



2025 Stated Meeting

of the

Presbytery of Redstone
Presbyterian Church (USA)

May 27, 2025



ONLINE (ZOOM)

**CONTACT PRESBYTERY OFFICE
FOR MEETING ID# AND PASSWORD**

OR

Puckety Presbyterian Church
Lower Burrell, PA

*Communicate the Word...Carry on the Work...Change the World
Together*

***DIRECTIONS TO
PUCKETY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1009 Puckety Church Rd., Lower Burrell, PA 15068
724-339-1323***

From Pittsburgh:

Take Rt. 28 North to Exit 14 – Tarentum. Follow Rt. 366 signs to New Kensington. You will cross the Tarentum Bridge. Continue straight on Rt. 366 until after the third light. (Maneuver into the passing lane, as the lanes combine after the light.) The road will split. Take the road to Rt. 56 East/Leechburg, which bears off to the left and will go over an overpass and loop down to the Bypass/Rt. 56 E. Follow Rt. 56 E. until you reach Puckety Church Road (stop light at the Midas Shop). Turn right. Puckety Church is on the left at the top of the hill.

From Greensburg:

Take N. Main Street/Old Rt. 66 until old Rt. 66 joins with the new four-lane Rt. 66 in Delmont. (After the stop light, about 20 yards, take the next left.) Follow Rt. 66 until you come to Rt. 366 at the flash yellow light. Turn left onto Rt. 366 West. Follow Rt. 366 through Parnassus/New Kensington. You will pass Valley High School on the left. Do not bear off to the right (Rt. 366), continue to go straight along the Rt. 56 Bypass. Follow Rt. 56 E. until you reach Puckety Church Road (stop light at the Midas Shop). Turn right. Puckety Church is on the left at the top of the hill.

From Turnpike/Springdale:

Exit the turnpike at exit 47 and go south/west on Freeport Road. Do not cross over the highway, merge directly onto the highway. Follow Freeport Road to Rt. 910/yellow belt. Take Rt. 910 (right turn) about 1/10 mile until Rt. 28 north. Then follow directions from Pittsburgh (listed above).

From Kittanning:

From Rt. 422 merge onto Rt. 28 south. Follow Rt. 28 S until Exit 14 - Tarentum. Turn left off exit ramp onto Bull Creek Road and merge with Rt. 366. Follow Rt. 366 signs to New Kensington. You will cross the Tarentum Bridge. Continue straight on Rt. 366 until after the third light. (Maneuver into the passing lane, as the lanes combine after the light.) The road will split. Take the road to Rt. 56 East/Leechburg, which bears off to the left and will go over an overpass and loop down to the Bypass/Rt. 56 E. Follow Rt. 56 E. until you reach Puckety Church Road (stop light at the Midas Shop). Turn right. Puckety Church is on the left at the top of the hill across from Huston Middle School.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MEETING

The offering for this meeting will go to PDA for recent disasters.

To make your Offering through online contributions go to www.redstonepresbytery.org and click on the green "GIVE NOW" link on the left of the page.

You will need to login - or create a profile if you don't already have one - and then designate your offering in the space(s) provided. You may also mail your Offering to the Presbytery office at 1004 Mt. Pleasant Road, Greensburg, PA 15601. Please designate "Presbytery Offering" on the memo line.



- Presbyters who are participating via zoom are reminded to get "Prayer Requests" to the Clerk as soon as possible as they will be lifted up during the prayers in the Worship Service.

Puckety Presbyterian Church, Lower Burrell, PA
or
Zoom meeting
May 27, 2025

4:30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minutes review and Church Register Reviews</i> 	<i>Clerks of Session</i>
5:30-6:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Registration and fellowship</i> 	<i>In Person/Online</i>
	<u>THE KINDOM OF GOD IS LIKE... GATHERING IN WORSHIP AND WORK</u>	<i>In Person or Zoom</i>
6:00 p.m.	<p><u>Announcements Loop</u></p> <p><u>Presbytery Gathering Convenes</u> CAL TO ORDER/OPENING PRAYER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of the Roll (any new business should be submitted to the Interim Stated Clerk in writing before the end of worship) • Seating of Corresponding Members • Introduction of 1st time commissioners 	Susan Keaney Rev. Cliff Foster
	<p><u>Reports</u></p> <p><u>Interim Stated Clerk</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation Report - page 7-8 • Consent Agenda - page 8-11 <p><u>Treasurer</u> - page 12</p> <p><u>Interim Executive Presbyter</u> - pages 13-14</p>	Rev. Cliff Foster John Dickson Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver
	<u>The Kingdom of God is Like.... - Appendix A)</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering • Prayers of the Day • Song of Praise "Because He Lives" • Prayer of Confession/Assurance of Pardon • Passing the Peace • Hymn "Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me" • Prayer for Illumination • Scripture Reading: Mark 10: 46-52 • Anthem: "God Almighty Is" • Sermon - "Bartimaeus and Pancakes" • Hymn "Sacred the Body" Stanzas 1, 2 & 4 • Offering • Communion • Prayer after Communion • Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" Stanzas 1 & 4 	Elder Mick Dober, Puckety Puckety Praise Team Rev Ed Gray, Murrysville, First Elder Chuck West, Puckety Puckety Choir Elder Hunter Steinitz Elder Tammy Germana, Westmont Rev. Brian Kilbert, Puckety

	SHARING IN MINISTRY AND MISSION	
	COUNCIL - page 15-27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments 24-A, 24-B, 24-C, 24-F 	Elder Len Morgan
	<u>Enabling Ministry Networks</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial Reconciliation Group pages 28-29 • Disability Inclusion Presentation 	Rev. Brenda Barnes Elder Hunter Steinitz
	<u>Empowering Mission Partnerships</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Network – page 30 --Mission reports (Congregations) --Sudan/South Sudan Mission Partnership • Pine Springs Camp – pages 31-32 	Elder Tammy Germana, Puckety Greg Davis,
	<u>Engaging Congregations</u>	
	COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY - page 33-36 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships • Wee Kirk Conference - October 13-15, 2025 - (Appendix B) 	Rev. Dr. Martin Ankrum
	<u>Equipping Leadership</u>	
	COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION ON MINISTRY - pages 37-38 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written report NOMINATING COMMITTEE - page 39 Article by Jim Farrer - “ The declining congregation: dilemma, despair and Biblical hope” pages 39-41	
	<u>New Business</u>	
	<u>Resolution of Thanks</u> <u>Benediction</u> <u>Response “For Everyone Born”</u> <u>Adjournment</u> <i><u>The next stated meeting of the Presbytery of Redstone will take place on September 23, 2024, 6:00p.m. at West Hempfield Presbyterian Church, Irwin or by Zoom.</u></i>	Rev. Brian Kilbert

*By God’s grace,
Communicate the Word,
Carry on the Work,
Change the World!*

STATED CLERK'S REPORT:

1. During the period since the last regularly stated Presbytery meeting, all correspondence that was received was responded to and/or appropriately routed for review and response to the appropriate entity of Presbytery.

Stated Clerk Correspondence Log

Date Received	Received From	Content	Action
May 15, 2025 - Mail	West Newton, Sewickley United PC	2025 Terms of Call for Commissioned Pastor, Glenn Hart	COM & File
May 6, 2025 - mail	Revloc PC	2025 Terms of Call for Commissioned Pastor, David O'Hara	COM & File
April 29, 2025 - email	Lower Burrell, Puckety PC	2025 Terms of Call for Brian Kilbert	Com & File
April 28, 2025 - email	Latrobe PC	2025 Terms of Call for Derek Campbell	COM & File
April 22, 2025 - inperson	New Alexandria, Congruity	Session Members	File
April 21, 2025 - mail	Lake Lynn, Springhill Furnace PC	2025 Terms of Call for Molly Hall	COM & File
April 17, 2025 - email	Trafford, Level Green PC	Manse inspection Report	File
March 25, 2025 - inperson	Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis	Transfer of membership from Pittsburgh to Redstone	COM & File
March 25, 2025 - inperson	Fairchance, First PC	Manse, Waiver Request for Kathleen Hockenberry, Randy Grimm, Marcia Grimm, Barbara Reiprich,	COM & File
March 25, 2025 - inperson	Dunbar, Laurel Hill PC	Waiver requests for Sherryl Scully & Cheryl Duncan 2025 Terms of Call for William Weightman	COM & File
March 25, 2025 - inperson	Patrick Ewing	Annual Report for MAL	COM & File
March 21, 2025 - mail	Cresson PC	List of Session Members	File
March 21, 2025 - email	Apollo, Poke Run PC	Manse Report	File
March 6, 2025 - mail	Apollo, Poke Run PC	2025 Terms of Call for Peter Goetschius	COM & File

