

The 19th Stated Meeting of The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey March 11, 2025

*(to be approved at the 20th 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 19th Stated Meeting on March 11, 2025, on the ZOOM platform.

The Moderator, Rev. Chad Rodgers called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with an opening prayer.

The Moderator introduced the Zoom Meeting Process.

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	Vacant	V		A
Alpha	Rev. Scott DeCaro	P		A
Andover	Rev. Pamela Osborne	P		A
Basking Ridge (3)	Rev. Dennis Jones	P		A
	Rev. Dr. Maureen Paterson	P		A
				A
Bedminster, Lamington	Vacant	V		A
Belvidere	Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek	A		A
Blairstown	Rev. David Harvey	P	Elizabeth Topolski	P
Boonton	Rev. Carie Morgan	P	Meg Meyer	P
Bound Brook (2)	Rev. Linda Owens	P	Jamie Breeding	P
				A
Branchville	Rev. Dr. Nancy Young	P	Susan Parsons	P
	Rev. David Young	P		
Califon, Fairmount	Rev. Mike Atzert	P		A
Califon, Lower Valley	Rev. Tex Culton	P	Warren Newman	P
Cedar Knolls, Hildale Park	Rev. Ross Lang	P		A
Chatham Township (3)	Rev. Thomas Brown	P		A
				A
				A
Chatham, Ogden Memorial	Rev. Kathi Heath	P	Donn Mansfield	P
Chester	Rev. Christopher Scrivens	A	Jeanne Perry	P
Clinton	Rev. Tracey Henry	A		A
Delaware	Vacant	V		A
Delaware, 1st Oxford	Vacant	V		A
Denville, Union Hill	Rev. Timothy Clarkson	P	Emerson Crooks	P

Dover, First Memorial	Rev. Alan Schaefer (HR)	E		A
East Hanover, Kitchell	Rev. Hannah Allred	A		A
Flanders (2)	Rev. Cliff Acklam	P	Lois Steward	P A
Flemington (3)	Rev. Amy Lincoln	P	Jamie Evans Jim Gillberg Eric Ruppel	P P P
Florham Park, Calvary	Rev. Ronald de Groot	A		A
Franklin (2)	Rev. Julie Raffety	P	Connie Cholminski	P
Frenchtown (2)	Rev. Emily McCachren	P	Gayla Gerhardt Tonya Reese	P P
Gillette, Meyersville	Rev. Stefanie Muntzel	P	Loura Zijdel	P
Hackettstown (2)	Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook	A	Michelle Cameron	P
Hampton, Musconetcong Valley	Stephanie Farley, CRE	A		A
Hillsborough, TAFPC	Rev. Eric Lai	P		A
Lambertville	Vacant	V	Phillip McCloughan	P
Lambertville, 2nd English	Vacant	V		A
Long Valley	Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden	E		A
Long Valley, Highlands	Rev. Robin Burton Palmer	P	Ruth Babula	P
Madison (2)	Rev. Carol Howard	E	Becky Moody	P A
Martinsville, Seed & Sanctuary	Lissette Gonzalez-Sosa	A		
Mendham	Rev. Scot McCachren	P	Van Buchanan	P
Milford	Rev. Dr. Linda Erkert-Bullock	A		A
Milford, Alexandria	Rev. Nicholas Hatch	P	Marie Knapp	P
Milford, Holland Bible	Rev. Geoff Stanley	A	Virginia Derbyshire	P
Mine Hill	Vacant	V	Deb Hooper	P
Morris Plains	Rev. Donald Brown	P	Alec Jain	P
Morristown (3)	Rev. Daniel Vigilante Rev. Audrey Webber	E P	Richard Albright Craig Barth Dick Kaller	P P P
New Vernon	Rev. William Stone	A	Donna Miller	P
Newton	Rev. Michael Cuppett	P	Gerald Chandler	P
Newton, Yellow Frame	Rev. Michael Nelms	P		A
Oak Ridge (2)	Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle	P		A A
Ogdensburg	Rev. Alden Johnson	A		A
Parsippany	Rev. Donald Bragg	P		A
Phillipsburg, Harmony	Rev. Scott Bohr	A		A
Phillipsburg, Pilgrim	Vacant	V	Debra McGuinness	P
Pittstown, Bethlehem	Rev. Linda Gaden	P		A
Pluckemin	Rev. Ian Rankine	A		A
Port Murray, Rockport	Vacant	V		A
Ringoes, 1st Amwell	Vacant	V		A
Ringoes, Kirkpatrick	Rev. Dr. Barbara Booth-Jarmon	P		A
Ringwood (2)	Rev. Arlene Romaine	A		A

				A
Rockaway (2)	Rev. Ryon Herin	P		A
				A
Somerset	Rev. Nancy Nalepa-Skibo	A	Barbara Nicol	P
Sparta (2)	Rev. Dr. Patrick Sileo	P		A
				A
Stanhope	Rev. Pamela Osborne	P	Carol Barry	P
Stewartsville (2)	Rev. Stephen Choi	P	Denise DeMasi	P
				A
Stewartsville, Old Greenwich	Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy	P	Lisa Kolterjahn	P
Stirling	Rev. Stefanie Muntzel	P	Joyce Koenig	P
Stockton	Rev. David Snyder	A		A
Succasunna (2)	Rev. Timothy Clarkson	P		A
				A
Sussex	Vacant	V	Charles Bates	P
Titusville	Vacant	V	Kris Schmidt	P
Wantage, Beemerville	Rev. Barry Young	A	Dave Simmons	P
Warren, Trinity United	Rev. Amy Sandlin	A		A
Washington	Rev. James Scovell	A	Dorothy Decker	P
West Milford	Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle	P		A
Wharton	Rev. Sarah Green	A		A
Wharton, Berkshire Valley	Vacant	V	Andrew Vogel	P
Wharton, Hungarian	Vacant	V	Stephen Lance	P
Whippany	Rev. Sarah Cairatti	A	Trish Martin	P

Teaching Elders Engaged in a Validated Ministry

Rev. Joanne Miller	E
Rev. Robin Miller Curras <i>(serving church out of bounds)</i>	A
Rev. Christine Davies	A
Rev. John C. Kile	P
Rev. Jeanne Radak <i>(Presbytery Leader – Highlands Presbytery)</i>	P
Rev. Chad Rodgers <i>(Director of Activities - Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center)</i>	P
Rev. Dr. Steven Shussett, Stated Clerk <i>(Highlands Presbytery)</i>	P
Rev. Angella Son <i>(Professor – Drew University)</i>	E
Rev. Caroline Unzaga	A

Members at Large

Rev. Peter Billings	P
Rev. M. Elizabeth Blythe	E
Rev. Justin Choi	P
Rev. Courtney Cromie	A
Rev. Dan Dorrow	A
Rev. Jin Hee Han	E
Rev. Ryan Irmer	P
Rev. Donna McDaid	A
Rev. Peter Magnan	P
Rev. Merideth Mueller-Bolton	P
Rev. Hayley O'Connor	A
Rev. Gail Pendleton	A

