



**Presbytery of Lake Michigan**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

# September 13, 2025

## Stated Meeting Packet

**FINAL**  
**DOCKET of the STATED MEETING**  
**Presbytery of Lake Michigan**  
**September 13, 2025. 9:30 a.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Battle Creek, MI**

**The Presbytery of Lake Michigan forms and partners with faith communities to challenge, encourage, equip, and hold one another accountable as Christ's disciples.**

**8:30 a.m.** Registration opens: Please sign the Roll of the Presbytery

Orientation for first-time Elder Commissioners and new pastors took place via Zoom on September 8, 2025, and was led by Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom.

**9:30 a.m. LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE** – Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon, Moderator (GH)

**OPENING OF THE STATED MEETING**

Call to Order and Opening Prayer

Declaration of Quorum

**9:35 a.m. BUSINESS PLENARY I**

Appointment of Temporary Clerks

[ACTION]

Seating of Corresponding Members

[ACTION]

Omar Salinas-Chacón, PCUSA Immigration

Approval of the Docket

[ACTION]

Welcome

First-Time Elders and Christian Educators

Guests and Visitors

Greetings from the Host Church - Rev. Lorenzo Small

Approval of the Consent Agenda

[ACTION]

**10:00 a.m. WORSHIP** – (See insert)

Preacher: Omar Salinas-Chacón,

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Mission Specialist for Migration Accompaniment Ministries

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Today's offerings are designated for PCUSA Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

**11:00 a.m. BREAK** (15 minutes)

**11:15 a.m. KEYNOTE** (30 minutes)

Omar Salinas-Charón, PCUSA Immigration



**11:45 a.m. BUSINESS PLENARY II**

Report of the Executive Presbyter –Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence (15 minutes) [ACTION]  
On Declaring the PCUSA a Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/committee/3000090/business>

Report of the Leadership Team (10 minutes)  
Recommendation 2026 Per Capita [ACTION]  
Recommendation of Anti-Harassment Policy [ACTION]  
Reminder of Grant Funds toward Health Care

Budget and Finance - Beth Dyer (20 minutes)  
Presentation of Proposed Budget for 2026

Commission on Ministry - Rev. Ben Rumbaugh (30 minutes) [ACTION]  
Recommendation - 2026 Minimum Terms of Call  
Recognition of the Retirement of Rev. Dan Anderson  
Welcome New Teaching Elders

- Calandra Nevensel (UCC) - Interim for Richland
- Amy Ruhf-Brien - Installed Big Rapids

Nominating & Representation Committee – Rev. Lisa Schrott (10 minutes) [ACTION]

Report of the Synod of the Covenant Commissioner - Andy Thorburn (10 minutes)

**1:15 p.m. ADJOURNMENT/EXTINGUISHING OF THE CANDLE – Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser Brydon**

**LUNCH**

**1:30 Ruling Elder Boundary Training - Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom**

**The next Presbytery meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3, 2025  
at Parkwood Presbyterian Church  
7998 28th Avenue  
Jenison, Michigan 49428**



**Presbytery of Lake Michigan**  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**September 13, 2025**  
**We Gather to Worship**

## **Prelude**

### **\*Call to Worship**

**Elder Randy Abraham (Grand Haven First)**

Praise the LORD!

**Praise the Lord, oh my soul!**

Happy are those who execute justice for the oppressed;  
**who give food to the hungry.**

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
**the LORD loves the righteous.**

The LORD watches over the strangers;  
**he upholds the orphan and the widow,**

Praise the LORD,  
**Praise the LORD, oh my soul! Let us worship God together.<sup>1</sup>**

### **\*Hymn #100**

**“My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout”**

### **Call to Confession and Prayer of Confession**

**Rev. Calandra Nevenzel (Richland First)**

Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan, and we are joined by our baptisms into one community, led by Christ. As part of the baptized community, we come together to confess our sin because sin is not only an individual offense, but a communal one. Together, let us confess our sin before God and one another, trusting in God’s forgiveness.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Compassionate God, we have not done what is right. We have turned away from those in need of shelter. We do not offer support to the homeless. We do not offer sanctuary to immigrants and refugees. We let our fears rule us, planted by those who seek to divide us. We exclude those who look different, who sound different, who once called another place home. We forget that what we do to others, we do to you. We forget that what we do not do for others, we do not do for you. Forgive us. Our guilt is overwhelming, and we do not know what to do. Cleanse us of our sin, and teach us to turn our guilt into action; Renew in us your**

<sup>1</sup> From Psalm 146 NRSVU

**love, that we might love the world as you do; Open our hearts to the voices of others, that we might hear you in them. Through your Beloved, our Savior and Teacher, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*Silence*

### **Assurance of God's Love and Sharing in Christ's Peace**

God's forgiveness and love are given to us freely and joyfully. As God declared when Jesus came up from the water, and as was promised us at our baptisms, we are God's beloved. I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are a forgiven people. Thanks be to God. The Peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you!**<sup>2</sup>

### **We Hear the Word**

#### **Prayer for Illumination**

**Elder Jackie Skinner (Schoolcraft First)**

Faithful God, give us courage to seek your love. Give us courage to join our voices with others. Give us courage to hear your Word and your will in our lives. Amen.

#### **Anthem**

**Beatitudes part 4: Blessed Are Those Who Seek Justice**

**Cesar Franke**

#### **Scripture Readings**

**Jeremiah 4:23-28; James 2: 14-26**

**Omar Salinas-Chacón**

#### **Message**

**"Christ Calls Us to Be More Than Allies"**

**Omar Salinas-Chacón**

### **We Respond to the Word**

#### **\*Hymn (See insert)**

**God of the Traveler**

#### **Installation of the Presbytery Vice-Moderator**

**Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser-Brydon  
Elder Benjamin Boerkoel**

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.**

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**There is one body and one Spirit, just as we were called to the one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.**

We are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, a sign in the world today of what God intends for all humankind.

**The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of**

<sup>2</sup> Hart-Anderson, Madeline, "Immigration Worship Resources: Lent and Holy Week" PC(USA).org.

humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. The call of Christ is to willing, dedicated discipleship. Our discipleship is a manifestation of the new life we enter through baptism. Discipleship is both a gift and a commitment, an offering and a responsibility. Today it is our joy to share the call of God to Elder Ben Boerkel as vice moderator of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.

**Ben, the grace bestowed on you in baptism is sufficient for your calling because it is God's grace. By God's grace we are saved, and enabled to grow in the faith and to commit our lives in ways which serve Christ. God has called you to particular service. Show your purpose by answering these questions.**

Who is your Lord and Savior?

**Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?

**I will, with God's help.**

Do you welcome the responsibility of this service because you are determined to follow the Lord Jesus, to love neighbors, and to work for the reconciling of the world?

**I do.**

Will you serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love, relying on God's mercy and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit?

**I will, with God's help.**

Do you, members of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, confirm the call of God to our sibling Ben Boerkel as vice moderator in the service of Jesus Christ?

**We do.**

Will you support and encourage them in this ministry?

**We will.**

Faithful God, in baptism you claimed us; and by your Holy Spirit you are working in our lives, empowering us to live a life worthy of our calling. We thank you for leading Ben to this time and place. Establish them in your truth, and guide them by your Holy Spirit, that in your service they may grow in faith, hope, and love, and be (a) faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever.

**Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you called disciples and, by the Holy Spirit, made them one church to serve you. Let your Spirit rule your church, so that we may be joined in love and service to Jesus Christ, who, having gone before us, is coming to meet us in the promise of your kingdom. Amen.**

Ben, you are installed to service as vice moderator in the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him.

## **Offering**

**Rev. David Schell (Jackson First)**

The offering today is designated to support the PC(USA) Disaster Assistance

## **Offertory**

### **\*Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;  
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost!**

### **\*Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

**Rev. Amy Ruhf-Brien (Big Rapids United)**

**God of love and compassion: may we always recognize your spirit:  
in the refugee family, seeking safety from violence;  
in the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables;  
in the asylum-seekers, seeking justice for their families;  
May these resources that we humbly give bring your love and justice into this world. In  
Jesus' name, Amen. <sup>3</sup>**

## **Celebration of the Lord's Supper**

**Rev. Lorenzo Small (Battle Creek First)**

### **Invitation**

### **Great Prayer of Great Thanksgiving**

### **Communion of the People**

### **Prayer After Communion**

### **\*Hymn (See insert)**

**"Abraham Journeyed to a New Country"**

### **\*Charge and Benediction**

**Omar Salinas-Chacón**

## **Postlude**

*Thank you to all those who participated in leading worship today.*

*Musicians:*

*Director of Music: Dr. Carl Witt*

*Soloist: Daniel Kring*

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Hartnett, Dan, S.J. "Give Us Hearts." In "Prayer for an Interfaith Gathering," *Prayers and Reflections*, Mission and Identity, Loyola Marymount University.

## **God of the Traveler**

William McConnell © 2018

5.5.5.4.D

Suggested Tune: COME TO THE TABLE (Glory to God #508)

God of the traveler,  
God of the journey,  
Shelter and refuge,  
Savior and friend.  
Traveling with us,  
Our close companion,  
Grant us protection,  
'Til journey's end.

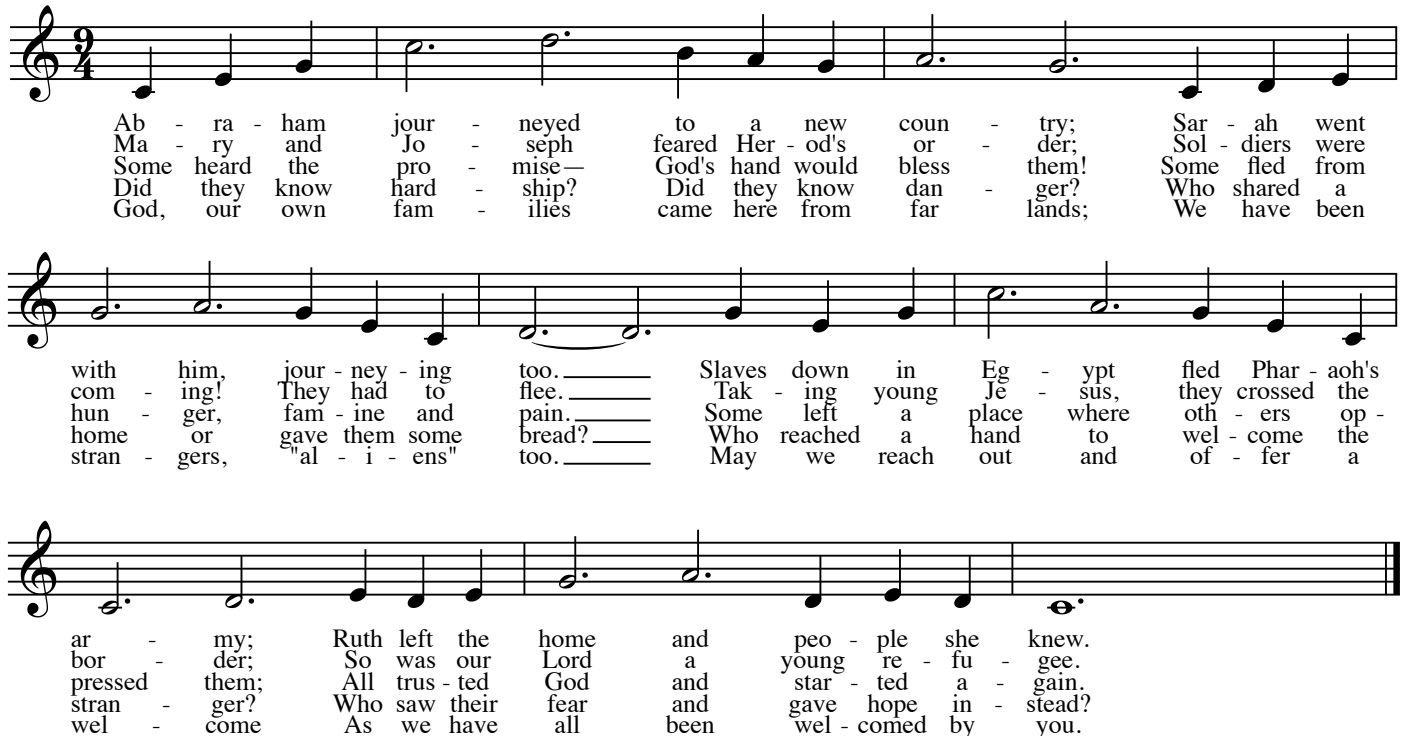
Refugee fleeing  
Prison and torture;  
Seeking asylum,  
Living in fear.  
Children and parents  
Torn from each other,  
Great God of mercy  
Hear heartfelt prayer.

Parents of Jesus,  
Refugee guardians,  
Flee Herod's rage, you  
Shelter the child.  
Fathers and mothers,  
Children beloved,  
To you entrusted,  
God's undefiled.

Wanderers, travelers,  
Weary and worried,  
God grant us strength and  
Courage to dare.  
Risking our safety,  
Freedom, and status,  
Your children need us,  
Dare us to care.

# Abraham Journeyed to a New Country

BUNESSAN 5.5.5.4 D ("Morning Has Broken")



Ab - ra - ham jour - neyed to a new coun - try; Sar - ah went  
 Ma - ry and Jo - seph feared Her - od's or - der; Sol - diers were  
 Some heard the pro - mise— God's hand would bless them! Some fled from  
 Did they know hard - ship? Did they know dan - ger? Who shared a  
 God, our own fam - ilies came here from far lands; We have been

with him, jour - ney - ing too. \_\_\_\_\_ Slaves down in Eg - ypt fled Phar - aoh's  
 com - ing! They had to flee. \_\_\_\_\_ Tak - ing young Je - sus, they crossed the  
 hun - ger, fam - ine and pain. \_\_\_\_\_ Some left a place where oth - ers op -  
 home or gave them some bread? \_\_\_\_\_ Who reached a hand to wel - come the  
 stran - gers, "al - i - ens" too. \_\_\_\_\_ May we reach out and of - fer a

ar - my; Ruth left the home and a peo - ple she knew.  
 bor - der; So was our Lord a young re - fu - gee.  
 pressed them; All trus - ted God and star - ted a - gain.  
 stran - ger? Who saw their fear and gave hope in - stead?  
 wel - come As we have all been wel - comed by you.

Biblical references: Genesis 12, Ruth 1; Matthew 2:13-16, 10:40; 25:31-46; Hebrews 11, 13:2; Leviticus 19:18, 33-34

Tune: Gaelic melody

Text: Copyright © 2010 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

Email: [bcgillette@comcast.net](mailto:bcgillette@comcast.net) See also <http://carolynshymns.com/>

Permission for free use of this hymn is given to churches that support the Office on Immigration Issues of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

## Hymn Note for “Abraham Journeyed to a Far Country”

Text: Throughout the Bible, we see stories of immigrants—people called to settle in new lands and begin new lives for a variety of reasons, people who trusted in God's protection along the way. Abraham and Sarah heard God's promise of a new land. Exodus is the story of God's people being led from slavery to the freedom of the Promised Land. Later, Ruth went with Naomi, her mother-in-law, because her love of family led her to take risks and leave the home she knew for a new home. Jesus himself was a refugee in Egypt when his parents had to flee from Herod for his safety. Jesus taught that one of the greatest commandments is to love our neighbors; these neighbors include foreigners (Luke 10:25-37 with references to Leviticus 19:18, 33-34). He also taught that all people will be judged on their compassion for those in need and their welcome of strangers (Matthew 25:31-46). Today, people are immigrants for many of the same reasons that these biblical people were. The Church is called to follow the Bible's teachings by welcoming and supporting immigrants today. Check out the web site of the Office on Immigration Issues of the Presbyterian Church (USA): <http://oga.pcusa.org/immigration/>

Tune: The hymn tune, Bunessan, is a traditional Gaelic melody that was originally associated with the 19th century Christmas carol, "Child in a Manger," by Mary Macdonald. When the Gaelic hymn was translated into English, the melody was named after the small village on the Scottish island of Mull by the translator, Lachlan Macbean. Eleanor Farjeon wrote a new hymn to this tune, "Morning Has Broken," that was published in 1931.

Author: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette is the author of *Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor* (Discipleship Resources/Upper Room Books, 2009) and *Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship* (Geneva Press, 2000) and the co-pastor of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware. This congregation includes first generation immigrants from Brazil, England, Ghana, India, Scotland and South Africa, and provides space for a Ghanaian Presbyterian Fellowship. A complete list of Carolyn's 160+ hymns can be found at [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com).

**[12-11] Commissioner's Resolution. Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations.**  
**Source:** Commissioners  
**Committee:** [12] Peacemaking and International Issues  
**Prefile #:** [CR-008]  
**Event:** 222nd General Assembly (2016)  
**Sponsor:** No Assignment  
**Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

### Action Summary

#### Recommendation

#### Action

On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

Approve (AA)

On this Item, the Peacemaking and International Issues Committee acted as follows:

Approve (CA)

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

### Approve

[action via Agenda: Wednesday Consent Agenda]

Consensus

## Committee Recommendation

*On this Item, the Peacemaking and International Issues Committee acted as follows:*

### Approve

Counted Vote - Committee

Affirmative:44

Negative:2

Abstaining:

## Recommendation

**The 222nd General Assembly (2016):**

- 1. Reaffirms the support of previous General Assemblies for the ministry of sanctuary and for those congregations that have supported and offered sanctuary for refugees and immigrants threatened with deportation.**
- 2. Reaffirms the ethical responsibility of congregations and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to defend the unity and integrity of families when an immigrant mother or father is threatened with deportation.**



3. **Calls upon congregations and individual Presbyterians to provide hospitality, accompaniment, and sanctuary for mothers, children, unaccompanied minors, and refugees fleeing the murderous gang violence of the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras).**
4. **Recognizes that offering sanctuary is one way in which Presbyterians are living out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger, including but not limited to: advocacy to end family detention; visitation programs for detained immigrants; advocacy and organizing to stop the criminalization of immigrants and end the collaboration of local police with Immigration and Customs Enforcement; immigration legal clinics; support of and engagement with immigrant-led congregations and organizations; and advocacy and organizing for humanitarian, just immigration policies on the local, state, and federal levels.**

## Rationale

Throughout the biblical narrative, God calls us to welcome the stranger. In Exodus 22:21, God declared that the people not oppress immigrants because they themselves were once strangers in a strange land. After the Judeans returned from exile, they expelled foreign wives and children (Ezra 10:10–11), contrary to God’s call through the prophet Isaiah to welcome all people to God’s house (Isa. 56:7). After Jesus was born, his family fled to Egypt because King Herod was persecuting young Israelite children (Mt. 2:13–14). During Jesus’ ministry, he welcomed and healed people who were estranged from Jewish society, such as the Samaritan woman, a Roman centurion, lepers, and paralytics. Jesus declares that loving our neighbor follows loving God with our whole selves (Mk. 12:30–31). He then calls us in his parable of the sheep and the goats to welcome the stranger just as we would welcome him (Mt. 25:36). Sanctuary, providing immigrants shelter from deportation, is an act of faith founded upon the call of the biblical witness.

Successive General Assemblies (194th [1984]–198th [1986]) have supported the ministry of providing a safe haven for refugees fleeing the violence in Central America, which became known as the ministry of sanctuary.

The 211th General Assembly (1999) reaffirmed the guiding theological and ethical principles of the ministry of sanctuary contained in the resolution on, “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors.”

The 211th General Assembly (1999) recommended that, “Christians should engage in pastoral, compassionate, educational, and prophetic ministries with refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants” (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 368). The provision of sanctuary for asylum seekers may be an appropriate moral response for churches.

The 221st General Assembly (2014), “Encourages Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations to consider preparations to provide sanctuary, safety, and support for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers” (*Minutes*, 2014, Part I, p. 737).

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, wrote to the President of the United States in support of sanctuary and in hope of administrative relief on September 15, 2014. “These congregations are living out their love of neighbor by protecting families vulnerable to separation. They are doing justice by showing your administration that it is not abiding by its own enforcement policies. This denomination has a history of supporting its churches that find the offering of sanctuary to be an appropriate moral response. These churches are no different and have our support today.”

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Presbytery of New Castle

Adan Mairena, Presbytery of Philadelphia

## Other Comments

### ACREC Advice and Counsel

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approve Item 12-11 with comment.

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns agrees with the rationale commissioners provided with this resolution.

This resolution is also similar to Item 09-06 from the Presbytery of New York City that the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advised to be approved.

The ministry of sanctuary is based on our Christian responsibility to care and protect those who are the most vulnerable of our society.

The practice of sanctuary cities comes from the Old Testament and is based on the principle that every person deserves a new opportunity to rebuild their lives. This principle was also followed by Jesus in his relations with sinners and outcasts. The adulterous woman, the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus the tax collector, the Prodigal Son, and others in the Gospel had a new opportunity. They were not judged by the rule of law but by the rule of love.

As followers of Jesus we are commanded to follow the example of Jesus and be compassionate with those who are suffering. The Sanctuary Movement is a way to put in practice the love of Jesus and our Christian responsibility. The ACREC advises approval of this resolution.

### ACSWP A&C on Item 12-11

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that Item 12-11 be approved.

The ACSWP notes that 197th and 198th General Assemblies (1985) and (1986) did indeed speak out in defense of religiously motivated sanctuary workers<sup>1</sup> and that recommendations approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999) included that “The provision of sanctuary for asylum seekers may be an appropriate moral response for churches even though the United States government regards this witness as illegal.”<sup>2</sup>

The current situation of violence in Mexico and Central American has led to a number of Presbyterian churches being led by their faith to become part of the New Sanctuary movement. Item 12-11 affirms this practice. The committee may also wish to note the biblical and theological basis developed in the “Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States” as approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004), pages 13–15. (See also *Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 737ff.)

Item 12-11 complements Item 09-06, “On Responding to Our Sisters and Brothers Who Are Refugees or Internally Displaced.”

The ACSWP also notes that there is significant overlap between Item 12-11 and Item 12-12 and offers support resource should the committee wish to consider combining the two resolutions.

### Endnotes

1. 1985 and 1986 PC(USA) statements in *Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2000), 57.
2. *Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA), 1999), 3. See also *Minutes*, 1990, Part I, p. 353.

**ACWC A&C on Item 12-11.**

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) advises that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approve Item 12-11.

The ACWC is in support of Item 12-11. Jesus commanded the church in John 21:17 to "feed my sheep." He also told us in Mark 12:33 that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Part of fulfilling these commands of Christ includes offering sanctuary to displaced or migrant persons/families. We should absolutely affirm our ministry of sanctuary as the church and in individual congregations as a means by which we live out our Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger. Many displaced and migrant persons across the United States currently struggle to keep their families together; whether these families are traditional nuclear families or nontraditional family units. There are laws as well as an absence of particular laws within the U.S. that blatantly disregard the basic human rights of displaced and migrant persons in countless ways. It is the call of the church to uphold the humanity of all people, especially those who are most vulnerable.

**COGA Comment on Item 12-11.**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly advises approval of Item 12-11.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly consists of fifteen elected members. Its responsibilities include supporting and reviewing the work of the Office of the General Assembly, including the Office of Immigration Issues.

Item 12-11 is consistent with the PC(USA)'s long history of extending welcome to the stranger, including the "We Choose Welcome" initiative of the Stated Clerk over the past year. This item usefully reinforces those existing policies, as well as the church's position that the right of sanctuary is encompassed by the rights set forth in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. In a time when different states are taking contradictory views of such a right, reaffirming the position of the PC(USA) as to this fundamental right is vital.



## Presbyterian Policy on Immigration

### The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) Resolution Regarding a Call to Stand with Immigrant Presbyterians in Their Hour of Need.

The 206<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1994) adopted the “Call to Presbyterians to Recommit to Work and Pray for a Just and Compassionate U.S. Immigration Policy.” Again, in 1999 and 2004 Presbyterians, through General Assembly actions, guided by theological and ethical principles, continued to call for a commitment from both Presbyterians and the government to work toward welcoming immigrants into communities and providing just laws that affect those who live and work in the United States. In 2010 Presbyterians addressed the most appropriate way to respond to state laws that result in members of the population being targeted for increased scrutiny.

1. Refrain from holding national meetings at hotels or non-PC(USA) conference centers in those states where travel by immigrant Presbyterians or Presbyterians of color or Hispanic ancestry might subject them to harassment due to legislation similar to Arizona Law SB 1070/HB2162.

a. If individual congregations and camp and conference facilities deem it necessary, the PC(USA) and its staff will offer nonfinancial support for the creation of accompaniment programs to support persons of color who feel that they are at risk when attending church-sponsored worship or programs.

b. If such laws are passed in states where the PC(USA) camp and conference centers are located, the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) encourages those centers to develop ‘sanctuary’ responses that would create safe places for all participants, allowing the denomination to continue to support its own conference centers, and encourages the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the General Assembly Mission Council to offer support to partners across the denomination as they develop a process to train volunteers to document abuses and collect data on those abuses to share with the broader church.

2. Direct the Office of Immigration to develop resources that educate Presbyterians about the history of immigrant policies, the beneficial aspects of immigration in the United States as well as official anti-immigration conduct, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that was not repealed until 1943; the forced migration of persons of Mexican descent from California between 1929 and 1939, 60 percent of whom were U.S. citizens; and the forced relocation of Japanese Americans to detention camps during World War II.

3. Direct the Office of Immigration to develop resources that educate Presbyterians about the origins of this most recent legislation, with a special focus on those states that are considering enactment of copycat legislation.

4. Empower the Immigration Office of the PC(USA) to provide a legal resource to PC(USA) congregations in states experiencing the introduction of SB 1070 copycat legislation.”

5. Direct the Stated Clerk to ask the National Council of Churches to request the churches of North America to join our sister churches in Europe in a common day of prayer to commemorate those migrants who have died on their journey.”

**[IMM-06]**      **On Declaring the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to Be a Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church**  
**Source:**        Presbytery  
**Committee:**   [IMM] Immigration  
**Profile #:**     [OVT-020]  
**Event:**        225th General Assembly (2022)  
**Sponsor:**     San Jose Presbytery  
**Type:**         General Assembly Full Consideration

### Action Summary

#### Recommendation

#### Action

On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

Approve as  
Amended (AA)

On this Item, the Immigration Committee acted as follows:

Approve as  
Amended (CA)

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

#### Approve as Amended

Electronic Vote - Plenary  
Affirmative:340  
Negative:25  
Abstaining:

**Final text:** Show Amended Text

- 1. Recognize and celebrate the many ways that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has spoken out on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and their children, including the many statements and resolutions included in the document “Presbyterian Policy Around Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Dream Act, the Spirit of Which Includes DACA.”**
- 2. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Stop the Separation of Families” approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018).**
- 3. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 4. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 5. Recognize and celebrate the history of many churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who declared themselves “Sanctuary Churches” in the 1980s, risking prosecution and imprisonment for the sake of those who were fleeing for their lives from the wars in Central America.**
- 6. Recognize that sanctuary is one way that Presbyterians continue to live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger and, thereby, some again risk prosecution and imprisonment by providing sanctuary to those in need.**

7. Recognize that just as offering sanctuary to those in need is one way our churches are living out the Gospel of Christ, so too accompaniment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is yet another way our churches are seeking to live out the Gospel by helping them as they struggle through the maze of immigration laws, detentions, and the fear of deportation.
8. We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families.
9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its Office of General Assembly stands ready to assist its councils in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations, to inform them of the legal risks associated with doing so, and to equip them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment.
10. Advise congregations that to become sanctuary churches they may need extra, external financial assistance, especially if providing sanctuary embroils them unavoidably in legal difficulties. Although the PC(USA) at the national and mid council levels cannot guarantee unlimited funding to cover such costs, and the self-designation above (Recommendation 8) should not be taken to so imply, the assembly encourages appropriate offices to provide information on potential sources of funds, legal assistance, and other forms of aid for their witness.

## Referral

*Referral to OGA from IMM-06*

9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its Office of General Assembly stands ready to assist its councils in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations, to inform them of the legal risks associated with doing so, and to equip them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment

Status:	Referred to Entity
Refer to Entity:	Office of the General Assembly
Expected Completion Date:	

## Committee Recommendation

*On this Item, the Immigration Committee acted as follows:*

### Approve as Amended

Electronic Vote - Committee
Affirmative:36
Negative:3
Abstaining:

**Final text:** Show Amended Text

### **Text for Assembly Consideration**

- 1. Recognize and celebrate the many ways that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has spoken out on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and their children, including the many statements and resolutions included in the document “Presbyterian Policy Around Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Dream Act, the Spirit of Which Includes DACA.”**
- 2. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Stop the Separation of Families” approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018).**
- 3. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 4. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 5. Recognize and celebrate the history of many churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who declared themselves “Sanctuary Churches” in the 1980s, risking prosecution and imprisonment for the sake of those who were fleeing for their lives from the wars in Central America.**
- 6. Recognize that sanctuary is one way that Presbyterians continue to live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger and, thereby, some again risk prosecution and imprisonment by providing sanctuary to those in need.**
- 7. Recognize that just as offering sanctuary to those in need is one way our churches are living out the Gospel of Christ, so too accompaniment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is yet another way our churches are seeking to live out the Gospel by helping them as they struggle through the maze of immigration laws, detentions, and the fear of deportation.**
- 8. We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families.**
- 9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stands ready to assist its congregations in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations; to inform them of the legal risks associated with doing so; and to equip them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment.**
- 10. Advise congregations that to become sanctuary churches they may need extra, external financial assistance, especially if providing sanctuary embroils them unavoidably in legal difficulties. Although the PC(USA) at the national and mid council levels cannot guarantee unlimited funding to cover such costs, and the self-designation above (Recommendation 8) should not be taken to so imply, the assembly encourages appropriate offices to provide information on potential sources of funds, legal assistance, and other forms of aid for their witness.**

## **Recommendation before the Committee**

*This item was referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) for consideration during the 225th General Assembly (2022).*

**The Presbytery of San Jose overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) to do the following:**

- 1. Recognize and celebrate the many ways that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has spoken out on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and their children, including the many statements and resolutions included in the document “Presbyterian Policy Around Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Dream Act, the Spirit of Which Includes DACA.”**
- 2. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Stop the Separation of Families” approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018).**
- 3. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 4. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 5. Recognize and celebrate the history of many churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who declared themselves “Sanctuary Churches” in the 1980s, risking prosecution and imprisonment for the sake of those who were fleeing for their lives from the wars in Central America.**
- 6. Recognize that sanctuary is one way that Presbyterians continue to live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger and, thereby, some again risk prosecution and imprisonment by providing sanctuary to those in need.**
- 7. Recognize that just as offering sanctuary to those in need is one way our churches are living out the Gospel of Christ, so too accompaniment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is yet another way our churches are seeking to live out the Gospel by helping them as they struggle through the maze of immigration laws, detentions, and the fear of deportation.**
- 8. We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families.**
- 9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stands ready to assist its congregations in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations, [to advise-[inform] them of the legal risks associated with doing so, and to equip] in equipping them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment.**
- [10. Advises congregations that become sanctuary churches that they may need extra, external financial assistance, especially if providing sanctuary embroils them unavoidably in legal difficulties. Although the PC(USA) at the national and mid council levels cannot guarantee unlimited funding to cover such costs, and the self-designation above (Recommendation 8) should not be taken to so imply, the assembly encourages appropriate offices to provide information on potential sources of funds, legal assistance, and other forms of aid for their witness.]**

## Recommendation



*This item was referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) for consideration during the 225th General Assembly (2022).*

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- 3. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 4. Recognize and celebrate the resolution “On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).**
- 5. Recognize and celebrate the history of many churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who declared themselves “Sanctuary Churches” in the 1980s, risking prosecution and imprisonment for the sake of those who were fleeing for their lives from the wars in Central America.**
- 6. Recognize that sanctuary is one way that Presbyterians continue to live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger and, thereby, some again risk prosecution and imprisonment by providing sanctuary to those in need.**
- 7. Recognize that just as offering sanctuary to those in need is one way our churches are living out the Gospel of Christ, so too accompaniment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is yet another way our churches are seeking to live out the Gospel by helping them as they struggle through the maze of immigration laws, detentions, and the fear of deportation.**
- 8. We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families.**
- 9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stands ready to assist its congregations in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations in equipping them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment.**

## **Rationale**

This overture builds on the work of previous General Assemblies mentioned above. While those overtures affirmed and celebrated the efforts of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), this overture seeks to take the next step by declaring our denomination a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” church.