2. Committee on Representation Annual Report – 12/31/2024

Standing Committees	# Members	Gender	Age	TE/RE	Ethnicity
Council	14	7-M; 7-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 4-(36-50); 6-(51-65); 4-(66+)	8-TE; 6-RE	13-W 1-AA
Nominating	3	2-M; 1-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 1-(36-50); 1-(51-65); 1-(66+)	1-TE; 2-RE	3-W
Preparation for Ministry (CPM)	9	5-M; 4-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 3-(36-50); 5-(51-65); 1-(66+)	4-TE; 5-RE	8-W 1-AA
Committee on Ministry (COM)	24	12-M; 12-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 4-(36-50); 14-(51-65); 6-(66+)	12-TE; 12-RE	23-W 1-AA
Representation	3	1-M; 2-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 2-(36-50); 0-(51-65); 1-(66+)	2-TE; 1-RE;	2-W 1-NA
Pine Springs Board	6	2-M; 4-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 2-(36-50); 2-(51-65); 2-(66+)	3-TE; 3-RE;	5-W 1-AA
Permanent Judicial Commission	9	4-M; 5-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 0-(36-50); 3-(51-65); 6-(66+)	5-TE; 4-RE	9-W
Committee Summary (duplicated)	68	33-M; 35-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 16-(36-50); 31-(51-65); 21-(66+)	35-TE; 33-RE;	63-W 4-AA 1-NA
Council Sub-Committees/Networks	# Members	Gender	Age	TE/RE	Ethnicity
Budget and Finance	5	4-M; 1-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 0-(36-50); 1-(51-65); 4-(66+)	5-RE;	5-W
Mission	7	3-M; 4-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 2-(36-50); 1-(51-65); 4-(66+)	5-TE; 2-RE	6-W 1-AA
Staff Support	4	3-M; 1-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 0-(36-50); 2-(51-65); 2-(66+)	1-TE; 3-RE	4-W
Racial Justice and Reconciliation	5	2-M; 3-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 2-(36-50); 3-(51-65); 0-(66+)	4-TE; 1-RE	5-W
Addictions Ministry	8	3-M; 5-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 2-(36-50); 2-(51-65); 4-(66+)	3-TE; 5-RE	8-W
Worship	3	1-M; 2-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 1-(36-50); 0-(51-65); 2-(66+)	2-TE; 1-RE	3-W
GRAND TOTALS (duplicated)	100	49-M; 51-F	0-(16-25); 0-(26-35); 23-(36-50); 40-(51-65); 37-(66+)	50-TE; 50-RE;	94-W 5-AA 1-NA

Observations and Recommendations:

- The Racial-Ethnic membership of the churches of the Presbytery equals approximately 1% of the total membership. Among those who are ordained as Ruling Elders, the percentage is even smaller. So, while there is a need for greater diversity in congregational leadership which serves as the “pool” for potential presbytery leadership, progress has been made with presbytery committees and structures. Our commitment remains to increase the representation of all members of the body of Christ; but without those steps, options for increasing racial-ethnic participation in Presbytery will remain limited.
- The Teaching Elder – Ruling Elder ratios are roughly equal within the standing committees of the presbytery where it is required. Some imbalance exists within networks and subcommittees which is largely driven by the engagement in these groups is based upon personal initiative and interest.
- Gender ratios are balanced among individual committees except for two. We should pursue another female for the Budget & Finance committee as well as the Staff Support Committee. The aggregate is balanced.
- Overall, the report continues to be balanced with progress being made in racial-ethnic, gender and ruling elder status among some of the committees being sustained or improved. There remains a need to attract and nominate ruling and teaching elders in our younger age categories (16-35). This information is being related to the Nominating Committee with encouragement for their work and to continue to address any inequities identified within committees wherever possible.

CONSENT AGENDA:

The Interim Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, Rev. Cliff Foster, presents the following Consent Agenda.

From Executive Committee

1. Following the review of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Interim Stated Clerk, it is **recommended** that the minutes of the Presbytery meeting of the March 25, 2025, be approved.

From the Council

1. Council **recommends** that the Financial Reports presented to the Council and the Presbytery be received and filed for audit.
2. Council **recommends** that the reports of the Interim Stated Clerk and be received and filed.
3. Council **recommends** that any Interim Executive Presbyter, Treasurer, Mission, Pine Springs Camp and Synod commissioner presented to the Presbytery be received and filed.

Presbytery of Redstone
Income and Expense Statement
 GENERAL FUND 01, April 2025

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Page: 1

	Current Period	Year to Date	Annual Budget	Annual Budget Percentage
INCOME				
CONTRIBUTION INCOME	\$37,816.86	\$113,718.75	\$353,000.00	32.21%
INTEREST INCOME	31.86	64.34	4,000.00	1.61%
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	1,077.40	1,127.40	5,000.00	22.55%
RELEASE FROM RESTRICTIONS				
TEMP RESTRICTED RELEASE	-1,984.00	-9,597.35	0.00	0.00%
Subtotal Release From Restrictions	-1,984.00	-9,597.35	0.00	0.00%
RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION	1,984.00	9,597.35	0.00	0.00%
TOTAL INCOME	38,926.12	114,910.49	362,000.00	31.74%
EXPENSES				
SHARED MINISTRY & MISSION	\$6,334.00	\$26,097.35	\$97,000.00	26.90%
COMMITTEE EXPENSES				
COUNCIL	309.36	1,402.69	3,750.00	37.41%
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00%
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00%
Subtotal Committee Expenses	309.36	1,402.69	5,250.00	26.72%
OPERATIONS	3,771.12	11,872.58	43,221.00	27.47%
PRESBYTERY STAFF				
EXECUTIVE STAFF	7,176.66	19,199.18	138,000.00	13.91%
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	2,746.40	9,212.40	29,213.00	31.54%
EMPLOYER PAID FICA TAXES	759.12	2,172.97	9,100.00	23.88%
Subtotal Presbytery Staff	10,682.18	30,584.55	176,313.00	17.35%
APPORTIONMENTS	8,773.75	35,095.00	105,285.00	33.33%
RESTRICTED EXPENSE	0.00	358.86	0.00	0.00%
TOTAL EXPENSES	29,870.41	105,411.03	427,069.00	24.68%
TRANSFER ACCOUNTS				
TRANSFER FROM OTHER FUNDS	\$2,287.50	\$2,287.50	\$66,000.00	3.47%
TOTAL TRANSFERS	2,287.50	2,287.50	66,000.00	3.47%
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES	\$11,343.21	\$11,786.96	\$931.00	1,266.05%

Redstone Presbytery
Commitment to Larger Church
April 30, 2025

	2025	TOTAL	% Payup	Unpaid
	PLEDGE	PAID	as of	Pledge
			4/30/2025	Balance
Adah, Palmer	500.00	500.00		-
Apollo, Poke Run	3,897.90	2,863.95	73%	1,033.95
Avonmore	1,000.00	696.50	70%	303.50
Belle Vernon, First	4,500.00	1,125.00	25%	3,375.00
Belle Vernon, Harmony	1,200.00		0%	1,200.00
Belle Vernon, Marion	2,475.00	1,237.50	50%	1,237.50
Belle Vernon, Rehoboth	3,000.00	950.00	32%	2,050.00
Bolivar		500.00		(500.00)
Brownsville, Calvin				-
Brownsville, Ft. Burd				-
Brownsville, Hopewell				-
Colver		132.00		(132.00)
Cresson	2,000.00	1,000.00		1,000.00
Delmont				-
Derry	1,000.00	250.00	25%	750.00
Dunbar, First		1,275.00		(1,275.00)
Dunbar, Laurel Hill	1,062.00			1,062.00
Ebensburg	1,000.00	856.08		143.92
Fairchance				-
Farmington				-
Fayette City, Little Redstone	2,000.00	2,000.00		-
Greensburg, First	31,000.00	10,333.32	33%	20,666.68
Greensburg, Maplewood	6,000.00	2,000.00	33%	4,000.00
Greensburg, Westminster	6,000.00	2,000.00	33%	4,000.00
Irwin, First	25,000.00	8,333.32		16,666.68
Irwin, W. Hempfield	3,000.00	750.00	25%	2,250.00
Jeannette	2,400.00	600.00	25%	1,800.00
Johnstown, Bethany	1,620.00	810.00	50%	810.00
Johnstown, First	6,000.00	1,800.00	30%	4,200.00
Johnstown, Second	2,000.00			2,000.00
Johnstown, Westmont	16,000.00	8,000.00	50%	8,000.00
Lake Lynn				-
Latrobe, Main St.	26,500.00	6,630.00		19,870.00
Latrobe, Spring St.	3,000.00	3,000.00		-
Leisenring	500.00		0%	500.00
Ligonier, Pleasant Grove				-
Lower Burrell, Grace	7,000.00	2,333.32		4,666.68
Lower Burrell, Puckety	10,000.00	3,400.00	34%	6,600.00
Masontown	200.00	200.00		-
McClellandtown	5,200.00	2,600.00		2,600.00
Merrittstown, Dunlap's Ck.	150.00			150.00
Mt. Pleasant, Reunion		65.00		(65.00)
Murrysville, First	12,000.00	4,000.00		8,000.00
Murrysville, Newlonsburg	23,040.00	6,282.00		16,758.00
Murrysville, Union	4,000.00	1,160.00	29%	2,840.00
N. Alexandria, Community	4,000.00	1,000.00	25%	3,000.00
N. Alexandria, Congruity	6,200.00	3,653.02	59%	2,546.98
New Florence, Bethel	3,000.00	1,000.00	33%	2,000.00

	2025 Pledge	TOTAL PAID	% Payup as of 4/30/2025	Unpaid Pledge Balance
New Florence, Trinity	3,825.00	1,275.00	33%	2,550.00
New Kensington	4,757.00	1,201.17	25%	3,555.83
New Salem	2,000.00	298.00	15%	1,702.00
N. Huntingdon, New Hope	5,700.00	1,900.00	33%	3,800.00
Patton	3,465.00	3,465.00	100%	-
Revloc	1,800.00	600.00	33%	1,200.00
Scottdale	500.00		0%	500.00
Smithfield, Grace Chapel	900.00		0%	900.00
Smock, Pleasant View	10,000.00	2,500.00	25%	7,500.00
Trafford, Level Green	5,925.00	2,449.16	41%	3,475.84
Uniontown, Tent				-
Uniontown, Third		724.00		(724.00)
Uniontown, Trinity	2,700.00	132.00	5%	2,568.00
Vanderbilt, E. Liberty	1,000.00	425.00	43%	575.00
West Newton, Sewickley	540.00		0%	540.00
W. Newton, Sewickley UP				-
West Newton, United				-
Totals	270,556.90	98,305.34		172,251.56

From the Committee on Ministry

From the Committee on Preparation for Ministry

From the Nominating Committee

From the Committee on Representation

1. Committee on Representation **recommends** that the annual report on representation be received, filed, and directed to the Nominating Committee.

