

**The 17th Stated Meeting of
The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey**
September 10th, 2024
*(to be approved at the 18th
Stated Meeting of The
Presbytery of the Highlands of
New Jersey)*

The Body of Christ, A Call to Gather

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey of the Presbyterian Church (USA) held its 17th Stated Meeting on September 10th, 2024, at Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center and on the ZOOM platform.

The Moderator, Ruling Elder Sue Cail (Ringwood Community), called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and led the opening prayer.

Introduction to the Hybrid Meeting Process and voting – *Moderator, Elder Sue Cail*

FORMATION OF THE ROLL

The roll was formed as Commissioners signed the registration forms. Resource Staff/Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Steve H. Shussett, certified that a quorum was present.

| <u>Congregation</u> | <u>Teaching Elder</u> | | <u>Ruling Elder</u> | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Allamuchy, Panther Valley | Rev. James Vespoli | P | | A |
| Alpha | Rev. Scott DeCaro | A | | A |
| Andover | Pamela Osborne | A | | A |
| Basking Ridge (3) | Rev. Dennis Jones | A | Alejandra Ryder | P |
| | Rev. Dr. Maureen Paterson | P | | A |
| Bedminster, Lamington | Vacant | V | | A |
| Belvidere | Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek | E | Ray Smickle | P |
| Blairstown (2) | Rev. David Harvey | P | Deb Albrecht | P |
| | | | | A |
| Boonton (2) | Rev. Carie Morgan | P | Meg Meyer | P |
| Bound Brook (3) | Rev. Linda Owens | P | Jamie Breeding John O'Meila Elaine Teterault | A |
| | | | | P |
| Branchville | Rev. Dr. Nancy Young Rev. David Young | P | | A |
| | | E | | A |
| Califon, Fairmount | Rev. Mike Atzert | E | Joyce Martin | P |
| Califon, Lower Valley | Rev. Tex Culton | E | | A |
| Cedar Knolls, Hildale Park | Rev. Ross Lang | A | | A |
| Chatham Township (2) | Vacant Rev. Thomas Brown | V | Lucille Deutsch Carl Woodward | P |
| | | P | | P |
| Chatham, Ogden Memorial | Rev. Kathi Heath | P | | A |
| Chester | Rev. Christopher Scrivens | P | Jeanne Perry | P |
| Clinton (2) | Rev. Tracey Henry | P | | A |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--------|--|-------------|
| | | | | A |
| Delaware | Vacant | V | | A |
| Delaware, 1st Oxford | Vacant | V | | A |
| Denville, Union Hill | Rev. Timothy Clarkson | P | John Ware | P |
| Dover, First Memorial | Rev. Alan Schaefer (HR) | E | | A |
| East Hanover | Vacant | V | | A |
| East Hanover, Kitchell | Rev. Hannah Allred | P | Carol Williams | P |
| Flanders (2) | Rev. Cliff Acklam | P | | A A |
| Flemington (3) | Rev. Amy Lincoln | P | Patience Anderson Jamie Evans Bill Thomson | P P P |
| Florham Park, Calvary | Rev. Ronald de Groot | A | | A |
| Franklin (2) | Rev. Julie Raffety | P | Connie Cholminski Beth Westerfield | P P |
| Frenchtown (2) | Rev. Merideth Mueller-Bolton | P | | A A |
| Gillette, Meyersville | Rev. Stefanie Muntzel | P | | A |
| Hackettstown | Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook | P | Diane Hull | P |
| Hampton, Musconetcong Valley | Stephanie Farley, CRE | A | | A |
| Hillsborough, TAFPC | Rev. Eric Lai | P | | A |
| Lambertville (2) | Vacant | V | | A A |
| Lambertville, 2nd English | Vacant | V | | A |
| Long Valley | Vacant | V | | A |
| Long Valley, Highlands | Rev. Robin Burton Palmer | P | Scott Riker | A |
| Madison | Rev. Carol Howard | E | Becky Moody | A |
| Mendham | Rev. Scot McCachren | A | | A |
| Milford | Rev. Dr. Linda Erkert-Bullock | A | | A |
| Milford, Alexandria (2) | Rev. Nicholas Hatch | P | | A A |
| Milford, Holland Bible | Rev. Geoff Stanley | A | | A |
| Mine Hill | Vacant | V | Jane Smith | P |
| Morris Plains | Rev. Donald Brown | A | | A |
| Morristown (3) | Rev. Daniel Vigilante Rev. Audrey Webber | P A | Linda Schober Craig Barth | P P A |
| New Vernon | Rev. William Stone | P | Donna Miller | P |
| Newton | Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden | P | | A |
| Newton, Yellow Frame | Rev. Michael Nelms | A | | A |
| Oak Ridge | Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle | P | Dave McDonald | P |
| Ogdensburg | Rev. Alden Johnson | A | | A |
| Parsippany | Rev. Donald Bragg | A | | A |
| Phillipsburg, Harmony | Rev. Scott Bohr | A | | A |
| Phillipsburg, Pilgrim | Rev. Richard Gelson | P | | A |
| Pittstown, Bethlehem | Rev. Linda Gaden | P | Frank Gaden | P |
| Pluckemin (2) | Rev. Ian Rankine | P | | A A |
| Port Murray, Rockport | Rev. Robert "Bronc" Radak | P | | A |
| Ringoes, 1st Amwell | Vacant | V | | A |
| Ringoes, Kirkpatrick (2) | Rev. Dr. Barbara Booth-Jarmon | P | Norma Zimmerman | P A |
| Ringwood | Rev. Arlene Romaine | P | | A |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------|
| Rockaway (2) | Rev. Ryon Herin | P | | A A |
| Somerset (2) | Rev. Nancy Nalepa-Skibo | P | Mildred Patterson | P A |
| Sparta | Rev. Dr. Patrick Sileo | P | Don Keck | P |
| Stanhope | Pamela Osborne | P | | A |
| Stewartsville | Rev. Stephen Choi | P | Judy Melchore | P |
| Stewartsville, Old Greenwich | Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy | P | Lisa Kolterjahn | P |
| Stirling | Rev. Stefanie Muntzel | P | | A |
| Stockton | Rev. David Snyder | A | Irene McKnight | P |
| Succasunna (2) | Rev. Timothy Clarkson | P | Kathy Ritchey | P A |
| Sussex | Rev. Katherine Scott-Kirschner | P | Mike Kosco | P |
| Titusville | Vacant | V | | A |
| Wantage, Beemerville | Rev. Barry Young | P | | A |
| Warren, Trinity United | Rev. Amy Sandlin | E | | A |
| Washington | Rev. James Scovell | P | Dorothy Decker | P |
| West Milford (2) | Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle | P | Betsy Engelhardt | P A |
| Wharton | Rev. Sarah Green | P | | A |
| Wharton, Berkshire Valley | Vacant | V | | A |
| Wharton, Hungarian | Vacant | V | Stephen Lance | P |
| Whippany | Rev. Sarah Cairatti | P | | A |

Teaching Elders Engaged in a Validated Ministry

| | |
|---|---|
| Rev. Joanne Miller | E |
| Rev. Robin Miller Curras (<i>serving church out of bounds</i>) | P |
| Rev. Christine Davies | A |
| Rev. Jin Hee Han | P |
| Rev. Jennifer Hrynyk | P |
| Rev. John C. Kile | A |
| Rev. Jeanne Radak (<i>Presbytery Leader – Highlands Presbytery</i>) | P |
| Rev. Chad Rodgers (<i>Director of Activities - Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center</i>) | P |
| Rev. Salvatore Seirmarco (<i>Chaplain – United Methodist Communities</i>) | P |
| Rev. Dr. Steven Shussett, Stated Clerk (<i>Highlands Presbytery</i>) | P |
| Rev. Christopher Small (<i>Chaplain – Hunterdon Healthcare Systems</i>) | A |
| Rev. Angella Son (<i>Professor – Drew University</i>) | E |
| Rev. Caroline Unzaga | E |

Members at Large

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Rev. M. Elizabeth Blythe | A |
| Rev. Justin Choi | P |
| Rev. Dr. Ellen Clemot | P |
| Rev. Courtney Cromie | A |
| Rev. Dan Dorrow | A |
| Rev. Ryan Irmer | P |
| Rev. Donna McDaid | A |
| Rev. Peter Magnan | P |
| Rev. Hayley O'Connor | P |
| Rev. Gail Pendleton | A |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Rev. Annie Tsai | A |
|-----------------|---|

Honorably Retired

| | |
|--|---|
| Rev. Peter Amerman | E |
| Rev. Janice Ammon | E |
| Rev. Jeff Archer | E |
| Rev. Nancy Asbury | E |
| Rev. Barbara Aspinall | P |
| Rev. Charles Baier | E |
| Rev. Joicy Becker-Richards | E |
| Rev. Robert Beringer | E |
| Rev. George Blank | E |
| Rev. Sally Campbell | E |
| Rev. Robert Colman | E |
| Rev. Cynthia Crowner | E |
| Rev. William Culton | E |
| Rev. James D'Angelo | E |
| Rev. William Davis | E |
| Rev. Judith Dean | E |
| Rev. Richard Dole | E |
| Rev. Birda Ferguson | E |
| Rev. Guy Ferguson | E |
| Rev. Dr. Janet Fishburn | E |
| Rev. Benhardt Fraumann | P |
| Rev. Mervin Fry | E |
| Rev. Peter Gregory | E |
| Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Hall | E |
| Rev. Dr. Edward Halldorson | P |
| Rev. David Hengerer | E |
| Rev. Dr. Jefferson Hatch | E |
| Rev. Kathryn Henry | E |
| Rev. Jean Holmes | E |
| Rev. Herbert Huffmon | E |
| Rev. Harold Johnson | E |
| Rev. Eugenia Johnston | E |
| Rev. Philip Jones | E |
| Rev. Steven Kengeter | E |
| Rev. Heup Young Kim | E |
| Rev. Dr. David Lawrence | E |
| Rev. Unzu Lee | E |
| Rev. Tony MacNaughton | P |
| Rev. Fred Milligan | P |
| Rev. James Morris | E |
| Rev. Elizabeth Morrison | E |
| Rev. Szabolcs Nagy | E |
| Rev. Chet Penza | E |
| Rev. Barbara Peters | E |
| Rev. John Potter | P |
| Rev. Donald Prytherch | E |
| Rev. Bronc Radak (<i>serving Rockport</i>) | P |
| Rev. Jack Roan | E |
| Rev. Stephen Ross | E |

| | |
|---|---|
| Rev. Lorrie Rowland-Skinner | E |
| Rev. Diane Ruffle | E |
| Rev. Alan Schaefer (<i>serving Dover</i>) | E |
| Rev. Bruce Schundler | E |
| Rev. Donald Scott | E |
| Rev. Sherman Skinner | E |
| Rev. Sarah Taylor | E |
| Rev. Charles Thompson | E |
| Rev. Alfred Tisdale | E |
| Rev. Jacquelynn Van Vliet | P |
| Rev. John Verser | E |
| Rev. Deirdre Greenwood White | E |
| Rev. David Young | E |
| Rev. Dr. Nancy Young | P |

Ruling Elders by Virtue of Office

| | |
|---|---|
| John Crozier, Co-Moderator of COM, First Presbyterian Church of Boonton | P |
| Wendy Doidge, Past Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Morristown | P |
| Alec Jain, Member of ACT, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains | P |
| Joe Martinoni, Past Moderator, First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway | P |
| Rich Rubin, Member of ACT, Presbyterian Church in Morristown | P |
| Sue Cail, Moderator, Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood | P |
| Alan Ford, Past Moderator, Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Pittstown | P |
| Lisa Gray, Past Moderator, Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville | P |
| Pete Peterson, Co-Moderator of ACT, Clinton Presbyterian Church | P |
| Mel Prestamo, Past Moderator, Long Valley Presbyterian Church | P |
| Donna Rahmann, Co-Moderator of CPM, Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Califon | P |

