

The 25th Stated Meeting of The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

May 12, 2026

*(to be approved at the 26th 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 25th Stated Meeting on May 12, 2026, at Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center and on the ZOOM platform.

At 4 PM in the Highlands (Presbytery) Pavilion, a worship service “Celebrating 70 Years of Clergywomen” took place. Presbytery Leader Jeanne Radak (TE) preached, and Teaching Elders Gail Pendelton (HR), the first woman ordained in one of Highlands Presbytery’s predecessor presbyteries, and Adrienne Poissant (Branchville), the most recent woman ordained in the Presbytery, presided at the Lord’s Supper.

Following this there was a celebration of Highlands Presbytery’s fifth anniversary. To mark the occasion, a red oak, the state tree of New Jersey, was planted at Camp Johnsonburg. Presiding over the occasion were Presbytery Moderator Ryon Herin (TE, Rockaway), Vice-Moderator Donna Rahmann (RE, Fairmount), and Johnsonburg’s Associate Director Chad Rodgers (TE, Specialized).

A “Presbytery Trivia Night” emceed by Hannah Faye Allred (TE, Kitchell) and dinner followed.

Moderator Ryon Herin called the business portion of the meeting to order at 6:44 PM with an opening prayer.

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS — PART 1

The Moderator introduced the Hybrid Meeting and Voting Process.

EXPLANATION OF UNANIMOUS CONSENT

The Moderator introduced Stated Clerk Steve Shussett, to explain Unanimous Consent.

FORMATION OF THE ROLL

The roll was formed as Commissioners signed the registration forms. Resource Staff/Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Steven 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	A		A
Alpha	Vacant	V		A
Andover	Rev. Pamela Osborne	P	Marcia Bruno	P
Basking Ridge (3)	Rev. Dennis Jones	P	Joan Eichhorn	P
	Rev. Dr. Maureen Paterson	A		A

				A
Bedminster, Lamington (2)	Rev. Scott Stolte	P	Bisham Singh	P A
Belvidere	Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek	A		A
Blairstown	Rev. David Harvey	P		A
Boonton	Rev. Nathaniel Fryer	A	John Crozier	P
Bound Brook (2)	Rev. Justin Warner	A	Jamie Breeding Kathy Hobbs	P P
Branchville (2)	Rev. Adrienne Poissant	P	Donna Havelin	P A
Califon, Fairmount	Rev. Mike Atzert	P	Joyce Martin	P
Califon, Lower Valley	Rev. Tex Culton	P	Warren Newman	P
Cedar Knolls, Hildale Park	Rev. Ross Lang	P	John Wright	P
Chatham Township (3)	Rev. Thomas Brown	P	David Whitman	P A A
Chatham, Ogden Memorial	Rev. Kathi Heath	P	Donn Mansfield	P
Chester	Rev. Christopher Scrivens	P	Jeanne Perry	P
Clinton	Rev. Dr. Tracey Henry	P	Pete Peterson	P
Delaware	Vacant	V		V
Delaware, 1st Oxford	Vacant	V	Sue Marsh	P
Denville, Union Hill	Rev. Timothy Clarkson	P	John Ware	P
Dover, First Memorial	Rev. Alan Schaefer (HR)	E		A
East Hanover, Kitchell	Rev. Hannah Allred	P	Nancy Lanigan	P
Flanders (2)	Rev. Cliff Acklam	P	Lois Steward Suzan Preston	P P
Flemington (3)	Rev. Amy Lincoln	P	Bill Thomson Jamie Evans Cecelia Hopkins	P P P
Florham Park, Calvary	Rev. Carie Stanley	P		A
Franklin (2)	Rev. Julie Raffety	P		A A
Frenchtown	Rev. Emily McCachren	P	Jennifer Campbell	P
Gillette, Meyersville	Rev. Stefanie Muntzel	P		A
Hackettstown (2)	Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook	P		A A
Hampton, Musconetcong Valley	Stephanie Farley, CRE	P		A
Hillsborough, TAFPC	Rev. Eric Lai	P		A
Lambertville	Vacant	V	Phil McCloughan	P
Lambertville, 2nd English	Vacant	V		A
Long Valley (2)	Rev. Heather Morrison Yaden	E	Tricia Hayes	P A
Long Valley, Highlands	Vacant	V	Ruth Babula	P
Madison	Rev. Carol Howard	E	Becky Moody	P

Martinsville, Seed & Sanctuary	Rev. Lissette Gonzalez-Sosa	P		A
Mendham	Rev. Scot McCachren	P	John Clinedinst	P
Milford	Rev. Dr. Linda Erkert-Bullock	E		A
Milford, Alexandria	Rev. Nicholas Hatch	P		A
Milford, Holland Bible	Rev. Geoff Stanley	A		A
Mine Hill	Vacant	V		A
Morris Plains	Rev. Donald Brown	P	Susan Vigilante	P
Morristown (3)	Rev. Daniel Vigilante	A	Bill Crean	P
	Rev. Audrey Webber	P	Clara Harmon	P
				A
New Vernon	Rev. William Stone	P	Donna Miller	P
Newton (2)	Rev. Michael Cuppett	P	Gerald Chandler	P
			Jane MacDonald	P
Newton, Yellow Frame	Rev. Michael Nelms	P	Mark Hontz	P
Oak Ridge	Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle	A	David McDonald	P
Parsippany	Rev. Donald Bragg	A		A
Phillipsburg, Harmony	Vacant	V		A
Phillipsburg, Pilgrim	Rev. Peter Billings	A	Debra McGuinness	P
Pittstown, Bethlehem (2)	Rev. Linda Gaden	P	Kevin Klein	P
			Ralph Fader	P
Pluckemin	Rev. Ian Rankine	A		A
Port Murray, Rockport	Rev. Jeff Walters	P	Betty Baggerly	P
Ringoes, 1st Amwell	Vacant	V		A
Ringoes, Kirkpatrick	Rev. Dr. Barbara Booth-Jarmon	P	Pat Wright	P
Ringwood (2)	Rev. Arlene Romaine	A		A
				A
Rockaway (2)	Rev. Ryon Herin	P	Dan Cassidy	P
			Joe Vorgetts	P
Somerset	Rev. Nancy Nalepa-Skibo	A	Angela Newton	P
Sparta (2)	Rev. Robin Miller Curras	P	Don Keck	P
				A
Stanhope	Rev. Pamela Osborne	P	Carol Barry	P
Stewartsville	Rev. Stephen Choi	P	Cindy Bowman	P
Stewartsville, Old Greenwich	Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-Lecroy	E		A
Stirling	Rev. Stefanie Muntzel	P	Joyce Koenig	P
Stockton	Rev. David Snyder	A	Irene McKnight	P
Succasunna	Rev. Timothy Clarkson	P		A
Sussex	Rev. Barry Young	P	Michael Kosco	P
Titusville	Vacant	V		A
Wantage, Beemerville	Rev. Barry Young	P		A
Warren, Trinity United	Rev. Amy Sandlin	A		A
Washington	Rev. James Scovell	P	Dorothy Decker	P
West Milford	Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle	A	Betsy Engelhardt	P
Wharton	Rev. Sarah Green	P		A
Wharton, Berkshire Valley	Vacant	V		A

Wharton, Hungarian	Vacant	V	A
Whippany	Rev. Sarah Cairatti	A	A

Teaching Elders Engaged in a Validated Ministry

Rev. Dr. Edwin Aponte <i>(Dean & Professor at Drew University)</i>	A
Rev. Joanne Miller	E
Rev. Christine Davies	P
Rev. Lisette Gonzalez Sosa <i>(Seed + Sanctuary)</i>	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. Dr. Steven Shussett, Stated Clerk <i>(Highlands Presbytery)</i>	P
Rev. Dr. Angella Son <i>(Professor – Drew University)</i>	E
Rev. Caroline Unzaga	P
Rev. Benjamin Willans	E

