

# PRESBYTERY OF SHEPPARDS AND LAPSLEY

*partner with and equip present and emerging  
PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama  
to serve Christ and our neighbors*



**Fall Stated Meeting  
November 21, 2024**

**Cahaba Springs Presbyterian Church  
Trussville, AL**

*Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices*

9:30	Call to Order and Opening Prayer Organization – Declaration of Quorum, Adoption of Docket, Seating of Corresponding Members, Welcome of First Time Commissioners, Welcome of Visitors, Requests for New Business to the Stated Clerk in writing by 11:00 AM	Moderator Deborah Thomas
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1. To approve the minutes of the August 15, 2024 meetings
2. To approve the requests for absences from today's meeting
3. To adopt an "Electronic Meetings Rule" for this meeting so that virtual attendees seeking recognition from the Chair be allowed to unmute themselves and call for the attention of the Moderator for recognition and obtaining the floor.
4. Approval of the former Permanent Judicial Commission members to serve if needed, to make a quorum: Lee Cleveland, Debbie Feagin, Mike Mastin, Mary Porter, and Teresa Pulliam.
5. To receive, record and approve the minutes of the Commission of the Presbytery to install the Rev. Cort Gatliff as Pastor of the South Highland Presbyterian Church on September 8, 2024.
6. To accept these invitations to host meetings of the Presbytery: February 20, 2025 at First Presbyterian of Wetumpka; on May 15, 2025, at Grace Church of Tuscaloosa. Invitations are welcomed for the August 21 and November 20, 2025, meetings.

deNay Kirkpatrick

## Gathering of the People

arr. Martha S. Kelsey

**Tony Larson**

Lynda McLean

**Leader:** Our help is in the name of our God, who made heaven and earth.

***People: Amen.***

**Leader:** Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving. Make music upon the harp. How good it is to celebrate God's presence and sing praise throughout each day!

**People: How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!**

*Leader:* Our God rebuilds the people of earth. The wandering ones are gathered together, the brokenhearted are healed, the hungry are fed, the prisoners are freed, the blind are given sight, the lonely are befriended.

**People: How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!**

*Leader:* All of nature sings aloud God's goodness—clouds, rain, grass, creatures great and small. Our God creates and sustains our world with his ever-growing, never-ending love.

**People: How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God! (Psalm 147)**

*Leader:* Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord.

**People: Amen.**

†Hymn 409

*God Is Here!*

ABBOT'S LEIGH

Call to Confession

Julie Helmers

Prayer of Confession

(Unison)

Julie Helmers

Loving God, we gather today rich in blessing, somehow believing that we merit the wealth and comforts that we enjoy. Forgive us, our God, for comfortably closing our eyes to the faces of the poor that stare blankly in our direction. With bellies full of grain and meat, we offer token gestures to the hungry in our world and we feel we have done enough. Forgive us, God, for keeping a distance between "us" and "them," for closing our ears to the cries of the hungry. With hands tightly clasping our treasures on earth, we cannot reach out to our oppressed brothers and sisters around this world. Forgive us for clinging to our own possessions rather than to you. Unite us with hearts of thanksgiving that we may work to insure freedom and justice for all. Lord, have mercy on us.

Assurance of God's Grace

Julie Helmers

†Passing of the Peace

deNay Kirkpatrick

The peace that Christ shared with us is not for us to keep, but is to be shared with all. As Christ Jesus has shared his peace with each of us, let us now share that peace with each other.

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Proclaiming God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination

David Perry

First Reading

2 Kings 5: 1-14 (NRSVUE)

David Perry

**5** Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. **2** Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. **3** She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." **4** So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. **5** And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. **6** He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." **7** When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

**8** But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." **9** So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. **10** Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." **11** But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! **12** Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. **13** But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" **14** So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

The Word of God, given for *all* people.