Others in Attendance

| | |
|--|---|
| Sonja Gaertner, Office Manager & Attendance Clerk, Presbytery of the Highlands | P |
| Lizabeth Hutchinson, Financial Administrator, Presbytery of the Highlands | P |
| Hildy Benjamin, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains | P |
| Lynne Foreman, PCUSA Ministry Engagement | P |
| Esther Chiang, a leader of Sanctuary + Seed (formerly MARP, Martinsville Adaptive Reuse Project), | P |
| Lissette Gonzales-Sosa, Ruling Elder, Iglesia Hispana Presbiteriana Bet-el, Vineland NJ, Presbytery for Southern New Jersey, and a leader of Sanctuary + Seed (formerly MARP, Martinsville Adaptive Reuse Project), a New Church Development hosted by the Bound Brook Presbyterian Church | P |
| Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, Presbytery of Philadelphia, Director, Ministry Engagement and Support, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) | P |
| Catherine Morgan, Member of Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood | |

Total in Attendance – 113

~ Sonja Gaertner, Attendance Clerk – The Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ

WORDS OF GREETING

INTRODUCTION OF NEW RULING ELDER COMMISSIONERS

Ruling Elder John Ware, Union Hill Presbyterian Church, Denville
Ruling Elder Mildred Patterson, Somerset Presbyterian Church
Ruling Elder Bill Thomson, Flemington Presbyterian Church

Ruling Elder Alejandra Ryder, Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church
Ruling Elder Kathy Ritchie, First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna
Ruling Elder Lucy Deutsch, Presbyterian Church in Chatham
Ruling Elder Carl Woodward, Presbyterian Church in Chatham
Ruling Elder Catherine Morgan, Community Presbyterian Church, Ringwood

EXPLANATION OF UNANIMOUS CONSENT

ITEMS FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT:

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Catherine Morgan, Member of the Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood and the Presbytery's Young Leader Formation Team;
Ruling Elder Lissette Gonzalez Sosa, Ruling Elder, Iglesia Hispana Presbiteriana Bet-el, Vineland NJ, Presbytery for Southern New Jersey, and a leader of Sanctuary + Seed,
Esther Chiang, a leader of Sanctuary + Seed;
Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, Presbytery of Philadelphia, Director, Ministry Engagement and Support, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The seating was adopted by **UNANIMOUS CONSENT**.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Agenda was adopted by **UNANIMOUS CONSENT**.

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

SC-1

Approve the minutes of the Presbytery meeting held May 14, 2024.

SC-2

Approved the minutes of the Special Presbytery meeting held July 11, 2024.

SC-3

Approve excuses for the Presbytery meeting of September 20, 2024.

SC-4

Receive the 2023 Session Minutes Review Report – Part 2.

SC-5

Receive the Interim Report of the Administrative Commission of the Oxford Second Presbyterian Church

SC-6

Receive the Interim Report of the Administrative Commission of the First Presbyterian Church of Hanover, East Hanover.

SC-7

Receive the report of the Administration and Coordinating Team.

SC-8

Receive the report of the Committee on Ministry – Part 1

SC-9

Receive the report of the Committee on Ministry – Part 2

SC-10

Receive the report of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

SC-11

Receive the report of the Discernment Team.

SC-12

Receive the report of the Nominating Committee.

SC-13

Receive the report of the Young Leader Formation Team.

ACT-1

The ACT recommends the following:

- The approval of the PILP application for Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church for \$67,000 to convert from oil to gas.

CPM-1

The CPM recommends the following:

- The approval of the Commissioned Ruling Elder Policy. (See Attached.)

Stated Clerk's Report

September 10, 2024

Items to Report:

SC-13

The Presbytery is reminded that the rolls and registers of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey are kept at the Presbytery Office.

SC-14

The Presbytery's commissioners to the 226th General Assembly (2024) spoke on their experience via Zoom at a Town Hall Meeting on July 25th.

SC-15

The Presbytery is reminded that, for the period of June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025, the Presbytery's insurance carrier is Guide One, and its agent is Brown & Brown. This arrangement is through the Presbytery's relationship with the Partnership Insurance Program (PIP).

SC-16

Received Preliminary Order for Hearing – Remedial Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee dated June 14, 2024 (attached).

SC-17

Received Preliminary Order #2 – Dismissal of Cross-Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant/Cross-Appellee vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee/Cross-Appellant dated June 20, 2024 (attached).

SC-18

Received Stay of Enforcement – Remedial Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee dated June 24, 2024 (attached).

The Stated Clerk provided an oral summary of the judicial matters found in SC-16 — SC-18.

GA Commissioner Video #1- Ruling Elder Alec Jain, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton (Frenchtown), representing the Church Development Team, introduced Rev. Linda Owens (Bound Brook), who gave historical context for the presentation to follow. Rev. Owens then introduced Ruling Elder Lissette Gonzalez Sosa and Esther Chiang, leaders of Sanctuary + Seed (formerly Martinsville Adaptive Reuse Project) a New Church Development in partnership with the Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook. Sanctuary + Seed is repurposing the former Christ Presbyterian Church in Martinsville community of Bridgewater Township, New Jersey as multi-use, shared space to facilitate human and ecological flourishing.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Rev. Jacqui Van Vliet (HR), Co-Moderator of the Committee, presented the following:

MOTION: That the Presbytery approve the call of the Rev. Tom Brown as the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township. This requires a three-fourth (3/4) vote of the Presbytery – G-2.0504(c).

Rev. Tom Brown has served as Associate Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township
Background: In February 2024 the Session of the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township (PCCT) requested that Rev. Brown be called as the Pastor of the PCCT. The COM required the Session to provide a rationale for the change along with a description of the new position and changes to other staff positions. The COM set the requirement that COM, the Session, the PCCT congregation, and the Presbytery had to approve the change, and all votes had to be no less than 3/4 of the present voting members (G-2.0504 (c)). The Session approved with unanimous vote on May 13, 2024. The COM approved with unanimous vote on June 4, 2024. The Congregation approved unanimously on June 23, 2024.

MOTION APPROVED

INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Rev. Van Vliet introduced new Pastors and Pastors in new positions:

- Rev. Eric Lai, Pastor, Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Arlene Romaine, Pastor, Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood
- Rev. Jin Hee Han, Interim Pastor, West Dover UCC, Vermont as a validated ministry

INVITATION TO HYBRID ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Chad Rodgers (Validated), Vice Moderator, invited participants to place their announcements in the Chat Function. Later in the meeting, those announcements would be shared, either by highlighting posted items," or by giving 30 seconds to those persons physically present.

BOARD OF PENSIONS CHANGES

Presbytery Leader, Rev. Jeanne Radak reviewed the many changes and options presented by the Board of Pensions for the 2025 year. COM recommendations and requirements for 2025 were also addressed.

DIGITAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Rodgers read the Digital Announcements that were collected from the chat and individuals came to the microphone to share their announcements. Those submitted to be included in the minutes are:

Moderator Cail assumed the Gavel.

GA Commissioner Video #2- Rev. Rich Gelson, Pilgrim Presbyterian Church, Phillipsburg, NJ

ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATING TEAM

2025 Budget

Ruling Elder Pete Peterson (Clinton), ACT Co-Moderator, assisted by Presbytery Leader Jeanne Radak, highlighted work of the Finance and Budget team and presented the 2025 Budget for a first reading. He reviewed the factors of the budget while highlighting the changes for 2025: Increase in Per Capita, Initial stage of the GA Funding Model Experiment – Percentage Model, Board of Pensions changes, and a decrease in the deficit.

MOTION: That the 2025 Highlands Presbytery Per Capita rate be \$43.50.

MOTION APPROVED

Anti-Harassment Policy

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel, reviewed to background text of the Highlands Presbytery Anti-Harassment Policy. After amendments from the floor the policy was **APPROVED AS AMENDED**.

Boundary Training for Sessions

Rev. Steve Shussett, Resource Staff/Stated Clerk reviewed the Book of Order requirements (as of June 2023) that “all councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council’s policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.”

He informed the Presbytery of the ongoing discussions to provide a means of session boundary training. Also noted was the Presbytery’s 2024 change in insurer, which made it unclear if this boundary training option would be available in 2024. He stated that would be taken into consideration as churches seek to meet this requirement.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Rev. Amy Lincoln (Flemington), Co Moderator presented the slate:

Moderator for 2025 — Rev. Chad Rodgers, Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center
Vice Moderator for 2025 — Rev. Ryon Herin, First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway

THE SLATE WAS APPROVED AS PRESENTED

GA Commissioner Video #3 – Rev. Robin Palmer Burton, Highlands Presbyterian Church, Long Valley

YOUNG LEADER FORMATION TEAM

Rev. Katherine Scott-Kirschner (Sussex) spoke on behalf of the Young Leader Formation Team.

SHARING OUR STORIES

Catherine Morgan (Ringwood) shared her summer of mission trips with Son Servants.

DISCERNMENT TEAM

Presbytery Leader Radak presented an update of the Discernment Team progress. Over the last 12 plus months our presbytery has been working its way through a Discernment Process. This summer they Presbytery leadership has been working on a Vocation Statement. At the last Administration and Coordinating Team meeting they approved the following as our working Vocation Statement. The Presbytery will have a chance to vote on the final vocation statement when the final report is presented.

The working vocation statement is as follows:

*God calls the Presbytery of the Highlands
to equip, enable, and nurture the presbytery community
as we exemplify the love of Christ in and through creative ministries
preparing our faith communities to embrace and engage a new season.*

The body participated in brainstorming “What can the presbytery do to bring this vocation statement to life.” Responses were collected on paper as well as in the chat function of Zoom.

Rev. Linda Owens gave an update on the Presbytery Scramble and stated that Season 2 will be in the spring.

GA Commissioner Video #4- Ruling Elder Craig Barth, Presbyterian Church in Morristown

WORSHIP

Worship was led by members of the Worship Planning Team, including music by Rev. Dr. Nancy Young (HR) and Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy (Old Greenwich), scripture reflection led by Revs. Mardis-Lecroy and Chris Scrivens (Chester). The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was shared, presided by Rev. Rodgers.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business.

ADJOURNMENT

Moderator Cail closed the meeting after prayer at 2 PM.

Attested: _____
Steven H. Shussett Stated Clerk

REPORTS:

- Stated Clerk's Report
- 2023 Session Minutes Review Report – Part 2
- Interim Report of the Administrative Commission of the Oxford Second Presbyterian Church
- Interim Report of the Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of East Hanover
- Per Capita Thank You Letter
- Preliminary Order for Hearing – Remedial Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee dated June 14, 2024
- Preliminary Order #2 – Dismissal of Cross-Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant/Cross-Appellee vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee/Cross-Appellant dated June 20, 2024
- Stay of Enforcement – Remedial Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee dated June 24, 2024
- September 6, 2024 – Presbytery of the Highlands vs. Ryan Irmer – Preliminary Order #3 2024-02

GA in Brief

The General Assembly in Brief is available for download for use in your newsletter and at the next meeting of your session. Please include it as a bulletin insert or in your newsletters.

- Bulletin/Print Version
- Letter-sized/Online Reading Version
- Administration and Coordinating Team Report

- 2025 Proposed Highlands Budget
- Anti Harassment Policy of the Presbytery of the Highlands
- Committee on Ministry Report – Part 1
- Committee on Ministry Report – Part 2
- 2025 Board of Pensions Requirements for Presbytery of the Highlands
- Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report
- Commissioned Ruling Elder Policy
- Nominating Committee Report
- Young Leader Formation Team Report

Stated Clerk's Report
September 10, 2024

Items for Consent Agenda:

SC-1

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Receive the report of the Committee on Ministry – Part 1

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SC-10

Receive the report of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

SC-11

Receive the report of the Discernment Team.

SC-12

Receive the report of the Nominating Committee.

SC-13

Receive the report of the Young Leader Formation Team.

Items for Action:

None.

Items to Report:

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SC-14

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SC-18

Received Stay of Enforcement – Remedial Appeal 2024-02 in the matter of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ, Appellant vs. Rev. Ryan Irmer, Appellee dated June 24, 2024 (attached).