Treasurer's Report

INCOME & EXPENSE REPORT

This report provides an unaudited overview of the April 2025 finances for the Redstone Presbytery. The month of April, represents the fourth (4th) operating month of the budget period for the Presbytery. At this time, its hopeful 33% of pledged Church Commitments are received to address mission objectives.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW / INCOME

Church Commitments received for the month totaled \$34,548, which exceeds the desired benchmark of \$25,667. During this period also, there was an additional contribution of \$503.00 provided. YTD Income is \$100,399.00, which is just slightly short of a benchmark of \$102,667.

Other revenue sources from Temporarily Restricted, Interest Income, and Miscellaneous, provided a total income amount of \$38,926.00. YTD accounting for other sources totaled \$114,910.

CHURCH COMMITMENT ACTIVITY

The Redstone Presbytery consist of sixty-seven (67) member churches. The following information highlights pledges, payments provided, and payments provided which met the percentage (%) goal for the period. For this period, the percentage goal is 33%.

- 49 Pledges have been offered (+1) since the March report (68% participation [**correction:** participation in March was 66% and not 72% as reported])
- 16 Churches have yet to provide a pledge (down from 21 in March)
- 46 Churches have provided a payment (+ 6 since March)
- 17 Churches have met or exceeded the 33% benchmark for this period (+1 for this period)

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW / EXPENSES

Expenses for the month totaled \$29,870.00, which is well below the monthly target of \$35,589. YTD, the expenses are \$105,411.00 which is well below the benchmark of \$142,356.00 for the period. The positive turnaround comparing the March & April financial reports is first associated to obtaining higher Church Commitments in April and lower expenses for this period in total.

INVESTMENTS & HOLDINGS

Ameriprise investment statement for the month ending April 2025, reflected a negative change in value of -\$3,388.00, and YTD the portfolio has a negative change in value of -\$31,793.00. Ending value of the investments total \$704,999.00.

Other investments and holdings consisting of First Commonwealth (\$52,794.00), PILP (\$10,000.00), Petty Cash (\$250.00), and New Covenant (\$347,987.00) total \$411,031.00

Total Investments & Holdings = \$1,116,030.00

Interim Executive Presbyter Report

Redstone Presbytery
Interim Executive Presbyter Report
Submitted by Lon Weaver
May 27, 2025 (Time Period: March 26th – May 25th)

1 Organizing Our Ministries: To this end, I

- Met with Commonwealth bank representative with Redstone’s bookkeeper and chair of Finance re: options to consider;
- Had two individual conversations/meetings with other EPs in the Synod;
- Had A tour of Pine Springs, kindly and hospitably guided by Executive Director Greg Davis;
- Pursued four visits/conversations with leaders (pastoral and non pastoral) in the presbytery;
- Enjoyed one meeting with a GA/Synod agency representative (Rev. Ellie Johns Kelley of the Presbyterian Foundation);
- Met – in two meetings – with members of the new Presbytery Design Team and with presbytery officers in preparation for the May 27th meeting;
- Attended two CPM meetings, two COM meetings, and one Council meeting (via Zoom); and
- Attended the Board of Pensions “Regional Summit” on Benefits in Philadelphia.

2 – Pastoral Care and Support: To this end, I

- Had twelve visits with pastors in the presbytery;
- Participated in the commission of Patrick Ewing to the Uniontown 3rd;
- Prepared materials for the Pastors’ Retreat at Pine Springs on the top of discernment – unfortunately, mechanical issues on my return plane delayed my return and prevented my presence in person;
- Met with author/consultant Thomas Bandy re: a summer read of his book, *Pilgrim Bands*, by members of the presbytery – this is an invitation to you ALL;
- Had six conversations/calls in support of churches in the presbytery facing challenges;
- Led an orientation meeting for one PNC and a participated in a progress support meeting with another PNC in the presbytery;
- Attended the Interfaith Passover Celebration at the Jewish Community Center in Pittsburgh;
- Attended the Jeannette/Greensburg Annual NAACP Human Rights Banquet;
- Met with Rev. David Ackerman, U.C.C. Penn West Conference Minister; and
- Attended the Christian Associates Retreat at the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City.

3 – Worship – To this end, I

- Attended Sunday worship at the Uniontown Trinity and Greensburg, Westminster churches;
- Preached during Sunday worship at Latrobe (Main St.) and Colver churches; and
- Provided music for Sunday worship at Johnstown 1st and New Alexandria Community United churches

4 – My Self-Development – To this end, I

- Completed the concluding meetings of the Presbyterian Leader Formation sponsored “90 Days of Companionship” with colleague Retired EP Rev. Steve Cureton: the final four sessions were during this time period. Given his significant ability to listen and reflect, it was a very meaningful experience for me; and
- Had my first experience of the Presbyterian Leader Formation sponsored (and Synod supported) coaching program with my coach, Rev. Dr. Youngsook Charlene Kang.

GENERAL GOALS:

My general goals remain these:

- To be attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit in all of the actions I undertake for Redstone Presbytery;
- To listen to the stories of the church leaders of Redstone as they describe their joys and hopes, as well as their challenges and conflicts;
- To become aware of the qualities that the presbytery as-a-whole has: its strengths; its growing edges; and its deepest concerns;
- To learn who the leaders are – lay and ordained – whose presence is key to determining the direction of the presbytery; and
- Finally, to provide the room and encouragement that allows for meaningful discernment required to chart the course for Redstone Presbytery's next chapter.

In closing, three thoughts cross my mind. First, there are many gifted and committed followers of Christ in Redstone Presbytery. Second, there are a range of views about how we may embody the Body of Christ in this time and place. Third, the world throws constant change before us – seemingly faster than we have experienced before – that poses many puzzles that we must face in our passion and desire to continue to be bearers of the causes of love and justice. In the face of all of this, may we embrace a humble spirit, opening ourselves to answers that may be surprising and challenging, yet faithful. In light of this, may we reflect on the assertion of Paul at the end of chapter two of II Corinthians:

“Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God, we are speaking in Christ before God” (2:16-17)

In that Spirit, let us go on.

ACTION AGENDA

Presbytery Council

Council Report Items

- **Amendments 24-A, 24-B, 24-C, 24-F**
- **Racial Justice and Reconciliation**
- **Disability Inclusion Presentation**
- **Mission Network Report**
 - Mission reports (Congregations)
 - Sudan/South Sudan Mission Partnership
- **Pine Springs Camp Report**

24-A- F-1.0403

OPENESS TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT F-1.0403

UNITY IN DIVERSITY (POL-011)

The 226th General Assembly (2024) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall F-1.0403 in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity be amended as follows?

(Deleted text is in strikethrough; added text is in *italics*.)

"F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity ...

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, *gender identity, sexual orientation*, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

Background and Rationale

... While affirming the freedom of councils of the church to make ordination decisions as guided by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that the Church has been called upon historically to be ever more faithful to the most inclusive and affirming statements of Scripture and promptings of the Holy Spirit...

We feel that the Spirit is working in the churches concerning this matter. The 223rd General Assembly (2018) approved the following resolution.

1. *Celebrating the expansive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the breadth of our mission to serve a world in need, the 223rd General Assembly (2018) affirms the gifts of LGBTQIA+ people for ministry and celebrates their service in the church and in the world ...*

5. *The assembly also gives thanks for those who continue to seek deeper understanding, and more authentic welcome, even amid discomfort or uncertainty about how best to show hospitality, in the spirit of continuing Reformation ...*

JO. *The assembly encourages all congregations and councils of the PC(USA) continually to seek to expand their welcome so that all might know the Good News of Jesus Christ and encourages all other communions to do the same.*

We follow this encouragement by urging that gender identity and sexual orientation be established as protected classes against which we must not discriminate.

Advice - From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

We believe the witness of Scripture and the Constitution testifies to the full inclusion of persons as members of the Church (universal), as noted not only in F-1.0403 but also reiterated in G-1.0302 regarding the church particular: "No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith" (see also the "Confession of Belhar," *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part I The Book of Confession* (2016), 10.3). A positive affirmation of this principle through constitutional amendment is consistent with this witness.

