



2015 Stated Meeting

of the

Presbytery of Redstone
Presbyterian Church (USA)

November 17, 2015



Rehoboth Presbyterian Church
Belle Vernon, PA

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

Directions to
Rehoboth Presbyterian Church
442 Rehoboth Road, Belle Vernon
724.929.7020

Route 70 to Exit #44 (Arnold City) - After exiting Route 70, if you are coming from the east you will turn left, if you are coming from the west you will turn right. You will travel approximately 2/10 mile to Finley Road. (There is no stop sign at this intersection for you.) Make a right onto Finley Road. Travel approximately 1 mile to Rehoboth Road. Make a left onto Rehoboth Road. (This intersection is just before the railroad tracks. You will see a sign for the church as well as a historical marker for Col. Edward Cook.) Rehoboth Church is located 2/10 of a mile from this intersection on the left.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRESBYTERY MEETING

As you enter the church, Registration will be up the stairs to the right in the room next to the sanctuary. Refreshments will be served in that room as well, and the meeting will be held in the Sanctuary. The Prayer Team will meet in the Choir Room which is next to registration. The noon meal (\$10) will be in the Social Hall, which is downstairs directly under the sanctuary. The mission fair will be on the second floor of the Christian Education Building. There are restrooms on both floors of the church. There will be signs showing you where all of these rooms are.

Notes for the NOVEMBER 2015 Presbytery Meeting!

- Presbyters 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.
- The Offering received during worship at this meeting will go to support mission and co-workers with our partnership churches in South Sudan.
- ***It is Very Important*** that all **Background Checks** be completed. Presbyters are reminded that the "Praesidium" clearances no longer fulfill a church's responsibility.

Presbytery of Redstone
November 17, 2015 --- 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Rehoboth Presbyterian Church, Belle Vernon, PA

Presbytery Convenes

Formation of the Roll	Glenn Hart
Introductions/Seating of Corresponding Members	Cliff Foster
Arrangements	
Clerks' Report (s) – p. 4	
Consent Agenda – p. 5	Cliff Foster

Worship

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Announcements Loop

Laura Blank

Peacemaking Discussion

Craig Miller

Introduction

Moderated group discussions

Lunch (costs - \$10/person)

Reports

Executive Presbyter – pp. 6-7

Skip Noftzger

Treasurer – p. 8

John Dickson

Executive Director-Pine Springs Camp – pp. 8-9

Greg Davis

Mission Network – p. 10

Sylvia Carlson

Action Agenda

Council

Cheryl Rhea

2016 Budget - Appendix B - pp. 19-21

Peacemaking Affirmations - Appendix C - pp. 22-23

Committee on Ministry - p. 12

Honorable Retirement-Rev. Chuck MacPherson

Martin Ankrum

Commissioning of Ruling Elder to Particular Service

Nominating Committee - p. 14

Curtis Paul

Vice Moderator

General Assembly Commissioners

Standing Committees and Synod roles

New Business (must be submitted in writing to the Associate Clerk before worship begins)

Attendance Report

Adjournment

Benediction

Glenn Hart

Next Presbytery Meeting - Saturday, January 16, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. at the Maplewood Presbyterian Church, Greensburg

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.

CORRESPONDENCE LOG

Date Received	Received From	Content	Action
November 2, 2015 - mail	First Presbyterian Church, Avonmore	Invitation to service in remembrance of Rev. Richard Baker	To File
November 2, 2015 - mail	Community United Presbyterian Church, New Alexandria	2016 Terms of Call for the Rev. Kathy Shirey	To COM
October 30, 2015 - mail	Kiskiminetas Presbytery	Request for concurrence for a proposed overture to the 222 nd General Assembly	To Council
October 30, 2015 - mail	Rev. Wendy Keys	Request for approval of Installation Commission	To COM
October 29, 2015 - mail	New Salem Presbyterian Church	Contract between CRE William Wiegand and the New Salem Presbyterian Church	TO COM
October 20, 2015 - email	Carlisle Presbytery	Dismissal Form for Rev. Grafton Eliason	To File
October 20, 2015 - fax	United Presbyterian Church, New Kensington	2015 Terms of Call for the Rev. Wendy Keys	To COM and File
October 16, 2015 - mail	Covenant Presbyterian Church, Boswell	2016 Terms of Call for Stated Supply Rev. James Stobaugh	TO COM and File
October 15, 2015 - email	United Presbyterian Church, Bolivar and Bethel Presbyterian Church, New Florence	3 year renewal contract for CRE James Sunseri	To COM and File
October 13, 2015 - mail	Ardara Presbyterian Church	copy of letter to PSC regarding 3 rd installment of promised annual gift	To Council and File
September 21, 2015 - email	Great Lakes Presbytery	receiving Rev. Linda Snyder pending dismissal by Redstone	To COM and File
September 21, 2015 - email	Great Lakes Presbytery	receiving Middle Presbyterian Church pending dismissal by Redstone	To File
September 21, 2015 - email	Rev. Linda Snyder	asking to be released to ECO effective October 2, 2015	To COM and File
September 21, 2015 - mail	Presbytery of the Alleghenies	receiving Manor Presbyterian Church pending dismissal by Redstone	To File
September 10, 2015 - hand delivered	Pine Run Presbyterian Church in Apollo	request to enter into the discernment process	To Moderator and Moderator of COM and File

CONSENT AGENDA:

The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, Rev. Skip Noftzger, presents the following Consent Agenda.

From Executive Committee

1. Following the review of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Stated Clerk and Associated Stated Clerk, it is **recommended** that the minutes of the Presbytery meeting of the September 15, 2015 be approved.

From the Council

1. Council **recommends** that the Financial Reports presented to the Council be received and filed for audit.
2. Council **recommends** the authorization of guarantor for the PILP loan for the Westmont Presbyterian Church.
3. Council **recommends** the approval of the nominees of Rev. Curtis Paul (TE, Newlonsburg); chair and Nancy Rodgers (RE, Level Green) to serve on the Nominating Committee of the Presbytery.

From the Committee on Ministry

1. The Committee on Ministry **recommends** that the report on Review of Session Minutes and Church Registers presented to the committee be received and filed.
2. The Committee on Ministry **recommends** that the report on 2015 terms of call presented to the committee be received and filed.

From the Committee on Preparation for Ministry

From the Nominating Committee

From the Committee on Representation

From the Discernment Teams

1. It is **recommended** that the written report of the Discernment Team for the Pine Run Presbyterian Church discernment process (p. 15) be received and filed.

