**REPORT TO PRESBYTERY OF THE PINES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION**

**JOHN CALVIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA**

Commission Members: Barbara Callaway, Chris Currie, Jim Freeman, Dana Stinson

The Administrative Commission for John Calvin Presbyterian Church, Shreveport, Louisiana, was appointed by unanimous consent of the body at the February 9, 2019, Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Pines in Ruston, Louisiana. The stated purpose of the commission is to determine the future of the congregation through consultation with members of the church and with representatives of other area Presbyterian churches. The commission is charged with considering the possible closure of the church and with proposing other viable options for consideration by the congregation as they may be determined.

Having separately conferred with representatives of other area Presbyterian churches, the commission met with the John Calvin session and with the pastor, Rev. Beth Sentell, on March 17, 2019. The session reviewed with the commission their ongoing attempts in recent years to address the attendance and financial concerns of the congregation and the failure of these attempts to effect a positive change. Membership of the congregation, comprised largely of elderly members, has steadily diminished. The church roll stands at approximately 40, with many effectively inactive. Participation in Sunday worship has declined and currently averages 10-20 attendees. Energy level among members is generally low.

The church historically has served as a neighborhood church, established in the 1950s. Factors influencing the congregation’s decline include shifts in the local population and the closure or downsizing of major area employers. Funding for church activities has equally declined. Regular offerings currently are barely sufficient to cover basic expenses. No funding cushion exists, and major building repairs are needed.

Following discussion with both the session and Rev. Sentell, and after reviewing the status and location of other local Presbyterian churches, it was agreed that the option of merging or yoking with another area congregation does not appear practical. As a result it was further agreed that the commission allow the congregation to begin planning for closure ceremonies tentatively to be scheduled in June. Session members agreed to develop plans for commemorating the life and history of the congregation and to develop an orderly plan for distribution of special church items, excluding those items which are required to become the property of the presbytery.

The commission acknowledges the inevitable sorrow accompanying this decision and has offered to assist in any way possible in coordinating the process. Commissioners also commend the elders and congregation members for their long-term faithful efforts to maintain the viability of the congregation in pursuit of the mission of Jesus Christ.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

* That the Presbytery of the Pines affirm the closure of John Calvin Presbyterian Church effective June 30, 2019, in accordance with regulations contained in the Book of Order and that a final service of worship be conducted in the sanctuary on June 23, 2019, at 3:00 p.m.
* There being no entity within the presbytery found to have an interest in utilizing and maintaining the property, that the physical plant and real property of the church be offered for sale in the most efficient manner available to provide a timely and advantageous disposition of the property. Further that the proceeds of the sale be dedicated to church revitalization and expansion efforts in the Shreveport/Bossier area.
* That the Session of John Calvin be authorized to manage and handle items from the church claimed by church members and that the session will continue to manage those property requests as needed following the final worship service.
* That letters of transfer be executed prior to closure for congregation members who have chosen to move memberships to churches of other denominations. That members who have chosen another church in Pines Presbytery will have their membership be transferred to that church upon closure. That other members of the congregation included on the church roll on the date of closure will be transferred to another local congregation.