Comment - From the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Task Force

At the 223rd General Assembly (2018), the Assembly approved item 11-13 "On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church." This statement affirmed the faithful presence and service of LGBTQIA+ folks in the PC(USA). This is one of many overtures passed at past General Assemblies (dating to at least the 22nd General Assembly in 2014) in support of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and around the world.

Thus the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Committee advises the Assembly to continue to embody this commitment by stating explicitly in our Foundations that, alongside "race, ethnicity, age, sex, [etc.]," sexual orientation and gender identity are similarly fundamental dimensions of personhood that shall not be used as barriers from membership in the Church universal or participation in the "worship, governance, and emerging life" of PC(USA) churches.

Advice and Counsel-From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)

F-1.0403 outlines the principles of unity in diversity, citing Gal. 3:27-29 as the guiding scriptural basis for these principles. ACWGJ reads Gal. 3:27-29 alongside Col. 1:16-17. The diversity in which we are united is not only plentiful but also specifically flows from God. As a result, affirming these diverse identities with language that closer estimates the depths of human experience in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity allows us to stand firmly in our Reformed Tradition. Only when we explicitly affirm the theological, ecclesial, and biblical foundations of openness and welcome to individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities can we proclaim the "good news" Gospel truth.

Advice and Counsel - From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

We acknowledge the historic role that the church has occupied, both as the oppressor and as advocate. We acknowledge that there is still much work to do in fostering healing with our siblings who have been harmed by the church. Echoing the 223rd General Assembly (2018), we celebrate the faithful, loving, and courageous Gospel witness of LGBTQIA+ persons. Our church is enriched, made vibrant and vital by the contributions of LGBTQIA+ people and they ought to be

afforded the same constitutional protections that have been extended to those on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, location, and theological conviction.

Advice and Counsel - From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

REAC notes that the PC(USA) has already take the step in accepting "On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church." At the 223rd General Assembly in St. Louis in June 2018, the PC(USA) voted unanimously to pass three significant overtures related to LGBTQ+ inclusion. Therefore, in approving POL-01, the PC(USA) cements and demonstrates the denomination's commitment to inclusivity and its Matthew 25 platform, which sends a resounding message of acceptance across the denomination.

Comment - From the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)

GACOR will primarily direct its comments toward Part 1 (proposing changes to F-1.0403) from which section of the *Book of Order* GACOR receives its primary mandate and focus. GACOR has already been studying the impact of gender identity and sexual orientation on equity and representation within the structures, systems, and leadership of the PC(USA). Approval of this item, however, would greatly increase the capacity of GACOR to invite the wider church to include ways to collect data and understand the ways the diversity already among us impacts how we live and move together as the Church in terms of process and norms. This change also, foundationally, acknowledges the multiplicity of leaders and members led by the Spirit to serve and take part in the life of the Church (Joel 2:28-29/ Acts 2:17-18).

The Assembly Committee on Polity approved Item POL-01 1, 35/3. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-01 1, 389/24.

For the full report on POL-01, go to
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001122>

24-B- G-1.0104

THE CONGREGATION

G-1.0104 OTHER FORMS OF CORPORATE WITNESS (WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES, etc.) (POL-03)

The 226th General Assembly (2024) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-1.0104 be added to Congregations in the Form of Government as follows? (Deleted text is in strikethrough; added text is in italics.)

G-1.0104

Communities, etc.)

Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Worshipping

In circumstances where the formation of a traditional ecclesiastically and legally organized congregation is not desired or deemed appropriate, and a worshiping community has been formally recognized by a presbytery according to its own definition, presbyteries and congregations may work together with such a group to provide supervision and support. Such recognized groups shall be under the mutually agreed upon oversight of a minister of the Word and Sacrament approved by the presbytery, shall include at least one ruling elder in their chosen leadership, and shall function under the financial, legal, and disciplinary sponsorship of an ecclesial council (either a session or a presbytery). The sponsoring council shall, in consultation with the worshiping community, authorize any celebrations of the sacraments within the group in accordance with the Directory for Worship. Membership records for group participants desiring to be formally enrolled as baptized, active, or affiliate members in the PC(USA) shall be maintained by the sponsoring council. Such groups shall not hold property, and may not undertake any financial, legal, or contractual obligations, apart from their sponsoring council. They shall adhere to the sponsoring council's required policies on sexual misconduct, harassment, child and youth protection, and antiracism. Presbyteries shall determine appropriate means of representation and participation of such groups in and through the sponsoring councils (session and/or presbytery).

Background and Rationale

1. The intention of the proposed amendment is to provide a minimal, flexible, and adaptable level of historic Reformed polity for small worshiping communities that wish to identify with the larger church in worship and formation, discipleship, and mission. The wording is intended to be adaptable to current constitutional provisions and/or to whatever recommendations may emerge from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination.
6. The role of the sponsoring council (session or presbytery) would basically be that of an "umbrella organization" with oversight of financial, legal, and disciplinary matters as needed

The principal body responsible for discerning the appropriateness of any such groups and their activities in relationship to the PC(USA) would be the presbytery, in consultation with any sponsoring congregation, acting under the authority of Scripture, guided by the Book of Confessions, and governed by the Book of Order.

Advice - From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution verbally advised the General Assembly that this language does not have constitutional implications.

Comment - From the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)

The General Assembly Committee on Representation recommends approval of this item. While there are many types of New Worshiping Communities (NWCs), from the perspective of representation and equity, GACOR notes that many NWCs actually serve historically marginalized communities - particularly communities of color and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

These NWCs provide a vibrant, safe place for the exploration of what it means to be the church in the 21st century. However, under the current provisions in the Book of Order, there is no church-wide mechanism for participants in NWCs to receive the sacrament of Baptism, or be counted as members of the larger church. This lack of standing has caused confusion and frustration, as well as a lack of representation in all councils of the church. While this has a daily impact for these NWCs, creating a "second class" of church participants and organization, it also affects the capacity of GACOR to understand the diversity of the church through the annual statistical reporting of the Church. This item would correct these issues while also providing the necessary oversight, allowing NWC participants full standing and representation within the PC(USA).

Advice and Counsel) - From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) approve Item POL-03. This overture continues progress made by the 225th General Assembly (2022) in developing standardized guidelines for chartering immigrant fellowships, worshiping communities, and new church developments. Crucially, this overture seeks to provide an adaptable framework rooted in our Reformed polity.

The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the overture language and then approved Item POL- 03, 35/3 with comment. The 225th General Assembly (2024) amended and then approved Item POL-03, 391/14 with comment.

For the full report on POL-03, go to <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001126>

24-C - G-2.0104b

ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0104b GIFTS AND QUALIFICATIONS (POL-01 2)

The 226th General Assembly (2024) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0104b be amended as follows:

(Deleted text is in strikethrough; added text is in *italics*.)

b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts,

preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404), the Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01), and in the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403. Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

Background and Rationale

... While affirming the freedom of councils of the church to make ordination decisions as guided by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that the Church has been called upon historically to be ever more faithful to the most inclusive and affirming statements of Scripture and promptings of the Holy Spirit...

We feel that the Spirit is working in the churches concerning this matter. The 223rd General Assembly (2018) approved the following resolution:

1. *Celebrating the expansive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the breadth of our mission to serve a world in need, the 223rd General Assembly (2018) affirms the gifts of LGBTQIA + people for ministry and celebrates their service in the church and in the world ...*
5. *The assembly also gives thanks for those who continue to seek deeper understanding, and more authentic welcome, even amid discomfort or uncertainty about how best to show hospitality, in the spirit of continuing Reformation ...*
10. *The assembly encourages all congregations and councils of the PC(USA) continually to seek to expand their welcome so that all might know the Good News of Jesus Christ and encourages all other communions to do the same.*

We follow this encouragement by urging that gender identity and sexual orientation be established as protected classes against which we must not discriminate.

Advice - From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

Inserting the wording "and in the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination found in F-1.0403" into G-2.0104b adds a requirement for acknowledgment of F-1.0403 in the examination of all candidates for ordered ministry before ordination and/or installation. Under the proposed amendment, a council is required to examine candidates to be ordained and/or installed, to

1. determine the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404), and
2. determine the candidate's ability and attentiveness to fulfill the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination of church members found in F-1.0403 which pertains to
3. the foundational principles of unity in diversity of the Church (universal), and
4. the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as a particular church, guaranteeing full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership, and no member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

The proposed amendment, in effect, would require the candidate to acknowledge, by some means, during the examination, what F-1.0403 states regarding the unity in diversity of the Church universal when it comes to non-discrimination, and church particular when it comes to participation and representation related to membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Authoritative Interpretation of the General Assembly (1987, 151, 15.252, Com. 17-87) states that the determination for church membership is different from the determination for ordination and/or installation to the ordered ministries of deacon, ruling elder, and minister of Word and Sacrament. Furthermore, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in 1985 determined that the right to elect deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of Word and Sacrament is not absolute but is bound by the constitutional framework of the larger church (Minutes, 1985, Part I, pp. 118--23, Union Presbyterian Church of Blasdell, New York, et al. vs. The Presbytery of Western New York).