Rev. Annie Tsai	A
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Honorably Retired

Rev. Peter Amerman	E
Rev. Janice Ammon	E
Rev. Jeff Archer	E
Rev. Nancy Asbury	E
Rev. Barbara Aspinall	E
Rev. Charles Baier	E
Rev. Joicy Becker-Richards	E
Rev. Robert Beringer	E
Rev. George Blank	E
Rev. Sally Campbell	E
Rev. Cynthia Crowner	E
Rev. William Culton	P
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. Mervin Fry	E
Rev. Peter Gregory	E
Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Hall	E
Rev. Dr. Edward Halldorson	E
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	E
Rev. Fred Milligan	E
Rev. James Morris	E
Rev. Elizabeth Morrison	E
Rev. Szabolcs Nagy	E
Rev. Barbara Peters	E
Rev. John Potter	P
Rev. Donald Prytherch	P
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. Jacquelyn Van Vliet	E
Rev. John Verser	E
Rev. Deirdre Greenwood White	E
Rev. David Young	P
Rev. Dr. Nancy Young	P

Ruling Elders by Virtue of Office

Paula Benson, Past Presbytery Moderator, Highlands Presbyterian Church	P
Sue Cail, Past Presbytery Moderator, Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood	P
Lisa Gray, Past Presbytery Moderator, Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville	P
Jane MacDonald, Presbyterian Women Commissioner, First Presbyterian Church of Newton	P
Joe Martinoni, Past Presbytery Moderator, First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway	P
Peter Peterson, Co-Moderator of ACT, Clinton 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, Finance Administrator, Presbytery of the Highlands	P
Susan Johnson, Finance Administrator, Presbytery of the Highlands	P
Scott Riker, Highlands Presbyterian Church	P
Susan McManus-Spidell, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains	P
Hildy Benjamin, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains	P
Jim Dieterle, United Presbyterian Church, Flanders	P
Robert Eyre, Christ Community Church, Philadelphia Presbytery	P
Bruce Heyman, Wilson Memorial Church	P
Rev. Dr. Carrie Mitchell, Board of Pensions	P
Elise Bates Russell, Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center	P
Nancy Steiner, Wharton United Community Church	P

Total in Attendance – 110

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

WORDS OF GREETING

INTRODUCTION OF NEW RULING ELDER COMMISSIONERS

EXPLANATION OF UNANIMOUS CONSENT

ITEMS FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT:

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Elder Elise Bates Russell, Executive Director, Camp Johnsonburg

Elder Nancy Steiner (Wharton United), Member of the Nairobi Partnership

Rev. Dr. Carrie Mitchell, Regional Representative, Board of Pensions, and Member of Coastlands Presbytery

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 November 12, 2024.

SC-2

Approve excuses for the Presbytery meeting of March 11, 2025.

SC-3

Receive the 2024 Presbytery Statistical Report. 100% reporting participation.

SC-4

Receive the 2024 Necrology Report.

SC-5

Receive the 2024 Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey Annual Reports.

SC-6

Receive the report of the Administration and Coordinating Team.

SC-7

Receive the report of the Church Development Team.

SC-8

Receive the report of the Commission on Ministry.

SC-9

Receive the report of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

SC-10

Receive the report of the Nominating Committee.

SC-11

Receive the report of the Property and Insurance Team.

SC-12

Receive the report of the Young Leader Formation Team.

COM-1

The Commission on Ministry recommends the following:

- The Presbytery of the Highlands Retirement Policy. (See attached.)

The Consent Agenda was approved as amended, to include the Final Report of the Administrative Commission in Service to the Long Valley Presbyterian Church.

Items to Report:

SC-13

In accordance with **D-3.0602 Quorum for a Permanent Judicial Commission**

b. Roster of Former Members

“The stated clerk shall keep a current roster of those members of the permanent judicial commission whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. The stated clerk shall report the roster annually to the council or councils.”

Class of 2023

Rev. Dr. Jefferson Hatch, Retired

Elder Alec Jain, Morris Plains/Presbyterian

Rev. Dennis Jones, Basking Ridge/Presbyterian

Elder Ray Smickle, Belvidere/United

SC-14

On November 18, 2024, the Stated Clerk received the final report from the Investigating Committee of the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission.

SC-15

In accordance with **G-3.0108 Administrative Review**, on February 1, 2025, the Stated Clerk received documentation that the results of the Investigating Committee of the Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission were reported to the session involved.

SC-16

In accordance with **G-3.0108 Administrative Review**, on January 23, 2025, the Stated Clerk submitted notice to Flor Vélez-Díaz, Manager for Judicial Process that the matter of The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey v. Rev Ryan Irmer 2024-02, (dated October 20, 2024) was communicated to the Presbytery on November 12, 2024, its first meeting following the Decision.

SC-17

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

SC-18

The Presbytery is reminded that the Manual of Operations for the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey is available on the website. It includes:

1. The Presbytery Bylaws and Guidelines, including:
 - a. Child and Youth Protection Policy (March 16, 2021)
 - b. Sexual Misconduct Policy (March 16, 2021)
 - c. Anti-Racism Policy (November 8, 2024)
 - d. Anti-Harassment Policy (September 4, 2024)
 - e. Electronic Meeting Policy
 - f. Personnel Policy and Practices
2. Committee and Team Descriptions
3. Ethical Standards for Ministers
4. Committee on Ministry Policies and Terms of Call, including:
 - a. Family Leave Policy
 - b. Dissolution Agreements
 - c. Background Check Application
 - d. Criminal Background Check
 - e. Ethical Standards for Ordained Officers
 - f. Commissioned Ruling Elder Policy
5. Property and Insurance Policies and Resources
6. Committee on Preparation for Ministry Handbook and Policies
7. Presbytery Staff and Volunteer Position Descriptions
8. Financial Management Policies and Guidelines

SC-19

The Presbytery is reminded that the Presbytery is a member of the New Jersey Partnership Insurance Program. Its Insurance Carrier is Guide One, while its Insurance Agent is Brown & Brown.

SC-20

Through the Presbytery's relationship with MinistrySafe, over 400 persons have taken trainings now required by the Book of Order and/or had background checks conducted. Information to access these services can be found on the Presbytery's website.

Greetings from the Board of Pensions

Rev. Dr. Carrie Mitchell presented updated Board of Pensions information.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Rev. David Young (HR), Commission on Ministry Co-Moderator, introduced new Pastors and Pastors in new positions:

Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden, Interim pastor, Long Valley Presbyterian Church

Rev. Michael Cuppett, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Of Newton

Rev. Emily Mccachren, Covenant Supply Pastor, Frenchtown Presbyterian Church-

Rev. Peter Billings At-Large Minister, Director Of Family And Community Ministries - Hilltop Church, First Presbyterian, Mendham

WORSHIP

Worship was led by members of the Permanent Judicial Commission, Revs. Tom Brown (Chatham Township), David Harvey (Blairstown), Linda Gaden (Bethlehem), and Ruling Elder Jamie Evans (Flemington). Members of the Presbytery's Worship Planning Team also participated, with Revs. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy (Old Greenwich) and Ryon Herin (Rockaway) presenting the Necrology.

ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATING TEAM

Ruling Elder Pete Peterson (Clinton), Co-Moderator of the Administration and Coordinating Team shared the successes of the 2024 Budget year and the work of the Budget and Finance Team

Pete welcomed our new Financial Administrator, Susan Johnson.

Pete reviewed the following Presbytery Meeting Dates approved by the Administration & Coordinating Team:

VOTING ON PROPOSED GENERAL ASSEMBLY AMENDMENTS

The entire slate, minus 24-A and 24-C, was proposed for omnibus action. 24-L was removed for a separate vote. The final outcome was as follows:

VOTING ON BOOK OF ORDER AMENDMENTS RECOMMENDED BY THE 226TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AMENDMENT NUMBER	TO BE AMENDED	DATE OF VOTING	VOTING OUTCOME
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24-A	F-1.0403	May 13, 2025	To be Determined
24-B	G-1.0104	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-C	G-2.0104b	May 13, 2025	To be Determined
24-D	G-2.0504b	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-E	G-2.0504b	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-F	G-2.0610	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-G	G-2.0901	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-H	G-3-0106	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-I	G-3.0302d	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-J	G-3.0501	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-K	D-7.0501	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR
24-L	D-7.0902b	March 11, 2025	AGAINST
24-M	G-5.0203	March 11, 2025	IN FAVOR

Ryon Herin, Vice-Moderator assumed the gavel.

NAIROBI PARTNERSHIP

Nancy Steiner shared statistics and successes of the 30 year partnership between Highlands and Nairobi Presbyteries. The Partnership will conclude on December 31, 2025; Highlands will continue to accept gifts for the Nairobi Partnership until that time.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Rev. Amy Lincoln (Flemington) of the Nominating Committee presented the following slate:

Commission on Ministry

Class of 2027

Rev. Tom Brown (A), Chatham/Presbyterian

Rev. Tim Clarkson (A), Denville/Presbyterian & Succasunna/First

The slate was **MOVED AND CARRIED** as presented.

JOHNSONBURG CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

Elise Bates Russell, Executive Director, Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center updated the Presbytery on the camp's status, including celebration of the completed capital campaign and 65 Summers of Johnsonburg.

DIGITAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Herin read the Digital Announcements that were collected from the chat and individuals came to the microphone to share their announcements. None were submitted for inclusion in the minutes.

YOUNG LEADER FORMATION TEAM

Rev. Tim Clarkson (Denville/Presbyterian & Succasunna/First) presented a report on the recent Family Spirituality Day and called attention to the upcoming Presbyterian Youth Triennium registration deadline.

Rev. Herin returned the gavel to the Moderator.

NEW BUSINESS

Rev. Ryan Irmer submitted an item of new business concerning validated ministries, meeting the deadline set by Presbytery policy. Per that same policy, the item was considered by the Moderator, in consultation with Stated Clerk, for appropriate action: to present as new business before the Presbytery, or to process it through the Presbytery's standing committee structure.

The Moderator stated that because matters concerning validated ministry are ordinarily processed by the COM, and further, that the COM report for the meeting reflect that this has been done, and is underway.

Because this latest matter is related to previous business that had already been referred to the COM, the Moderator recommended that this latest business be forwarded to COM, to be coupled with the previous referral

Following discussion it was **MOVED, SECONDED, AND CARRIED** to refer the new business to the COM.

ADJOURNMENT

Moderator Chad Rodgers closed the meeting with prayer at 9:23PM.

Attested: _____
Steven H. Shussett Stated Clerk

REPORTS:

ATTACHMENTS:

2024 Presbytery Statistical Report
2024 Necrology Report
Administration and Coordinating Team Report
Church Development Team Report
Commission on Ministry Report
Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report
Nominating Committee Report
Property and Insurance Team Report
Young Leader Formation Team Report
Presbytery of the Highlands Retirement Policy
2024 Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ Annual Reports

2024 Presbytery Statistical Report

Presbytery Highlands
Address 390 Route 10 W, Randolph, NJ 07869-2141
Phone 973-361-0084 **Fax**
Email office@highlandspresbyterynj.org
Web Site highlandspresbyterynj.org



Membership			
Prior Active Members	10322	Adjusted membership	10283
Gains		Losses	
Certificate	83	Certificate	32
Youth Professions	52	Deaths	179
Professions & Reaffirmations	216	Deleted for any Other Reason	718
Total Gains	351	Total Losses	929
Total Ending Active Members	9705		
Baptisms		Average Weekly Worship Attendance	4556
Presented by Others	140	Friends of the Congregation	1751
At Confirmation	5	Ruling Elders on Session	601
All Other	8	Do you have Deacons? Yes / No	58 / 16
Age Distribution of Active Members		People with Disabilities	
17 & Under	410	Hearing impairment	371
18 - 25	883	Sight impairment	85
26 - 40	1237	Mobility impairment	316
41 - 55	1535	Other impairment	267
56 - 70	2487		
Over 70	2661	Gender Distribution	
Total Age Distribution	9213	Women	5845
		Men	3791
		Non-Binary	3
Youth in Congregation			
Age 4 and under	315	Middle School (6th – 8th grade)	351
Elementary School (K-5th grade)	651	High School (9th – 12th grade)	466
		Total Youth	1783
Racial Ethnic			
Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian	201	Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	7
Black/African American/African	147	White	9129
Middle Eastern/North African	13	Multiracial	61
Hispanic/Latino-a	66		
		Total Racial Ethnic	9624
Budgeted Income	18,767,921		
Budgeted Expense	21,230,831		
Receipts			
Regular Contributions	16,517,662	Bequests	1,310,759
Capital Building Fund	1,313,275	Other Income	4,125,687
Investment Income	3,471,746	Subsidy or Aid	23,860
Expenditures			
Local Program	22,223,344	Investment Expenditures	3,089,460
Local Mission	1,523,057	Per Capital Apprt	503,968
Capital Expenditures	3,821,568	Other Mission	561,115

Necrology Report
(January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024)
March 11, 2025

Basking Ridge, Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church
Jeffrey Haines March 11, 2024

Belvidere, United Presbyterian Church in Belvidere
Robert G. Herrmann March 27, 2024
Gertrude J. Hoyt January 15, 2024
Louis P. Stout February 6, 2024

Bound Brook, Bound Brook Presbyterian Church
Jack Gardner October 9, 2024
Diane Judkins December 4, 2024
Vincent Magliochetti November 4, 2024
Rose Suits January 29, 2024

Califon, Fairmount Presbyterian Church
William Cannon July 27, 2024
Nancy Myers January 21, 2024

Califon, Lower Valley Presbyterian Church
Dominick Pulsinelli December 8, 2024

Chester, Community Presbyterian Church
Hope Hollenbeck July 18, 2024
Robert Jones July 30, 2024
William Wolgamuth January 20, 2024

Delaware, First Presbyterian Church of Oxford at Hazen
Harold Vannatta September 23, 2024

