

**Final Report of the Administrative Commission to Close
Northminster Presbyterian Church
September 14, 2024**

The Presbytery's Administrative Commission to close the Northminster Presbyterian Church of Reisterstown was formed in the fall of 2022 when the Presbytery's Steering Cabinet commissioned us "to attend to any and all matters related to the closing of the Northminster Presbyterian Church." Our work began after the congregation had voted to request dissolution, which they did on November 6, 2022. An earlier Administrative Commission had worked diligently and sensitively to lead the congregation through a discernment process that led to the dissolution vote.

Once we had assumed original jurisdiction in early 2023, taking on the responsibilities of the session, we finalized arrangements for the six-month severance package that the earlier commission had negotiated with the Rev. Janna VanderWoude. We assumed responsibility for management of church property and finances — a complex matter because of the two congregations that were leasing space in the church building as well as a road-construction company that was leasing a substantial portion of the grounds for a heavy equipment storage yard. We also honored two historic commitments, leasing space short-term to the local high school for advanced placement testing and to the owner of a summer children's day camp. Ruling Elder Helen Krone of our commission assumed the responsibility of church treasurer, doing a thorough job of managing rental income and payments for building maintenance, utilities, insurance and the like, as well as the pastor's previously agreed-upon severance compensation.

The session, as one of its last acts, had already determined where most of the members would be transferring. Most transferred to the First Presbyterian Church of Westminster, with a smaller group going to the Springfield Presbyterian Church of Sykesville. We subsequently communicated with several other members who decided to worship at other nearby congregations or who let us know they were not interested in a membership transfer. Once this process was completed, we sent the membership roll to the Presbytery for safekeeping, along with other congregational records, some of which Presbytery Stated Clerk Mary Gaut transferred to the Presbyterian Historical Society.

The Steering Cabinet also gave us responsibility for "arranging for the disposition of all property including the sale or transfer of real property." After clarifying with the Steering Cabinet that their instruction was to sell the property for the highest possible amount, in June of 2023 we contracted with MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate Services, LLC to list the property for sale. Ruling Elder Robert Latshaw, an experienced commercial realtor, provided valuable service managing communications with the realtor.

Rather unusually, the title for the property was never held by the congregation but rather by the Trustees of the Presbytery. After a lengthy period during which the realtor listed the property and showed it to a number of potential purchasers — all of them, as it turned out, other congregations — a buyer was found and a sale contract agreed upon that the Presbytery Trustees approved. The closing for the sale took place in late June 2024. The buyer was United Church, one of the two non-denominational congregations that had been leasing space in the building.

Income from the property sale was \$2.4 million, less real estate commissions. Additionally, we transferred \$60,545 to the Presbytery Trustees which was the remaining balance in the church's bank account. The final task is to request the State of Maryland to close

the Northminster Presbyterian Church Corporation.

In addition to Ruling Elders Helen Krone and Robert Latshaw, other commission members who ably handled numerous and varied assignments were Ruling Elders Sharon Pappas and Brian Cumer (a former member of Northminster Church).

Our work being effectively completed, **we request the Presbytery to dissolve the Administrative Commission, effective upon closure of the Northminster Presbyterian Church corporation.**

The Rev. Carl Wilton

Chair, Administrative Commission to Close Northminster Presbyterian Church