



EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERY

Synod of the Covenant-Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
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DAN K. SCHOMER
General Presbyter

META S. CRAMER
Stated Clerk

May 16, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Following eighteen months of discussions with the Stow Presbyterian Church, Eastminster Presbytery approved a covenant between the presbytery and the church that ends the church's relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and permits the congregation to continue its ministry in its present building. Eastminster Presbytery took action to approve the covenant at its May 13 stated meeting held at the First Presbyterian Church in Hubbard. The action to "dissolve" the congregation effectively severs the ties of the church to the denomination and permits it to continue its ministry as an independent congregation. The presbytery agreed not to pursue property rights to the church facility that is held in trust for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Stow Church promised to provide at least \$40,000 in direct support to mission causes and projects of Eastminster Presbytery over a five-year period. The spirit of the covenant is revealed in its opening statement: "In recognition of our mutual desires to further the peace, unity, and purity of the larger church, the living body of Christ...."

During the May 13 meeting, questions were raised by presbytery commissioners concerning the different approaches the presbytery has taken in dealing with the Stow and Hudson congregations. Currently a court case continues in Summit County Common Pleas Court in which Eastminster Presbytery claims rights to the Hudson Church property on behalf of the portion of the congregation wishing to remain with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There are numerous differences between the two disputes. The most obvious is that the Stow Church has no loyal faction, while the Hudson Church has a strong core group loyal to the denomination that has formed a vibrant congregation under new pastoral leadership. The Presbyterian Church of Hudson, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) worships at the historic Church on the Green.

I want to personally thank the Stow Commission for their many, many hours of work. The time they spent together in prayer, reflection, conversation, and negotiations required both sacrifice and discipline. As the presbytery formally dismissed the commission following the vote, I hope they heard the Lord declare, "Well done, good and faithful servants." I sensed an air of sadness as we officially brought an end to our relationship with the Stow Church; but I also sensed relief that this eighteen month ordeal had concluded.

On a very positive note, the Presbytery recently received word that the Presbyterian Church of Hudson, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has received a \$100,000 Transformation Grant from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This grant, combined with presbytery and synod monies already committed, provides the church with \$200,000 over five years. Our prayers go forth for the Rev. Sue Tinker and the congregation of The Presbyterian Church of Hudson.

In Christ's service together,
Dan Schomer