

TO: Members of East Liberty Presbyterian Church
FROM: Tom Morton, Chair of the Property Committee
DATE: 12 May 2023
RE: The Manse

ELPC owns a single-family home, located at 501 Edgerton Place in the Point Breeze Neighborhood of Pittsburgh. This home has served as the residence for our Senior Pastor (including our last Interim Pastor) since 1988, when Rev. Dr. Robert Chestnut was hired. This home is not property that was original to ELPC but was selected by Dr. Chestnut upon his hire. The manse was then occupied by Rev. Rick Otty during his Interim Ministry, and then by the Bush family during Pastor Randy's Pastorate.

The manse was built in 1930, has 5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms and approximately 3500 square feet. It is located approximately 2 miles away from ELPC.

The Property Committee began prayerfully considering our options for the manse since Pastor Randy's departure. The manse was originally rented below cost to a family known to the Bush family, but they moved out of the manse in October of 2022. We retained the manse in the expectation that an Interim Pastor would reside there. However, in December it was reported to the Session that no interim pastor had been found for ELPC in this transitional season, and the manse has been vacant for the past 7 months.

In close consultation with our Interim Senior Co-Pastors, Patrice Fowler-Searcy and Heather Schoenewolf, the Property Committee did its due diligence for several months to discern what ELPC should do with the manse. ELPC has three basic options: let the manse sit vacant; rent the manse; or sell the manse. The Property Committee kept Session informed of our deliberations and our findings.

During the April 2023 meeting of Session, the Property Committee brought forth a motion regarding the sale of ELPC's manse. The Session voted overwhelmingly to sell the manse.

Session has called a Congregational meeting for Sunday, May 21 following the 11 AM worship service, so that our congregation can vote on the sale of the manse, according to our denomination's polity. On behalf of the Property Committee, I offer you our rationale for this motion so that you can review it in advance of our congregational meeting.

Rationale:

Upon learning that ELPC's manse would remain vacant for the foreseeable future, Property explored three options for the manse:

1. The manse remain vacant.
2. ELPC rent the manse.
3. ELPC sell the manse.

Options 1 and 2 were ruled out for the following reasons:

1. VACANCY –
 - a. It is not prudent for a home to sit vacant, as it opens the property to security concerns: both those of intruders as well as the breakdown of operational systems of the property.
 - b. Our insurance company is not pleased that the manse is vacant and prefers that it does not remain as such for an extended period of time, or our rates could rise
 - c. The church pays nearly \$21,000/year in carrying costs for the manse. It is not good stewardship of our resources to sustain these carrying costs for a vacant building. In addition, Pastor Randy and his family did routine yardwork, which the church is now responsible for covering.
2. RENTAL –
 - a. There are limited options with what we can do with the manse. It is in a neighborhood that is zoned single-family residential.
 - b. The property was assessed by Dan Ridley, who is a realtor and a member of the Property Committee. In its current condition, the home could be rented for approximately \$5,000/month. However, there is a limited rental market for houses of this size with these features for that cost. Please note: the kitchen is dated, and the home does not have central air conditioning – two factors that could restrict its rental capabilities.

Rationale for selling the manse:

1. As stated above, owning a manse is not cost neutral. The church would save over \$21,000 in carrying costs/year.
2. It is increasingly less common for churches to offer manses to their pastors, and they are finding other ways to help their pastors with housing – from offering a simple housing allowance to supporting pastors with a down payment for their home.
3. There is no guarantee that the new pastor would want to live in the manse – and churches cannot force a pastor to live in a manse. Selling the manse gives ELPC the broadest range of options as to how to support our next pastor with meeting their unique housing needs.
4. The manse is a sizable asset of the church. Its sale, as stewarded by our Session, creates opportunities for us to support the larger ministry of our church in new ways when a new pastor is called, or if needed during this interim season.

I hope that members of ELPC prayerfully consider what is best for ELPC when voting on whether to sell the manse.