AC Chair by the Presbytery Moderator, Rev. David Young.

Brief History of the Church

The Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church was formed on February 2, 1958, with 60 faithful people received as charter members. In May 1958 the congregation called their first pastor, Rev. R. Paul Freed. Soon after they acquired 4 acres on the corner of Sunset Road and Roome Avenue as the site of the new church building. A 200-year-old farmhouse on the property was named "Calvin Lodge" and served as meeting place for all the activities of the church. In October 1963 the sanctuary was dedicated. Both the cross and the organ were designed and built by members of the church. In the spring of 1969, the construction on the Christian Education Annex began and was dedicated on Palm Sunday 1971.

The Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church was devoted and dedicated to reaching and serving its youngest members, all the way through to adulthood. They had three youth groups meeting in the fall through the spring. In the summer the youth and parents participated in the Freed Summer Camp in Maine. Through the years they had more than five installed pastors and numerous interim and supply pastors.

Just prior to the New Jersey Presbyteries transition, we were contacted that the session had determined that, after many faithful years of service, it was now time to have the final worship service of the congregation. Soon after March 1, 2021 the Presbytery of the Highlands appointed an Administrative Commission to walk the congregation through their last days as a faith

community. The Congregation had their final worship service on June 27, 2021 with Rev. Elizabeth Morrison, former interim pastor, providing the final sermon.

Transfer of members of the Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church

While no request has been made at the time of this report, members have twelve months from the date of dissolution to request transfer to a congregation of their choice.

Process and Actions of the Administrative Commission

The AC met with the Session of PVPC, which was also the totality of its membership, in April 2021, and listened prayerfully to the wishes of the congregation to (i) conclude its ministry as a church, (ii) dissolve the congregation and find other houses of worship that would welcome the remaining members, (iii) sell the property and (iv) disburse the proceeds to their beloved charities. The AC learned that while PVPC was part of the Palisades Presbytery, it had already decided to put the church building and real estate up for sale. There had even been discussions with potential recipients of the proceeds and talk of a potential merger with another church in a different denomination.

The AC did its best to implement a process of transition in an orderly manner, beginning with the spiritual well-being of the congregation. We identified the closest Presbyterian Church that might welcome them, and also discussed their joining the Reformed Church of Pompton Plains, whose minister of congregational engagement had reached out to several members and attended their closing worship in June 2021. After the initial in-person meeting in April 2021, the AC communicated to the Presbytery Leader of Highlands Presbytery the congregation's affirmation of its wish to dissolve and wind up its affairs as a church.

The AC explained to the members of PVPC that the Session was now replaced by the AC as its governing body to implement the transition process, but as a courtesy, the AC met with the Session members several more times and always arrived at unanimous decisions with the membership as to how the AC would proceed. Significantly, all the membership agreed on the date and time for the final worship service and dissolution of the congregation. The AC voted to declare the congregation dissolved upon at the benediction offered at that service, held in the church sanctuary on June 27, 2021. Rev. Bill Stone organized the worship service and invited the former interim Pastor of PVPC, Elizabeth Morrison, to preach. The Presbytery

was invited to the worship service, and several congregants and neighbors attended in addition to the AC, worship leaders, and Presbytery members.

During the ten weeks from April 15 to June 30th, the AC worked by e-mail and video conference on the plans to wind-up the affairs of the church and sell its property. It was ably assisted by the Presbytery Financial Manager Liz Hutchinson, who was instrumental in ensuring that the bills were identified and paid, the property was maintained, break-ins addressed, and insurance coverage kept in place. Liz also provided oversight to the removal of one in ground oil tank that did not need remediation. She made several on-site visits to meet with the PVPC's congregant treasurer and financial steward of the church's bank accounts, investments, and other assets. She oversaw the transfer of the financial records and inventories of equipment of the church to the Presbytery.

The AC terminated all executory leases and identified those which would terminate by the terms of their agreements no later than July 2021. Liz Hutchinson and Jeanne Radak, and AC members Ellen Clémot and Ken Nickel, visited the campus, identified valuables, and searched for records of any kind. Boxes of records and documents were collected and have been reviewed and sorted. Appropriate documents will be deposited with the Presbyterian Historical Society. The AC asked the congregants if there were any special requests for the disposition of any church property. They did ask that choir robes and the handbells find a good home. The handbells were given to the First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown to enhance their music program. Other items were distributed to various ministry locations by the Presbyterian Women. The hope was that the building, especially the sanctuary, could be used intact by the new owner. The AC did not make any commitments as to the use or disposition of assets apart from being mindful of their request. Through telephone and in-person conversations, the AC informed the congregants of PVPC that the property of the church now entrusted to the Presbytery in its entirety, known and unknown, both assets and liabilities. (G-4.0203 & G-4.0205) All mail, and bills were transferred to the Presbytery's address.

