

To: Presbytery of Carlisle  
Fr: Administrative Commission (AC)  
Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC), Lebanon, PA  
Date: April 19, 2021

Re: Final Report to the Presbytery of Carlisle

This report is in compliance with the instructions provided by the Stated Clerk that the Administrative Commission formally report to the Presbytery when its ministry is concluded.

The AC was appointed at the December 9, 2019 meeting of the Presbytery of Carlisle with membership as follows: Rev. Charles Best, Chair; Rev. Kristal Smith, Elder Gregg Robertson (Derry), Elder Larry Smith (also a Session member at CPC) and Rev. Larry Van Hise. The AC was charged to: meet with the Session of CPC to assess the location of the church in its life cycle; meet with Session and Treasurer to ascertain financial status and obligations; meet with the Pastor to discuss leadership needs; and to empower and equip the Session to meet with the congregation to identify and explore the implications of various options that include but not limited to the following:

- Continue on current course until financial resources are exhausted;
- Convert the building and property into an asset for the congregation's continued sustainability;
- Dissolve the congregation and determine how the church's remaining assets could be directed to fund a ministry within the community;
- Explore possibility for a rebirth and development of a new Presbyterian witness within the Lebanon community.

Additionally, the AC was authorized to assume "original jurisdiction" at its sole discretion.

The initial meeting of the AC was on December 17, 2019 with Interim Executive Presbytery, Rev. Cheryl Galan and Stated Clerk, Jim Speedy to review the charge from Presbytery and to discuss any questions. At this meeting, Elder Gregg Robertson was appointed Vice-Chair and Rev. Larry Van Hise, Secretary.

The AC began meeting either as the AC or with the Session on a weekly basis beginning early in January of 2020. It should be reported up front that Session members Elders Julie Fields, Clerk; Becky Moyer, Carol Holt, Diane Roth and Nancy Shay continued to work patiently, diligently and faithfully with the AC until the congregation was dissolved and continuing up to date of this report. The orderly and satisfactory completion of the AC's ministry was due largely to their dedicated participation. Also essential to the efforts of the AC was the willingness of Treasurer Al Bender and Assistant Treasurer Sandra Herr to continue in their respective capacities until the dissolution of the congregation.

During the AC's initial meetings with the Session, it became evident that the Session was unanimous in its belief that CPC could not survive as a functioning church under

the current pastorship of Rev. John Barlow. A series of “listening sessions” were conducted with members of the congregation to gauge their feelings on the future of CPC with or without Rev. Barlow. This concluded with an agreement by both the Session and Rev. Barlow to dissolve his relationship with CPC. A six-month severance agreement was negotiated between Rev. Barlow and the Session in accordance with Presbytery guidelines which totaled \$22,500. At a Congregational Meeting on March 29, 2020 the motion to dissolve the relationship with Rev. Barlow effective March 31, 2020 was approved by a majority: 27 for, 5 against.

It was at this juncture that the directives from the Pennsylvania Department of Health regarding Covid-19 to limit public gatherings as well as legitimate individual health concerns essentially doomed any effort of CPC to remain a viable functioning church. In addition to frustrating the Session and the congregation to freely assemble and plan a future, the church structure was in need of repairs estimated to exceed \$300,000. At that time, the total liquid assets of the church were approximately \$43,000 with a severance obligation of \$22,500. At its joint meeting with the Session on April 7, 2020 the AC voted unanimously to assume “original jurisdiction” and a letter was sent to the congregation explaining the implications of this action. Although the AC would function as the Session going forward, the elected Session members agreed to continue to meet and work with the AC. (For the purposes of this report, the originally elected Session members will continue to be referred to as “the Session”). After a number of meetings and having carefully reviewed the results of a written survey to the congregation detailing several possibilities for the future of CPC, the Session and the AC concluded that the most reasonable option was to dispose of the church property, donate any remaining cash assets to local ministries and dissolve the congregation. The church structure and property had been estimated by accredited appraiser Benjamin Weaver to have a value of \$744,000.

During the summer months while the AC and Session considered several options regarding the disposal of the church property, digital Sunday morning worship services were organized and produced by Elders Gregg Robertson and Carol Holt. Both Rev. Charlie Best and Rev. Don Potter led worship on several occasions. A final worship service at CPC which also celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was conducted in the sanctuary on August 2, 2020 with fifty-three in attendance. As of July 31, 2020, all financial assets of CPC had been converted to cash equaling \$20,455 and the severance obligation had been fully satisfied.

By early September, the AC and Session agreed that the best use of the church structure as a continuing Christian ministry within the Lebanon area was to donate the structure and all contents “as is” to True Life Ministries (TLM) a very successful youth ministry operating within the greater Lebanon County community since 1945. TLM agreed to accept the structure and all contents (previously, congregation members were given the opportunity to claim personal items). The one exception was the unique baptismal font which had been commissioned by the Coleman family (the founding family of CPC) which was a large marble statue of an angel. St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, another Lebanon area church founded by the Coleman family, agreed to move the font

to its church and assume all related expenses. TLM also agreed to pay all closing costs, all legal fees incurred by the AC and the appraisal fee. The remaining cash assets, after all expenses were satisfied were to be distributed as follows: 50% to Lebanon County Christian Ministries; 25% to Coleman Park and 25% to Iglesias Ei Dios Vivente, a Spanish ministry in Lebanon which had expressed interest in the church structure. At the October 3, 2020 meeting of the Presbytery of Carlisle, the AC recommended and the Presbytery approved the donation of the church structure, property and contents “as is” to TLM and to distribute the remaining cash assets as detailed above.

A Congregation meeting was held on October 8, 2020 where a motion to donate the church structure, property and contents excepting the baptismal font to TLM was unanimously approved. On November 3, 2020 the closing on the transfer of the CPC church structure, property and contents to TLM was concluded.

Elder Julie Fields reported that she delivered on December 21, 2020 to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, PA all appropriate minutes and records of CPC.

At a meeting of the AC and Session on January 25, 2021 it was moved and unanimously approved to donate \$5,000 to a long-time faithful member who was in financial distress due to the sudden death of her husband from Covid-19. On February 1, 2021 it was moved and unanimously approved to distribute the remaining cash funds as follows: \$6,213.83 to Lebanon County Christian Ministries; \$3,106.92 to Coleman Park and \$3,106.92 to Iglesias Ei Dios Vivente. Treasurer Al Bender was instructed to mail the funds along with accompanying letters provided by Elder Julie Fields and to close the checking account when the checks cleared. Treasurer Bender reported on February 18, 2021 that all checks cleared, that the account balance was “0” and the account had been closed.

At its meeting on February 23, 2021 the AC dissolved the congregation of Christ Presbyterian Church, Lebanon Pa. A list of active members (67) who have not requested transfer to another Presbyterian congregation has been sent to Interim Stated Clerk, Rev. Meg Shoeman. A review of the “Duties and Responsibilities of an AC in Closing a Church” provided by the Stated Clerk determined that all items have been satisfied. The AC felt that it should remain in existence until the baptismal font was successfully moved from the CPC sanctuary to St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. This was accomplished on March 30, 2021.

At this juncture, the Administrative Commission believes that it has concluded its ministry as directed by the Presbytery and requests that it be dissolved.