Denville, Union Hill Presbyterian Church
John "Jack" Killmeyer July 31, 2024

Dover, First Memorial Presbyterian Church
Dale Mertz May 4, 2024

East Hanover, Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church
Elizabeth Debski July 10, 2024

Flanders, United Presbyterian Church, Flanders
Gerald Rose November 28, 2024

Flemington, Flemington Presbyterian Church
Shirley Favier April 23, 2024
Barbara Lalevee December 17, 2024

Glenn Lambert Jane Sorensen	January 1, 2024 November 20, 2024
Florham Park, Calvary Presbyterian Church Matthew Allen	November 21, 2024
Franklin, First Presbyterian Church of Franklin Eleanor Carlin	June 14, 2024
Gillette, Meyersville Presbyterian Church Eleanor Kielblock Jean Stapper Penne	January 26, 2024 July 18, 2024
Hillsborough, Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church Allen Ying-Tsai Yang	October 19, 2024
Long Valley, Highlands Presbyterian Church Eric Cornish June Scheller	January 7, 2024 July 27, 2024
Mendham, First Presbyterian Church of Mendham Laura Grzanka	December 24, 2024
Milford, Alexandria First Presbyterian Church Keith Erwin	May 31, 2024
Morris Plains, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains Joan Everhart Joan Morgan Judith Oakley	October 22, 2024 January 23, 2024 February 1, 2024
Morristown, Presbyterian Church in Morristown Nancy Herbst Monroe Sechrest	September 13, 2024
Oak Ridge, Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church John Fredericks Carol Mullen	May 4, 2024 June 28, 2024
Newton, First Presbyterian Church of Newton Dr. William Gray	August 17, 2024
Phillipsburg, Pilgrim Presbyterian Church Marge Carlson John Fritts Carl Meixell	February 3, 2024 February 17, 2024 April 12, 2024

Pittstown, Bethlehem Presbyterian Church

James Eschbach	January 1, 2024
Judy Thorne Morgan	July 9, 2024

Pluckemin, Pluckemin Presbyterian Church

Dale Albright	June 6, 2024
Kenneth Bernhardt	April 3, 2024
Gary Johnson	June 23, 2024
Doris Krayner	March 17, 2024

Stirling, First Presbyterian Church, Stirling

Phyllis Clemson	May 6, 2024
Jean Hoffman	January 31, 2024

Succasunna, First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna

Harry Gedicke	August 6, 2024
Dolores Kiminkinen	June 24, 2024
Fred Piscorchik	June 21, 2024
Ruth Ann Trowbridge	October 29, 2024
June Varcoe	November 18, 2024

Titusville, First Presbyterian Church of Titusville

Fred K. Schmidt	August 26, 2024
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Wantage, Beemerville Presbyterian Church

Joyce Palmer	March 9, 2024
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Washington, First Presbyterian Church of Washington

Rik Atkinson	October 1, 2024
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West Milford, West Milford Presbyterian Church

Walter Erbeck	June 10, 2024
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Minister Members:

Rev. Robert A. Colman	September 1, 2024
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March 11, 2025

Administration and Coordinating Team Report

Items for Report:

The ACT reports the following from their November 26, 2024 called meeting:

ACT-1

Received the report for the Funds Development Team for Financial Sustainability Development Program starting in 2025.

ACT-2

Reviewed the November 12, 2024 Presbytery Meeting.

ACT-3

Began preliminary planning of the March 11, 2025 Presbytery Meeting including having a pre-presbytery workshop in February on the Amendments to the Book of Order.

ACT-4

Reviewed the Year-to-Date Financial Reports.

ACT-5

Approved the following motion:

- Rebecca A. Moody, Treasurer of the Presbytery and its corporation, is authorized to open a new checking account with TD Bank. The following individuals are authorized to sign documents for this account:
 - Rebecca A. Moody, Treasurer
 - David Glen Harvey, President
 - Scot McCachren, Secretary
 - David G. Peterson, Finance Chair
 - Jeanne Bragdon Radak, Presbytery Leader

ACT-6

Approved the Terms of Call for the Presbytery Leader, Rev. Jeanne Radak and Resource Staff/Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Steven Shussett for 2025. (See attached.)

ACT-7

Approved a request from the Property and Insurance Team to be authorized to act on behalf of the Presbytery on the sale of the First Presbyterian Church of Franklin manse. \$100,000 from the sale will be invested for future pastoral housing, with remainder allocated to enhance church programs.

ACT-8

Approved the 2025 budget to be presented at the November 12, 2024 Presbytery Meeting.

ACT-9

Reviewed the highlights of the Discernment Team Visioning and Action Steps Retreat:

Visioning Goals:

- Vision - Annual visits to each Session.
- Vision - Organize gatherings for worship, fellowship, regional activities, and mission opportunities.
- Vision - Establish a Center for Innovation.
- Vision - Train mediators in conflict management.
- Vision - Strengthen community-building communication.

Innovation Work Group Goals:

- Vision - Equip congregations to understand and utilize their assets for ministry.
- Vision - Create storytelling initiatives to share experiences.
- Vision - Improve communication and resource identification.
- Vision - Further develop the Center for Innovation.

ACT-10

Approved the 2025 ACT meeting dates.

From the January 16, 2025 Special ACT meeting:

ACT-11

Approved the position description for a Financial Administrator. (See attached.)

From the January 28, 2025 ACT meeting:

ACT-12

Received the End of the Year Financial Report

- end the year with a deficit of \$14,000, less than the budgeted amount.
- Revenues were significantly higher and anticipated expenses were less than budgeted.
- Per Capita was \$25,000 over budget.
- The uncollected budgeted per capita was 18%.
- Financial Investment position increased due to New Covenant Trust investments and market performance.

ACT-13

Approved the recommendation of the Property and Insurance Team that the First Presbyterian Church of Sparta congregation to be permitted to move forward with the sale of the manse property (29 Main Street, Sparta, NJ) and the net proceeds shall be used in the following manner:

- An estimated \$600,000 to purchase a manse that includes at least 3 bedrooms and 2 baths.
- Additional funds from the sale will be added to the church endowment, where it will be invested and used to support the Church's budget.
- Note: The sale of the manse was not initiated by the congregation but was an unexpected and unsolicited offer.

The Property and Insurance Team be granted the authority to approve the final terms of the contract of sale, contingent upon a favorable vote of the congregation.

The Property and Insurance Team shall report the final details of the sale to the Presbytery.

ACT-14

Approved the request from the Session of the Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Califon to lease the premises of 249 Old Turnpike Road, Califon, NJ 07830 for five years to its current tenant, The Good News Home for Women.

- Background: According to the *Book of Order*, G-4.0206 b. Leasing Congregational Property. A congregation shall not lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation.

ACT-15

Approved the request of the Committee on Ministry to approve the new position description and designation as a commission. (See attached.)

ACT-16

Approved the revisions to Officer Manager's position description.