We are admonished by scripture to welcome the alien and stranger among us: “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen

among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:33); “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt. 25:35c). There are no less than twenty-two verses enjoining us to welcome the stranger and alien among us.

Romans 12:13 reads, “Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” The Greek word for “stranger” here is *xenos*, the root word for xenophobia. Similarly, the Greek word for “hospitality” is *philoxenia* or love of the stranger. In other words, there can be no hospitality without love of the stranger, love of the other, love of those who are different from us.

The history of immigration policy in the United States is tainted with the sin of racism and xenophobia. Several administrations have struggled and failed to reform our broken immigration system. Some of their enforcement practices have been harmful to immigrant communities, such as the “Secure Communities” policy that disincentivized immigrants from reporting or cooperating with law enforcement. Yet this administration has exceeded the others with a shocking disregard for the wellbeing of children and the separation of children from their parents, as well as the separation of families in our own communities. Consequently, our undocumented friends live in fear of deportation, separation from their families, and possible impoverishment when the family breadwinner is detained and/or deported.

Many of our churches have declared themselves Matthew 25 churches. Sanctuary and accompaniment are ways of addressing systemic poverty and racism that are fundamental to being a Matthew 25 church. While sanctuary usually refers to a person living within a church or on the church campus, accompaniment refers to all the ways that people are helping immigrants in order to prevent the need for sanctuary. Sanctuary can be a disaster for the person or family that goes into sanctuary. All of their normal connections with their family change; all of their normal connections with the community cease. For these reasons, accompaniment is preferable to sanctuary when possible. Accompaniment may include, among other things, helping them find housing, medical care, a pro bono attorney to navigate the legal system, education, support services, transportation, etc.

Matthew 25:35 says “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” The situation on the border and throughout our country demands that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) speak out with urgency. As we witness our borders being closed to asylum seekers, forcing them to return to the dangerous places they have fled, we remember that Jesus and his parents were themselves refugees from Herod’s murderous intentions (Matt 2:13–23).

By declaring the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church,” we are publicly declaring that we will not be silent and we will not stand by while families continue to be separated and while refugees are turned away. By declaring our denomination as a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church,” we are heeding our charge as followers of Jesus Christ to act in ways that support the stranger in our midst and to treat our neighbors as ourselves. By declaring our denomination as a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church,” we create a witness that is public and we become a truly confessing church.

Most importantly, we share the Gospel of Jesus Christ by making his body visible in the world. The situation at our border demands that we no longer hide our light under a bushel. It is time to raise our lamps and make clear our intention to stand with Christ who is the very stranger in our midst.

## Other Comments

### **Advice and Counsel—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)**

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) **approve IMM-06 with the following amendment:**

*“[10. Advises congregations that become sanctuary churches that they may need extra, external financial assistance, especially if providing sanctuary embroils them unavoidably in legal difficulties.*

*Although the PC(USA) at the national and mid council levels cannot guarantee unlimited funding to cover such costs, and the self-designation above (Recommendation 8) should not be taken to so imply, the assembly encourages appropriate offices to provide information on potential sources of funds, legal assistance, and other forms of aid for their witness.]”*

With many in the church, ACSWP deeply admires the courage of those who offer hospitality to asylum-seekers, refugees, and others fleeing desperate circumstances. Several of our current members are in congregations that have taken a range of sanctuary measures. Thus, we want to be quite clear about the potential costs of discipleship in this area.

At the same time, commissioners may wish to encourage or request proactive legal action, preparation, or Friend of Court brief support from appropriate agencies of the church to protect sanctuary churches and other bodies, or to challenge policies or enforcement, consistent with our immigration policies. In the well-known case involving Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson back in the 1980s, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church both provided support partly on First Amendment grounds to prevent infiltration of worship services by (then) INS agents. The 2014 Assembly resolution on Drones, War, and Surveillance included a provision specifically aimed at new forms of this problem.

The church’s emphasis on spiritual freedom of conscience and the work of the Holy Spirit in community lead us to maintain that congregational life is protected from governmental and commercial intrusion. In order to uphold both privacy rights and the separation of church and state, we regard all spaces of worship as surveillance-free zones. Aware of the potential for abuse by both government agencies and criminal enterprises, surveillance of individuals should only intrude into congregational life under extraordinary circumstances and in each case should require a warrant or court order. Recognizing the role of technology in facilitating overreaching surveillance, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) encourages the church to examine its own technological choices and, where feasible, use hardware and software that allows us to avoid this surveillance except under extraordinary circumstances with a warrant or court order.

#### **Advice and Counsel—From the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC)**

The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns advises the 224th General Assembly (2020) to **approve** this item.

The PC(USA) has, over the years, developed numerous policies around the subject of immigration, as well as guidelines for congregations and communities to discern if they should become a sanctuary congregation. ACWC encourages the 224th General Assembly (2020) to approve this overture based on the “Sanctuary Movement Pledge” printed in the *Sanctuary: A Discernment Guide for Congregations* produced by the Office of Public Witness, PC(USA), in June 2017.

As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the current administration’s policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people (*Sanctuary: A Discernment Guide for Congregations*, 4).

#### **Advice and Counsel—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)**

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee advises the 224th General Assembly (2020) to **approve** this item.

The Organization for Mission states “... the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) shall be a prophetic voice for involving people of color in the formation of public policy, particularly where race is a factor that

negatively impacts the quality of life of people of color” (Organization for Mission, VI.1).

True to its mandate, REAC has consistently advocated for all immigrants, but specifically for undocumented immigrants who come to the U.S. and are mainly people of color from the Global South. They come escaping war, political upheaval, murderous gangs, and poverty, all for the most part byproducts of the United States, which over the years has intruded into those countries with either direct military might or covert actions to depose “unfriendly” democratically elected governments. Moreover, U.S. corporations have also added to the situation by engaging in suspect economic dealings that benefited mostly their coffers to the detriment of these countries’ economies. The renowned church historian, Justo González, puts it in this manner: “Indeed, the notion that the North is successful while the South is a failure lies at the root of the struggle of many Hispanics in this country with their own identity. But an economic analysis of the entire situation shows a relation of cause and effect so that our presence in this country is not a sign of the success of the North but rather of its failure, for its mis-developing of the South” (Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective).

Therefore, declaring the Presbyterian Church (USA), a “sanctuary church” will fully show our solidarity with the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and above all, the stranger.

#### **Comment—From the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA)**

The Presbyterian Mission Agency **agrees with the important role that Presbyterian congregations, mid councils, and individuals are playing when they respond to the needs of asylum seekers and vulnerable immigrants through accompaniment and sanctuary.** In the past two years, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has seen a continued expansion of asylum accompaniment in the United States. When we say “accompaniment,” we mean the work of walking alongside an asylum seeker or family as they go through the legal process of seeking asylum. The work of accompaniment can include: legal services, housing, clothing, food, language/interpretation, medical and mental health, education, social/spiritual needs, community activity, job placement related activities, and advocacy.

There are a number of resources developed by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and ecumenical partners including the *Toolkit for Congregations to Faithfully Accompany People Seeking Asylum*. Three PDA grants to mid councils in 2019 were given to support the recruitment and mentoring of church groups and volunteers to engagement in accompaniment. Accompaniment and sanctuary have become more important than ever in order to ensure access to due process, that United States immigration authorities follow United States and International standards for the rights of refugees and migrants. Another helpful resource is the 211th General Assembly (1999) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) resolution on “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors” and related study guide. Although the term “accompaniment” was not used at that time, its call to ministry and justice describe the very essence of accompaniment as it is understood today. PDA is in the process of hiring a staff person to work more closely with mid councils and domestic asylum and refugee ministries, including asylum accompaniment. PDA would welcome the opportunity to organize regional or national networking opportunities to encourage and strengthen accompaniment ministries.

#### **Comment—From the Office of the General Assembly (OGA)**

The Office of the General Assembly, through the Office of Immigration Issues, views this piece of business as an **invitation to congregations and mid councils to consider what relationships and ministries can be nurtured and supported in their own communities.** Should this piece of business become policy this office, with the help of the many denominational ministries whose work intersects with immigration like Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Office of Public Witness, the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations, World

Mission and Racial Equity and Women's Intercultural Ministries, is ready to resource those congregations and mid councils who decide to answer this invitation.

Presbyterians are a part of a rich history of immigration advocacy. The General Assembly, through the church's antecedents, has been making policy in support of immigrants since 1893 when we opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act. As to sanctuary, we have been making statements in support of that ministry for thirty-six years. These sanctuary statements and other resources for sanctuary congregations can be found at [www.pcusa.org/sanctuary](http://www.pcusa.org/sanctuary). Just as sanctuary is an important expression of our faith, so are other forms of accompanying those with immigration issues, such as helping a member prepare for possible detention of deportation with a family care plan or gathering to resist a deportation. If this piece of business becomes policy, congregations and mid councils could be inspired by it to watch and listen to the members of their own communities who are most affected by the country's broken immigration policy and find their place in the struggle to make life better for all of us.

## **Concurrence**

**de Cristo Presbytery**

**Denver Presbytery**

**Plains and Peaks Presbytery**

**[09-14]**      **Commissioners' Resolution: Stop the Separation of Families**  
**Source:**      Commissioners  
**Committee:** [09] Peacemaking, Immigration, and International Issues  
**Profile #:**    [CR-005]  
**Event:**       223rd General Assembly (2018)  
**Sponsor:**    Smith, Bart  
                  Rightmyer, Margaret  
**Type:**        General Assembly Full Consideration

### Action Summary

#### Recommendation

#### Action

On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

Approve as  
Amended (AA)

On this Item, the Peacemaking, Immigration, and International Issues Committee acted as follows:

Approve as  
Amended with  
Comment (CA)

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

#### Approve as Amended

Counted Vote - Committee  
 Affirmative:484  
      Negative:34  
 Abstaining:

#### Final text:

**That the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA):**

1. Call upon the ~~Department of Justice (DOJ)~~ [federal government] to immediately end the newly implemented zero-tolerance policy that is tearing apart families.
2. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible, under the care of the community, not in family detention [ensuring access of attorneys to those in detention].
3. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to make certain that every parent in custody knows the location of their children and facilitate regular communication between parents and their children until they are reunited.
4. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to not use possible reunification with children to force immigrant parents into a concession to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for reuniting with their children.
5. ~~Call upon churches and individuals to advocate for the passage of the Keep Families Together Act in Congress, which would take away the power of the DOJ to continue separating families.~~ [Condemns the President's June 20th Executive Order "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation"]

that further criminalizes migration through the expansion of family detention on military bases and other government property, potentially indefinitely.”]

6. Call upon synods, presbyteries, and individual churches to understand, condemn, and work against the ideology of white supremacy undergirding these racist immigration policies.

7. Remind our denomination of the Gospel call to work for just and humane policies for all immigrant communities, grounded in the principles of family unity, human dignity, and rights.

8. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate the contents of this overture to the President of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as to Jeff Sessions, U.S. Attorney General, and Kirstjen Nielson, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

“[9. Directs the PMA, through the Office of Public witness, to advocate for a policy that ensures family unity and safety for those in the asylum process.]”

“[9.] [10.] Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below:

“• The Genesis of Exodus film and Story Map resources: [www.genesisofexodusfilm.com](http://www.genesisofexodusfilm.com);

“• Family Detention: [www.pcusa.org/familydetention](http://www.pcusa.org/familydetention);

“• Sanctuary, A Discernment Guide for Congregations: [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc\(usa\)\\_opw\\_sanctuary\\_final\\_6.21\\_edit.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc(usa)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf);

“• Resources on Refugees and Asylees <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/refugees/>.

“[11. Urge churches and congregations to connect with, accompany, support, and advocate alongside immigrant-focused organizations that can lead us to be part of the voices working for change and transformation of unjust immigration laws and policies.]”

## Recommendation before the Assembly

Amend 09-14

*Commissioners’ Resolution. On Stopping the Separation of Immigrant Families at the Border and Upholding the Integrity of the U.S. Asylum System.*

That the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA):

1. Call upon the ~~Department of Justice (DOJ)~~ [federal government] to immediately end the newly implemented zero-tolerance policy that is tearing apart families.
2. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible, under the care of the community, not in family detention [ensuring access of attorneys to those in detention].
3. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to make certain that every parent in custody knows the location of their children and facilitate regular communication between parents and their children until they are reunited.
4. Call upon the DOJ [federal government] to not use possible reunification with children to force immigrant parents into a concession to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for reuniting with their children.

5. ~~Call upon churches and individuals to advocate for the passage of the Keep Families Together Act in Congress, which would take away the power of the DOJ to continue separating families. [Condemns the President's June 20th Executive Order "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation" that further criminalizes migration through the expansion of family detention on military bases and other government property, potentially indefinitely.]~~
6. Call upon synods, presbyteries, and individual churches to understand, condemn, and work against the ideology of white supremacy undergirding these racist immigration policies.
7. Remind our denomination of the Gospel call to work for just and humane policies for all immigrant communities, grounded in the principles of family unity, human dignity, and rights.
8. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate the contents of this overture to the President of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as to Jeff Sessions, U.S. Attorney General, and Kirstjen Nielson, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.
9. Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below:
  - The Genesis of Exodus film and Story Map resources: [www.genesisofexodusfilm.com](http://www.genesisofexodusfilm.com);
  - Family Detention: [www.pcusa.org/familydetention](http://www.pcusa.org/familydetention);
  - Sanctuary, A Discernment Guide for Congregations: [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc\(usa\)\\_opw\\_sanctuary\\_final\\_6.21\\_edit.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc(usa)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf);
  - Resources on Refugees and Asylees <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/refugees/>.

## Committee Recommendation

*On this Item, the Peacemaking, Immigration, and International Issues Committee acted as follows:*

### **Approve as Amended with Comment**

The commissioners of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) support and pray for effective humane and swift action to end this atrocity.

Counted Vote - Committee

Affirmative:60

Negative:0

Abstaining:

### **Final text:**

**Amend the recommendation section as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]**

**“That the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA):**

**“[Recommendations 1. through 8. remain unchanged.]**

**“[9. Directs the PMA, through the Office of Public witness, to advocate for a policy that ensures family unity and safety for those in the asylum process.]**

**“[9.] [10.] Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below:**

- “• The Genesis of Exodus film and Story Map resources: [www.genesisofexodusfilm.com](http://www.genesisofexodusfilm.com);**



- “● Family Detention: [www.pcusa.org/familydetention](http://www.pcusa.org/familydetention);
- “● Sanctuary, A Discernment Guide for Congregations: [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc\(usa\)\\_opw\\_sanctuary\\_final\\_6.21\\_edit.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc(usa)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf);
- “● Resources on Refugees and Asylees <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/refugees/>.

**“[11. Urge churches and congregations to connect with, accompany, support, and advocate alongside immigrant-focused organizations that can lead us to be part of the voices working for change and transformation of unjust immigration laws and policies.]”**

## Recommendation

***Commissioners’ Resolution. On Stopping the Separation of Immigrant Families at the Border and Upholding the Integrity of the U.S. Asylum System.***

That the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA):

1. Call upon the Department of Justice (DOJ) to immediately end the newly implemented zero-tolerance policy that is tearing apart families.
2. Call upon the DOJ to reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible, under the care of the community, not in family detention.
3. Call upon the DOJ to make certain that every parent in custody knows the location of their children and facilitate regular communication between parents and their children until they are reunited.
4. Call upon the DOJ to not use possible reunification with children to force immigrant parents into a concession to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for reuniting with their children.
5. Call upon churches and individuals to advocate for the passage of the Keep Families Together Act in Congress, which would take away the power of the DOJ to continue separating families.
6. Call upon synods, presbyteries, and individual churches to understand, condemn, and work against the ideology of white supremacy undergirding these racist immigration policies.
7. Remind our denomination of the Gospel call to work for just and humane policies for all immigrant communities, grounded in the principles of family unity, human dignity, and rights.
8. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate the contents of this overture to the President of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as to Jeff Sessions, U.S. Attorney General, and Kirstjen Nielson, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.
9. Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below:
  - The Genesis of Exodus film and Story Map resources: [www.genesisofexodusfilm.com](http://www.genesisofexodusfilm.com);
  - Family Detention: [www.pcusa.org/familydetention](http://www.pcusa.org/familydetention);
  - Sanctuary, A Discernment Guide for Congregations: [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc\(usa\)\\_opw\\_sanctuary\\_final\\_6.21\\_edit.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc(usa)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf);
  - Resources on Refugees and Asylees <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/>

## Rationale

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) condemns the Department of Justice's inhumane and cruel "zero-tolerance" policy<sup>1</sup> that seeks to prosecute all immigrants crossing the U.S.-México border, regardless of any individual's claim to asylum. In April of 2018, news spread across the country that Customs and Border Protection (a branch of the Department of Homeland Security) was separating migrant families at the border due to the increase in prosecutions of parents of these children. The DOJ, led by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, admitted that these policies would result in the further separation of families, considering this a deterrent to what they consider unlawful entry of migrants. Due to these policies, children as young as twelve months are being torn from their parents and detained even hundreds of miles away from their parents. This includes families who have arrived through an official port of entry and those apprehended outside of one.

From October 2017 to April 2018, approximately 1,358 families have been torn apart at the border, resulting in trauma to parents and children. Reported in the *New York Times*, a Honduran father, Marco Muñoz, committed suicide in jail, after being torn away from his son a day earlier.<sup>2</sup> Another report surfaced that a child was torn away from her mother during breastfeeding. When the mother resisted, she was handcuffed.<sup>3</sup> An employee inside one of the Arizona facilities detaining the separated children reported that officials had told children that their parents were "lost," which the children interpreted to mean dead.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Collen Kraft, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, warned that "fear and stress, particularly prolonged exposure to serious stress without the buffering protection afforded by stable, responsive relationships—known as toxic stress—can harm the developing brain and harm short- and long-term health." She went on to say that she is dismayed by the "sweeping cruelty" of these policies. Indeed, it would appear that child abuse has become an official policy of the United States."<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations human rights office, too, has condemned this practice of family separation, saying it "violates the rights of the child and international law."<sup>6</sup> The United States is the only country that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates that "a child who is considered a refugee ... shall receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance."<sup>7</sup>

Our Scriptures are very clear about our call to welcome the stranger among us: "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev 19:33–34). In Matthew, Jesus tells a parable to his followers emphasizing specific classes of people we should serve as if serving Christ himself. Immigrants are one of those groups. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35c). In fact, the call to care for immigrants is reiterated thirty-seven times throughout the Bible.

The United States has a history of separating brown and black children from their parents. During the era of slavery, enslaved families were frequently torn apart, bought and sold by different slave owners. Most of these families were never able to reunite. In the late 19th century, the U.S. government began to tear native children from their families to forcibly assimilate them into white American culture in Indian Boarding Schools.<sup>8</sup> The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued a call for the denomination to apologize to the descendants of native people who were taken to these boarding schools.<sup>9</sup> The 221st General Assembly (2014) directed agencies of the PC(USA) to bolster the church's commitment to antiracism training and "an understanding of systemic racism, including white privilege, power, and prejudice in relation to race."<sup>10</sup> In recent history, millions of immigrant families have been torn apart through deportation of a family member or members. The 220th General Assembly (2012) called the church to prioritize family unity as part of

The Trump Administration claims to have no choice but to separate children from their “criminal” parents, even though there is nothing in the criminal code that requires either incarceration for a misdemeanor offense or separation of children and their parents. This cruel policy is being implemented even against immigrants who present themselves at official border crossings and legally request asylum. The government has made it clear that it seeks to collectively punish children and parents in order to deter them from seeking asylum and refuge in the U.S. This must not be allowed to stand without a full-throated protest from every corner of the church.

1. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-announces-zero-tolerance-policy-criminal-illegal-entry>
2. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-family-was-separated-at-the-border-and-this-distraught-father-took-his-own-life/2018/06/08/24e40b70-6b5d-11e8-9e38-24e693b38637\\_story.html?](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-family-was-separated-at-the-border-and-this-distraught-father-took-his-own-life/2018/06/08/24e40b70-6b5d-11e8-9e38-24e693b38637_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a8cca7590df2)  
[noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.a8cca7590df2](#)
3. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/12/us/immigration-separated-children-southern-border/index.html>
4. <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-border-migrant-shelter-20180614-story.html>
5. [https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/  
StatementOpposingSeparationofChildrenandParents.aspx](https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/StatementOpposingSeparationofChildrenandParents.aspx)
6. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/world/americas/us-un-migrant-children-families.html>
7. <https://www.ohcr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
8. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/03/opinion/children-border.html>
9. <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2017/2/9/pcusa-leaders-issue-apology-native-americans-alask/>
10. A Resolution to Develop a Churchwide Antiracism Policy—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns).
11. On Advocating for Comprehensive Immigration Reform—From the Presbytery of Santa Fe.  
Bart Smith, Presbytery of de Cristo  
Mardee Rightmyer, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

## Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Comment

*Advice and Council on Item 09-14—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP).*

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises the 223rd General Assembly (2018) to approve Item 09-14 with the following amendments:

“[9. Directs the Presbyterian Mission Agency, through its Office of Public Witness, to advocate for a policy that ensures family unity and safety for those in the asylum process.]”

“[9.] [10.] Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below: [The rest of Recommendation 10 remains unchanged.]

As the resolution points out, Jesus called the children to him. Within the Presbyterian tradition, we have continued the call to bring all of God’s children to the church. The 216th General Assembly (2004) approved the statement “*Transforming Families*,” which points out that family loyalty reflects the covenant that God establishes with God’s people. This covenant is reflected in the vows parents make at baptism, as well as the recognition of the church community that they are called to support both the parents as they raise the child and to support the child as they grow and mature. “We envision a church and society that welcomes and nurtures all persons, regardless of their family circumstances” (*Transforming Families*, p.11). The United States government’s decision to rip children from their parents at the U.S./Mexico border is a direct violation of our call to welcome all persons into our country and our communities.

Further, “We envision a society in which the well-being of every child is nurtured and supported” (*Transforming Families*, p. 11). As the resolution points out, the American Pediatric Association has stated the harm to both child and parent, both immediately and continuing throughout their precious lives. Ripping children from their parents is not supporting and nurturing these children, it is the opposite of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s vision for all children.

The 216th General Assembly (2004) approved a policy on comprehensive immigration reform. The theological grounding reminds us in both the Old and New Testaments that God calls us to welcome the stranger (see Lev. 19:33–34; Deut. 10:18–19; Mt. 25:44–45; and Heb. 13:2). As people present themselves to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the U.S./Mexico border, our faith tradition calls on us to create communities of welcome; not to rip their children from them and then lose track of these children in the system.

### **Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns**

*Advice and Council on Item 09-14—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC).*

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises that the 223rd General Assembly (2018) approve Item 09-14.

This resolution is aligned with the core values of our Christian beliefs and faith in the health and unity of the family in general, and ministry of compassion and hospitality in specific and aligned with ACREC values including

1. advocating for of the most vulnerable among us, the children,
2. condemning and seriously addressing any mistreatment of children.

The question for ACREC is not whether a state has the right to protect its border or not, but the question for us is, biblically speaking, “how we treat the alien and the stranger in our midst.”

### **Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns Comment**

*Advice and Council on Item 09-14—From the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC).*

The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns advises that the 223rd General Assembly (2018) approve Item 09-14.

This commissioners’ resolution clearly articulates the need for the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to act in this moment of crisis occurring daily at our southern border, and the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns affirms the resolution and advises for its approval. The ACWC

believes to not do so would, in essence, be turning our backs on the most vulnerable among us—the women and children being torn asunder as we watch in silence. Let this not be us, we pray.

**Comment from the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA).**

The Office of Public Witness (OPW) is actively engaging with social movements led by undocumented leaders and affected people to win just immigration policy. The OPW is able to provide training and equipping for mobilization and accompaniment, including resources for direct action.

Part of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's (PDA) mandate is to provide relief to refugees and asylum seekers. Over the past week, PDA has begun working with mid councils along the U.S. southern border to financially support organizations providing legal aid and helping parents find their children who have been separated by the Department of Homeland Security. PDA is also working with the Office of Immigration Issues, other denominations and ecumenical partners, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to create a more coordinated advocacy and humanitarian response.

In addition to the resources already mentioned, to understand more about the reality of immigration detention for these separated parents, we refer the committee members to the PDA produced short documentary film *Locked in a Box: Immigration Detention*, <http://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/video-immigration-detention/>.

**[12-12] Commissioners Resolution. On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees.**

**Source:** Commissioners  
**Committee:** [12] Peacemaking and International Issues  
**Prefile #:** [CR-007]  
**Event:** 222nd General Assembly (2016)  
**Sponsor:** No Assignment  
**Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

### Action Summary

#### Recommendation

On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

#### Action

Approve as  
Amended (AA)

On this Item, the Peacemaking and International Issues Committee acted as follows:

Approve as  
Amended (CA)

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

### Approve as Amended

[action via Agenda: Wednesday Consent Agenda]

Consensus

### Final text:

**Amend Recommendation 2. as follows:** [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

"2. [ ~~We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental principals and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome refugees, and of our particular concern for refugees from Syria and Central America at this moment in time.~~] [We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental principles and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome all refugees. At this moment in time, our particular concern is for refugees from Syria, Central America, and conflict zones in Africa.]"

## Committee Recommendation

On this Item, the Peacemaking and International Issues Committee acted as follows:

#### Approve as Amended

Counted Vote - Committee  
Affirmative:47  
Negative:0  
Abstaining:

#### Final text:

Amend Recommendation 2. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

"2. [ ~~We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental principals and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome refugees, and of our particular concern for refugees from Syria and Central America at this moment in time.~~] [We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental principles and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome all refugees. At this moment in time, our particular concern is for refugees from Syria, Central America, and conflict zones in Africa.]"

## Recommendation

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses our deep concern for the well-being of the refugee children, families and all migrants currently arriving at our borders, as well as those struggling to live within our borders. In response to the increased numbers of people around the world who are being forced to leave their home countries, and the simultaneous increase in punitive enforcement in many receiving countries, we affirm the following principles to guide and inspire our efforts to respond:

- **Compassionate Response:** We care deeply about these refugee children, families, and all migrants, and we urge our countries to have open arms to protect them and preserve their human dignity. We reject detention of migrants as a violation of human rights and dignity.
- **Due Process:** We advocate for fair and timely legal proceedings, competent legal representation, and due process for children, asylum seekers, and all migrants.
- **Family Unity:** We uphold and respect the unity of families as a basic human right.
- **Restorative Justice:** We desire revitalization and healing of our borderlands, not militarization. The only long-term solution is a holistic approach that prioritizes safety and opportunity for these migrants and addresses root causes.
- **Civil Initiative:** As long as our governments are not adequately addressing these humanitarian crises, citizens have the right and responsibility to respond with an approach that follows the mandate to provide sanctuary when needed and, above all, to love our neighbors.

Based on these principles, the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approves the following:

1. We covenant to work together for just and humane response to all migrants, both at our borders and within our countries.

2. **We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental principals and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome refugees, and of our particular concern for refugees from Syria and Central America at this moment in time.**
3. **We call on the Stated Clerk to share these principles with ecumenical and interfaith partners and to actively seek opportunities for collaboration with those partners.**
4. **We direct the Stated Clerk to work with the grassroots movement of Presbyterians who are working on these matters to interpret this opportunity for ministry through our mid councils.**

## Rationale

Over the last several months, there has been a group of colleagues from Germany, the NY Metro, and the U.S./Mexico border who have been meeting monthly by conference call to discuss common concerns around refugee support and sanctuary. This group has actually met in person twice since 2009, first with a visit by the Germans to the Arizona/Mexico borderlands and the New York Metro area that took place about seven years ago, followed by a visit to Germany by U.S. church workers a few years later.

Given the current crisis for Syrian refugees in Europe and Central American children and youth fleeing the economic desperation and gang violence in their home countries, this group has extended an urgent call to faith-based organizations to affirm these basic principles of sanctuary in responding to the needs of refugees and displaced persons. Below is the full-text of their statement.

From the Borders of Europe to the U.S.A.:

Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation of Displacement

*June 2016*

We, religious leaders and humanitarian groups from the European Union and the United States, who have practiced migrant and refugee hospitality for decades, express our deep concern for the well-being of the refugee children, families and all migrants currently arriving at the borders of Europe and the United States, as well as those struggling to live within our borders. In response to the increased numbers of people around the world who are being forced to leave their home countries, and the simultaneous increase in punitive enforcement in many receiving countries, our communities are working hard to support those in need with basic survival aid. But what is needed goes far beyond aid. What we desire is justice based on a recognition of the fundamental unity and interdependence of the human family.

Both in Europe and in the southern United States, the root causes of these migration trends include the economic and political priorities of the Global North. The wars, economic upheaval, and climate disasters befalling peoples of the Global South are more often than not driven by decisions and policies set in motion by the wealthiest nations in the world. As residents of these wealthy nations, our efforts to aid these migrants are carried out in recognition of this reality — in recognition of our role in their suffering — and in service of the “web of interdependence” which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of. We know that our ability to live truly dignified lives is bound up in their ability to do the same.

In an ideal situation, it is the responsibility of our governments to respond to these needs — and some governmental response has indeed taken place. The recent attention on the plight of refugee children and families arriving at the borders of Europe and the Mediterranean has spurred interest and compassion across the world. This spotlight on the European refugee crisis is similar to that of the Central American refugee crisis that received attention in the summer of 2014. Unfortunately, when the immediate flurry of attention wanes, we have seen how policymakers use such crises to promote fear-based strategies to detain and deter



migrants, and to further the militarization of our border regions. At the grassroots, this is a tragedy. At the grassroots, we need living compassion much longer than the press interest lasts. These transit and migration points into Europe and the US have been, and undoubtedly will continue to be, protracted humanitarian crises as long as the strategy of deterrence prevails with a border enforcement-only approach. We yearn for a new, restorative and compassionate response to these global humanitarian crises of mass displacement — and it is toward this vision that we continue to act on a day-to-day basis.