Members at Large

Rev. Peter Billings	A
Rev. M. Elizabeth Blythe	E
Rev. Justin Choi	P
Rev. Courtney Cromie	A
Rev. Dan Dorrow	A
Rev. Jin Hee Han	E
Rev. Hayley O'Connor	A
Rev. Gail Pendleton	P
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	E
Rev. Charles Baier	E
Rev. Joicy Becker-Richards	E
Rev. Robert Beringer	E
Rev. George Blank	E
Rev. Sally Campbell	E
Rev. Cynthia Crouner	E
Rev. William Culton	E
Rev. James D'Angelo	E
Rev. Judith Dean	E
Rev. Ron deGroot	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. Alden Johnson	E
Rev. Harold Johnson	E
Rev. Eugenia Johnston	E
Rev. Philip Jones	E
Rev. Steven Kengeter	E
Rev. Heup Young Kim	E
Rev. Unzu Lee	E
Rev. Peter Magnan	P
Rev. Donna McDaid	E
Rev. Fred Milligan	P
Rev. James Morris	E
Rev. Elizabeth Morrison	E
Rev. Merideth Mueller-Bolton	E
Rev. Szabolcs Nagy	E
Rev. Linda Owens	P
Rev. Barbara Peters	E
Rev. John Potter	E
Rev. Donald Prytherch	P
Rev. Bronc Radak (<i>serving Rockport</i>)	E
Rev. Jack Roan	E
Rev. Lorrie Rowland-Skinner	E
Rev. Diane Ruffle	E
Rev. Alan Schaefer (<i>serving Dover</i>)	E
Rev. Bruce Schundler	E
Rev. Sherman Skinner	E
Rev. Sarah Taylor	E
Rev. Charles Thompson	E
Rev. Alfred Tisdale	E
Rev. Jacquelynn Van Vliet	E
Rev. John Verser	E
Rev. Deirdre Greenwood White	E
Rev. David Young	E
Rev. Dr. Nancy Young	E

Ruling Elders by Virtue of Office

Paula Benson, Highlands Presbyterian Church, Past Moderator	P
Sue Cail, Community Presbyterian Church of Ringwood, Past Moderator	P
Alan Ford, Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Pittstown	P
Lisa Gray, Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville, Past Moderator	P
Mel Prestamo, Long Valley Presbyterian Church, Past Moderator	P

Donna Rahmann, Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Califon, Vice Moderator	P
Wendy Doidge, Presbyterian Church in Morristown, Past Moderator	P
Alec Jain, Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains, ACC Member	P
Joe Martinoni, First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway, Past Moderator	P
Rich Rubin, Presbyterian Church in Morristown	P

Others in Attendance

Sonja Gaertner, Office Manager & Attendance Clerk, Presbytery of the Highlands	P
Zayn Silva, Communications Coordinator, Presbytery of the Highlands	P
Victoria Stevens, 1 st Oxford Presbyterian Church at Hazen, Delaware	P
Frank Gaden, Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Pittstown	P
Dan Keoppel, First Presbyterian Church of Boonton	P
Meg Meyer, First Presbyterian Church of Boonton	P
Lynn Nakashian, Bound Brook Presbyterian Church	P
Scott Riker, Highlands Presbyterian Church, Long Valley	P
Craig Barth, Presbyterian Church in Morristown	P

Total in Attendance – 122

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

ITEMS FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT:

ENROLLMENT OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND GUESTS:

Guests:

Ruling Elder Craig Barth, Presbyterian Church of Morristown
 Ruling Elder Mark Hontz, Yellow Frame Presbyterian Church
 Ruling Elder Dan Keoppel, First Presbyterian Church of Boonton
 Ruling Elder Susan Marsh, First Presbyterian Church of Oxford at Hazen
 Ruling Elder Tricia Hayes, Long Valley Presbyterian Church
 The seating was approved by **UNANIMOUS CONSENT**.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

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

Presbytery of the Highlands Stated Meeting CONSENT AGENDA

SC-1

Approve the minutes of the Presbytery meeting held February 24, 2026.

SC-2

Approve excuses for the Presbytery meeting of May 12, 2026.

SC-3

Receive the 2025 Presbytery of the Highlands Statistical Report. 100% Reporting.

SC-4

Receive the report of the Administration & Coordinating Commission.

SC-5

Receive the report of the Church Vitality and Discernment Team.

SC-6

Receive the report of the Commission on Ministry.

SC-7

Receive the report of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry.

SC-8

Receive the report of the Committee on Representation.

SC-9

Receive the report of the Nominating Committee.

SC-10

Receive the report of the Young Leader Formation Team.

REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

The report of the stated clerk was received as part of the Consent Agenda.

**Presbytery of the Highlands Stated Meeting
STATED CLERK'S REPORT**

Items for Consent Agenda:

SC-1

Approve the minutes of the Presbytery meeting held February 24, 2026.

SC-2

Approve excuses for the Presbytery meeting of May 12, 2026.

SC-3

Receive the 2025 Presbytery of the Highlands Statistical Report. 100% Reporting.

SC-4

Receive the report of the Administration & Coordinating Commission.

SC-5

Receive the report of the Church Vitality and Discernment Team.

SC-6

Receive the report of the Commission on Ministry.

SC-7

Receive the report of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry.

SC-8

Receive the report of the Committee on Representation.

SC-9

Receive the report of the Nominating Committee.

SC-10

Receive the report of the Young Leader Formation Team.

Items for Action:

None.

Items to Report:

None.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW RULING ELDERS

At the Moderator's invitation, Vice-Moderator Donna Rahman assumed the gavel and welcomed first-time commissioners to the meeting.

INVITATION FOR HYBRID ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice-Moderator extended instruction and invitation to submit announcements, to be shared later in the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATING COMMISSION

Assuming the chair, the Moderator called on Presbytery Leader Jeanne Radak (TE). She updated the Presbytery on the Discernment Process and the New Jersey Presbyteries' Insurance Partnership.

PRESENTATION BY PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The Moderator called on Ruling Elders Donna Rahmann and Lisa Gray (Old Greenwich), who spoke on PW's upcoming event.

COMMISSIONING OF PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONERS TO THE 227TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2026)

The Moderator called on Teaching Elders Michael Cuppett (Newton) and Linda Gaden (Bethlehem), and Ruling Elders Jeanne Perry (Chester) and Bisham Singh (Lamington), for the purpose of commissioning them.

OVERVIEW OF OVERTURES COMING BEFORE THE 227TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2026)

The Moderator called on Teaching Elder Linda Gaden and Ruling Elders Jeanne Perry to give a brief overview of the overtures to be presented.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

ELECTION OF SYNOD COMMISSIONERS

The Moderator called on Nominating Committee member Birda Ferguson (HR) to present nominees for the position of Synod Commissioners. Ruling Elder Joe Martinoni (Rockaway) and Rev. Ross Lang (Hildale Park) were nominated. With no nominations from the floor, the motion was **MOVED AND CARRIED**.

The gavel was passed to the Vice-Moderator, Donna Rahmann.

SHARING OF HYBRID ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice-Moderator invited those in attendance to share announcements, while those submitted electronically were read aloud. She then returned the gavel to the Moderator.

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

PLAN OF UNION: Meyersville Presbyterian Church (Gillette) and the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling

The Moderator called on Jacqui Van Vliet (HR), Co-Moderator of the Commission on Ministry, who in turn invited Stefanie Muntzel (TE) to the podium. Rev. Muntzel provided her personal perspective on the proposed Plan of Union between the two churches. The Plan of Union was **MOVED AND CARRIED**. Rev. Muntzel was commended for her work, and following a prayer offered by Moderator Herin, the doxology was sung to the glory of God and in honor of the Rev. Tom Peters, formerly of the Stirling Church.