When a council is prayerfully discerning and examining candidates to be ordained and/or installed, the council is required to act with due diligence on behalf of the whole church in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As stated in G-2.0104b, standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry.... Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

Where membership within the greater church is to be inclusive, demonstrating unity in diversity, ordination and/or installation into an ordered ministry of the church does require candidates to determine their ability to uphold the Constitution and principles of Presbyterian polity

In Book of Order G-2.0105, "in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member" or to become a member (i.e. a session or a presbytery).

The current examination standards already require a candidate to affirm W-4.0404e, to be governed by our church's polity and to abide by its discipline. Adding the proposed language to the examination requirements is redundant.

Comment - From the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Task Force

The heart of this proposal intends for emerging teaching elders, ruling elders and deacons to make explicit their intention, as part of the preparation/examination process for ordination (prior to an ordination service), not to discriminate in the course of their service based on identity markers named in F-1.0403. The committee believes that every person in the church has a right to be treated with equality, fairness and dignity.

On one hand, this proposed measure may be seen as a redundancy since the constitutional questions for ordination already articulate a commitment "to be governed by our church's polity," which, obviously, includes the current version of F-1.0403. On the other hand, this commitment has not, in practice, preserved ordained individuals from discriminatory behavior in the course of their service based on race, age, sex, etc. Also, this overture refers to the examination process and therefore neither requests nor requires a change to the constitutional questions.

Thus the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Committee calls upon the Assembly to continue to support ordained individuals in keeping their ordination vows by making explicit in the preparation/examination process a determination of the candidate's "ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404)" - "the principles of participation, representation and non-discrimination," [*Proposed addition to G-2.0104b*]. We also believe the changes to G-20104b are the action to the sentiments expressed in F-1.0403 and therefore they should not be separated into two amendments.

This assessment does not require uniformity of thought or conviction - only a commitment not to disrupt or block other individuals from living into their callings based on the identity markers named in F-1.0403. We not only support this regarding LGBTQIA+ identities, but also in regard to the other identities listed in F-1.0403 (all of which can and do intersect with LGBTQIA+ identities). People with a variety of identities and convictions exist in the church, are baptized in the name of the Lord, and are called to lay and ordained ministry, and all should be able to exist and serve in the church without discrimination or disruption.

Advice and Counsel-From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)

The Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) **approve** POL-01 2.

Since the original overture addresses changes to two parts of the Book of Order, ACWGJ looks at the two parts separately, in light of advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution. Ordination already calls us to uphold our commitment "to be governed by our denomination's polity." G-2.0104b explicitly names our baptismal call to include welcome and openness as named in 1 Cor. 12: 12-13. As a community of disciples who seek to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ, asking those preparing for ordination to name their baptismal call with specific detail allows us to work towards the Great Ends of the Church together. Only by being explicit in this way can we stand for justice, rising up against the wicked and standing for God against evildoers (Psalm 94:16). Vague affirmation, like silence, only perpetuates the pain inflicted on our siblings in Christ when their experiences are not recognized as part of the Body of Christ. Naming our belief in participation, representation, and non-discrimination is not only important, it is precedent.

Finally, ACWGJ affirms the work of our siblings on the LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee to specifically advocate for individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities before the Assembly.

The Assembly Committee on Polity approved Item POL-01 2, 28/10. The 226th General Assembly (2024) amended and approved Item POL-01 2, 297/130.

For the full report on POL-01 02, go to <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001122>

For the video of the GA Plenary 10 discussion on POL 01 2 go to <https://ga-pcusa.org/videos/>

24-F - G-2.0610

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0610 ACCOMODATIONS TO PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES (ORD-05)

The 226th General Assembly (2024) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0610 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?

(Deleted text is in strikethrough; added text is in *italics*.)

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-fourths vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. A full account of the reasons for a *The existence of any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness, with confidential details omitted,* shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

Background and Rationale

Editor's note: This rationale attached to the original item of business which was significantly amended by the General Assembly.

Those persons who respond to the call to serve as a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the church have embarked on a sacred journey, accompanied by their home congregation and presbytery of care. Along the way, the presbytery and the inquirer or candidate develop a relationship of accountability and trust that enables and empowers the whole church to be a part of this journey of faithful response to God's call. Placing a detailed record of a potentially traumatic encounter in the permanent records of the presbytery does little to further this relationship of accountability and trust and only provides an opportunity to increase and intensify harm.

Removing this requirement for this full account of the reasons for a waiver of examination requirements for those under the care of a presbytery clarifies that the detailed record of a person's preparation for ministry process is independent from the long-term story of that person's faithful service as a minister. This amendment simplifies the text of the Constitution by making it less of a manual of operations and gives voice to emerging understandings of learning differences, cultural competency, and neurodivergence that are increasingly common within and beyond the church. The proposed amendment allows for greater pastoral sensitivity by presbyteries in their care of those preparing for ministry and encourages presbyteries to trust one another in their work with those preparing for this sacred calling.

Advice - From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

Editor's note: This Advice attached to the original item of business which was significantly amended by the General Assembly

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve item ORD-05 with amendment.

The overture seeks to allow "for greater pastoral sensitivity" when candidates for ministry require waivers from ordination requirements or an alternate means to assess readiness by removing the requirement of G-2.0610 that a "full account of the reasons" for the action(s) be recorded in presbytery minutes and reported "to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred," which the overture rationale characterizes as "placing a detailed record of a potentially traumatic encounter in the permanent records of the presbytery." The overture would therefore strike the entire last sentence of G-2.0610.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes, first, that the Accommodations to Particular Circumstances described in G-2.0610 occur as part of the Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service outlined in G-2.0607, resulting in a presbytery certifying a candidate ready for examination by a presbytery. In so certifying a candidate, a presbytery has an ethical duty to inform the presbytery receiving the candidate of any waiver granted, or alternative form of assessment utilized in granting that certification of those facts.

Additionally, since a presbytery is required to approve any such accommodations by a three-fourths vote, a record of that action will necessarily be recorded in the presbytery's minutes, and there is no need for G-2.0610 to specifically so require.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution therefore concludes that the desired outcome of the overture could be achieved by striking only the part of the final sentence that refers to the contents of presbytery minutes as follows:

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-fourths vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. ~~A full account of the reasons for a~~ Any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

The Assembly Committee on Ordination amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item ORD-05, 37/6. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item ORD 05 by consensus.

Council Information items

April 22, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Elder Len Morgan, Chair of Council called the meeting to order at 6: 30 p.m. and opened the meeting with prayer. A quorum of members was established.

AGENDA APPROVAL

It was MSP to approve the distributed agenda for this meeting. With these additional items to New Business: 1) cleaning of the Presbytery Center and 2) discussion of the content included in the reports of the Presbytery Packets.

DEVOTIONS AND OPENING PRAYER

Ed Gray led devotions. The devotions focused on how we look at our situation and our perspective.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the February 25, 2025, meeting were presented. It was MSP to approve these minutes.

REPORTS

Moderator No Report

Interim Executive Presbyter

Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver presented a written report of his activities since the last Council meeting. His report also included a statement that he had written about the death of Pope Francis. This statement was sent out to the Presbytery via email.

Interim Stated Clerk

Rev. Cliff Foster, Interim Stated Clerk reported the following:

- The Correspondence Log which is included in the meeting packet.
- Session Minute Review: there is a Minute Review scheduled for April 23, 2025, at the Presbytery Office at 6PM and one on May 27 before the Presbytery Meeting at Puckety Presbytery Church at 4:30PM.
- It was MSP to ratify the email vote of the Council to allow Lon Weaver be given time off (April 21-28) for the purpose of getting his house in Duluth MN ready and listed for sale.

Treasurer Report

John Dickson distributed a written report to the members of Council which highlighted the March finances. John also reported that this month that expenses exceeded income for the month.

John also brought the following motion to the Council for approval: At the scheduled meeting of the Redstone Presbytery Council meeting on April 22, 2025, the motion was presented for the approval and authorization effective May 1, 2025, or as soon thereafter as possible, of the following check signers:

- John R. Dickson IV – Treasurer
- Keith H. Langston – Assistant Treasurer (replacing Gerald Cumer)
- Cliff Foster, Stated Clerk (replacing Richard Noftzger)
- Lon Weaver, Interim Executive Presbyter
- Roberta Shaffor, Bookkeeper

This motion also recognizes the Redstone Presbytery Checking Account Number ending in 6353, to be changed to only allow one signature, replacing the need for two. It also authorizes the opportunity for the

issuance of an ATM card for the noted account through the bank which will be issued in the name of Presbytery of Redstone – Roberta R. Shaffor. Single signatures authorizations would be extended to Lon Weaver and Roberta Shaffor. It was **MSP** to approve this motion.

Executive Director of Pine Springs Camp There was a written report on the upcoming Pine Spring Camp Golf Outing at the Latrobe Country Club and an appeal to the churches to sponsor signs for the Amen Corner. It was **MSP** that the Presbytery be a sponsor of a sign for the Amen Corner sponsor.

SUBCOMMITTEES/NETWORKS/TASK FORCES:

Staff Support There was a written report from the Staff Support Committee.

It was **MSP** that Bob Ruefle receive a prorated amount of \$250.00 for the March Presbytery Meeting.

The Staff Support recommends approval of the time off for Lon Weaver (April 21-28). The Council approved this request.