We are clergy, academics and leaders of faith-based organizations who have worked in Europe and the United States to protect refugee children, families and all migrants, and to defend their human rights. We have been in relationship with one another for three decades since declaring sanctuary for refugees threatened with deportation from the U.S. and Germany. We have exchanged delegations to witness the work being done by faith-based organizations on the Southwest border of the U.S. and in Malta, Germany and Italy. Now we join together because of the common crises of alarmingly increased numbers of people being forced by war and economic upheaval to flee the Middle East and Africa, and the equally alarming increased numbers of people fleeing drug wars, poverty, and gang violence in Central America and Mexico. We join in solidarity with these migrants and with one another in faith, to uphold the human rights of all and the mandates of our faiths.

The following **principles** (further elaborated below) unite and embolden us to work together toward these ends at the borders of the US and Europe:

- **Compassionate Response:** We care deeply about these refugee children, families and all migrants, and we urge our countries to have open arms to protect them and preserve their human dignity. We reject detention of migrants as a violation of human rights and dignity.
- **Due Process:** We advocate for fair and timely legal proceedings, competent legal representation, and due process for children, asylum seekers, and all migrants.
- **Family Unity:** We uphold and respect the unity of families as a basic human right.
- **Restorative Justice:** We desire revitalization and healing of our borderlands, not militarization. The only long-term solution is a holistic approach that prioritizes safety and opportunity for these migrants and addresses root causes.
- **Civil Initiative:** As long as our governments are not adequately addressing these humanitarian crises, citizens have the right and responsibility to respond with an approach that follows the mandate to provide sanctuary when needed and, above all, to love our neighbours.

Based on these principles, we covenant with one another to work together for just and humane response to all migrants both at our borders and within our countries.

We ask our allies and supporters across Europe, the United States, and beyond to join us in this covenant, and in insisting that the above policies and principles serve as the basis for all countries receiving migrants in response to the current and ongoing international humanitarian and refugee crisis.

### ***Church in Asylum, Germany***

### ***No More Deaths, Arizona***

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### **What these principles mean to us:**

**Compassionate Response:** We care deeply about these refugee children, families and all migrants, and we urge our countries to have open arms to protect them and preserve their human dignity. We reject detention of migrants as a violation of human rights and dignity. Entering a country without documentation is not a crime if a refugee asks for asylum — the seeking of asylum should not be criminalized, and refugees should never be detained in prison-like conditions. In the US we oppose the proliferation of immigration detention centers maintained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and private prison

corporations to hold captive immigrant men, women, and children. These detention centers are filled through national legislation mandating that 34,000 detention beds be filled at all times. This legislation creates demand for the policing and criminalization of immigrants for corporate profit. The results are devastating as detained individuals are often held far from family and face frequent transfers, impossibly high bonds, a lack of legal resources, and deportation. We are especially concerned by the re-opening of family detention centres, proven to be harmful to the well-being of children and families, and we urge collaboration with community-based centres for shelter. In Europe, some refugees have to stay in detention camps (for example Malta, Poland, Hungary), and others can live in refugee-houses or private homes. The rising numbers of refugees in more and more countries in Europe tend to move to a more restrictive policy against refugees, which leaves us very concerned. Flight is not a crime; refugees should not be detained. This principle stems from the belief that every person who arrives at the borders of Europe and the US has unique and sacred dignity, which is not bestowed by governments or by laws or based upon their wealth or where they or their parents happen to be born.

**Due Process: We advocate for fair and timely legal proceedings, competent legal representation, and due process for children, asylum seekers, and all migrants.**

Since the outpouring of support for the Central American and Mexican minors who arrived at the US–Mexico border in the summer of 2013, US Department of Homeland Security has introduced practices designed to expedite mass deportations that offend fundamental principles of due process and endanger mothers and children fleeing extreme violence, according to the CARA Project and Human Rights First.<sup>1</sup> Violations of due process and unreasonable delays in legal proceedings are also rampant in ICE and privately run detention centers throughout the United States.<sup>2</sup> In Europe more and more countries are defined as “sichere Herkunftsländer (ie. safe countries) — including Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, Mazedonia — which means that refugees from there have the most restricted means to apply elsewhere for asylum and almost no chance for acceptance. In Germany there are discussions at the moment to declare Afghanistan a “safe country” — though currently 50% of all Afghani applicants to Germany are accepted for asylum under the Geneva Conventions — because the German government asserts that in some regions of Afghanistan, like Kundus, people are able to live peacefully. This is also happening with several countries in North Africa. In the US, we are also concerned with the due process of enforcement mechanisms such as the criminal prosecutions carried out by Operation Streamline. In Europe, more and more countries are implementing the policy of closing borders, even though it is arguably against EU policy. The EU Commission should challenge those countries, but because it is not seen as a “normal” situation, and because of the prevailing ‘culture of intolerance’ such actions are condoned. With the trauma that many of the migrants carry and their confusion about the immigration system, they should not have to defend themselves against a system stacked against them. We insist that the principles of due process and legal representation be upheld for these refugee families. We believe the justice system and the immigration system should not be used to criminalize or punish people who have had to migrate to feed, protect or re-join their families, or be used to expedite their removal.

**Family Unity: We uphold and respect the unity of families as a basic human right.** Many of the children and other migrants arriving at our borders, whether or not they have asylum or protection claims, are trying to unite with their parents or family members. We support this process for traditional nuclear families as well as non-traditional family units. In the US, we oppose the record number of deportations under the Obama Administration, and in Europe we are concerned about the practice of granting humanitarian status, a lower status which does not come with the right to family reunification. We oppose excessive time restrictions on reunification, and practices that link this right to costly monetary fees. We call for immigration policies that promote family unity and prioritize reunification. When families are travelling together, everything must be done to keep them together. We believe people have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families and that they should not have to choose between supporting their family and being with their family.

**Restorative Justice: We desire revitalization and healing of our borderlands, not militarization.** The

residents, indigenous peoples, historical sites and wildlife of our borderlands feel the heavy impact of the migrations funnelled through them and the concentrated enforcement apparatus. We desire healing for all these communities and eco-systems. The plight of these vulnerable should not be used as an excuse to further promote fear of migrants and to militarize our borders. We believe that respect for basic human dignity, human and civil rights, as well as the restoration of environmental protections of public lands, must be prioritized. To achieve this, we must pursue more effective international cooperation. In Europe, the so-called “Dublin System” places the heaviest burden on the countries at the southern borders of Europe. In the southern US, it is the US-Mexico border that bears the burden of the migration from many Central American countries. We envision a system where every country is sharing equal responsibility, regardless of their proximity to the border. We suggest that refugees be registered near the countries from which they have to flee, and then be allowed to enter countries which will process their applications through safe corridors. Countries can decide about the number of refugees they will accept through this system. In Europe, those who are given a refugee status should be allowed to move freely within the EU and to choose the country in which they want to live. In the US, this vision implies cooperation between Canada, the US and Mexico. Refugees must take precedence — this will prevent family separation and deaths. The only long-term solution is a holistic approach that prioritizes safety and opportunity for these migrants and addresses root causes.

**Civil Initiative: As long as our governments are not adequately addressing these humanitarian crises, citizens have the right and responsibility to respond with an approach that follows the mandate to provide sanctuary when needed and, above all, to love our neighbours.** While the specific ways we extend support will vary, we are united in our commitment to respond. We seek to understand and educate others on the root causes of migration. We mourn with the families whose loved ones have perished in the Arizona desert and Mediterranean sea or other land borders. We recognize that a border-enforcement approach to the refugee children and families and the ongoing humanitarian crises will lead to more deaths, violence, human rights abuses and human trafficking already faced by vulnerable migrant populations. We urge the creation of transparent independent oversight groups to review customs and immigration officers’ practices and investigate allegations of abuse. We hold the belief that building just relationships with our neighbours should guide our efforts as a community to respond.

#### Endnotes

1. <http://immigrationimpact.com/2016/01/11/asylum-seekers-due-process/>.
2. <http://harvardcrcl.org/detained-without-due-process-is-indefinite-immigration-detention-unconstitutional/>.

Karen Turney, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

Elizabeth Shannon, Presbytery of Tampa Bay

## Other Comments

### ACREC Advice and Counsel

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approve Item 12-12 with comment.

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns agrees with the rationale commissioners provided with this resolution.

This resolution is similar to the Item 09-06 from the Presbytery of New York City that the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advised approval.

The growing number of armed conflicts in different parts of the world is generating an incredible number of refugees and displaced people. This is a global problem that needs to be addressed globally. We have to be

part of the solution, and our church needs to develop strategies and alliances with other churches promoting collaboration to find solutions for short- and long-terms. The ACREC advises approval of this resolution.

### ACSWP Advice and Counsel

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that Item 12-12 be approved with the following amendment to the Recommendation 2: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

“2. We direct the Stated Clerk to notify the President of the United States, the office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Homeland Security of our commitment to these fundamental [~~principals~~] [principles] and our commitment as a church to support efforts to welcome refugees, and of our particular concern for refugees from Syria[,] [~~and~~] Central America[, and conflict zones in Africa] at this moment in time.”

Item 12-12 builds upon the support of previous General Assemblies for welcoming the stranger, and for revising U.S. immigration policy. The 202nd General Assembly (1990), for instance, reaffirmed

the following principles, which are part of past General Assembly actions, as the basis for evaluating the [Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986] IRCA and advocating changes in U.S. immigration policy. Any immigration policy must:

- (1) provide for the human needs of refugees and immigrants;
- (2) assure non-discriminatory humanitarian aid and application of laws and policies;
- (3) uphold full constitutional and civil rights for refugees and immigrants as well as U.S. citizens;
- (4) protect the lives of persons;
- (5) give special consideration to the needs of women, children, individuals with special needs, and the unification of families;
- (6) insure provision of adequate resources, as needed, to communities in order to reduce possibilities of conflict between immigrant groups and racial/ethnic U.S. citizens; and
- (7) combat vigorously any expression of racism either in policies or the implementation of them.<sup>1</sup>

Item 12-12 is in general terms consistent with the “Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States” as approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004), and with the policy document “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors” approved by the by the 211th General Assembly (1999).

Item 12-12 complements Item 09-06, “On Responding to Our Sisters and Brothers Who Are Refugees or Internally Displaced.”

In Item 12-12, Recommendation 2, ACSWP adds the wording “and conflict zones in Africa” to recognize humanitarian crises such as that in Sudan, not least as reported by our PC(USA) mission co-workers.

The ACSWP also notes that there is significant overlap between Item 12-12 and Item 12-11, and offers support resource should the committee wish to consider combining the two resolutions.

### Endnote

1. 1990 PC(USA) Statement in *Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2000), 58. See also, *Minutes*, 1990, Part I, p. 520.

**ACWC Advice and Counsel**

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns advises that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approve Item 12-12.

The ACWC is in support of Item 12-12. Jesus commanded the church in John 21:17 to "feed my sheep." He also told us in Mark 12:33 that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Part of fulfilling these commands of Christ entails advocating for our current structures of government to uphold and respect the human rights of all people; which includes our migrant populations. Many displaced persons and refugees across the world currently struggle to keep their families together; whether these families are traditional nuclear families or nontraditional family units. There are laws as well as an absence of particular laws within the U.S. and abroad that blatantly disregard the basic human rights of displaced persons and refugees in countless ways.

The ACWC is also concerned about how the current methods by which we are addressing these humanitarian crisis' are allowing for greater abuses to take place within migrant communities. The way we are currently responding to the massive influx of displaced persons and refugees is leading to more deaths, violence, human rights abuses, and human trafficking already faced by vulnerable migrant populations. It is the call of the church to uphold the humanity of all people, especially those who are most vulnerable.

**COGA Comment**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly advises approval of Item 12-12.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly consists of fifteen elected members. Its responsibilities include supporting and reviewing the work of the Office of the General Assembly, including the Office of Immigration Issues.

Item 12-12 is consistent with the PC(USA)'s long history of extending welcome to the stranger, including the "We Choose Welcome" initiative of the Stated Clerk over the past year. This item usefully reinforces those existing policies, as well as the church's position that the right of sanctuary is encompassed by the rights set forth in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. In a time when different states are taking contradictory views of such a right, reaffirming the position of the PC(USA) as to this fundamental right is vital.

DRAFT

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Anti-Harassment Policy

It is the Presbytery of Lake Michigan's belief that God has created all people in God's own image and thus has made us equal in Christ (Genesis 1:26). The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is given shape and life and is meant to reflect our relationship to one another and to God. We firmly believe that God intends all human life to have worth and dignity in all relationships. Through these relationships, we are bound to serve and respect the dignity of every human being (F-1.0301). This respect and dignity afforded to all of God's creation is through the creation and maintenance of a safe environment within our community, free of harassment.

This policy applies to members, staff, officers, and volunteers within the bounds of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. The Presbytery, in conjunction with existing policies and procedures and in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination and harassment laws and regulations, enforces this policy, as stated, in accordance with the following definitions and guidelines.

- **Verbal Harassment:** Verbal harassment is harassment established by a pattern of conduct of unwelcome or unwanted spoken or written comments. Those comments can include, without limitation, insults, jokes, slurs, false and misleading information and threats. This could also include and is not limited to stereotyping based on a person's nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance.
- **Nonverbal Harassment:** Nonverbal Harassment includes, without limitations, distribution, display, or discussion of any graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, or belittles. This may also include and is not limited to a show of hostility, aversion, or disrespect toward an individual or group because of nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance. <sup>1</sup>
- **Both Verbal and Nonverbal Harassment** include, without limitation, persistent unwanted contact (verbal or nonverbal), bullying, intimidation, and interference in the ministry of the church or organization.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual Harassment is the behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and/or inappropriate sexual remarks, physical advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature.<sup>2</sup>Sexual

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/harassment>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Sexual Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>

harassment may take many different forms including, but not limited to, verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment. More information about this can be found in the Presbytery's Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct.

- **Electronic Harassment:** Electronic Harassment is the use of electronic communication to harass a targeted person or group, including, but not limited to, emails, blogs, social networking websites, online games, forums, instant messaging, Zoom, and other virtual conferencing modalities, text messaging, and mobile phone pictures and videos. Harassment perpetrated through these online media have come to be known as "cyber bullying."<sup>3</sup>
- **Retaliation:** Retaliation is any hardship, loss of benefit, or penalty imposed on any person in response to filing or responding to a bona fide complaint or discrimination or harassment.<sup>4</sup>

In our efforts to create a church where all persons are treated with respect and dignity the Presbytery of Lake Michigan commits to:

- Provide anti-harassment training for our members, staff, volunteers, officers, and leaders to encourage education, understanding, and growth;
- Acknowledge and thoroughly investigate all allegations of harassment, providing support through the use of Book of Order defined processes.
- Strive to create a Presbytery where harassment of all kinds is not tolerated or accepted, where all people of God are welcome and safe.

## Acknowledgement

Lake Michigan is indebted to Philadelphia Presbytery who overtured the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to amend G-3.0106 to require all councils to adopt a harassment policy. This policy is heavily drawn from the policy the Philadelphia Presbytery approved on April 30, 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Electronic Harassment – Concept Map and Definition. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/electronic-harassment-concept-map-and-definition>

<sup>4</sup> US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Enforcement Guidance on Retaliation and Related Issues. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues>



## Appendix A

### Sample Actions that Describe Harassment

Sample actions of conduct that are prohibited may include, but are not limited to:

- Spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Intimidating a person.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Removing areas of responsibilities without cause.
- Constantly changing work guidelines.
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set-up the individual to fail.
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information.
- Making jokes that are obviously offensive by spoken word or email regardless of intent.
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking.
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload which are unfavorable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure).
- Underwork – creating a feeling of uselessness.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment.
- Unwarranted blocking applications for training, leave or promotion.
- Tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment.
- Using racist slang, phrases, or nicknames.
- Making remarks about an individual's skin color or other ethnic traits.
- Displaying racist drawings, or posters that might be offensive to a particular group.
- Making offensive gestures.
- Making offensive reference to an individual's mental or physical disability.
- Sharing inappropriate images, videos, e-mails, letters, or notes in an offensive nature.
- Offensively talking about negative racial, ethnic, or religious stereotypes.
- Making derogatory age-related comments.
- Wearing clothing that could be offensive to a particular ethnic group.
- Harassing communications can be verbal, written, electronic (e.g., email or text messages), or social media (e.g., X, FB, IG).

## Appendix B

### Steps to Prevent Harassment

#### 1. Create a Safe Environment

**Be vocal.** Let your staff and congregation know you take harassment seriously. Those who work at and attend the church should feel safe if they need to come forward with an accusation of harassment.

**Define policies.** If there aren't policies in place concerning harassment in your church, create them now. The church must be prepared if an allegation surfaces. Provide awareness training. Consider using an appropriate video to enhance discussion.

#### 2. Keep a Safe Environment

**Practice Accountability.** One way to keep your staff accountable is to stay aware of any change in behavior or individuals. Declining performance, increased absences, inability to concentrate and/or changes in work habits could indicate an employee being harassed.

**Check your insurance.** Make sure your church insurance covers employment related claims, such as a harassment claim.

**Address allegation.** When an non-anonymous allegation surfaces, follow the guidelines in the Church Discipline section of the Book of Order.

#### 3. Annual Requirement

**Review during committee orientation.** Each staff member, volunteer, officer, and member of the Presbytery needs to understand how to create a harassment-free environment. An annual review will help us to keep our eyes on the image of God in each other. Also review the guidelines in the Church Discipline section to know how to file an allegation when necessary.

**Be certain to encourage policies in each congregation.** Presbytery representatives should encourage the congregations within their bounds to adopt and annually review a similar policy.



## SEEKING TO BE FAITHFUL TOGETHER: *Guidelines for Presbyterians in Times of Disagreement*

*In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will...*

***Give them a hearing...  
 listen before we answer***

(John 7:51 and Proverbs 18:13)

1. **Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ;**
  - ï we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange,
  - ï we will not ask questions or make statements in a way that will intimidate or judge others.
2. **Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.**
3. **State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.**

***Speak the truth in love***

(Ephesians 4:15)

4. **Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teachings.**
5. **Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;**
  - ï we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during or following the discussion.
6. **Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.**

***Maintain the unity of the  
 spirit in the bond of peace***

(Ephesians 4:3)

7. **Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.**
8. **Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;**
  - ï we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
9. **Follow these additional guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:**
  - ï urge people of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
  - ï seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
  - ï be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
  - ï abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways that are consistent with these Guidelines.
10. **Include our disagreement in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.**



As Presbyterians, we are called to work for the “peace, unity and purity of the Church” (*Book of Order*) as we seek to be faithful to God’s work in the world. However, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as we try to be faithful. They exist within committees, congregations, presbyteries, synods, at General Assemblies and in the national life of the denomination.

Conflicts are inevitable in all of life and certainly in the church. The history of the church is filled with conflicts and disagreements. Several of Paul’s letters address the conflicts that were common in the early church. There have been and are going to be disagreements as Christians attempt to discern God’s work in the world and as we interpret Scripture.

Conflicts can be harmful and even destructive. They can cause individuals a great deal of pain and the community of faith immeasurable damage. Congregations have been divided; denominations have experienced schisms.

At the same time, conflicts can be an opportunity for new insights, learning, and individual and corporate growth. Disagreements can illuminate a topic in helpful ways and can present solutions to problems that previously had not been seen. The successful resolution of conflict can also bind people together in a powerful way.

The Bible contains many stories of conflict and disagreement and much advice about how they can be addressed. As those stories indicate, God is already present wherever there is brokenness, granting wholeness and peace. God promises to be with us in times of disagreement and calls us to reconciliation, trust, love and forgiveness.

We realize that our perspectives are limited, so to help us affirm each other, enhance our community, stay open to the viewpoints of others and be sensitive to cultural diversity, we commit ourselves to the Guidelines in a spirit of prayer, trust and love, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for use by sessions and congregations.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

*for use by sessions and congregations*

### 1. What are the Guidelines and how did they come about?

“Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement” is a response to requests from many Presbyterian congregations that have experienced pain and brokenness resulting from disagreements that were not dealt with in a healthy and productive way. Some of these disagreements were about issues important in our national life (e.g., abortion and human sexuality), while some of them were about matters dealing with the life of the congregation (e.g., should we start a building campaign?).

Every congregation has conflicts. They will either be occasions for divisiveness and harm, or they will provide opportunities for growing and learning. The Guidelines may help congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) use conflict in a creative and productive way.

The 204th General Assembly (1992) adopted the Guidelines for its own life and provided this tool to congregations and the other bodies of the Presbyterian Church to help them deal with the inevitable conflicts and disagreements that occur.



## **2. What is the biblical basis for the Guidelines?**

The Bible contains many stories of conflict and offers a great deal of guidance for dealing with disagreements. It is also rich in its description of God's peace-giving and reconciling work.

- ï God, through Jesus Christ is reconciling the world and gives us the ministry of reconciliation. (II Corinthians 5:17–20)
- ï We are one body. (I Corinthians 10:7)
- ï We are called to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)
- ï Make peace with your sibling when you have a conflict. (Matthew 5:23–24)
- ï Bless those who persecute you; live in harmony with one another. (Romans 12:14–16)
- ï Be kind to one another and forgive one another. (Ephesians 4:13–16)
- ï Listen carefully before you speak. (Proverbs 18:13)
- ï Speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:13–16)
- ï Work for consensus. (Acts 15:1–31)

## **3. Why should your session and congregation agree to use the Guidelines?**

Conflicts and disagreements occur in congregations. Where there are people who care deeply, there is bound to be conflict.

The Guidelines offer clear, simple suggestions for dealing with differences, so they become occasions for growing in grace and understanding, not times of divisiveness and separation. Though use of the Guidelines cannot prevent conflict from happening, they might help develop an open, helpful climate where differences are dealt with productively.

## **4. What are some suggested steps for considering the use of the Guidelines in your congregation?**

- ï Leadership: Ask a committee of session or several elders to lead the session in a study of the Guidelines.
- ï Bible Study: Suggest that an adult church school class or Bible study group study the biblical insights on conflict and what to do about it. It would also be useful if the session would have their own similar study.
- ï Skill-Building Sessions: If the session has not recently used a portion of their meetings for learning skills for dealing with conflict, consider using and adapting this resource. Also consider using this resource in your adult education program.
- ï Study the Guidelines: Ask the session to study the Guidelines by examining each one of them. The session might ask these questions about each Guideline:
  - ï How might the use of this Guideline help create a healthy atmosphere for dealing with conflict?
  - ï How might the use of this Guideline help deal with an existing conflict?
  - ï Would you like to change this Guideline or remove it from the list?
- ï Vote on the Guidelines: The session might vote to use the Guidelines in its own life and to encourage and help members of the congregation make use of them. The session might also wish to overture the presbytery to agree to use the Guidelines for its life together. Ask a committee of the session to help the session and the congregation make use of the Guidelines.
- ï Report to the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program: Please inform the Peacemaking Program when your session agrees to use the Guidelines, about your experience with them, and other efforts to deal with conflict and disagreement.



## 5. How can our session actually use the Guidelines?

Once your session has agreed to use the Guidelines, there are several ways to use them:

- ï Encourage all members of the session to take responsibility for using the Guidelines during the meeting.
- ï Urge session members to use the Guidelines and remind others to use them during informal conversations in the congregation.
- ï Read a simple prayer together prior to the start of the session meeting that asks God's help in dealing with conflict effectively.

### *One possible prayer:*

Gracious and Loving God, you have called us together to do the work of your church. Be present with us during this meeting, guide us that we may make decisions that will reflect your loving presence in this world. Create within us open minds and hearts, that we will not fear conflict or run from it, but embrace it, knowing that it is an opportunity for growing in faith and a fuller understanding of your will for us. Help us to listen to each other, share our thoughts in loving, honest ways and do all we can to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

- ï Pray before voting on a matter that has created significant disagreement, reminding all present that some will be happy about the decision and some will be disappointed.
- ï Use the Guidelines in ways that encourage open candid discussion. Discourage using the Guidelines in ways that would stifle the airing of disagreements and impede session members from sharing their opinions.
- ï Display the Guidelines in the rooms where the session and other committees meet.
- ï Review and evaluate the session's use of the Guidelines each year. Help each new class of the session understand the Guidelines and their use.

## 6. How can the Guidelines be used in our congregation?

- ï Reproduce the first page of this form and include it in a Sunday bulletin or in your congregation's newsletter in an effort to give copies to as many members as possible.
- ï Display the Guidelines on several of your church's bulletin boards.
- ï Present the Guidelines to the committees of session, the choir and groups within the church of all ages.
- ï Invite members of these groups and other leaders in your congregation to a training session on the Guidelines. Include training on the Guidelines in new member classes and elder and deacon training.
- ï Ask the worship leadership team to find ways that the Guidelines might be emphasized in worship.
- ï At a congregational meeting, ask the congregation to decide if they will use the Guidelines.
- ï If a congregation votes to use the Guidelines, consider having an evaluation annually at a congregational meeting on how effectively the congregation has used them. This evaluation might produce suggestions for using them better.

Order or download this resource at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com)



Presbyterian Mission  
**Presbyterian  
Peacemaking Program**



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) | 100 Witherspoon St. | Louisville, KY 40202 | 800-728-7228, ext. 5805  
[pcusa.org/peacemaking](http://pcusa.org/peacemaking)

# STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



Life Together in the Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Integrated Version □ References and Examples

# **Professional Code of Ethics**

Approved by the  
210th General Assembly (1998)  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed by  
The Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics

Published by  
The Office of the General Assembly  
100 Witherspoon Street  
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September 1, 1998

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you may be aware, the 210th General Assembly (1998) approved a report submitted by the Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics. The report, as approved, is titled "Life Together in the Community of Faith:

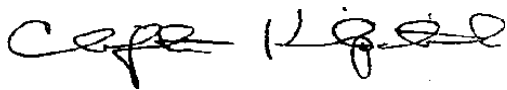
- A. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- B. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- C. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);"

The General Assembly took several actions to implement the use of "Life Together in the Community of Faith." Though it was not the first action taken, the action that is perhaps of the most interest to you is that the General Assembly commended the Standards, as a model, to presbyteries and synods for study, approval, and inclusion in manuals of operations, and to congregations, as a model, for study, approval, and use with sessions, new member classes, adult education classes, personnel committees, and in contracts. In addition, the General Assembly commended the Standards to seminaries for inclusion in curricula. The General Assembly approved A and B as Standards of Ethical Conduct for those serving in General Assembly entities and instructed those entities to include the Standards in personnel policies.

To make the report available to governing bodies and the seminaries, I have been instructed to publish and distribute the full report, including references and examples. I am pleased to put this important report in your hands. Some may ask why we need "Life Together in the Community of Faith." After all, we have the Bible, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. However, the 207th General Assembly (1995) recognized there were a number of different perspectives from which the issue of misconduct might be viewed. The committee was given the task of providing a resource that can help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prevent harm to individuals and the community of faith and provide an example of ethical conduct to the world.

I hope that in your session, presbytery, synod, or seminary faculty, the study of this report and implementation of the standards it upholds will be an enriching experience and will help produce a life together that reflects the shalom that God intends for us.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clifton Kirkpatrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Clifton" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kirkpatrick".

Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore I will:**

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

**II**

**I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore I will:**

1. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due and observe copyrights;
9. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and
10. Accept the discipline of the church.

**III**

**I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:**

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for sisters and brothers in Christ;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore I will:**

1. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
2. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
3. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
4. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
5. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

**II**

**I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
2. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
4. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
5. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
6. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
7. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
8. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
9. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position, speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable;
12. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
13. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
14. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

**II**

**I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;

11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- \*\*15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
- \*\*16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- \*\*17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

### **III**

#### **I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:**

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

\*\* These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

## IV. INTEGRATED VERSION □ REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES\*

### LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH: STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our *Confessions*, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

#### References

*Ordination vows* □ *G-14.0405b* [ministers]; *G-14.0207* [elders and deacons]:

- “(1) Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- “(2) Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
- “(3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- “(4) Will you be a minister of the Word and Sacrament [elders and deacons: Will you fulfill your office] in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions?
- “(5) Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
- “(6) Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- “(7) Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
- “(8) Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?”

*Ordination vows* □ *G-14.0405b(9)* [ministers]

- “(9) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith, and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

*Ordination vows* □ *G-14.0207* [elders and deacons]:

- “i. (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?
- “j. (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

*Jesus Christ as pattern for my life and ministry*

*Matthew 20:26–28*: “. . . whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” See also *G-6.0101*.

*Philippians 2: 1–5*: “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” See also *1 Peter 1:15–16*.

*C-9:24 (The Confession of 1967):* “The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death.”

*G-14.0103:* “The purpose and pattern of leadership in the church in all its forms of ministry shall be understood not in terms of power but of service, after the manner of the servant ministry of Jesus Christ.”

#### *Relying on God’s grace*

*C-9.22–23 (The Confession of 1967):* “The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand, except God’s grace.

“The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.”

#### *Commit myself to the following ethical standards*

*1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1:* “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

*Philippians 1:27:* “. . . live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ”

*James 1:22:* “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

*James 3:1:* “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

*C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession):*

“SYNODS. Nevertheless, there ought to be proper discipline among ministers. In synods the doctrine and life of ministers is to be carefully examined. Offenders who can be cured are to be rebuked by the elders and restored to the right way, and if they are incurable, they are to be deposed, and like wolves driven away from the flock of the Lord by the true shepherds.”

*G-2.0200:* “These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nonetheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed. The church is prepared to counsel with or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions. ”

## **I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry.**

### **References**

*Titus 2:7–8:* “Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.”

*Hebrew 13:7:* “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

*C-4.032 (Heidelberg Catechism):*

**“Q. 32. But why are you called a Christian?”**

“A. Because through faith I share in Christ and thus in his anointing, so that I may confess his name, offer myself a living sacrifice of gratitude to him, and fight against sin and the devil with a free and good conscience.”

*G-6.0106a:* “To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.”

*G-6.0202a:* “..... When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice .....



G-6.0303: "Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world. (G-6.0106)"

G-6.0401: "The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office."

### **Therefore I will:**

#### **I.1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:8*: "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

*Acts 2:42*: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

*Romans 12:11–13*: "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers."

*Ephesians 6:18*: "Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints."

*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

*C-5.164 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: "But in order that the minister may perform all these things better and more easily, it is especially required of him that he fear God, be constant in prayer, attend to spiritual reading, and in all things and at all times be watchful, and by a purity of life to let his light to shine before all men."

*W-2.2004*: "... Those responsible for teaching and preaching the Word have a special responsibility to ensure that in their personal worship they observe a discipline of reading from the fullness of Scripture."

*W-2.2007*: ".....Preaching requires diligence and discernment in the study of Scripture, the discipline of daily prayer, cultivated sensitivity to events and issues affecting the lives of the people, and a consistent and personal obedience to Jesus Christ."

*W-5.1004*: "The life of a Christian is empowered by grace, is expressed in obedience, and is shaped by discipline. God has given as means of grace the elements of worship to be used by households and by individuals as well as by congregations."