Review of the 2023 Session Minutes Report – Part 2

September 10, 2024

Minutes approved without exceptions:

Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church, Chatham
Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church, East Hanover
First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon
First Presbyterian Church of Ogdensburg
Parsippany Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church of Sparta
First Presbyterian Church of Stockton
First Presbyterian Church of Berkshire Valley, Wharton
Hungarian Presbyterian Church of Wharton

Minutes approved with exceptions:

United Presbyterian Church of Alpha
Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church
United Presbyterian Church in Belvidere
Hildale Park Presbyterian Church, Cedar Knolls
Community Presbyterian Church, Chester
First Oxford Presbyterian Church at Hazen, Delaware
Union Hill Presbyterian Church, Denville
Calvary Presbyterian Church, Florham Park
Frenchtown Presbyterian Church
Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church, Hillsborough
First Presbyterian Church of Lambertville
Presbyterian Church of Milford
Holland Bible Church, Milford
Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains
First Presbyterian Church of Newton
Yellow Frame Presbyterian Church, Newton
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church, Ringoes

Somerset Presbyterian Church
Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville
First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna
First Presbyterian Church of Titusville
Beemerville Presbyterian Church, Wantage
Trinity United Church, Warren
First Presbyterian Church of Washington
Wharton United Community Church

Minutes not received and not approved

Delaware Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church of Hanover, East Hanover
Meyersville Presbyterian Church, Gillette
Musconetcong Valley Presbyterian Church, Hampton
First Presbyterian Church of Mendham
Presbyterian Church in Harmony, Phillipsburg
Presbyterian Church at Pluckemin
Rockport Presbyterian Church, Port Murray
Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood

**INTERIM REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION OF THE OXFORD SECOND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

September 10, 2024

Members: Rev. Kathi Heath (Chair), Liz Hutchinson, George Bradlau, Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek, Rev. Scott Bohr, Rev. Jeanne Radak, Rev. Dr. Steve Shussett, Janice Troyer (Realtor)

This report is an update of our work together on behalf of the Presbytery regarding the sale of the Second Oxford Presbyterian Church. The AC has met regularly and as needed over the past months and continues to make significant progress on the construction and maintenance efforts at Second Oxford.

We are actively communicating with and planning for the sale of the property (church, chapel/fellowship hall, manse) with our realtor, Janice Troyer and have retained the services of a land use attorney (Alan Lowcher) to advise and represent us as necessary to complete the sale. Beside the condition of the buildings, the main obstacle is a deed restriction which will be pursued, if necessary.

Construction Update: The steeple has been successfully refurbished, and we have made considerable improvements to the interior conditions of the church. We currently have one outstanding construction item: the wooden awning structure over the front doors. We expect this to be completed in the near future.

Maintenance Update: We have had the church contents professionally removed as part of our ongoing maintenance. We are in the process of obtaining quotes to address potential mold in the basement of the chapel. Once all the construction and maintenance work is complete, we will have the building professionally cleaned to ensure it is in top condition.

Property and Deed Considerations: We are actively working with our realtor to explore the best options for the property given the restrictive conditions of the deed. On a positive note, there has been interest from religious organizations which would comply with the deed restrictions. If things do not work out in this regard, we will pursue with our attorney the preparation of a motion to the local court to free us from deed restrictions that we are unable to comply with. Additionally, we could explore the possibility of appealing to the Attorney General for relief from some of the deed restrictions to expand our alternatives.

Next steps: (1) Complete the wooden awning structure; (2) Address potential mold issues in the chapel basement; (3) Continue discussions with interested parties and explore all possible avenues for the sale of the property.

The AC remains dedicated to ensuring the satisfactory conclusion of this issue for all parties involved, and

we are making steady progress toward this end.
Rev. Kathi Heath, Chair

INTERIM REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HANOVER, EAST HANOVER

September 10, 2024

The First Presbyterian Church of Hanover, East Hanover, had their final worship service on June 9, 2024. The Rev. Ben Frauman, pulpit supply preacher, did an excellent job leading and preaching. Church members past and present spontaneously spoke during a sharing time--really lovely. And, Rev. Cairatti spoke on behalf of the AC, sharing how humbling it is to be a part of the church's life right now, and how grateful we are for the 300+ years of ministry shared by pastors, elders, deacons. Well received.

The Session was blessed by the leadership of the Rev. Tom Brown, who served as moderator, over many years, and who, in the end, they trusted with the tender and difficult conversations that took place before the decision to close. Thank you, Rev. Brown! We give thanks for the Session who were faithful in discernment and in leadership in the last months of the church's life, leading their fellow church members in storytelling and grieving, to the glory of God.

FPC Whippany elders prepared potted plants for each member and notes of friendship. A letter of welcome from Kitchell Memorial's pastor was in the bulletin. Florham Park also included a note of welcome in the bulletin. A few members have been attending worship at Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church, East Hanover, over the summer!

Elders and members hosted a time of fellowship following worship, with cake, and elders had to put out extra tables and chairs to accommodate all who attended.

Betty Albert, the sanctuary sexton, and Deb Sutton, office manager, have been paid through the end of September 2024, and their work has concluded. A letter of thanks went out to each.

The landscaper and parish hall cleaning service continue their work.

Renter, Rising Sun Cheer, continues to rent the parish house several times a week and the tenants in the manse property still reside there.

The umbrella insurance policy was renewed, effective June 2024.

All finances have been mostly moved to the Presbytery's care (the last one is in process), and bill pay responsibilities have moved to Liz Hutchinson of the Presbytery office. Liz has also been the point person for any repairs needed in the parish house that the renters have pointed out to us.

Conversations are ongoing about the future use of the property. Members of the AC have taken several meetings with East Hanover Township officials, and also a meeting with an IAF organizer, who develops affordable housing.

A commercial appraiser has been hired to value the property in its entirety and in parcels. Those reports should be back very soon.

Sincerely,
The Rev. Sarah Cairatti, chair

Carol Corea
The Rev. Tim Clarkson
Richard Kaller

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST

May 14, 2024

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

Attn: Rev. Dr. Steven Shussett

390 Rte 10

Randolph, NJ 07869

Dear Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey:

On behalf of the Synod of the Northeast, thank you for your Per Capita contributions in the amount of \$44,795.98 for the year 2024. Your Per Capita offering provides the means for us to meet our vision of walking alongside gospel communities through innovation, building connections, and joint mission.

Additionally, your gift demonstrates your commitment to the work of our denomination as we answer God's call together. We are the Church together, engaging Presbyterians in work that changes and saves lives in the Northeast. We do this with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love, and with a commitment to equity as people who want to make a difference in shared, effective, life-changing ministry.

Thank you again for your commitment to the connections that make us uniquely Presbyterian. Thank you also for the ways you bear witness to Christ in your region.

In Christ Service,

Rev. Dr. SanDawna Gaulman Ashley

Transitional Synod Leader

Frances E. Klaiber

Manager of Finance

Cc: Nancy Tindall, Synod Treasurer

**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(U.S.A.)**

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

Appellant,

v.

Rev. Ryan Irmer,

Appellee

Preliminary Order for
Hearing Remedial Appeal

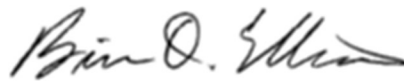
2024-02

This is an appeal before the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC or this Commission) from a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Northeast, which sustained some specifications of error raised in Appellee's complaint.

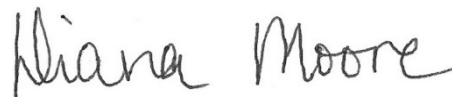
The notice of appeal, along with a request for stay of enforcement, was transmitted to the officers of this Commission on June 7, 2024. The officers reviewed the appeal under the provisions of D-6.0601. Following their review, the officers find that this Commission has jurisdiction over this appeal, the appellant has standing to file the appeal, the appeal is timely and properly filed, and the appeal states one or more of the grounds for appeal under D-6.0202.

The appeal is accepted, and a hearing will be set for a time and place to be determined by the GAPJC.

Dated this 14th day of June 2024.



Brian D. Ellison, Moderator
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission



Diana Moore, Clerk
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission

**THE PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

Appellant/Cross-Appellee

v.

Rev. Ryan Irmer,

Appellee/Cross-Appellant

Preliminary Order #2

Dismissal of Cross-

Appeal 2024-02

This is an appeal before the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC or this Commission) from a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Northeast (SPJC), which sustained some specifications of error raised in a complaint by the Rev. Ryan Irmer.

In a Preliminary Order dated June 14, 2024, the officers of this Commission accepted for hearing an appeal (Appeal), which had been forwarded to the officers on June 7, 2024, filed by the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey (Presbytery).

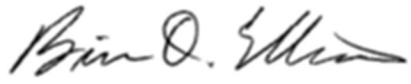
Subsequent to that Preliminary Order, the officers received a second notice of appeal from the same SPJC decision (Cross-Appeal), which had been filed by Rev. Irmer and received in the Office of the General Assembly on June 11, 2024.

The notice of Cross-Appeal was transmitted to the officers of this Commission on June 19, 2024. The officers reviewed the appeal under the provisions of D-6.0601. Following their review, the officers find that this Commission has jurisdiction over this Cross-Appeal, the Cross-Appellant has standing to file the appeal, and the Cross-Appeal states one or more of the grounds for appeal under D-6.0202.

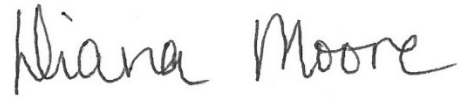
However, the appeal is not timely filed in accordance with D-6.0201, which requires remedial appeals to be filed “within forty-five (45) days after a copy of the final order was received by the appealing party.” The SPJC decision was issued April 26, 2024, and June 11, 2024, is forty-six days later, one day later than the filing deadline. Nothing in the filings indicates that the SPJC decision was received by the parties any later than April 26, 2024.

Therefore, because one of the questions in D-6.0601 has been answered in the negative (namely, D-6.0601c), the Cross-Appeal dated June 11, 2024, by the Rev. Irmer is dismissed.

Dated this 20th day of June 2024.



Brian D. Ellison, Moderator
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission



Diana Moore, Clerk
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission



**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

Appellant,

v.

Rev. Ryan Irmer,

Appellee

Stay of

Enforcement

Remedial Appeal

2024-02

**STAY OF ENFORCEMENT, SIGNED BY THREE MEMBERS OF PJC
RECEIVING COMPLAINT OR APPEAL**

The following members of the Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction to hear the appeal of the decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Northeast on April 26th, 2024, having received a request for a stay and a notice of appeal, certify that in their judgment probable grounds exist for finding the decision or action erroneous and that harm will occur if the decision is not stayed, do hereby grant a stay of enforcement of those portions of the decision and order concerning the intent to, or effect of, restricting, inhibiting, limiting or otherwise interfering, directly or indirectly with the presbytery's obligation and responsibility for

care and oversight in requiring a psychological exam of Rev. Irmer prior to transfer to a new call in any presbytery.

s/ *Linda Windy Johnston*, June 20th, 2024

s/ *Dave Goss*, June 20th, 2024 s/ *Paige*

Bass, June 24th, 2024

I have received the required number of signatures on June 24th, 2024.

s/ *Flor Vélez-Díaz*

Manager Judicial Process and Social Witness

Assistant Stated Clerk

Office of the General Assembly

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 100

Witherspoon St

Louisville, KY 40202

P: 502-569-5434

M: 502-240-2570

E: Flor.Velez-Diaz@pcusa.org W:

www.pcusa.org/gapjc

**THE PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

Appellant/Cross-Appellee

v.

Rev. Ryan Irmer,

Appellee/Cross-Appellant

Preliminary Order
#3

2024-02

This is an appeal before the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC or this Commission) from a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Northeast (SPJC), which sustained some specifications of error raised in a remedial complaint filed by the Rev. Ryan Irmer (Rev. Irmer) against the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey (Presbytery).

In a Preliminary Order dated June 14, 2024, the officers of this Commission accepted for hearing an appeal (Appeal), filed by the Presbytery, which had been forwarded to the officers on June 7, 2024. The officers of this Commission found that the constitutional questions set forth in D-6.0601 were answered in the affirmative, and that determination was not challenged.

Subsequent to that Preliminary Order, the officers received a second notice of appeal from the same SPJC decision (Cross-Appeal), which had been filed by Rev. Irmer and received in the Office of the General Assembly on June 11, 2024. The notice of Cross- Appeal was transmitted to the officers of this Commission on June 19, 2024. The officers reviewed the appeal under the provisions of D-6.0601.

