

Hopewell Draft Report

Administrative Commission: Ginny Shanda, Elder, FPC Lexington; Rev. Mike Ward, Retired Teaching Elder; Emily Carroll, Elder, FPC Georgetown; Rev. Lisa Culpepper, Mt Horeb, Lexington; Rev. Philip Lotspeich, Staff, General Presbyter

Conversations: The Commission engaged in multiple discussions to discern the present problems and concerns and hear from various people involved. The Commission met with the Commissioned Pastor and remaining Session members, Ann Hollingsworth, the occupant of the Manse who has been involved with the church for many decades, and the former Pastor who left upon retirement over a year ago. These conversations were focused on listening and gathering information.

History: Hopewell Presbyterian Church was organized in 1787 in Paris, Kentucky which was then known as Hopewell, Kentucky. The congregation in the county, also known as Hopewell Presbyterian Church, was organized in 1810. Later histories seem to combine these two groups into one. The present structure was built in 1904 and the interior was renovated / updated in 1950. Over time the church lost its connection with Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). According to information provided by Mrs. Hollingsworth, Rev. Don Hollingsworth began his ministry at Hopewell in 1982 and the parsonage was built in 1995. A life estate was deeded to Ann Hollingsworth on April 10, 2007 via deed filed with the Clerk of Bourbon County Court. During the ministry of the Rev. Alan Sutherland from the Episcopal tradition, it was clarified the church was in the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Transylvania.

Presenting Issue:

The presenting problem for the Hopewell Congregation and its leadership involves an unhealthy relationship between leaders of the church and Ann Hollingsworth. The commission was asked to intervene after many unsuccessful attempts for clarification, reconciliation and cooperation with Ann.

Ann's long history with the Hopewell church has led to her excessive sense of ownership and entitlement with a desire to control all aspects of the church's operation, property and manse. Complicating factors involve the details of the deed giving her certain rights to live in the manse based upon responsibilities of property maintenance. Yet, the lack of clarity and specificity in the deed regarding the church's and her responsibilities for maintenance is extremely problematic. Other complicating factors regarding ownership and cooperation involve the dependence of congregants on the only available restroom which is located in the manse.

Prior to requesting an administrative commission, the session of Hopewell Presbyterian Church exhausted all feasible resources in reconciliation including legal counsel. Ultimately, the session was met with an impasse.

Therefore, after many unsuccessful attempts to communicate and reconcile differences, members of the session expressed a desire to resign, and the Commissioned Ruling Elder resigned from her call.

Determinations:

1. That previous formal and informal commitments allowing Mrs. Hollingsworth to reside in the Hopewell Presbyterian Church manse for her lifetime should be honored.
2. That the possibility of future ministry at Hopewell Presbyterian Church will require mutual respect and cooperation between Mrs. Hollingsworth and congregational leadership.
3. That the resources (human and financial) for ongoing ministry at Hopewell Presbyterian Church are uncertain currently.

Actions to be taken:

1. Original Jurisdiction- The commission voted on January 17th to take original jurisdiction of Hopewell Church.
2. Secure all documents: Session minutes, membership roster, and financial instruments
3. Negotiate defined details for the Lifetime estate Deed between Hopewell Church and Ann Hollingsworth
4. Gather the remaining people interested in Hopewell and host an informational meeting
5. Recognition of the contributions of Ann Hollingsworth. Host a small ceremony with her family and those she invites.
6. Establish a new commission to oversee the ongoing work of Hopewell until a new Session can be elected and installed once a new direction is determined.

Future Plans:

It is the intention of this commission to see Hopewell Church define its ministry and find new leadership that will help it establish an ongoing missional presence for the folks in that section of Bourbon County.