

**Report of the Administrative Commission for
Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church
Kansas City, Missouri**

AUGUST 12, 2009

Since the last report to the Presbytery, the Administrative Commission has been very active. A meeting was held on June 25, 2009, at the John Knox Kirk Presbyterian Church for the purpose of discussing all the information gathered from the pastor, Session, and Congregation as well as the studies of the church's history, past and current membership and finances and past, current and future missions. The purpose of the discussion was to make a recommendation to the Ruskin Heights Session on the question of whether the church should continue or close.

Members present: Bob Nicholson, Tim Hoare, Elbert Darden, Molly Jones, Leigh Hamann, and Cheryl Farris.

Absent: Paul Thomson

After a lengthy discussion the Commissioners agreed that due to the study decline of membership, the age of the current congregation, lack of finances, the needs of the congregation, lack of a vision for the church over the next 5-10 years, and the age of the building and the maintenance issues with it, it would recommend to the Session and the Congregation that the Ruskin Heights Church should close. The Commission also wanted to have a special meeting of the Session to discuss this recommendation.

Cheryl Farris volunteered to contact Pastor Gentry and the Clerk of the Session to make the arrangements. Bob Nicholson was chosen to act as the spokesperson for the Commission.

The Commission met with the Session of the Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church at the church on the evening of July 2, 2009.

All members of the Session were present and those present from the Administrative Committee were Cheryl Farris, Bob Nicholson, Leigh Hamann, Elbert Darden, Paul Thomson, and Tim Hoare. Molly Jones could not be present.

After opening prayer, the Commission first celebrated with the Session the 55 years of service of the Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church. It then went over the information gathered and gave its recommendation of closure. The Commission reminded the Session that this was a recommendation that could be accepted or rejected. It was further informed that if the recommendation was rejected, then the Commission would be in place to support the Church in whatever way it could.

The Session then inquired about the process of dissolution. What happens to the real estate, personal property and most importantly, who will minister to the needs of the members after dissolution, especially the homebound and those in nursing facility. Those questions were

answered as best they could and the Commission left the meeting after prayer was given. We learned several days later that the Session voted to accept the recommendation of dissolution and established two dates for this purpose. The first was to hold a Congregational meeting for the purpose to vote on the Issue of dissolution on July 12, 2009, after the regular worship service to be followed by a potluck dinner, and the second was a recommendation to the Congregation to hold its last worship service on August 30, 2009.

July 12, 2009, most of the Commission members attended worship at the Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church. After the service, the moderator of the Congregation, the Rev. Carla Gentry called the meeting of the Congregation to order with an opening prayer. The Clerk of the Session declared that a quorum of the membership was present. The moderator presented to the congregation the recommendation of the Session to dissolve the church and hold its last official worship service on Sunday, August 30, 2009, to be followed by a potluck supper to celebrate the church's past. All members present voted to accept the recommendation of the Session with the exception of one dissenting vote.

July 14, 2009, the Commission met at the John Knox Kirk to review what procedures were going to be necessary to help the Session close the church. Various information was provided by the Presbytery's State Clerk. After study of those models, the Commission divided the various task to its members to perform. It was also noted that until the actions of the congregation are accepted by the Presbytery, the church is not officially dissolved.

July 20, 2009, the Commission met at the Presbytery Office to discuss items for the Ruskin Heights Session to address at its meeting that night. The Presbytery Executive, Rev. Charles Spencer and Rev. Carla Gentry were invited to attend. Commission members present were Bob Nicholson, Leigh Hamann, Tim Hoare, Paul Thomas and Cheryl Farris. Opening prayer was given by Charles Spencer. Discussion was held as to specific functions of the Commission from this point on and what task the Session could do. It was noted that a complete inventory of all the personal property of the church had been completed. Charles raised the issue of an old \$10,000.00 GA loan from 1954 to help build the original church building that had to be paid back. If the Session paid it now before the official dissolution, then the church would only have to pay back \$8,000.00. If it were to be paid back after dissolution, interest would be charged on the loan, the proceeds of any sell of the real estate would pay it back. That amount would be \$27,500.00. The Commission voted to recommend to the Session that it pay the \$8,000.00 now.

Other issues addressed that night were termination of employees, Rev. Gentry's contract, what to do with the real estate and personal property, bank accounts, salaries, bills that come in, notice to groups that use the facilities, preservation of the church records and various topics along those lines. It was decided that the Commission would recommend to the Session that it gives notice of immediate termination to the church secretary on July 23 and pay her through August 31, 2009. The Commission assigned Cheryl Farris and Paul Thomson to work with the church treasurer in paying salaries and bills.

Note, since the July 20, 2009 meeting, the Session terminated the services of church secretary; new signature cards have been signed at the bank. The Commission is now in charge of the

church finances, with the consent of the Session; the Session approved the payback of the \$8,000.00 on the loan; the quilting group and the Jackson County Election Board have been given notice of the closure of the facilities and terminating their use of the facilities; auctioneers are being contacted to get bids for auctioning off the personal property if the dissolution is approved by the Presbytery (this is for property remaining after other churches in the Presbytery, then other denominations in that area, and congregational members have had an opportunity to receive the property); Nancy Erlich has met with Rev. Gentry and Cheryl Ferris in regard to preservation of the church records and history; legal information has been obtained in regard to dissolution of the church corporation in Missouri and notice to creditors, and Rev. Gentry and the Session have agreed to her severance package pending approval of the Committee on the Ministry and Presbytery. The Commission will be contacting various nonprofit organizations in the Kansas City area and Committees of the Presbytery in regard to the purchase of or use of the building and grounds of the church.

On August 30, 2009, the members and guests of the Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church held its final worship service. It was a celebration of the life of this great church, its missions and history. It was celebrated by 105 persons with special music and speakers. A memorable communion was celebrated as well. Commission members and Presbytery staff joined in the celebration and the potluck dinner that followed the service. After the tables were cleared, commission members, Bob Nicholson, Cheryl Ferris, Tim Hoare, Leigh Hamann and Stated Clerk, Maryann Farnsworth and the stated supply, Carla Gentry, met to review the process from this point on, organizing for the Presbytery meeting and discussions with leaders from several community groups in the Ruskin Heights subdivision. The community leaders were interested in keeping the facility open and were looking for possible tenants and buyers. Rev. Gentry had relayed information in regard to inquiries she had received about the church building.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Nicholson, Moderator