First Presbyterian Church Bethlehem

Presbyterians for Unity

RESPONSE TO SESSION: WISE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

THE TRUTH:

We are a **connectional church**, **all one body with all PC (USA) churches**. "All property held by or for a congregation… is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)." *Reference: Book of Order PC (USA)*

This **"Trust Clause,"** part of our denomination since the PC (USA)'s formation in the early 1980s, is **designed to protect church property and assets from being sold or misused in ways that are inconsistent with intentions of past and present PC (USA) members** who have, over time, made contributions and endowments so that a church and its mission are able to grow.

THE TRUTH:

The Trust Clause was in effect when FPCB launched significant capital campaigns and construction/maintenance projects in the past, including building the Kirk Center. **The Trust Clause has never been a hindrance to FPCB in expanding and/or maintaining our church facility.**

THE TRUTH:

The Trust Clause has only become an issue as the leadership of FPCB has decided to seek dismissal from the PC (USA).

Many members of our congregation wish to remain with the PC (USA), and so **there will be a substantial, negotiated financial settlement paid to Presbyterian Church (USA)** if the congregation votes to join ECO. This will **further diminish FPCB's financial resources** – resources that could be used to advance our mission and growth.

WHAT OUR FPCB SESSION HAS PUBLISHED:

- "**Being part of a denomination that claims ownership of our property discourages giving for capital improvements."** *Reference: "Why the Session Recommends ECO"*

  Note: The trust clause has been in place since the early 1980s. The trust clause has never discouraged "giving for significant capital improvements." Witness the construction of the Kirk Center, office redesign, *etc.*

- **"Last fall, Session aborted plans to expand our facilities because of strong disagreement among many long-term members with the theological drift of the PC (USA) and the uncertainty of our future denominational affiliation."** *Reference: "Why the Session Recommends ECO"*

  Notes: The above statement is vague and unclear. **What does the term "theological drift" really mean?** How many long-term members were identified at the time this document was published?

  There are also "**many long-term members" of the FPCB congregation that want to remain with the PC (USA).**

  Any "uncertainty with our denominational affiliation" is directly due to our leadership's intent to move to ECO.