Following their review, in a second Preliminary Order, the officers found that this Commission had jurisdiction over this Cross-Appeal, the Cross-Appellant had standing to file the appeal, and the Cross-Appeal stated one or more of the grounds for appeal under D- 6.0202. The officers, however, found that the notice of Cross-Appeal was not timely filed, and accordingly dismissed the Cross-Appeal, reasoning as follows:

However, the appeal is not timely filed in accordance with D-6.0201, which requires remedial appeals to be filed “within forty-five (45) days after a copy of the final order was received by the appealing party.” The SPJC decision was issued April 26, 2024, and June 11, 2024, is forty-six days later, one day later the filing deadline. Nothing in the filings indicate that the SPJC decision was received by the parties any later than April 26, 2024.

Rev. Irmer challenged the dismissal of the Cross-Appeal, in a filing transmitted by email to the Office of the Stated Clerk on July 19, 2024. In a subsequent email to the Assistant Stated Clerk for Judicial Process, the Presbytery objected to this challenge as untimely.

Meanwhile, on June 24, 2024, a stay was entered in this case, upon the signature of three members of this Commission. Rev. Irmer challenged the entry of that stay in a submission transmitted to the Assistant Stated Clerk on July 25, 2024.

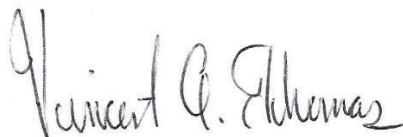
In consideration of these preliminary issues, the Commission sets this matter for briefing and hearing, as follows:

1. As an initial matter, the Presbytery has challenged the timeliness of Rev. Irmer's challenge to the dismissal of the Cross-Appeal. The Assistant Stated Clerk has clarified that the order of the officers of this Commission was transmitted to the parties on June 20, 2024. Rev. Irmer transmitted his challenge to that order on July 19, 2024. Rev. Irmer's challenge was timely, and the Presbytery's objection is overruled.
2. All remaining issues in this case are set for hearing on this Commission's docket to take place October 16-18, 2024, which is planned to take place in Southern California. Counsel and parties will have the option of participating in the hearing via videoconference. Those remaining issues include the following:
 - a. the merits of the Presbytery's appeal;
 - b. Rev. Irmer's challenge to the entry of a stay.
 - c. Rev. Irmer's challenge to the dismissal of the Cross-Appeal;
 - d. and, if that challenge is sustained, the merits of Rev. Irmer's Cross-Appeal.
3. The parties are to submit briefs addressing these issues, according to the following deadlines:
 - a. The Presbytery is to file its brief no later than 9 am ET, September 23, 2024
 - b. Rev. Irmer is to file his brief no later than 9 am ET, October 7, 2024
 - c. The Presbytery has 7 days following the submission of Rev. Irmer's brief to file a supplemental brief addressing issues raised by Rev. Irmer related to the merits of his Cross-Appeal. The Presbytery is to file this supplemental brief no later than 9 am ET, October 14, 2024.
4. This Commission is informed that the record in this appeal has not yet been filed. The Clerk of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Northeast, through the Stated Clerk for the Synod of the Northeast, is directed to file the record for this appeal with the Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than September 13, 2024.

Dated this 6th day of September 2024.



Scott Clark, Moderator
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission



Vincent A. Thomas, Clerk
General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission

GA in Brief

The General Assembly in Brief is available for download for use in your newsletter and at the next meeting of your session. Please include it as a bulletin insert or in your newsletters.

Insert bulletins

September 10, 2024

Administration and Coordinating Team Report

Items for Consent Agenda:

ACT-1

The ACT recommends the following:

- The approval of the PILP application for Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church for \$67,000 to convert from oil to gas.

Items for Action:

ACT-2

The ACT recommends the following to the Presbytery for approval:

- That the Presbytery approves the Anti-Harassment Policy for the Presbytery of the Highlands. (See attached.)

Background: The changes in the Book of Order (July 1, 2023) now requires all councils (presbytery and sessions) have an Anti-Harassment Policy. (G-3.0106). The ACT tasked the Personnel Committee with the development of the policy. They also developed a template for sessions to use in their development of a policy.

ACT-3

The ACT recommends the following to the Presbytery for approval:
That the 2025 Per Capita be set at \$43.50.

Background: This summer the General Assembly raised their Per Capita and we are anticipating an increase at the Synod of the Northeast Assembly in October. The breakdown of the Per Capita is Presbytery -\$28.41, General Assembly - \$10.84, Synod -\$4.25.

Items for Report:

The ACT reports the following from their June 18, 2024 called meeting:

ACT-4

Approved the request from COM to call a Special Presbytery meeting for the Examination of Pamela Osborne for Ordination.

ACT-5

Stated Clerk updated the ACT on the filing of an appeal to the GAPJC in the case of Ryan Irmer vs. Presbytery of the Highlands

ACT-6

Reviewed the YTD Financial Report.

ACT-7

Received a report from the Personnel Committee.

ACT-8

Received a report from the Discernment Team on the planned retreat in August.

ACT-9

Received a report from Worship Planning Team concerning the September Presbytery Meeting worship.

ACT-10

Discussed the May Presbytery Meeting.

ACT-11

Reviewed and discussed the agenda and plans for the September Presbytery Meeting. Approved a starting time of 6:30pm.

ACT-12

Steve updated the ACT on the upcoming General Assembly.

ACT-13

Presbytery Leader's sabbatical Part 2 was June 1 to July 20 and included General Assembly at Salt Lake City.

The ACT reports the following from their August 27, 2024 called meeting:

ACT-14

Reviewed the agenda and other issues related to the September Presbytery meeting.

ACT-15

The Finance and Budget Team reported that the Year-to-Date financial report is on target with the 2024 budget.

ACT-16

Approved the Anti-Harassment Policy and voted to recommend it to the Presbytery at the September Presbytery Meeting.

ACT-17

The Finance and Budget Team presented the proposed 2025 budget which includes a \$1.00 increase in the Per Capita due to the General Assembly and Synod increasing their per capita. The 2025 budget will be

presented at the September Presbytery Meeting for its first reading with approval at the November Presbytery Meeting. Jeanne Radak shared the change in the model for our funding of the General Assembly and Synod (15% to GA and 4% to Synod). A detailed explanation will be provided at the Presbytery meeting.

ACT-18

The Funds Development Team reported that it will be working with PCUSA Mission Engagement Team on modeling a new way of funding mid councils. They also reported that they are working on developing workshops for churches around the issue of financial sustainability.

ACT-19

The Discernment Team reported that over the summer the leadership of the Presbytery developed a Working Vocation Statement. The ACT approved the Working Vocation Statement

- *Working Vocation Statement: God calls the Presbytery of the Highlands to equip, enable, and nurture the presbytery community as we exemplify the love of Christ in and through creative ministries preparing our faith communities to embrace and engage a new season.*

ACT-20

Approved the Presbytery Investment and Loan Application for Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church for \$67,000 to convert from oil to gas in the Parish House, Sanctuary and Manse.

ACT-21

Approved on behalf of the Presbytery a New Church Development Grant for Bound Brook Presbyterian for the Martinsville Adaptive Reuse Project (MARP) seeking a \$10,000 seed grant from the PCUSA.

ACT-22

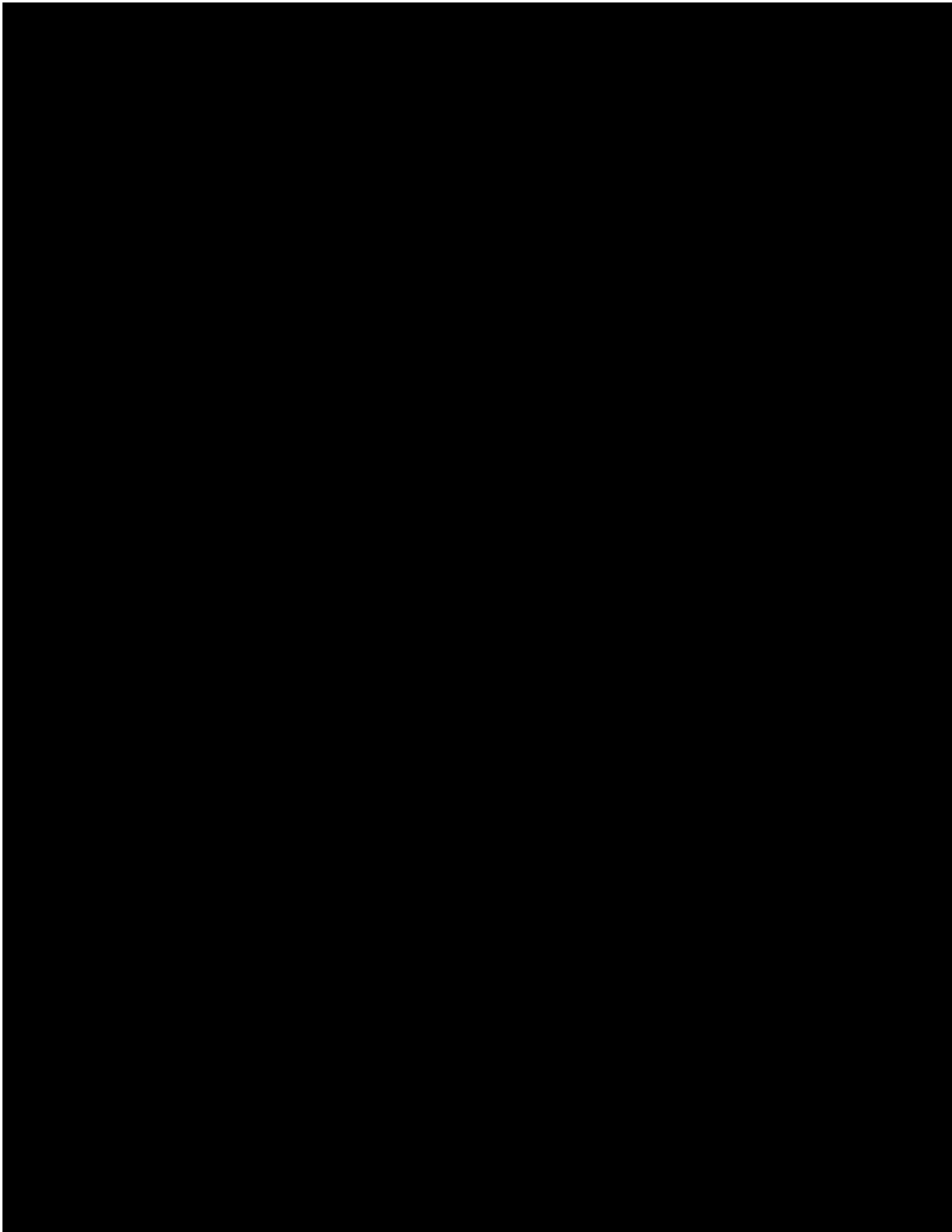
Approved a request from the Insurance Partnership to contribute \$3000 from the Special Resources Fund towards a fund to contract with a consultant to provide assistance to our churches concerning church insurance issues.