COMMISSIONING OF COMMISSIONED PRESIDING ELDERS

The Moderator called forward the following:

- Ruling Elder Craig Barth, Presbyterian Church of Morristown
- Ruling Elder Tricia Hayes, Long Valley Presbyterian Church
- Ruling Elder Mark Hontz, Yellow Frame Presbyterian Church
- Ruling Elder Dan Keoppel, First Presbyterian Church of Boonton
- Ruling Elder Susan Marsh, First Presbyterian Church of Oxford at Hazen

Moderator Herin explained that Ruling Elders Barth, Keoppel, and Marsh have completed both the *Preaching God's Word in the World* and *Presiding at the Table: A Class for Ruling Elders* courses. Ruling Elder Hontz has long been on the pulpit supply list, and Ruling Elder Hayes has completed the Commissioned Ruling Elder program, so their completion of *Presiding at the Table* met the requirements to be Commissioned Presiding Elders. By their participation on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply List and agreeing to meet stated requirements, they were approved for commissioning as Commissioned Presiding Elders by COM at its meetings in April and May. Rev. Herin then presided over the liturgy. Prayer was offered by Vice Moderator.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

ADJOURNMENT WITH PRAYER

Following a motion and second to close the meeting with prayer, it was decided by UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Rev. Herin at 7:52 pm.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 2025 Presbytery Statistical Report
- Administration and Coordinating Commission Report 05.12.26
- Administration and Coordinating Commission Report 05.12.26 Part 2
- Finance and Property Work Team Description
- Funds Development Work Team Description
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Work Team Description
- Worship Planning Team Description
- Church Vitality and Discernment Team Report
- Commission on Ministry Report, Part 1
- Commission on Ministry Report, Part 2
- Final Plan of Union — Meyersville Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church, Stirling
- Report of the Administrative Commission to Install Nathaniel Fryer
- Report of the Administrative Commission to Install Adrienne Poissant
- Validated Specialized Ministry Policy
- Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Leadership Development Report
- Committee on Representation Report
- Young Leader Formation Team Report

Administration and Coordinating Commission Report – Part 1

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

The Administration and Coordinating Commission Reports the following from the March 4, 2026 ACC meeting:

ACC-1

Elder Rick Friedl, Presbytery of the Northeast presented the NJ Presbyterian Insurance Partnership proposal for the Presbytery Deductible Fund.

ACC-2

The ACC approved being part of the NJPIP Deductible Fund.

ACC-3

Approved the use of the Highlands Presbytery Cemetery Fund to pay for the winter clean up of the Old Clove Cemetery (Sussex County).

ACC-4

Approved moving \$25,000 from the Special Resourcing Fund to the Judicial Fund to bring it back to a positive number.

ACC-5

Approved Communion being served at the April and October Presbytery Worship events.

ACC-6

Discussed the content of the May Presbytery Meeting.

ACC-7

Received and reviewed the YTD financial reports.

ACC-8

Communications team reports that they are working on a Communications Strategy.

ACC-9

Moderator Ryon Herin reported that he presided at the Installation service of Rev. Nathaniel Fryer at First presbyterian Church of Boonton.

ACC-10

The Stated Clerk shared an update from Attorney Ellen O'Connell on Boy Scout lawsuits.

ACC-11

Presbytery Leader, Rev. Jeanne Radak, reported the Presbytery of Highlands will be participating in the General Assembly Funding Model Project.

The Administration and Coordinating Commission Reports the following from the April 1, 2026 ACC meeting:

ACC-12

Discussed the May Presbytery meeting plans including the celebration of the Presbytery's 5th anniversary. A team was appointed to make plans for the celebration.

2025 Presbytery Statistical Report

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



Membership

Prior Active Members	9705	Adjusted membership	9693
----------------------	-------------	---------------------	-------------

Gains		Losses	
Certificate	84	Certificate	33
Youth Professions	94	Deaths	184
Professions & Reaffirmations	186	Deleted for any Other Reason	443
Total Gains	364	Total Losses	660
Total Ending Active Members	9397		

Baptisms		Average Weekly Worship Attendance	4467
Presented by Others	150	Friends of the Congregation	1774
At Confirmation	13	Ruling Elders on Session	599
All Other	8	Do you have Deacons? Yes / No	57 / 17

Age Distribution of Active Members		People with Disabilities	
17 & Under	506	Hearing impairment	399
18 - 25	856	Sight impairment	97
26 - 40	1221	Mobility impairment	300
41 - 55	1480	Other impairment	285
56 - 70	2302		
Over 70	2449	Gender Distribution	
Total Age Distribution	8814	Women	5527
		Men	3602
		Non-Binary	13

Youth in Congregation			
Age 4 and under	333	Middle School (6th – 8th grade)	306
Elementary School (K-5th grade)	663	High School (9th – 12th grade)	419
		Total Youth	1721

Racial Ethnic			
Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian	213	Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	7
Black/African American/African	133	White	8825
Middle Eastern/North African	19	Multiracial	75
Hispanic/Latino-a	87		
		Total Racial Ethnic	9359

Budgeted Income	18,710,512
Budgeted Expense	20,853,612

Receipts			
Regular Contributions	13,023,686	Bequests	1,575,501
Capital Building Fund	1,457,213	Other Income	2,877,197
Investment Income	4,619,138	Subsidy or Aid	76,977

Expenditures			
Local Program	17,585,553	Investment Expenditures	865,942
Local Mission	858,065	Per Capital Appt	387,068
Capital Expenditures	2,025,337	Other Mission	453,318

ACC-13

Received and reviewed the Financial Reports. First quarter report indicates the income is higher and spending on target.

ACC-14

Received the Report of the Annual Audit.

ACC-15

Communications team reported that they are working on assembling the Presbytery Brand kit.

ACC-16

New Jersey Presbyteries' Insurance Partnership will be presenting an informational meeting on April 16.

ACC-17

Personnel reported that Annual Reviews had been completed for:

- Stated Clerk - Rev. Dr. Steve Shussett
- Office and Property Manager - Sonja Gaertner
- Financial Administrator - Susan Johnson
- Communications Coordinator - First quarter review - Zyan Silva

ACC-18

Moderator Rev. Ryon Herin reported he presided at the Installation of Rev. Adrienne Poissant at First Presbyterian Church of Branchville.

ACC-19

Approved for the 227 General Assembly that the Administration and Coordinating Commission be authorized to elect an alternate Ruling Elder or Minister as a commissioner should the need arise and not timely for the Presbytery to do so.

ACC-20

Approved that Steve Shussett serve as Overture Advocate for the three overtures and Jeanne and Steve be empowered to appoint another additional advocate for one of the three overtures if necessary because of committee schedules.

ACC-21

The ACC had a lengthy discussion on the Synod's request for the Presbytery to Endorse participants in the Synod's Commissioned Ruling Elder Program for Dubuque Seminary. Following the discussion the ACC approved empowering the Stated Clerk to send a "endorsement" to the Synod on behalf of the Presbytery.

ACC-22

The ACC approved the writing of a letter by the Stated Clerk requesting the language be changed in the Synod's requirement from endorsement to "approve" in order to avoid confusion with Presbytery's Commissioned Ruling Elder process and policy. The approval of the final letter will be done by an email vote.

ACC-23

The Stated Clerk shared an update on the Boy Scouts of America lawsuits against the presbytery. At this time no further action is needed.

Administration and Coordinating Commission Report – Part 2

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

The Administration and Coordinating Commission Reports the following from the May 6, 2026 ACC meeting:

ACC-24

Reviewed the plans for the May Presbytery meeting

ACC-25

Approved the following ACC work team descriptions

- Finance and Property Work Team
- Funds Development Work Team
- Worship Planning Work Team
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Work Team

ACC-26

Approved the Property and Insurance Work Team recommendation to purchase a new refrigerator to replace the 25 year old refrigerator.

ACC-27

Approved the request from First Presbyterian Church of Sparta to borrow \$43,300 loan (five years interest free) to replace two HVAC units.

ACC-28

Approved the recommendation of the ICE Response Task Force for a resource landing page on the Presbytery Webpage.

ACC-29

Received the report from the Presbytery Moderator of a positive and productive Worship and Mission Project event at Sanctuary and Seed.

ACC-30

Approved the following dates for the remaining 2026 ACC meeting dates

- June 3 at 11 am
- July 1 at 11 am — tentative
- August 5 at 11 am
- September 2 at 11 am – Budget meeting
- October 7 at 11 am
- November 4 at 11 am
- December 2 at 11 am

Finance and Property Team

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

Introduction:

The Finance, Budget and Property Team provides comprehensive oversight and guidance for the Presbytery's financial, Budget, property. This unified team ensures faithful stewardship of resources through sound financial practices, property oversight, legal compliance, and insurance and investment management. The team works to support congregations, protect Presbytery assets, and advance the mission and ministry of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey.

