

**Atlanta Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission
Final Report to the Presbytery of Geneva
May 2023**

A Brief History of The Atlanta Presbyterian Church

Main source: materials from the celebration of the church's history 1894-1955
& 1955 -1960 celebration, congregation members and historical artifacts.

The Church is located on 1.4 acres and is a two-story Queen Anne style church building constructed of red pressed brick over a limestone basement, with a bell tower ("Church Building"), containing 4,720 gross square feet, built in 1895, and utilized as a house of worship. Also on the property is a single-story building containing 2,016 square feet, originally built and used as a stable/hitch house and later as a fellowship and meeting hall ("Wilson Hall"), collectively the "Church Property". The sanctuary has raised floors and will seat about 250 people. There is a large hall/basement that was dug out and built in 1957 where many functions, dinners and meetings were held over the years. Over the years there were many individuals that spent a lot of time, talent and money to build, renovate and keep the church beautiful. They wove their personality, influence and faith into the permanent heritage of the community.

*"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word."*

The congregation sang in September 1895 as they lay the cornerstone of the Atlanta Presbyterian Church. The date of July 22, 1894 was the official date the Atlanta Presbyterian Church was organized and started. If you can imagine the town of Atlanta was a thriving village in 1850!

The first pastor of the new church was Rev. Thomas Kerr, a student from Auburn, NY. The church had a Sunday School and served the community in many capacities. The women were very active in fund raising and programs. In 1926 Rev. J.T.M Wilson worked with the young people and Boy Scouts and he transformed the old hitch house in the rear of the church into a Scout Hall. In 1929 it officially became Wilson Hall, and still remains today.

Land next to the church was donated and a house was purchased and moved to this land to serve as the parsonage. The parsonage was home to many pastors and their families over the years. Once it was no longer needed as a parsonage, the house was sold.

The church building has been added to and improved upon during its nearly 125 years as a house of worship. Additions included a basement/hall and kitchen from which many community meals have been prepared and served.

The church has joined with other area churches in shared ministry throughout its history. There was a yoke between Cohocton and Atlanta churches at one time.

The Atlanta Church was known for its work in the community and hosted dinners, baptisms, weddings and funerals. It has been a vital part of the community for over 125 years. Its final treasurer and many elders were members of the Bidwell family of Atlanta.

Other mission projects of the church have included ten cent suppers, church fairs, Two cents a meal program and many special offerings to assist the local community and Presbytery.

Summary of the work of the Administrative Commission (AC)

In accordance with the Charge approved at the October 26, 2021 regular meeting of the Presbytery of Geneva, the following work has been completed.

Duly called AC meetings were held monthly via zoom in 2021, 2022, 2023 to discuss the future of the church, the role of the Administrative Commission (AC) and facilitate the sale of the church and to identify a way to revitalize this place of worship so it will continue its mission in the community and provide new life to a congregation and house of worship.

At the congregational meeting held on 9-28-2021 options for the future of the church were discussed along with the role of the AC and the steps that would be involved in closing the church. Those present reluctantly agreed that closure would be the likely outcome and set a date to start an inventory of the contents of the church and discuss which items should be returned to families who donated them, offered to other churches, or donated to the Atlanta Historical Society, Fire department and other community resources. Members of the AC met at the Atlanta Church to complete an inventory list, secure session minutes and identify items to be donated.

At the September 28, 2022 AC meeting the following recommendations of the AC were approved unanimously by the members present:

- That the Atlanta Presbyterian Church and its corporation be dissolved;
- That a final worship service with possibly a historical element be offered to the congregation and community before the final sale of the church if so desired by the congregation;
- Debts and other obligations of the church, if any, be satisfied;
- The contents of the church be donated, sold or disposed of as the AC determines after discussion with the congregation, giving first priority to returning items donated by members to their family;
- The church real property be transferred to the Presbytery of Geneva and offered for sale;
- The corporation be dissolved, as soon as the way is clear.
- Ensure the sale of the Church was congruent with the desires of the congregation I.E to be used for a house of worship first and foremost. To be a vital element to the community.

The congregation also unanimously

- Authorized the AC to take any further actions on the Congregation's behalf necessary or advisable to complete the disposition of property and the dissolution of the Atlanta Presbyterian Church and Corporation.
- Recommended to the Presbytery of Geneva that funds from the sale of the church's real estate and any other funds transferred from the Atlanta Presbyterian Church to the Presbytery of Geneva be donated in the following way: N. Cohocton Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church of Cohocton, Vincent House, American Legion and Lyons Club.

Note: Although the congregation voted to transfer the church property to the Presbytery of Geneva and then be sold, the property was sold before it had to be transferred to the Presbytery of Geneva.

Arrange for the pastoral care of church members:

The Rev. Katherine Griffis offered to serve the congregation as temporary supply pastor during the months of discussion about dissolution of the church (September 2021– May 2023).

Working as the session, in September 2021 the AC informed all members that the congregation had voted to dissolve the church and invited them to contact the AC if they would like their membership transferred to another church.

A review of the active members was done and remaining active members were informed that their membership would be held by the Presbytery of Geneva if no instructions were received about transfer. Names and contact information for individuals who were still members at the time of the dissolution have been sent to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

A final worship service celebrating the life and ministry of the congregation was offered and declined by the existing members of the Atlanta Congregation.

Financial status and management of financial assets and obligations

Financial assets: At the establishment of the AC (9/2021), the church's assets included:

Bank checking account	\$ 21,239.85- January 2023
Operating Expense	\$10,970.12
Building and land	

A financial review of the Treasurer's books for 2021 found no issues of concern. There were no outstanding debts or obligations at that time or at the closing of accounts. There were no bequest stipulations on any accounts. The books were certified and balanced with bank statement on July 27th, 2022. Shirley Bidlack continued to serve as church treasurer until the property was sold, all bills paid, and the church bank account was closed.

A public notice about the upcoming closure of the church was published.

The church bank account will be closed upon completion of the filed petition, payment for legal fees due, and distribution of funds to several recipients to include the N. Cohocton Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church of Cohocton, the Vincent House located in Wayland, NY, the American Legion and the Lyons Club. Any misc. funds to be sent to presbytery. Items from the hall, kitchen and sanctuary were left for the new Church purchasing the building.

Selling the church building and property: The AC identified a group that was looking for a church property to expand their worship and congregation. The AC utilized the Presbytery legal team (Steinbrenner Law Offices, LLC), to complete the property real estate search, court filing and sale of the property with the agreement that the new congregation coming in is responsible for all closing costs.

Steinbrenner Law Offices, LLC, of Rochester, NY served as our attorney for the sale of the church property.

Following approval by the Administrative Commission, the Presbytery of Geneva and the Supreme Court of the State of New York County of Steuben, the real property of the Atlanta Presbyterian Church was sold to the November 4, 2022 for a sale price of \$1.00 (November 2022 closing).

Dissolution of the Atlanta Presbyterian Church

Following approval by the Administrative Commission (October 2022), AC representatives signed the verified petition to the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Steuben to dissolve the corporation of the church.

The Supreme Court of the State of New York County of Steuben dissolved the Atlanta Presbyterian Church (August, 2022).

Respectfully submitted,

The Administrative Commission of the Atlanta Presbyterian Church

TE Katherine Griffis (chair); RE Lynn Dinehart (Clerk), intermittently; TE David Ashby;
RE Bob Bidlack; RE Catherine Foerster.