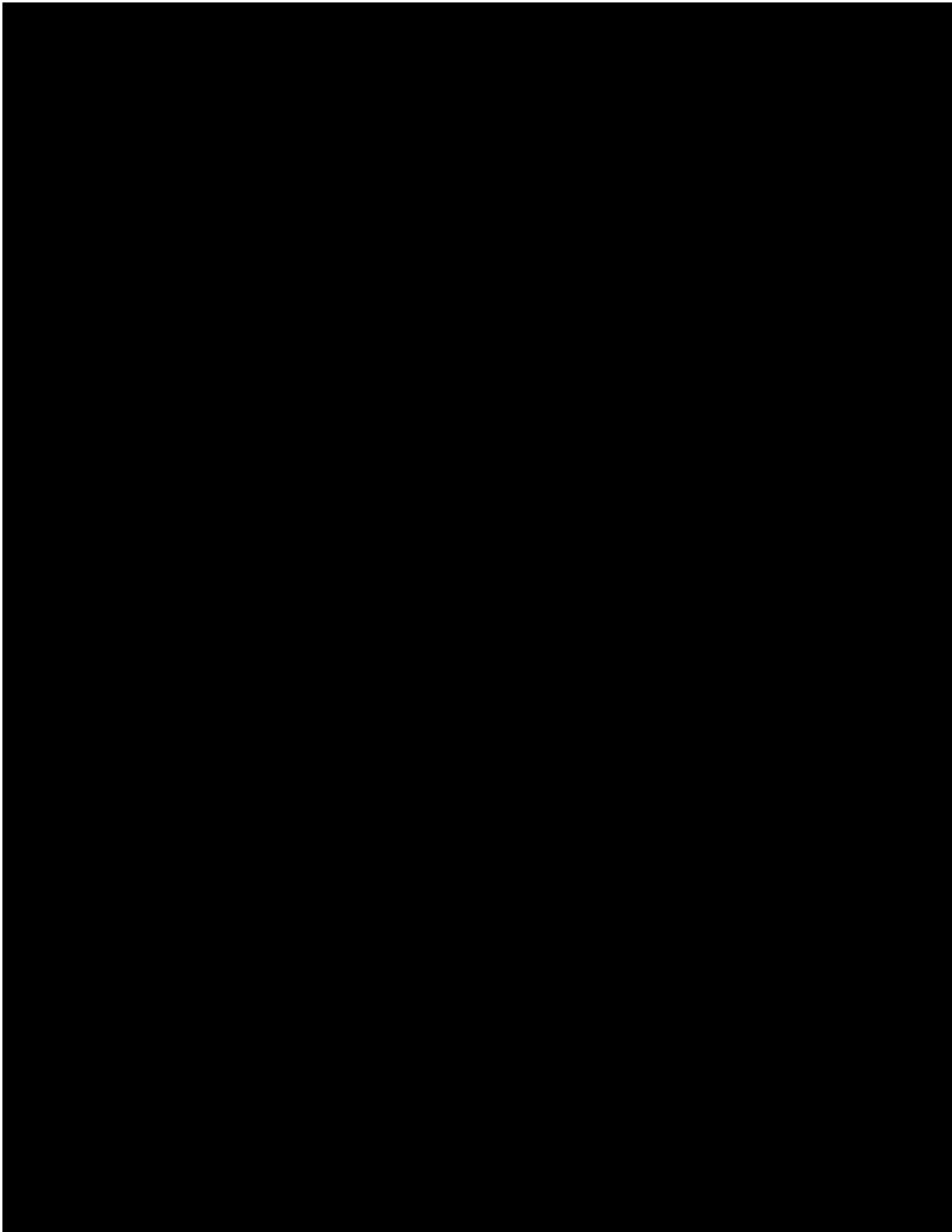
ACT-23

Approved signing the Group Affiliated Marketing Agreement to generate rebates for Insurance Partnership congregations based on loss experience.

ACT-24

Reassigned the task of the Presbytery's Anti-Racism Policy development to a task group. Encouraged the Committee on Representation to continue with their plans to provide a Workshop this Fall to assist sessions in writing their Anti-Racism policy.





ANTI HARASSMENT POLICY FOR PRESBYTERY OF THE HIGHLANDS

Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work. Administration is the process by which a council implements its decisions. Administration enables the church to give effective witness in the world to God's new creation in Jesus Christ and strengthens the church's witness to the mission of the triune God. ... All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.

Excerpted from *G-3.0106 - Administration of Mission* (2023)

Introduction

The Presbytery of Highlands strives to create and maintain an environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. When the Presbytery of Highlands gathers to do its work as a council, committees, commissions, or staff, it is committed to providing an environment that is characterized by mutual trust and is safe and free from harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any form. The Presbytery will not tolerate any type of harassment of its employees, minister members, ruling elders, volunteers, or ministry partners. Through enforcement of this policy and by education of its members and employees, the Presbytery will seek to prevent, correct and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

All members and employees (details for employees need to be spelled out separately in the presbytery's employee handbook) of the Presbytery, regardless of their role or position, are covered by and are expected to comply with this policy and to take appropriate measures to ensure that prohibited conduct does not occur. Appropriate disciplinary action, in accordance with the Book of Order or the Presbytery Personnel Policy, will be taken against any member or employee of the presbytery who violates this policy. Based on the seriousness of the offense, disciplinary action may include removal from a role or position.

Prohibited Behavior

As used in this policy, the term "harassment" includes sexual as well as actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected characteristic.

Any action may be considered harassing if it:

- creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment,
- unreasonably interferes with an employee's or Presbytery member's work performance; or
- adversely impacts an individual's employment or volunteer opportunities.

Examples of prohibited conduct include:

Microaggressions

A microaggression is a verbal or nonverbal slight that impacts an individual who might identify as being from a marginalized or non-mainstream community. Microaggressions are typically indirect, subtle, even unintentional, but nonetheless are considered discriminatory to the recipient.

Bullying

Bullying is a pattern of behavior in which the bully attempts to intimidate their victim. Examples of bullying behavior range from teasing, to extortion, to physical assault. In addition to physical interactions, bullying includes any form of interpersonal, including electronic, communication.

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is acting or using words to make an individual feel endangered. This includes actions that create actual harm to another individual or words that result in another individual having a reasonable belief that they are in danger.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, presbytery member, or a member of the public at any time will not be tolerated, this includes any form of electronic communication.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser. This includes any form of electronic communication.

Prevention Practices

The Presbytery of Highlands provides regular anti-harassment training to ensure an environment free of sexual and other unlawful harassment. Minister members, commissioners, committee/commission members, Presbytery employees (and other categories of presbytery leaders) are expected to complete an initial training event/program and participate regularly in anti-harassment education training opportunities.

All persons covered by this policy shall participate in presbytery approved training/program at least every 36 months. Documentation of participation and completion of the training/program will be included in a file at the presbytery office.

Reporting Procedures

The Presbytery has established the following procedure for lodging a complaint of harassment, discrimination or retaliation. The Presbytery will treat all aspects of the procedure confidentially to the extent reasonably possible.

- Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after an incident has occurred, preferably in writing.
- Complaints should be submitted to the COM co-moderator(s) or the Presbytery Leader.
- Normally the complaint will be shared with COM co-moderators who will determine if the complaint is forwarded to the COM Response Team or to the Stated Clerk for disciplinary action.

A Complainant has the right to initiate the disciplinary process established in the Book of Order by sending the complaint directly to the Stated Clerk, as outlined in D-7.0102

Responding Procedures

The responding procedures depend on who is making the complaint.

- Elders, church members, deacons, volunteers should first consult with the session.
- Staff members should consult the organization's personnel policy/committees
- minister members should consult the Committee on Ministry.

If none of those takes actions, the complaint should be brought to the Presbytery leader or Stated Clerk.

Matthew 18:15-17

“If your sibling sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector.”

Remembering that Jesus continued to associate and eat with gentiles and tax collectors, the recommended means of response is to focus on grace rather than judgment, and education more than discipline, in all but the most intentional acts of harassment.

To err on the side of grace is

- not to dismiss or diminish the offense, but to name it , gently rather than in anger;
- to recognize that people come into this subject matter from a variety of backgrounds and history;
- to acknowledge that, consequently, the time, length, and intensity of new understanding will vary from person to person.

This requires mutual conversation, and formal or informal courses of study, designed to equip more than reprimand or punish.

As a final resort one can turn to appropriate measures within the Constitution’s *Church Discipline*. It is incumbent upon us to remember, however, that despite its title, *“The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath, so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.”* (D-1.01 Power Vested in Christ’s Church).

We trust that, just as Jesus associated and ate with gentiles and tax collectors, so too does he in all of our contemporary failings, including intentional and unintentional demonstrations of harassment.

RESPONDING STRUCTURE

The Committee on Ministry shall maintain a team of trained Conflict management facilitators and mediators who will assist the presbytery, pastors and congregations in times of disagreement.

The Conflict Response Team will be called upon to assist in the resolution of a harassment complaint that has come before the COM attention. They will also be available to assist session and church leaders with the resolution of conflicts within a congregation.

The Conflict Response Team will report to the Stated Clerk and the COM moderators the outcome of the resolution process. All complaints and outcomes of the complaints will be confidential.

PREVENTION PRACTICES

The Presbytery of Highlands Presbytery shall provide regular anti-harassment training to ensure an environment free of sexual and other unlawful harassment. Minister Members are expected to complete the initial training and participate regularly in anti-harassment education training opportunities. Anti-Harassment Training will be part of the required Boundary Training for minister members, Certified Ruler Elders, presbytery staff, and elders/non-clergy on the pulpit supply

Definitions and Examples of Harassment

Microaggressions

A microaggression is a verbal or nonverbal slight that impacts an individual who might identify as being from a marginalized or non mainstream community. Microaggressions are typically indirect, subtle, even unintentional, but nonetheless are considered discriminatory to the recipient.

Examples of microaggressions include, but are not limited to:

- Asking a new acquaintance, “Where were you born?” Implication: “You don’t belong here. You are not one of us.”
- Saying, “I guess you like Korean/Mexican/soul/American food.” Implication: “I have identified you in terms of a racial/ethnic stereotype.”
- Asking the youngest member of the worship team to provide contemporary music. Implication: “We assume you won’t participate in worship unless we have something non-traditional, and we’re not interested enough to work with you to make worship relevant.”

Bullying

Bullying is a pattern of behavior in which the bully attempts to intimidate their victim. Examples of bullying behavior range from teasing, to extortion, to physical assault. In addition to physical interactions, bullying includes any form of interpersonal, including electronic, communication.

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

- Yelling, shouting, gesturing, “getting in someone’s face.”
- Directing, demanding, or ordering a council, committee, or commission to do what the leader or a small group of individuals wants.
- Standing in the doorway to the room or office while talking to staff, physically blocking their exit.
- Arbitrarily changing work hours or meeting times

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is acting or using words to make an individual feel endangered. This includes actions that create actual harm to another individual or words that result in another individual having a reasonable belief that they are in danger.

Examples of workplace violence amounting to behavioral misconduct include but are not limited to

- verbal or physical threats
- assaults or other violence
- any behavior that causes others to feel unsafe such as bullying, shouting, or name calling
- belligerent, threatening or offensive comments
- hitting, pushing, or other similar physical contact, including touching or threats to take such action
- gestures or the display of offensive signs or pictures
- other aggressive behavior

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, presbytery member, or a member of the public at any time will not be tolerated, this includes any form of electronic communication.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a

sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser. This includes any form of electronic communication. The following is a partial list of sexual harassment examples:

- Unwanted sexual advances.
- Offering anything in exchange for sexual favors.
- Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances.
- Visual conduct that includes leering, making sexual gestures, or displaying of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons or posters.
- Verbal conduct that includes making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs, or jokes.
- Verbal sexual advances or propositions.
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used to describe an individual, or suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations.
- Physical conduct that includes touching, assaulting, or impeding or blocking movements.
- Unwelcome sexual advances (either verbal or physical), requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment;
 - (2) submission or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for making employment or volunteering decisions; or,
 - (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Committee on Ministry Report – Part 1
From the September 10, 2024 meeting:

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

COM-1

The COM recommends the following:

That the Presbytery approve the call of the Rev. Tom Brown as the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township. This requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Presbytery – G-2.0504 (c).

Background: In February 2024 the Session of the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township (PCCT) requested that Rev. Tom Brown, Associate Pastor be called as the Pastor of the PCCT. The COM required the Session to provide a rationale for the change along with a description of the new position and changes to other staff positions. In the Spring the session, in consultation with COM, provided the required information. The COM set the requirement that all the Committee on Ministry, the Session, the PCCT congregation and the Presbytery of the Highlands had to approve the change and all votes had to be no less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the present voting members (G-2.0504 (c)). The Session approved with unanimous vote on May 13, 2024. The COM approved with unanimous vote on June 4, 2024. The Congregation approved unanimously on June 23, 2024. Rev. Jacqui Van Vliet, co-moderator of the COM, moderated the

congregational meeting.

Items for Report:

From the June 4, 2024 meeting:

COM-2

Rev. Jean Holmes was appointed moderator for the congregational meeting of the Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood.

COM-3

Approved the request from the Presbytery of the Northeast to transfer Rev. Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp for membership in their presbytery to serve as Interim Pastor at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield.

COM-4

Approved the request of Rev. Jin Han to consider his Interim Pastor Ministry to West Dover UCC congregation (Connecticut) as a validated ministry.

COM-5

Reported that the exit interview with the Session of Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon was conducted.