Purpose:

The FBP Team is charged with the following:

- Overseeing financial operations, policies, and procedures of the Presbytery.
 - Managing and monitoring the Presbytery's property and real estate matters, including purchases, sales, leases, and inspections. Includes consulting with administrative commissions appointed to work with church dissolutions.
 - Supporting congregations in navigating complex property and financial challenges.
 - Providing transparency, accountability, and strategic planning in the Presbytery's fiscal and property matters.
 - Conducting or referring to the ACT and/or Presbytery all constitutional matters regarding the properties of the Presbytery's churches.
-

Membership:

- The FBP Team shall consist of 4 members more can be invited
- At least two members shall be from the Administration and Coordinating Commission (ACC).
- The Presbytery Treasurer shall serve as a member of the team.
- Additional members may be appointed based on relevant experience in finance, property, legal, or insurance matters.
- Staff support shall be provided by the Presbytery Leader and the Financial Administrator or designee.

Position Description and Responsibilities:

Members of the FPI Team are entrusted with the following responsibilities:

Financial Management and Oversight

- Develop and propose an annual operating budget in consultation with staff.
- Provide accurate and regular financial reports to the Presbytery and PCT.
- Monitor compliance with financial protocols and review use of restricted/dedicated funds.
- Maintain and update financial policies and procedures.
- Review findings from the annual audit or financial review and recommend necessary actions.
- Prepare and present an annual financial report on the health and management of Presbytery resources.

Property Oversight

- Oversight Management of Presbytery-owned property and office spaces.
 - Review and approve transactions related to church properties, including purchases, sales, rentals, and leases.
 - Conduct manse and building inspections as needed.
 - Support congregations with property challenges, including historic preservation grants and emergency and capital loans.
 - Communicate legal guidance related to property matters in coordination with appropriate counsel.
 - Work with the Cemetery Association on the care and oversight of Presbytery owned cemeteries
-

Commissioned Responsibilities:

The Presbytery Commission the FBP Team with the authority to take the following actions **if the ACC is not available to act :**

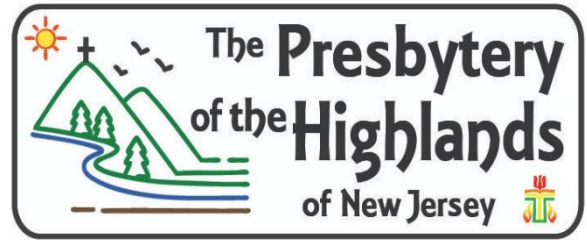
- Approve Emergency Capital Loans up to \$10,000 to congregations, contingent on available funds and in compliance with the Emergency Capital Loans policy.
- Approve Lease Agreements between congregations and non-church organizations in compliance with G-4.0206b.

All actions taken by the FBP Team shall be reported at the next stated ACC meeting.

This integrated team supports the Presbytery's commitment to transparency, good governance, and faithful stewardship, ensuring that all financial and property decisions serve and strengthen its ministries and mission.

Funds Development Team

*Presbytery of the Highlands
of New Jersey*



Introduction

The Funds Development Team serves as a strategic leadership body within the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey, dedicated to ensuring long-term financial sustainability and stewardship. This team explores innovative funding models, cultivates opportunities for giving, and partners with others to support the Presbytery's ability to carry out its mission in a changing financial landscape.

Purpose

The purpose of the Funds Development Team is to:

- Create and implement a long-range financial sustainability plan for the Presbytery.
 - Develop measurable benchmarks to guide responsible use of reserves and proactive fund development.
 - Experiment with and evaluate creative strategies for generating revenue and increasing giving.
-

Membership

- Membership shall include individuals with experience or interest in stewardship, investment, fundraising, financial planning, or nonprofit development.
 - Members are appointed by the Administration and Coordinating Commission
 - The size of the team may vary based on current needs and initiatives but should be sufficient to support diverse perspectives and skills.
 - A moderator will be appointed by the ACC to coordinate the team's work.
-

Position Description and Responsibilities

Members of the Funds Development Team are responsible for:

1. Strategic Financial Planning

- Chart a five- and ten-year sustainability roadmap for the Presbytery.
- Develop and monitor financial benchmarks, particularly regarding use of reserves and new revenue streams.

2. Innovation and Experimentation

- Explore and test creative funding models that align with the Presbytery's mission and evolving ministry context.

3. Giving and Revenue Generation

- Design and implement giving campaigns, donor engagement strategies, and alternative revenue initiatives.
- Promote a culture of generosity across the Presbytery, including among congregations, individuals, and ministry partners.

4. Collaboration and Support

- Work closely with other Presbytery teams and committees to align fund development with strategic goals and program needs.

5. Investments and Asset Stewardship

- Oversee Presbytery Investments according to the adopted Investment Policy
- Ensure investments align with the mission and ethical standards of the Presbytery

6. Accountability and Reporting

- Report regularly to the Administration and Coordinating Commission, providing updates, proposals, and progress reports at each stated ACT meeting.

The Funds Development Team plays a critical role in ensuring that the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey is equipped with the financial resources and sustainability strategies necessary to support its mission well into the future.

Position Description:

Presbytery Disaster Assistance (PDA) Team Member

Purpose: To serve as a dedicated liaison between Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and the Presbytery, ensuring that congregations and leadership are equipped to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters with resilience and spiritual support.

Key Responsibilities

1. Pastoral and Congregational Resourcing

- Act as a primary point of contact for pastors and church sessions during times of crisis.
- Identify and distribute specialized PDA resources, including liturgical materials, grants, and technical assistance.
- Offer guidance on navigating the emotional and spiritual challenges of disaster recovery.

2. Strategic Planning and Coordination

- Collaborate with the **Administrative Commission/Council (ACC)** to design, implement, and maintain a comprehensive **Presbytery Disaster Plan**.
- Develop a localized strategy for disaster mitigation and long-term recovery efforts within the Presbytery's bounds.
- Ensure contact lists and emergency protocols are reviewed and updated annually.

3. Training and Capacity Building

- Coordinate disaster preparedness training for clergy and lay leaders within the Presbytery.
- Foster regional resilience by organizing joint training sessions with neighboring presbyteries.
- Promote PDA-sponsored workshops, such as "Emotional and Spiritual Care" or "Volunteer Management."

4. Communication and Advocacy

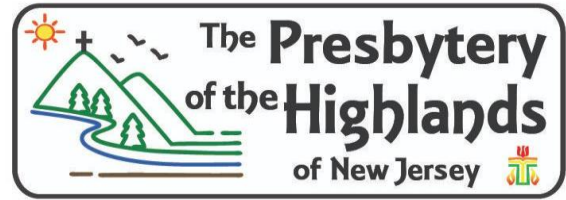
- Manage the flow of timely information during active disasters, providing situational updates to the Presbytery.
 - Curate and disseminate resources for worship, including prayers and theological reflections.
 - Promote stewardship by providing clear instructions on how to give financially or provide physical resources through the PDA mission.
-

Qualifications

- Active membership in a congregation within the Presbytery.
- A heart for disaster ministry and social justice.
- Experience in emergency management, social work, or pastoral care is a plus, but not required.
-

Worship Planning Team

*Presbytery of the Highlands
of New Jersey*



Introduction

The Worship Planning Team supports the spiritual life of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey by creating meaningful worship experiences that reflect the unity, diversity, and mission of the Church. Grounded in the Reformed tradition and responsive to the Spirit's movement, the team crafts worship that nurtures, inspires, and calls the Presbytery into faithful service.

Purpose

The purpose of the Worship Planning Team is to:

- Plan and implement worship for all stated meetings of the Presbytery.
 - Coordinate and lead special worship services as requested by the Presbytery or the Administration & Coordinating Commission (ACC)
 - Ensure that worship services reflect theological depth, liturgical excellence, and the rich diversity of the Presbytery.
 - Provide input on worship-related budget needs for the following year.
-

Membership

- The Worship Planning Team shall consist of at least 3 to 5 members.
 - At least two members shall be drawn from the ACC.
 - Resourcing staff will assist in support and planning.
 - Additional members may be co-opted as needed based on worship focus or expertise.
 - The Moderator of the Worship Planning Team shall be appointed annually by the ACC co-moderators.
-

Position Description and Responsibilities

Members of the Worship Planning Team are responsible for:

1. Worship Leadership and Planning

- Plan, prepare, and implement worship services for stated presbytery meetings.
- Develop liturgy, select music and preachers, and coordinate all worship elements in collaboration with staff and volunteers.

2. Special Services

- Design and lead special worship services at the direction of the Presbytery or ACC (e.g., installation services, memorial services, or thematic worship gatherings).