**Thanks be to God.**

The Second Reading

Psalm 100 (NRSVUE)

David Perry

**1** Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

**2** Serve the LORD with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.

**3** Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

**4** Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him; bless his name.

**5** For the LORD is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

The Word of God, given for *all* people.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem**

*Give Thanks*  
Julie Helmers and Kay Carter

arr. Vicki Tucker Courtney

**11** On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. **12** As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, **13** they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” **14** When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. **15** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. **16** He prostrated himself at Jesus’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? **18** Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?” **19** Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

The Word of God, given for *all* people.

**Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

deNay Kirkpatrick

†Hymn 612

*We Praise You, O God*

KREMSER

### **Responding to God’s Grace**

†Affirmation of Faith

(Unison) written by Tim Tate

George Fritsma

**I believe in a God who created all things and seeks for all to be in communion as God’s people.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ who showed us how to share love, and who commissioned us to go out into the highways and byways inviting all to be a part of God’s work in the world.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit who leads and guides us into the world, then touches the lives of those around us in ways that make them receptive to love. I believe in the harvest and the call for laborers to receive and respond, sharing light and life with the world. Amen.**

Presentation of Tithes and Offerings

George Fritsma

(50% of the offering goes to CPM for candidates and 50% is used as a Presbytery discretionary fund for pastoral care. Please give generously.)

Offertory Music

†The Doxology 608

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise God, all creatures here below;  
praise God above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

†The Prayer of Dedication

deNay Kirkpatrick

**Holy Communion**

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Ernie Haynes

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving  
The Lord be with you.

deNay Kirpatrick and Ernie Haynes

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Communion (by intinction)

Communion Music

Joe Carter

Prayer after Communion

Memorials

### **Sending of God's People**

†Hymn 39

*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*

FAITHFULNESS

†Benediction

deNay Kirkpatrick

**And all God's children say: Alleluia, Amen!**

Except where otherwise noted, the liturgy for today's service was adapted from *Service of Thanksgiving* by Rev. Donald Jansma

*Cahaba Springs Presbyterian Church gratefully acknowledges all who participated in today's worship:*

Joe Carter – Music Director, Cahaba Springs

George Fritsma – Elder, Cahaba Springs

Ernie Haynes, CRE - Cahaba Springs

deNay Kirkpatrick, CRE - Pastor, Cahaba Springs

Tony Larson, Co-Moderator of the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

Lynda McLean - Clerk of Session, Cahaba Springs

David Perry - Elder, Cahaba Springs

Kay Carter - Pianist

Julie Helmers - Elder, Cahaba Springs

## Ministry Within Our Presbytery

10:30 Greetings from the Co-Moderator of the PC(USA) General Assembly, the Rev. Tony Larson

11:15 Greetings from Caminos® Nacional and Presbyterian Home for Children

Doug Marshall and Adalis Ortiz-Vega (Caminos)

11:30 Executive Council (page 13)

Ed Hurley

1. Good News from Matthew 25 churches

Jonathan Yarboro

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is a Matthew 25 Presbytery where:

We do hereby commit to become a Matthew 25 mid council. We pledge to encourage 20% or more of our congregations to become Matthew 25 churches and embrace these areas of focus: Building congregational vitality; Dismantling structural racism; Eradicating systemic poverty. We promise to keep track of the impact of our ministry and share our stories with the PC(USA) from time to time.

2. **Approve the request from The Board of UKirk Birmingham, the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church, and the Equip, Nurture Connect Committee for the future of its ministry.** (pages 14-18)
3. **Approve the Transition Plan for General Presbyter and Stated Clerk.** (page 16)

12:00 Lunch

1: 00 PM General Presbyter's Report (page 19)

Sue Westfall

1: 10 Bills & Overtures Committee (proposed amendments pages 20-77)

1: 20 Commission on Preparation for Ministry (page 78)

Nicole Newton

1. **The CPM requests approval of the following individuals to serve as ordination exam graders in 2025: Teaching Elder - Emily Frandsen, Ruling Elder - Jeff Johnson, Alternate (Ruling Elder) - Adrienne Stokes**

1: 30 Commission on Ministry (page 79)