ACT-17

Stated Clerk reported On January 23, 2025, notice was submitted to Flor Vélez-Díaz, Manager for Judicial Process, demonstrating that the matter of The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey v. Rev Ryan Irmer 2024-02, (dated October 20, 2024) was communicated to the Presbytery on November 12, 2024, its first meeting following receipt of the Decision.

ACT-18

Approved the authorization of Presbytery leader Jeanne Radak, Stated Clerk Steve Shussett and Specialized Minister Chad Rodgers to celebrate the Lord's Supper in 2025 as their responsibilities require, in accordance with W-3.0410, "A council may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper in certain contexts beyond the congregational setting..."

ACT-19

Approved the following:

Recommend the Consent of Presbytery for Officers to Act on its behalf, in accordance with the Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey, the following are empowered and authorized to sign on behalf of the Presbytery of the Highlands in matters relating to the Corporation of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey and/or real estate transactions:

- President of the Corporation
- Secretary of the Corporation
- Treasurer of the Corporation
- Moderators of Administrative Commissions in which real estate and/or matters relating to the dissolution of the congregation are part of their charge.

ACT-20

Approved the following dates for 2025 Presbytery meetings

- March 11 at 7pm on Zoom
- May 13 at 4pm Hybrid/In-person at Johnsonburg
- September 9 at 4pm Hybrid/In-person at Johnsonburg
- November 11 at 7pm on Zoom

ACT-21

Approved the following schedule for ACT meetings and Presbytery meeting walk throughs:

- ACT January 28

- Presbytery Meeting: March 11 at 7pm on Zoom

Executive Team Walk-through on March 7 at 12pm

- ACT March 25

- Presbytery Meeting: May 13 at 4pm Hybrid, In-Person at ***Johnsonburg?***

Executive Team Walk-through on May 12 at 10am

- ACT May 27

- Presbytery Meeting: September 9 at 4pm Hybrid, In-Person at ***Johnsonburg?***

Executive Team Walk-through on September 8 at 10:30am

- ACT August 26

- ACT October 28

- Presbytery Meeting: November 11 at 7pm on Zoom

Executive Team Walk-through on November 7 at 12pm

- ACT November 25

From the February 26, 2025 Special Meeting of ACT:

ACT-22

Approved the hiring of Ms. Susan Johnson as Financial Administrator beginning March 1, 2025.

Ms. Johnson and Lizabeth Hutchinson will work together for a month. Liz will retire on March 31, 2025.

Church Development Team Report

March 11, 2025

Items to Report:

CDT-1

New Grant Program: “Who is my Neighbor?” is a process of using your congregation’s demographics to learn about the people in your neighborhood and ministry opportunities. Complete the Who is My Neighbor program and your session can apply for a \$1000 grant to reach out in mission and ministry to your neighbors. CDT has approved a grant request from the First Presbyterian Church of Whippany.

CDT-2

CDT provides Liaisons to congregations in transition and helps support them with their discernment studies (Turn the Page). This discernment study and additional resources can be found on the Presbytery webpage. CDT is currently supporting five congregations that are in transition.

CDT-3

CDT is discussing possible speakers for 2025. More information to come.

Commission on Ministry Report

November 12, 2024

Items for Consent Agenda:

COM-1

The Commission on Ministry recommends the following:

- The Presbytery of the Highlands Retirement Policy. (See attached.)

Items to Report:

From the December 3, 2024 meeting:

COM-2

Appointed Rev. Robin Palmer Burton as moderator for Rockport Presbyterian Church, Port Murray starting January 1, 2025.

COM-3

Approved recommendations from the Clergy Care Team concerning next steps with Rev. Irmer.

COM-4

Appointed a team from COM to review a request for validated ministry at Wilson Memorial Interdenominational Church.

COM-5

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- First Presbyterian Church of Branchville and Interim co-pastors Rev. David Young and Rev. Dr. Nancy Young.

COM-6

Approved the request from Delaware Presbyterian Church for an exemption for term limits for session members.

COM-7

Approved the updated Terms of Call Worksheet.

COM-8

Approved the Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon Discernment Report and granted them permission to form a Pastor Nominating Committee.

COM-9

Approved the request from Rev. Donna McDaid to change her status from Member-at-Large to Retired as of November 1, 2024.

COM-10

Thanked all the outgoing COM members for their years of service to the Presbytery and the congregations.

From the January 7, 2025 meeting:

COM-11

Approved the transfer of the Rev. Dr. Ellen Clark Clemot to the Presbytery of the Coastlands for a validated ministry at Princeton Seminary.

COM-12

Approved the requests from the Clergy Care Team and Rev. Ryan Irmer to pause all actions and requests pending a time of mediation.

COM-13

The COM received the Validated Ministry and Member at Large Reports for 2024

- Rev. Angella Son
- Rev. Salvatore Seirmarco
- Rev. Courtney Cromie
- Rev. Christine Davies
- Rev. Daniel Dorrow
- Rev. Donna McDaid
- Rev. Dr. Ellen Clark Clemot
- Rev. Gail Pendleton
- Rev. Hayley OConnor
- Rev. Justin Choi
- Rev. Jin Hee Han
- Rev. Jennifer Hrynyk

- Rev. John Christian Kile
- Rev. Joanne Miller
- Rev. Liz Blythe
- Rev. Robin Miller Curras

COM-14

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- First Presbyterian Church of Boonton and Rev. Carie Morgan (Interim)
- Stockton Presbyterian Church and Rev. David Snyder
- Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Pittstown and Rev. Linda Gaden
- Long Valley Presbyterian Church and Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden
- Yellow Frame Presbyterian Church, Newton and Rev. Michael Nelms

COM-15

Approved the Installation Commission for the Rev. Michael Cuppett at First Presbyterian Church of Newton on January 19, 2024.

COM-16

Approved recommending to ACT the revised version of the COM purpose and responsibilities. (See attached.)

COM-17

Approved exemptions to session and deacon terms for the following:

- Mine Hill Presbyterian Church (extend elder term)
- First Presbyterian Church of Sussex (extend elder term)
- Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Califon (extend two deacons terms)

From the February 4, 2025 meeting:

COM-18

Approved request from Session of Pilgrim Presbyterian Church, Phillipsburg to grant permission for Rev. Byron Leasure to moderate the annual meeting. Rev. Leasure is a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

COM-19

Approved the request from the session of Lamington Presbyterian Church, Bedminster to grant permission for Rev. Dr. Ellen Clemot to moderate their annual meeting. Rev. Clemot is a member of Coastlands Presbytery.

COM-20

Installation service of Rev. Michael Cuppett because of bad weather is rescheduled for Sunday, March 2, 2025 @ 4pm.

COM-21

All pastors, in active service, in the Boundary Training rotation have completed the process.

COM-22

Approved the request from the Presbytery for Southern New Jersey to transfer Rev. Katherine Scott-Kirschner to serve as pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Egg Harbor, NJ.

COM-23

Approved the Validated Ministry of Rev. Justin Choi as part time pastor of Warwick Reformed Church, Reformed Church of America, Warwick, NY.