The Staff Support committee would like some clarification if Bob Ruefle as a contract employee of the Council or the Presbytery? The question is who does an evaluation of the work of the meeting tech support person in this position. It was **MSP** that the Staff Support Committee formalize a contract for the position, to do an annual review and to renew the agreement for the upcoming year. It was suggested that there be a signed contract for this position. It was suggested that there be a thirty-day notice for each party.

Mission There was a written report from the Mission Committee.

Finance, Stewardship and Property No Report

Communications There was a written report from the Communications Committee.

The Communications Committee reminded that any AV material for a Presbytery Meeting needs to be done beforehand, usually a week before the Presbytery meeting.

The Committee also presented the Redstone Presbytery Social Media Policy for 2025. It was presented as a first reading and we will be voting on it at our June 24, 2025, meeting.

The Committee suggests that the Announcement Loop to be moved to the beginning of the meeting.

Racial Justice and Reconciliation There was a written report from the Racial Reconciliation Network. There will be a discussion question for the next Presbytery Meeting, “what two [concrete] things might Jesus be calling us to do in our communities”.

Presbytery Worship and Planning There was a written report from the Worship Committee.

It was **MSP** to invite Hunter Steinitz to preach at the May Meeting of Presbytery. Hunter is the Co-Moderator of the Presbyterians For Disability Concerns, a recent MDiv graduate of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a ruling elder and a candidate under the care of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

It was **MSP** to allow Hunter to give a presentation (15 minutes) on disability inclusion during the Council Report

It was **MSP** to cover Hunter’s travel costs to the Presbytery Meeting through Pittsburgh Regional Transportation’s (PRT) Access program.

It was **MSP** to change the name of the committee from “Worship Committee” to “Meeting Design Committee”.

Addictions Ministry No written report. They are planning to have some things presented on the Social Media for National Prevention Week during the week of May 11-17, 2025 to raise awareness of substance use prevention.

Healing and Prayer Ministry There was a written report from the Healing and Prayer Ministry Network.

IPLF Steering No report.

MAY PRESBYTERY MEETING AGENDA

The May Presbytery Meeting Agenda will contain 15 minutes for the Racial Justice and Reconciliation, a Presentation of 15 minutes on disability inclusion during the Presbytery Council Report and 4 minutes during the COM report for an announcement on the upcoming Wee Kirk Conference. It was **MSP** to include these items during the May Presbytery Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

The Subcommittee formed to look at amendment 24B recommends that the Presbytery concur with this amendment.

NEW BUSINESS

- It was **MSP** M. Lon Weaver be added as one of the check signers for the Presbytery of Redstone account effective April 22, 2025.
- Cleaning of the Presbytery Center. It was **MSP** to authorize the office of the Interim EP and staff to develop the scope of the cleaning of the office.
- Discussion of the content of the reports in the Presbytery Packets. There is a concern about the number of details that are included in the reports of the various committees that are included in the Presbytery Packets, there appears to be some oversharing with information that are readily available for people to see. It was suggested this be referred to the newly renamed Meeting Design Committee.
- Intercession
Prayer concerns were shared by members of the Council. A period of intercession was entered with various members leading in prayers for those requested needs.

ADJOURNMENT

It was **MSP** to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The meeting was closed with prayer by Len Morgan.

MINISTRY AND MISSION REPORTS

Racial Reconciliation Group

DISCUSSION

Allow each person in the group to speak uninterruptedly for about 2 minutes each and give yourself 5 minutes to ask questions after everyone has spoken. Appoint a note-taker and decide together what you agree on. Note that on this sheet.

Jesus invites us and challenges us to be imaginative and playful with this activity! Have fun!

What would the Kingdom of God look like to Jesus - in practical terms: education, social life, relationships, etc.?

Using what we know in Scripture, what two things does your group think Jesus would call us to do in our communities today? (In other words, what would the Kingdom of God contain/not contain; do/not do?)

One minute warning - pray together

Compilation of the Presbytery Responses
Breakout Sessions at March 26, 2025 Meeting

Set 1:

a) How does a person build trust with you?

Honest with people, dependable, transparent

Willing to have conversation - share personal information - reputation

Follow through on their word/acts of kindness; do what you say you will do - authenticity

Honesty - integrity - interaction with others

Humility, care, being relational

b) Well-known persons who seem trustworthy:

Pastor, Mr. Rogers (because of his gentleness), Jesus; Jonathan Roune (because of the boldness of his testimony); Tom Hanks; Pastors (in general); Barak Obama, Dolly Parton, Betty White, Whoopi Goldberg

Set 2:

a) Are you frightened by people who are different from you?

People with addictions, taking a taxi late at night, new experiences, asking questions/listening; curious; no - respect is important; genuine concern

Not frightened but perhaps hesitant

Most people in one group said "not frightened"

Heck no - I'm fascinated by others who are different from me!

b) Someone with a criminal background; travel w/a co-worker; moving outside comfort zone; different work experiences; yes, racial, nationality, orientation;

I have a friend at work who is atheist.

I have a good friend who is gay, and we bonded through showtunes.

I have a good friend who is.... Fill in the blank – we all know people who are different!

I had more friends who were different from me when I lived in Wisconsin. This question reminds me of the importance of reaching out and intentionally meeting a wider range of people (taking responsibility for one's self to grow)

What do we do about people who are non-Christian? (This is what they meant by “different”...)

Set 3:

a) How do dreams fall apart?

Unrealistic expectations;

need for others to help us stay on track;

people who encourage us;

God opens the doors;

when it's our dream and not God's will

When you stop believing in it and trying to achieve it (perseverance?) (Personally, I like this answer because it contains the seeds of hope!)

b) Is it possible to revive a broken dream?

Possibly

When dreams fall apart it may be a blessing because it is a type of wake-up call, a type of catalyst to work harder or to allow the better dream to emerge.

With respect to church dreams, there are dreams we have, but are afraid to pursue.

People have to be made welcome in order to pursue their dreams.

Sure – with the right prayer and encouragement from each other

Mission Network

Mission Information Items

May 8, 2025

Devotions: Isaiah 6:1-9 The call of Isaiah

Prayers for this administration; for Sudan and South Sudan; 11 year old Addie who had been praying for a pony, received the pony which has subsequently died; Pakistan is being bombed 25 minutes from the people Dawn is helping; on May 20, Debby is having a test on her back, please pray for peace and calmness for her; for the churches in the presbytery.

Offering for the May Presbytery meeting: PDA for recent disasters

Dawn Sherwood asked how to approach the issue of assistance for the people she has been dealing with in Pakistan.

Sylvia will share the OCHA reports with the situation in South Sudan.

Sylvia reported on the project in to build a gazebo at Hezekiah House in St. Albans, WV. The gazebo was built and all that remains to be done is the roof. We also prepared steps and a ramp by scraping and sanding and then treated them with non-skid paint.

The meeting was adjourned.

Pine Springs Camp



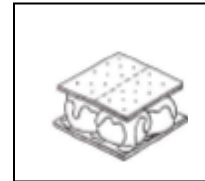
Redstone Presbytery Packet Report-MAY, 2025

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:4-5



We are continually grateful for the support of the Presbytery and the additional investment that other churches graciously give to the ministry whether its churches supporting our Encourage a Summer Staff Program or Presbyterian Women supplying a plethora of

S'more ingredients, it all communicates your desire to help us provide "vital encounters with Christ" to every camper!



SUMMER CAMP UPDATE

Our current Summer Camp Numbers are listed below. Please pray that more campers will be drawn to sign up for our summer camps:

- Summer Overnight Camp: 790 (Last year at the end of May: 828)
- Traveling Day Camp Update:
- Murrysville: Wait List
- Irwin: 1 spot available
- Latrobe: 11 registrations

OUR GOLF OUTING



On Monday, May 12, 108 golfers participated in the 25th Annual PSC Scholarship Golf Outing. It was an incredible day of golf, fellowship, and raising a substantial amount of funds to help families send their children to camp. We are on track to raise the most money ever in the 25-year history of the event. We are thankful to the many sponsors of our event and our Amen Corner Sponsors (Churches who gave the most ever!). This event has blessed the ministry and thousands of campers since 2001.

LET'S GET MORE CAMPERS! SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Due to the success of the Golf Outing, please share with others that it is not too late to sign up for camp and assistance is available! God has blessed us with the opportunity to say "yes" to any family that has financial need. The easiest way to secure a spot and request scholarship funding is to register online; a \$75.00 deposit is required. This will hold the camper's spot. There is a place to indicate an opportunity to receive scholarships. If the registrant checks the box, they will be sent a short "Request for Scholarship" form. Please contact the camp office if there is a need for a full scholarship, including the \$75.00 deposit. Go to our website to register <http://www.pinesprings.org> or for more information email [info@pinesprings.org](<mailto:info@pinesprings.org>) or call 814-629-9834.

A REVAMPED STRATEGIC PLAN AND A MASTER SITE PLAN

The PSC Board of Directors recently approved a new Strategic Plan. It states strategic priorities, goals, and objectives as we pray and plan for the future of the ministry. We will be publishing the plan for those that are interested in the near future.