The AC retained a real estate broker in Pompton Valley and an attorney, Tania Nemeth, Esq. of Law Firm Masessa & Cluff, to assist in the Presbytery's designation as owner of the real estate assets, identify outstanding executory leases, hazards or encumbrances, and to place the property (land and buildings and their contents "as is") on the market for sale in the summer 2021.

The former congregation had expressed a wish that the buyer of the property be a church and the AC made this wish known to the broker. Several bids came in from developers in the \$2 million range. One church made a compelling bid at \$2 million which was accepted in October 2021, but, after months of delay, the buyer was unable to procure financing to close. The property was re-listed in February 2022 and another church entity offered \$2.5 million. Several other bids were received, and the competition encouraged the new church bidder to raise its offer to \$3 million. The AC accepted this offer, and the buyer closed the deal, through its affiliated school entity, during Holy Week 2022.

The AC met virtually with the Budget and Finance team, the Funds Development Team, and the moderators of the ACT, as required by AC charge, in April 2022 to discuss the disposition of the cash received at the closing, net of fees and commissions. It agreed unanimously to disburse the proceeds in the manner indicated below. The AC respectfully requests its dissolution as a commission effective on the receipt and approval of this final report by the Presbytery at its meeting on May 10, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Ellen Clark Clémot

Chair of the Administrative Commission

Submitted May 2, 2022

Recommendation:

The PVAC, in consultation with the Presbytery Finance Team and Funds Development team of the ACT, recommends the following distribution of the proceeds from the dissolution of the Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church.

Sale price	3,000,000
RE Commission	(150,000)
Realty Transfer Fee	(33,775)
Sewer/water	(366)
Attorney's fees	(8,500)
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Balance	2,807,359
PVPC Cash on Hand	370,878
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Total	3,178,237

Proposed Use of Funds

Tech Resource/Grant	100,000
Johnsonburg Capital Fund	100,000
Highlands Presbytery Cemetery Fund	25,000
Pompton Valley Church Missions	5,000
Church Building Reserve Fund	60,000
Unnamed Resourcing Funds	80,878
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Total	370,878

Proceeds	3,178,237
less Proposed use	(370,878)
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NET PROCEEDS	2,807,359

Net Proceeds be invested in The Presbytery of the Highlands Mission and Ministry (M &M) Investment Fund (NCT)

M& M Investment	1,283,021 (as of 3/31/22)
Net Proceeds	2,807,359
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Total	4,090,379

Rationale:

- Recommends the Cash from the church (about 10+% of Net proceeds of sale of property) be used to fund requests of the PVC members, support resourcing for congregations of the presbytery and assist funds of the Presbytery that are in need of additional funding.
- Tech Resource/Grants (\$100,000)– This will be used to fund a Technology consultant for churches to develop and continue their online ministry presence with the technology that is best for their situation. There will also be grants to support the purchase of needed equipment and software. The Church Development Team is developing this program and hope to have it launched by mid summer.
- Johnsonburg Capital Funds – The Presbytery received a request from Johnsonburg Camp and Retreat Center for a contribution to their **Marked For the Future** Capital Campaign. This is also one of the requests from the PVC mission request. The Commission and Finance members believe this is a great investment for youth ministry and discipleship development for our congregations.
- The Highlands Presbytery is steward of several cemeteries from dissolved congregations. There are not always adequate funds from the congregations for the perpetual care of the cemeteries. \$25,000 would bring our present Cemetery Fund \$100,000. We have care over two cemeteries and partial oversight of a third one.
- Pompton Valley Presbyterian Church members had a small list of beloved mission projects within their region. This would be to provide final gifts on their behalf to those mission projects. At the time of writing, we had not received the final list. This number may go up slightly after reviewing the list.
- Church Building Reserve Fund will be used to for when congregations request dissolution and do not have reserve funds to maintain the during the process. We have found through several dissolutions that deferred maintenance and other property issues need to be addressed in order to preserve buildings or to bring them to code in order to sell can require upfront cash. This fund would help provide the needed cash and would be refurbished after the property had been sold.
- Unnamed Resourcing Fund will be for projects that have not been developed enough to name fully or may emerge through the next year.

- Mission and Ministry Investment Fund is the name of the fund we use to provide income for the general budget and the fund that provides income for deficits in the budget. The role of the Funds Development Team is to continue to develop a long-term financial sustainability plan for the presbytery. The M & M fund is major component of that the financial sustainability plan.
- Upon dissolution of the PVAC the Administration and Coordination team will have oversight of the funds.