MINISTRY AND MISSION REPORTS

Executive Presbyter

Rev. Richard "Skip" Noftzger Executive Presbyter Report		
<i>Communicate the Word, Carry on the Work, Change the World.....Together!</i>		
VISION	9/16/2015-11/16/2015	
Congregation-centered (ENGAGE)	Visible presence within the Presbytery engaging with congregations--- Church Visits--- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visited eight congregations in worship or special services since the last presbytery meeting. Preached at four worship services. Attended or moderated three session meetings. • Organized and met with the discernment team working with the Pine Run Presbyterian Church. With the team, conducted initial meeting with the Pine Run session to review both their concerns and issues, as well as the processes and timetables of the discernment process. Corresponded with and then conducted open congregational forum to discuss • Continue to work with one session on obtaining interim pastoral leadership and also worked with another session on identifying and selecting pastoral leadership in temporary pastoral relationship. • Participate in memorial service held within one of our congregations for a former pastor within the Presbytery. • Actively supporting Trinity PNC in their pastoral search through identifying and referring appropriate candidates. Consulted with them on the process for review and screening candidates based upon their priorities and timetable. 	
Leadership developed (EQUIP)	Developing and equipping leadership within the Presbytery--- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met individually with several pastors to review pastoral concerns and offering advice and counsel on future ministry plans and issues. • Coordinated the task force to prepare educational discussion concerning not only the Peacemaking Affirmations, but the role and responsibility of Christians in peacemaking in our world. • Worked with the Nominating Committee in order to recommend possible candidates for consideration for positions of leadership within the Presbytery. • Consulted with various pastors on property and finance issues in order to make prudent decisions about renovations, property changes and oil/gas leases. Served as resource person to the Finance and Budget committee on recommending authorization of these decisions upon property "held in trust." 	

Collaboration- Districts/Network (ENABLE)	<p>Joined and initiated contact both within and outside Redstone---</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to participate and support affinity, networking and pastor groups within our presbytery as they continue to meet. • Serve as the Executive Presbyter advisory liaison to the Governing Commission of the Synod of the Trinity. • Coordinating the inter-presbytery (Redstone, UOV, Washington) planning task force working on a new hybrid educational design for the preparation and continuing education of ruling elders commissioned to particular service. • Meet with various pastors as part of regional pastor gatherings within the geographic district of the presbytery. 				
Partnership in Mission promoted (EMPOWER)	<p>Promoted and provided leadership in our partnerships in mission---</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with Michael and Rachel Weller with the Mission Committee to have the mission in the "horn of Africa" interpreted and to explore further how we may be an involved partner with the Sudan and South Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church. • Along with others, participated in the Sudan/South Partnership Network meetings in Louisville with representatives of other presbyteries with similar partnerships, mission agency staff and some mission co-workers. As part of that meeting, I served as a panelist on the role of the Presbytery Leader in supporting and maintaining such partnerships. • Consulted and worked alongside of others in order to identify possible "lead" gifts for the capital campaign for Pine Springs Camp. Participated in developing and making recommendations concerning possible building construction to the Board of Directors as part of the capital campaign. • Was privileged to witness and participate in the second "Stop Hunger Now" program offered at Community United Presbyterian Church by the Mission Committee. 				
Operational Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed the draft of the financial review of the presbytery prepared by the auditors for any questions or concerns. Provided draft version to Finance committee. Met with auditor and finalized the 2014 review and made arrangements for 2015 review. • Finalize the collection of documentation on background clearances for those serving in pastoral leadership for congregations within our presbytery. • Ongoing resource and consultation with counsel regarding financial and property issues related to West Leisenring property, sale of the Johnstown Home, quitclaim deeds for dismissed congregations and our cash flow and investment strategies. 				
VALUES	Servant Leadership	Flourishing Community	Witness to the World	Generous and effective Stewardship	
<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i>					

Treasurer Report - Appendix A - pp. 16-18

The written treasurer's report will be on the table at registration as a handout.

Pine Springs Camp

Summer Camp-

What do you do in the winter months? Recruiting campers is a year round responsibility

- We are currently on a "thank you" swing. Going to approximately 12 churches to say thank you for sending campers/supporting camp. (We do bring cinnamon rolls from the Pie Shoppe!)
- Still reaching out to other areas including the DC area. Moms Recruiting Moms Recruiting Initiative
- Brochure coming out in time for "Camp as a Christmas Present" idea
- Setting up Skating Events for next semester
- Setting up church visits, Family Nights, Moms and Tots (MOPS)

Retreats

The Elijah House is a popular retreat place for groups. In fact, every weekend in January and February is booked. Only two weekends open in March. There a quite a few weekends open for Graham Village. Call the office 814-629-9834 and schedule a retreat.

Upcoming Events

- Pine Springs Camp Friend's Dinner, Sunday, November 22, 2015 at the Willow Room, Belle Vernon, 4:30-7:00 p.m.
- Senior High Retreat-January 29-31, 2016
- Middle School Retreat-February 26-28, 2016
- Women in the Woods-April 1-3, 2016
- Confirmation Retreat-April 1-3, 2016
- Father and Son Saturday-April 30, 2016
- Redd Up Camp Day (Work Day)-May 14, 2016
- 16th Annual Scholarship Golf Outing-Monday, May 23, 2016

Capital Campaign Update

We are currently in the Silent Phase of the Campaign. We are doing well in trying to reach our immediate goal of raising funds to meet the \$250,000 matching gift generously given by a family. We are hoping to have the public phase of the campaign launched in early 2016.

2015 Friend's Dinner

This is an important event that greatly helps with our annual operating fund.

What can your church do?

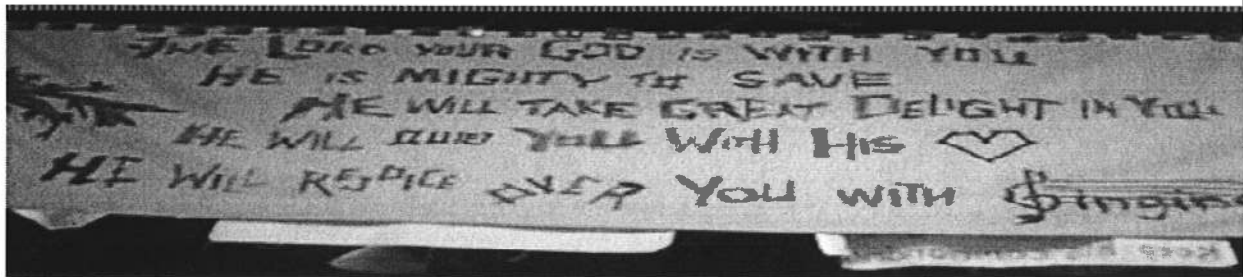
1. **Table Sponsorship PLUS guests-** Please consider sponsoring and filling an 8 guest table for \$400. You can invite folks who are new to this ministry and seat them with some of the "old faithful" camper families. It's always great to include people from your Mission Commission so that they can see first-hand how their support brings the gospel to countless kids each summer.

2. **Table Sponsorship** - Sometimes a church can sponsor a table but not fill it. This is also a great way to support the camp because we can then invite some special guests of our own or fill with overflow from other churches. Table Sponsorship is \$400.
3. **Silent Auction Gifts**- We are always looking for quality items for our Silent Auction and Raffle. Some ideas are: Pittsburgh Sports or Cultural Tickets and memorabilia, quality jewelry, gift cards, restaurant certificates and small electronics. If you could identify members who have access to items that could be included we would be happy to arrange a way to pick them up.
4. **Theme Baskets** -As part of our Silent Auction we would like to offer Theme Baskets to encourage some lively bidding while enabling the winners to get a jump on their Christmas shopping! These baskets would hold small gifts and gift cards and would have a total value upwards of \$75. Some choices are: Child's Play (boy or girl), Movie Night, Jewelry, Car Care, Playful Pets, Kitchen Gadgets and Dining Out. Contact the camp with your idea. This is a great way for several people to contribute one item!
5. **Extend an Invitation** - We would love to host as many people as possible to get the word out about Pine Springs. Individuals can attend by purchasing a ticket for \$50 - this works best if they accompany someone who already knows and loves the camp. Sponsorship Packets and invitations are attached and are also available by contacting the office at 814-629-9834. Please share this with your session, Mission Commission, Christian Education, Youth Pastor, camper parents- anyone who would be a good point person to promote this special event. **Thank you and hope to see you on Nov. 22nd!**

A Reminder of Why We Do What We Do!