Carl Martin

1. **Honor CRE Bev Dodson for her service as Head of the CRE program.** (page 80-82)
2. **Examine and approve the Rev. Nicole Newton to be installed as the Associate Pastor for Discipleship at Independent Presbyterian Church beginning on December 1, 2024.** (pages 83-110)
  - a. **Effective Salary, \$85,000; Board of Pensions Dues, \$31,050.**
  - b. **Full Terms of Call and IPC Report to COM are included in the packet.**
3. **Examine the Rev. Daniel Vanek, MWS of PC(USA), who is serving as Genesis Pastor of Tuscaloosa United Church of Christ, and approve** (pages 111-134)
  - a. **membership within the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley and**
  - b. **validate his ministry with UCC Tuscaloosa.**

1:50	Congo Mission Partnership & Network Conference (Nov. 2025) (Mission Coordinator report – page 135)	Charles Nash
2:00	Finance Committee (pages 136-141) <b>1. Approve the 2025 budget for the Presbytery</b>	Wendy Tucker
2:10	Nominating (pages 142-144) <b>1. The Committee nominates the following people</b> (pages 142-144 and addendum in worship folder) <b>to fill new and unexpired terms as indicated in the packet</b>  <b>2. Election of Nominations and Representation</b> Moderator Deborah Thomas <b>(Class of 2027): Rev. Caroline Kelly, Minister of the Word and Sacrament, Grace Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, AL; Elder James (Jim) Holland, Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, AL; Elder Ron Parsons, First Presbyterian Church Auburn, Auburn, AL; Moderator: Rev. Rick Atkerson, South Highland Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL.</b>	Rick Atkerson
2:20	Trustees (addendum in worship folder and at registration)	Lant Davis
2:30	Living River (pages 145-148)	
2: 50	Stated Clerk (pages 149-153) <b>1. Approve report of the Anniston, First Administrative Commission.</b> (addendum) <b>2. Approve the report of the Five Mile Administrative Commission.</b> <b>3. Approve the report of Second Administrative Commission.</b> <b>4. Approve the report of Fairfield Highlands Administrative Commission and to approve the request of the AC to be dissolved with thanks for their service.</b> <b>5. Approve Committee on Representation report.</b> (pages 154-156)  New Business from Bills & Overtures	Jay Wilkins
3:00 PM	Adjournment with Prayer	Moderator Deborah Thomas

†Please stand, if able

**After the meeting, please turn in your hanging name badge.**

We wish to extend a special thank you to deNay Kirkpatrick, the staff, and the volunteers of Cahaba Springs for hosting the Presbytery meeting today. We would also like to thank Tony Larson, Lynda McLean, Julie Helmers, David Perry, Kay Carter-pianist, George Fritsma, Ernie Haynes and Joe Carter-organ for participating in today's worship service.

**Next Stated Meeting – February 20, 2024  
First Presbyterian Church, Wetumpka, AL**



### The Rev. Anthony Larson



The Rev. Anthony L. Larson was born in Minneapolis and raised in North Carolina. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he was confirmed at Rocky River Presbyterian Church near Harrisburg, North Carolina.

As a student at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, Anthony served in the student congress as a representative, finance committee chair and speaker. He also served on the leadership team of Presbyterian Campus Ministry at UNC. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in Public

Policy Analysis and Religious Studies.

While serving as director of youth ministries at Williamsburg Presbyterian Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, Anthony began to discern a call to ministry. He received his Master of Divinity from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia.

Anthony has served in a number of capacities, including co-leader of the Synod Youth Council for the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, which planned the Synod Youth Leadership Development Event, an annual gathering to equip youth to be leaders in the church, as well as skill development for youth ministry professionals. He has also served as a planning team member for Montreat Youth Conference.

Anthony's first pastorate was with Springs Community Presbyterian Church in East Hampton, New York. He is currently serving as pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Surfside, South Carolina, and is enrolled in Doctor of Ministry studies at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

He has been married for 16 years to wife Heather, father by adoption to her son, Stephen Larson, and recently became grandfather to Nora James Larson. Anthony describes himself as a "semi-professional nerd" and backs that up as a Level 50 Pokémon Go Trainer, captain of the RogueRev Trivia Team and is officially sorted into House Ravenclaw. He loves to cook, listen to jazz, and spoil his cat and dog.

