

## Administrative Commission to Dardenne Presbyterian Church Status Report

February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

### *Background*

The Administrative Commission (AC) to Dardenne Presbyterian Church (DPC) was officially commissioned at the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the gathering of the Giddings Lovejoy Presbytery (GLP). At that time, the Administrative Commission faced the following two parallel but competing tracks. The first was to develop and prosecute Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery's defense to the civil lawsuit Dardenne Presbyterian Church filed on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. The second was for the Administrative Commission, to investigate church polity issues related to Dardenne Presbyterian Church, with the goal of determining if amicable resolutions to those issues could be identified and implemented. The specific details of assigned responsibilities to the Administrative Commission can be found in the implementing resolution passed at the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, gathering of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery.

### *Legal Response*

In short, the DPC filing alleges that the real property used by Dardenne Presbyterian Church for its church and grounds should not be governed by the trust provisions of PC(USA) Book of Order or the representatives and promises made by DPC over the years. Dardenne Presbyterian Church added allegations that the PC(USA) and/or Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery intended to imminently take control of its (DPC) church property and its (DPC) Session. Dardenne Presbyterian Church asked the court to declare that its (DPC) church property is owned solely by Dardenne Presbyterian Church free from any trust provisions in favor of either PC(USA) or Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery.

The Administrative Commission worked with legal counsel from the Polsinelli law firm to formulate a response and is asking the court to declare that the property in question is, indeed, held in trust for the benefit of PC(USA) and Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery. The response explains why as a civil matter, the property is held in trust to the benefit of the PC(USA) and how GLP has the authority to enforce the trust. The response also specifically denies that there has ever been an intention for either PC(USA) or GLP to seize control of DPC property or otherwise disrupt the ministry of Dardenne Presbyterian Church. The Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery response was filed on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, pursuant to court scheduling requirements.

### *Responsibility of Care*

The Administrative Commissions sincere desire is to join in conversation with Dardenne Presbyterian Church to better understand the issues and together seek reconciliation of any differences that exist.

To this end, on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, prior to filing the GLP court response, the AC which represents the greater church body of GLP, in consultation with our counsel, sent an email to the individuals we believe were currently serving as ruling elders on the Session at Dardenne PC. The email was sent, with hopes of reestablishing communication between the members of DPC

and the AC. We also sought to convey the heartbreak that we have experienced because of the surprise litigation and false accusations that GLP sought to seize the property and disrupt standard ministry operations of Dardenne Presbyterian Church. Finally, the email served as a courtesy communication to alert the DPC Session that GLP did not agree with the content of DPC's court filings and that we would shortly be filing our response as required by the court.

To date, the Administrative Commission has not received any response to the email sent on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, nor to a follow-up email sent January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, which kindly requested simple confirmation that our communications, referred to above, have been received by the individual members of the current DPC session. Additionally in the January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, email, a request was made for confirmation of current DPC session members, as we believe we have incomplete contact information. Our desire is to ensure that the whole session receives equal access to information. A copy of both emails is attached and available for review.

It is not unusual for the competing parties in litigation to only communicate through counsel. However, GLP's charge to the AC requires that we make every effort to engage DPC in conversation directly.

Considering Dardenne's leadership's unwillingness to engage the presbytery in dialogue, we are hosting an open conversation and prayer time on February 8th, 2024, starting at 5:00 pm at nearby New Hope Presbyterian Church, 1580 Kisker Rd, St. Charles MO, 63304 for any members, elders, and staff of Dardenne Presbyterian Church who wish to come. The Administrative Commission is committed to making every possible effort to reestablish a relationship with Dardenne Presbyterian Church. It is only through conversation that everyone involved might come to understand all the facts and circumstances that brought us to where we are today. The hope is that this outreach toward reconciliation provides a path to move forward together in Christian love and fellowship.

Following through on the details of our charge as the Administrative Commission to Dardenne Presbyterian Church, we will provide our next status report at the April 2024 Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery Gathering.

We ask that as the body of Christ, we continue to keep each other in prayer especially the members of Dardenne Presbyterian Church and the members of the Administrative Commission.

In love, peace, joy, and hope and in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Submitted by Rev. MP Panco Chairperson on behalf of the Administrative Commission.