This banner was made by women of the Westmont Presbyterian Church and given to camp. It hangs over the entrance of our beloved A-frame. It is a reminder that Pine Springs Camp desires for each camper to know a living God who takes great delight in them and even rejoices over them with singing! Teaching campers this truth is what Pine Springs Camp is all about.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17



*The Lord your God is with you,
He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
He will quiet you with His love.
He will rejoice over you with singing.*

Mission Committee

Redstone Presbytery welcomed to the September Presbytery meeting Presbyterian Church (USA) mission co-workers Rev. Michael Weller, PCUSA Area Liaison for the Horn of Africa, and his wife, Rachel, serving in Gambela, Ethiopia as a Community Health Evangelism nurse. Michael preached the sermon during the afternoon worship, and spoke of the work he is doing in Sudan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia.

The Mission Committee hosted the Wellers for dinner that evening at the home of Sylvia Carlson and learned more about the work that is being done in Sudan and South Sudan. Please continue to pray for all of our mission co-workers and the peoples and lands they serve around the globe.

By the September meeting we already had learned that Rev. Philip Akway Obang was not able to apply for a visa to enter the United States in time to arrive here to attend the Sudan and South Sudan Mission Network in Louisville, KY, October 18-20. We hope that he will be able to visit here next summer and be here at the time of the New Wilmington Mission Conference. Please watch for any announcements of his being available to speak to congregations and mission groups in Redstone next summer.

Four people from Redstone Presbytery traveled to Louisville, KY, for the Sudan and South Sudan Mission Network Meeting: Executive Presbyter Skip Noftzger, Rev. Donna Havrisko (Sudan and South Sudan Mission Network Coordinating Team), Rev. Sylvia Carlson and Elder Patty Summerville.

By the time the Presbytery meets in November, many volunteers will have packed more than 20,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now. The event will have taken place at the Community United Presbyterian Church in New Alexandria.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sylvia Carlson, Chair

ACTION AGENDA

Presbytery Council

[Links to complete copies of the Minutes of Council can be found online at www.redstone.org under the "Presbytery Council Meeting Dates" tab.]

Action Items for Presbytery

- **The Council recommends the approval of the 2016 Presbytery of Redstone budget as presented for the first reading and now second reading.**
- **The Council presents for Presbytery consideration and support of each of the five "Peacemaking Affirmations."**

Information Items from Council

- Approved the Finance and Budget committee recommendation of authorization of the oil & gas lease for the Presbyterian Church of McClellandtown (Trustees).
- Referred the Emma Johnston grant request by Mt. Washington Presbyterian Church for \$3808 to come from the New Covenant Fund back to the Committee on Ministry for further information concerning how the request fulfills the mission and ministry calling of the congregation (Trustees).
- Peacemaking Affirmations task force reported on plan to facilitate the discussion. November docket time was requested for educational discussion on affirmations, but our peacemaking responsibilities as Christians.
- Updated report on use of social media within the Presbytery and a schedule for the monthly "Redstone Stories." The next "Redstone Stories" will feature the Israel/Jordan trip (Communication).
- Registrations are open and available for the Youth Triennium for 2016. Dates for the Confirmation Retreat are established and congregations are encouraged to plan on participating (Christian Education).
- Authorized the Presbytery to serve as guarantor for Westmont Presbyterian Church for the PILP loan and for which they were raising funds in a capital campaign (Finance/Budget).
- Approved the request from Union Presbyterian Church, Murrysville for the building of a new bridge. They have all necessary funds (Finance/Budget).
- Churches are requested to provide photo displays of current mission work to share ideas with others. This has been promoted through email; announced at the last meeting; and will be included in the next packet (Mission).
- 2016 pledges are coming in slowly. It is assumed that the response rate is the result of many sessions still needing to establish their budget for the next year (Stewardship).
- Approved the following nominees for the Nominating Committee: Curtis Paul will serve as chair. Nancy Rodgers will also serve on committee.
- Approve the docket for the November Presbytery with a changed start time of 9:30 instead of 9:00.
- Authorized the request from Harmony to raise the lunch cost for the November meeting only from \$5 to \$10. Further discussion will occur about meal costs relative to future meetings.

Committee on Ministry

Action Items for Presbytery

- **The Committee on Ministry recommends to the Presbytery that Rev. Charles MacPherson be moved to the status of "Honorably Retired."**
- **The Committee on Ministry has approved the agreement for William Wiegand to serve as a Ruling Elder commissioned to particular service in pastoral leadership at the New Salem Presbyterian Church and recommends his commissioning as an act of the Presbytery.**

Information Items from the Committee on Ministry

- Received an update and report on the initial meeting of the Discernment Team with the Pine Run Presbyterian Church session. Len Morgan serves as the COM representative on the team.
- Received completed reports on Session minutes review and 2015 terms of call for pastors serving congregations within the Presbytery of Redstone.
- Received request from Rev. Linda Snyder requesting transfer to the Presbytery of Great Lakes, ECO. Solicited and received response confirming that Rev. Snyder would be received by the ECO presbytery. It was MSP to grant the request of Rev. Snyder to be dismissed to the Presbytery of Great Lakes, ECO.
- New liaisons appointed: Martin Ankrum-First, Murrysville; Michael Shepard-PleasantView, Smock.
- Update on the solicitation of possible participants in the "Ambassador Program." So far, there are volunteers. Orientation and training will be provided.
- Reconsideration of Mt. Washington grant referred back by the Council. On behalf of the committee, Ron Durika will write a response outlining the rationale of the request and connection to ministry.
- After discussion on background clearances and any possible non-compliance, it was MSP to have the EP consult with presbytery counsel concerning any possible liability and options for compliance.
- "Mandatory Reporter" training event is scheduled for January 16; 10 a.m. preceding Presbytery meeting. This event is open not only to Teaching Elders, but other employees within congregations.
- MSP to accept the resignation of Dave Stewart as CRE at Third Uniontown and therefore, to dissolve that particular commission.
- MSP to approve the temporary pastoral relationship and contract for the Rev. Carole Isley Corey to serve as the Interim Pastor for the Trinity, New Florence congregation.
- MSP to approve the contract for William Wiegand to serve as a CRE in pastoral leadership for the New Salem congregation and to recommend his commissioning by the Presbytery at its next meeting.
- MSP to approve the installation commission for Rev. Wendy Keys for November 22 at 2:00 p.m. at the United Presbyterian Church of New Kensington.
- MSP to approve the renewal contracts of the temporary pastoral relationships within the Presbytery for 2016 upon receipt of adequate terms of call for that year.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Action Items for Presbytery

- NONE

Information Items from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry

- Reviewed the ongoing plans for an inter-presbytery training and continuing education program for Ruling Elders for possible commissioning to particular service. The proposed nature of the program employs an educational design with a variety of learning strategies from formal instruction, focused workshops and structured mentored field experiences.
- Interviewed Taylor Barner, candidate from Redstone Presbytery on his advancement in the following areas: academic progress, personal maturity, interpersonal skills, spiritual development and professional development.
- It was MSP to approve the authorization for Taylor to enroll and take all of the ordination examinations at their next offering in January.
- Discussed other possible inquirers who have expressed some desire to enter the process and who have been referred to the sessions of their home congregations.