"The story of my life and faith is one of being called by God through the voices of others," Anthony said. "In each chapter of my life story, there have been people who sensed a place where my gifts and the needs of community overlapped, and they named my gifts and challenged me to develop and use them as a disciple of Jesus Christ."

# PHFC Secure Dwellings Program in Talladega, Alabama, Fills Critical Housing Need for Homeless Moms and Their Children

[Advent Season, Covenant Partner](#) / By synod

BY CINDY FISHER, Presbyterian Home For Children, Communication Director

The Presbyterian Home for Children has renovated several cottages on the Talladega, Alabama, campus over the last year to make room for more homeless children and their female caregivers in need of hard-to-find, long-term housing as part of our Secure Dwellings program.

With the expansion, the Home can now take in 24 at-risk families – that’s double the number of moms and children in crisis than before. And these families can come from anywhere in Alabama or surrounding states to live in our apartments and cottages and receive wrap-around support for up to two years.

“The Home has provided hope and healing for children and families in need for more than 156 years,” PHFC CEO Doug Marshall said. “Our investment over the last year will bring a great return as we strengthen families with love and key resources that will lead them toward a strong future.”

Growing the Secure Dwellings program fills a critical need seen throughout Alabama and beyond to provide more shelter options for homeless children and their mothers who are being left behind because there are not enough programs like ours. Our Secure Dwellings program is also one of few that accepts moms with teen boys, which allows us to keep families in crisis together.

Secure Dwellings places moms in apartments or private bedrooms with their children. Moms get support from the Home’s social workers/case managers who guide them toward gainful employment or education to help them become independent after the two-year program is complete. While living on campus, their children attend our accredited private school or the local Head Start preschool program through our community partnerships.

Secure Dwellings has been a godsend for moms like Temika Henley of Birmingham. She and her three children moved into an apartment at Ramsey Cottage in late Spring after living in their car for a month and a half.

Temika tragically lost her husband in a car accident three years ago, when she was pregnant with twin girls. Temika held it together for a while, working and raising three little ones alone. But she lost her job when she had to miss too much work taking care of the twins while they were sick last winter. Then she lost their apartment only

to find the Birmingham shelters were full. So the family lived in their 2004 Chevy Trailblazer.

"I tried to stay in safe places, but we were exposed to the elements, gunshots, just unsavory people," Temika said. "I couldn't sleep most nights. I'd sit in the driver's seat and keep an eye out."

Then she heard about the Presbyterian Home for Children and the Secure Dwellings program.

"To God be the glory, (they) had a space for us, and we were able to come and find safety here," Temika said. "This campus is so safe and secure and quiet and peaceful, and the atmosphere is just – you can feel the presence of God here."

Today, Temika is doing great. Her twins are attending preschool, while her son is thriving at our private school, Ascension Leadership Academy.

To learn more about the Secure Dwellings program and how it could help families in need near you, visit <https://phfc.org/family-services/secure-dwellings/> or contact Sharon Moore, Vice President of Transitional Housing & Family Services at [smoore@phfc.org](mailto:smoore@phfc.org) or 256-362-1438 x 1201.

## PHFC Adds Caminos® Program to Care for More At-Risk Children in Need

[Fall 2024 Issue](#) / By [synod](#)

The Presbyterian Home for Children, a new covenant partner with the Synod of Living Waters, has added a new program that will help ensure unaccompanied immigrant minors coming to Alabama are being placed in safe housing.

The Home that is based in Talladega, Alabama, has joined the national Caminos® program through a contract with nonprofit Everstand in Baltimore, Maryland, and the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Through this new contract, the Home is filling a growing need in the state of Alabama to ensure private homes are safe for migrant children who are placed with relatives living in communities throughout the state, primarily in Jefferson, Marshall, Mobile and Baldwin counties.

