

Another Take on Area
Presbyterian Schism
1/24/2007

The Jan 2. letter from Matthew Everhard of Hudson Presbyterian Church (“Why Hudson church left”) brought to mind the saying that, “People are entitled to their own beliefs, but not their own facts.” The recent publication of multiple falsehoods cannot go unchallenged.

The statement that Eastminster Presbytery had 60,000 members 20 years ago is grossly inaccurate. The accurate figure is 21,033 members.

It is true that its membership is declining – but so is the population of the area in which we live. It would be good if the talents of Hudson Presbyterians could be turned away from schism and redirected to the support and redevelopment of some our area’s declining congregations. Let us work together to keep the notion of having “no denomination to leave to our children” from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The mention of reduced number of mission personnel in the mission field ignores Presbyterian mission work of the 19th and 20th centuries has borne abundant fruit, and that thriving Christian churches around the world can now stand on their own and serve God in their own way.

Nonetheless, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues to have mission personnel in 70 countries and mission partners in 90.

Everhard’s description of what took place at our denomination’s General Assembly last June bears little resemblance to what actually happened. By a remarkable 91% affirmative vote, commissioners affirmed the importance of respecting theological differences while remaining unified in our focus on serving Jesus Christ.

The denomination’s standards for ordination for ministers, elder, and deacons were not changed. Some flexibility is now allowed in applying those standards, but the authority of regional and national bodies to oversee local decisions has been strengthened.

Contrary to his allegations, the only action taken by Eastminster Presbytery has been to form a commission to be in conversation with the Hudson church.

Everhard failed to mention that many of the 28 percent of the congregation who voted not to leave the Presbyterian Church were among those who formed the Hudson church in 1982 with significant financial support of the denomination he finds so easy to dismiss.

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