

EASTRIDGE PARK CHRISTIAN CHURCH VOTES TO LEAVE THE DISCIPLES DENOMINATION

On Sunday, February 12, the Eastridge Park Christian Church of Mesquite, Texas, voted to withdraw from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination. The congregation voted 381-45 in favor of a resolution to withdraw.

In documents prepared for the congregation, the pastor and elders of Eastridge Park cited several primary concerns that led them to consider their action. They began with their concern over the growing affirmation of universal salvation in the DoC, citing a statement from a report given at the last DoC General Assembly. They also listed the erosion of belief in the inspiration of Scripture, the DoC ecumenical partnership with the United Church of Christ, an openly homosexual professor at a DoC seminary and the practice of “don’t ask, don’t tell” in dealing with gay candidates for ordination in the Region.

A lengthy process of discussion and education led up to the vote. The elders first undertook a study of the issues, and voted to forward their concerns to the Board. The Board voted to forward the issue to the congregation. Special meetings were held on two Sunday mornings and several open sessions were held on weeknights. The elders oversaw the Sunday gatherings, and pastor Dan Carroll led the weeknight meetings. The elders met with the Regional Minister, Dani Cartwright for several hours before their vote. Cartwright and Area Minister Larry Ross both came to congregational information meetings to answer questions, as did Doug Harvey of DHF.

The church had a property reversion clause on its land. The reversion clause required the church to pay \$25,000 to the North Texas Area of the Disciples of Christ if they ever left the denomination, as the land was donated through the Area. Eight days before the vote, the church received a letter from the Area office demanding they be paid the entire amount before the vote was taken, otherwise “the property would be taken over and [the congregation] would become their tenants.” With time very short, the church made an emergency decision to pay the money up front so that there would be no possibility of action against their property. Pastor Dan Carroll expressed perplexity at the last-minute demand for payment before the vote was taken, as the issue had been brought up with the Area in the earliest discussions about the vote, the date of the vote had been set for two months and the church had assured the Area that if the vote was in favor of withdrawal they would immediately make the payment.