"Young and vulnerable children from all over the world face continued exploitation, abuse, and trafficking in the United States," PHFC President and CEO Doug Marshall said. "Currently, there are very limited resources to protect these children in Alabama. The Presbyterian Home for Children is opening the Caminos® program

because we believe all of God's children deserve the love of Christ in a safe, welcoming, home environment."

The Home has been staffing up in recent months to be ready to take on cases that task social workers with providing in-home placement support and post release services for children who entered the United States without a guardian and are placed with a sponsor family already in Alabama.

This type of work is not new to the Home. For seven years, PHFC's Family Bridges program has been helping stabilize families in crisis in their homes across seven counties in east central Alabama through a contract with the Department of Human Resources.



The Home recently hired a director to oversee the Caminos program. **Adalis Ortiz-Vega has been named program director for Caminos®**, and she considers the job a calling that fits with her passion for giving children in need the right tools to be healthy and happy.



"I want to be there for kids as they are growing into adulthood and help those who have been traumatized and be a part of their healing," she said. "They are our most vulnerable population, and they need us. We need to protect them as much as we can."

Ortiz, a Puerto Rican native, comes to the Caminos® program with a wealth of experience working with bilingual youth and teens as a licensed mental health counselor and therapist in Florida, Nebraska, Texas and New York City.

She will be based out of the Home's Caminos® office in Birmingham, which is located at the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley building.

As she gets the program started, Ortiz is hiring bilingual social workers to go into the homes and make sure the living conditions are safe.

Ortiz has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Universidad del Turabo in Puerto Rico and master's in Mental Health Counseling from Bellevue University in Nebraska, as well as a master's in pastoral counseling from Liberty University.

Ortiz had a challenging childhood herself, having witnessed domestic violence and abuse with her own parents and fights, shootings and drug deals at her family's bar they owned. She came to the United States for her education and – as a mother of two little girls – vowed to help other children fulfill the right to have a healthy homelife and "live in peace, feeling protected and loved."

"These immigrant children have experienced trauma before, during and after their journey," she said. "They have experienced domestic violence, physical abuse, sex trafficking, family separation, death. They have been threatened for money. Gangs try to recruit them. And there is trauma here, including racism and language barriers."

Ortiz's vision is to establish the Home's Caminos® program with the highest quality standards to provide the youth with strong roots to continue growing. The program will safely unify them with the family member located by ORR and prepare them to be part of their new community.

"They will be here anyway, and they were not safe in their country," Ortiz said. "Our home visits will make sure they are safe and happy. That is my wish." Participating in the Caminos® program is congruent with the Home's 156-year mission of providing hope and healing to at-risk children in need.

for more information: <https://phfc.org/family-services/caminos/>



**Executive Council Report to the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley  
November 21, 2024**

<b>Class of 2024</b>	<b>Class of 2025</b>	<b>Class of 2026</b>
Tom Bryson*	Terry Hamilton-Poore*	
Terri Moon Jones	Leeann Scarbrough*	Jothany James
Ed Hurley*	Joe Scrivner*	Neil McCarter*
Donna Winn	Deborah Thomas	Jonathan Yarboro*

**Matthew 25: next steps?**

There is a company called “Rooted Good” that has a packet to help churches assess their church’s mission and their fulfillment. Terry noted that it is to help churches look at their building space and how best to use it. First United Forestdale was suggested, and they are looking into revitalization. The cost for the packet is \$300, but Presbytery will pay for the first church (pilot) to see if it is feasible.

**MOTION: Executive Council will reach out to find a church to support a pilot project for congregational vitality and eradicating systemic poverty for \$300, to be taken out of Presbytery funds. Sue will choose the church. APPROVED**

**Affirmation of Volunteer Staff Persons:** James Ephraim, Pat Goodman, and Ralls Coston

**MOTION: To affirm the volunteer staff persons for the following year. Approved.**

**MOTION: We recommend to the Finance Committee a 3% increase for the volunteer staff persons. Approved**

**Presbytery Meeting Review & Plans:** In-Person, Hybrid, Virtual? Tech Person? At our planning meeting we will discuss with the host church their capability to have a Zoom meeting and do they have someone to run Zoom during the meeting. If they do, we have funds to compensate them. This will determine if it will be a Zoom or in-person meeting. Sue will reconvene the tech team and see if they can help us find someone.