*W-5.2001*: "Daily personal worship is a discipline for attending to God and accepting God's grace. The daily challenge of discipleship requires the daily nurture of worship. Daily personal worship may occur in a gathered community of faith (W-1.1006; W-1.3012; W-3.4000), in households and families (W-5.7000), or in private. Scripture, prayer, self-offering, and commitments to service are elements of daily personal worship. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are by their nature communal, but preparing for and remembering these Sacraments are important in daily personal worship. An aspect of the discipline of daily personal worship is finding the times and places where one can focus on God's presence, hear God's Word, and respond to God's grace in prayer, self-offering, and commitment to service."

*W-5.5004–.5005*: "Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God's gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God's self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ's call to minister to and share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship. (W-1.3030; W-2.500)

"Those who follow the discipline of Christian stewardship will find themselves called to lives of simplicity, generosity, honesty, hospitality, compassion, receptivity, and concern for the earth and God's creatures. (W-7.500)"

*W-6.2006*: "The primary standard and resource for the nurture of the church is the Word of God in Scripture. The central occasion for nurture in the church is the Service for the Lord's Day, when the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. All members of the community, from oldest to youngest, are encouraged to be present and to participate. "

#### *Examples*

- *An elder always takes his ten-year-old daughter to Sunday School and returns home to read the Sunday paper and drink a cup of coffee*

- *A minister becomes so wrapped up in church responsibilities that she drops her daily personal time for prayer and study.*
- + *A deacon who teaches the high school Sunday School class leads the class in establishing a recycling program.*
- + *When an elder's son asks why they say prayers every night before they go to sleep, she explains why Christians pray and the variety of prayers she says each day.*

## **I.2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;**

### **References**

*Exodus 20:16:* "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

*Ephesians 4:15:* "...speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"

*Ephesians 4:25:* "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another."

*Colossians 3:9-10:* "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."

*G-1.0304:* "That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior's rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it."

### *Examples*

- *When a conflict arises in a church, the minister tells only partial truths and withholds some of the relevant facts to avoid taking appropriate responsibility for his actions.*
- *An elder with access to the church's tax exempt identification number uses it for his personal benefit.*
- + *A minister puts the wrong date in publicity for a church-wide dinner. Instead of blaming the error on the church secretary, she accepts responsibility for her mistake.*
- + *A deacon discovers an error in his favor on his bill at the hardware store and returns to the store to correct the mistake.*

## **I.3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;**

### **References**

*Genesis 21:22-34:* Story of the covenant of Abraham with Abimelech.

*Exodus 20:14:* "You shall not commit adultery."

*Exodus 20:17:* "... you shall not covet your neighbor's wife"

*Matthew 19:4-6:* "He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'"

*Hebrews 13:4:* "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."

*C-6.123 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* [Re: keeping covenants]

"An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt: nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels."

*C-6.131 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* “Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man and one woman enter, cherishing a mutual esteem and love, bearing with each other’s infirmities and weaknesses, comforting each other in trouble, providing in honesty and industry for each other and for their household, praying for each other, and living together the length of their days as heirs of the grace of life.” See also *G-6.0106b*.

*C-9.47 (Confession of 1967):* “. . . Man’s perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means for birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the household of God, is called to lead men out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, each person has joy in and respect for his own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by man when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.”

*G-6.0106b:* “Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

[An amendment is before the presbyteries that would revise the language of this section. This reference will reflect the current constitutional language.]

#### *Examples*

- *A minister regularly promises to do more than is humanly possible, undercutting the credibility of the office and leading people to see her interest in them as shallow and short-lived.*
- + *An elder who finds himself attracted to a member of a committee begins marriage counseling with his wife in order to strengthen his marriage.*
- + *A single minister discusses with her session the need for an office door with a window so that counseling sessions can be confidential yet observed.*
- + *A Stephen Ministries Committee decides to make home visits in teams after one of their Stephen Ministers is met by parishioner wearing a swimming suit.*

#### **I.4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;**

##### **References**

*Exodus 23:9:* “You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”

*Leviticus 19:15:* “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.”

*Matthew 25:37–40:* “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ”

*Mark 12:28–31:* “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ ” See also *Matthew 19:19 and 22:39, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8–9*.

*Acts 10:34–35*: “Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’”

*1 Corinthians 11:19–22*: “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?”

*C-7.232 (Larger Catechism)*:

**“Q.122. What is the sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man?”**

“A. The sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them to do to us.”

*C-8.19–20 (Barmen Declaration)*: “‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.’ (Matt. 20:25, 26)

“The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.”

*C-9.44 (Confession of 1967)*: “God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however, subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith they profess.”

*C-9.46 (Confession of 1967)*: “. . . A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

*G-6.0304*: “It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. Together with the pastor, they should encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equip and renew them for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world, visit and comfort and care for the people, with special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister spends so much time with members whom he particularly enjoys that he neglects pastoral care for the part of the congregation towards whom he feels less affinity.*
- *A session makes decisions favored by more wealthy/active/powerful members of the church at the expense of less noticeable members.*
- + *A minister makes an effort to talk with other members of presbytery with whom she disagrees.*
- + *An elder on the personnel committee meets weekly for coffee with the congregation’s obnoxious custodian to provide moral support during the custodian’s divorce.*

**I.5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:8–10*: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work . . .”

*Exodus 20:12*: “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

*Romans 12:2*: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

*C-9.47* (Confession of 1967): See I.3. above.

### *Examples*

- *A minister becomes so absorbed in local school politics that he stops giving adequate pastoral care and leadership in developing church programs.*
- + *A deacon negotiates with her family to schedule one dinner hour a week organized around Scripture, prayer, and reflection on family life before anyone flees to the Internet.*
- + *A session discusses the balance of responsibilities the minister carries, so that the session understands her work and the demands on her time and attention. The elders covenant to share in the ministry more fully, expanding their understanding of ordination and providing the minister adequate time to have meals with family, engage in regular exercise, participate in a hobby or sport, and maintain a Sabbath.*
- + *A church secretary asks the session for permission to take a church administration course offered by the continuing education department at a local seminary in order to update her skills and get some new ideas.*

## **I.6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;**

### **References**

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 20:1*: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray is not wise.”

*Proverbs 23:29–35*: “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last, it bits like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ‘They struck me,’ you will say, ‘but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.’ ”

*1 Corinthians 3:16–17*: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

*Galatians 5:13–15*: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”

*C-7.251–.252* (*Larger Catechism*):

#### **“Q.141. What are the duties required in the Eighth Commandment?”**

“A. The duties required in the Eighth Commandment are: truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose of those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and a diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor by all just and lawful means to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

#### **“Q.142. What are the sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment?”**

“A. The sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment besides the neglect of duties required, are: theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen; fraudulent dealing; . . . injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; . . . all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise . . . we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.”

G-6.0106a: “Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church.”

cf: *Freedom and Substance Abuse. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993), 2f, (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 762):*

“Three principles guide this exploration of substance abuse.

“(1) God wills wholeness for each person, and wills the healthy interdependence of family and friends, congregation and community; rather than the loneliness and alienation of dependency.

“(2) The use of mind-altering substances is to be judged by their effect on health, creativity, reason, conscience, and respect for self and others.

“(3) Reformed theology calls on believers as individuals, households, congregations, denomination, and participant in society to accept social responsibility for substance dependency and its public consequences.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister continually yells at his inexperienced secretary when she doesn't “read his mind” and do exactly what he thought she should do.*
- *An elder logs onto a sexually explicit web site each night, gradually increasing his time online.*
- + *A minister takes education opportunities to develop supervision skills to foster growth and professionalism in the staff.*
- + *A personnel committee of a session organizes an intervention for an alcoholic minister of music in which members of the committee, family, and choir participate.*

#### **I.7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:16:* “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

*Leviticus 19:16:* “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people . . .”

*Proverbs 20:19:* “A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babblers.”

*2 Timothy 2:16–17:* “Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene . . .”

*James 4:11–12:* “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?”

*1 Peter 2:1:* “Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.”

*C-7.254–.255 (Larger Catechism):* See also *C-4.112 (Heidelberg Catechism).*

#### **“Q. 144. What are the duties required in the Ninth Commandment?”**

“A. The duties required in the Ninth Commandment are: the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors, loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatters, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

#### **“Q. 145. What are the sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment?”**

“A. The sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment are: all prejudicing of the truth, and the good name of our neighbors as well as our own, especially in public judicature; . . . speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling; . . .”

G-1.0304: See I.2. above.

### Examples

- A minister repeats a story about the mayor without checking the facts.
- An elder perpetuates an unverified rumor about misuse of money by the denomination.
- A member yells, swears, and calls the minister names in order to intimidate the minister into a particular action.
- A minister talks negatively about the chair of a committee who won't acquiesce to the minister's wishes.
- + A recently ordained elder attempts to dispel unfounded rumors about the personal life of the moderator of the property committee when a conflict develops over a building renovation.

### I.8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

#### References

*Psalms 51*: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions," et seq.

*Proverbs 28:13*: "No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

*Matthew 18:21–22*: "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy times seven.' "

*Philippians 2:3*: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves." See also *Proverbs 22:4*, *1 Peter 5:5–6*.

*James 1:21*: "Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls."

*James 5:16*: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

*1 John 1:8–9*: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

C-4.088–.089 (*Heidelberg Catechism*): See also C-4.090–.091.

#### **"Q. 88. How many parts are there to the true repentance or conversion of man?"**

"A. Two: the dying of the old self and the birth of the new.

#### **"Q. 89. What is the dying of the old self?"**

"A. Sincere sorrow over our sins and more and more to hate them and to flee from them."

C-7.254–.255 (*Larger Catechism*): See I.7. above.

C-6.086 (*Westminster Confession of Faith*):

"As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof, upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy: so he that scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him."

C-9.21 (*Confession of 1967*):

"The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of mankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to men, moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ."

### Examples

- *A minister threatens to sue whenever she disagrees with the actions of presbytery concerning her behavior in the pastorate and the possible dissolution of her pastoral relationship.*
- *A trustee refuses to acknowledge mistakes, blaming them on the financial secretary.*
- + *A minister organizes a feedback group to assist in his growth and development and help him see past his blind spots.*
- + *A member apologizes for unkind words, mistaken statements, or failure to follow through on task.*

## II

**I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry.**

### References

*Joshua 7:19*: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’ ”

*Psalms 69:5*: “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.”

*I John 1:5–7*: “. . . God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” See also *Ephesians 5:8–12*.

*G-1.0303*: “That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.”

**Therefore I will:**

**II.1. Preach, teach and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;**

### References

*Leviticus 19:15*: See I.4. above.

*2 Samuel 12*: Story of Nathan’s encounter with David, the king regarding Bathsheba, at v. 7: “Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord . . .’ ”

*Jeremiah 26*: “Jeremiah’s Prophecies in the Temple.” See especially vs. 14–15: “But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.” See also *Jeremiah 28*, story of Jeremiah and the yokes of wood and iron.

*Acts 10:34*: See I.4. above. See also *James 2:8–9*.

*Acts, Chapters 24–26*: Story of Paul’s trial in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Caesarea. See especially 26:22–23: “To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

*1 Peter 3:13–18*: “Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good con-



duct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God."

*C-7.269 (Larger Catechism):*

**"Q.159. How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?"**

"A. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the Word are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season, and out of season, plainly, not in the enticing word of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God . . ."

*G-6.0304:* "It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge . . . They should cultivate their ability to teach the Bible and may be authorized to supply places which are without the regular ministry of the Word and Sacrament."

*G-6.0402:* "It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session."

*G-14.0801c:* "When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)–(6) below."

*Examples*

- *A minister fails to address a particular issue from the pulpit even though the text and context warrant it because she knows it will offend a member of the congregation.*
- *A minister does not express his opinion openly regarding local pollution because he pastors a church in a small company town.*
- + *A deacon risks addressing racism and poverty in his affluent Anglo congregation even though he suspects the challenge will not be welcome.*
- + *An elder defends a person under her supervision from racist attacks from the elders's own supervisor.*

**II.2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;**

**References**

*Genesis 38:* Story of Judah and Tamar.

*Genesis 39:* Story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

*Psalms 55:20:* "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me ....."

*Matthew 26:48–49:* "Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him."

*C-4.105:*

**"Q.105. What does God require in the sixth commandment?"**

"A. That I am not to abuse, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor, either with thought, or by word or gesture, much less by deed, whether by myself or through another, but to lay aside all desire for revenge; and that I do not harm myself or willfully expose myself to danger. This is why the authorities are armed with the means to prevent murder."

*G-3.0101b:* "God liberated the people of Israel from oppression; God covenanted with Israel to be their God and they to be God's people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord; God confronted Israel with the responsibilities of this covenant, judging the people for their unfaithfulness while sustaining them by divine grace."

cf: *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993) (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 572), Section II.B.2, Standards of Conduct:*

“Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor’s, counselor’s, officer’s, or supervisor’s responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.”

#### *Examples*

- *A single minister has sexual relationships with a single member of his congregation.*
- *A minister of pastoral care whose primary role is counseling fails to arrange for regular supervision.*
- *A male head of staff begins each staff meeting with a brief devotional period, then transitions into the business of the meeting by telling an off-color joke. The nervous laughter of the staff (both male and female) registers their disapproval of this behavior. The head of staff considers the laughter as reinforcement and refuses to stop the behavior.*
- + *A single minister who desires to date a member of the congregation arranges for spiritual direction and counseling to explore the meaning of that desire.*
- + *A church’s youth director arranges for an adequate number of male and female adult chaperones for every youth trip event.*

### **II.3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;**

#### **References**

*2 Samuel, Chapters 11 and 12:* Story of David and Bathsheba.

*Matthew 20:25–28:* “But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”

*Matthew 23:8, 10–12:* “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students..... Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

*1 Peter 5:1–3:* “Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.”

*C-5.157 (Second Helvetic Confession):*

“THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH. Now, therefore, it is fitting that we also say something about the power and duty of the ministers of the Church. Concerning this power some have argued industriously, and to it have subjected everything on earth, even the greatest things, and they have done so contrary to the commandment of the Lord who has prohibited dominion for his disciples and has highly commended humility (Luke 22:24 ff.; Matt. 18:3 f.; 20:25 ff.) There is, indeed, another power that is pure and absolute, which is called the power of right. According to this power all things in the whole world are subject to Christ, who is Lord of all, as he himself has testified when he said: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ (Matthew 28:18), and again, ‘I am the first and the last, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Hades and Death’ (Rev. 1:18); also, ‘He has the key of David, which opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens’ (Rev. 3:7).”

*C-9.40 (Confession of 1967):* “..... Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition.”

*G-1.0307:* “That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church governing body ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all

their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.”

*G-6.0102*: “One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. The existence of these offices in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. These ordained officers differ from other members in function only.”

*G-11.0403b*: “The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.”

*G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

*W-7.4002*: “Reconciliation: Justice and Peace:

“Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for

- “a. dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- “b. exercising power for the common good,
- “c. supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- “d. working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- “e. welcoming the stranger in the land,
- “f. seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- “g. bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- “h. redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world.”

#### *Examples*

- *A head of staff calls upon others to take assignments without giving time to prepare, changes schedule without warning, does tasks that fall in others’ areas of responsibilities.*
- + *The chair of the nominating committee keeps before the committee and the session the importance of extending opportunities to serve, to be looking for “Who is not here.”*
- + *A minister sees that the new chair of the property committee is insecure with her new responsibility and devotes special time for leadership training, enabling her to do this job well.*
- + *A minister gathers information for the session and invites outside resource persons to assist the session regarding how to invest a large bequest.*

#### **II.4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;**

##### **References**

*Matthew 6:24*: “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” See also *Luke 16:13*.

*G-6.0202a*: “. . . When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice.”

#### *Examples*

- *An elder recommends buying insurance coverage whose premiums are higher than those of another agent because she is related to the first agent.*
- *A minister tries to persuade an auto mechanic member of the congregation to provide free service for her car.*

- *A minister has a joint discretionary bank account with the church that no one is permitted to review.*
- + *A minister whose spouse owns a local business encourages her not to solicit business or clients from the congregation.*
- + *A Committee on Ministry member recuses himself from the committee's discussion of a conflict in the congregation where he is pastor.*

**II.5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the covenant community for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;**

**References**

*2 Samuel 11*: David and Bathsheba story.

*Psalms 55:20*: "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me."

*C-5.157 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

"THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH." See II.3. above.

*C-9.47 (Confession of 1967)*: See I.3. above.

*D-10.0401*:

"b. Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to

"(1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or

"(2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position."

Cf: *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures* at II.2. above.

*Examples*

- *A minister requests loans and gifts from a parishioner, i.e., an auto loan, tickets to sports events, or use of a vacation home.*
- *A minister uses a church member's business connections to lobby the chairperson of a pastor nominating committee in another church where the minister is seeking a new call.*
- + *A tent-making minister refrains from soliciting business for his secular employment from members of the church.*
- + *An elder, acting as youth group sponsor, sensitively declines sexual invitation by teenager from an abusive home and assists teen to find counselor.*

**II.6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;**

**References**

*Proverbs 11:13*: "A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence."

*Proverbs 25:9-10*: "Argue your case with your neighbor directly, and do not disclose another's secret; or else someone who hears you will bring shame upon you, and your ill repute will have no end."

*C-7.254-.255 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.7. above.

cf: *A Resolution on Clergy Confidentiality*. Adopted by the 199th General Assembly (1987)

"... the 199th General Assembly (1987) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

"1. Reaffirms the historic position of the Presbyterian Church that it is a spiritual and professional duty of clergy to hold

in confidence matters revealed to them in their counseling, caring, and confessional ministries, and that being called to testify in a court of law does not negate this sacred obligation, the law of God being prior to the laws of human courts.”

*D-9.0101*: “A member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who feels injured by rumor or gossip may request an inquiry for vindication by submitting to the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery a clear narrative and statement of alleged facts.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister uses confidential information as thinly veiled sermon illustrations.*
- *An elder tells a church member about the personal problems shared during a session’s prayer time.*
- + *At the presbytery’s request, a session maintains confidentiality concerning allegations of embezzlement by the pastor until the presbytery’s investigation process is complete.*
- + *A minister breaks the bond of confidentiality when he knows a child is abused and at risk for suicide.*

### **II.7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;**

#### **References**

*Romans 12:3–8*: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

*Ephesians 4:7, 11–12*: “But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift ..... The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ” See also *I Corinthians 3:6–7*.

*C-5.151(Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“ORDINATION. And those who are elected are to be ordained by the elders with public prayer and laying on of hands. Here we condemn all those who go off of their own accord, being neither chosen, sent, nor ordained (Jer. ch 23). We condemn unfit ministers and those not furnished with the necessary gifts of a pastor.”

*G-6.0105*: “Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God’s providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the Church.”

*W-1.1005a*: “ The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, orders and empowers the new community of the covenant. To each member, that Spirit gives gifts for building up the body of Christ and for equipping it for the work of ministry.”

*W-6.3003–.3004*: “Some in the community of faith who have special gifts and appropriate training are called in the church to the particular ministry of pastoral counseling with individuals and with groups formed for this purpose.

“In certain circumstances the ministry of pastoral care may call for referral to specialized ministers or others qualified by credentials and faith-perspective to provide appropriate counseling or therapy.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister advises members on their financial investments and retirement planning.*
- *A minister continues to counsel a member even though the person’s needs are beyond the minister’s level of competence.*

- + *A minister declines to serve as executor of a member's estate.*
- + *A church preschool director refers parents of deeply troubled toddler to child psychologist.*

**II.8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;**

#### References

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 20:17*: “Bread gained by deceit is sweet, but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.”

*Romans 13:7*: “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

*Galatians 6:3*: “For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.”

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.6. above. See also *C-4.110 (Heidelberg Catechism)*.

#### Examples

- *A minister purchases books of published sermons and preaches them as her own, and uses prayers for worship published by others without citing the source.*
- *A music director photocopies music for the choir's use.*
- *A minister censured by presbytery for sexual misconduct deletes the final page required page of his Personal Information Form (certifying no sexual misconduct findings or charges) as he seeks a new call.*
- *A church member who is a therapist is found to have misrepresented his professional qualifications.*
- + *An elder who is a church educator gives proper credit for copyrighted intergenerational materials and lesson plans instead of using them as if they are her own.*

**II.9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness which might compromise my ministry;**

#### References

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 22:7*: “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”

*Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13*: See II.4. above.

*Luke 12:29–31*: “And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

*Romans 13:8*: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

*Hebrews 13:5*: “Keep your lives from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ ”

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.6. above.

#### Examples

- *A minister with heavy seminary debts and undergraduate guaranteed student loans defaults on the student loans and is later embarrassed by being pursued by the government for defaulting.*

- *A minister buys expensive furniture from a church member who owns a furniture store. When the minister moves to a new call, none of the debt has been satisfied and the store owner pursues collection through the new presbytery.*
- + *Presbytery's Committee on Ministry makes financial management counseling and assistance with debt available as a part of its service to ministers. A minister with large debts seeks and accepts financial management counseling.*

**II.10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;**

**References**

*Exodus 20:15:* "You shall not steal."

*Luke 16:1–3, 10–13:* "Then Jesus said to the disciples, 'There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." . . . Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.' "

*1 Corinthians 4:1–2:* "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism):* See I.6. above.

**Examples**

- *A wealthy church member learns that the minister has been enriching his family for five years with frequent thousand dollar gifts that the member had intended for the church's emergency fund.*
- *An elder who serves as treasurer pays her personal bills with church funds.*
- + *At the end of the year, a minister discovers that she was overpaid for continuing education expenses and returns the money to the church.*
- + *A minister starts an accounting system for the pastor's discretionary fund with accountability to the finance committee.*

**II.11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;**

**References**

*Exodus 23:8:* "You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right."

*Ecclesiastes 7:7:* "Surely oppression makes the wise foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart."

*Acts 4:32–5:11:* See story of Ananias and Sapphira's sale of land, concealing their holdback of part of the proceeds forwarded to the congregation.

*1 John 2:15–16:* "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world."

*C-7.251 (Larger Catechism):* See I.6. above.

*G-10.0102n:* [The session.....has the responsibility and power]

"to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including..... personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff ....."

*G-11.0103f*: [The presbytery . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

*G-12.0102f*: [Synod . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to consult with its member presbyteries with regard to . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

*G-13.0201i*: [. . . General Assembly . . . Council . . . shall have the following responsibilities:] “to consult with the synods with regard to equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

#### *Examples*

- *Without disclosing his sources, a minister accepts expensive gifts from wealthy members and friends of the church, such as season tickets to sports events, membership in the local country club, all-expenses paid cruises, use of vacation houses, new cars, and payment of private school or college tuition for his children.*
- + *A minister receives two frequent flier tickets as a gift from a church member in order to take a winter vacation in a warm climate. When negotiating with the session for the time away, the minister discloses the gift of the tickets.*
- + *A presbytery staff member trained as a certified leader in a program area is asked to help a congregation in another presbytery. He discusses with the personnel committee whether an honorarium may be received, and what limitations should apply.*
- + *A tent-making minister entering a new presbytery negotiates the secular part of employment with the committee on ministry and shares the details with the session so that all parties are aware of the extent of this employment and its compensation.*

#### **II.12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;**

#### **References**

*Joshua 7*: Story of Achan. See especially vs.19–20: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’”

“And Achan answered Joshua, ‘It is true! I am the one who sinned against the Lord God of Israel. This is what I did.’”

*2 Corinthians 5:19–20*: “. . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–13*: “But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

*C-5.165 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“DISCIPLINE. And since discipline is an absolute necessity in the Church and excommunication was once used in the time of the early fathers, and there were ecclesiastical judgments among the people of God, wherein this discipline was exercised by wise and godly men, it also falls to ministers to regulate this discipline for edification, according to the circumstances of the time, public state, and necessity. At all times and in all places the rule is to be observed that everything is to be done for edification, decently and honorably, without oppression and strife. For the apostle testifies that authority in the Church was given to him by the Lord for building up and not for destroying (II Cor. 10:8). And the Lord himself forbade the weeds to be plucked up in the Lord’s field, because there would be danger lest the wheat also be plucked up with it. (Matt. 13:29f.).”

*C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: See Above, Introduction, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

*C-6.109 (Westminster Confession of Faith)*: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.” See also *G-1.0301*.



*G-1.0302*: “That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.”

*G-1.0305*: “. . . while under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” See also *G-1.0307* at II.3. above.

*G-2.0200*: See Introduction above, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

*G-6.0108*:

“a. It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

“b. It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer 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 hold office in that body. 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 governing body in which he or she serves. (*G-1.0301*; *G-1.0302*)”

*G-14.0405b(3) (5)*, *G-14.0207c, e*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

*D-1.0101*: “Church discipline is the church’s exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. Thus, the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. In all respects, members are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process, and it is the intention of these rules so to provide.”

#### *Examples*

- *An elder whose viewpoint does not prevail at a session meeting threatens to resign unless the decision is reversed.*
- *In a triennial visit, the Committee on Ministry discovers that a minister is making improper use of a pastor’s discretionary fund. The minister refuses to discuss this matter with COM, insisting that this is purely between the minister and the session.*
- + *A minister refuses to leave the session meeting during a triennial visit, seeing no value in giving the elders a chance to discuss anything on their minds which they might be uncomfortable saying in her presence.*
- + *When asked to conduct a private baptism for the grandchild of a church member, a minister uses The Book of Confessions to explain that baptism is an act of the covenant community to be conducted in the context of corporate worship. Even when the member suggests that no one needs to know about the baptism and offers a substantial honorarium, the minister holds firm.*

#### **II.13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;**

#### **References**

*Ezra 7:10*: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.” See also *Neh. 8:13*.

*Psalms 32:8–9*: “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.”

*Proverbs 9:9*: “Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous, and they will gain in learning.”

*Colossians 3:16*: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

*Titus 1:9*: “He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.”

*Re mentoring*: Note especially Paul’s relation to Timothy, as expressed in *1 Timothy*:

*4:16*: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

*6:20–21*: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

“Grace be with you.”

*2 Timothy 3:10–11; 14–17*: “Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

*C-9.49 (Confession of 1967)*: “..... effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world.”

*G-10.0102k*: [re: the session’s responsibility and power]: “to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session;”

*G-11.0103f*: “The presbytery is responsible for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical district. It therefore has the responsibility and power to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of leadership development, church officer training, ”

*G-14.0305j(2)*: “By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery’s plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth ”

*G-14.0801d*: “The commissioned lay pastor shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the committee on ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.”

*Cf. Minutes of the 204th General Assembly (1992), ACC Opinion L*, paragraphs 21.257–.258, p. 323.

“*Request 89-6* asks whether elders and deacons who have been previously ordained and, at a later time, reelected to be active officers may be required by session to be trained or examined for their new service.

“Session may require such training or examination under *Book of Order*, G-10.0102j that lists as one of the responsibilities and powers of a session ‘to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session.’ ”

### *Examples*

- *A minister fails to participate in any continuing education program, merely spending his study leave money on books for his library.*
- *A minister diverts continuing education funds to vacation activities.*

- + *An elder participates in presbytery-sponsored lay spirituality training events.*
- + *A presbytery designs a mentoring program for every pastor entering the presbytery.*

**II.14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office, speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;**

#### References

*Deuteronomy 34:9*: “Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

*2 Kings 2:1–14*: Elisha inherits Elijah’s mantle.

*Romans 13:7*: “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

*1 Corinthians 3:3–9*: “. . . For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human?

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“THE NATURE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. Paul explains simply and briefly what we are to think of the ministers of the New Testament or of the Christian Church, and what we are to attribute to them. ‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God’ (I Cor. 4:1). Therefore, the apostle wants us to think of ministers as ministers. Now the apostle calls them uphretav, rowers, who have their eyes fixed on the coxswain, and so men who do not live for themselves or according to their own will, but for others—namely, their masters, upon whose command they altogether depend. For in all his duties every minister of the Church is commanded to carry out only what he has received in commandment from his Lord, and not to indulge his own free choice. And in this case it is expressly declared who is the Lord, namely, Christ; to whom the ministers are subject in all the affairs of the ministry.”

*G-14.0405b(5), (7), G-14.0207e and g*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

#### Examples

- *A minister talks openly about the mistakes her predecessor made and characterizes him as a poor pastor and administrator.*
- + *A new minister takes his predecessor to a lunch at which they agree that when a family in the church asks that previous pastor to conduct a wedding or funeral, the new pastor will conduct the service, assisted by the previous pastor.*
- + *A congregation celebrates the accomplishments of prior ministries at anniversaries of the church.*
- + *A former pastor is approached by members of the congregation complaining about the new pastor. The former refers the members back to their new pastor for candid conversation.*

**\*\*II.15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;**

#### References

*1 Corinthians 3:3–9*: See II.14. above.

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: See II.14. above.

G-11.0502: (Re: Committee on Ministry)

“f. It shall counsel with sessions regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor, and it shall provide lists of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by the presbytery to supply vacant pulpits. Concurrence of the presbytery through its committee on ministry is required when a session invites an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor as provided for in G-14.0513b and c. . . .

“i. It shall serve as an instrument of presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations between ministers and churches ”

G-14.0405b(7), G-14.0207g: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0605: “When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the committee on ministry of the presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister who moves from one church in a metropolitan area to another undermines the continuing ministry of her former parish by encouraging persons from that church to transfer their memberships to her new church.*
- *A minister moves seven hundred miles away from his former parish, but five years later continues to accept telephone calls from elders and to comment on issues before the session.*
- + *A minister whose retirement date is six months away declines to recommend names of interim pastors to the session as his replacement, telling the session that committee on ministry will provide them with such names.*
- + *On the last Sunday prior to leaving a call to become chaplain at a nearby hospital, a minister reads to the congregation the presbytery’s ethics policy for ministers who leave a call. The departing minister assures the members of his love for each of them and indicates that all member contact by him will cease.*

**\*\*II.16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and**

#### **References**

*1 Corinthians 3:3–9*: See II.14. above.

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: See II.14. above.

G-14.0405b(5): See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0606: “Former pastors, associate pastors, and assistant pastors may officiate at services for members of a particular church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister leaves youth work in a Presbyterian church to work for a nearby church of another denomination in direct competition for the youth of the community.*
- *A minister agrees to do wedding for charter member’s granddaughter without first talking with his successor and being invited to participate.*
- + *A minister from a small town is in the city making hospital calls when she discovers that an elder whom she knows from*

*a presbytery committee is in the hospital. She contacts the elder's pastor before stopping in for a brief pastoral visit with the elder.*

- + *A minister calls her successor before agreeing to participate in the funeral of a close friend in that congregation.*

**\*\*II.17. Consult with the committee on ministry in presbytery of residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.**

### References

*1 Corinthians 3:19–23*: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness,’ and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—All belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”

*G-11.0412b*: “Honorably retired ministers are encouraged to transfer their membership to the presbytery in which they live and the presbytery is encouraged to receive them. If they are active in presbytery, additional elders may be elected to keep a proper balance between ministers and lay persons at the presbytery meetings. (G-11.0101b) Presbyteries should encourage honorably retired ministers to use their experience and skills in creative and meaningful ways. Those who are able and willing to reengage in ministry and service to others should relate to a particular church or presbytery. For those who do not or cannot, the presbytery should provide nurture and support.”