Redstone Presbytery Packet Report-MAY, 2025

In addition, we are grateful that we received a grant from the McFeely-Rogers Foundation to engage in a Master Site Plan. We hired Richard Rauso, Landscape Architect, to lead us through the process. We are anticipating the final site plan to be completed in the Fall of 2025

OUR POPULAR PSC RETREATS COMING THIS FALL

- Fall Fusion for Grades 4-6: September 13-14 (Saturday-Sunday)
- Women in the Woods: October 3-4 (Friday-Saturday)
- The Big 1-Middle and High School: October 17-19 (Friday-Sunday)

PRAY AND PRAISE FOR PINE SPRINGS

- Praise for the recent weekend retreat for families who have adopted children that we ran in conjunction with West Shore Community Church in Mechanicsburg, PA.
- Pray for our staff and their families as we head into the summer.
- Pray for God to draw more campers this summer.
- Praise for the success and the fun of our 25th Annual Golf Outing.
- Pray for the Master Site Plan process.
- Praise and pray for our 2025 Summer Staff – two of which will be international staff (one from Jamaica and one from Mexico).
- Pray that campers would encounter Christ in a life-changing way this summer!

OUR SUMMER 2025 THEME



Committee on Ministry

Committee on Ministry Report Items

- COM recommends the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Sara Sadler and the Trinity, New Florence congregation as of May 31, 2025 and dismiss Rev. Sadler to the Presbytery of Northern Waters if the way be clear.
- COM recommends the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Hyiwot Teshome and the First, Johnstown congregation as of June 30, 2025 and dismiss Rev. Teshome to a joint venture between the presbyteries of Baltimore and National Capital, with membership to be determined at a later, if the way be clear
- Wee Kirk Conference at Laurelville Retreat Center - October 13-15, 2025 (Appendix B)

Information items

May 1, 2025, Meeting

Approval of this Evening's Agenda

MSP to accept and approve this meeting's agenda.

Approval of Minutes

MSP to approve the April 3, 2025 minutes.

Consent Items Approved Between Meetings

None

Report of the Stated Clerk

The report updated the committee on the following items:

- Correspondence Log
- Final 2025 Minute Review Date: Tuesday May 27, 2025, 4:30 at Puckety PC, Lower Burrell.
- 33 churches out of our 64 have completed their minutes review. A list of churches needing minutes review was presented. COM liaisons were encouraged to contact these perspective churches.
- It was MSP to accept the Report of the Stated Clerk.

Report of the Interim Executive Presbyter Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver

A written in-depth report was presented and reviewed.

- A listing of preaching engagements was presented.
- He served as organist at Johnstown First and will at Greensburg First.
- Presbytery Gatherings/Meetings; Denominational Entities; Ecumenical/Interreligious/Cultural; Conversations and Various Tasks/Interactions were shared.

MSP to receive and accept the Report of the Interim EP.

Report of the Moderator

- The Moderator noted that the Rev. Bob Ruefle has resigned as the Zoom Coordinator for the Presbytery meetings.
- The Moderator reported that there would be no COM/CPM Synod gathering this year.

Reports of Subcommittees

Examinations and Membership

- The Examinations and Membership Committee met with Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis. His Statement of Faith was presented in the meeting packet. On May 18, 2025 he will be moving from Transitional Interim Pastor to Permanent Pastor at Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lower Burrell. By the end of the year, he plans to move from the PC(USA) to the ELCA. It was **MSP** to recommend to the Presbytery that Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis be received into active membership transferring from the Presbytery of Pittsburgh, if the way be cleared.

Search and Call

- PNC work within First, Irwin; Trinity, Uniontown; and First, Belle Vernon is in progress.

Care of Congregations and Congregational Leaders

There were no breakout rooms this meeting due to the limitations of zoom capabilities.

- Several liaison reports were presented in the meeting packet.
- June suggested questions for our churches: "What are you planning for Pentecost?", "Do you have any summer youth events planned?" and final minute review reminders if applicable.
- Prayer requests: Rev. Molly Hall asked for prayers for Commissioned Pastor Bill Wiegand. RE David McMunn asked for prayers for his nephew Keith McMunn who has a brain tumor.
- Our Moderator offered prayer for our pastors and churches.

The following Pastors were prayed for during this time: Jim Stobaugh, James Sunseri, Rick Sweeney, Hyiwot Teshome, Denise Todero, Alice Tondora, Robert Van Wyk, Sue Washburn, Travis Webster and William Weightman

The following churches were prayed for during this time: Uniontown, Tent; Uniontown, Third; Uniontown, Trinity; Vanderbilt, East Liberty; Adah, Palmer Community; Apollo, Poke Run; Avonmore, First; Belle Vernon, First; Belle Vernon, Harmony and Belle Vernon, Marion.

IPLF Program, Workshops, Ongoing Task Forces

- The IPLF-no news. Spring classes have ended and the fall classes will begin in August.
- Rev. Molly Hall presented a review update on the Annual RP Pastor Retreat held at Pine Springs Camp on April 29.

Other Business

- Questions were raised about the newly requested PC(USA) annual report. This is a council issue and they will be asked to notify the churches.
- No new business.

Adjournment

There being no further business, it was **MSP** to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 PM with prayer offered by Rev. Martin Ankrum.

April 3, 2025, Meeting

Approval of this Evening's Agenda

MSP to accept and approve this meeting's agenda.

Approval of Minutes

MSP to approve the March 6, 2025 minutes.

Consent Items Approved Between Meetings

None

Report of the Stated Clerk

The report updated the committee on the following items:

- Correspondence Log
- Remaining 2025 Minute Review Dates: Wednesday April 23, 2025, 6:00 at the Presbytery Office and Tuesday May 27, 2025, 4:30 at Puckety PC, Lower Burrell
- It was **MSP** to recommend to the Presbytery to accept the requests of Waiver of Rotation from Fairchance, First: Ruling Elders: Kathleen Hockenberry, Randy Grimm, Marcia Grimm and Barbara Reiprich and from Dunbar, Laurel Hill: Ruling Elders: Sherry Scully and Cheryl Duncan
- It was **MSP** to accept the Report of the Stated Clerk.

Report of the Interim Executive Presbyter Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver

A written in-depth report was presented and reviewed.

- Reports of where he has attended worship and where he has preached.
- Addressed matters concerning the Presbytery meetings
- Denominational Entities and Ecumenical/Interreligious cultural attendances
- Noted several conversations, various tasks and interactions
- Served as organist at Johnstown, First

MSP to receive and accept the Report of the Interim EP.

Report of the Moderator

- An At Large Minister report was received from Rev. Patrick Ewing
- A letter of transfer from Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis, PhD was presented. He is requesting transfer from the Pittsburgh Presbytery to the Redstone Presbytery upon a recent move to Lower Burrell, PA. He is currently serving an ELCA congregation and will eventually transition into the ECLA. The Stated Clerk suggested either he would meet first with the Examinations and Membership Subcommittee or be examined on the floor of the Presbytery. Our COM Moderator will contact him.

Reports of Subcommittees

Examinations and Membership -Nothing to report

Search and Call

- Rev. Dr. Travis Webster updated the committee on the status of Irwin, First. He has recently met with the PNC Chair Phyllis Neal. The PNC is now meeting monthly, recently received 25 new referrals and the church is doing well.
- Rev. Molly Hall updated the committee on the status of Trinity, Uniontown. They have formed a 5 member PNC and will be voted upon by the congregation on April 13. She is seeking some input from Rev Ed Gray or our Interim EP Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver on the PNC process and packets for the elected PNC.

Care of Congregations and Congregational Leaders

There were no breakout rooms this meeting due to the limitations of zoom capabilities.

- RP Administrative Operations Manager Karen Gray now has the Goggle form working for the liaison's reports. Several liaison reports were in the meeting packet.
- May suggested questions for our churches: "How was Easter within your church?" and "What are your summer ministry plans?"

- Rev. Jim Farrer offered his help to the churches and promoted the Wee Kirk Conference scheduled for Oct. 13-15, 2025.
- Our Moderator offered prayer for our churches.

IPLF Program, Workshops, Ongoing Task Forces

- The IPLF Old Testament class is finishing up.
- Introduction to Reformed Theology will start in the Fall taught by Rev. Martin Ankrum.
- A reminder from Rev. Molly Hall that the Annual RP Pastor Retreat will be held on Tuesday April 29 (10:00-2:30) at Pine Springs Camp. Rev. Laura Blank will be doing crafts. Interim EP Lon Weaver will be our speaker on "Discerning the Burning Heart of Ministry". Reservations are being taken.

The following Teaching Elders and Commissioned Pastors were prayed for during this time:

- Marnie Russell, Sara Sadler, Regina Sturiale, Josh Scully, Robert Sheehan, Dawn Sherwood, Becca Siddle, John Simpson, Jeff Smith and Doug Stevens
- The following churches were prayed for during this time. Union PC, Murrysville; Community UP, New Alexandria; Congruity PC, New Alexandria; Bethel PC, New Florence; Trinity PC, New Florence; United PC, New Kensington; New Salem PC; New Hope PC, North Huntingdon; Patton PC and Revloc PC.

Other Business

- Unfinished--Rev. Mary Kay Glunt reported that the Administrative Committee met with the Hopewell PC and they are working on the ownership of their church cemetery.
- No new business.

