

AUGUST 28, 2021 PRESBYTERY MEETING

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS

Stated Clerk

I. For Information:

The reading of Shenandoah Presbytery 2020 minutes has taken place and were found to be in order and consistent with the standards of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

II. Recommendation:

That Presbytery grant the status of honorably retired to Teaching Elder Nancy Smith effective April 1, 2021.

Committee on Presbytery Administration

Regarding: Summary of Action on Sale of Presbytery Property

An article was published in the July 27, 2021 Daily News Record entitled, “Presbytery In Talks to Sell Site for Homeless Shelter.” This being the case, we thought it would be a good time to update the Presbytery on the actions CPA has taken regarding sale of the property.

The first thing to know is that as of August 20, 2021, no formal offer has been made by any party for the property. When/if an offer comes in, CPA will negotiate with the interested party through our real estate agent. If a price is agreed upon by CPA and the interested party, that negotiated price would come to Presbytery for approval as a recommendation from CPA.

Here are the major steps to date:

October 25, 2015 Property initially listed for sale at \$995,000

June 22, 2018 Lot sold to Dollar General for \$276,667

February 2, 2021 CPA reduced price for remaining lot to \$829,000

In the spring of 2021, CPA paused to ask a simple, yet profound, question:

“With no serious offers being made in one of the hottest real estate markets in American history, might the Holy Spirit be nudging us to consider other options for the property?”

Clayton Rascoe and Betsy Hay were then asked to explore how the property might be used in mission to the “least of these” in the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area. They hosted a series of three open houses at the property that were attended by representatives from United Way of Harrisonburg & Rockingham County, Faith in Action, Harrisonburg City Manager’s office and over ten different nonprofit organizations.

Subsequently, two significant actions have occurred:

- The board of directors of one nonprofit voted to “engage in negotiations with the Shenandoah Presbytery regarding the property at 1111 N. Main Street with the goal of a favorable purchase. The potential purchase of this property is for the intent of establishing a long-term, 12 month, low-barrier shelter to alleviate homelessness in the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.”
- Harrisonburg City Council approved the designation of \$326,000 from CARES Act funds for the purpose of purchasing property and/or services for a low-barrier homeless shelter.

CPA now awaits with hope to see how the Holy Spirit may possibly use these actions to move us toward God’s purposes for the property. We invite your prayers! S-1

Committee on Pastoral Transition

- A. Sustained the examination of Teaching Elder Kevin Channell (member of Shenandoah Presbytery) who has received a call to Petersburg Church.
- B. Approved the following terms of call between TE Kevin Channell and Petersburg Church effective October 1, 2021:

Annual Cash Salary	48,500
Deferred Income	1,200
Dental	635
Use of Manse Value	15,101
Automobile Expense	1,800
Books and Subscriptions	500
Continuing Education	500
Cell Phone	700
Major Medical	17,668
Pension and Disability	6,544
SECA	4,169
Utilities and Furnishing Allowance paid directly by the church	
Moving expenses to the field as negotiated	
Four week's annual paid vacation, including four Sundays	
Two week's annual study leave with pay, including two Sundays	
Primary and Support Family Leave	
Disability and/or Death Benefit	

Committee on Relational Ministry

Recommend that the current listening team to the Bethel Church become the Administrative Commission with the powers granted to it as stated in the Presbytery Policy for Discernment toward Reconciliation or Separation of Congregations in Shenandoah Presbytery.

INTERIM REPORT ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF THE LISTENING TEAM FOR BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The session of Bethel Presbyterian Church voted on Sept. 13, 2020, to seek gracious dismissal from the PCUSA. A listening team to inquire into this issue was formed by the Shenandoah Presbytery and held its initial meeting on Dec. 10, 2020. Over the ensuing months, the listening team met with the session and other church leaders, and contacted a majority of congregation members either by telephone or in person to gauge their support for the proposed action. The listening team became aware of a letter sent by session to congregation members that contained mischaracterizations of PCUSA policies. The listening team sent a letter to congregation members and held two information sessions to present accurate information about PCUSA policies.

The listening team developed an understanding that the congregation was divided into two groups, a dominant group wanting to leave the PCUSA and a smaller, much less organized group wanting to remain in the denomination. The dominant group alleges that policies of the PCUSA and/or the Presbyterian Mission Board have politicized the denomination and are so far out of step with the values of the congregation as to render continued alignment with the PCUSA impossible. The issues most often cited by members of this faction were policies on same-sex marriage, abortion, and social justice issues. The most cited social justice issue was the Mission Board's statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Also mentioned as reasons to leave the denomination were the failure of the

congregation to engage a pastor sufficiently in step with its views and the belief that an evangelical posture beyond that of the PCUSA is needed to retain current members and to attract new members to the congregation.

Members of the minority group within the congregation have alleged the dominant group has needlessly introduced political issues into worship services, feel they are marginalized within the congregation, and are nearly unanimous in saying they disagree with the vote to seek gracious dismissal and that many of the reasons put forward in support of that vote are values which are counter to their understanding of the teachings of Christ. They seem to have been worn down by years of what they consider heavy-handed tactics by a core group within the dominant group. The minority group has no apparent natural leader, is small, and is relatively unorganized. The listening team determined that the two groups do not share sufficient common ground to discuss their differences in a productive manner.