*G-14.0606*: See II.16. above.

### Examples

- *A retired minister moves to a new community and strikes up a friendship with the associate pastor of the church where he worships. He is drawn into becoming the associate's advocate as the committee on ministry and the session negotiate with the associate pastor about leaving the call.*
- *A retired minister joins a holistic health clinic as its “spiritual advisor” without contacting the committee on ministry.*
- + *A retired minister who moved to a new presbytery approaches committee on ministry to offer his services for supply preaching and for moderating sessions of churches without an installed pastor.*
- + *A retired minister requests permission to act as the chaplain in a retirement home located within a presbytery that is not his presbytery of membership.*

## III

**I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the church universal.**

### References

*Galatians 6:9–10*: “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

*C-5.127 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“PARTS OR FORMS OF THE CHURCH. The Church is divided into different parts or forms; not because it is divided or rent asunder in itself, but rather because it is distinguished by the diversity of the numbers that are in it.”

*G-4.0200–.0203*: “The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it. The Church is fellowship of believers which seeks the enlargement of the circle of faith to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone.

“There is one Church. As the Bible speaks of the one body which is the Church living under the one Spirit of God known through Christ, it reminds us that we have ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.’ (Ephesians 4:5–6)

“Visible oneness, by which a diversity of persons, gifts, and understandings is brought together, is an important sign of the unity of God's people. It is also a means by which that unity is achieved. Further, while divisions into different denomina-

tions do not destroy this unity, they do obscure it for both the Church and the world. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity and is willing to seek and to maintain communion and community with all other branches of the one, catholic Church. (G-15.0000)”

*G-15.0101*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to manifest more visibly the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and will be open to opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and action with other ecclesiastical bodies and secular groups.”

**Therefore I will:**

**III.1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;**

**References**

*Ephesians 4:4–6*: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

*C-5.126 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“ONLY ONE CHURCH FOR ALL TIMES. And since there is always but only one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, Jesus the Messiah, and one Shepherd of the whole flock, one Head of this body, and, to conclude, one Spirit, one salvation, one faith, one Testament or covenant, it necessarily follows that there is only one Church. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. We, therefore, call this Church catholic because it is universal, scattered through all parts of the world, and extended unto all times, and is not limited to any times or places ”

*C-9.40 (Confession of 1967)*: See II.3. above.

*G-1.0303*: See II, Introduction above.

*G-4.0200–.0203*: See Introduction to Section III, above.

*G-15.0101*: See Introduction to Section III, above.

*G-14.0405b (7), (9), G-14.0207g, i*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

*Examples*

- *A minister votes in favor of the presbytery’s budget, then recommends to the session that it withhold funds from the presbytery.*
- + *A minister who serves as interim pastor in churches around the country changes presbytery membership each time in order to have closer accountability and better relationship with the presbytery in which each church is located.*
- + *A retired elder spends three months as a volunteer in mission.*
- + *An elder agrees to represent the presbytery at the regional council of churches meetings.*

**III.2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;**

**References**

*1 Corinthians 12: 26–30*: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–13*: See II.12. above.

*C-6.186 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* “By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is his body. He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members. He gives efficacy to the Word and to the ordinances of the gospel. By him the Church will be preserved, increased, purified, and at last made perfectly holy in the presence of God.”

G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

#### *Examples*

- *Some ministers develop a negative climate in presbytery by competing with, judging, and demeaning their colleagues.*
- + *A presbytery sponsors cluster support groups for ministers, elders, and other lay leaders.*
- + *Retired ministers and members-at-large in a presbytery voluntarily step forward to preach on occasion without honorarium so that each installed minister can have an occasional Sunday off.*
- + *An elder takes time to listen to the pain felt by a fellow elder over the direction of the congregation’s evangelism program.*

### **III.3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:17:* “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

*Matthew 7:12:* “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

*C-7.256–.257:*

#### **“Q.146. Which is the Tenth Commandment?**

“A. The Tenth Commandment is, ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.’

#### **“Q.147. What are the duties required in the Tenth Commandment?**

“A. The duties required in the Tenth Commandment are: such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul towards our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto and further all that good which is his.”

*G-4.0104:* “Each particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. Its officers are ministers of the Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. Its government and guidance are the responsibility of the session. It shall fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister calls on persons who are members of other congregations when they are hospitalized, develops a relationship with them, then encourages them to join his church.*
- + *An elder encourages an active member of another congregation to assume volunteer leadership positions in the church where that person is a member.*
- + *A minister leads session in cooperating with presbytery in new church development in nearby community, inviting members to transfer to the small organizing congregation.*
- + *A minister provides pastoral care for a member of a colleague’s congregation while the colleague is on vacation. She then gently discourages the member’s interest in transferring her membership, and consults with her colleague about the request.*

### **III.4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.**

#### **References**

*Micah 6:8*: [The Lord] “has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

*C-9.41–.42 (Confession of 1967)*: “The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God’s revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God’s revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God’s revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

“The Christian finds parallels between other religions and his own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God’s judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all men. The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all men whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.”

*C-9.46 (Confession of 1967)*: “The reconciliation of man through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world’s poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls every man to use his abilities, his possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to him by God for the maintenance of his family and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise men’s hopes for better conditions and provide them with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

*G-3.0401*:

“The Church is called:

“a. to a new openness to the presence of God in the Church and in the world, to more fundamental obedience, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;

“b. to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity;

“c. to a new openness to the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world;

“d. to a new openness to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be a more effective instrument of mission in the world.”

*G-15.0104*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek new opportunities for conversation and understanding with non-Christian religious bodies in order that interests and concerns may be shared and common action undertaken where compatible means and aims exist.”

*G-15.0105*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will initiate and respond to approaches for conversation and common action with movements, organizations, and agencies of the business, educational, cultural, and civic communities that give promise of assistance toward accomplishing the mission of the Church in the world.”

*W-7.4003*: “There is no peace without justice. Wherever there is brokenness, violence, and injustice the people of God are called to peacemaking

“a. in the Church universal fragmented and separated by histories and cultures, in denominations internally polarized by mutual distrust, and in congregations plagued by dissension and conflict;

“b. in the world where nations place national security above all else, where the zealotry of religion, race, or ideology explodes in violence, and where the lust for getting and keeping economic or political power erupts in rioting or war;



“c. in communities racked by crime and fear, in schools and workplaces marked by vicious competition and rebellion against order, and in households and families divided against themselves, scarred by violence and paralyzed by fear.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister refuses to participate in ministerial groups and community projects that include persons outside the Christian faith.*
- *An elder makes disparaging, negative comments about other Christian groups and other faith traditions.*
- + *A minister takes her turn as the volunteer police chaplain in her community.*
- + *An elder participates in a Presbyterian-related mission trip to the Middle East, visiting with both Muslim and Jewish communities.*

\* The examples are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

\*\* These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

- + Indicates example of appropriate conduct.
- Indicates example of inappropriate conduct.

#### **Abbreviations for Sources and References:**

*The Book of Confessions:* C

Form of Government: G

Directory for Worship: W

Church Discipline: D

Translation of the Bible—New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)



Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]

# Budget and Finance Committee



## Beth Dyer – Trustee and B&F Moderator

Beth Dyer, JD, CPA, has extensive experience in public accounting and corporate tax leadership, including roles at BDO, PwC, Jason Incorporated, and SC Johnson. She has served North Shore Presbyterian Church (Mission Commission),

Pine Island Presbyterian Church (ruling elder, youth coordinator, finance committee), and First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo (finance committee, choir, Hope Garden).

## Dr. Lola Coke – Trustee

Dr. Lola Coke is a retired nurse scientist and academic leader who has managed large budgets, finances, and grants in higher education. At Westminster Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, and previously at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, she has served as Deacon, Elder, Chair of Mission and Outreach, and on the Board of Directors of Chicago Lights.

She also serves on the Board of Faith in Practice Medical Missions, leading surgical teams to Guatemala for more than 15 years.



## Todd Olson – Trustee

Todd currently serves as business administrator at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven where he has worked for the last 2 1/2 years. Prior to this Todd spent 5 years as finance director for several non-profits including a large Presbyterian church in Oregon.

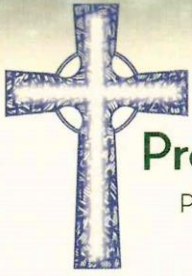
Prior to his work in the non-profit sector, Todd spent 17 years in Commercial and Corporate banking with Wells Fargo Bank.

## Rev. Dr. Riley Jensen – Trustee

Rev. Dr. Riley Jensen retired from forty years of congregational ministry in 2007 having served pastorates in Seattle, Summit, NJ, and Grand Rapids. As Pastor Emeritus of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, he continues to maintain

close ties to the Grand Rapids community and he continues to be active in many areas of service.





Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2026 Budget Narrative  
Stated Meeting  
September 13, 2025

## Presbytery of Lake Michigan First Read 2026 Proposed Budget

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### Narrative Overview of Proposed 2026 Budget

#### I. Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

The 2026 Presbytery of Lake Michigan (PLM) Budget is designed to reflect the mission, vision, values, and goals of the institution.

The Presbytery of Lake Michigan (PLM) 2026 Budget reflects the Strategic Plan adopted by the Presbytery in 2018. The plan established the following goals:

1. PLM will work to strengthen relationships between
  - a. the Presbytery and its congregations
  - b. the Presbytery and its minister members
  - c. the Presbytery and Sessions
  - d. congregations
2. PLM will resource and support congregations for healthy and vital ministries.
3. PLM will develop and support healthy and dynamic leaders for congregations and validated ministries.
4. PLM will fulfill its other responsibilities mandated in G-3.03 in the Book of Order,

#### II. Ministry Context

Ministry has been, and is taking place within our Presbytery through congregations, campus ministries, local and regional partnerships, and through the work of the Presbytery. The shape and delivery mechanisms for many of the component parts of our ministry changed during the pandemic and they continue to change as we adapt to provide ministry in a post-pandemic environment that continues to evolve.

Technology plays an increasingly important role in ministry. Every level of ministry, from the local to the global, has increased its use of technology. But ministry is by, for, with, and to people. In budgeting for 2026, we face the challenge of attempting to discern what ministry will look like in 2026 and what resources (human and financial) will be available to facilitate ministry.

Effects of Board of Pensions (BoP) decisions related to coverages and costs for the benefit plans that cover many of our church's employees which began in January 2025 are becoming

increasingly apparent. During 2025 certain adjustments to the roll out were made by BoP, the net effect of these adjustments are yet to be determined.

Some initiatives, like the Matthew 25 initiative, that were approved by the presbytery in the last few years will need additional or reallocated resources.

The First Read of the Proposed Budget 2026 is our best attempt to consider all the factors that affect our ministry together.

### **III. Societal Context**

- A. A politicized atmosphere in our society contributes to diminished trust. The potential of working together to meet challenges has been and continues to be threatened by apathy and/or acrimony. Ascription of bad motives to those with whom we disagree regarding political, social, or ecclesiastical issues exacerbates diminished trust and threatens the ability of the connectional church to provide the ministry necessary in our world.
- B. American society continues to develop heightened awareness of how racism, privilege, injustice, structural oppression, and apathy are interrelated. This heightened awareness of the pervasiveness of racism within North American society and the injustices fueled and perpetuated by racism calls for a response by the Presbytery of Lake Michigan contextualized to our local or regional ministry setting.
- C. Societal anxiety is fed by uncertainty regarding the longer-term effects of COVID on human health and our society. We are uncertain regarding longer term impact of the changes that became part of our daily lives.
- D. Angst caused by violence, and especially gun violence, shows itself in our cities, small towns, and rural areas.
- E. Debates and initiatives regarding US citizenship and immigration have led to distress and uneasiness for many.
- F. Fear of war and terrorism has increased within the ministry context of the Presbytery.
- G. Economic uncertainty is fueled by stock market volatility, supply chain issues, fears of recession, and the potential for economic disruption brought on by international political unrest or upheaval.

### **IV. Our Presbytery Context**

- A. The Presbytery enjoys stable executive leadership by the Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence, Executive Presbyter/ Stated Clerk.
- B. In person attendance for most of our congregations has declined significantly from pre-covid levels.

- C. Many of our congregations now report participation in virtual worship. For some this is a convenient way for shut-ins, for those whose health is compromised, or for those who are seasonal travelers to participate. For others who have moved away it affords the opportunity to worship with a congregation with whom they have historic ties.
- D. Some of our congregations are experiencing growth from members who have joined because of dissatisfaction with the stance and practices of their former less inclusive congregation/denomination.

E. Presbytery Revenues through June 30, 2025

1. Per Capita receipts were \$ 230,996
  - This is 63.38 % of the annual per capita expected.
  - Last year the percentage received at this time was 65.75%.
  - As of June 30, 2025:
    - 33 congregations paid their annual per capita in full
    - 9 congregations paid 50-99% of their per capita
    - 7 congregations paid between 1% and 49%
    - 10 congregations had not paid anything YTD.
2. Shared Mission receipts were \$ 54,430 compared with \$59,120 last year at the same time. \$ 54,430 represents 39.66 % of the 2025 PLM Shared Mission budgeted amount.
3. Presbytery Operating expenses YTD through June 30, 2025, were \$ 333,236 compared with \$354,300 for a similar period in 2024.

F. Limitations of Human Resources

1. Our Presbytery continues to shrink:
  - a) Membership reported in 2020 was 10,283,  
2021 was 9,845,  
2022 was 9,119  
2023 was 8,677  
2024 was 8,249
  - b) Annual losses range between 4.26% and 7.37% since 2020.
  - c) Membership reported for 2000 was 21,690 compared to 8,249 in 2024.  
Stated differently, PLM's 2024 membership was 38% of what it was in 2000.
2. In the 2024 annual report cited above: 13 congregations reported a gain in membership with a total gain of 76 members (Four of our larger congregations with over 300 members accounted for 47 of the 76 members), 4 congregations reported the same number of members in 2024 as they did in 2023, 43 congregations reported loss of membership.
3. The median age of most of our congregations is much older than it was in 2000. Recent PLM statistics show that 43.08% of our members are over 71 years old.
4. The human resources for ministry and service are dwindling in most of our congregations and certainly within our presbytery.

5. As a result of this dwindling pool of human resources, congregations and the presbytery are vying for service from a smaller pool of persons.
6. The structure of the presbytery has been shrinking. But even with a smaller structure we often cannot fill the necessary positions in our structure with qualified and willing individuals. The Nominations & Representation Committee has repeatedly noted this problem in its communications with the Leadership Team and with the Presbytery at large.
7. Expenses for maintaining the organization do not contract at the same rate as the loss of members.
8. Budget & Finance and Leadership Teams believe that moving toward a more simplified structure assists in addressing the issues mentioned above but it does not solve the problem.

#### F. Effects on Revenue of the Continuing Decline in Participation

1. Congregational attendance (and sometimes support) may come from non-members.
  - a. A ten-year decline in average attendance from nearly 50% to 37% of membership was evident pre-pandemic.
  - b. As previously noted, most of our congregations' report that in person attendance is markedly less than attendance was pre-pandemic. In 2024 some congregations reported that non-members participated virtually in worship or small groups and contributed financially to the ministry. The longer-term effect of on-line/virtual worshippers on annual revenue is unknown currently.
2. Per Capita revenues are influenced by rate increases and the number of members:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2024</u>
GA Budget	\$ 108,115	\$ 89,366
GA Per Capita	\$ 6.50	\$ 9.80
GA Actual Receipts	\$ 104,500	\$ 79,777
 Synod Budget	 \$ 54,057	 \$ 29,637
Synod Per Capita	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25
Synod Actual Receipts	\$ 52,251	\$ 26,445
 Presbytery Budget	 \$ 235,178	 \$ 246,213
Presbytery Per Capita	\$ 14.50	\$ 27.00
Presbytery Receipts	\$ 233,115	\$ 222,304

3. Shared Mission financial experience can be summarized in this snapshot:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2024</u>
GA Actual Receipts	\$ 161,005	\$ 207,884
Synod Actual Receipts	\$ 9,063	\$ 2,970
Presbytery Receipts	\$ 286,920	\$ 119,664



- G. Legitimate ministry needs and opportunities within the communities served by our congregations and worshipping communities far outstrip the Presbytery's ability to resource all those ministry opportunities. This reality has been discussed within Presbytery committees for at least the last eight years. This reality was formally brought to the attention of the Presbytery in September and December of 2019 through the Narratives accompanying the 2020 Budget that warned of likely reduction in monies allocated to ministry partners in the future. The PLM budgets adopted for each year 2021 through 2025 could not support all the ministry requests that were submitted. And this reality is also true for the 2026 Budget.
- H. The challenges faced by our Presbytery are common to many presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. While accumulated resources may vary, all of them are facing the realities that current giving cannot sustain the breadth and scope of historical ministries and/or development of new ministries as may have been true in the past.

#### **V. Sources of Revenue for Budget 2026**

The anticipated sources of revenue for the 2026 Budget include:

- Presbytery Per Capita
- Presbytery Shared Mission
- Other income
- Grant monies from PCUSA affiliated entities
- Financial reserves held by Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Note: The amounts for Synod and the General Assembly Per Capita and Shared Mission are a "pass through" in the 2026 Budget. That is, they show up both as revenue and as expense in the budget.

The expectation of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) is that each presbytery will pay the full OGA per capita for all its congregations regardless of whether individual congregations pay their full per capita amount. The practice of the PLM has been to send in the amount that it collects from the congregations. The projected revenue and projected expenses for these items are the same in the 2026 Budget.

The GA meeting in July 2024 approved a per capita of \$ 10.84 for 2025 and \$11.26 for 2026. This translates into a 10.61 % annual increase for 2025 and a 3.87 % annual increase for 2026.

The Synod of the Covenant Trustees approved a Per Capita for 2025 of \$ 3.40 as compared with the 2024 per capita of \$ 3.25. This translates to a 4.62% annual increase. The Synod Trustees approved a Per Capita for 2026 in the amount of \$ 3.40.

#### **A. Presbytery Per Capita**

***The 2026 Budget, as recommended and attached, assumes a Presbytery Per Capita of \$ 27.76***  
This represents an increase of \$ 0. This amounts to an annual Per Capita increase of 0.0%.

Please note that as membership decreases the per capita amount would need to increase by the same factor as the membership loss to provide the same number of dollars as in the previous year. Membership losses in the past year exceeded 4.95%. Budget and Finance and the Leadership

Team are recommending a budget that includes a slight increase in the amount taken from reserves recognizing that the PLM received monies from the closing of one of our congregations in 2025.

The Per Capita for the Presbytery was \$23.00 for the 2020 and 2021 Budgets. In 2022 it was \$24.50, and \$26.00 for 2023, and \$27.00 for 2024, and \$ 27.76 in 2025. Please note that it would require a Presbytery Per Capita of over \$ 60.00, if we did not use financial reserves or our “Other Income” to balance the budget.

**B. Snapshot of Per Capita Increases**

Per Capita	2024 Amount	2025 Amount	2026 Amount	Percentage Change
GA	\$ 9.80	\$ 10.84	\$ 11.26	3.87 %
Synod	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.40	\$ 3.40	-0- %
Presbytery	\$27.00	\$ 27.76	\$ 27.76	-0- %
Total per Capita	\$40.05	\$42.00	\$42.42	1.0 %

Please note that the Per Capita amounts for the GA and the Synod of the Covenant are set by those respective bodies and are not subject to change by individual presbyteries.

**C. Shared Mission**

Shared Mission recommended for 2026 reflects the specific receipt experience during the last few years. The PLM has seen the following decline in its annual Shared Mission receipts:

2020	\$142,870
2021	\$185,354
2022	\$140,305
2023	\$135,670
2024	\$119,664

While many of our congregations contribute to Shared Mission, well over half of them do not inform us of their intent to do so. While we are grateful for their participation, it does make accurate projection difficult. For some congregations the level of participation depends on whether there is money available after all local needs are met.

Shared Mission is the tangible expression of the connectional nature of the relationship within the PCUSA, our Synod, and our Presbytery.

**D. Other Income**

- Joy Foundation denotes monies received from an endowment administered by the Presbytery of Detroit.
- Investment Income- The amount of Investment Income projected each year is based on a formula using a 12-quarter rolling average applied to the Presbytery’s unrestricted assets. The 2026 applicable factor is 4.5% of the Presbytery’s unrestricted assets, this is the same formula as used for each year from 2022 through the 2025 budgets. We are aware that some congregations and institutions use higher or lower factors. In a time of economic uncertainty this figure represents a factor that Budget and Finance can endorse.



- Synod of the Covenant -Higher Education  
The Synod returns part of the monies we send to it in the form of support for Higher Education. In 2022 the PLM received \$6,582. In 2023 the PLM received \$ 5,112. This was the amount budgeted for 2025. However, in 2024 the PLM received \$ 8,527 (apparently a bit of catch-up). The amount recommended for the 2026 Budget is \$ 6,324 as was the case in 2023 and 2024.
  - Land Sales – Youth \*
  - Land Sales – Congregation \*
  - Land Sales - Unrestricted \*
- \* In the past this included allocation of specified monies received from some of the Presbytery's Greenwood Properties as delineated in the Presbytery's December 2018 decision. On December 06, 2022, the Presbytery approved a recommendation to change that decision. The First Read of the 2026 Budget reflects that decision.

#### E. Reserves to Balance

The PLM's unrestricted reserves as of June 30, 2025, were \$ 4,105,682 which includes \$ 3,608,691 of non-designated funds. Recently designated funds are described below.

At its December 05, 2023, Stated Meeting, the PLM approved a recommendation to designate funds for the support of vulnerable congregations. The monies which come from the sale of property of dissolved congregations were designated in the following amounts: \$70,000 for Dissolutions, \$50,000 for Mergers/Unions/Joint Witness, \$150,000 for Creative Ministries for Vulnerable Congregations.

Funds designated to each area are to be replenished, if possible, from the sale of property of congregations that may be dissolved in the future.

The PLM's restricted funds as of June 30, 2025, were \$258,578.

For the past six years, the Presbytery has approved monies from the Financial Reserves to balance the budget, if necessary. In 2019 the amount was \$226,057; in 2020 it was \$155,787; in 2021 the amount was \$93,504, in 2022 it was \$ 166,010, in 2023 it was \$ 132,199, and in 2024 the amount was \$ 172,055. In none of those years did we take monies from Financial Reserves. A combination of factors contributed to this, including actual expenses which were lower than projected, income from grants that were not budgeted, appreciation of PLM investments, the PPP loan and forgiveness program, and the effect of the pandemic in limiting some programming.

In the current year, 2025, the amount budgeted from reserves is \$ 209,197; we wait to see if it is necessary to use some or all this money this year.

The amount budgeted from financial reserves in the 2026 budget is \$ 230,086.

#### Net Asset History

	PLM Net Assets as of 12/31
2015	\$ 1,077,408
2016	\$ 1,118,881
2017	\$ 1,144,643
2018	\$ 1,848,445
2019	\$ 2,213,997

2020	\$ 2,320,449
2021	\$ 2,520,812
2022	\$ 2,206,177
2023	\$ 3,588,141
2024	\$ 3,522,749
2025	as of 6/30 were \$ 4,364,260.

[Note: These are snapshots of value. Market volatility affects the value each day.]

The pattern of assets listed above remained relatively constant for the years 2019 through 2022 until the assets showed a large increase in 2023. This increase was largely due to the receipts from the sale of properties associated with the following dissolved congregations: Tustin Covenant, Lansing Mount Hope, Grand Rapids, Eastminster. The PLM also had an unrealized gain YTD on December 31, 2023. As noted above, the PLM made decisions in December 2023 regarding use of some of the monies derived from sale of properties.

The economic uncertainty noted under “III. “Societal Context” impacts the formation of the 2026 Budget. We believe there is a possibility that in 2025 the PLM will dip into its financial reserves.

We recognize the market value of our assets could increase, decline, or remain stagnant. The value of our assets on June 30, 2025, increased from January 01, 2025. The market performance of the PLM investments varied during this period, but monies received from the sale of our church buildings contributed to the increase in asset value. These and other factors were weighed by the Budget and Finance Committee in preparing the First Read 2026 Budget.

## **VI. The Role of the Presbytery**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is governed by councils. The councils are The Session, The Presbytery, The Synod, and the General Assembly.

A brief overview of the responsibilities of each presbytery is furnished in the Book of Order:

The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

(Excerpt G-3.0301)

The presbytery has responsibility and power to:

- a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.
- b. provide that the Sacraments be rightly administered and received.
- c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.

The presbytery fulfills its mandated functions in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, the Commission on Ministry, Commission on Preparation for Ministry, Judicial Commission, Office of the Stated Clerk, Committee on Nominations and Representation, Trustees/Budget & Finance Committee, maintaining ecumenical relationships, and maintaining relationships with the Synod and the General Assembly.

The presbytery's mandated tasks focus on assisting congregations in their efforts in fulfilling the mission of the church; presbyteries have the latitude to conduct their own programs as needed and as resources are available. The Budget and Finance Committee and the Leadership Team have focused on resourcing the mandated tasks first and then resourcing other ministries as monies are available.

## **VII. Continuity and Change**

When presenting the 2020 Budget, the Leadership Team and the Budget & Finance Committee outlined the following course of action:

*The Leadership Team and the Budget & Finance Committee share a commitment to using wisely and prudently the monies entrusted to the Presbytery. This involves investing the monies into ministry programs that will help fulfil the goals adopted by the Presbytery.*

*It also means that their intent is that the Presbytery will use unrestricted asset reserves to supplement annual income in order to accomplish its ministry goals for at least the next four years while aiming to retain adequate unrestricted reserves for the years of 2024 and following.*

This year's budget reflects that commitment and continued movement toward that announced goal.

Projected income and ministry expenses for 2026 assume a movement to a "new normal. Projections are an art form and not a science; the recommended 2026 Budget represents the best efforts of the artists on the Leadership Team and the Budget & Finance Committee.

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## **Narrative Related to Various Areas of Budget**

**Please note that the budget was created following a review of all ministry areas using submitted Ministry Action Plans (MAPS).**

### **Administration and Support Team**

The budget totals in this area reflect:

- A. The 2026 budgeted allocation for search is for possible support staff replacement(s) should that become necessary.
- B. Customary expenses for most areas of administration.
- C. Continuation of 2024 and 2025's increase in costs for conducting the mandated reviews of Session minutes. The importance of investing time and energy in these reviews to assist in alerting the Presbytery to difficulties in congregational practices has become evident in the last few years.
- D. Continuation of allocation to line item for policies and procedures for mandated anti-racism training because of an amendment to the Book of Order adopted by the General Assembly.

## **Budget & Finance Committee**

The budget totals in this area reflect the anticipated costs for an Audit be done in 2026 on the 2025 financials. The Presbytery has an audit performed every three years with Financial Reviews in the two other years. (An audit was last performed in 2023 on 2022 financials.)

## **Congregational Support Team**

The 2026 Budget recommendation reflects:

- A. The Commission on Ministry budget represents a shift in some line items for COM along with an increase of \$500 for a training retreat for COM leaders and purchase the software package (Mission Insite) at the cost of \$ 6,000 to assist congregations in identifying ministry opportunities, and a line item was added to provide a luncheon for those involved in validated ministries.
- B. Vital Congregational Initiative is eliminated as a separate line item as VCI is subsumed as part of the Matthew 25 Initiative. (See comments on “H” below)
- C. The Mediation Committee’s budget remains the same as requested and approved for 2025 and reflects the Committee’s plans to address some of the systemic issues that confront female pastors in conflict situations.
- D. The Response Committee budget remains the same as the 2025 budget.
- E. No funding in the line item titled “Congregational and Worshipping Communities Support” reflects the decision of the Presbytery in December 2022 to alter previous practice.
- F. Kalamazoo North was reduced in 2023 per their request for 2023 to reflect a shift in how the “Togetherness Group” Coordinator is compensated. North did not submit a request for funding in 2024, 2025, or 2026.
- G. Korean Ministries – This ministry was moved structurally to “Mission and Outreach” to reflect the reality that this ministry is a combination of campus and congregational ministry.
- H. The line item titled “Congregational Initiative and New Worshipping Communities” was added in the 2025 budget to provide support for unique initiatives and NWC that may arise as congregations explore new opportunities in a changing ecclesiastical environment. The same amount is proposed for 2026.
- I. The PC(USA) Mission Agency now links Vital Congregations, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty under the Matthew 25 rubric. At the December 2021 Stated Meeting the Presbytery of Lake Michigan voted to become Matthew 25 Presbytery. The monies allocated for Matthew 25 help provide the necessary resources to the Presbytery, its congregations, and its ministry partners for these commitments to be implemented.
- J. The line item titled “Ministry Connections” was added to the 2025 Budget. This ministry would meet the expressed need to bring together leaders to think and speak together about the “new normal” for ministry; and would celebrate the great things happening in validated ministries and congregations with the goal of making connections between similar ministries. We believe this need can be met through weekly zoom connections facilitated by Presbytery staff.

## **Dynamic Leaders Team**

The 2026 Budget recommendation reflects:

- A. The Team Administration budget remains the same as in previous years.
- B. Support for the Cohort groups remains at the same level as in previous years.

- C. The allocation of monies for Justice Ministries to assess involvement of local congregations in work of justice ministries and to link, train, and help them access resources for the work of justice remains at the same level as in the 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 budgets.
- D. A partnership with LeaderWise provides training for ruling elders, pastors, and congregational leaders utilizing both in person and virtual learning modules. This reflects the vision articulated in Goal Number 3 for the PLM. And it reflects the expressed need for training and education within our congregations.
- E. Leadership Development utilizes an alternative source to provide training for ruling elders, pastors, and congregational leaders utilizing both in person and virtual learning modules. This reflects the vision articulated in Goal Number 3 for the PLM. And it reflects the expressed need for training and education within our congregations. The level of support remains at the same level as in the previous two years.
- F. There is a line for training congregational members who provide liturgical leadership. This is a response to a need that has been called to the Presbytery's attention. This initiative is done in consultation with the Commission on Ministry.
- G. Presbytery Worship budget was increased in 2023 to reflect the movement to in person presbytery meetings which entails increased travel expenses for guest preachers and/or keynote speakers. The recommended amount for 2026 is consistent with projected needs.
- H. The Commission on the Preparation for Ministry (CPM) 2026 budget is configured to reflect the needs of CPM.
- I. Resource Center remains at the same level as budgeted for 2025.
- J. The "Scholarships for Continuing Education" budgeted amount remains the same as in the 2025 budget, reflecting anticipation that leaders will again be attending in person sessions and/or enrolling for virtual learning in 2026.
- K. Activities, Montreat/Plunge/Triennium. The recommended budget provides support for Montreat, urban plunge and other currently planned youth activities as requested by Youth Strategies. The Presbytery has a Triennium Reserve, and the Trustees approved up to \$35,000 to come from the Triennium Reserve Fund in 2025 for this once every three-year event.
- L. Youth ministries and youth scholarships- The lack of monetary recommendation for 2026 reflects the decision of December 2022.

