

**Presbytery of Southern New England
Committee on Ministry**

Recommendation to establish an Administrative Commission
for the Turn of River Presbyterian Church

The Committee on Ministry recommends that the Presbytery **ESTABLISH** an Administrative Commission to work in partnership with the Session of the Turn of River Presbyterian Church of Stamford, at their own request, to assess that Church's continuing viability for ministry and mission.

If as a result of this assessment, it is the determination of the Administrative Commission that the Turn of River Presbyterian Church of Stamford is not able to continue as a congregation of the Presbytery, then the Commission shall have the power and authority to carry out all matters related to either a merger with another Church or Churches, or the dissolution of the Church, to include:

1. The assumption of original jurisdiction, in accordance with **Book of Order G-3.0303e**
2. The pastoral care of the members
3. The arrangement of an appropriate celebration of the ministry and mission of the congregation
4. The orderly dismissal of members to other congregations of their choosing
5. The securing, holding, and using of the properties of the congregation
6. The making of recommendations to the Presbytery about the sale or disposition of such property

In consultation with the Nominating Committee, the Committee on Ministry **NOMINATES** the following persons to serve on the Administrative Commission:

- Armin Thies, Ruling Elder, First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan (CT)
- Joan Priest, Teaching Elder, Member-at-Large (CT)
- Andre Castillo, Teaching Elder, First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich (CT)

Background and rationale: The Turn of River Church (TORCH) has served as a Christian witness in Stamford since 1861, becoming a Presbyterian congregation in 1955. Following the departure of the most recent installed pastor, the Rev. Jim Mahan, in 2019, the congregation and the session have been engaged in discernment about the future of their ministry, facilitated by the Rev. Joan Priest, the appointed moderator of the session, and the Rev. Robert Rodriguez, the stated supply pastor.

On January 28, the moderator of the session communicated to the PSNE stated clerk the session's request that the presbytery arrange for the dissolution of the church. The session characterized the church's circumstances as follows:

1. At present TORCH has 25 active members. Of these numbers, our weekly attendance is approximately a maximum of 11 people. Of these faithful remnants,

- five serve on Session and three serve on Deacons.
2. Rev. Rob Rodriguez was hired as our Stated Supply, to provide consistent pastoral care, of which he has far exceeded TORCH's expectation, and to help transition TORCH into our new state of being. That state could be merger with another church, nesting, which we have done before, or ease us into the final stage, dissolution. He has valiantly searched for other congregations, both within our formula of agreement, and outside of it, to find a congregation that is looking for a home and would be willing to worship with us. No successful match has been found with no other prospects at this time.
 3. TORCH members have also valiantly tried to keep to our current practices, serving on committees, fellowship hour, and other works to keep us together in this home, not just a house of God, but our home. Within the last year, the bodies of our members have not been at 100%. The spirit is willing, but the flesh has gotten a bit weaker. With fewer resources it has become more difficult for us to maintain what is important to us. Our Deacons still serve those who need care and the facility needs. Our Session still governs and serves the needs of our congregation. As each valuable resource, or member, becomes less able, we are approaching a time that will warrant emergency action. We of TORCH are choosing a date of dissolution, while we are still able.
 4. If the way be clear, there are still a few projects in the works of which TORCH can be impactful and celebrate the 161 years this church, these people, have been in and serving this community.

The session has proposed an effective date of dissolution of June 30, 2022, with a final worship service to be held on June 26. As the dissolution of a congregation can be effected only by the action of the presbytery, the proposed Administrative Commission will need to hear from the session and make a determination as to how to proceed. The proposal above vests the Commission with the authority to carry out all matters related to dissolution, if after due consideration it determines that this is the most faithful course of action.