3. Budget and Resourcing

- Prepare and submit an annual worship budget proposal to the ACC moderators for inclusion in the Presbytery's planning process.

4. Accountability and Collaboration

- Report to the ACC and the Presbytery Meeting Planning
- Collaborate with the Stated Clerk, Presbytery Leader, and other relevant staff for worship logistics and implementation.

5. Meetings

- Meetings will be convened by the Worship Planning Team Moderator as needed in preparation for Presbytery meetings or special services.

The Worship Planning Team ensures that the worship life of the Presbytery is vibrant, inclusive, and grounded in the shared call to glorify God and serve Christ's Church.

Congregational Vitality and Discernment Team

May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

CVDT-1

The Church Development Team is now: the Congregational Vitality and Discernment Team.

The newly formed team met with our Presbytery Leader, Jeanne Radak in January to begin discerning our role and responsibilities within the life of the presbytery.

The purpose of the Congregational Vitality and Discernment Team is to:

- Understand and embrace the current story: Help congregations and new worshiping communities recognize and celebrate their present ministry context.
- Discern and shape future ministry narratives: Guide congregations in imagining and implementing new ministry directions that align with God's mission.
- Faithfully conclude ministry seasons: Support congregations in closing ministry chapters with integrity when a season of active ministry ends.
- Provide resources and practical ideas: Equip congregations to carry out their ministries effectively in their unique contexts.

CVDT-2

We have spent time during our Feb, March and April meetings discussing ways to resource congregations in embracing their current story.

CVDT-3

Available Grant: Who is my neighbor? No requests received.

This grant is based on a demographic study provided by MissionInsite. The Presbytery offered a webinar with MissionInsite on January 29. This recording can be found on the Presbytery webpage. Grants are for \$1,000

CVDT-4

Sanctuary and Seed: nothing to report

CVDT-5

CDT is currently overseeing five churches in transition. One congregation has just finished their discernment process. Three are actively engaged in the study. One will begin in the next

few months. Each of these congregations is assigned a liaison from CVDT and we are currently working on defining what the liaison responsibilities are to these churches in transition.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Rev. Carie Stanley – Co-Chair
Rev. Sarah Green - Co-Chair

Commission on Ministry Report – Part 1

May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

COM-1

The COM recommends the following to the Presbytery:

- That the Presbytery approve the Plan of Union for First Presbyterian Church, Stirling and the Meyersville Presbyterian Church, Gillette. See Plan of Union attached.

Items for Report:

The COM reports the following from their March 3, 2026 meeting:

COM-2

Appointed Rev. Jim Scovell as moderator for Musconetcong Valley Presbyterian Church, Hampton.

COM-3

Received the report of the Service of Installation of the Rev. Nathaniel Fryer at First Presbyterian Church of Boonton.

COM-4

Noted that because of snowy weather the Service of Installation of Rev. Adrienne Poissant at First Presbyterian Church of Branchville was postponed until March 22.

COM-5

Validated the Ministry of Rev. Peter Billings at First Presbyterian Church of Mendham.

COM-6

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek and United Presbyterian Church in Belvidere
- Rev. Amy Lincoln and Flemington Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Emily McCachren and Frenchtown Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Tex Culton and Lower Valley Presbyterian Church, Califon

- Rev. Hannah Faye Allred and Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church, East Hanover
- Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy and Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Stewartsville
- Rev. Don Bragg and Parsippany Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Stephen Choi and Stewartsville Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Nathaniel Fryer and First Presbyterian Church of Boonton
- Rev. Don Brown and Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains
- Rev. Jim Scovell and First Presbyterian Church of Washington

COM-7

Approved the Clergy Renewal/Sabbatical Proposal for Rev. Amy Lincoln and Flemington Presbyterian Church.

The COM reports the following from their April 7, 2026 meeting:

COM-8

Approved the request from the Presbytery of the Coastlands to transfer the membership of the Rev. Dr. Jefferson Hatch, HR to the Presbytery of the Coastlands.

COM-9

Approved the request to grant Rev. Steve McClelland, Presbytery of the Northeast, permission to moderate the session at Flemington Presbyterian Church while Rev. Amy Lincoln is on Clergy renewal leave in 2026.

COM-10

Appointed Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek to be moderator of the Second English Presbyterian Church (Mt. Airy), Lambertville.

COM-11

Approved recommending that presbytery commission Elder Craig Barth, Elder Tricia Hayes and Elder Mark Hontz to preside at Table. If approved they will be commissioned at the May Presbytery Meeting.

COM-12

Approved the final updated policy for Validated/Specialized Ministry.

COM-13

Discussed the plans for the Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of Clergy Women in the PCUSA.

COM-14

Discussed the Plans for the Pastor's Retreat at Johnsonburg on April 29.

COM-15

Discussed the plans for a Retired Pastors and spouses gathering this summer at Long Valley Presbyterian Church.

COM-16

Approved the following Terms of Call between:

- Rev. Justin Warner and Bound Brook Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Cliff Acklam and United Presbyterian Church, Flanders
- Rev. Carie Stanley and Calvary Presbyterian Church, Florham Park
- Rev. Geoffrey Stanley and Holland Bible Church, Milford
- Rev. Daniel Vigilante and Presbyterian Church in Morristown
- Rev. Audrey Webber and Presbyterian Church in Morristown

COM-17

Approved the revised Pastor position from Interim to Covenant Supply Pastor for the Presbyterian Church in Harmony, Phillipsburg.

COM-18

Approved the Session Exemption waiver for Hungarian Presbyterian Church of Wharton.

Commission on Ministry Report – Part 2

May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

The COM reports the following from their May 5, 2026 meeting:

COM-19

Recommended Elder Susan Marsh (United First Presbyterian Church of Amwell (Larisons Corner) and Elder Dan Keoppel (First Presbyterian Church of Boonton) to be commissioned by Presbytery to officiate the sacrament of Communion at the May Presbytery meeting.

COM-20

Approved the Retired Pastors' gathering on July 14 at Long Valley Presbyterian Church.

COM-21

Approved the following Terms of Call for:

- Community Presbyterian Church, Chester and Rev. Chris Scrivens
- Pilgrim Presbyterian Church, Phillipsburg and Rev. Peter Billings
- Somerset Presbyterian Church and Rev. Nancy Nalepa-Skibo
- First Presbyterian Church of Washington and Rev. James Scovell

COM-22

Approved the updated Covenant between Rev. Nancy Nalepa-Skibo and Somerset Presbyterian Church.

COM-23

Met with members of the Church Vitality and Discernment team to work on updating the Discernment Process.

Report of the Administrative Commission to Install Rev. Nathaniel Fryer March 1, 2026

Meeting convened at 2:30 PM

Present:

Rev. Ryon Herin, Moderator (Rockaway)

The Revs. Steve Shussett (Stated Clerk), Michael Cuppett (Newton), and Adrienne Poissant (Branchville); Elders Elaine Oussoren (Boonton), and Craig Barth (Morristown).

Guests: Brooke Matejka, Deacon of the Episcopal Diocese, New York

Emma Claire Sunday, Candidate for Ministry, Presbytery of Philadelphia

*The Rev. Dr. Andrew Pomerville, President/Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

The Rev. Dave Prentice-Hyers, Lead Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor

The Rev. Emily Sutphin, Minister-Member of the Presbytery, Philadelphia

Elder Evelyn Thiel, Clerk of Session, 1st Presbyterian, Boonton

James Fryer, Deacon @ Westminster Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Sonja Fryer, Elder @ Westminster Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Rev. Alyssa Queen, Chaplain @ Seattle Children's Hospital and Minister-Member of the Presbytery of Seattle

Meeting was called to order and opened in prayer by Rev. Ryon Herin Moderator

Purpose of the Meeting: to install Nathaniel Fryer to First Presbyterian Church of Boonton.

The commission voted to receive the guests for the meeting and worship (Motion made and seconded). Motion Carried.

The commission reviewed the service and the duties assigned.

The commission voted to approve the service order (Motion made and seconded). Motion Carried.