COM-6

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood and Rev. Arlene Romaine
- United Presbyterian Church in Belvidere and Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek
- Bound Brook Presbyterian Church and Rev. Linda Owens
- Calvary Presbyterian Church, Florham Park and Rev. Ron de Groot
- Highlands Presbyterian Church, Long Valley and Rev. Robin Palmer Burton
- Presbyterian Church of Milford and Rev. Dr. Linda Eckert-Bullock
- First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon and Rev. Bill Stone
- Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville and Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy
- Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township and Rev. Tom Brown
- First Presbyterian Church of Ogdensburg and Rev. Alden Johnson
- First Presbyterian Church of Washington and Rev. Jim Scovell

COM-7

Approved the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township staff position redistribution/structuring from a two pastor to a solo pastor model with Associate Pastor Rev. Tom Brown becoming Pastor. The COM approved the request unanimously.

COM-8

Approved the Ministry Discernment Profile for First Presbyterian Church of Newton.

COM-9

Approved the request to ACT to call a special meeting of the Presbytery to exam Pamela Osborne for ordination in order to serve as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Stanhope and Andover Presbyterian Church congregations.

From the July 30, 2024 meeting:

COM-10

Rev. Peter Magnan was appointed as Moderator for July for Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood.

COM-11

Completed an exit interview with Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township Session.

COM-12

Approved October as the month for mandated boundary training.

COM-13

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- First Presbyterian Church of Stanhope, Andover Presbyterian Church and Pamela Osborne
- Presbyterian Church in Morristown and Rev. Audrey Webber
- Frenchtown Presbyterian Church and Rev. Emily McCachren (12/1/2024)
- Presbyterian Church of Madison and Rev. Carol Howard (9/1/2024)
- Community Presbyterian Church, Chester and Rev. Chris Scrivens
- United Presbyterian Church, Flanders and Rev. Cliff Acklam
- First Presbyterian Church of Newton and Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden
- Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church and Rev. Dr. Chris Doyle
- Rockport Presbyterian Church, Port Murray and Rev. Bronc Radak

COM-14

Approved the revised Discernment Report for First Presbyterian Church of Berkshire Valley and approved the formation of a Pastor Nominating Committee for an installed pastor.

COM-15

Approved the request from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church of Wharton for waiver to allow a deacon to serve an additional term.

COM-16

The Presbytery Leader reported that after consultation between COM, ACT and the presbytery attorney, it was agreed that the Presbytery would appeal the Synod PJC decision in the case of Ryan Irmer vs. the Presbytery of the Highlands in two areas. The appeal requested clarity on Presbytery's authority requiring ministry evaluation and removal of coaching comments in the Synod report without being able to provide witnesses about the process used for coaching.

COM-17

The Presbytery Leader reported that a letter was sent reminding Scott Foster of his requirement to follow the decision and directive of the Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission in the case of Scott Foster vs. Presbytery of the Highlands.

COM-18

The following will have ordination/installation services this Fall:

- Pamela Osborne, Andover/Stanhope – September 29 – Ordination and Installation at the First Presbyterian Church of Stanhope.
- Rev. Eric Lai – October 6, Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church.
- Rev. Arlene Romaine – September 8- Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood.

September 10, 2024

Committee on Ministry Report – Part 2

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

From the September 3, 2024 meeting:

COM-19

Approved the request from the Presbytery of the Coastal Carolina for the transfer of membership of Rev. Caroline Jinkins to serve as the pastor at the Little Chapel on the Boardwalk.

COM-20

Distributed grants to meet two requests from the Clergy Care Fund.

COM-21

Approved that there will be no change in the minimum Terms of Call because of the increase in the Board of Pensions dues.

COM-22

Approved the Final Terms of Call report for 2024. Because of the Presbytery's online policy of not publishing personal information, the spreadsheet is available upon request by contacting the presbytery office. The spreadsheet will be included in the Presbytery's minutes for review.

COM-23

Approved the Installation Commission for Rev. Tom Brown as pastor of Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township if the way be clear following the vote of the Presbytery on September 10, 2024.

COM-24

Approved the Ordination and Installation Commission for Pamela Osborne, First Presbyterian Church of Stanhope and Andover Presbyterian Church.

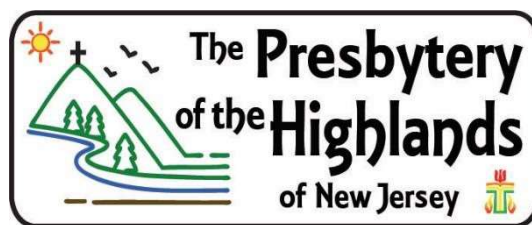
COM-25

Reported that Congregational Care Team approve the Covenant Agreements between the Presbyterian Church of Madison and Rev. Carol Howard and between Frenchtown Presbyterian Church and Rev. Emily McCachren.

COM-26

COM Liaison, Rev. Mike Atzert, reported that Larison's Corner, United First Presbyterian Church of Amwell, Ringoes, will be celebrating their 275th Anniversary on September 22, 2024.

Presbytery of the Highlands BOP requirements and recommendations for 2025



Introduction

For 2025 there are three options for Benefits and Medical for pastors and their families

Congregational Package - required for all installed pastors and available to any congregational pastoral leader (non-installed and Commissioned Ruling Elders - CRE)

- Pension Benefits - 10%
- Medical - member only PPO 16%
- Medical coverage for spouses and/or children is available for additional fees.

- Children - \$8950
- Spouse - \$11,000
- Family - \$20,600

Covenant Package - any employee working 20 hours or more per week

- Employees who are not ministers
- Ministers serving in congregational settings (non-installed)
- Ministers serving outside the congregational setting
- Medical Coverage PPO depends on zip code
 - Same PPO as Congregational Package
 - No calculator is available currently. Must call BOP for cost for PPO for region.
 - Similar set up for Medical Coverage of Self, Spouse, children, Family

Transitional Package - available to ministers who are in the present Pastor Participation Program as of *Dec 31, 2024*.

- Continuation of the dues structure of the Pastor Participation through 12/31/2027.
- Each year the percentage will increase. For 2025 it is 43% which is both medical and pension.
- If you do not choose Transitional Package in 2025 you can not go back to it in 2026. 2025.

All pastors in Pastor Participation as of 12/31/2024 will automatically be rolled into the transitional package. 43% effective salary and includes BOP benefits.

Transitional Package vs. Congregational Pastor Package

The cost difference for family coverage between Transitional and Congregational Package may be slightly lower for the Transitional for 2025 or minimally higher depending on the effective salary.

Breakeven for family coverage between the Congregational Package and the Transitional Package is around \$113,000 effective package. If you make more than \$113,000 effective salary the Congregational Pastor Package is more cost effective.

For clergy who are not installed and serving a congregation they can choose the Congregational Pastor package, the Covenant Package or the Transitional package.

The Covenant Package cost is based on your zip code. Currently there is no online calculator to determine the cost for an individual, spouse, children or family. The Employer representative must call and speak with a BOP representative to determine those cost.

BOP is providing a 3 year grant program for congregations, **starting in 2025**, calling a shared pastor. The grant can be up to \$10,000 a year.

COM REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Board of Pensions Medical and Benefits coverage is required of all installed pastors.
- The Board of Pensions Benefits is required of all non-installed pastors working more than 20 hours.
- Board of Pensions Medical is required of all non-installed pastors working more than 20 hours unless they can demonstrate they have insurance from another source (example: other work or spouse). The Pastor is required to provide annual proof of Medical coverage with their annual TOC.

Details for Requirements

BOP Benefits

- All pastors/CRE serving 20 hours or more shall have the BOP Benefits. This is the 10% of the effective salary which includes Pension, Death and Disability, Temporary

Disability. This also includes at members cost access to dental, vision and death benefits.

- Exception is retired pastors serving a congregation

BOP Medical Coverage

FAMILY COVERAGE

- Sessions/Congregations are required for 2025 to provide all installed pastors, family coverage, if needed, through either the Congregational Pastors Package or the Transitional Pastor's Package.
- Sessions/congregations are required for 2025 to provide family coverage for non- installed pastors, if needed, through the Congregational Pastors Package, Transitional Pastor's Package or The Covenant Package.
- Exceptions will be made for those who are clergy couples that need family coverage or situations where the spouse presently also has employer provided (noncontributory) insurance that covers the family.

SPOUSE COVERAGE

- Sessions/Congregations are required for 2025 to provide for installed pastors, Spouse coverage, if needed, through either the Congregational Pastors Package or the Transitional Pastor's Package.
- Sessions/congregations are required for 2025 to provide spouse coverage for non- installed pastors, if needed, through the Congregational Pastors Package, Transitional Pastor's Package or The Covenant Package.
- Exceptions will be made for those where the spouse already has employer provided (noncontributory) insurance coverage . Should the spouse no longer have insurance coverage

the church will be required to provide it.

CHILDREN COVERAGE

- Sessions/Congregations are required for 2025 to provide for installed pastors, *child(ren) coverage, if needed, through either the Congregational Pastors Package or the Transitional Pastor's Package.
- Sessions/congregations are required for 2025 to provide child (ren) coverage for non- installed pastors, if needed, through the Congregational Pastors Package, Transitional Pastor's Package or The Covenant Package.
- Exceptions will be made for those where the children are covered by the other parent's employer provided (noncontributory) insurance coverage . Should the child (ren) no longer have insurance the church will provide coverage.

*child(ren) – 26 years or younger

HOW TO RECEIVE AN EXCEPTION

The Committee on Ministry has several members who have been trained in the 2025 Benefits/Medical Plan. They are available to work with the pastor and session or personnel committee to work out the best options for your situation. They are available whether you need an exception or not.

If an exception is needed you do need to meet with one of the COM team.

After meeting with one of the COM BOP team you will be asked to include with your annual Terms of Call an agreement describing the exception.

RETIRED PASTORS

BOP Retired Pastors serving less than 20 hours per week are exempt from BOP requirements.

Retired Pastors serving more than 20 hours a week are exempt from BOP requirements, but the church is required to pay 12% post-retirement service dues. The COM recommends that the church add to the retired pastors 403b retirement savings plan.

September 10, 2024

Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report

Items for Consent Agenda:

CPM-1

The CPM recommends the following:

- The approval of the Commissioned Ruling Elder Policy. (See Attached.)

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

From the May 13, 2024 meeting:

CPM-2

The Committee met with Inquirer Benjamin Willans for his annual consultation. Benjamin is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Whippany.

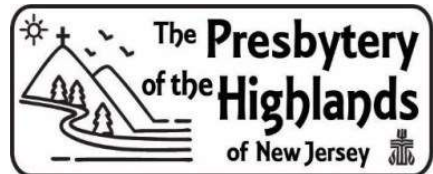
From the July 15, 2024 meeting:

CPM-3

The Committee met with Candidate Melanie Williams for her annual consultation. Melanie is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Sparta.

Received the request to remove Melanie Williams from Candidacy.

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey Commissioned Ruling Elder Policy



AUTHORITY

According to the *Book of Order (G-2.10)*, a presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be “commissioned to limited pastoral service” when, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, the presbytery “determines that its strategy for mission requires it.”

In the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) is responsible for the approval of applicants according to the qualifications below as well as their training and examination in accordance with (G-2.1002). The CPM is also responsible for approving candidates as ready to accept a position as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE). The Committee on Ministry (COM) is responsible for authorizing the placement and commissioning in accordance with (G-2.1001-2.1004). The CPM and the COM consider the commissioning of ruling elders a further means of fulfilling the presbytery’s commitment to ensure that all congregations within its bounds have the best possible leadership in ministry.

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER

A CRE is a salaried or volunteer ruling elder interested in congregational ministry, affirmed by their session, and trained and commissioned by the presbytery to pastoral service in a particular parish or congregation in the Presbytery. Normally, a CRE provides pastoral leadership in congregations that are unable to secure pastoral leadership from a teaching elder because of congregational size, geography, finances or language. CREs may also be commissioned to serve specialized ministries such as immigrant or emerging ministries. A CRE is not an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament but is commissioned only to a particular congregation in Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey and may not provide pastoral leadership or services outside of that commission or after the commission ends. As part of their commission, the COM will establish whether a CRE is authorized to moderate the session of the congregation to which they are commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery, through the COM, shall review the commission at least annually.