Nominating Committee

Action Items for the Presbytery

- The Nominating Committee places the following person in nomination for the Position of Vice Moderator
Rev. Sue Washburn, Reunion, Mt. Pleasant
- The Nominating Committee places the following persons in nomination for commissioners, alternate commissioners or advisory delegates, respectively:
 - GA Commissioners**
 - Tom Shipley (RE), First, Irwin
 - Bernice Adams (RE), Westmont, Johnstown
 - Rev. Curtis Paul (TE), Newlonsburg, Murrysville
 - Rev. Colleen Molinaro (TE), Third, Uniontown
 - GA Alternate Commissioners**
 - David Auman (RE), Latrobe, Main Street
 - Rich Smith (RE), Newlonsburg, Murrysville
 - Rev. Ron Durika (TE), First, Irwin
 - Rev. John Simpson (TE), Level Green, Trafford
 - YAAD**
 - Mandi Pascarella, First, Greensburg
- The Nominating Committee nominates the following persons for the Offices/Classes indicated:
 - COUNCIL:**
 - Elder Lynn Mance (1) District I, Delmont (2018)
 - Rev. Alice Tondora (1) District IV, First, Johnstown (2018)
 - Rev. Steve LaSor (1) District II, Maplewood, Greensburg (2018)
 - Elder Dan Foster (1) District II, Westminster, Greensburg (2017)
 - COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY:**
 - Elder Connie Cauvel (1) District I, Poke Run, Apollo (2018)
 - COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY:**
 - Elder David O'Hara (1) District IV, Revloc (2018)
 - Rev. Caroline Vickery (1) District I, Delmont (2017)
 - COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION:**
 - Rev. Wendy Keys (1) District I, United, New Kensington (2018)
 - SYNOD COMMISSIONER**
 - Sheila Farrer
 - PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION:**
 - Redstone**
 - Rev. John Manon
 - Elder James Anderson
 - Rev. Caroline Vickery
 - Synod**
 - Rev. Wendy Keys

Information Items

- Nominating Committee solicits the submission of names of ruling elders who might be willing to serve the greater Church through involvement at the Presbytery level.

Discernment Team Reports:

Pine Run Presbyterian Church Team Report

Upon appointment, the team working in the discernment process initiated contact with the session of the Pine Run Presbyterian Church. At that meeting, the team heard the concerns about issues that have brought them to the point of entering the discernment process. As a result, both the session and the team committed to the process of prayer, conversation, and seeking discernment over the next six months.

An opportunity to meet with the congregation for firsthand conversation with the team was scheduled for November 15, following the worship service. A letter from the team has been distributed to members of the congregation inviting their participation in that forum. Future meetings and discussions will be scheduled upon its completion.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Presbytery of Redstone Income and Expense Statement October 2015

	Current Period	Year to Date	Annual Budget	Annual Budget Percentage	YTD Prior Year
INCOME					
CONTRIBUTION INCOME	\$41,458.34	\$318,681.17	\$395,000.00	80.68%	\$317,600.52
INVESTMENT INCOME	-7,004.97	500.00	17,500.00	2.86%	24,241.30
INTEREST INCOME	630.06	4,007.68	5,000.00	80.15%	5,896.89
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	239.67	2,357.87	5,000.00	47.16%	8,189.21
RELEASE FROM RESTRICTIONS					
TEMP RESTRICTED RELEASE	-8,951.00	-29,259.48	0.00	0.00%	-19,470.02
Subtotal Release From Restrictions	-8,951.00	-29,259.48	0.00	0.00%	-19,470.02
RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION	8,951.00	29,259.48	0.00	0.00%	19,470.02
TOTAL INCOME	35,323.10	325,546.72	422,500.00	77.05%	355,927.92
EXPENSES					
MISSION PARTNERSHIPS	\$4,678.00	\$68,304.59	\$86,000.00	79.42%	\$63,414.61
COMMITTEE EXPENSES					
COUNCIL	177.52	3,759.08	6,280.00	59.86%	4,214.86
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY	0.00	420.00	500.00	84.00%	330.99
CPM	0.00	547.46	500.00	109.49%	3,655.99
Subtotal Committee Expenses	177.52	4,726.54	7,280.00	64.93%	8,201.84
OPERATIONS	1,284.57	23,217.69	36,196.00	64.14%	36,631.14
PRESBYTERY STAFF					
EXECUTIVE STAFF	8,082.85	94,646.94	111,197.00	85.12%	117,164.82
SUPPORT STAFF	4,148.33	41,483.30	50,279.00	82.51%	40,825.00
EMPLOYER PAID FICA TAXES	651.00	7,427.76	8,729.64	85.09%	8,974.04
Subtotal Presbytery Staff	12,882.18	143,558.00	170,205.64	84.34%	166,963.86
APPORTIONMENTS	8,530.04	92,731.38	123,317.00	75.20%	79,759.54
TOTAL EXPENSES	27,552.31	332,538.20	422,998.64	78.61%	354,970.99
TRANSFER ACCOUNTS					
TRANSFER TO OTHER FUNDS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%	-\$24,883.83
TRANSFER FROM OTHER FUNDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	10,733.83
TOTAL TRANSFERS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	-14,150.00
EXCESS INCOME\EXPENSES	\$7,770.79	-\$6,991.48	-\$498.64	1,402.11%	-\$13,193.07