### **Leadership Team**

The 2026 Budget recommendation for Leadership Team reflects anticipated needs in each area for 2026.

### **Mission & Outreach Team**

The 2026 Budget recommendation reflects:

- A. The level of support for each Campus Ministry is reflective of our commitment to recognize the importance of these ministry efforts balanced with prudent use of financial resources consistent with the adopted goals of the Presbytery. It also reflects a decision to provide Presbytery financial support for each of them at the same level of financial support irrespective of location or history of support.
- B. The recommended amount for each ministry was increased for the 2025 budget from the 2024 level. The recommended amount for 2026 reflects an increase of \$1,000 for each campus ministry, or about a 5.26 % increase.

- C. Korean Ministries – This line item was moved from Congregational Support to this location in 2024 because this ministry is a combination of campus ministry and congregational ministry. The level of support was increased at that time to move them to parity with other campus ministries.
- D. “Presbyterian Disaster Assistance” is not budgeted for 2026 because the Presbytery has monies available for disaster assistance in a fund designated for that purpose which it received as part of the disposition of the John Knox properties.

### **Nomination & Representation Committee**

This committee is critical to our functioning as a Presbytery. The recommendation reflects their expressed needs for 2026.

### **Permanent Judicial Commission**

These monies are budgeted each year with the hope that this commission will not be pressed into use.

### **Personnel/ Staff Narrative**

Budgets are established reflecting the positions expected to be filled at the time the budget is established. They do not represent contracts or monies to be paid to the individuals filling the positions. A termination of employment may lead to a shift in responsibilities or duties either increasing or decreasing an individual’s compensation. Staff responsibilities may be shifted to reflect competencies and changes in availability. As needs change, the staffing positions or competencies may change to reflect that reality. The recommendations for 2026 reflect the increasing dependence of technology and the services provided to our congregations to utilize technology. The recommendations also reflect the need for staff members to fulfill certain necessary functions as the number of qualified and available volunteers continues to decrease.

Salaries for Officers and Staff Salaries are presented as a single line item in the First Read 2026 Budget. The specific 2026 compensation rates for staff members will be set by those having supervisory responsibilities following a review of 2025 performance and delineation of expectations for 2026. This is consistent with the patterns established in many of our larger congregations and in many not-for-profit organizations.

Called Staff positions and compensation packages are approved by the Presbytery at the time the nominated leaders are presented for approval. The approved position descriptions indicate, “The supervision, review, and adequacy of compensation (of these positions) shall be reviewed by Leadership Team at least annually.” At the PLM’s Stated Meeting in December 2025 compensation recommendations will be presented to the body for the Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, and the Treasurer.

The money for these salaries is included in the “Officers and Staff Salaries” line item along with monies for other staff positions.

The 2026 First Read Budget includes a \$4,960 increase for the Officers and Staff Salaries.

- The increase reflects a 1.26 % increase in this line item as compared to last year’s budget.
- Estimates for this year’s Social Security increase expected to be announced in October 2025 predominately range between 2.57 % and 3.0%.
- Composite look at over 1500 surveyed employers showed average salary increase budgets for 2026 to be 3.5 %.

- July 15, 2025, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its June 2025 Consumer Price Index which showed its “all items index” rose by 2.7% over the previous 12 months.

The anticipated Staff configuration for 2026:

- Executive Presbyter/ Stated Clerk – Full-time called position with health and pension benefits.
- Bookkeeper – 12-16 hours per week.
- Associate Clerk – Full time position with benefits.
- Technology/Communication Support Manager – 20-24 hours per week.
- Treasurer – Salaried for 15 hours per week.
- Commission on Ministry Support – part time – 10 hours per week.
- Assistant to the Executive Presbyter – 80 hours per quarter plus additional hours as approved by Executive Presbyter at rate less than the minimum TOC rate for 2025. (Hours are primarily expended in staffing Administrative Commissions and/or dealing with Presbytery real estate matters. The future need for these hours is impossible to predict. The monies come from the sale of PLM properties.)

The Budget & Finance Committee and Leadership Team recognize that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan is a service organization with many similarities to school systems in which salary costs represent a significant portion of the budget. It also looks at data from our congregations.

Each year the congregations within the presbytery return information to the Stated Clerk related to finance. This data is compiled for all the congregations of the Presbytery. Please note that the data referenced below was collected for fiscal 2021. The format for 2022, 2023, and 2024 reporting did not include personnel costs as a separate category, so we had to rely on historical data from 2021 which was:

	Total for PLM Congregations
Annual Expenses	\$ 11,333,304
Personnel Costs	\$ 6,739,973
Personnel as % of total	59.47 %

The Personnel Expenses in the 2026 Budget as proposed would constitute 54.53% of the PLM Budget.

### **Operations Narrative**

The Operations Budget for 2026 increased by \$ 10,250 reflecting experience in 2024 and through June 30, 2025, as well as anticipated need for 2026.

### **Administrative Commissions**

Tracking costs associated with various administrative commissions. These costs are distinct from those which are related to the sale of Presbytery property for dissolved congregations.

### **Building Maintenance/Lease**

Budget reflects lease costs and anticipated maintenance costs.

### **Building Utilities**

Projected based on usage and utility rate increases.

### **Communications & Technology**

First Read 2026 Proposed Budget Narrative  
Stated Meeting September 13, 2025

Reflect changes in needed technology.

**Computer Support**

Reflects experience of 2019-2024 and YTD 2025.

**Contract Service (payroll, recording clerk, other)**

Reflects known and anticipated costs.

**Congregational Connection/Directory/Software links for this service**

Reflects known and anticipated costs.

**Depreciation -Building and equipment**

**Equipment Acquisition**

Reflects on-going needs to upgrade equipment and/or purchase new equipment.

**Equipment Repair and Maintenance**

Budgeted amount appears adequate based on history.

**Fees and Service Charges**

Budgeted amount based on history.

**Insurance - Comprehensive**

Reflects anticipated costs based on experience.

**Insurance - Workers' Comp**

Based on experience and anticipated participation.

**GA Meeting and Retreat**

Operational Expense involving General Assembly participation.

**Governing Body Meeting Expense**

Participation in Governing Body meetings when commissioners or staff members are delegated, requested, or instructed to attend.

**Professional Expenses**

These are predominately legal expenses incurred by the Presbytery. Proposed amount is reflective of 2019-2024 experiences, YTD 2025, and anticipated expenses for 2026.

**Moderator/Vice Moderator Travel Expenses**

Travel for Moderator/Vice Moderator in performance of official duties.

**Moderator Training Expenses**

Costs associated with education and training to serve in these functions.

**Postage**

Projected expense based on experience.

**Supplies**

Reflects experience.

**Telephone/ General**



Projected expense based on experience.

**Website and email contact expense**

Projected expense based on experience.

**Vouchered Expenses**

Projected expense based on experience and anticipated need.

**Other Expense**

Unclassified or miscellaneous expenses.

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**The 2026 Budget as presented is an investment in the Presbytery's collaboratively developed ministry priorities. It reflects the goals and priorities established by the Presbytery in 2018 and follows the trajectory of assumptions and commitments previously communicated to and approved by the Presbytery in the adoption of the previous annual budgets.**

**It reflects a best effort at faithful stewardship of the gifts and ministries that God has entrusted to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.**

**Recommendation to September 13, 2025, Stated Meeting that:**

**The 2026 Per Capita for the Presbytery of Lake Michigan be set at \$27.76**

During the Stated Meeting on September 13, 2025, the First Read Proposed 2026 Budget, and its Narrative will be presented to the body with limited time for questions and comments.

Those desiring to gain clarification or to comment on the Budget and the Narrative are invited to submit comments or questions via email sent to [bnfmoderator@lakemichiganpresbytery.org](mailto:bnfmoderator@lakemichiganpresbytery.org). **Please direct all questions and comments to this address and not to another email address for any member of the Budget and Finance Committee.**

					<b>Presbytery of Lake Michigan</b>		
					<b>2026 Proposed Budget</b>		
					<i>Stated Meeting September 13, 2025</i>		
	<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	
		<b>Budget 2026</b>	<b>Budget 2025</b>	<b>Budget 2024</b>	<b>Budget 2023</b>	<b>Budget 2022</b>	
	<b>PER CAPITA</b>						
	GA Per Capita	\$ 92,884	\$ 94,059	\$ 89,366	\$ 96,973	\$ 92,341	
	Synod Per Capita	\$ 28,047	\$ 29,502	\$ 29,637	\$ 31,996	\$ 33,420	
	Presbytery Per Capita	\$ 228,992	\$ 240,874	\$ 246,213	\$ 255,970	\$ 251,934	
	Current Year Uncollectable	\$ (15,000)	\$ (15,000)	\$ (15,000)	\$ (15,000)	\$ (15,000)	
	<b>Per Capita Total</b>	<b>\$ 334,923</b>	<b>\$ 349,434</b>	<b>\$ 350,216</b>	<b>\$ 369,940</b>	<b>\$ 362,695</b>	
	<b>SHARED MISSION</b>						
	Presbytery Shared Mission	\$ 130,750	\$ 137,250	\$ 152,500.00	\$ 152,500	\$ 137,250	
	G.A. Shared Mission	\$ 85,500	\$ 85,500	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 85,500	
	Synod Shared Mission	\$ 2,250	\$ 2,250	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,250	
	<b>Shared Mission Total</b>	<b>\$ 218,500</b>	<b>\$ 225,000</b>	<b>\$ 250,000</b>	<b>\$ 250,000</b>	<b>\$ 225,000</b>	
	<b>OTHER INCOME</b>						
	Joy Foundation-Detroit Presbytery	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	
	Interest on Land Contract		\$ -	-	\$ -	-	
	Investment Income	\$ 127,497	\$ 107,807	\$ 90,602	\$ 80,428	\$ 86,694	
	Synod of Covenant for Higher Education	\$ 6,324	\$ 5,112	\$ 6,324	\$ 6,324	\$ 6,170	
	GW Land Sales -Congregations	*	*	*	\$ 5,710	\$ 6,278	
	GW Land Sales -Youth	*	*	*	\$ 6,472	\$ 6,475	
	GW Land Sales- Unrestricted	*	*	*	\$ 3,370	\$ 3,335	
	Monies from Project participants	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 16,500	
	Transformation Grant			-			
	* per Stated Meeting 2022 12 6 decision						
	<b>Other Income Total</b>	<b>\$ 157,821</b>	<b>\$ 136,919</b>	<b>\$ 120,926</b>	<b>\$ 126,304</b>	<b>\$ 137,452</b>	
	<b>TOTAL ALL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 711,244</b>	<b>\$ 711,353</b>	<b>\$ 721,142</b>	<b>\$ 746,244</b>	<b>\$ 725,146</b>	

	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 941,330</b>	<b>\$ 920,550</b>	<b>\$ 893,197</b>	<b>\$ 878,443</b>	<b>\$ 891,256</b>		
	<b>INCOME - EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ (230,086)</b>	<b>\$ (209,197)</b>	<b>\$ (172,055)</b>	<b>\$ (132,199)</b>	<b>\$ (166,110)</b>		
	<b>ANTICIPATED FROM RESERVES</b>	<b>\$ 230,086</b>	<b>\$ 209,197</b>	<b>\$ 172,055</b>	<b>\$ 132,199</b>	<b>\$ 166,010</b>		
	<b>EXPENSES</b>							
		<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Adopted</b>		
		<b>2026</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>		
	<b>ADMINISTRATION &amp; SUPPORT TEAM</b>							
	Administration	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300		
	Overture & Amendment Review	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 100		
	Policy & Proceedure Committee	\$ 10,100	\$ 10,100	\$ 15,100	\$ 100	\$ 100		
	Records Preservation	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300		
	Session Records Review - mileage	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 600	\$ 300		
	Staff Search	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 10,000		
	<b>Administration &amp; Support Total</b>	<b>\$ 12,700</b>	<b>\$ 12,700</b>	<b>\$ 17,700</b>	<b>\$ 1,800</b>	<b>\$ 11,100</b>		
	<b>BUDGET &amp; FINANCE</b>							
	Administration	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 750		
	Financial Audit/Review	\$ 8,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 8,500	\$ 6,000		
	<b>Budget and Finance Total</b>	<b>\$ 9,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,500</b>	<b>\$ 7,500</b>	<b>\$ 9,500</b>	<b>\$ 6,750</b>		
	<b>CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT TEAM</b>							
	Administration	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500		
	<i>Commission on Ministry</i>							
	Administration	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 1,500		
	Admin Commissions		\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		
	Advertising interim/small church pos.	\$ -				\$ 1,000		
	Background Screening	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000		
	Child Care @ Stated Meetings	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500		
	Clergy Counselling	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,500		

	COM Retreat/training	\$ 1,000	\$ 500					
	Emergency Aid/ Ministers	\$ -			\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500		
	Sabbatical Assistance	\$ 2,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000			
	Scholarships for Interim Training	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		\$ 2,000		
	Validate Minister's Luncheon	\$ 500						
	Mission Insite Software	\$ 6,000						
	<b>sub-total COM</b>	<b>\$ 17,500</b>	<b>\$ 12,500</b>	<b>\$ 12,000</b>	<b>\$ 11,000</b>	<b>\$ 11,000</b>		
	<i>Mediation Committee</i>	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 315	\$ 1,000	\$ 500		
	<i>Response Committee</i>	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100		
	Vital Congregations Initiative **							
	Admin/Misc/contact w National Office	**	**	**	\$ 2,000	\$ 4,700		
	Cong Development- hosting	**	**	**	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,000		
	Community & Congregational- Surveys	**	**	**	\$ 2,500	\$ 7,000		
	Facilitator Training Conference	**	**	**	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000		
	Facilitator Travel & cohort meetings	**	**	**	\$ 3,000	\$ 4,500		
	Materials and Resources- study guide	**	**	**	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000		
	National VCI Allocation	**	**	**				
	** Now part of Matthew 25 Initiative							
	<b>sub-total VCI</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 13,500</b>	<b>\$ 24,200</b>		
	Congregation & Worshiping Comm Support	*	*	*	\$ 5,710	\$ 6,278		
	* per Stated Meeting 2022 12 6 decision							
	Kalamazoo North			\$ -		\$ 10,050		
	Korean Ministry ***				\$ 14,200	\$ 8,000		
	*** moved to Mission & Outreach							
	Cong Initiative and NWC	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000					
	Matthew 25 Initiatives	\$ 33,500	\$ 33,500	\$ 33,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000		
	Ministry Connections	\$ -	\$ 3,800					
	<b>Congregational Support Total</b>	<b>\$ 59,600</b>	<b>\$ 58,400</b>	<b>\$ 46,415</b>	<b>\$ 66,010</b>	<b>\$ 80,628</b>		

	<b>DYNAMIC LEADERS TEAM</b>							
	Administration	<b>750</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>\$ 750</b>	<b>\$ 750</b>		
	Cohort Groups							
	Encouragement Project	100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100		
	Service to Retirees	300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 250	\$ 250		
	<b>sub-total Cohort</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>\$ 400</b>	<b>\$ 400</b>	<b>\$ 350</b>	<b>\$ 350</b>		
	Justice Ministries	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000		
	LeaderWise partner- Synod of Covenant	\$ 9,200	\$ 8,200	\$ 6,500		\$ 750		
	Leadership Development	\$ 5,100	\$ 5,100	\$ 6,400	\$ 6,400	\$ -		
	Liturgy Development Workshops	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000					
	Presbytery Worship Group	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 1,200		
	<i>Preparation for Ministry Commission</i>							
	Administration	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 600	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500		
	Candidates/Vocational Counsel/Asses	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		
	Candidates Ordination Exams	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		
	Candidates/Inquirers Retreat	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000		
	Candidate/Inquirer/Educator Travel	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 800	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		
	Financial Assistance	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		
	<b>sub-total CPM</b>	<b>\$ 11,500</b>	<b>\$ 11,500</b>	<b>\$ 11,100</b>	<b>\$ 11,500</b>	<b>\$ 11,500</b>		
	Resource Center	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,500		
	Scholarships for continuing Educ	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000			
	Youth Activities. Montreat/Plunge/Triennium	\$ 17,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 13,380	\$ 10,000	\$ 46,000		
	Youth Ministry & Scholarships	*	*	*	\$ 6,472	\$ 6,475		
	* per Stated Meeting 2022 12 6 decision							
	<b>Dynamic Leaders Total</b>	<b>\$ 63,650</b>	<b>\$ 62,650</b>	<b>\$ 57,230</b>	<b>\$ 54,172</b>	<b>\$ 76,525</b>		
	<b>LEADERSHIP TEAM</b>							
	Administration	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000		
	Leadership Team Retreat	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 300		
	Moderator's Conference	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		

GA Meetings and Retreat	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500				
Presbytery Retreat	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500		
<b>Leadership Team Total</b>	<b>\$ 7,000</b>	<b>\$ 6,500</b>	<b>\$ 6,500</b>	<b>\$ 6,500</b>	<b>\$ 5,800</b>		
<b>MISSION &amp; OUTREACH TEAM</b>							
Administration	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500		
G. R. Area Campus Ministries	\$ 20,000	\$ 19,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000		
Kazoo United Campus Ministries	\$ 20,000	\$ 19,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 29,600		
U-Kirk Ministries (Lansing)	\$ 20,000	\$ 19,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000		
Korean Ministry	\$ 20,000	\$ 19,000	\$ 18,000				
<b>Ministry Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$ 80,500</b>	<b>\$ 76,500</b>	<b>\$ 72,500</b>	<b>\$ 54,500</b>	<b>\$ 66,100</b>		
Pres. Disaster Assistance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
<b>Mission and Outreach Total</b>	<b>\$ 80,500</b>	<b>\$ 76,500</b>	<b>\$ 72,500</b>	<b>\$ 54,500</b>	<b>\$ 66,100</b>		
<b>NOMINATING/REPRESENTATION</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>		
<b>PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>		
<b>Officers and Staff Salaries</b>	<b>\$ 399,500</b>	<b>394,540</b>	<b>\$ 383,049</b>	<b>\$ 371,892</b>	<b>\$ 352,222</b>		
<b>Operational Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 100,100</b>	<b>\$ 89,850</b>	<b>\$ 85,200</b>	<b>\$ 87,000</b>	<b>\$ 78,100</b>		
See attachment for Detail							
<b>TOTAL PLM EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 732,650</b>	<b>\$ 709,240</b>	<b>\$ 676,694</b>	<b>\$ 651,974</b>	<b>\$ 677,825</b>		
Per Capita - General Assembly	\$ 92,884	\$ 94,059	\$ 89,366	\$ 96,973	\$ 92,341		
Per Capita - Synod of the Covenant	\$ 28,047	\$ 29,502	\$ 29,637	\$ 31,996	\$ 33,240		
GA- Shared Mission	\$ 85,500	\$ 85,500	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 85,500		
Synod - Shared Mission	\$ 2,250	\$ 2,250	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,250		
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$ 941,330</b>	<b>\$ 920,550</b>	<b>\$ 893,197</b>	<b>\$ 878,443</b>	<b>\$ 891,156</b>		

<b>OPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Six months</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>2024 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>
	<b>2026</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2025</b>			
Administrative Commissions	\$ 15,000	\$ 14,679	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,003	\$ 205	\$ 1,109
Building Maintenance/Lease	\$ 15,500	\$ 7,445	\$ 15,500	\$ 14,656	\$ 14,227	\$ 14,171
Building Utilities	\$ 3,600	\$ 1,496	\$ 3,600	\$ 2,479	\$ 2,759	\$ 2,837
Communications & Technology	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 411	\$ -	\$ -
Computer Support	\$ 4,000	\$ 578	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,816	\$ 3,153	\$ 3,809
Contract Service (payroll, recording clerk, other)	\$ 4,500	\$ 3,038	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,331	\$ 2,364	\$ 1,963
Cong Connection/Directory/ software links	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 546	\$ 948	\$ 798
Depreciation- Bldg & Equip	\$ 2,250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,747	\$ 2,517	\$ 2,458
Equipment Acquisition	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ 668	\$ -	\$ -
Equipment Repair and Maintenance	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 70	\$ 605	\$ -
Fees and Service Charges	\$ 500	\$ 54	\$ 500	\$ 494	\$ 563	\$ 286
GA Mtg and Retreat	\$ -	-	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 65
Governing Body Mtg Expense	\$ 8,500	\$ 576	\$ 11,500	\$ 5,497	\$ 10,621	\$ 9,129
Insurance -Comprehensive	\$ 3,800	\$ 3,279	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,395	\$ 2,721
Insurance- Workers Comp	\$ 1,000	\$ 851	\$ 900	\$ 725	\$ 730	\$ 783
Professional Expenses	\$ 6,000	\$ 174	\$ 6,000	\$ 19,464	\$ -	\$ 21,347
Moderator/Vice Moderator Travel Expenses	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 704
Moderator Training Expenses	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Postage	\$ 800	\$ 26	\$ 800	\$ 731	\$ 857	\$ 610
Printing	\$ 650	\$ 151	\$ 650	\$ -	\$ 556	\$ 1,011
Supplies	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,036	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,020	\$ 1,795	\$ 3,495
Telephone/ General	\$ 2,400	\$ 1,214	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,784	\$ 7,029	\$ 6,556
Website and email contact expenses	\$ 4,500	\$ 2,467	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,443	\$ 4,674	\$ 4,261
Vouchered Expenses	\$ 16,000	\$ 7,672	\$ 15,000	\$ 19,089	\$ 15,173	\$ 12,291
Other Expense	\$ 2,600	\$ 352	\$ 2,600	\$ -	\$ 2,517	
	<b>\$ 100,100</b>	<b>\$ 45,088</b>	<b>\$ 89,850</b>	<b>\$ 92,474</b>	<b>\$ 73,688</b>	<b>\$ 90,404</b>

Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Balance Sheet at 6/30/2025

ASSETS:

Cash	47,799.28
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General Investments:

Investments - New Covenant Trust Mgmt. Fund	3,072,586.61
Investments - John Knox Memorial Fund	889,721.50
Investments - Investment & Loan Program	50,015.16
Investments - Presbyterian Foundation - Sp. Assistance	45,361.44
Endowment - Presbyterian Foundation - Niger	66,525.96
Endowment - Presbyterian Foundation - Nicaragua	66,525.96

Total Investments	4,190,736.63
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Accounts Receivable Per Capita	133,438.40
Note Receivable - GR Eastminster	20,000.00
Fixed Assets - Original Cost less Depreciation	2,584.33

Total Assets:	4,394,558.64
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LIABILITIES:

Accounts Payable	30,298.99
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NET ASSETS:	4,364,259.65 *
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TOTAL LIAB & NET ASSETS:	4,394,558.64
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\*Fund Balances:

Unrestricted:

Non-Designated:

Operating Surpluses Prior Years:	484,605.99
Operating Surpluses YTD:	335,391.29
John Knox Memorial Fund	589,574.95
Church Dissolutions	1,324,303.89
Undesignated Funds	674,815.31
Presbtery Operating Cash Reserve	200,000.00
Total Non-Designated:	3,608,691.43

Designated:

Congregational Vitality & Justice	71,718.63
Triennium Reserve Fund	110,091.91
Designated Church Dissolution Grants:	
Creative Ministries Grants	150,000.00
Church Dissolutions Grants	70,000.00
Mergers/Unions/Joint Witness Grants	48,000.00
John Knox Disaster Relief	45,000.00
Mental Health Ministry Grant	5,200.00
Misc. Designated	(3,020.46)
Total Designated:	496,990.08

Total Unrestricted:	4,105,681.51
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Restricted:

John Knox- Nicaragua	64,876.58
John Knox- Niger	64,876.58
Special Assistance Endowment Fund	46,801.62
Other Temporarily Restricted	82,023.36
Total Restricted:	258,578.14

Total Net Assets:	4,364,259.65
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Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Summary of Operating, Designated and Restricted Funds  
For the Year-To-Date Ended June 30, 2025

PLM Operating Fund:	Annual Budget	
Support and Revenue	6/30/2025	2025
Per Capita	\$ 364,434	\$ 364,434
Presbytery Shared Mission	\$ 54,430	\$ 137,250
Investment and Other Income/Receipts	\$ 249,763	\$ 136,919
Current Year Uncollectible	\$ -	\$ (15,000)
Transfer In	\$ -	\$ 209,198
<b>Total Support and Revenue:</b>	<b>\$ 668,627</b>	<b>\$ 832,801</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<i>ADMINISTRATION &amp; SUPPORT TEAM</i>	\$ 1,321	\$ 12,700
<i>BUDGET &amp; FINANCE</i>	\$ 6,700	\$ 7,500
<i>CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT TEAM:</i>		
Administration	\$ -	\$ 500
Commission on Ministry	\$ 1,929	\$ 12,500
Cong Initiative and NWC	\$ -	\$ 5,000
Mathew 25 Initiative	\$ -	\$ 33,500
Mediation Committee	\$ -	\$ 3,000
Ministry Connections	\$ -	\$ 3,800
Response Committee	\$ -	\$ 100
<i>DYNAMIC LEADERS TEAM:</i>		
Administration	\$ -	\$ 750
Encouragement Project	\$ -	\$ 100
Justice Ministries Group	\$ -	\$ 5,000
Leadership Development	\$ 200	\$ 5,100
LeaderWise Partnership-Synod	\$ -	\$ 8,200
Liturgy Development Workshops	\$ -	\$ 3,000
Presbytery Worship Team	\$ 1,795	\$ 6,500
Preparation for Ministry Commission	\$ 24	\$ 11,500
Resource Center	\$ 84	\$ 4,200
Scholarships for Continuing Education	\$ -	\$ 3,000
Service to Retirees	\$ -	\$ 300
Youth Activities/Montreat/Plunge/etc.	\$ -	\$ 15,000
<i>LEADERSHIP TEAM</i>	\$ -	\$ 6,500
<i>MISSION &amp; OUTREACH TEAM:</i>		
Administration	\$ -	\$ 500
Campus Ministries	\$ 38,000	\$ 76,000
<i>NOMINATING/REPRESENTATION</i>	\$ -	\$ 300
<i>PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION</i>	\$ -	\$ 300
Officers and Staff	\$ 155,277	\$ 394,540
Office Operations	\$ 45,088	\$ 89,850
Other Expense	\$ -	\$ -

**Summary of Operating, Designated and Restricted Funds  
For the Year-To-Date Ended June 30, 2025**

<b>PLM Operating Fund:</b>		<b>Annual Budget</b>
Per Capita - General Assembly	\$ 63,020	\$ 94,059
Per Capita - Synod of the Covenant	\$ 19,798	\$ 29,502
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 333,236</b>	<b>\$ 832,801</b>
<b>Operating Revenue (Deficit) Over Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 335,391</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
 <b>Other Assemblies' Shared Mission Receipts:</b>		
GA Shared and Other Missions	\$ 124,370	\$ 85,500
Synod Shared Mission	\$ 4,297	\$ 2,250
<b>Total Other Assemblies' Shared Mission Receipts:</b>	<b>\$ 128,667</b>	<b>\$ 87,750</b>
 <b>Other Assemblies' Shared Mission Disbursements:</b>		
GA Shared and Other Missions	\$ 124,370	\$ 85,500
Synod Mission	\$ 4,297	\$ 2,250
<b>Total Other Assemblies' Shared Mission Disbursements:</b>	<b>\$ 128,667</b>	<b>\$ 87,750</b>
 <b>Designated &amp; Restricted Fund Activity:</b>		
Revenue		
Candidates Scholarship Offerings	\$ -	\$ -
Church Dissolutions	\$ 537,818	\$ -
J. Knox Missionaries - Nicaragua & Niger	\$ 2,528	\$ -
Peacemaking Offering-Presbytery	\$ 2,208	\$ -
Planning Clntrs/BksOrder/Outlook	\$ 115	\$ -
Special Assistance Endowment Fund	\$ 862	\$ -
Special Offerings	\$ 1,555	\$ -
Grants	\$ 7,500	\$ -
Two Cents A Meal	\$ 1,548	\$ -
Youth Activities	\$ -	\$ -
Various Other	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total Designated &amp; Restricted Revenue:</b>	<b>\$ 554,135</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
 <b>Expenditures:</b>		
Church Dissolutions	\$ 11,825	\$ -
Congregational Vitality & Justice Grants	\$ 13,800	\$ -
Disaster Relief - John Knox Memorial Fund	\$ 5,000	\$ -
GA Grants	\$ 3,000	\$ -
J. Knox Missionaries - Nicaragua & Niger	\$ 2,528	\$ -
Offerings - Presbytery Meetings	\$ 862	\$ -
Planning Clntrs/BksOrder/Outlook	\$ -	\$ -
Special Assistance Endowment Fund	\$ -	\$ -
Various Other	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total Designated &amp; Restricted Expense:</b>	<b>\$ 37,015</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
 <b>Total All Revenue/Receipts:</b>	<b>\$ 1,351,430</b>	<b>\$ 920,551</b>
 <b>Total All Expenditures/Disbursements:</b>	<b>\$ 498,919</b>	<b>\$ 920,551</b>
 <b>Total Rev Over/Under Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ 852,511</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

\*Presbytery financial statements are based on modified fund accounting. Per capita revenues are accrued and uncollectible amounts are netted against the accrued per capita revenue.

**PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY  
A PRESBYTERY POLICY  
MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL - 2026**

**B-1**

**A. Cash Salary and Housing**

1. \$44,869 plus free use of the manse and payment of actual utilities by the church, the value of the manse for pension purposes must be at least 30 percent of cash salary, plus annuity plus Social Security allowance, if negotiated.

**or**

2. \$58,352 combined salary and allowance for housing and utilities allowance. The exact amount for salary and housing for 2025 is to be determined by the pastor and session prior to December 31, 2025. The Book of Order (G1.00503) Business Proper to Congregational Meetings states that one business of the congregation is: "...reviewing the adequacy of and approving changes to the terms of call of the pastor or pastors..." Richard R. Hammer, J.D., LL.M., CPA states in his book "Tax Guide for Ministers & Church" that the church designates housing allowance "in advance (prior to the beginning of the new year or prior to beginning employment for a newly hired minister) and that the housing allowance "(1) represents compensation for ministerial services, (2) it is used to pay housing expenses, and (3) it does not exceed the annual fair rental value of the home (furnished, plus utilities)."

**or**

3. \$85,000 total compensation package, which must include all the following components:

- a. Cash Salary and Housing as outlined in 1. and 2. above.
- b. Board of Pensions benefits as outlined in Section B and C.
- c. Professional expenses as outlined in Section D.

**B. Board of Pensions Benefits Plan**

Board of Pensions defined benefit pension, death and disability, long-term disability and Employee Assistance Program (10% of effective salary). Required for all clergy and encouraged for CREs and other church workers.

**C. Board of Pensions Medical Coverage**

- The Book of Order requires that congregations enroll Ministers of Word and Sacrament in installed pastoral service in the Congregational Pastors Package, which includes member-only medical coverage. (17.5% of Effective Salary)
- If family coverage is needed by the pastor, and the church was enrolled in the Transitional Pastor's Plan in 2025, churches in 2026 shall cover the entire cost of the 2026 Transitional Pastor's Participation (37% of effective salary).

