

Presbytery of Transylvania
Report of the Judicial Business Committee
March 14, 2006

Background Information

- The Historical Foundation at Montreat, North Carolina is located on the campus of the Montreat Conference Center.
- The Foundation is the primary archive of the Presbyterian Church in the south. It functions as a regional archives, library, and museum serving 15 southern states.
- The Foundation is also the repository for records of governing bodies of the PC (USA), churches in the Presbyterian Church U.S. before reunification in 1983, and family and personal records relating to the life and mission of the church both here and abroad.

The Decision to Close the Historical Foundation

- In September 2005, the Committee on the General Assembly (COGA) voted to close the Historical Foundation at Montreat effective December 31, 2006.
- This decision was made due to an ongoing decrease in per capita income to the General Assembly.
- COGA proposed that the holdings of the Historical Foundation at Montreat be divided between the Presbyterian Historical Society's headquarters in Philadelphia and Columbia Theological Seminary.

Opposition to the Decision to Close the Historical Foundation at Montreat

- A number of Presbyterians have voiced opposition to COGA's decision as both ill advised and premature.
- On February 4, 2006, Salem Presbytery adopted the attached Overture to the 217th General Assembly seeking to prevent the closure of the Historical Foundation at Montreat, to transfer oversight and administration of the Foundation to a separate Board of Directors, and to find ways of funding the Foundation independent of the per capita income of the General Assembly.
- The Judicial Business Committee has received Overtures from First, Richmond and Maxwell Street that are identical to the Overture adopted by the Salem Presbytery.

Having reviewed the Overtures sent by the sessions of First, Richmond and Maxwell Street, the Judicial Business Committee hereby recommends that the Presbytery of Transylvania concur with Overture from Salem Presbytery relating to the Historical Foundation of Montreat.

Item

Overture 78. On the Historical Foundation at Montreat—From the Presbytery of Salem.

The Presbytery of Salem overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

1. Direct that the closure plans and the dispersion of the collections and assets of the Historical Foundation at Montreat cease immediately, that any and all assets including endowments of the Historical Foundation at Montreat, which may have been removed since 1983, be returned, and that the Historical Foundation continue its operations at the 2004 levels of service.
2. Direct that new ways be found to fund this valuable institution and retain its ministry to the family of Presbyterian and Reformed churches that is separate from the current per capita income of the General Assembly.
3. Direct that the General Assembly transfer oversight and administration for the Montreat Historical Foundation from the Department of History and the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly to a separate board of directors of fifteen persons who will serve in three-year rotating classes, and who are deeply devoted to the continuing ministry of the Historical Foundation and who will be immediately approved by the 217th General Assembly (2006) and who will report thereafter to the General Assembly at its meetings.
4. Direct that, upon approval of this overture, the Board of the Friends of The Historical Foundation at Montreat, Inc. act as an advisor to the General Assembly Nominating Committee for said new Board of Directors of The Montreat Historical Foundation, and that the new board of directors shall include a majority representation from the four synods most directly served by the Montreat Historical Foundation (the Synods of the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Living Waters, and The Sun), and that the nominees shall be elected by the General Assembly Council at their first meeting following the 217th General Assembly (2006). [Presbytery Stated Clerk's Note: All references to "The Montreat Historical Foundation" intend and refer to The Historical Foundation at Montreat, Inc.]
5. Direct that said board of directors include representatives of the presbyteries specifically served by the Historical Foundation and who have a passion for and the ability to save this institution for the greater church and so that it may be accountable to its major constituent presbyteries, their congregations and members.
6. Direct that said board of directors be given two years in which to assure the General Assembly that there are both adequate endowment and ongoing funding commitments necessary to support the Historical Foundation, and that during this time the Historical Foundation be supported by funds that have been specifically pledged for the development of the Historical Foundation, as well as those reserve funds that had originally been designated for the Historical Foundation.
7. Direct that the plan and agreements for funding, governance and continuing the ministry of the Historical Foundation at Montreat be presented to the 218th General Assembly (2008) for approval with appropriate changes in the bylaws and other organizational documents to be made as well as appointments to the board of directors recommended.
8. Direct that the new Historical Foundation work cooperatively with the Presbyterian Historical Society in exchange of information and in building a common data base for the collections of materials of Presbyterian and Reformed history at both institutions, as well as at Presbyterian (U.S.A.) seminaries.

Rationale

The Historical Foundation at Montreat contains a remarkable and exceptionally rich collection of materials on the history of the Presbyterian church and the worldwide Reformed tradition, and houses resources that enable Presbyterians to understand the roots of our Presbyterian history.

The Historical Foundation at Montreat has legally existed as a North Carolina nonprofit corporation under the name *The Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Incorporated*, and still is legally existing at the present time.

This is the primary archive of Presbyterianism in the South, including not only the records from several denominations and PCUSA governing bodies (congregations, presbyteries, and synods) but also valuable personal and family papers that reflect the life and mission of the church both here and abroad.

The facility is well-designed for its purpose, and is visited each year by several thousand persons, including researchers, scholars, and congregational historians.

Several thousand congregations and individual Presbyterians have entrusted to its care their local and family records, papers, manuscripts, and artifacts.

The Historical Foundation is located on the campus of the Montreat Conference Center, which is the largest conference facility of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and offers a recognized gathering place for Presbyterians across the nation.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly has determined that, because of the ongoing decrease in the per capita income to the Office of the General Assembly, the Historical Foundation at Montreat should be closed and its holdings distributed between the Philadelphia Presbyterian Historical Society office and Columbia Seminary, with the present Historical Foundation becoming a museum under the management of the Mountain Retreat Association.

Such an arrangement would destroy a precious heritage that has great potential for the life and ministry of the total church, as well as partner churches around the world.

It should be known that if the Montreat Historical Foundation ever ceases to be used for its current purposes, a difficult legal situation could result because the land and the buildings of the Montreat Historical Foundation have separate origination issues including reversionary clauses and the ownership of such will be unclear since the General Assembly has never acted to legally transfer the property from *The Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Incorporated* to any other legal entity.

Inadequate time, limited information, lack of creative alternatives, restricted involvement by the greater church and the Friends of the Historical Foundation, and a flawed feasibility study regarding funding lead to a premature decision to close the Historical Foundation at Montreat when other options do exist but have yet to be explored.

The *Minutes of the General Assembly, 2004*, Part I of the *Journal* under the report of the Historical Society and Item 03-24 states that the appointed task force to study the situation of the Historical Foundation will report to the General Assembly in 2006, and that this task force was never allowed to complete its work including making a final report with recommendations and was dismissed before reporting to the 2006 General Assembly by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.