Adjournment

There being no further business, it was **MSP** to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 PM with prayer offered by Rev. Martin Ankrum.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Committee on Preparation Report Items

- **No oral report. Information items below.**

Information Items

May 6, 2025

1. Opening prayer by Robin Jennings
2. Approval of minutes of April 2025 MSP
3. **Committee met with Karen Gray.**
Karen is happy in her work as Presbytery's administrative assistant. She also is enjoying her opportunities to preach. She particularly likes filling in for Lynn Mance at Avonmore, and the opportunities to develop a complete order of worship, beyond selecting scripture text, sermon and prayers. She has assisted her husband Ed with Communion in her home church and they serve as sounding boards for one another in discussing the direction their particular sermons might take. Karen is interested in being commissioned, but at this time, not to a particular congregation. She is interested in opportunities to serve in District 1, and mentioned moderate a Session meeting or other needs that she might fulfill if commissioned. Lon said he would speak with Committee on Ministry about this. Kristen prayed for Karen to end her time with us.
4. **Committee met with Candidate James Vlosich.** James is awaiting results of his second attempt at Polity exam. While he felt confident in his first attempt, he failed to complete it, not understanding the time constraints. He reported greater anxiety about the latest test. He concluded his second field ed at Newlonsburg right before Easter and will preach there this summer. James also will take his last class at Fuller Seminary this summer – Reformed Worship, a 10-week class that begins mid-June. Committee offered several suggestions to James for improving his test taking skills, including help from the Writing Center at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, or should he not pass the Polity exam, look into taking the Polity course at PTS. Hywiot had previously offered to review exams with James and restated that there are several previous exams online that James could use to practice so that he is better prepared with the format. Committee members suggested outlines, bolding/numbering as ways to assure the exam questions as asked are answered. All of these steps will assist James in future sermon preparation. Committee also urged James to only take one exam at a time rather than feel pushed to complete them and look to spring of 2026 to be finished. With a PNC formed in his home congregation, James expressed a sense of urgency to complete his requirements so that he could apply. He is also anxious that his current position will be eliminated once the congregation determines its path forward. Committee counseled him to see these as separate matters and focus on seminary and exam completion. Committee shared pitfalls of serving in one's home church and how that can be a hindrance to effective ministry. James was reminded to remain open to where God is leading. Hywiot prayed for James to end his time with us.
5. With no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned with prayer by Lon. Unless business comes to the committee, CPM will not meet again until September.

April 1, 2025

6. Opening Prayer by Robin Jennings
7. Committee accepted with regret the resignation of Rev. Larry Armstrong from CPM.
8. Approval of minutes of March 2025 **MSP**
9. **Updates on Candidates and IPLF Participants**
 - a. Committee will meet with both **Karen Gray and James Vlosich** at the May 2025 meeting. Hywiot indicated he continues to meet with James regarding ordination exam preparation to help him achieve success.
 - b. Committee met with **Tammy Noss**. She has maintained a full preaching schedule throughout 2024 and into 2025, with repeat requests for her in several congregations, among them Bethel, where she was present throughout Advent. Bethel did ask her if she was interested in Commissioning, but no further contact on that topic had been made by the congregation. Tammy was asked about any gaps in her experience and she indicated a desire for opportunities for pastoral care visits and children sermon preparation. Resource suggestions were made for children's messages. Given Tammy's sitter routine with her grandchildren, the committee also suggested she use that time to practice with them as the children's ages are wide-ranging. Suggestions also were made for her to connect with other clergy in the Johnstown area, including Hywiot and Jim from the committee and Danielle Kendig at Ebensburg to participate in either hospital or home visits. Tammy to follow up on suggestions. As of this meeting, Tammy has only ever provided scriptures and sermon for host churches. Discussion about how to engage with various congregations on deadlines and amount of responsibility given to the AP. Jackie also inquired about this as a newly Commissioned Pastor. Kristen suggested that she/Tammy ask about these items when being engaged by the various churches so expectations and contacts are clearly known. Jim prayed for Tammy to conclude our time with her
10. **Committee will not meet in June, July and August. Based on conversation with James in May, we will determine if we meet with him again in September.**
11. Adjournment/Prayer by Interim EP Lon Weaver.

Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee Report Items

- **No oral report. Information items below.**

Information Items

- As we prepare for the upcoming season (June-September) of identifying new leadership, the Nominating Committee is in need of your suggestions and recommendations for ruling elder candidates to serve within the various committees and structures of the Presbytery. Please email any nominations to Glenn Hart (glennhart316@gmail.com), Nominating Committee Chair.
- In the upcoming months, we will be considering candidates to serve as Vice Moderator in 2026. If you desire to nominate someone (including yourself), please contact either Glenn Hart or Rev. Dr. Lon Weaver

Article by Jim Farrer

Information Item

Published for biblicalleadership.com and offered through Redstone Presbytery Healing Prayer Ministry Network ... Use freely

The declining congregation: dilemma, despair and Biblical hope

For several decades when asked about the percentage of congregations that are plateaued or declining, the standard answer has been 75 to 85 percent. A 2017 LifeWay survey revealed that number to be 65 percent.

Thom Rainer presented the caveat that this research was among Southern Baptist congregations which have historically been more intentional about church planting and evangelism. The number might be higher among some other denominations which have emphasized compassion and justice.

Professor Gary McIntosh who has consulted in more than 90 denominations/associations reported that several regional superintendents intimated to him that almost every one of their congregations was languishing.

In *The Apostolic Congregation* (p.9), Professor George Hunter claims: "Less than one percent of all churches in the United States grow significantly from conversion growth in a given year."

Tough U-turn

It is especially difficult for the numerically smaller congregations to reverse course. In point of reference at least four major national studies reveal that the median number at worship is about 75, meaning that half of

the congregations surveyed reported fewer than 75 in attendance and half more. Remarkably these surveys include megachurches. Also noteworthy is that this figure has remained steady for decades. It may be even lower since sociologists seldom get reports from the growing “house church” movement.

Many people believe that stagnant congregations can be characterized by the maxim: “We never did it that way before.” Today these may be more accurately described as: “Been there; done that; didn’t work.”

This dilemma echoes the opening words of the Bible book Ecclesiastes: “Vanity of vanities!” This has been the standard translation, but others include “meaningless” (NIV), “futility” (NJB), “emptiness” (NEB), and even “flatulence” (Frank Zimmerman). This last interpretation, however irreverent, closely mirrors the nuance of the Hebrew word *hebel* which is defined as “a puff of air that disappears.”

Hebel also means fleeting, lack of permanence, or despair and is used in the Bible to describe an idol or false god which is an empty, worthless fraud.

Possibilities for turnaround

Lyle E. Schaller who consulted with 6,000 congregations discloses in *Growing Plans* that the smaller type church grows rarely, reluctantly and only by accepting significant changes (p.16). The most promising strategy is for 10 or 12 members to commit themselves to inviting someone to worship or to “a side-door event” then helping to assimilate at least one new member over each of the next five years.

Where to start

In his book *Create Your Own Future* (p. 58), Schaller reported on a widely used planning model which first identifies problems confronting a congregation. In his experience with churches in despair, he found: “A better model calls for identifying and affirming strengths, resources, and assets and building on these in creating that new future.” Most congregations have an important niche in their community upon which to build.

Management guru Peter Drucker long advised organizations to “build on these islands of health and strength.” We should not ignore weaknesses but it is easy to get bogged down attempting to fix all of the problems at once.

Jesus’ main methods

In Luke 10:25ff Jesus responded to a query about the greatest commandment. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and explained that the priority was to love the LORD God totally. This could be paraphrased: “To put the Most High God first.” This rules out the “isms” which promise success and their own skewed views of salvation including atheism, humanism, hedonism, nihilism, pantheism, mysticism, occultism and communism.

In addition, we are to put God first rather than other idols. Many congregational decisions are influenced by the idols of tradition (“We never did it that way.”) or idols of fear (“The Smith family won’t like that idea.”) Today many leaders succumb to making idols of fads of worship and music which disregard almost every facet of the way Jesus worshiped.

Jesus’ second commandment quoted from Leviticus 19:18 was to “love your neighbor as yourself.” When asked: “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus followed with the parable of the Good Samaritan. To many Jews, Samaritans were considered political traitors and religious heretics. Oxford professor G.B. Caird in his

commentary *Saint Luke* (p.148) describes the Samaritans as “semi-pagan foreigners.” Jesus spent a lot of time among these and other “outsiders.”

Outsiders today

The USA represents the third largest unchurched population in the world. George Hunter includes among the unchurched: those who appear immunized because of substandard Christianity, others whose lives are out of control and the “agnostics” who know little about the real Jesus.

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus commands: “You must now let your light shine before others.”

Crisis response

In unusual and difficult times, even the most discouraged congregation can look forward with hope. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck in *The Different Drum* (p.145) asserted: “... community develops naturally only in response to a crisis.”

Jim Farrer, honorably retired, served Redstone Presbytery and the Synod of the Trinity in Congregational Development and Evangelism. A broadly-trained consultant in church vitality and published author, he has instructed leaders from 19 denominations, having led seminars from coast-to-coast and at Jerusalem Seminary in October 2022. Previously he oversaw the serving of Holy Communion at the “largest Presbyterian gathering ever held in America.” Find Jim’s current and many archived articles at biblicalleadership.com along with articles from turnaround experts from many denominations