COM-24

Approved the Terms of Call between:

- Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Califon and Rev. Michael Atzert
- First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna, Union Hill Presbyterian Church, Denville and Rev. Tim Clarkson
- First Memorial Presbyterian Church, Dover and Rev. Alan Schaefer
- First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown and Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook
- Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church, East Hanover and Rev. Hannah Faye Allred
- First Presbyterian Church of Mendham and Rev. Scot McCachren
- First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway and Rev. Ryon Herin
- First Presbyterian Church of Stanhope, Andover Presbyterian Church and Rev. Pamela Osborne
- Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon and Rev. William Culton (Interim)
- Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church, Ringoes and Rev. Barbara Booth-Jarmon with note of post-retirement exemption for Board of Pensions

COM-25

Approved the position descriptions for part-time Covenant Supply positions for:

- First Presbyterian Church of Sussex
- Rockport Presbyterian Church, Port Murray
-

COM-26

Approved exemption request for term extensions for elders and deacons at Andover Presbyterian Church.

COM-27

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

COM-28

Approved Rev. Byron Leasure permission to officiate at Ordination and Installation services of church officers for churches in our presbytery. This will be reviewed in one year.

COM-29

Approved Rev. Byron Leasure permission to moderate congregational meetings for election of church officers for one year.

From the March 4, 2025 meeting:

COM-30

Approved Rev. Alexandra Hendrickson, Chaplain at Lafayette College, to officiate at ordination and installation of church officers for our congregations, when requested.

COM-31

Approved the transfer of Rev. Peter Billings from the Presbytery of Carlisle to the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ. Peter is the spouse of Rev. Emily McCachren, pastor at Frenchtown Presbyterian Church.

COM-32

Approved the following terms of call between:

- Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and Rev. Dennis Jones
- Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and Rev. Dr. Maureen Paterson
- Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church, Chatham and Rev. Kathi Heath
- Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township and Rev. Tom Brown
- United Presbyterian Church, Flanders and Rev. Cliff Acklam
- Flemington Presbyterian Church and Rev. Amy Lincoln
- Presbyterian Church of Harmony, Phillipsburg and Rev. Scott Bohr
- Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon and Rev. William Culton
- Presbyterian Church in Morristown and Rev. Audrey Webber
- Hildale Park Presbyterian Church, Cedar Knolls and Rev. Ross Lang
- Clinton Presbyterian Church and Rev. Tracey Henry
- Presbyterian Church in Morristown and Rev. Daniel Vigilante
- Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville and Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy
- Stewartsville Presbyterian Church and Rev. Stephen Choi
- Trinity United Church, Warren and Rev. Amy Sandlin
- First Presbyterian Church of Washington and Rev. Jim Scovell
- First Presbyterian Church of Whippany and Rev. Sarah Cairatti

COM-33

Approved the Terms of Call for Lissette Gonzalez-Sosa and the New Worshipping Community Sanctuary + Seed.

COM-34

Approved the Ordination Commission for Lissette Gonzalez-Sosa, Ordination date, March 16, 4pm, Bound Brook Presbyterian Church.

- Rev. Chad Rodgers, Presbytery Moderator
- Rev. Linda Owens, Bound Brook
- Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton, Member at Large
- Rev. Michael Cuppett, First Presbyterian Church of Newton
- Elder Christine Su, Taiwanese American Presbyterian Fellowship Church
- Elder Joe Martinoni, First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway

COM-35

Approved the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) for First Presbyterian Church of Berkshire Valley, Wharton.

COM-36

The COM was assigned New Business from the November 12, 2024 Presbytery Meeting regarding the validation of Wilson Memorial as a ministry. At the December COM meeting, the application for validated ministry was received and reviewed. At the January COM meeting, it was determined that it could meet the criteria for a validated ministry. However, no action was taken pending the resolution of other issues.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report March 11, 2025

Items for Report:

From the November 18, 2024 meeting:

CPM-1

The Committee met with Joe Martinoni, a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway, seeking to become a CRE Aspirant. They voted to receive him as such.

CPM-2

Reverends Kathi Heath (Ogden) and Chris Doyle (West Milford/Oak Ridge) were appointed co-moderators and will begin their duties in January 2025.

CPM-3

Rev. Linda Gaden (Bethlehem) and Susan Vigilante-Williams (Morris Plains) became members of the Committee, along with Kathi Heath, Chris Doyle, Craig Barth, and Donna Rahmann. Steve Shussett continues to staff CPM.

CPM-4

The Committee voted to grant Candidate Laura Choi a Highlands Presbytery's CPM scholarship, for which she was eligible this year.

From the January 13, 2025 meeting:

CPM-5

Authorization was given to Prep4Min for Ben Willans and Laura Choi to sit for ordination exams in January 2025.

From the February 10, 2025 meeting:

CPM-6

Candidate Laura Choi has passed all her ordination exams with plans to graduate in May 2025. Candidate Ben Willans passed three ordination exams.

CPM-7

CRE Aspirant Tricia Hayes was given approval to do her Field Ed requirement at the Community Presbyterian Church, Chester, supervised by Rev. Chris Scrivens.

CPM-8

Forms 3 and 4 were modified in accordance with the unique CRE requirements process.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathi Heath and Chris Doyle, CPM Co-Moderators

Nominating Committee March 11, 2025

Commission on Ministry Class of 2027

Rev. Tom Brown (A), Chatham/Presbyterian
Rev. Tim Clarkson (A), Denville/Presbyterian & Succasunna/First

Property and Insurance Team March 11, 2025

Items to Report:

From the December 16, 2024 meeting:

P&I-1

Insurance Update

Some churches have received notice from Brown & Brown that a failure to require anti-harassment training could result in non-renewal. This was done in error, and any churches receiving such a message should contact B&B for resolution. On this and other matters, B&B has been very responsive.

From the January 28, 2025 meeting:

P&I-2

Request to Sell the Sparta Manse

The Property and Insurance Team recommended that the ACT approve a request from the Sparta Presbyterian Church to sell its manse, under the conditions noted.

From the February 24, 2025 meeting:

P&I-3

2025 Manse Grants

In 2021 the Manse of the Stillwater Presbyterian Church was sold. A court determined that a condition on the 1892 deed would be met if proceeds from the sale were used to provide assistance for minister housing in the Presbytery of the Highlands. The Property and Insurance Team annually reviews requests for a matching grant of up to \$2000 for energy-efficient improvements.

The Property and Insurance Team approved the following applications and amounts:

<u>Church</u>	<u>Grant \$ Allotted</u>
First Presbyterian Church of Boonton	\$1,324
First Presbyterian Church of Berkshire Valley	\$2,000
First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown	\$676
Hildale Park Presbyterian Church, Cedar Knolls	\$2,000
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church, Ringoes	\$2,000
Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon	\$2,000
Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church	\$2,000

P&I-4

Update on Sparta Manse Sale

The Congregation has approved proceeding forward and a letter of intent has been signed. Due diligence is underway, including zoning which is estimated to take at least six months.

P&I-5

Insurance Update

Churches should be aware that the period for insurance renewal has opened. While some carriers have been reluctant to renew existing policies, Brown & Brown has been receptive to new clients, and has been responsive to its clients within the Presbytery.