Motion was made and seconded to have the meeting adjourn and commission dissolved with the benediction at the end of the worship service. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ryon Herin

**Report of the Administrative Commission to Install Rev. Adrienne Poissant
March 22, 2026**

Meeting convened at 2:45 PM

Present:

Rev. Ryon Herin, Moderator (Rockaway)

The Revs. Julie Raffety (Franklin), Michael Cuppett (Newton), and Nathaniel Fryer (Boonton);
Elders Betsy Engelhardt (West Milford), and Mark Hontz (Yellow Frame).

Meeting was called to order and opened in prayer by Rev. Ryon Herin Moderator.

Purpose of the Meeting: to install Adrienne Poissant to First Presbyterian Church of Branchville.

The commission reviewed the service and the duties assigned.

The commission voted to approve the service order (Motion made and seconded). Motion Carried.

Motion was made and seconded to have the meeting adjourn and commission dissolved with the benediction at the end of the worship service. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ryon Herin

PLAN OF UNION

Adopted by the congregations of Meyersville Presbyterian Church and The First Presbyterian Church (of Stirling) on May 5, 2026.

I. INTRODUCTION

Meyersville Presbyterian Church (MPC) and The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling (FPCS) are both located in Long Hill Township, New Jersey, within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ.

This Plan of Union provides the framework for these two congregations to faithfully merge into one new worshiping community.

Background

The merger of these two congregations aims to combine resources in light of declining membership, unsure financial realities, and the call to meet evolving ministry needs in and beyond Long Hill Township. This merger would be the first step towards a revitalized and thriving ministry.

Name

The newly formed congregation shall have a new name.

A POU Name Team with equal representation from both congregations was formed. It requested suggestions for a new name for the proposed merged congregation. Members of both congregations made contributions. A list of names was reviewed with the aim of offering final options. The primary reason for removing certain names from consideration was to avoid duplication with other churches or organizations that had either identical or nearly identical names. Together, the congregations voted on the final name, when this Plan of Union was adopted, selecting: United Presbyterian Church (UPC) of Long Hill

The incorporated name and/or the church tag line will include Long Hill Township, NJ; this will be determined by a legal incorporation process.

Denominational Affiliation: The merged congregation will remain a member of the Presbyterian Church USA, and The Presbytery of Highlands of New Jersey.

II. GUIDING VALUES AND STRATEGY

The duly elected Sessions of both MPC and FPCS congregations met and identified these values which animate and guide our response to Christ's call to come and follow him. As one body we value:

- **Authentic Community** – Genuine relationships rooted in faith and belonging.
- **Commitment to Growth** – Seeking spiritual, relational, and outreach growth.
- **Honoring Our Roots** – Celebrating heritage while embracing the future.
- **Joyful Generosity** – Open to sharing time, talents, and treasure with gratitude.
- **Love in Action** – Serving others with compassion.

Trusting in God's faithfulness, it is recommended the newly formed Church adopt the following ministry priorities:

- Build Christlike Community: Genuinely welcome everyone as a beloved child of God and foster an atmosphere of hospitality in worship, ministries, and mission.
- Focus on Outreach: Prioritize growth in every ministry, hospitality in worship, reaching out to new friends, sharing Good News, and making disciples.
- Honor Our Roots: Celebrate the rich histories of Meyersville Presbyterian Church and The First Presbyterian Church (Stirling) and maintain strong ties with the Long Hill Township community.
- Lead by Generosity: Encourage lay leaders, members, and friends of the congregation to joyfully share time, talents, and resources in response to God's generosity.
- Share Love in Action: Actively and compassionately serve our neighbors in need, specifically building our commitment to feeding hungry neighbors.

Church Growth Statement

Renewing our shared calling and strengthening the vitality of our common ministry are central priorities of the merger of our two churches. In addition, the newly formed congregation commits to growth in the number of disciples who join and participate in our life together. We acknowledge that a merger alone is not a solitary solution to challenges such as declining membership and limited resources. Rather, bringing our congregations together is a first step on a longer journey toward renewed ministry and mission. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we seek to serve God faithfully and to share the good news of Christ now and in the years ahead.

III. PLAN OF UNION TIMELINE

- Many years of shared fellowship and worship.
- Several years of shared staffing and shared ministry as two churches with one ministry.
- June 18, 2025: Both Sessions voted to propose merger of our two congregations.
- August: Joint Session retreat, discernment of values and introduction to Plan of Union checklist.
- September 2025: Plan of Union teams are formed and begin meeting– these teams are equally represented by both churches.
- October 2025: Presentation of Plan of Union progress by POU Teams to the congregations.
- November 2025 – Discussion of key values and adding the priority of church growth.
- December 2025 – Meeting with COM Liaison
- January 2026 - Meeting with Foundry Commercial to assist with discernment regarding buildings and properties.
- February 2026 - Buildings Values Appraised by Foundry (Broker Opinion Price)
- March 2026 - Plan of Union Team votes unanimously on site for merged congregation.
- March 21 and 23 Both Sessions construct and adopt Plan of Union.
- April 7 The Presbytery of the Highlands’s COM reviews/votes on Plan of Union
- April 19 Plan of Union Distributed to Congregations
- May 3 Congregations voted in favor of Plan of Union

May 12 The Presbytery of Highlands Meeting (potential vote on Plan of Union)

June - December 2026

____ Integrating Two Churches into One New Church

____ Incorporation of New Church

2027 Celebration of New Congregation

IV. PLAN OF UNION IMPLEMENTATION TEMPLATE

1. OFFICERS /GOVERNANCE

Session- Phase 1. Upon affirmative vote for the merging of Meyersville Presbyterian Church and The First Presbyterian Church (of Stirling) by both congregations and the Presbytery of the Highlands:

- a) An integrated Session shall be established to fulfill the constitutional responsibilities of a Session; including but not limited to allocation of funds for transition and merger costs.
- b) This integrated Session will consist of the twelve elders currently serving on the Sessions of both merging congregations.
- c) Rev. Muntzel, who is currently the moderator of both the merging churches' sessions, will moderate the integrated Session.
- d) A Clerk and treasurer shall be named by the integrated Sessions.
- e) The integrated Session shall ensure fair representation from both former churches in its committees and teams during Phase 1.
- f) The integrated Session shall construct the Manual of Operations of the newly formed congregation within 6 months.
- g) **Upon approval of the ecclesiastical merger by affirmative votes of both congregations and the Presbytery of the Highlands, this integrated Session, is authorized to act as the Board of Trustees of the corporation (cf. G-4.0101 Book of Order) to oversee and manage all aspects of the management and sale of church property so long as appropriate approval is given by the presbytery.**
- h) Session-Phase 2. Upon completion of the civil merger:
 - a. The Integrated Session will continue to serve as an interim Session for twelve month period, providing continuity of leadership during the transition.
 - b. During this period, the interim Session shall oversee an appropriate process for the nomination and election of officers for the following year, in accordance with the new congregation's bylaws, the Manual of Operations, and the requirements of the Book of Order.

Deacons Board - Before the civil merger, the deacons from MPC and the FPC will continue to carry out their assigned duties. As appropriate, some joint activities may begin between the two groups. Deacons from both congregations will take part in defining the responsibilities for the new deacon's board, and these responsibilities will be documented in the new congregation's Manual of Operations. After the new congregation is officially incorporated, a new board of deacons will be formed and governed by the new congregation's bylaws and Manual of Operations.

2. PROPERTY

The real properties owned by both FPCS and MPC congregations consist of:

The First Presbyterian Church property includes the church building, a manse (single-family home), a parking lot, and the Memorial Garden. These are all located on a single lot at: **158 Central Avenue, Stirling, NJ 07980.**

The Meyersville Presbyterian Church property consists of the church building and surrounding land, which includes the adjacent historic (inactive) cemetery, located at: **223 Hickory Tavern Road, Gillette, NJ 07933.**

Additionally, the Meyersville Presbyterian Church owns a parking lot and a manse (single-family home), which are situated together on one lot. The manse is located at **32 Gillette Road, Gillette, NJ 07933.**

New Home - The merged congregation will use a single location for all its worship services, ministry activities, and outreach programs. The recommended site for the new home is 158 Central Avenue, Stirling, NJ 07980.