- If dependent coverage is needed by the pastor, and the church was not enrolled in the Transitional Pastor's Plan in 2025, churches in 2026 shall cover the cost of the 2026 Medical and Dependent Medical Coverage dues to no less than a total compensation package of \$85,000.

#### **D. Professional Expenses.**

1. Automobile expenses are to be vouchered and reimbursed at the current IRS rate.
2. Professional Development allowance of a minimum of \$800 is to be vouchered and may be accumulated for up to three years.
3. Book allowance is to be vouchered up to at least \$300 or more if negotiated.
4. Professional expenses allowance includes vouchered business costs such as subscriptions, pamphlets, professional membership, supplies, etc. as negotiated.

#### **E. Professional Development and Vacation Time.**

1. Professional development time (formerly study leave or continuing education) is two weeks and two Sundays annually and may be accumulated for up to three years.
2. Annual vacation is one month, including four Sundays. A month is at least 30 days including 4 Sundays.

#### **F. Presbytery policy regarding Pastoral Sabbatical.**

When a pastor has been in their congregation for at least seven years, the Commission on Ministry strongly encourages the session to talk with the pastor about a sabbatical period. Typically, this would be for three months or more, and the current terms of call would be in place during the sabbatical time. A sabbatical enables the pastor to do some longer term study or reflection which will enable them to return to the congregation refreshed and with new perspectives on ministry. The Commission on Ministry has models for how the church and pastor can plan for a sabbatical.

#### **G. Presbytery policy regarding Minimum Terms of Call.**

The Presbytery at its September 2026 meeting adopted the following recommendation of the Commission on Ministry: "that the minimum terms of call in effect for pastors serving churches beginning January 1, 2026, be either

1. \$44,869 plus free use of manse and payment by the church of actual manse utilities. The value of the manse for Board of Pensions purposes must be at least 30% of cash salary, plus annuity, plus Social Security allowance, if negotiated; OR,
2. \$58,352 combined salary and housing/utilities allowance; OR,
3. 3. \$85,000 total compensation package, which must include all the following components: Cash Salary and Housing as outlined in 1. and 2. Above, Board of Pensions benefits as outlined in Section B and C, Professional expenses as outlined in Section D.

If a church cannot meet these requirements, the Session must annually submit a request to Presbytery through the Committee on Ministry to be excused from this requirement and outline the justification for such a request, indicating why this position should not be reduced to a part-time position. The minister must be in agreement with this request and indicate in writing a willingness to be compensated less than the minimum terms of call approved by Presbytery. Special provisions apply to teaching elders in part-time situations.

#### **H. Presbytery Policy Regarding Family Leave**

Terms of Call must include the Family Leave Policy of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. See Policy B-8.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON NOMINATING and REPRESENTATION**  
**September 13, 2025**  
**STATED MEETING of the PRESBYTERY of LAKE MICHIGAN (PLM)**

**TO REPORT RESIGNATIONS:**

Rev. Stan Jenkins, Leadership Team (At Large), Class of 2025

**TO REPORT NOMINATIONS TO THE NAMED POSITIONS, COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES, or TEAMS**

**OFFICERS TO BE APPROVED (Motion)**

**Vice Moderator Presbytery of Lake Michigan (service to begin upon approval)**

Ruling Elder Ben Boerkoel, Westminster – Grand Rapids

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY RULING ELDER COMMISSIONERS\* TO BE APPROVED (Motion)**

Ruling Elder Heather Myer, Eastminster – East Lansing

- Currently serving the PLM as Moderator of the COM, East

Ruling Elder Ben Boerkoel, Westminster – Grand Rapids

- Currently serving on the PLM Nominating & Representation Committee

**\* 227<sup>th</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY TEACHING ELDER & YAAD APPLICATIONS**

**Deadline extended to Wednesday, October 15, 2025**

We are accepting applications for (2) Teaching Elder Commissioners and (1) Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD). We are also accepting applications for alternates for the Ruling Elder and Teaching Elder Commissioners and YAAD. Completed applications and supporting documents — including appropriate endorsements by the Session and your pastor.

- Application for Teaching and Ruling Elder Commissioners:  
<https://lakemichiganpresbytery.breezechms.com/form/b86eb9>
- Application for Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD):  
<https://lakemichiganpresbytery.breezechms.com/form/b86eb940>

**General Assembly Schedule:**

**June 22:** General Assembly Convenes w/ online plenary and online committees

**June 23-24:** Online Committees

**June 25-26:** Plenary preparation & travel

**June 27:** Community Day - service and education opportunities, ministry fair, and community gatherings

**June 28:** Worship in local congregations, convening of plenary.

**June 29 - July 2:** Plenary with Moderator Election on July 2

**SERVING THE PRESBYTERY**

The Nominating Committee is continuing to seek Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders with a heart for the connectional church. We are working on the slate for the Class of 2028 to be presented at the

December Presbytery meeting. High priority needs are Ruling Elders to serve on the Commission on Ministry (COM) Regions. You can learn more here: [https://lakemichiganpresbytery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NR\\_Opportunities-to-serve-2021.03.pdf](https://lakemichiganpresbytery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NR_Opportunities-to-serve-2021.03.pdf) or contact any member of the Nominating & Representation Committee.

## REPRESENTATION

The Nominating & Representation Committee, with additional work by the Rev. Dr. Fran Lane Lawrence, Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, has been discussing ways to support churches who are responding to pressures related to immigrant rights, refugee resettlement, LGBTQ+ support, anti-racism initiatives and economic stresses. If you or your church needs support in these areas, please reach out to Fran or a member of the committee.

Please note that the PLM website has a page devoted to Anti-Racism Resources. It is under the “Churches” tab and can be directly accessed through this link: <https://lakemichiganpresbytery.org/churches/antiracism-resources/> If you have resources that have been helpful in the work of anti-racism, please send those along to Fran. And stay tuned for resource pages for other topics.

## NOMINATING AND REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- |                               |                                       |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Rev. Lisa Schrott           | 318-286-3816                          | <a href="mailto:pastorlisa@okemospres.org">pastorlisa@okemospres.org</a>     |
| • Elder Ben Boerkoel          | 616-293-7959                          | <a href="mailto:bboer@aol.com">bboer@aol.com</a>                             |
| • Elder Willye Bryan          | 517-449-8279                          | <a href="mailto:entpeople@yahoo.com">entpeople@yahoo.com</a>                 |
| • Rev. Dr. Ruth Lowry         | 616-915-8221                          | <a href="mailto:pastor.ruth.pcusa@gmail.org">pastor.ruth.pcusa@gmail.org</a> |
| • Rev. Dr. Fran Lane Lawrence | 269-240-8155<br>269-381-6337 ext. 802 | <a href="mailto:flanelawrenceplm@gmail.com">flanelawrenceplm@gmail.com</a>   |

**PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN**  
**CONSENT AGENDA of the STATED MEETING**  
**September 13, 2025**

1. **To excuse** these members and elder commissioners at their request and to add those who will continue to request an excused absence up to the actual meeting: Mary Austin (VM), David Braak (VM), Jessica Bratt Carle (VM), Peggy Casteel-Huston (VM), Cathy Hoop (Holland First), Karen Fitz LaBarge (Rockford North Kent), Laurie Hartzell (Retired), Jessica Hauser-Brydon (MAL), Mackenzie Jager (Muskegon First), Linda Male (HR), Kirk Miller (Holt First), Kyle Nolan (VM), Bill Pinches (Mason First), Jim Pollard (GR Forest Hills), Linda Rubingh (VM), Scott Scheel (Edwardsburg First), Barb Schreur (MAL), Lynette Sparks (GR Westminster)
2. **To approve** the Minutes of the Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, June 10, 2025, Online only.
3. **To file** the approved Minutes of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Leadership Team on August 7, 2025. Online only.
4. **To authorize** Elder Kerri Comai (Battle Creek Westlake) to administer communion to that congregation for one year, effective April 10, 2025, through April 9, 2026.
5. **To approve** the following recommendation of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry that Rev. Daniel Anderson be granted the status of Retired, effective October 27, 2025.
6. **To approve** the following recommendation of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry that Rev. Jan Jasperse be granted the status of Retired, effective September 30, 2025.
7. **To receive** the Report of the Stated Clerk for today, as follows:

**REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK**  
**Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence**  
**September 13, 2025**

1. **REVIEW OF 2024 SESSION MINUTES:** The review of the 2024 session minutes has been completed. The 2024 Session Minutes for the following congregations were approved without exception. Battle Creek First, Battle Creek Pennfield, Benton Harbor Fairplain, Big Rapids, Brooklyn, Buchanan, Cadillac, Cassopolis, Coldwater, Concord, Decatur, Dimondale, East Lansing Eastminster, Edwardsburg, Goebles Bethany, Grand Haven, Grand Rapids Forest Hills, Grand Rapids North Park, Grand Rapids Westminster, Gregory Unidilla, Hastings, Hesperia, Holland, Holt, Ionia, Jackson First, Jackson Westminster, Jenison Parkwood, Jonesville, Kalamazoo First, Lake City,



Lansing First, Lyons/Muir, Marshall, Mason, Muskegon, Niles, Okemos, Plainwell, Portage Westminister, Richland, Rockford North Kent, Schoolcraft, Spring Lake, Sturgis, and Three Rivers/Centerville.

The 2024 Session Minute reviews for the following congregations were approved with exceptions: Homer, (given until November 30, 2025, to complete a review of Sexual Misconduct and Child Protection Policies and a financial review), Lansing Delta (given until October 31, 2025, to complete a review of Sexual Misconduct and Child Protection Policies), and Lansing North Westminister (given until October 31, 2025, to complete a financial review). Corrections completed by congregations will be reported to the Presbytery at the stated meeting in December.

The 2024 Session Minute reviews for the following congregations were not approved: Allegan, Battle Creek Westlake, and Benton Harbor First

The following congregations did not submit 2024 minutes for review: East Lansing Korean, Kalamazoo North, and Stockbridge.

2. **BOUNDARY AND ETHICS TRAINING:** The PCUSA Constitution in the *Book of Order* mandates all councils (this includes sessions) to adopt and implement sexual misconduct policies “which shall include requirements for training which includes the topics of sexual misconduct and child sexual abuse prevention . . . at least every 36 months.” (G-3.0106) The Presbytery of Lake Michigan also mandates sexual misconduct/ boundary training every 36 months for teaching elders, including retired ministers, commissioned ruling elders, ruling elders, and Christian educators who are active in the ministry of the Presbytery. If members of your session have not yet completed Boundary Training, please contact Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom, Associate Clerk, or Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence, Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, for information about how to complete the training.

Upcoming Dates:

- September 13, 2025, at Battle Creek First - Ruling Elder Boundary Training
- September 20, 2025, at TBD - Teaching Elder Boundary Training
- October 11, 2025, at GR Forest Hills - Teaching Elder Boundary Training
- October 21 & 22, 2025, via Zoom - LeaderWise Boundary Training

\*Training will be led by Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence and Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom

3. **REQUEST FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR PRESBYTERY MEETINGS:**  
The Stated Clerk asks that all requests for excused absences be made through the online system available on the Presbytery website or by using this link: <https://lakemichiganpresbytery.breezechms.com/form/6ce58f>. ***Requests for excused absences not requested through the online system may not be recorded correctly.***

4. **DATES FOR STATED MEETINGS IN 2025:** The dates for stated meetings of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan for 2025 are as follows:

- a. Saturday, March 8, 2025 – *E LANSING EASTMINSTER*
- b. Tuesday, June 10, 2025 – *CADILLAC FIRST*
- c. Saturday, September 13, 2025 -*BATTLE CREEK FIRST*
- d. Tuesday, December 2, 2025 - *JENISON PARKWOOD*

**Thank you to these congregations for generously hosting a meeting of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.**

5. **PROPERTY SALES:**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church of Jackson, MI**

On July 7, 2025 the Presbytery of Lake Michigan at a Special Called approved the sale of the property of Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2301 Ridgeway Road, Jackson, MI 49203 described below to Wendell Mark Riggle and Margaret Drew Riggle, if the way be clear, for the sum of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000.00) of land situated in the City of Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan:

Legal Description

BEG AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE S LN OF RIDGEWAY RD  
WITH THE E LN OF SEC 20 TH W ALG  
THE S LN OF RIDGEWAY RD 966 FT TO A PT FOR PL OF BEG OF  
THIS DESCN TH S 0DEG 05'53"W  
500 FT TH N 89DEG 52'W 400 FT TH N 0DEG 05'53"E 500 FT TO  
THE S LN OF RIDGEWAY RD TH E  
ALG S LN OF SD RD 400 FT TO BEG SEC 20 T3S R1W  
000-13-20-276-007-00

This meeting also approved the recommendation that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan authorize the Stated Clerk, the Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence; the Treasurer, Elder Kirk Truesdell; or the President of the Corporation, Elder Beth Dyer, jointly or individually, to execute all documents necessary to implement this decision.

On August 6, 2025, Elder Kirk Truesdell, acting on behalf of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, closed on the sale of the above-described property to Wendell Mark Riggle and Margaret Drew Riggle for \$350,000 (Three hundred fifty thousand dollars).

6. **REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSIONS:**

**First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI**  
Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI  
September 13, 2025

The Members of the Administrative Commission (AC) continue to work diligently and pastorally with the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI.

Members of the AC continue to attend all Session Meetings, as they are able, either in-person or virtually, to provide continued support and clarity of communication.

After the resignation of the Clerk of Session, effective April 03, 2025, and after being presented with a deadline for action by the AC, a new Clerk of Session appears to have been elected, although the AC has not received minutes of the Session meeting at which this action was approved. Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence confirmed with the new Clerk, Elder Karen Earl, that she and PLM Associate Clerk, Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom, plan to be present in Marshall on September 03, 2025, to meet with the new Clerk of Session to provide training and orientation.

During the May 31, 2025, review of the 2024 session minutes, it was found that the minutes were not in order. Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom, PLM Associate Clerk, reviewed the minutes. She has communicated frequently with Marshall about the deficiencies in their minutes and provided language that would be acceptable. Some of the revisions submitted by the session contained minimal or no revisions. Rev. Groenenboom informed the Session of a deadline of August 31, 2025, to make the necessary corrections and edits to the 2024 Minutes to bring the minutes into order.

The Mission Study Committee continues its work with support from AC member Elder Nancy Toth. The Session canceled their June Session meeting to focus on the work of their Mission Study. The Mission Study Group (Session Members) cancelled several meetings to discuss their Mission Study. Two of the remaining four members did have a Zoom meeting with Elder Toth during which they reviewed comments and recommendations related to previously submitted "Final Drafts". The AC is currently reviewing the fifth iteration submitted on August 26, 2025, and has expressed comments/concerns about this document. The requested changes are motivated by a desire for clarity of expression and perceived acceptance by those reading this document.

The AC requested to meet with the Session on July 27, 2025, after not being informed of the date and time of the July Session meeting. Stated Supply Pastor, Rev. Charlotte Ellison, said this failure to inform the AC was an accident resulting from an email she failed to send to the AC. During the July 27, 2025, Session meeting, AC representatives, along with Rev. Dr. Cal Bremer and Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence, noted a propensity to ask questions that had been previously answered on more than one occasion, and for members of the session to focus on their perception of past events. In addition, the AC members and PLM staff members noted inflammatory language was employed both by members of the Session and by the Stated Supply pastor to describe processes provided by the PCUSA Book of Order. The AC members and PLM staff offered continued support and encouragement to the Session, including ordering of copies of the *Book of Order* for all Session members as well as informing them of upcoming training Sessions. Special mention was made of the ongoing support in assisting them in completing

their Mission Study, as this will be a primary resource document for determining pastoral needs and ministry support.

The AC sent a letter dated August 01, 2025, to Rev. Charlotte Ellison, which stated:

“In reviewing records, it was noted that your current Covenant Agreement with the First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI, concludes on September 2, 2025. After prayerful discussion, it was determined that if Session would like to renew the Covenant Agreement, the AC is willing to approve an extension for no more than 28 days, through September 30, 2025.”

On August 3, 2025, AC member Elder Nancy Toth received an email from a Session member indicating his inability to participate in continued Mission Study work given his resignation from Session effective that day (he was a member of the Class of 2025). He also informed Elder Toth that none of the others who were scheduled to meet that evening to work on the Mission Study would be available. When asked by the AC to reconsider his resignation, he declined.

On August 6, 2025, AC member Rev. Amber Nettleton was forwarded an email from the Clerk of Session, which had been composed by Stated Supply Pastor Rev. Charlotte Ellison, notifying the AC of the resignations of two more Session members, both Class of 2025, effective August 31, 2025.

Three individuals were elected to the Session at a congregational meeting held on August 24, 2025, to fill vacancies on Session noted above. The Session is working with the AC on drafting language to amend their By-Laws to bring them into compliance.

The AC was present with the congregation, along with Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence and Rev. Dr. Cal Bremer, on Sunday, August 24, 2025, to hear from the congregation, clarify process, and detail continued plans of support for the Session and congregation in determining their pastoral needs and future ministry. This meeting lasted for nearly two and a half hours. Again, this meeting was punctuated with inflammatory comments and unfounded accusations made by Session members.

The AC, working with COM, has arranged for the Rev. Steven Kaszar (Homer/Concord) to moderate Marshall Session meetings beginning in October 2025.

Please join us in praying for God's blessing on this congregation and Session as they discern God's will for their future ministry.

Respectfully Submitted by  
The AC for Marshall First Presbyterian Church

Rev. Amber Nettleton (Kalamazoo First)  
Elder Nancy Toth (Jackson First)  
Trustee Brad Sparks (Grand Rapids Westminster)

**First Presbyterian Church of Richland, MI**

Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of Richland, MI  
September 13, 2025

The Richland Administrative Commission (AC) continues its work. Since the last Stated Meeting on June 10, 2025, the AC representatives met with the Richland Session on June 11, 2025, on July 9, 2025, and on August 13, 2025, either in person or by Zoom. The August 13, 2025, Richland Session meeting began at 5:00 pm with a meal hosted by Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence. She provided additional training and guidance in Presbyterian polity, officer leadership, and some examples of dealing with congregational issues and their resolution.

The Richland AC normally meets weekly by Zoom to discuss progress, issues to address, and guidance to provide to the Richland Session and other congregational leaders. Rev. Dr. Calvin Bremer (Assistant to Executive Presbyter) and Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk) often attend our weekly Zoom meetings. They offer instructive and beneficial guidance to the AC. Interim Pastor Rev. Cal Nevenzel meets once a month with the AC by Zoom.

The AC on July 14, 2025, formally voted to grant Interim Pastor Rev. Cal Nevenzel approval to moderate Session meetings going forward. Rev. Seth Weeldreyer (Kalamazoo First) had served as Moderator of the Richland Session up to that time. He provided positive and sensitive leadership following the December 2024 retirement of former Pastor Rev. Mark Jennings.

We affirm our support of Rev. Nevenzel during her presence at our Zoom meetings and through other personal contacts. We endeavor to support her in her Interim Pastor work and offer beneficial guidance from our collective clergy/lay experiences.

We are committed to reminding the Richland Session and congregation how important and vital the time spent with an Interim Pastor can be for working through issues, understanding church dynamics and history, and preparing for the calling of an installed Pastor. Circumventing the benefits and time necessary for a good Interim Pastor experience often results in unexpected and, sometimes, detrimental outcomes in the next calling of a pastor.

The Richland Session continues to make significant progress in reviewing, updating, and clarifying its church policies and procedures as they relate to committees, staff, and finances.

The AC members are grateful for the cooperative spirit that characterizes the relationship between the AC and the Richland Session and congregation. We request your continuing prayers for all involved.

Respectfully,  
Elder Stuart Deming (Kalamazoo First), Rev. David Milbourn (HR), and Rev. Dan Anderson (Spring Lake)

**First Presbyterian Churches of Decatur and Paw Paw, MI**  
Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Churches of Decatur and Paw Paw,  
MI  
September 13, 2025

No report.

*This concludes the reports of the Administrative Commissions.*

***This concludes the Clerk's Report***

8. **To receive** the following report from the Commission on Ministry:

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY STATED MEETING  
of the PRESBYTERY of LAKE MICHIGAN  
September 13, 2025**

Since the last Presbytery meeting, the COM Plenary has met once (August 26, 2025), and the Northern, Eastern, and Southwestern Regions have met as needed. The following report deals with actions that the Commission has recommended to the Presbytery, actions taken by the Commission and its Regions on behalf of the Presbytery, and other matters of a general nature.

**REPORT ON ACTIONS REGARDING CALLS, INSTALLATIONS, AND RELATED MATTERS:**

1. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the COM Plenary meeting of May 27, 2025.
2. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the COM Regions since the May 27, 2025, Plenary meeting.
3. **A motion prevailed** to recommend to the Presbytery that Rev. Dan Anderson be granted the status of Retired, effective October 27, 2025.
4. **A motion prevailed** to recommend to the Presbytery that Rev. Jan Jaspers be granted the status of Retired, effective September 30, 2025.
5. **A motion prevailed** to approve Rev. Brian Madison (Cassopolis) to labor outside the bounds on the Queen Mary 2 ship from January 3, 2026, through January 19, 2026, and to celebrate communion on January 4, 2025, January 6, 2025, and January 11, 2025.
6. **A motion prevailed** to approve Rev. Timothy Chon to labor outside the bounds of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. Rev. Chon will be serving within the bounds of the National Capital Presbytery.
7. **A motion prevailed** to validate Rev. Timothy Chon's ministry as Senior

Administrator and Faculty of Wesley Theological Seminary.

8. **A motion prevailed** to approve the COM Redivision of Regions effective October 1, 2025. Elder Heather Myer (East Lansing Eastminster) will be the Vice-Moderator of the East Region. Rev. Amber Nettleton (MAL) will be the Vice-Moderator of the West Region.
9. Battle Creek Pennfield: **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Amber Nettleton (MAL) as moderator for the September 7, 2025, Congregational Meeting.
10. Big Rapids United: Rev. Sarah Juist (Jenison Parkwood) and Rev. Mike Horlocker (Cadillac First) conducted a fit interview with Rev. Amy Ruhf-Brien on July 3, 2025. Rev. Ruhf-Brien submitted her Sexual Misconduct Policy Receipt, Conflict of Interest Disclosure, and Boundary Training Certificate to the Presbytery. **A motion prevailed** to approve the terms of call if the way be clear between the United Church of Big Rapids, MI, and Rev. Amy Ruhf-Brien as full-time installed solo pastor for an indefinite period, effective October 1, 2025.

11.

Cash Salary	\$30,000
Housing Allowance	\$30,000
403b Contributions	\$5,100
Medical Allowance	\$156
Dental Allowance	\$144
Total Effective Salary	\$65,400
Board of Pensions	\$15,600

Professional Development	\$800
SECA Offset	\$4,500
Books and Professional Expenses	\$3,700
Moving Expenses paid in full	
30 days of vacation, including 4 Sundays	
14 days of Professional Development, including 2 Sundays	

12. Brooklyn Presbyterian: **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between Brooklyn Presbyterian Church and Rev. David Weber as full-time interim pastor, effective September 1, 2025, to August 31, 2025.

Cash Salary	\$43,853
Housing Allowance	\$23,613
Total Effective Salary	\$67,466
Board of Pensions (27.5%)	\$18,553.15
SECA Offset	\$5,588

Professional Development	\$1,000
Professional Expenses	\$1,000
Books	\$500

Travel	IRS Rate
Vacation	4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Professional Development	2 week,s including 2 Sundays

13. Grand Rapids North Park: Rev. Philomena Ofori-Nipaah's updated Terms of Call were approved by the congregation and now meet the minimum salary requirement for 2025.
14. Jackson Westminster: **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Ben Rumbaugh as moderator from April 28, 2025, through July 28, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. John Best (HR) as the moderator for their congregational meeting on June 15, 2025. Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom provided Clerk of Session training on May 19, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to approve a covenant agreement between Westminster Presbyterian Church and Rev. Judy Goodrow (UCC) as full-time stated supply pastor effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Salary	\$47,370
Housing	\$15,000
Education & Meetings	\$2,000
Pension (UCC, 14%)	\$10,153

Vacation	4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Professional Development	2 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Sick Time	2 weeks

\*Westminster pays 50% of the compensation package

The property was sold for \$350,000 on August 6, 2025, and the proceeds will be placed in an escrow account. Requests from Westminster for funds will need to be approved by the Commission on Ministry. After a time of discussion and review, **a motion prevailed** to approve the "Request Form for Westminster Presbyterian Church to Receive Funds in Escrow" as amended. The region received a request for disbursement of \$25,500 from the escrow account to cover three months of cost-sharing expenses. **A motion prevailed** to approve the disbursement of \$25,500 from the escrow account pending the receipt of session approval and minutes and completion of the Request Form.

The session requested clarification on whether Rev. Goodrow should attend Session meetings. The members of the region encourage Rev. Goodrow's attendance at meetings of the Session. COM advised that the Session should vote to give her a voice at the meetings.

15. Jonesville First: **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Karen Kelley (Retired) as moderator. Rev. Steve Kaszar (Concord/Homer) and Rev. Karen Kelley conducted an exit interview with Rev. Lynne Fry. Rev. Kelley and Rev. Fran



Lane-Lawrence conducted the exit interview with the Session on July 23, 2025. The Covenant of Closure was also signed on July 23, 2025. Rev. Lane-Lawrence conducted training with the Session on July 23, 2025, regarding the work of the Session and the responsibilities of Ruling Elders.

16. Lake City First: **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Michael Horlocker (Cadillac First) as moderator effective September 29, 2025.
17. Lansing First: Exit interviews with the Session and Rev. Stan Jenkins were completed on July 23, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Ben Rumbaugh (Dimondale/Lansing Delta) as moderator of the session effective September 1, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to approve the dissolution of the call between Rev. Stan Jenkins and First Presbyterian Church of Lansing, MI, effective August 17, 2025.
18. Lansing North Westminster: Rev. Timothy Chon has accepted an Administrator and Faculty position at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Several meetings have occurred at North Westminster PC to explore options for the congregation. **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between North Westminster Presbyterian Church of Lansing, MI, and Rev. Timothy Chon as part time (10 hours) stated supply pastor effective August 1, 2025,-December 31, 2025 with the following changes: end the sentence at December 31, 2025 - striking out the remainder of the sentence; insert a 30 day clause that either party can terminate the Agreement. Insert a paragraph indicating COM will begin working with the session on a transition plan.

Cash Salary	\$5,000
Travel/Mileage	\$5,000
Professional Reimbursement	\$2,500
Pension Plan	\$2,500

**A motion prevailed** to remove Rev. Timothy Chon as Moderator of the Session and to appoint Rev. Kristin Stroble as moderator effective August 26, 2025.

19. Rockford North Kent: The congregation has paid its PILP loan in full.
20. Schoolcraft First: Rev. Jerry Duggins (Portage Westminster) was appointed to serve as the congregation's transition counselor. **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between First Presbyterian Church of Schoolcraft, MI, and Rev. Tom Kragt as part-time (25 hours) temporary supply pastor effective April 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025.

Cash Salary	\$13,564.06
Free Use of Manse with Utilities	\$6,793.50
Retirement Contribution	\$1,050 (175/month)
Total Effective Salary	\$21,407.56

Travel	
IRS Rate	
Books/Professional Expenses	\$300
Professional Development	\$800
Vacation	2 weeks, including 2 Sundays
Study Leave	1 week, including 1 Sunday

21. Three Rivers/Centreville First: A motion prevailed to approve the covenant agreement between First Presbyterian Church of Three Rivers/Centreville, MI, and Rev. Clint Cozier as full-time Interim Pastor effective November 1, 2025-October 31, 2026.

Cash Salary	\$32,000
Housing	\$35,000
Deferred Compensation	\$5,000
Medical FSA	\$7,500
Total Effective Salary	\$79,500
Board of Pensions	\$9,540
SECA	\$5,962.50
Travel	\$1,000
Professional Expenses/Development	\$2,000
Vacation	4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Study Leave	2 weeks, including 2 Sundays

*This concludes the report of the Commission on Ministry.*

**PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN  
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY  
September 13, 2025**

The Commission met two times since the last Stated Meeting of the Presbytery—Regular stated meetings on July 22, 2025, and August 26, 2025. The following report deals with actions taken by the Commission on behalf of the Presbytery and other matters of a general nature.

1. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the Commission on the Preparation for Ministry of May 27, 2025, and July 22, 2025.
2. Candidate Elder Sheri Harris received a call to serve as pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rome, GA. She was examined by the Cherokee Presbytery and will be ordained and installed on October 26, 2025. The Ordination can be livestreamed on Westminster's YouTube channel.
3. On August 4, 2025, an informal meeting was held to meet with Elder Sheri Harris to celebrate her call to Georgia.

4. The Commission welcomed 2 new members, Rev. Pat Weatherwax (HR) and Rev. David Schell (Jackson First).
5. The Commission mourns the death of our longtime and faithful secretary, Elder Leslie Gilreath (Fairplain).

***This concludes the report of the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry.***

***This concludes the Consent Agenda.***

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES of the STATED MEETING  
PRESBYTERY of LAKE MICHIGAN**

**June 10, 2025 at 9:30 A.M.**

**First Presbyterian Church**

**221 E Harris Street**

**Cadillac, MI 49601**

**The Presbytery of Lake Michigan forms and partners with faith communities to challenge, encourage, equip, and hold one another accountable as Christ's disciples.**

**LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE AND OPENING OF THE STATED MEETING**

Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser-Brydon (Grand Haven First), Moderator, called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. with the lighting of the Christ candle and opening prayer. A quorum was present.

**APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY CLERK**

**A motion prevailed** to appoint Elder Scott Rumsey (Hesperia), Elder Judy Wood (Plainwell First), Rev. Timothy Chon (Lansing North Westminster), and Rev. Mackenzie Jager (Muskegon First) as temporary clerks.

**SEATING OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS**

**A motion prevailed** to seat Rev. Ruth-Aimée Belonni-Rosario (New York City), Associate Executive for Racial Justice for the Synod of the Covenant.

**APPROVAL OF THE DOCKET**

**A motion prevailed** to approve the docket as presented.

**INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME OF FIRST-TIME RULING ELDERS AND  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS**

Rev. Troy Hauser-Brydon welcomed first-time elder commissioners and Christian educators.

**WELCOME TO GUESTS AND VISITORS**

Rev. Troy Hauser-Brydon welcomed guests and visitors. Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence welcomed and introduced Rev. Ruth-Aimée Belonni-Rosario, Associate for Racial Justice for the Synod of the Covenant.

**GREETINGS FROM EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST LANSING**

Rev. Michael Horlocker offered greetings and thanksgiving on behalf of First Presbyterian

Church of Cadillac, Michigan, giving thanks for the congregation's work with the local community. He described their Jack Foss Closet ministry and shared that the congregation provided 410 pairs of boots to children and adults this past winter.

