

# Two area Presbyterian churches leave denomination

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Two local churches, Stow Presbyterian Church and Hudson Presbyterian Church, have voted to leave their denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA.

Both churches belonged to the Eastminster Presbytery, which is made up of 55 churches in Summit, Portage, Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties.

According to the Rev. David Weyrick, the Stow Presbyterian Church board of elders unanimously voted in October to leave the denomination, and the members “overwhelmingly upheld the vote.”

Weyrick said the majority of the Stow Presbyterian Church members disagree with the denomination’s claim “that many in the church no longer uphold the ...infallibility and authority of the Bible.”

“We believe that we have not left the denomination, but the denomination has left us,” he said. “We still uphold the Presbyterian system of government and the history and theology, but we’re not going to be a part of the denomination.”

Weyrick said members also were concerned with the “continued decline of the (church) in terms of membership and involvement in world mission work. Recent statistics show the Presbyterian Church USA has been in a steady decline for more than two decades.”

According to Weyrick, the two churches currently are operating as independent churches.

“We have two options,” he said. “We can remain an independent Presbyterian church or we can go into another Presbyterian denomination. There are seven in the United States. The congregation has not yet made a decision.”

He said the Stow church was the first congregation in the Eastminster Presbytery to leave the denomination, which is based in Louisville, Ky. The Hudson Presbyterian Church voted to leave the denomination Nov. 5 and the Stow Presbyterian Church voted to leave in October.

Hudson Presbyterian Church Rev. D. Wayne Bogue did not return calls by press time.

The Rev. Dan Schomer of the Eastminster Presbytery said members met Nov. 14 to determine how to respond to the decisions of the Stow and Hudson congregations.

“For the Stow church, a consulting commission that visits with churches will form a special administration review of the church to gain a better understanding of what has

taken place,” he said. “We want to explore the possibility of a negotiated separation. At the Stow church, there is a very small minority that was opposed to breaking away from the denomination.”

Weyrick said he is “open to working with the Eastminster Presbytery toward a negotiated separation.”

According to Schomer, when the Hudson Presbyterian Church congregation voted Nov. 5, 161 members voted to leave the denomination, 61 voted to stay and six abstained.

“In accordance with the Presbytery constitution, we decided those members who wish to continue their affiliation with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. will be considered the ‘true church,’” he said. “An administrative commission was formed in October to find those members. In cases in which there are two identifiable groups within a church and we cannot bring about reconciliation, the Presbytery is obligated to name one of the groups the ‘true church.’”

Hudson Presbyterian Church filed a complaint in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas Sept. 28 against Eastminster Presbytery. According to the court records, the complaint asks the court to clarify the church’s rights and responsibilities, and property rights and title.

According to the court records, Eastminster Presbytery has until Nov. 20 to respond to the complaint. Schomer declined to comment on the case.