Redstone Presbytery
Commitment to Larger Church
October 31, 2015

	2015 PLEDGE	TOTAL PAID	% Payup as of 10/31/2015	Unpaid Pledge Balance
Adah, Palmer	600.00	400.00	67%	200.00
Apollo, Pine Run	0.00			-
Apollo, Poke Run	3,125.00	2,343.75	75%	781.25
Avonmore	3,000.00	2,507.00	84%	493.00
Belle Vernon, First	7,000.00	7,000.00	100%	-
Belle Vernon, Harmony	1,320.00	1,100.00		220.00
Belle Vernon, Marion	2,000.00	2,000.00	100%	-
Belle Vernon, Rehoboth	6,000.00	5,000.00	83%	1,000.00
Bolivar	1,500.00	1,200.00	80%	300.00
Boswell	800.00		0%	800.00
Brownsville, Calvin				-
Brownsville, Ft. Burd		3,600.00		(3,600.00)
Brownsville, Hopewell		186.00		(186.00)
Colver	500.00	539.00	108%	(39.00)
Connellsville		2,808.00		(2,808.00)
Cresson	2,400.00	1,800.00		600.00
Dawson, Tyrone		5.00		(5.00)
Delmont	5,000.00	4,105.00	82%	895.00
Derry	2,000.00	1,500.00	75%	500.00
Dunbar, First	2,800.00	2,800.00	100%	-
Dunbar, Laurel Hill	1,500.00	1,000.00	67%	500.00
Ebensburg	750.00	805.00	107%	(55.00)
Fairchance	4,000.00		0%	4,000.00
Farmington	1,800.00	1,800.00	100%	-
Fayette City, First	1,015.00	825.00	81%	190.00
Fayette City, Little Redstone	2,400.00	1,200.00	50%	1,200.00
Greensburg, First	34,318.00	25,124.71	73%	9,193.29
Greensburg, Maplewood	4,000.00	3,334.00	83%	666.00
Greensburg, Westminster	6,000.00	5,000.00	83%	1,000.00
Irwin, First	25,000.00	18,748.00	75%	6,252.00
Irwin, W. Hempfield	4,000.00	4,000.00	100%	-
Jeannette	6,993.00	6,543.40	94%	449.60
Johnstown, Bethany	2,050.00	2,050.00	100%	-
Johnstown, First	9,000.00	6,300.00	70%	2,700.00
Johnstown, Second	3,000.00	2,000.00	67%	1,000.00
Johnstown, Westmont	22,000.00	14,666.64	67%	7,333.36
Lake Lynn	4,008.00	3,499.00	87%	509.00

Latrobe, Main St.	26,500.00	22,100.00	83%	4,400.00
Latrobe, Spring St.	4,800.00			4,800.00
Leisenring		325.00		(325.00)
Ligonier, Pleasant Grove	1,008.00	1,008.00		-
Lower Burrell, Grace	15,720.00	13,100.00	83%	2,620.00
Lower Burrell, Puckety	12,000.00	9,430.00		2,570.00
Manor				-
Masontown	1,000.00	1,000.00	100%	-
McClellandtown	4,500.00	4,500.00		-
Merrittstown, Dunlap's Ck.	300.00	300.00	100%	-
Mt. Pleasant, Middle	2,000.00	5,892.00		(3,892.00)
Mt. Pleasant, Reunion	2,400.00	1,781.00	74%	619.00
Murrysville, First	8,400.00	11,000.00		(2,600.00)
Murrysville, Newlonsburg	15,000.00	13,200.00		1,800.00
Murrysville, Union	840.00	810.00		30.00
N. Alexandria, Community	6,000.00	3,000.00	50%	3,000.00
N. Alexandria, Congruity	7,800.00	6,677.00	86%	1,123.00
New Florence, Bethel	2,400.00	2,000.00	83%	400.00
New Florence, Trinity	2,400.00	2,100.00		300.00
New Kensington	10,000.00	8,333.33		1,666.67
New Salem	3,000.00	2,069.00	69%	931.00
N. Huntingdon, New Hope	4,500.00	3,750.00	83%	750.00
Patton	3,700.00	3,700.00	100%	-
Revloc	1,500.00	1,250.00	83%	250.00
Scottdale	750.00	757.20	101%	(7.20)
Seward, Armagh				-
Slickville		792.00		(792.00)
Smithfield, Grace Chapel				-
Smock, Pleasant View	14,256.00	10,695.00	75%	3,561.00
Trafford, Level Green	500.00	436.60	87%	63.40
Uniontown, Tent	333.00	333.00		-
Uniontown, Third		995.00		(995.00)
Uniontown, Trinity	9,000.00	10,463.00	116%	(1,463.00)
Vanderbilt, E. Liberty	2,520.00	2,090.00	83%	430.00
Vandergrift				-
West Newton, Sewickley	508.00	381.00	75%	127.00
W. Newton, Sewickley UP	500.00	500.00	100%	-
West Newton, United	4,000.00	4,000.00		-
Windber	3,000.00	2,500.00	83%	500.00
Totals	341,014.00	287,057.63	84%	53,956.37

Appendix B

INCOME/RECEIPTS

	2015 Budget	2016 Budget
Shared Ministry/Mission		
Church contributions	395000	397000
Shared		
Directed		
Interest/Investments	5000	5000
	17500	17500
Reserves(total) (directed funds)		
Miscellaneous	5000	5000
TOTAL REVENUE	422,500.00	424,500.00

EXPENSES

SharedMinistry

Council

Council expense	1,600.00	1,600.00
Communications	500.00	500.00
Presbytery meetings	500.00	500.00
Website	180.00	180.00
GA Expenses	0.00	0.00
PCUSA meetings	2,000.00	5,000.00
Networking and Leadership	2,000.00	2,000.00
Engaging Congregations		2,000.00

Committee On Ministry

Committee Expense	500.00	500.00
Partnership for Missional Church		

Committee on Preparation

Committee Expense	500.00	500.00
Scholarships		

Committee-Nominating

Committee on Representation

Executive Presbyter

EP Salary	67,000.00	69,010.00
EP Pension	23,450.00	24,153.50
EP Study Leave	1,500.00	1,500.00
EP Professional Services	2,000.00	2,000.00
EP Travel	4,750.00	4,750.00

EPNC costs	0.00	0.00
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Christian Education/Resources

Christian Education

Triennium		6,000.00
Resource Center	2,000.00	1,500.00

Associate for Christian Formation	0.00	0.00
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Assoc. Christian Formation Salary	0.00	0.00
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Assoc. Christian Formation Study Leave	0.00	0.00
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Assoc. Christian Formation Travel

Denominational/Ecumenical Ministry

Presbyterian Media Mission

Christian Associates	1,500.00	1,500.00
Synod of Trinity(per capita)	29,425.00	27,595.00
General Assembly(per capita)	93,892.00	88,750.00

TOTAL SHARED MINISTRY	233,297.00	239,538.50
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Shared Mission

Sudan Partnership	16,000.00	16,000.00
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Pine Springs Camp	38,000.00	38,000.00
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Synod Mission	0.00	0.00
Presbyterian Mission Agency	32,000.00	32,000.00
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance		2500
TOTAL SHARED MISSION	86,000.00	88,500.00

Operations

Supplies	5,500.00	5,500.00
Postage	900.00	900.00
Telephone	4,000.00	4,000.00
Utilities & Maintenance	9,500.00	9,637.00
Property Insurance	3,656.00	3,656.00
Worker's Compensation	821.00	821.00
Legal and Auditing	4,000.00	5,000.00
Leases	3,819.00	3,500.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	500.00
Stated Clerk	11,997.00	1,000.00
Stated Clerk Travel	500.00	0.00
Associate Clerk		1,000.00
Recording Clerk	500.00	1,000.00
AA Salary	35,116.00	36,892.87
AA Medical/Pension	14,663.00	14,877.14
FICA paid-Presbytery	8,729.64	8,178.07
TOTAL OPERATIONS	103,701.64	96,462.08

422,998.64 424,500.58

Appendix C

THE FIVE AFFIRMATIONS FOR PRESBYTERIES

From the General Assembly Peace Discernment Process

FIVE PEACEMAKING AFFIRMATIONS FOR PRESBYTERY DELIBERATION

As part of the process of peace discernment begun by the General Assembly in 2010, then following 9 years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 221st General Assembly (2014) approved five affirmations for discussion, debate, and voting in the presbyteries. These affirmations were derived from work by 65 presbytery and congregational study groups and two consultations, one with seminary ethicists and one with Presbyterian college and university faculty, campus ministers and chaplains, and students.

