Second Report of the Administrative Commission for Pan American Presbyterian Church (PAPC)
February 28, 2014

Administrative Commission
Pan American Presbyterian Church

We on the Administrative Commission for Pan American Presbyterian Church wish to thank the Presbytery for this opportunity to be of service to you, the Presbytery of Tropical Florida, and to the congregation of PAPC.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In the spring and summer of 2014 the Presbytery office received communications indicating the possibility of difficulties at PAPC. The Executive Committee of the Presbytery appointed a commission with the following charges.

1. inquiry into the functioning of the Pan Americana Session,
2. the management of the church and the school
3. financial matters for the church and the school
4. to recommend action pertaining to these matters to the Session, and if needed, to the Presbytery, and
5. to come back to the Presbytery to ask for any additional authority it needs.

The members of the Commission are John Stewart (TE), moderator, Elizabeth Torres (RE), clerk, Cruz Juarez (RE), Gisela Prieto (RE), and John Vaughn (TE).

At the December meeting of the Presbytery we requested made two recommendations. Both of which were approved by the Presbytery. The second recommendation was the revision of the charter of the Commission. The revised charter now reads as follows:

1. inquiry into the functioning of the Pan Americana Session,
2. the management of the church and the school
3. financial matters for the church and the school
4. to recommend action pertaining to these matters to the Session, and if needed, to the Presbytery, and
5. to conduct a thorough investigation and if necessary to give the Session a full opportunity to be heard, in compliance with G-3.0303e, and if necessary to make a recommendation to the Presbytery concerning the willingness and ability of the session to manage wisely its affairs and consequently the advisability of appointing an administrative commission to assume original jurisdiction with full power of session.
6. to come back to the Presbytery to ask for any additional authority it needs.

At the same meeting, the Presbytery approved the appointment of Rev. Heidi Arencibia as moderator of the session for PAPC.

On January 23 the Session held a called meeting. Rev. Ms. Arencibia moderated and the Commission was present. COM was represented by Rev. Dr. Eve Tolley. The moderator did a very good job of explaining Reformed processes in church government and in keeping the session members focused.
For the most part the Commission merely observed how the Session functioned. On several occasions the Session requested direction from the Commission. We respectfully declined. We gave input only when the question concerned factual matters.

Several significant issues came to light, and several concerns we had previously were answered.

First we determined that the Session in fact has not been functioning and has not managed wisely the affairs of the church. Specifically,

1. The Session did not meet for almost twelve months
2. The Session did not provide for the administration of holy communion for over six months, with or without a moderator appointed by the Presbytery.
3. The Session does not seem to be exercising adequate minimal pastoral care for the congregation in that it is not securing consistent pulpit supply.
4. While the Session invited Jacobo Guiribitey (CRE) to preach on a regular basis, they did not seem to be aware of the Presbytery's proscription of inviting the same person to preach more than three consecutive Sundays. However, it does not appear that the Session and Mr. Guiribitey breached this rule. Also we determined that Mr. Guiribitey did not administer the sacraments. When Mr. Guiribitey did not preach usually one of the elders filled the pulpit or they used educational videos.
5. The total annual income from the members was approximately $3,000. It appears that the congregation de facto was not paying the pulpit supply preachers. Annual giving appears to be about one hundred dollars ($100) per member. Of that, $36 goes to per capita. We questioned how they were paying for pulpit supply at this level of giving. They then said that the preacher always gave the money back to the church, so they did not bother with writing the supply check, or with recording a payment and a receipt of giving. This procedure masked the lack of financial stewardship.
6. The congregation does not meet for worship at the sanctuary on a regular basis. Many times they meet at members homes. It is unclear how the worship location is decided or how it is communicated to members or to the community at large. The session members have stated multiple times that they have a ministry to the neighborhood, which is the rationale for their continued existence. Irregular worship on site limits both the provision of divine worship and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the surrounding community.
7. The Session did not have accurate financial records. There was no Income Statement. The treasurer did not know what one is, or how to prepare it.
8. There does not seem to be any distinction between the school, which is a secular legal entity, and the congregation, which is a religious legal entity. The two entities are legally distinct with completely different purposes. One is a lessor, the other a lessee. There should be bank accounts for each entity separately. We found no evidence of this. On the contrary funds from both entities appear to be co-mingled 100%. Specifically it appears that the school is paying for the sanctuary and church office space directly from its funds, rather than remitting funds as rent payments or other payments enumerated in the lease contract. Consequently the Session, and therefore the trustees, exercise no controls over the expenses and maintenance of the property.

Conclusions as of this Date

We concluded that the Session has failed to manage wisely its affairs and has failed to provide for pastoral care of the congregation for at least a year. We saw no evidence that the congregation is meeting the Great Ends of the Church with any regularity or intentionality. The marks of the church are
not visible at this point. There is a complete lack of financial control by the Session and financial stewardship by the members.

However, we are cognizant that we, the Presbytery, were unable to appoint a moderator for six months or more. We also noted that the Session appointed an assistant treasurer who is capable in QuickBooks. The treasurer and assistant treasurer agreed to have a useful financial statement at the next session meeting. The Session expressed a desire to re-establish pastoral care and management of the congregation. Ms. Arencibia has their respect as moderator, and she has a clear understanding of the task that lies in front of this Session. We believe that she will provide the needed leadership and direction.

Recommendation

At this time the Commission makes no recommendation. We have grave concerns about both the missional and financial viability of the congregation. Nonetheless, the Session has expressed a desire to manage its affairs. We believe that the best interests of the congregation and the Presbytery are served by allowing the Session time to right its ship.

Respectfully submitted,

Peace in Christ,

John Stewart, moderator