QUALIFICATIONS

Normally, the qualifications for acceptance into the program shall be that the individual (known as an “applicant” until CPM accepts them into the CRE process, and thereafter as an “aspirant”):

- Senses that they have a call to ministry.
- Is a member in good standing of a congregation in the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey.
- Possesses recognized leadership ability in the congregation as a ruling elder and has been ordained for at least two years.
- Demonstrates pastoral ability and shows a commitment to personal spiritual growth through prayer, Bible reading and devotions.
- Holds a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent, except in certain cases approved by CPM. The CPM shall determine appropriate credit for post high school course work and life experience.
- Is endorsed by the session of the congregation where they are a member.
- Is recommended by three references, at least one of whom is a teaching elder and a member of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey.
- Accepts and has an understanding of the ethical standards of the PCUSA and the presbytery of Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey.
- Is willing to accept the care and guidance of a mentor appointed by the Presbytery.

APPLICATION

Qualified individuals interested in pursuing a commission to pastoral service process (the aspirant) should complete the following steps:

1. Submit a completed *Commissioned Ruling Elder Application* (Appendix A) along with the supplemental questions and list of references to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
2. Obtain a letter of personal reference from three individuals familiar with their involvement in the Presbyterian Church (USA), including one from the applicant’s pastor or another teaching elder in the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey. Letters should address the following areas of the applicant’s readiness to enter a program of training for ministry:
 - a. Personal faith
 - b. Commitment to the PC(USA)
 - c. Gifts, talents and skills for pastoral ministry
 - d. a recent example of service to the congregation
3. Obtain a written letter of endorsement from their home session.
4. Submit to a criminal background check, which the Presbytery will complete prior to the applicant’s first meeting with CPM.
5. Meet with the CPM for an initial consultation and endorsement. At this meeting, the CPM shall:
 - a. Review the individual’s application, reference letters and related materials.
 - b. Discuss the roles and responsibilities of a CRE with a specific focus on how a CRE’s commission differs from the ordination of a teaching elder.
 - c. Provide an overview of the CRE training process and steps toward commissioning once it is complete.
 - d. Determine the applicant’s readiness to enter a program of training and education according to the requirements below.
 - e. Assign a liaison from the committee to work with the applicant during this process.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The aspirant must complete a suitable educational/training program that will prepare them to lead

congregations in all aspects of service to God and each other. The Presbytery of the Highlands in New Jersey does not offer CRE training, but will work with each aspirant, through its assigned liaison, to design a program that shall include formalized instruction in the following areas:

- Presbyterian Polity
- New and Old Testament, including Biblical Exegesis
- Reformed Worship and Sacraments
- Reformed Theology
- Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Christian Education

The proposed training program must be approved by the CPM prior to beginning any coursework. The aspirant may choose to enroll in a designated CRE training program offered by a college, seminary, or other governing body. In cases where this is not practical due to financial and/or time constraints, the CPM will work with the aspirant to find appropriate classes, seminars and/or courses that will satisfy these requirements. Ordinarily, instruction is to be at the post-graduate level, with exceptions to be determined by the CPM.

In addition to the courses outlined above, in accordance with G-2.1002, “A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements.” This boundary training must be completed before the year-long internship can begin.

CPM may require the aspirant to attend additional presbytery workshops and/or training events to supplement his or her training.

INTERNSHIP

Each aspirant shall also be required to satisfactorily complete a year-long internship in a congregation of the Presbytery of the Highlands. The internship shall offer opportunities for preaching, worship leadership and pastoral care, and involvement in other aspects of the congregation’s life. The congregation’s pastor, who must be a teaching elder in good standing with the presbytery, will supervise and meet regularly with the intern.

Throughout the education and training phase, the aspirant will meet at least annually with the CPM to review their progress and determine other needs or future plans.

If a CRE who has been trained or formally commissioned by another presbytery seeks to be commissioned to a congregation in the Presbytery of the Highlands, the CPM will evaluate the training program and explore past ministerial experiences of the CRE aspirant. The CPM would then interview the CRE aspirant to determine if they have met the standards established for training CREs in the Presbytery of the Highlands. Any discrepancies of training will be made up at the discretion of the CPM, prior to the recommendation of the CRE aspirant to COM for recommendation to a congregation for commissioning by the presbytery.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

All aspirants must complete a psychological evaluation approximately one year after beginning the

CRE process. They are responsible for signing the necessary releases to have the results of their psychological evaluation sent to the chairperson of the CPM. The entire psychological evaluation will be reviewed with the members of the CPM and discussed with the aspirant at their annual consultation. Confidentiality is assured. This evaluation is a tool to be used to point out strengths and areas where growth is needed. It may also highlight areas of concern and bring to light issues which need to be addressed in order for the aspirant to become effective in their future commissioning(s). Aspirants will not be commissioned until this process has been completed.

The CPM requires that the evaluation be done at:

Physis Associates
Dr. Dennis J. O'Hara
109 Fox Knoll Lane
West Chester, PA 19380
610-269-3037
<https://physisassociates.com/>

The chairperson of the CPM should be notified when an appointment has been made so that payment of the presbytery's one-third, church's one-third, and aspirant's one-third shares of the cost may be arranged. The aspirant is responsible for the cost of transportation, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Financial assistance may be available. Appointments are generally booked months in advance. Those interested are encouraged, therefore, to call the center for an appointment as early as possible.

ANNUAL GRANT

The Presbytery can provide a \$1000 grant annually to those persons formally in the CRE process who have completed a Financial Planning form, and who have submitted a written request indicating the purpose of the grant. This may include the psychological examination, books, or other course-related expenses.

EXAMINATION

At the successful completion of all the coursework and following the desires of the aspirant, an examination of the aspirant shall be arranged by the CPM. The examination shall be scheduled at a time, place, and location and in a manner determined by the CPM, including virtual meetings.

Prior to, and in preparation for the examination, CRE aspirants must submit to CPM (carefully prepared and typed double spaced) the following items:

- **Sermon Manuscript:** The length of the sermon, including the reading of the scripture, should be no more than 10 minutes in length. This sermon will be preached at a CPM meeting or in a setting approved by CPM.
- **Exegesis:** Exegetical study of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose including a study of key words, discussion of context, notes on significant points of grammar and variant readings, and an interpretation of the passage.
- **Statement of Faith:** This statement should be a statement of the CRE aspirant's personal faith (not a restatement of a creed) and ought to address matters of faith, including but not limited to: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the life and mission of the Church, the authority of Scripture, and the role of the Sacraments. The statement of faith should not be longer than one side of an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. It should be single-spaced, and double-spaced between paragraphs. We recommend sensitivity to the use of inclusive language.

The material shall be reviewed by the CPM and discussed with the aspirant. In addition, the scripture will be read and preached to the CPM. Input may also be offered or requested from the aspirant's mentor or pastor. Based on this discussion and examination:

1. The CPM may request that the material be revisited or rewritten.
2. The CPM may approve the aspirant's readiness and preparedness to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

After the CPM has approved the candidate as ready to be commissioned, the candidate may actively seek a position as a CRE. An invitation to serve must be recommended by the COM and approved by the Presbytery. When commissioned, they come under the supervision of the Presbytery through the COM.

COMMISSIONING

Upon recommendation by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to the Committee on Ministry (COM), the designated commissioned ruling elder may complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) and may be considered for commissioning to a specific congregation or validated ministry as a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

Upon commissioning to a particular pastoral service, the CRE must meet the same standards of boundary training as minister members of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey.

This commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as designated by the session, COM, and the CRE and approved by the Presbytery. It should document in writing the CRE's full compensation package, including salary, vacation time, study leave and other allowances as determined by the Session, the CRE, and COM. A CRE's commission may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the Session, the CRE, or COM, with approval of the Presbytery.

The commissioning of a ruling elder to a particular congregation or specialized ministry is an act of the presbytery. Ordinarily, the commissioning service shall take place at a stated meeting of the Presbytery. If other circumstances warrant, and if Presbytery approves, the commissioning may take place at another time and place. Refer to the *Book of Order* (W-4.0404) for questions asked at the time of commissioning.

The CRE may perform pastoral functions not requiring ordination as a teaching elder, in agreement with the session such as teaching, visitation of members in home or hospital, visitation of prospective members, supervising Sunday school, leading music, prayer meetings, or study groups or conducting funerals. If commissioned to a congregation, the CRE will ordinarily be the primary leader of worship and preacher for the congregation.

Upon the written request of the session to the COM, and with the recommendation of the mentor and supervisor, the CRE may also be authorized by the Presbytery to carry out other functions allowed in the *Book of Order*, G-2.1001:

1. Administer the Lord's Supper
2. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism
3. Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of, and when invited by, the moderator of the Session appointed by the Presbytery;
4. Have voice in meetings of the Presbytery;
5. Have a vote in meetings of the Presbytery;
6. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible

committee of the Presbytery.

7. May be appointed by the Presbytery as moderator of the session to the congregation to they have been commissioned.

If the CRE is to be commissioned to a validated ministry, rather than a congregation of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey, then the CRE will follow the same procedure through the COM for confirmation of that field of service as a validated ministry as followed by teaching elders. (*Book of Order*, G-2.0503a)

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commissioned Ruling Elder shall work under the supervision of a mentor who is assigned by the COM and is a teaching elder. The mentor and supervisor will meet regularly with the CRE, at least annually with the CRE and members of the session of the commissioning congregation to conduct the annual review of the work of the CRE. The results of this annual review will be communicated to the CRE and the COM.

The CRE shall comply with the polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA), including G-4.0301, and the by-laws of the congregation(s) being served. The CRE is expected to participate in continuing educational training experiences while commissioned.

Field Education for Commissioned Ruling Elders

Purpose

Field education is an integral part of preparation for Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Through supervised experiences in congregations, the aspirant has an opportunity to:

- **develop basic skills in the practice of ministry,**
- **clarify and focus the sense of call,**
- **discern specific gifts for ministry,**
- **integrate theology and theory with experience,**
- **develop pastoral identity and character,**
- **build a network of persons (in ordained ministry and otherwise) who can serve as references as the aspirant seeks a first call and who can continue to be mentors during early years in ministry.**

Requirements

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey requires supervised field education. *Service in the Inquirer's/Candidate's home church is not acceptable to the presbytery.* CRE aspirants are encouraged to reduce their involvement in their home sessions and active leadership roles in their home congregations while they are serving their field education assignments due to the additional commitment.

Fulfilling the required unit will ordinarily be accomplished:

- **in a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation that is not their home church,**
- **part time (6 hours per week),**
- **8-9 months, to include the entire program and liturgical year**

The CPM reserves the right to require a second year of field education in a Presbyterian church due to circumstances and/or readiness for a call.

Expectations

It is expected that the aspirant will get a well-rounded parish experience. This will include:

- **sharing in worship leadership, including occasional preaching;**
- **sharing pastoral responsibilities as available, including visitations, weddings, funerals, etc.;**
- **attending session meetings as permitted and time allows;**
- **and any other activities that might be available to them; such as leading a Bible Study or adult education class, or assisting in youth ministry.**

The pastor and aspirant should meet at least twice per month to review the aspirant's experiences, ask questions, share observations, etc.

Preaching outside of the field education placement is discouraged as it (1) limits the aspirant's supervised leadership when liturgist, and (2) denies the supervisor opportunity to witness the aspirant's preaching.

Ordinarily, field education will include the entire liturgical and program calendar, from the start of Sunday School and other programming (September), Advent/Christmas (November-December), Ordinary Time (January-February), and Lent/Easter (March-May). The goal is that the aspirant get a well-rounded experience of the church and program year.

Field Education Plans and Reporting

All field education plans must be submitted to and approved by the CPM prior to acceptance of the position. The plan shall indicate how the Expectations (above) are expected to be met, while the mid-point and final evaluations (see below) will include actual goals and achievements in those same categories.

The field education plan shall include agreement on how the church and personal calendars will be coordinated. For example, personal breaks or holidays may coincide with Advent/Christmas or Lent/Easter, but worship leadership at these times is an important experience for the aspirant. Self-care provided by breaks are important, but so is the real-life experience of the challenging schedule these seasons require.

