

Committee to Review Communication 26-7
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Communication 26-7 from the Westminster Session requests permission from the presbytery to sell their church building and manse in Prairie View, IL. Their intention is to move their meeting place roughly 25 minutes north to a location roughly equivalent to the geographic center of their membership. They also plan to purchase a manse near the new location to aid them in attracting a pastor.

This request to sell and move their worship location is made in order to fulfill the requirement in the Directory of Church Government Ch 2 Sect 11 pg D-6 "If a congregation wishes to change the location of its place of worship, it shall first secure the approval of presbytery both as to removal and as to the new location. A particular congregation shall not sell or mortgage property without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation."

In evaluating this request, we would like to note that:

- 1) The Directory of Church Government provides here a check and balance on the leadership of a local congregation, but we believe that the word "approve" implies a low bar of review as opposed to requiring presbytery "adopt" a particular real estate strategy.
- 2) Therefore, deference should be given to the local leadership if at all possible, particularly since the local session best understands the local community, local congregation, and is most invested in the health and welfare of the local flock.
- 3) However, beyond meeting this lower bar of review, Westminster has also provided compelling rationale concerning the difficulty of ministering in the Prairie View area, the unaffordability of housing for their members in the surrounding neighborhoods, and the greater potential for congregational vitality and renewal that a relocation offers.
- 4) In addition, we find compelling that for over 30 years, Elder Bob Koch has labored to renovate and maintain the Prairie View facility, and if Bob favors a sale even given his nostalgic connections to the building, it must be a good idea!

Motion 1: Approve Westminster RP Church's request to sell their church building and manse & to relocate their worship services to a suitable rental location.