

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION  
OF THE EAST HEBRON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
AND THE SESSION OF THE WEST HEBRON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
TO THE PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY

November 16, 2016

With joy and gratitude for God's grace and help, the Administrative Commission of the East Hebron Church and the Session of the West Hebron Church recommend to the Presbytery of Albany:

- 1) That the Presbytery receive the joint report of the East Hebron Commission and the Session of the West Hebron United Presbyterian Church:
  - a. that both congregations acted unanimously to affirm the consolidation of the East Hebron United Presbyterian Church and the West Hebron United Presbyterian Church to form the Hebron United Presbyterian Church<sup>1</sup>; and
  - b. that it is the intention of the consolidating churches to retain both the West Hebron and East Hebron church buildings and to schedule regular services of worship and mission activities in both buildings.
  
- 2) That the Presbytery approve the consolidation of the East Hebron United Presbyterian Church and the West Hebron United Presbyterian Church to form the Hebron United Presbyterian Church, effective upon approval by the State of New York.

Background

At its meeting on June 7-8, 2013, upon recommendation of the Committee on Ministry and a Resolution Team that had been working with the East Hebron United Presbyterian Church (EHUPC), the Presbytery voted to create an Administrative Commission (AC) to take original jurisdiction at EHUPC, with the mandate to:

- Oversee the worship life of the congregation and provide or procure worship leadership.
- Attempt to heal the divisions and fighting, and help restore order in the session and congregation.
- Work with members of the congregation, in consultation with churches and organizations in the area, to devise a plan for ministry and mission in East Hebron and to discern the place of East Hebron Presbyterian Church in that plan.
- Determine whether the Resolution process can resume and to work with the Resolution Team toward resolution.
- Provide a progress report to Presbytery within 6 months of appointment.

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<sup>1</sup> East Hebron voted on October 8, 2016, at a congregational meeting duly called for the purposes of voting on the proposed consolidation and approving by-laws for the consolidated congregation; West Hebron voted on October 9, 2016 at a congregational meeting duly called for the same purposes.

For three years, the AC has worked to fulfill this mandate. Regular worship leadership at EHUPC was provided by the Rev. Bo Harris and the Rev. Richard Hoffman; CRE Michael Barron, the Rev. Tom Davis, the Rev. John McAuley (Moderator of the AC), ruling elders from Third Presbyterian Church, Troy, the Rev. Kate Kotfila, the Rev. Laura Mitchell, and others have provided pulpit supply. Last spring Laura Mitchell began leading worship on a regular basis at East Hebron and offered pastoral care to its members, while musicians from West Hebron played for services. Since July 1, 2016 the East and West congregations have worshipped together, most often in the West Hebron building.

The AC has met regularly with members of the EHUPC congregation, invited two members to join meetings of AC, and worshipped with the congregation and attended special events as much as possible. Through consultation and by establishing guidelines for members' conduct, it sought to address the conflicts in the congregation. Morale in the congregation is now very positive, though various life events have reduced the number of members to 17 on the rolls and about ten active and occasional participants.

As the congregations grew closer together under Laura Mitchell's leadership, suggestions to consider a consolidation were advanced by the AC and by members of the East Hebron congregation. The West Hebron Session and congregation responded warmly. A decision by the New York State Court of Appeals to respond favorably to a request from the East Hebron Church to permit it to invest more productively a bequest (the Chamberlin Fund) given for upkeep of its building made it feasible to consider creating a single consolidated congregation with two buildings, one in each of the communities it would serve. (The provision in the bequest that the East Hebron building be used for regular services of worship will be honored, with some Sunday services and monthly services in conjunction with community dinners.) By-laws were drafted for a consolidated congregation and, as reported above, both churches have unanimously affirmed their desire to consolidate.

The two congregations are already worshipping together and are in the process of creating a single program calendar, with members of both churches participating in all activities. The Administrative Commission will continue to make financial and property decisions for the East Hebron Church until the State of New York approves the consolidation. It will delegate program and ministry decisions to the West Hebron Session, which will make every effort to include East Hebron members in its decision-making until the consolidation. At the time of the corporate consolidation, the AC will seek to be dismissed by the Presbytery.

Respectfully submitted,

For the East Hebron Administrative Commission:

The Rev. John McAuley, Moderator  
Elder Peter McKee, Clerk

For the West Hebron Session:

The Rev. Laura Lovell Mitchell, Moderator  
Elder Carl Flint, Clerk