Rationale: Great care and prayerful deliberation were taken in evaluating which property would give a newly merged congregation the greatest flexibility and advantages. Here are highlights of the Plan of Union Team on Property's review:

- I. Both church buildings are much beloved and have each sustained congregations in ministry for 150 and 180 years. We cannot but be thankful to God for the many hands which stewarded these properties over the years. Assessment cannot calculate or compare the ways both properties and buildings have enriched the lives of countless individuals, families, and our communities.
- II. The buildings both have beautiful sanctuaries with comparable capacities.
- III. Both congregations have sacred spaces which they have pledged to care for-- the cemetery adjacent to the Meyersville Church and the Memorial Garden at FPCS.
- IV. The buildings have comparable sewer and water systems.

EVALUATION OF PROPERTY: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility and Layout

Accessibility at the Meyersville Presbyterian Church (MPC) remains a significant challenge, despite the presence of an elevator to the sanctuary and a chair lift down to the fellowship hall. In contrast, the majority of rooms within the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling (FPCS) building—including meeting rooms, kitchen, offices, the large fellowship hall (Pollard Hall), and the multi-stall bathrooms—are located on a single floor, making them more accessible. The bathrooms at FPCS are also more accessible, (with additional “kiddie” bathrooms available on the lower level.) While FPCS does have some accessibility issues, these can be addressed with modifications such as installing a lift outside and adding a small ramp to the sanctuary.

Location

The FPCS building is conveniently situated near the Stirling train station and is within walking distance of residential Main Street and Somerset Apartments, providing the property with good visibility on Central Ave. The parking lot is paved and located on the same lot as the church building, offering ease of access. One drawback of the FPCS location is that the manse shares the same driveway as the entire complex, which would present challenges if there were a desire to sell the manse separately from the rest of the property.

Condition of the Buildings and Anticipated Future Maintenance

The POU Team conducted a thorough review of the condition of each building and the anticipated need for future capital improvements. The FPCS building has benefited from a number of recent upgrades, including a new sanctuary roof installed in 2025, an updated boiler and hot water heater, and bathrooms with new toilets and faucets.

Income-Producing Potential

FPCS has a well-established tenant in the church building: the Long Hill Montessori School. This tenant pays rent year-round and has made substantial investments into renovating and upgrading the downstairs of the building, as well as maintaining a playground.

Mission Opportunities

The Twelve Baskets Food Pantry of Long Hill Township, an initiative that both congregations have actively supported, already relocates to the FPCS building for several months each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEYERSVILLE CHURCH PROPERTIES

Transfer of Custodianship for the Church Building

The integrated Session, with the guidance and approval of the Presbytery of the Highlands, shall seek out new caretakers for the Meyersville Presbyterian Church building. Priority will be given to selling the building to another church or non-profit organization. Until such time that the building and property is either sold or leased, the newly merger congregation shall retain full ownership and responsibility for continued maintenance.

According to advice from real estate professionals, entities interested in making the Meyersville Presbyterian Church building their home will desire parking, therefore right of first refusal for the Gillette Rd. parking lot will go to the buyer or lessee of the Meyersville Church building and property.

Subdivision and Sale of Manse

The integrated Session, under the guidance and approval of the Presbytery of the Highlands, will initiate legal action to subdivide the current Meyersville Presbyterian Church properties on Gillette Road, thereby separating the manse from the parking lot. If this subdivision can be completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, the manse at 32 Gillette Road will then be sold.

Subdivision of Church Building and Historic Cemetery Care

Additionally, the integrated Session will pursue legal action to subdivide the current Meyersville Presbyterian Church building from the adjacent historic cemetery.

If the division between the MPC church building and the cemetery can be achieved promptly and economically, the newly formed congregation (made up of MPC and FPCS) shall retain ownership of the historic cemetery. However, if the cemetery cannot be separated from the church building, the new merged congregation shall establish a dedicated fund for the ongoing care and upkeep of the historic cemetery. This fund must be properly structured to ensure that any entity who purchases the MPC building has access to the resources necessary for the perpetual maintenance of the cemetery.

Property Held in Trust

All real estate property of the newly formed congregation shall be held "in trust for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)."

The Administration and Coordinating Commission of Highlands Presbytery will guide and assist with property sales according to Presbytery policy and acting as duly authorized to give the required Presbytery approval.

3. STAFFING

The staffing patterns of the two merged congregations will continue. This includes the Rev. Stefanie Muntzel in position of pastor and Linda Murphy as Office Administrator.

Pastoral leadership: Our covenant supply pastor will transition from 2 part-time positions to one full-time. Terms of call will continue through this calendar year and be negotiated for the new year and following years as per Highlands Presbytery and Book of Order requirements.

Other positions: Contracted Music Director position will continue to be filled by Justin Jaramillo and renegotiated as it has on a yearly basis.

4. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Review

A full financial review (undertaken by each congregation's audit committee) will occur before the final merger.

A full financial review will occur within 60 days after the final merger.

Account and investment statements and outstanding obligations (debts) will be noted and shared with both Sessions.

Successor in Interest

The newly formed congregation is the successor in interest to both/all original churches, ensuring continuity for all trusts, bequests, endowments, and designated gifts.

Intended Use of Proceeds

The proceeds derived from the leasing or sale of any properties referenced within this Plan of Union shall be allocated to the newly merged congregation.

5. INCORPORATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTS

Articles of Incorporation: The Integrated Session is empowered by the adoption of this Plan of Union to create a new corporation with Articles of Incorporation and By-laws and to register the corporation with the State of New Jersey.

Voting Rights: Voting rights for all preexisting members of both congregations will transfer to the new congregation.

Membership & Records: All members of both congregations will be incorporated into the unified congregation. Past (historic) membership records shall be archived appropriately.

Bylaws: By-laws shall be based on The Presbytery of the Highlands templates and take into consideration current practices of both churches, in accordance with constitutional requirements of the Book of Order.

Manual Of Operation: A new manual of operations shall be constructed to govern the newly formed congregation. It shall be based on Highlands Presbytery requirements and honor the current practices of both churches, in accordance with constitutional requirements of the Book of Order of the PCUSA.

It shall be formed under the guidance of the Session and adopted at the first congregational meeting of the newly incorporated congregation.

6. MOVABLE BELONGINGS

A task group of representatives of both former congregations will be created by the Integrated Session to manage movable property. All decisions relating to use, disposal, re-gifting or repurposing of items shall be made in a sensitive, respectful manner.

It shall be a priority that the designated “new” location at 158 Central Ave. reflects the character of a new congregation- integrating items from MPC and FPCS or finding new items to represent the newly formed congregation.

Whenever feasible, features from the worship space at Meyersville Presbyterian Church will be incorporated into the new church home. This may include, but is not limited to, semi-permanent fixtures like pews.

In addition, it shall be a priority to create space for displaying and preserving historical documents and artifacts of both congregations in the “new” space of the merged congregation.

V. HONORING HISTORY AND CELEBRATIONS

Marking the End of Chapter

If this document is approved, two congregations are changing their name and identity. Both FPCS and MPC are closing a chapter of their history. Therefore, care will be made to hold appropriate worship and fellowship opportunities to mark the ending to these two congregations.

If this document is approved, the Meyersville Church congregation will be leaving their building. Great care will be made to hold an appropriate closing worship to mark the transition of the congregation out of the Meyersville Church sanctuary and building.

Celebrations of New Church

A special worship service to commission the new congregation's ministry will be held on a Sunday afternoon so Presbytery partners can attend. Additionally, a Community Celebration will also take place to introduce the congregation to Long Hill Township and nearby areas. Additional steps, like unveiling a new sign will help welcome new neighbors into our blended congregation's ongoing ministry.

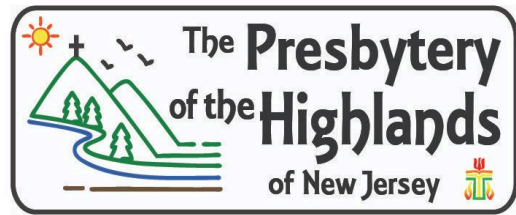
With the approval of this Plan of Union, no longer will two churches share one ministry; we will be one, new church with one ministry.

Ephesians 4: 1-6

... walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Recognition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry Policy

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey



Introduction

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey affirms and supports the diverse ways in which God calls people to serve the Church and the world. While many Ministers of Word and Sacrament serve in installed pastoral roles within congregations, others are called to ministries beyond the local church. These ministries, though varied in form, are essential expressions of the Gospel through proclamation, sacrament, justice, mercy, and service.