At the mid-point of the field education experience, aspirant and supervisor will meet to evaluate how well they are living into the covenant they established at the beginning of the experience. At the end of this experience they will meet again, to evaluate aspirant's progress toward their learning goals and other progress made during the year. The supervisor shall provide the aspirant with a written report that can include, but is not limited to an evaluation of the aspirant's gifts, growth areas, experiences, responses and any suggestions the supervisor might have for the future growth of the aspirant.

Following these mid-point and final evaluations, it is the aspirant's responsibility to submit the forms to their CPM liaison within 30 days of dates established by CPM. The liaison will forward this material to a CPM Co-moderator. Completing them is necessary for meeting their presbytery requirement. These reports will be kept confidential, as is the practice for the required psychological evaluation.

Compensation

Compensation shall be negotiated between aspirant and church, and the arrangements included in the field education plan provided to the CPM. Reimbursement is expected for the following: mileage for private vehicle use while on official church business (but normally not for commuting to the site)

at the current IRS rate; any pre-approved, out-of-pocket expenses such as supplies, trips, meals, or overnight lodging necessitated by the field education work.

Note: Stipends are taxable income pursuant to IRS guidelines.

***With appreciation for materials created by the Presbytery of Boston, and Pittsburgh and Princeton Theological Seminaries.**

For Prospective and Approved Field Education Supervisors*

Purpose

Field education is an integral part of preparation for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) . Through supervised experiences in congregations and agencies, the aspirant has an opportunity to:

- develop basic skills in the practice of ministry,
- clarify and focus the sense of call,
- discern specific gifts for ministry,
- integrate theology and theory with experience,
- develop pastoral identity and character,
- build a network of persons (in ordained ministry and otherwise) who can serve as references as the aspirant seeks a first call and who can continue to be mentors during early years in ministry.

Requirements

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey requires 8-9 months of supervised field education, to cover the entirety of the church year.

Fulfilling the required unit will ordinarily be accomplished:

- in a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation that is not their home church,
- part time (6 hours per week),
- 8-9 months, to include the entire program and liturgical year

Expectations

It is expected that the seminarian will get a well-rounded parish experience. This will include:

- sharing in worship leadership, including occasional preaching;
- sharing pastoral responsibilities as available, including visitations, weddings, funerals, etc.;
- attending session meetings as permitted and time allows;
- and any other activities that might be available to them, such as leading a Bible Study or adult education class, or assisting in youth ministry.

The pastor and aspirant should meet at least twice per month to review the aspirant's experiences, ask questions, share observations, etc.

Preaching outside of the field education placement is discouraged as it (1) limits the aspirant's supervised leadership when liturgist, and (2) denies the supervisor opportunity to witness the aspirant's preaching.

Ordinarily, field education over the full academic year or following graduation will include the entire liturgical and program calendar, from the start of Sunday School and other programming (September), Advent/Christmas (November-December), Ordinary Time (January-February), and Lent/Easter (March-May). The goal is that the aspirant get a well-rounded experience of the church and program year.

Field Education Plans and Reporting

All field education plans must be submitted to and approved by the CPM prior to acceptance of the position. The plan shall indicate how the Expectations (above) are expected to be met, while the

mid-point and final evaluations (see below) will include actual goals and achievements in those same categories.

The field education plan shall include agreement on how the church and personal calendars will be coordinated. For example, personal breaks or holidays may coincide with Advent/Christmas or Lent/Easter, but worship leadership at these times is an important experience for the aspirant. Self-care provided by breaks are important, but so is the real-life experience of the challenging schedule these seasons require.

At the mid-point of the field education experience, aspirant and supervisor will meet to evaluate how well they are living into the covenant they established at the beginning of the experience. At the end of this experience they will meet again, to evaluate aspirant's progress toward their learning goals and other progress made during the year. The supervisor shall provide the aspirant with a written report that can include, but is not limited to an evaluation of the aspirant's gifts, growth areas, experiences, responses and any suggestions the supervisor might have for the future growth of the aspirant.

Following these mid-point and final evaluations, it is the aspirant's responsibility to submit the forms to their CPM liaison within 30 days of dates established by CPM. The liaison will forward this material to a CPM Moderator or Co-moderator. Completing them is necessary for meeting their presbytery requirement. These reports will be kept confidential, as is the practice for the required psychological evaluation.

Compensation

Compensation shall be negotiated between aspirant and church, and the arrangements included in the field education plan provided to the CPM. Reimbursement is expected for the following: mileage for private vehicle use while on official church business (but normally not for commuting to the site) at the current IRS rate; any pre-approved, out-of-pocket expenses such as supplies, trips, meals, or overnight lodging necessitated by the field education work.

Note: Stipends are taxable income pursuant to IRS guidelines.

Questions for Prospective Pastor/Church to Consider

- How would you describe your site's broader community context?
- How would you describe your site's current areas of strength?
- How would you describe your supervisory style?
- What opportunities could you make available for an aspirant at your site?
- For what tasks or ministry areas would you like an aspirant to take responsibility?
- What monthly stipend, if any, could you provide an aspirant?
- What mileage reimbursement, if any, could you provide an aspirant?
- What sort of work environment and resources would be available to an aspirant?

*With appreciation for materials created by the Presbytery of Boston, and Pittsburgh and Princeton Theological Seminaries.

Appendix A **Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey Commissioned Ruling Elder Application**

Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone: Home, Work

Email:

Occupation/Place of Employment:

Academic Background

List the academic institutions you have attended, beginning with high school and complete the information requested:

| <u>Institution</u> | <u>Dates Attended</u> | <u>Program or Major</u> | <u>Diploma or Degree</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|

Describe any previous experience in Preaching or CRE Training:

Occupational History

List the three most recent full-time or part-time positions in which you have been employed and also provide the following information: job title, dates of employment, aspect most enjoyed, aspect most disliked.

1. Current employment:

2. Next most recent:

3. Second most recent:

Congregational History

Date and place of baptism:

Date and place of profession of faith:

Congregation Membership (name, city, and state):

Date joined:

Date ordained an elder:

Date ordained a deacon (if applicable):

List other congregations where you have been a member:

List areas of involvement in your local congregation both as a participant and leader. Indicate areas of leadership.

List areas of involvement in Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly.

List voluntary services, civic or social organizations of which you are or have been a member. Indicate your extent of participation and your role.

List any factors that may place limits on your ability to receive training or to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions for Reflection

Write a response to each of the following. These responses should be attached to this application.

1. In one or two paragraphs, describe yourself as a person.
2. Describe briefly what it means to you to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder. What has motivated you to consider this program?
3. Write a brief statement of your personal faith describing what you believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and your relationship to them.
4. What does it mean to you to be Presbyterian?
5. Describe your current spiritual journey, spiritual practices, prayer life, and disciplines.
6. Who/what is your ideal/role model for ministry? What do you expect in your ministry? What aspect of ministry do you find least interesting?

References

On a separate sheet attached to this application, please list three people who will serve as references. One should be your pastor or a teaching elder within Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey. Please include name, mailing address, email, daytime phone number and relationship to you.

Please ask your references to answer the following questions and send their responses under separate cover directly to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry at the following address: The Presbytery of the Highlands, 390 Route 10 West, Randolph, NJ 07869 or email it to one or both co-moderators.

1. How long have you known the applicant and would you say you know the applicant well?
2. What is your relationship to the applicant and under what circumstances have you observed his or her leadership in the church?
3. To what extent does the applicant's way of life demonstrate the teachings of Christ?
4. What is your experience of the applicant's commitment to the Presbyterian Church (USA)?
5. What special gifts, talents and skills does the applicant exhibit for service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder?
6. What is the most recent example of the applicant's service to the congregation?
7. If the applicant were your Commissioned Ruling Elder, what specific areas would you wish him or her to improve?

After completing the application, email it to one or both co-moderators.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

September 10, 2024

The Nominating Committee recommends:

- **Rev. Chad Rodgers**
Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center
Moderator of the Presbytery of the Highlands for 2025
- **Rev. Ryon Herin**
First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway
Vice Moderator of the Presbytery of the Highlands for 2025

YOUNG LEADER FORMATION TEAM REPORT

September 10, 2024

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items to Report:

YLFT-1

The YLF Team hosted its Annual Summer Workshop for Youth Leaders on Sunday, August 25th from 2 – 6:30 pm. We were hosted by Rev. Chad Rodgers on the beautiful grounds of Johnsonburg Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center. Our speaker was Liz Moore, Assistant Director of the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary, who led us in a Youth Ministry Design Workshop. Liz led the group of about 20 people from the Highlands and neighboring Presbyteries through the design-thinking and planning process as a way to help us imagine and innovate ways to connect with and serve young people in our churches and communities.

The room was energized as we moved through the steps of the design-thinking process!

Empathize: gain an understanding of the young people you are seeking to minister to. . . what do they say, think, feel and do?

Define: the problem/need or opportunity and consider how the church is uniquely poised to help.

Liz encouraged us to “fall in love with the problem” and come alongside young people with empathy rather than thinking the young people themselves are the problem, which they are not. Refine your thinking into a “How might we” statement. . . “How might we (verb) a (adjective, noun) so that (group) can (verb).”

For example, “How might we nurture a safe, loving, inclusive and wider space so that young people can discover their identity as beloved children of God?”

Ideate: brainstorm without limitations or filters, ways to respond to the “how might we” statement.

Prototype: Choose the idea that seems to best address the “how might we” in a way that is doable within your ministry context. Develop a plan of action, knowing it will need refining over time.

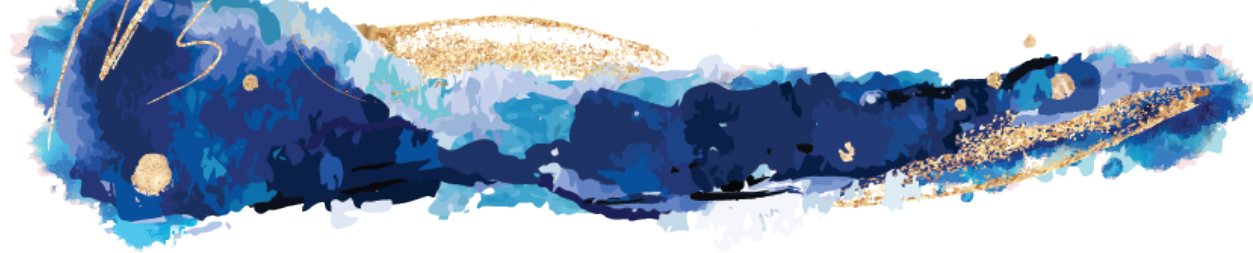
Test: Liz mentioned “the pancake principle.” The first pancake never comes out quite right and you make adjustments over time. Your ideas and plans will also need refining over time. It is important to know that failure is a part of the process and to look at moments of “failure” as opportunities to learn and adjust and refine and grow. Liz also shared a quote from the Vineyard Ministry – Faith is spelled R-I-S-K. We were all challenged to put that quote into action!

The Design-thinking process is helpful for all areas of church planning. Slides and resources from the workshop can be found on the Young Leader Formation Team Webpage (see link below). Our time together closed with worship, led by Katherine Scott-Kirschner and a meal provided by Johnsonburg.

YLFT-2

Presbyterian Youth Triennium

July 28-31, 2025 Louisville, Kentucky



We are seeking volunteers to help with planning a delegation from the Highlands and neighboring Presbyteries to attend Triennium 2025! Please contact Steve Shussett steves@highlandspresbytery.org if you are interested in joining the Triennium Planning Team. The information we know so far is listed below:

Programming and meals will be held at the Kentucky International Convention Center with participants staying at nearby Triennium-designated hotels at special PYT rates.

\$199 fee includes all programming, registration, meals, an event t-shirt, and more. Housing at Triennium-designated hotels will be an additional cost along with travel which has yet to be determined.

<https://presbyterianyouthtriennium.org/>

We are looking to welcome new members onto the Young Leader Formation Team. If interested, contact Steve Shussett (steves@highlandspresbytery.org) or Amy Clarkson (amyclarkson103@gmail.com).

Save the Date: Family Spirituality Camp - March 1, 2025!

This will be a Saturday morning event designed for families, to support home routines and rituals that encourage spiritual awareness and connection. More information to come!