Youth Leader Formation Team Report

March 11, 2025

We have been working on plans for the youth of the Presbytery of the Highlands to attend the 2025 Presbyterian Youth Triennium. Highlands Presbytery will share a bus with the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey and Hudson River Presbytery (NY). The bus will depart from Morris Plains Presbyterian Church on Sunday evening, July 27th and return late Thursday night, July 31st. The estimated cost per family for a youth to attend is \$500. The Presbytery will assist by providing financial support to cover the remaining costs. Churches are encouraged to consider helping to further offset the cost. Mae Martella, Children's Ministry Coordinator at The Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains, will be serving as the Triennium Registrar for the Presbytery of the Highlands.

Currently 8 youth, 1 young adult volunteer and 3 chaperones have signed up to attend. There is still room for 6 more youth. The deadline to reserve a spot on the bus is March 31st. We strongly encourage you to talk with your youth and ask them to fill out this google form in order to reserve a spot. <https://forms.gle/qmUG2KsdmdzQ65VZA>.

To find out more about Presbyterian Youth Triennium, visit their website.

<https://presbyterianyouthtriennium.org/>

Family Spirituality Camp - March 1, 2025

This Saturday morning event is designed for families, to support home routines and rituals that encourage spiritual awareness and connection. Together we will explore what it means to “Be Who God Made Us to Be” by stepping into stories that help us explore the question from a variety of perspectives. There will be crafts, songs, stories, a meal and fun! At the time of this writing, we have 25 people signed up to attend. We will provide a brief oral report at the Presbytery meeting.

To stay current on events and resources for youth ministry, check out the YLF webpage: <https://highlandspresbytery.org/young-leader-formation-team/>. If you are interested in joining the team, contact Steve Shussett at steves@highlandspresbytery.org

Submitted by: Amy Clarkson, coordinator of the Young Leader Formation Team

RETIRED MINISTERS Policy
Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

“I said, ‘Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.’” (Job 32:7)

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the Commission on Ministry (COM) in its interactions with the presbytery's retired members, as well as retired members from other presbyteries who may be serving in post-retirement roles within the presbytery's congregations. It also outlines the protocols, requirements, and procedures for retiring and retired pastors within the presbytery.

Retirement - First Steps

When a minister is within 5 to 7 years of retirement, they should attend the Board of Pensions retirement workshops. The schedule for these workshops can be found on the Board of Pensions website.

When a minister decides to set a retirement date, the following steps shall be taken:

- Before announcing their retirement to the congregation or validated ministry, the minister shall connect with the Commission on Ministry (COM) to begin the process and seek guidance on the next steps.
- Contact the Board of Pensions to obtain information and paperwork regarding retirement benefits.
- Once the minister is ready to announce their retirement date, they shall call a session meeting to begin the dissolution process. The retiring minister shall follow the same dissolution process as any pastor leaving a congregation.

Retirement Designation

When a pastor member gives notification and request of retirement status to the Presbytery, the Presbytery may officially designate the member as retired according to the Book of Order using the ecclesiastical code of Retired Pastor (299) (G-2.0503c).

Retirement through the Board of Pensions does not automatically grant a pastor the retired (299) designation from the Presbytery. To receive this designation, a pastor must formally notify the Presbytery and request retirement status. The Presbytery may only confer the retired (299) designation after receiving and processing this request.

Prior to July 2023, the Book of Order routinely conferred the title “Honorably Retired” to retiring Presbytery members, noting that this designation did not signify exceptional achievement.

Since July 2023, the Book of Order only mentions the title designation “retired” for pastors (G-2.053c). However, after pastor notification and request for retirement is made to the Presbytery, the Presbytery may officially designate the member as “Honorably Retired” (HR).

“Honorably Retired” (HR) may continue to be granted to retiring pastors by the Presbytery of the Highlands and/or the Commission on Ministry, retroactive from July 2023, unless a disciplinary ruling is in effect or becomes in effect after retirement, precluding such a title designation.

Ministers designated as retired (299) by the presbytery will remain listed as such in the national directory of PCUSA ministers, even if they later engage in paid post-retirement service, in accordance with Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801, "Post-Retirement Service."

Recognition of Retirement

The Commission on Ministry (COM) will acknowledge the ministry and service of retiring pastors and offer an opportunity to celebrate their retirement among their peers as a part of the Presbytery. This special moment may be held during a Presbytery meeting or in a dedicated event arranged by the COM specifically to honor retiring pastors.

Presbytery Membership After Retirement

Retired ministers typically belong to the presbytery within whose geographic bounds they reside. However, they may request membership in another presbytery or remain with the presbytery from which they retired, even if they live outside its bounds. Retired ministers from other presbyteries who wish to join the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey will be examined in the same manner as other ministers seeking membership in the Presbytery.

The Continuing Call

God’s call to ministry is life-long. Retirement is a new phase of God’s continuing call. Retired ministers continue to be members of presbytery (G-2.0503), exercising voice and vote in presbytery meetings, although their attendance at meetings is not mandatory and they do not need to request to be excused from presbytery meetings. They may serve on presbytery committees, commissions, and other work groups. In consultation with the Commission on Ministry, they may serve congregations as temporary pulpit supply or as session moderators. They may be elected to presbytery office (moderator, vice- moderator, stated clerk, treasurer) or as commissioners to Synod or General Assembly.

Boundary Training Requirements

All minister members of the Presbytery of Highlands are required to participate in boundary training which includes pastoral ethics and anti-harassment training every 3 years. Retired members of the presbytery are not exempt from this requirement. Retired pastors over the age of 80 will be exempt from this requirement provided they are not actively participating in providing pastoral services such as regular preaching, parish associate, on the pulpit supply list, serving on a Presbytery, Synod or GA committee or team, or other active congregational or pastoral activities. Exemptions may be granted because of health or other reasons that keep the pastor from actively

engaging in ministry.

Post Retirement Service

Within the post-retirement service guidelines of the PC(USA) Board of Pensions, retired ministers may choose to accept post-retirement employment with congregations or with other agencies. This should be arranged in consultation with the Commission on Ministry. It should be noted that the Board of Pensions places stringent restrictions on post-retirement service in the congregation most recently served before retirement (please see Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801, “Post-Retirement Service.”)

Pastoral Care

Because retired ministers continue to be members of the presbytery and not of a local congregation, the presbytery has responsibility to provide pastoral care and support to them through life’s transitions and crises (G-3.0301b; G-3.0307). The Committee on Ministry will develop such structures and programs as are necessary to extend this supportive care.

Retirement Age

While the Book of Order has no recommended retirement age, the Board of Pensions does consider age 55 to be the earliest time when retirement benefits may commence and considers age 65 to be the full retirement age for pension purposes. *This is entirely distinct from the provisions of the United States Social Security Administration.*

The Board of Pensions requires members to terminate their employment with the church or agency where they have been working. (see Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801, “Post-Retirement Service.”)