This brief document contains the key action of the General Assembly and summarizes the background rationales for each of the five affirmations. The goal is to make this process as inviting as possible for presbytery discussion and voting. For those interested, the full set of study material is posted online: <http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=4795> and is also available from the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Presbyteries may wish to schedule information sessions on the affirmations before they vote, or may simply distribute this resource and announce the voting in advance.

Here is the action of the Assembly:

"Process of Discernment for Presbyteries: As the next stage in a six-year process of discernment, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directs the Stated Clerk to send to each presbytery, electronically and in print, the following five affirmations and supporting rationale with the request that they discuss and take an advisory vote on each affirmation and send the results of those votes, along with a summary of the floor discussion, back to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy by July 1, 2015, to help guide the preparation of a report on peacemaking directions for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

"The affirmations for churchwide discussion and advisory vote:

"1. We affirm that peacemaking is essential to our faith in God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ, whose love and justice challenge hatred and conflict, and whose call gives our church a mission to present alternatives to violence, fear, and misused power.

"2. We confess our complicity in the world's violence even as we pray for the Spirit's courage to "unmask idolatries," to speak truth about war and oppression, to stand with those who suffer, and to respond to acts and threats of violence with ministries of justice, healing, and reconciliation.

"3. We reclaim the power and authority of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Reconciler, who proclaims God's reign, who inspires the prophetic church, [by] forgiving, healing, and undoing violence, and who overcomes evil through the cross and resurrection.

"4. We seek to understand the nonviolent revolutions and armed struggles of our time by drawing on the traditions of Christian pacifism, just war, just peacemaking and active nonviolence, and by cultivating moral imagination through prayer, study, and engagement with friends and enemies. Even as we actively engage in a peace discernment process, we affirm our responsibility of continuing the long tradition of support by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for our sisters and brothers who serve in the U.S. military, veterans, and their families.

"5. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves earnestly to seek and promote loving, nonviolent responses to conflict in our daily lives, in our communities, and in our world, to risk calling our nation back from the practices of empire to the highest ideals of our heritage, and to practice boldly the things that make for peace."

THE FIVE AFFIRMATIONS FOR PRESBYTERIES

From the General Assembly Peace Discernment Process

THEOLOGICAL BASIS: The title of the full General Assembly report is "Risking Peace in a Violent World." It invokes both the Brief Statement of Faith, acknowledging not only a "broken and fearful world," but a violent one, and the Confession of 1967's prophetic phrase, "This search [for peace] requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at the risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding" (*Book of Confessions*, 9.45). Each explanatory section includes Biblical, ethical, and historical analysis.

"Peace discernment" is the name given to a 6-yr. process of updating the peacemaking vision of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The process was initiated by seven presbytery overtures on the 30th anniversary of *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling* (1980). A Steering Team was charged with a twofold mandate to "seek clarity as to God's call to the church regarding nonviolence as our fundamental response to the challenges of violence, terror, and war," and to examine "ministries of peacemaking and justice-seeking that honor the Gospel, the history of the church, and the movement of the Holy Spirit..." to develop recommendations for new policy and action (*Minutes*, 2010, p. 69). The study document, *Encountering the Gospel of Peace Anew*, contained questions to explore not simply the effectiveness of the church's peacemaking work and its threefold offering, but the basic nature and scope of the Gospel's mandate for peacemaking.

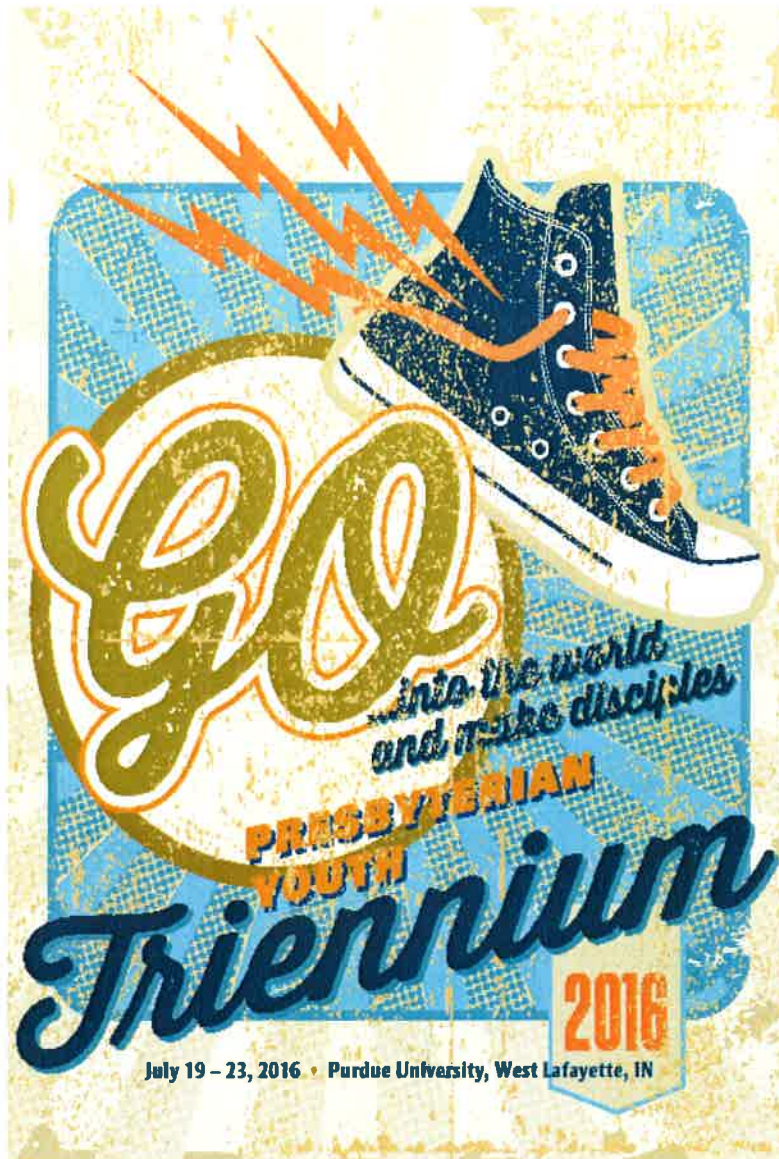
(<http://www.presbyteriansmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/peace-discernment/>)

STATUS OF THE AFFIRMATIONS AND POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS:

The affirmations clearly build on each other, but presbyteries can decide whether to consider the five as a set or vote on them individually to assess the degree to which they may, or may not, represent that presbytery's views. The five proposed affirmations honor the range of viewpoints within the church while testing new directions; *they are not statements of policy but propositions for serious debate*. We respectfully ask presbyteries to make time on their busy dockets to consider the affirmations.

