

Presented by Ron Stiles

I am Rev. Laurie Johnston from the Hillsdale Presbyterian Church in Hillsdale, Kansas. Ron Stiles told me that you need some testimony from the Hillsdale church concerning our dis-affiliation from the PC (USA) in 2007.

In 2006, our church congregation voted in the majority to dis-affiliate from the PC (USA) and join the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. After many years of trying to work with the PC (USA) we believed our essential tenets of the Christian faith did not match with the PC (USA) denomination.

In 2005-6 we had spent over \$400, 000 to build our new building next to our old sanctuary. We did not ask the PC (USA) to help us financially with our building.

When we decided to dis-affiliate with the PC (USA) in 2007 they formed an administrative commission to keep us from leaving. The denomination said that they owned our building and we could not keep our property if we transferred to another Presbyterian denomination. At this point, we hired a lawyer to help us. After a year of arguing and threats, the PC(USA) said we could leave the denomination if we paid them \$90, 000 for our building. Because we had already spent \$40-50,000 on lawyer fees trying to defend ourselves, we decided to pay the Presbytery (even though they never paid a dime for our church) so we could go to the EPC. In 2008 we officially became an EPC church.

The fight we had with the PC (USA) and the amount of money we paid hurt the ministry and mission of our church. It has taken time to heal from the wounds inflicted by our own Christian brothers and sisters. It also set us back financially from paying off our loan to build our church and inhibited our mission to the community.

I am sending with this letter 2 documents from an elder of our church. These documents show the history of our disagreement with the PC (USA). They also show that our original church was not a PC (USA) church, but belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The original church was built when it was a Cumberland Presbyterian Church. So, it was not paid by the PC (USA).

If you have any more questions, please call me at 913-259-9056.

Thank you and God bless,
Pastor Laurie Johnston

Timeline of events:

Just a note to let you know that Heartland Presbytery has officially dropped Hillsdale Presbyterian from the roster of PC(USA) churches. Last week culminated over a year of struggles to be dismissed from the PC(USA). The closing of all the paperwork, new mortgage and payoffs was completed on Thursday and Friday (see attached picture). Hillsdale paid Heartland Presbytery \$90,000 to drop all claims to our little church and just go away. We are Hillsdale Presbyterian, EPC, with a church home that fully belongs to the congregation.

The solid faith by members and friends of Hillsdale was apparent through the following chronology:

- *December 2006 Decision to start the congregational discernment process*
- *June 2007 Voted to request dismissal*
- *August to December NO real contact with Heartland*
- *January 2008 Put a TRO in place and filled lawsuit for determination of property ownership*
- *January 2008 Voted to disaffiliate from PC(USA) and join EPC*
- *March 2008 Heartland gets serious about seeking a settlement of a hopeless situation for them*
- *April 2008 It's a done deal*
- *August 2008 Planned formal celebration of EPC affiliation*

God is good. The above is not the destination but simply a part of the journey in His service in a small place called Hillsdale. The last 10 months have been brutal for both Laurie and Kirk but I see a new strength emerging in both of them as God leads them in this new calling.