## **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion prevailed to approve the Consent Agenda with the following items:

1. **To excuse** these members and elder commissioners at their request and to add those who will continue to request an excused absence up to the actual meeting: Mary Austin (VM), Joanna Bailey (VM), David Braak (VM), Elizabeth Hakken Candido (VM), Jessica Bratt Carle (VM), Katherine Culpepper (MAL), Karen Fitz LaBarge (Rockford North Kent), Jessica Hauser-Brydon (MAL), Sarah Juist (Jenison Parkwood), Karen Kelley (Retired), Hailey Malcolm (MAL), Nick Marlatt (Hastings), Calandra Nevenzel (Richland), Kyle Nolan (VM), Philomena Ofori-Nipaah (North Park), Jim Pollard (Forest Hills), Sarah Schmidt-Lee (VM), Barb Schruer (VM), Kristin Stroble (East Lansing Eastminster), Paul Van Kempen (Holland), Chrissy Westbury (Kalamazoo First), Jon Won (East Lansing Korean)
2. **To approve** the Minutes of the Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, March 08, 2025, Online only.
3. **To file** the approved Minutes of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Leadership Team on March 6, 2025; April 3, 2025; and May 1, 2025. Online only.
4. **To receive** the 2025 Terms of Call Report. Online only.
5. **To receive** the June 10, 2025, Budget and Finance Report. Online only.
6. **To approve** the following recommendation of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry that Rev. Brenda Deily be granted the status of Retired effective June 10, 2025. The Presbytery will celebrate her ministry at the stated meeting on September 13, 2025.
7. **To approve** the following recommendation of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry that Rev. Christine Barnes (MAL) be granted the status of Retired effective September 13, 2025.
8. **To approve** the following recommendation from the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry that Elder Jodi McCoy, Elder Christine Berry, Elder Gary Hay,

and Elder Linda Hay from Unadilla Presbyterian Church, Gregory, MI, be granted an exception to Ruling Elder Terms of Service (G-2.0404) for 1 year.

9. **To receive** the Report of the Stated Clerk for today, as follows:

### **REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK**

**Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence**

**June 10, 2025**

1. **FOR CLERKS OF SESSION - REVIEW OF 2024 SESSION MINUTES:** The review of the 2024 session minutes is in process. A report of the review will be provided at the meeting scheduled for September 13, 2025. There are two more session review clusters scheduled. If you were unable to attend your scheduled minute review cluster, you may attend one of the final two clusters. Clerks may also contact Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom, Associate Clerk, to make an appointment to bring the congregation's minutes and register books to the presbytery office for review.

The 2024 Minute Review Checklist is posted on the Presbytery website. Please contact Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom with any questions you might have about the 2024 session minutes reviews.

Cluster 1 – June 10, 2025 at 1 p.m. – Cathy Smart/Annamarie Groenenboom  
Location: First Presbyterian Church, 221 East Harris Street, Cadillac, MI  
Big Rapids, Cadillac First, Hesperia, Lake City

Cluster 4 – June 14, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. – Annamarie Groenenboom  
Location: Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1515 Helen Avenue, Portage, MI  
Allegan, Gobles, Hastings, Kalamazoo First, Kalamazoo North, Paw Paw,  
Plainwell, Portage Westminster, Richland, Schoolcraft, Three Rivers

2. **BOUNDARY AND ETHICS TRAINING:** The PCUSA Constitution in the *Book of Order* mandates all councils (this includes sessions) to adopt and implement sexual misconduct policies “which shall include requirements for training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct and child sexual abuse prevention . . . at least every 36 months.” (G-3.0106) The Presbytery of Lake Michigan also mandates sexual misconduct/boundary training every 36 months for teaching elders, including retired ministers, commissioned ruling elders, ruling elders, and Christian educators who are active in the ministry of the Presbytery. If members of your session have not yet completed Boundary Training, please contact Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom, Associate

Clerk, or Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence, Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, for information about how to schedule or complete boundary training..

Upcoming Dates:

- September 13, 2025, at Battle Creek First - Ruling Elder Boundary Training
- September 20, 2025, at TBD - Teaching Elder Boundary Training
- October 11, 2025, at GR Forest Hills - Teaching Elder Boundary Training

\*Training will be led by Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence and Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom.

**3. REQUEST FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR PRESBYTERY MEETINGS:**

The Stated Clerk asks that all requests for excused absences be made through the online system available on the Presbytery website or by using this link:

<https://lakemichiganpresbytery.breezechms.com/form/6ce58f>. *Requests for excused absences not requested through the online system may not be recorded correctly.*

**4. DATES FOR STATED MEETINGS IN 2025:** The dates for stated meetings of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan for 2025 are as follows:

- a. Saturday, March 8, 2025 – *E LANSING EASTMINSTER*
- b. Tuesday, June 10, 2025 – *CADILLAC FIRST*
- c. Saturday, September 13, 2025 -*BATTLE CREEK FIRST*
- d. Tuesday, December 2, 2025 - *JENISON PARKWOOD*

**Thank you to these congregations for generously hosting a meeting of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.**

**5. PROPERTY SALES:**

**First United Presbyterian Church of Dimondale, MI**

On April 18, 2025, First Presbyterian Church of Concord, MI sold 301 Hanover St, Concord, MI 49237 for the sum of \$140,000.00.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: BEG AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE S LN OF HANOVER ST WITH THE E LN OF CONCORD ST TH N 89DEG 33'30"E ALG THE S LN OF HANOVER ST 68.64 FT TH S 1DEG 18'E 165 FT TH S 89DEG 33'30"W 68.64 FT TO THE E LN OF CONCORD ST TH N 1DEG 18'E ALG THE E LN OF CONCORD ST 165 FT TO BEG. BEING PART OF LOT 162 ASSESSOR'S PLAT OF VILLAGE OF CONCORD, UNRECORDED. SEC 27 T3S R3W

## **6. REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSIONS:**

### **First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI**

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of Marshall, MI

June 10, 2025

The Members of the Administrative Commission (AC) continue to work diligently and pastorally with the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Marshall.

Members of the AC continue to attend all Session Meetings of the Marshall Church, either in-person or virtually, to provide support and clarity of communication.

The Mission Study Committee continues to work on a Mission Study with support from AC member Elder Nancy Toth. The Session is currently making suggested additions and changes to their first draft of their Mission Study.

The Session is finding it challenging to replace their Clerk of Session, who resigned effective April 3, 2025.

A Session representative will be attending the Annual Minute Review on May 31, 2025, at Jackson First.

On June 15, 2025, the 90-day contract of the Stated Supply Pastor, Rev. Charlotte Ellison, will be renewed upon agreement of the AC, the Session, and Rev. Ellison. The AC will continue to support the session in their ministry as they chart a path forward.

Respectfully Submitted by  
The AC for Marshall First Presbyterian Church

Amber Nettleton (MAL)  
Nancy Toth (Jackson First)  
Brad Sparks (Grand Rapids Westminster)

### **First Presbyterian Church of Richland, MI**

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of Richland, MI

June 10, 2025

The Richland Administrative Commission continues its work. Since the last Stated Meeting in March 2025, the AC representatives met with the Richland Session on March



12, 2025, on April 15, 2025, and will attend the May 21, 2025, meeting. Rev. Seth Weeldreyer continues to serve as moderator for these meetings. The Richland AC normally meets weekly by Zoom to discuss progress, issues to address, and guidance to provide to the Richland Session and other congregational leaders. Rev. Calvin Bremer (Assistant to Executive Presbyter) and Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk) offer instructive and beneficial guidance to the AC.

Rev. Kristin Stroble consulted with and coordinated her work with the AC, until she left for a three-month sabbatical on April 28. She represented the Presbytery as Presbytery Staff liaison to COM-related issues with special emphasis on the process of seeking, interviewing, and hiring an Interim Pastor. The Richland Session appointed an Interim Search Committee, reviewed several Ministry of Discernment Profiles (MDP), and selected a candidate to interview with Rev. Stroble's input and approval. The AC interviewed the Candidate and approved moving forward with agreed-upon Covenant Agreement. The candidate Rev. Calandra R. Nevenzel (United Church of Christ) has accepted the invitation to become Interim Pastor. She begins her work (part-time) on May 17, 2025. Beginning July 1, 2025, she will be full-time.

Officer training for Elders and Deacons was coordinated by the Richland church and Presbytery staff. Rev. Kristin Stroble and Presbytery Stated Clerk, Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence, provided the training on April 26, 2025.

The Richland Session has made significant progress in reviewing, updating, and clarifying its church policies and procedures related to committees, staff, and Finances.

The AC members are grateful for the cooperative spirit that characterizes the relationship between the AC and the Richland Session and congregation. We also request your continued prayers for all those involved.

Elder Stuart Deming (Kalamazoo First), Rev. David Milbourn (HR), and Rev. Dan Anderson (Spring Lake).

### **Fairplain Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor, MI**

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Administrative Commission for Fairplain Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor, MI

June 10, 2025

The Benton Harbor Fairplain Presbyterian Church engaged in discernment concerning its future for over 3 years. They utilized assistance from the Commission on Ministry, consulted with Presbytery staff members, and explored possible joint ministry with other

congregations. These efforts culminated in the fall of 2024 as the congregation moved toward dissolution. The Presbytery appointed an Administrative Commission made up of the Rev. Helen Havlik, Moderator; the Rev. Linda Male, Secretary; Ruling Elder Marlene Smith, clerk of the Fairplain Session. The Rev. Dr. Cal Bremer, Presbytery staff member, served as resource advisor to the Commission.

The congregation of the Fairplain Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor assembled in God's name on Sunday, November 17, 2024, at 10:45 am in the Courtyard Room of the church located at 210 W. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, MI. Upon motion and support, the congregation considered a motion to request the Presbytery to dissolve the congregation and corporation. Following discussion and questions, the congregation members present in person and on Zoom then voted unanimously (28 votes, which represent 82% of the current active membership of 34) to approve the motion.

The Presbytery approved the following recommendations from the Administrative Commission at its December 03, 2024, Stated Meeting:

1. The dissolution of the congregation, when the way be clear, but not later than September 30, 2025. Note: The "when the way be clear" language is used to provide flexibility in dealing with the numerous details related to church employees, finances, and contracts with various entities.
2. Extending the term of the following elders and trustees for one year: Pete Wendel, J. Michael Hall, Leslie Gilreath & Marlene Smith. These terms will end when the dissolution is effectuated.
3. Conveying to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan all real property held by Fairplain Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor, Michigan.

The members of the AC request you to join us in giving thanks to God for the effective ministry of this congregation for 72 years since its founding in 1952. The Session members with the help of Presbytery are committed to helping find new church homes for the members.

The final worship service was held on December 29, 2024, in the sanctuary. Worship included a celebration of the Lord's Supper and was led by Rev. Laurie Hartzell (preacher), Rev. David Schell (former pastor), and church liturgists and musicians. Following the service, over 100 worshippers enjoyed a catered lunch.

Two part-time employees continued with the activities necessary to provide required records to the Presbytery and for stability in the church building until the building was sold. Their final work dates were the end of April. Rev. Scott Paul-Bonham agreed to provide limited pastoral care until the dissolution is completed.

The church building was listed by Patriot Realty in January, 2025, for \$595,900. The listing generated multiple inquiries. The building was viewed by twelve different parties who envisioned a variety of uses for the building. Currently there are more than 55 former church and school buildings for sale in Michigan. Most that sold did so at a price discounted from the original listed price.

The AC meeting on Monday, February 17, 2025, reviewed an offer of \$555,000 from the Central Wesleyan Church of Holland dba Overflow Church. The AC decided to proceed with recommending acceptance of this offer to the March 08, 2025, Stated Meeting. The AC celebrated the potential for another worshipping community to use this building for ministry.

The compressed time frame of fewer than three weeks meant that some of the conditions could not be met by the time of the Stated Meeting. However, delaying decisions until the June Stated Meeting was not prudent for either the PLM or for Central Wesleyan Church of Holland. There are continuing utility costs associated with the building, and we recognized that vacant buildings can become targets for vandalism.

The Presbytery of Lake Michigan at its Stated Meeting on March 08, 2025, approved the following:

1. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan approves the sale of properties described below for the sum of \$555,000 to Central Wesleyan Church of Holland, MI, dba Overflow Church.
2. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan authorizes the Fairplain Administrative Commission to make such adjustments in price and conditions of the sale as the Commission deems appropriate to consummate the sale.
3. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan authorizes the Stated Clerk, the Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence; the Treasurer, Kirk Truesdell; or the President of the Corporation, Beth Dyer, jointly or individually, to execute all documents necessary to implement the sale to Central Wesleyan church of Holland dba Overflow Church.

April 30, 2025, the building was sold to Central Wesleyan Church of Holland, dba Overflow Church for \$555,000. The charges and adjustments involved in the sale amounted to \$34,741.69 leaving the PLM with a net on this sale of \$520,258.31. The AC takes note that Ron Lemmon/Patriot Realty reduced his commission to 2.5 % compared with the buyer's commission of 3.0%.

The AC approved the dissolution date of May 30, 2025, and approved transfer of that balance in the Fairplain bank account to the Presbytery prior to that date. The AC continues to work with the Fairplain elders to encourage the remaining members of the congregation to identify and affiliate with a new church home.

**The AC believes that it has completed the tasks assigned to it and respectfully recommends to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan that the Fairplain Administrative Commission be dismissed effective June 11, 2025.**

The Rev. Helen Havlik, Moderator

The Rev. Linda Male, Secretary

Ruling Elder Marlene Smith, Clerk of Fairplain Session

*This concludes the reports of the Administrative Commissions.*

***This concludes the Clerk's Report***

10. **To receive** the following report from the Commission on Ministry:

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY STATED MEETING  
of the PRESBYTERY of LAKE MICHIGAN  
June 10, 2025**

Since the last Presbytery meeting, the COM Plenary has met once (May 27, 2025), and the Northern, Eastern, and Southwestern Regions have met as needed. The following report deals with actions that the Commission has recommended to the Presbytery, actions taken by the Commission and its Regions on behalf of the Presbytery, and other matters of a general nature.

**REPORT ON ACTIONS REGARDING CALLS, INSTALLATIONS, AND RELATED MATTERS:**

1. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the COM Plenary meeting of February 25, 2025.

2. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the COM Regions since the February 25, 2025, Plenary meeting.
3. **A motion prevailed** to allow Rev. Chad Herring (Heartland Presbytery) to labor within the bounds of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.
4. **A motion prevailed** to add Rev. Jake Kaufman (HR) and Rev. Annemarie Kidder (Retired) to the pulpit supply list.
5. **A motion prevailed** to approve \$250 from the COM 2025 budget for the Validated Ministers Luncheon.
6. **A motion prevailed** to approve the 2025 Terms of Call and Covenant Agreement Report.
7. Allegan: **A motion prevailed** to schedule a congregational town hall meeting with Rev. Lorenzo Small (Battle Creek First) and Rev. Amber Nettleton (MAL).
8. Battle Creek Westlake: **A motion prevailed** to authorize Elder Kerri Comai to administer communion for one year, April 10, 2025, through April 9, 2026. **A motion prevailed** to recommend to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan the appointment of an Administrative Commission.
9. Brooklyn: **A motion prevailed** to approve the mission study. **A motion prevailed** to allow Brooklyn to form a Pastor Nominating Committee on March 19, 2025.
10. East Lansing Eastminster: Rev. Kristin Stroble is on sabbatical from April 28, 2025, through July 28, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Jeff O'Neill (HR) as moderator from April 28, 2025, through July 28, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Dr. Fran Lane-Lawrence as the moderator for their congregational meeting on June 29, 2025.
11. Decatur First/Paw Paw First: **A motion prevailed** to extend Rev. Gail Monsma's current covenant agreement through May 31, 2025.
12. Edwardsburg: Rev. Scott Scheel's 2025 Terms of Call are under the minimum salary requirement. He was informed that adjustments would need to be made to raise his Total Effective Salary to the minimum salary requirement.

13. Grand Rapids North Park: Rev. Philomena Ofori-Nipaah's house was damaged during the recent storms. She has been connected with the Board of Pensions and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.
14. Gregory Unadilla: **A motion prevailed** to recommend to the Presbytery that Elder Jodi McCoy, Elder Christine Berry, Elder Gary Hay, and Elder Linda Hay be granted an exception to G-2.0404 and be allowed to extend their terms as active elders on session for 1 year.
15. Jackson Westminster: **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Ben Rumbaugh as moderator from April 28, 2025, through July 28, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. John Best (HR) as the moderator for their congregational meeting on June 15, 2025. Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom provided Clerk of Session training on May 19, 2025. **A motion prevailed** to approve a covenant agreement between Westminster Presbyterian Church and Rev. Judy Goodrow (UCC) as full-time stated supply pastor effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Salary	\$47,370
Housing	\$15,000
Education & Meetings	\$2,000
Pension (UCC, 14%)	\$10,153
Vacation	4 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Professional Development	2 weeks, including 4 Sundays
Sick Time	2 weeks

\*Westminster pays 50% of the compensation package

16. Jonesville First: Rev. Lynne Fry has accepted a new call. Her last Sunday in the pulpit will be June 15, 2025. Following that, she will lead a congregational trip to Scotland, using her accumulated vacation time. Rev. Fry's last date of employment will be July 15, 2025. The congregation's annual corporate report has not been filed for the past 4 years, and the congregation has become unincorporated. The COM will work with the PLM Trustees to correct the congregation's corporate status.
17. Kalamazoo First: Rev. Amber Nettleton resigned from her position as Temporary Stated Supply Pastor effective April 4, 2025. Rev. Chrissy Westbury is on sabbatical.
18. Kalamazoo North: **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between CRE Charles Moerdyk and North Presbyterian Church as part-time (10 hours) pastor effective January 1, 2025- December 31, 2025.

Salary:	\$5,100
Housing Allowance:	\$5,100
Expenses:	\$ 500 (including mileage at IRS rate)
Books/Continuing Education:	\$500
Continuing Education Time:	2 weeks, including 2 Sundays
Vacation Time:	4 weeks including 4 Sundays

19. Plainwell: **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between First Presbyterian church of Plainwell, MI, and Elder Nathan Martens as part-time (20 hours) pastoral intern effective March 23, 2025-May 31, 2025. Elder Martins will receive a rate of \$15 per hour.
20. Schoolcraft: Rev. Jerry Duggins (Portage Westminster) was appointed to serve as the congregation's transition counselor. **A motion prevailed** to approve the covenant agreement between First Presbyterian Church of Schoolcraft, MI, and Rev. Tom Kragt (RCA) as part-time (25 hours) temporary supply pastor effective April 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025.

Cash Salary	\$13,564.06
Free Use of Manse with Utilities	\$6,793.50
Retirement Contribution	\$1,050 (175/month)
Total Effective Salary	\$21,407.56
Travel	IRS Rate
Books/Professional Expenses	\$300
Professional Development	\$800
Vacation	2 weeks, including 2 Sundays
Study Leave	1 week, including 1 Sunday

21. Three Rivers/Centreville First: **A motion prevailed** to grant Rev. Brenda Deily the status of Pastor Emerita. **A motion prevailed** to appoint Rev. Amber Nettleton as moderator of the session until an interim pastor is identified. Rev. Mark Pawlowski was informed that he is unable to lead worship or administer communion for the congregation per the terms of his Covenant of Closure.

*This concludes the report of the Commission on Ministry.*

**PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN  
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY  
March 8, 2025**

The Commission met three times since the last Stated Meeting of the Presbytery—Regular stated meetings on March 25, 2025, April 22, 2025, and May 27, 2025. The following report deals with the actions that the Commission has recommended to the Presbytery, actions taken by the Commission on behalf of the Presbytery, and other matters of a general nature.

1. **A motion prevailed** to approve the minutes of the Commission on the Preparation for Ministry of February 25, 2025, March 25, 2025, and April 22, 2025.

2. **A motion prevailed** to approve the Covenant Agreement between First Presbyterian Church of Plainwell, MI and Elder Nathan Martens as pastoral intern, effective March 30, 2025-May 30, 2025. See COM Report for Covenant Agreement Details.

*This concludes the report of the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry.*

*This concludes the Consent Agenda.*

## **WORSHIP**

Rev. Ruth-Aimée Belonni-Rosario (New York City), along with several members of the Presbytery, led the service of worship. Rev. Belonni-Rosario read Acts 2:1-21. During the sermon, she described how the invitation of Pentecost is to dig deeper to experience God through other people. Pentecost is an opportunity to be fully ourselves. She highlighted how often we encounter people and choose to only see one aspect of the individual instead of the whole person. She encouraged the members of the Presbytery to look for new ways to hear and understand one another and people different from them. After the sermon, the Presbytery recognized and offered praise for the ministry of Fairplain Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor, MI. The offering was designated for the PC(USA) Immigration Services, and \$812.50 was received. The Presbytery celebrated the Lord's Supper with the Rev. Michael Horlocker (Cadillac) and Rev. Dr. Janice Jasperse (Lake City First) presiding at the table.

The Presbytery recessed for a 17-minute break at 10:58 a.m. The meeting was reconvened at 11:15 a.m.

## **KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

Rev. Ruth-Aimée Belonni-Rosario described her role as Associate Executive for Racial Justice and explained how she plans to resource Presbyteries and churches on matters of racial justice. A small group discussion focused on the experiences of race. Rev. Belonni-Rosario emphasized ways members of the Presbytery are responsible for both those we see and those we do not see.



She described the hard and emotional work of racial justice and encouraged the Presbytery to be disruptors in the church and in society.

## **NOMINATING & REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Rev. Lisa Schrott (Okemos) presented the report from the Nominating and Representation Committee. Rev. Schrott reported the following resignation:

### **Commission on Ministry (COM) (Southwest)**

Rev. Dr. Philomina Ofori-Nipaah (GR North Park), COM (Southwest), Class of 2025

Rev. Schrott recognized and presented the following slate of nominees for consideration:

### **Commission on Ministry (COM) (North)**

Rev. Douglas Brouwer (HR), Class of 2027

### **Commission on Ministry (COM) (East)**

Rev. Steve Kaszar, (Homer & Concord ), Class of 2027

### **Commission on Ministry (COM) (East)**

Rev. Dr. Rob Carlson, (HR), Class of 2027

### **Committee for Preparation for Ministry (CPM)**

Rev. David Schell (Jackson First), Class of 2027

Rev. Troy Hauser-Brydon, moderator, opened the floor for nominations, and there were none. **A motion prevailed** to close nominations from the floor. **A motion prevailed** to elect the slate of nominees as presented.

Rev. Schrott encouraged members of the Presbytery to submit applications to serve as commissioners to the 227th General Assembly, June 22-July 2, 2026, in Milwaukee, WI. The names of those nominated will be presented for election at the stated meeting of the Presbytery scheduled for September 13, 2025. Rev. Schrott also highlighted resources focusing on anti-racism, immigration, and LGBTQIA+.

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER**

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence offered thanks to the Presbytery and described how the Presbytery is disrupting the sins of racism, poverty, and hunger. Rev. Lane-Lawrence introduced the PC(USA) Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church document and described how, as a Matthew 25 Presbytery, the Presbytery is doing the work of the Gospel. She encouraged the Presbytery to

consider adopting the document and to embrace becoming a sanctuary and accompaniment Presbytery as part of its identity. The Presbytery will consider this at the September 13, 2025, stated meeting. Rev. Lane-Lawrence also reminded commissioners and pastors of Presbytery grant opportunities.

## **COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REPORT**

Rev. Ben Rumbaugh (Lansing Delta/Dimondale) presented the report of the Commission on Ministry (COM). Rev. Rumbaugh presented background information related to Westlake Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek, MI. The session of Westlake Presbyterian requested an Administrative Commission to assist with discerning the future of their ministry. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the recommendation of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry to appoint an administrative commission of three to five members to the Westlake Presbyterian Church of Battle Creek, MI at the request of the session.

**Recommendation:** The Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry (COM) recommends that the Presbytery appoint an administrative commission of three to five members to the Westlake Presbyterian Church of Battle Creek, MI at the request of the session.

**Rationale:** The recommendation, made at the request of the session, comes with full awareness of the congregation's historical apprehension regarding the involvement of both administrative commissions and the Presbytery. COM approaches this matter with deep respect for the ministry partnership the Presbytery has shared with Westlake.

The proposed administrative commission will support the session and congregation during this challenging period of decision-making and transition. The primary goal is to support the congregation in concluding its ministry and mission with care and integrity, and provide guidance and resolution to any issues of disorder it encounters. The commission will aim to provide stability, guidance, and pastoral sensitivity as the congregation plans and concludes its particular ministry.

## **Background**

In 2021, Westlake sold two parcels of land in response to financial challenges, hoping to sustain its ministries. By June 2023, COM had learned that the session had not met for approximately two years, contrary to the requirements of the PCUSA Book of Order, which stipulates that the session meet quarterly (G-3.0203). During that time, ruling elders had also not been elected, despite the Book of Order's directive that the session govern the congregation and guide its witness (G-3.0201).

Recognizing the complexity of the situation, COM partnered with the congregation to restore

governance by assisting in the election of elders, providing training for church officers, and helping to reestablish Presbyterian polity in decision-making. These steps were taken collaboratively.

More recently, concerns have been raised regarding leadership, the congregation's connection to its Presbyterian identity, and the ongoing involvement of a non-ordained leader from the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. The session has not pursued an installed or supply pastor within the PC(USA) or Formula of Agreement denomination in nearly a decade. Meanwhile, the congregation's financial instability persists.

Acknowledging these realities and after discussion with COM, the session has now formally requested the Presbytery's support in appointing an administrative commission to assist in the process of concluding their ministry.

### **Purpose**

In response to the session's request, the Commission on Ministry recommends to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan that an Administrative Commission of three to five members be appointed by the Moderator of the Presbytery, in consultation with the Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, for the following purpose:

1. To provide pastoral care and support during this time of transition and conclusion of Westlake's ministry and dissolution of the congregation.
2. To assist members of the congregation in identifying other Presbyterian congregations to which to transfer their membership.
3. To collaborate with the session and members of the congregation in concluding its ministry and mission.
4. To partner with the Presbytery of Lake Michigan Trustees in the legal and property-related aspects of the church dissolution process.

### **Scope of Authorities**

1. This Administrative Commission has the authority of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, except where limited by provisions of the PC(USA) Book of Order, to
  - a. To work with the session/congregation to discern and implement necessary steps to conclude the ministry of Westlake Presbyterian Church and to dissolve the congregation at a date to be determined by the Administrative Commission. The Administrative Commission may partner with the Commission on Ministry and Presbytery staff to support their work in this area as needed.
  - b. To implement appropriate plans and steps relevant to the pastoral support of members of the congregation during the dissolution process. The Administrative Commission may

partner with the Commission on Ministry and Presbytery staff to support their work in this area as needed.

c. To effectuate the dissolution of the Michigan corporation and the sale of the property. The Administrative Commission shall partner with the Presbytery Trustees and Presbytery staff to support their work in this area as needed.

d. To assume original jurisdiction to effectuate dissolution of the congregation and sale of property, if the Administrative Commission determines it is necessary, adhering to provisions of the PCUSA Constitution found in the Book of Order.

### **Financial Responsibility:**

The Westlake Presbyterian Church of Battle Creek, MI, will be responsible for any costs associated with the dissolution of the congregation and the sale of the property.

### **Presbytery Authorities Granted by the PCUSA Constitution in the Book of Order that may apply**

G-3.0109b – Administrative Commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibility, they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the Council.

(5) by presbyteries visiting particular congregations over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling difficulties therein, except that no commission of presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body. (G-2.0901)

### **G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions**

Presbytery, being composed of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community. In order to accomplish this responsibility, the presbytery has the authority to:

- a. develop strategy for the mission of the church in its district;
- b. control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move, as well as to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members;
- c. counsel with a session concerning reported difficulties within a congregation, including:

- (1.) advising the session as to appropriate actions to be taken to resolve the reported difficulties,
  - (2.) offering to help as a mediator, and
  - (3.) acting to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unable or unwilling to do so, following the procedural safeguards of the Church Discipline;
- d. assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.

## **LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORT**

Rev. Dr. Lynnette Sparks provided information about the work of the Presbytery Staffing Taskforce. The task force determined that the current staffing structure of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan meets the needs of and supports the values of the Presbytery. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to leave the position of Associate Presbyter vacant.

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence presented several recommendations from the Leadership Team regarding the designation of funds from the sale of properties. The designated funds will provide educational opportunities and resources to congregations within the Presbytery, assist congregations in times of transition, and provide funding for mediation training. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to designate \$5,000 (funds from the sale of properties) for the educational gathering of “small” churches (100 members or less). **A motion prevailed** to designate \$5,000 (funds from the sale of properties) for the educational gathering of “large” churches (300 members or more). **A motion prevailed** to designate \$10,000 for Alternative Transitional Minister Initiative - Transitional Ministry Pathways - (funds from the sale of properties). **A motion prevailed** to designate \$20,000 for mediation training with Lombard Peace Center (10 people).

## **REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION**

### **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES OF PAW PAW AND DECATUR, MI**

Rev. Cathy Caldwell Hoop (Holland First) presented a report on behalf of the Administrative Commission (AC). Rev. Caldwell Hoop described the work of the AC and the discernment process with First Presbyterian Churches of Paw Paw, MI, and Decatur, MI. Through the discernment process and congregational votes on May 4, 2025, the congregations have discerned

that they should merge into one new congregation. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed to**

1. Receive the document titled "Plan for Union and Merger" from the Sessions of First Presbyterian of Decatur, MI, and First Presbyterian of Paw Paw, MI, dated May 20, 2025, and acknowledge with appreciation the investment of time, energy, love, and imagination with which it was created, and;
2. Approve the work of the Administrative Commission and its recommendations listed below. (With subpoints A-C of 1,2)
  1. The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, MI needs to call a congregational meeting to approve the following recommendations:
    - A. The dissolution of the congregation "when the way be clear," but not later than March 15, 2026.

Note: This is to provide flexibility since we cannot predict with certainty how long certain processes will take.
    - B. Extending the terms of the currently serving elders for up to one year  
Note: These terms will terminate upon dissolution of the congregation.
    - C. Conveying to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan the real property held by First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, MI.

Note: This property will be granted to the new congregation when the legal and ecclesiastical requirements for its formation are met.
  2. The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Decatur, MI needs to call a congregational meeting to approve the following recommendations
    - A. The dissolution of the congregation "when the way be clear", but not later than March 15, 2026.

Note: This is to provide flexibility since we cannot predict with certainty how long certain processes will take.
    - B. Extending the terms of the currently serving elders for up to one year  
Note: These terms will terminate upon dissolution of the congregation.
    - C. Conveying to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan the real property held by First Presbyterian Church of Decatur.

Note: This is consistent with the provisions of the Book of Order G-4.02

3. Authorize the AC in conjunction with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan to take appropriate actions to implement the above recommendations.
4. Acknowledge that the timelines found in the “Plan for Union and Merger” are aspirational and may be impacted by unforeseen delays or new information regarding necessary steps to be taken.
5. Continue in prayer for these congregations and those involved in this undertaking.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m. Rev. Dr. Troy Hauser-Brydon closed the meeting with prayer and the extinguishing of the Christ Candle.

**The next Presbytery meeting is scheduled for Saturday, September 13, 2025  
at First Presbyterian Church  
111 Capital Ave NE  
Battle Creek, MI 49017**