

Press Release
July 21, 2007

In a time when church disputes often generate animosity and public suspicion, we believe God worked among us to seek a better way. On April 21st, the Muskingum Valley Presbytery appointed an Administrative Commission to respond to the request of the congregation Middle Sandy Presbyterian Church in Homeworth, Ohio, to be dismissed to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Representatives of the congregation and the presbytery worked together to develop an agreement which will move forward the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The leaders and members of the Middle Sandy Presbyterian Church have differed with their denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), for a number of years over biblical interpretation and church policies. In recent months, they engaged in times of prayer and fasting to discern God's will for them. They came to a decision in late February of this year to seek transfer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The congregation and leaders believe the EPC is more in harmony with their theology and biblical understanding.

The Muskingum Valley Presbytery, the local regional body of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Middle Sandy Presbyterian Church agree that they have differing views on the Christian faith and biblical interpretation. They understand faithful Christians live out issues of life and faith in different ways.

In keeping with traditional Presbyterian practice of making decisions through ordered processes which seek God's guidance, a Commission elected by the Presbytery met with the Middle Sandy Session in a time of Bible study, prayer, and listening so that together they might discern how God's mission could best be accomplished. The groups mutually agreed that they were led by the Holy Spirit to focus on furthering the mission of Jesus Christ rather than on claims of being right or wrong.

Subsequently, a small group of representatives of each party worked out terms of mutual agreement which concluded with the dismissal of Middle Sandy Presbyterian Church to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on July 12, 2007.

The Middle Sandy Presbyterian Church becomes a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church -- a denomination which recognizes and is recognized by the Presbyterian Church (USA). Middle Sandy Church will carry on its ministry with the support of churches which share its theology and understanding of Biblical interpretation. The congregation will continue its ministry from the same location in Homeworth, Ohio.

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