Our Presbyterian process values differences of opinion as efforts to speak the truth in love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Voting is part of the work of the body to build consensus over time, and Presbyterians do not usually see unanimity or total agreement as necessary for decision. We take corporate stands, believing that the church as a body should not be silent, *and* at the same time we affirm that "God alone is Lord of the conscience..." making space for dissent. It is for those reasons we would like to see the vote tallies, but it is up to each presbytery to determine how to report, and some may wish to approve their own affirmations or amend the ones presented here. If a presbytery develops one or more affirmations of its own, we would appreciate a brief statement of rationale to explain the position or amendment. For example, if a presbytery thinks that "Christian pacifism" conflicts with the line about supporting the military – both added by the General Assembly – it could add, subtract, or move its own viewpoint.

The wording of this summary background piece draws freely on the language of the full report and all sources quoted are documented in the online footnotes. Leaders of presbytery discussions are urged to be familiar with the cases made in each section.



Audience: High School Age Youth and accompanying adult advisors (entering freshman through graduated seniors; adult advisors must be 21 years of age)

Registration: Will begin Early fall of 2015 for Redstone Presbytery. Participation forms will be available via the Redstone website. If you are interested in being on the work crew those applications are available on the Triennium Website.

Cost: \$500.00 (payments will be accepted.)

Delegations: A participant attends the Triennium in a Delegation. We will be attending as the Delegation from Redstone Presbytery.

Help them GO!

Triennium is a life giving, life changing, faith moving experience! As the world changes, society shifts—and the church expands -- the need for vibrant young Presbyterians grows. Help your young people GO to the next great place in their faith.

Questions:

Contact Teri Sauers @ 724-875-7007 or redstonetriennium@gmail.com

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NAVIGATING THE CURRENTS OF ENDOWMENTS AND RESERVE FUNDS

Donations to religious nonprofits climbed to historic levels, exceeding 115 billion dollars in the past year. Yet that rising tide hides small and turbulent undercurrents. Namely, charitable giving for religious institutions as a percentage of all nonprofit contributions continues on a thirty-year downward slide. Because people give to many worthwhile causes, including the church, leaders must make a case for how the congregation's mission advances God's will.

Permanent Endowment Fund Principles

First Church observed the 75th birthday of its endowment and celebrated the wonderful ministries it funded. However, for the past two years, leaders began dipping into the principle to pay staff salaries and subsidize the operating budget. The decision to go beyond an "interest-only" funding strategy generated conflict among members. Although some members preferred funding staff salaries through endowment principle monies rather than reducing staff, others felt it violated the trust of the endowment's donors. What is the best approach?

Start by obtaining the current guidelines for endowment funds from your denomination's regional or national offices. Most guidelines stipulate the appropriate uses of the endowment's interest income and principle funds. Further, endowment plans offer procedures for what happens if the congregation ceases to exist.¹

Every congregation should establish an endowment fund. Even if the beginning balance is modest, an endowment fund attracts contributions that people would not have given otherwise to the congregation. People give generously to an endowment if (a) church leaders publicize the endowment and its accomplishments twice a year, and (b) the endowment funds ministries that church members passionately support. Also, the process for making bequests should be accessible. A church that printed, "Remember the church in your will," in every worship service bulletin received bequests for decades. Additional information can be included on the church website.

Create two endowment funds—one for facilities and one for missions. Some members love to contribute to buildings and facilities because they receive joy from seeing holy spaces created for new generations. Sometimes people are motivated to give out of a sense of pride or attachment to a church that played a significant role in their family life or in the community's history. In contrast to these bricks-and-mortar types, another group of members love to make significant gifts to mission outreach—local, regional, and world. They know that their gifts will make a difference in these efforts and will continue to fund the causes they care deeply about far into the future.

Reserve Fund Principles

In addition to a facilities endowment, every congregation should create a maintenance reserve fund. Each year, church leaders place in an escrow fund a predetermined percentage of their total annual facilities-maintenance budget. A general rule is 10 to 15 percent of the total



"...AND TO THINK, DAD'S FINAL GIFT TO THE CHURCH CREATED THIS HOLY SPACE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME!"

facilities-maintenance budget. Other congregational leaders place a predetermined percentage of their total annual operations budget, about 1 percent or 2 percent, in a facilities-maintenance escrow fund. In both instances, these escrow funds provide for unexpected, expensive repairs—such as a new roof, a new heating or air conditioning system, or new technology upgrades.

One universal law is that the unexpected will happen sooner or later. A reserve fund prevents an event from becoming a crisis and protects church leaders from depleting the facility endowment's principle for ongoing maintenance.

Methods to Grow the Endowment

Several strategies boost endowment funds beyond just collecting the interest.

Make a case for the mission. After discussions and information meetings with church members, identify three or four mission priorities that speak to the congregation's core identity and commitments. For example, the congregation may take pride in its excellent music or arts ministry, community mission programs, or global mission partnerships. Committed current members are likely to feel strongly about these church strengths and want to insure their financial support during occasions when regular congregational income fluctuates. However, always communicate that the endowments provide for expanded ministry opportunities beyond the reach of the ongoing annual budget.

Know your congregation's giving patterns. Track pledges and giving habits from church records by age (members younger than 20, members in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and above). Determine what portion of the annual budget is funded by each ten-year age group, and pay special attention to members over age 60. Members older than sixty are the most likely to see the church's endowments as good investments. One idea is to challenge older members to endow their pledges by making a gift that equals twice their annual pledge with a zero added. For example, a \$1,500 annual pledge by two equals \$3,000. When a zero is added, the suggested endowment gift is \$30,000.²

Rejuvenate or expand your current endowment programs. Some churches focus on the investment returns of current endowment funds and make few efforts to solicit new gifts. Churches that offer Wills and Estate Planning Seminars every few years provide a valuable service for their members because an estimated 51% of Americans age 55 to 64 do not have wills.³ The reason

is denial. Although the seminars are not designed to influence people to put the congregation in their wills, estate planning often leads people of faith to make bequests that strengthen their church's ministries. With renewed focus, congregations can increase the number of people who have included the church in their estate planning by 20 percent each year.⁴

How to Minimize Risks

Two common problems arise when congregations develop an endowment or reserve fund dependency.

The accumulation of money makes leaders lose sight of ministry. For example, in a congregation that declined by more than 50 percent, the endowment funded a staff twice as large as appropriate for a church of its size. The endowment generated enough interest to pay salaries and operating expenses indefinitely. With that trajectory, the congregation could continue to exist without any members! Their challenge is learning how to connect with the spiritual needs of people currently in the community.

The talk of money is always tied to the church's need to balance the budget. Reserve funds or endowments provide a convenient excuse for members that their financial gifts are not needed. Church leaders must connect every mention of giving to its spiritual foundation. Financial giving is essential in helping believers form, retain, and grow in their relationship with God. The spiritual need to give is far greater than the church's need to receive.

Looking for a Great Investment?

People yearn to make a difference and search for ways to fulfill that desire. Thirty-five years after his assassination, the prayer for Archbishop Oscar Romero speaks to this truth: "The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us."⁵

1. See *Creating an Endowment Fund Guide*, <http://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/Resources/Ministry-Resources/Church-Tool-Box.aspx>

2. "50 Ways to Improve Your Annual Stewardship Campaign," Lewis Center for Church Leadership (www.churchleadership.com).

