

PRESBYTERY OF DONEGAL VOTES TO DISMISS Great Valley Presbyterian Church TO THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DENOMINATION

As most of you are aware, on March 25, 2008 the Presbytery of Donegal, in executive session, voted unanimously to approve the recommendation of its Administrative Commission to dismiss Great Valley Presbyterian Church to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Since we had already voted on June 24, 2007, to disaffiliate from the PC(USA) and to affiliate with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, this was essentially a “formality,” but it does bear witness to God's faithfulness in leading us through the conversations and negotiations which took place with the presbytery's commission.

You will recall that in order to protect the physical property of GVPC, the Trustees of the corporation of Great Valley Presbyterian Church filed a suit for declaratory judgment and to “quiet title” in Chester County Court on June 11, 2007. To represent and advise us in this process and in the ensuing discussions with the presbytery, we retained the services of Michael McCarty of the law firm of Cozen, O'Connor in Philadelphia. “Mac” is an elder of the Forks of the Brandywine Presbyterian Church and a nationally-consulted expert in church property law, and we were blessed to have him close at hand. (As a side note, we instructed our counsel to withdraw those civil actions on Tuesday, March 26, 2008, following the vote of Donegal presbytery.)

We rejoice at Tuesday's vote, and are blessed that this outcome was the result of prayerful, civil, and God-honoring negotiations. We can now fully devote ourselves to carrying out the ministry of Great Valley, free of the stress of these last few years during which we spent so much time and energy in deliberating our affiliation with the PC(USA). In this decision, we have been able to protect and retain the property where generations have worshiped for nearly 300 years and, God willing, will continue to do so for years to come.

However, this outcome was not reached without cost, both in terms of our own legal fees and in payments to Donegal Presbytery.

With regard to payments to Donegal Presbytery — The decision of the three churches to leave the presbytery was going to have a detrimental impact on Donegal's ability to fund its local missions, and consequently, the presbytery initially asked for a significant sum of money (10% of the value of our property) as a condition to dismiss us. We felt this was unacceptably high, and countered by offering to support a local mission of Donegal Presbytery for five years, at the then-current per capita rate. (This support is *only* for the mission of the presbytery — we will not pay *any* money to synod or General Assembly!) That proposal, which the presbytery voted to accept, amounts to \$4,980.80 per year, or \$24,904 total, and every dollar of this is designated for the support of La Iglesia, part of the Chester County Migrant Ministry. We further agreed to contribute \$6,667 as undesignated funds which the presbytery may use for any purpose it chooses. We assume they will use this to pay a portion of the legal expenses which they incurred as a result of having to respond to our civil suit.

With regard to our legal fees — we are confident that had we gone to court to resolve this matter, we were on solid legal grounds in seeking to retain our property. However, the legal fees involved in doing so would have far exceeded the \$31,571 in mission payments in the proposal to which the presbytery agreed. [We have been informed that this is by far the lowest settlement yet negotiated by any church anywhere in the nation with the PC(USA)]. Our own legal costs throughout the process amount to \$43,800, which is a significant sum, but still far less than we might have incurred had we not reached an out-of-court resolution with the presbytery. The bottom line is that for the sum of \$75,371, we have been able to finally resolve what has been a concern of our congregation for many decades.

Praise God for his provision of the funds which enabled us to do this! We rejoice that we can now move on unhindered in the furtherance of His Kingdom as He leads us in enabling all people to become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ, to the glory of His own name!