It is inappropriate for ministers under age 55, who are not permanently disabled, to be given retirement status. Those younger than 55 who wish to leave ministry employment for a time shall consult with the Commission on Ministry about being moved to Member At Large (797) status and report to the Commission on Ministry annually, in order to keep their Member at Large status in effect.

Ministers younger than 65 only be granted retired (299) status if they are starting to receive pension benefits at the same time.

For those who qualify for permanent disability income, either through the Board of Pensions or through Social Security, or both, it is possible for the Presbytery to grant retired (299) status at an earlier age.

Retirement Ethics and the Former Congregation

In 1948, the PC(USA) General Assembly described the continuing status of a minister's ordination following retirement. "The retirement of a minister does not affect in any way the minister's status as a minister or deprive [the minister] of any of the functions of the office. The minister has still the right to preach, to administer the sacraments, to represent the presbytery as a Commissioner in the higher judicatories of the Church, and to exercise other functions of the ministry, to the same extent as in the minister's active ministry." ("Status of Retired Ministers," General Assembly Minutes, 1948, 119- 120.)

As members of the presbytery, retired ministers perform ministerial roles under the guidance of the Presbytery.

Following retirement from congregational ministry, it is essential and required that former pastors establish healthy boundaries, disengaging from ALL congregational life and function of the congregations they have served. It is strongly recommended for pastors' spouses to do so as well. This is to provide sufficient space for the new pastoral relationship to become firmly established and to bond with the congregation.

The Book of Order's ethical standard, "Officiate by Invitation Only" (G-2.0905), applies to retired ministers, just as it does to ministers in active service: "...former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of the session."

Out of consideration for the next pastors and the life of the congregation, it is critical that former pastors politely and unconditionally decline all such invitations that come directly from church members. *It is not appropriate at any time for former pastors to respond to church members by saying they would "be willing, pending an official invitation".* Rather, they shall decline and then let the new pastor or session moderator take the initiative if that person is so inclined.

The General Assembly's Standards of Ethical Conduct require ministers to live by the following affirmations:

"I will...

...deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor.

...participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery.

...provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and

...consult with the Committee on Ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my

involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.”
(Standards of Ethical Conduct II, 14-17)

Minister members who retire or leave a congregation of the Presbytery of the Highlands SHALL sign a dissolution/separation covenant. The covenant reinforces the Ethical Standards and the Book of Order requirements.

Retired or former pastors also may not moderate session/congregational meetings or serve as interim, installed covenant supply or pulpit supply without permission of the Commission on Ministry.

Retirement Ethics and the New Congregation

Retired ministers are encouraged to become actively involved in a congregation other than their former congregations. In doing so, they shall exercise the same sort of discretion and explicit public support to the pastor or associate pastor of that congregation as they would offer to a pastor or associate pastor of a congregation they have formerly served. They shall refrain from offering pastoral care to members of that or any other congregation, except as the pastor may invite them to do so.

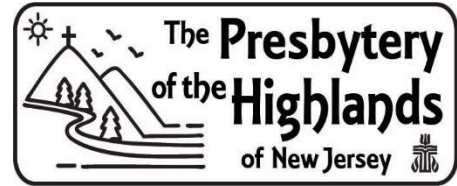
Among the greatest services retired ministers can perform for the congregation where they are worshiping is to support the pastoral leadership.

Retired Ministers of Other Presbyteries

Retired members of other presbyteries may express interest in serving a congregation of this presbytery as post-retirement employment, as defined by the Board of Pensions. In that case, the Commission on Ministry shall ordinarily require the minister to apply to be transferred to this presbytery as a retired member, although there may be special circumstances that dictate that temporary membership in this presbytery is preferable.

Retired Pastor Policy - March 2025

Purpose of the Commission on Ministry for the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey



The Commission on Ministry (COM) nurtures and cares for all teaching elder members of the Presbytery, for Certified Christian Educators, and Commissioned Ruling Elders while they are serving congregations in the Presbytery. The COM also nurtures and cares for the congregations of the Presbytery and the relationships between congregations and pastors.

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey confers the powers of an Administrative Commission on the Commission on Ministry(G-3.0307) in matters of:

- Receiving, dismissing and transferring Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the PCUSA (G-2.0502, G-2.0506, G-2.0507, G-2.0508, G-2.0509) and ministers for other denominations desiring to become members of the Presbytery (G-2.0505)
- Approving and oversight of the following elements of pastoral relationships between Pastors, Certified Christian Educators and Commissioned Ruling Elders and congregations:
 - Calls and Covenants (G-2.0504)
 - Terms of Call including annual review and setting annual minimum Terms of Call. (G-2.0804)
 - Approval and appointment of Ordination and Installation Commissions (G-2.0701, G-2.0805)
 - Appointments of moderators (G-3.0201)
 - Dissolution of all pastoral calls (G-2.0502, G-2.09)
 - Approval of Severance packages when required by the situation.
 - Commissioning Process of Ruling Elders, aside from the Commissioning service, as stated in the CRE policy (G-2.10)
- All aspects of Boundary/Anti-Harassment Training of all minister members (G-3.0106), CREs, (G-2.1002) Inquirers/Candidates under care (G-2.0603), and Certified Christian Educators (G-2.1103).
- Approve of retirement status for ministers in accordance with the Presbytery policy on retirement (G-2.0503c)
- Approval of all validated ministries and ministry status and member at large status of continuing members of the Presbytery. (G-2.0503a, G-2.0503b)

Recommendations of the Commission on Ministry that require Presbytery approval are:

- the ordination examination of Candidates Under Care of the Presbytery who will be serving in one of the Presbytery's congregations or serve in a validated ministry.
- the commissioning service of Certified Christian Educators

- Administrative Commissions for dissolution of a congregation, or other issues concerning the congregations

The Commission on Ministry shall report to the next standing meeting of the Presbytery all actions taken on behalf of the Presbytery.

Responsibilities (conferred by the Presbytery to the COM, per G-3.0307)

- Maintains open communication, visits and consults with ministers and Sessions, through liaisons to congregations.
- Reports annually to the Presbytery, the type of work each minister is engaged in.
- Counsels with churches regarding calls for permanent and temporary pastoral relations, guiding and resourcing PNCs and Search Teams.
- Provides for the implementation of EEO for Ministers and candidates.
- Provides oversight and support to congregations without pastors.
- Promotes the peace and harmony of congregations. Inquires into the sources of congregational discord, counsels with sessions concerning reported difficulties within a congregation, advises the session as to appropriate actions to be taken, offering to help as mediator, and acting to correct difficulties, if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unwilling or unable to do so. (G-3.0303d)
- Provides encouragement, guidance, and resources to congregations.
- Authorizes and trains specific ruling elders to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper when it deems it necessary to meet the needs for the administration of the Sacrament. (G-2.1001; G-2.1002)
- Maintains and approves the Pulpit supply list.
- May set policies, process, and guidelines that provide for these responsibilities and assist the COM members with their work.
- Other responsibilities may be assigned to the COM by the Presbytery and/or the Administration and Coordinating team.