3. Richard Eisenberg, "Americans' Ostrich Approach To Estate Planning," <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2014/04/09/americans-ostrich-approach-to-estate-planning/>

4. *Creating an Endowment Fund Guide*, 6.

5. Bishop Ken Untener, "A Future Not Our Own," (http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Ken_Untener_A_Future_Not_Our_Own.shtml).

THIS CONVERSATION—AGAIN? IMPROVING CHURCH COMMUNICATION

As congregations face change and new challenges, conflict is part of the process. Too often, under stress, church leaders and members fall into bad communication habits that prevent the airing of concerns and objections. Healthy conversations help people manage conflict and move them toward acceptance of new initiatives. Productive communication speeds up the process from planning to action and keeps members on track to accurately assess new realities.

Communication Fashions to Avoid

Appropriate and effective actions by church leaders rest on good thinking. Do you recognize some of these communication and thinking mistakes?

1. *All or Nothing Thinking.* Painting reality as black and white is easy. Recognizing some shades of gray in any situation takes more time and thought. New ideas can be quickly judged as “terrible” or the “greatest ever.” Most new ideas fit in neither category. Nearly all ideas possess some merit and leaders can hone them into a better strategy. And even the best and greatest ideas need further development.¹

Beware of any proposal that only offers two alternatives. For example, “we must cut our staff salaries immediately or stop paying our utility bills.” There is always a third way, or fourth avenue, or fifth alternative.

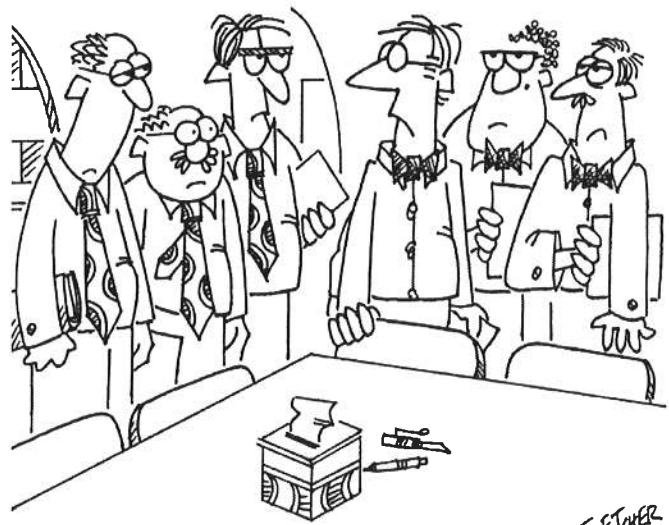
Polarized thinking can be used to describe members too (such as “we have good members and bad members”). Congregational efforts can be falsely judged as “successful” or “a complete failure.” Instead of putting all of reality into two baskets, creative people explore the positive and negative aspects of complex situations.

2. *Overgeneralizing.* After an unpleasant pastoral tenure with a recent seminary graduate, the congregation’s leaders vowed to never call another pastor without decades of pastoral experience. Unfortunately, those vows limit the number of gifted pastors

who could effectively serve with the church. And that view limits what the congregation could learn from the experience.

Taking one bad (or good) experience and using its specific outcome to make a general rule about how the universe works is more than a leap of faith. A specific situation is just that—unique to a particular event, time, and place. A healthy conversation recognizes the multitude of factors that produce any given outcome.

3. *Filtering Out the Positive.* After seventeen years of service, the pastor of First Church retired. He possessed many ministry strengths but some members expressed dissatisfaction with his administrative skills. As the search committee screened candidates, they made administrative experience a top priority. As a result, their next pastor was a phenomenal administrator with few other ministry gifts. His tenure was brief as the members realized they had focused too narrowly on the previous pastor’s weakness without appreciating all the leadership positives of their long-time pastor.



BY THE FIFTH COMMITTEE MEETING, IT WAS OBVIOUS
IT WOULD ALWAYS BE “US” VERSUS “THEM.”

A narrow focus on just the negatives or just the positives prohibits leaders from forming a realistic and balanced outlook. Identifying the positives and negatives of a situation is part of healthy communication.

4. *Assigning Motive.* We observe behavior and make guesses about why people are acting in ways that we deem irrational or counterproductive. Our inferences can be completely wrong because we can never be certain what someone else is thinking. Because we are not mind readers, healthy conversations include questions about what people believe, what they value, and why they wish to pursue one strategy vs. another. It is okay to ask: Why is this approach important to you?

5. *Catastrophizing.* Imminent disaster is rarely just around the corner and usually events do not explode into a crisis. Nostalgia about the past fuels some members to be doom-and-gloom prophets. Because their worldview is really a long-standing belief that all things are in decline, they see every event as the last shoe to drop. Healthy church conversations include discussions of many plausible outcomes, including positive ones.

6. *Emotional Reasoning.* Fear can inhibit effective discussions and prevent new ideas from being implemented. Leaders prone to elaborate explanations for why actions cannot be taken are often masking their fear of change. People often change their attitudes and feelings after they try something new, not before they do something new.

7. *Labeling.* Naming people or experiences puts them into hard categories based on an isolated incident. Hard categories block the reception of new information and make healthy communication much more difficult. Labeling tends to highlight the negative rather than illuminate the whole situation or person.

8. *Fortune-Telling.* Most people like to try their hand at predicting the future or like speculating about the future. However, none of us knows what will happen tomorrow. None of us knows what God has in store for the congregation and its mission. Negative predictions ignore all the possible outcomes and can be self-fulfilling congregational prophecies.

9. *Personalization.* When the pastor or lay leaders support a different strategy than some members, the focus can quickly shift away from the facts of a specific situation to a polarizing of people. The “us” vs. “them” type of thinking does not help people see the facts clearly because the focus shifts away from *what* to *who*.

10. *Looking for the Perfect Plan.* Churches can operate with the unrecognized conviction that discussing a problem equals solving the problem. They are convinced that lengthy discussion will eventually lead them to the perfect course of action, even if those discussions take many months or years. In general, only implementing a new idea reveals the required modifications to a strategy for use in a specific context. Successful new strategies more often occur when leaders use a “do-it-and-fix-it” method than when they wait for the perfect plan.

Clues to Improving Communication

Recognizing that our views are not always based on realistic thinking is hard to swallow. Sometimes our thinking is irrational or inaccurate. Acting on our faulty thinking leads to unnecessary conflict in a church setting. What steps can we take to improve our communication?

Let go of the past. Too much of the present conversation is actually attempts to rewrite history. Help yourself and others to make peace with the past.

Exercise forgiveness and patience. Everyone has made one or more thinking errors on the list. And the more important the decision, the more likely it is that our first response is not 100 percent rational. Managing our thoughts, taming our emotions, and behaving well is not easy.

Value the practical experiences of leaders and other congregations. Listen carefully to the observations of those who have tried and failed as well as those who tried and met success.

Uncover the theology, philosophy, and heart-felt passions that lead to change. When people marry their strategies with their deepest convictions, long-lasting change is more likely.

Remain hopeful about the future. A congregation’s script should be positive and energize members for what lies ahead in ministry.

1. Material drawn from Amy Morin, *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2014).