The Presbytery bears responsibility for both the minister and the ministry. The recognition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry is the means by which the Presbytery:

- Discerns and affirms an individual's call to ministry beyond the traditional congregational setting within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- Acknowledges, supports, and holds accountable those who serve faithfully in such ministries; and
- Evaluates whether a particular ministry—whether within the Presbytery's geographic area or beyond its direct jurisdiction—meets the standards for validation according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

These ministries reflect creative, Spirit-led opportunities to embody the mission of Christ in a wide range of contexts.

Purpose

The purpose of recognizing a Validated/Specialized Ministry is to:

- Affirm the minister's call and the legitimacy of the ministry within the mission of the Church;
- Ensure accountability to the Presbytery, the denomination, and the wider community;

- Provide ongoing support, nurture, and connection between the minister and the Presbytery; and
- Strengthen the Church by expanding the ways in which the Gospel is proclaimed and lived.

Definition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry

A Validated/Specialized Ministry is typically a ministry outside the life of a local congregation that meets the criteria outlined in the *Book of Order* and the guidelines of the Presbytery of the Highlands.

A minister engaged in a Validated/Specialized Ministry (G-2.0503a) shall:

- Demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*;
- Serve others and enable the ministry of others;
- Give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;
- Be accountable for the character and conduct of the ministry to the Presbytery, in addition to any organizations or institutions served; and
- Participate responsibly in the worship, work, and deliberations of the Presbytery, as well as in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Examples of Validated/Specialized Ministries

Validated/Specialized Ministries may take many forms, all consistent with the mission of God's people as expressed in Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These include, but are not limited to:

- Educators
- Chaplains
- Pastoral counselors
- Campus ministers
- Camp and conference ministry leaders
- Mission partners (domestic and global)
- Evangelists
- Administrators
- Social workers in church-related settings
- Faith-based community organizers
- New church development pastors

- Presbytery, synod, or General Assembly staff
- Others as approved by the COM

Criteria for Ministers Serving in a Validated/Specialized Ministry (G-2.0503)

A minister serving in a Validated/Specialized Ministry:

- Shall be a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or otherwise authorized for service in accordance with the *Book of Order*;
 - May be ordained if the Presbytery approves both the call and the ministry setting;
 - Shall participate in a congregation and in ecumenical relationships, consistent with ordination vows;
 - Shall be eligible for election to higher councils of the Church and to boards and agencies of those councils;
 - Shall participate in the Presbytery's Boundary Awareness Training at least once every three years;
 - Shall report annually to the Presbytery on the status and work of the ministry; and
 - Ministers serving in immigrant or non-English-speaking contexts will be considered in accordance with the *Book of Order*.
-

Approval Process for Validation of Specialized Ministry

To be recognized as a Validated/Specialized Ministry, the following process is required:

- 1. Submission of a Written Application**, including:
 - A statement describing how the ministry meets the required criteria;
 - A one-page Statement of Faith;
 - A Personal Discernment Profile (PDP), résumé, or curriculum vitae;
 - Financial terms of call (if applicable).
 - 2. Commission on Ministry (COM) Review and approval process**
 - The COM reviews the application, evaluates the terms of call, and interviews the applicant.
 - The COM may approve or defer for more information or not approve.
 - The COM reports its recommendation to the Presbytery for formal recognition.
-

Members-at-Large

A Member-at-Large is a Minister of Word and Sacrament who was previously engaged in a Validated/Specialized Ministry but is no longer serving in a ministry that fully meets the criteria of G-2.0503a, without having intentionally abandoned the exercise of ministry.

A minister may be designated as a Member-at-Large due to circumstances such as:

- Family responsibilities
- Transition between calls
- Employment outside the church
- Other situations recognized by the Presbytery

Criteria for Member-at-Large Status

A Member-at-Large:

- Shall participate in a congregation within the Presbytery and be available to assist congregations and the Presbytery (e.g., preaching, worship leadership, moderating sessions);
- Shall be eligible for election to higher councils of the Church and to boards and agencies of those councils;
- Shall participate in Boundary Awareness Training at least once every three years; and
- Shall report annually to the Presbytery on their status and engagement in ministry.

Annual Report Forms will be sent annually to all Validated/Specialized/Members-at-large members of the Presbytery.

Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Leadership Development Report May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda

None.

Items for Action

None.

Items for Report:

From the November 10, 2025 meeting:

CPM-1

Laura Choi (Candidate – certified ready to receive a call): Laura will continue under care of CPM until such time as she receives a call.

CPM-2

Jessica Fisher (Candidate – certified ready to receive a call): Per Jessica's request, her current status is 'on hold.' Policy language needs to be updated and more specific about guidelines/limitations/timelines regarding a person's 'on hold' status. Until such time, things remain 'status quo.'

CPM-3

Ben Willans (Candidate): COM approved Ben's request to a validated ministry in Scotland as the Health and Social Care Chaplain for NHS Highlands (Scotland). We expect that he will meet with Presbytery for (Zoom) examination at their February meeting with possible in-person ordination in March.

CPM-4

Patricia 'Tricia' Hayes (Aspirant for CRE): We expect Tricia's to have met all CRE requirements in November. Tricia's consultation will be held in December, and if the way be clear at that meeting, she will be certified ready to receive a call.

CPM-5

Joe Martinoni (CRE Aspirant): Joe's annual consultation was held. He is progressing in his course work. Joe is doing his field ed at the Mine Hill Presbyterian Church.

CPM-6

2026 Exam Readers were appointed and approved: Rev. Tim Clarkson (Union Hill Presbyterian - Denville/First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna) and RE Dan Mullen (Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church)

From the December 8, 2025 meeting

CPM-7

Benjamin Willans (Candidate): Ben was approved for examination at the February Presbytery meeting.

CPM-8

Patricia 'Tricia' Hayes (CRE Aspirant): Tricia's Annual Consultation was held. At this point, we are still waiting for receipt of one document. Pending receipt of that document, Tricia was certified ready to receive a call. At that time, if the way be clear, she will be certified ready to receive a call, and COM will be notified.

CPM-9

The proposed new CPMLD (Leadership Development) job description was discussed.

CPM-10

CPM's next meeting is 'on hold' pending training for the new teams and leaders.

From the April 13, 2026 Meeting

CPM-11

Joe Martinoni (CRE Aspirant): Joe was approved for a \$1,000 grant.

CPM-12

CPM is working on understanding and developing its new responsibilities as regards Leadership Training. They will begin to develop a study on The Six Great Ends of the Church, such study to be held sometime in 2026.

CPM-13

A major focus this year for CPM will be recruiting/nurturing CRE candidates to help fill pulpits. Because of this goal, work needs to be done on promoting the CRE program(s).

CPM-14

It was determined monthly meetings will be held the second Monday of each month (except the months of June, July, August and December unless necessary) at 3 pm (zoom).

CPM-15

The 2026 CPM Commission consists of the following members: RE Ken Nickel, RE Mel Prestamo, Rev. Linda Gaden, Rev. Pam Osborne, Co-Moderators Rev. Kathi Heath and Rev. Chris Doyle, and Resource Staff/Stated Clerk Rev. Steve Shussett.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Heath and Chris Doyle, CPM Co-Moderators

Committee on Representation Report

May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda

None.

Items for Action

None.

Items for Report:**COR-1**

The Committee on Representation met on March 19 for their orientation with Jeanne Radak and Steve Shussett. We discussed how we might develop a culture of belonging in our churches and presbytery. We will meet as a team on May 4 to discuss a larger project with our entire presbytery over the next year.

Young Leader Formation Team Report

May 12, 2026

Items for Consent Agenda:

None.

Items for Action:

None.

Items for Report:

YLFT-1

The budget available to the Young Leader Formation Team was reviewed.

YLFT-2

A reunion of the 2025 Presbyterian Youth Triennium participants is being planned. Costs and partnership were discussed.

YLFT-3

The Team began its review of its job description under the Discernment Report.

YLFT-4

Discussion followed on ways in which youth leaders can be gathered and supported, as well as to best communicate and coordinate with them. A goal has been set to contact youth leaders at each church to update them on plans and to build a network.

YLFT-5

The next meeting will include discussion on what storytelling would look like for this Team. The next meeting will take place on May 11 at 10am, via Zoom and at the First Presbyterian Church of Boonton.