**Mission Report:** The Congo Mission Network Conference will be in October 2025. Brown Memorial, Stillman College and the Presbytery will co-host the conference. Dates have not been set. It will be a three-day event. We need to find 3-5 people to go to the Conference next year and meet the people attending; then send them to the Congo for a visit. Council has designated a Taskforce to check into what has been going on with the Taskforce—Terry Hamilton-Poore, Deborah Thomas and Joe Scrivner will serve along with Lydia Wilfong and Charles Nash.

PDA will be doing an active shooter seminar on Nov. 2, at Southminster. Only 50 spaces are available. A few of our churches have ushers carrying guns. Southminster



had the Vestavia police come speak to them and they said no one should be carrying guns. Registration is available on the website.

**Bills and Overtures—** Recommendation from Bills & Overtures for voting on motions from GA 226. There are 13 amendments for Presbytery to vote on. Two may be pulled out to vote on separately; the rest could be voted on together.

November—share amendments in the November Presbytery packet;

February—vote on Amendments at the February Presbytery meeting

Hold Zoom review and info session for February commissioners and anyone interested in the amendments in late January and/or early February (offer the same session twice on different times of week). Discussion on who will lead these info sessions.

**MOTION: We accept the timeline recommendation from Bills and Overtures.**

**Approved**

**Hurricane Response** from David Lyons: “I know we have a lot of options available but wanted to ask if we are doing anything as a Presbytery for the victims of Hurricane Helene (and potentially Milton)? One idea we are considering at Dodson as a longer-term effort once the immediate needs have been addressed is to support a specific congregation directly to help recovery. I wanted to check to see if there are any specific plans we are working on as a Presbytery before we go too far. .... I am definitely interested in being part of any group going up from the Presbytery. I am setting aside at least one week to volunteer on site when it is most appropriate. I have a chainsaw certification and an active Wilderness First Responder certification. I believe the usual group size for the PDA is a minimum of 3 so I would have to go with a larger group.”

Ralls told David that we are not sending a team to the disaster area at the present time. Ralls is encouraging people to send money to PDA to make the clean-up buckets. Black Mountain Presbyterian is serving meals to people, and they need money to help with this and letting people charge their electronics.

**Presbytery Meeting Review & Plans:** Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly

Tony Larson has accepted an invitation to the November Meeting to present and participate. He will be in the area Nov. 20, and leave Friday afternoon.

## **ENC Report**

### **Request from UKirk Birmingham and Edgewood Presbyterian Church:**

To the Equip, Nurture, and Connect Committee:

The Board of UKirk Birmingham and the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church ask the ENC of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley to bring the following action to the appropriate council(s) for approval:

1. To dissolve the Board of UKirk Birmingham, giving deep thanks for its witness over the past seven years as a ministry of the Presbytery, and to authorize bringing the ministry under the supervision of the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

2. To transfer all funds in the UKirk Birmingham Restricted Fund to a UKirk Fund at Edgewood which will be designated for UKirk Campus Ministry expenses only. All UKirk property, branding, and social media accounts will transfer to Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

These requests have the unanimous endorsement of both the Board of UKirk Birmingham and the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

Rationale: UKirk Birmingham moved its offices to Edgewood in the spring of 2020 and has been holding all of its programming there since. Edgewood Pastor, Joe Genau, has been the volunteer Supervising Pastor for UKirk since 2020, after having served on the Board's predecessor, the Steering Team, since its inception in 2016. Edgewood has been a financial supporter of UKirk since its inception and Edgewood's membership has supported the ministry in many other ways as well.

UKirk Birmingham is at a crossroads. The departure of our full-time Campus Minister in 2020 along with the Covid-19 pandemic hit the program hard. We forged ahead with a new staffing model, leading to countless hours of vital ministry. The current program model seems to have run its course, with the Board struggling to find a path forward. Edgewood approached the Board in December with the offer to take over the program.

Joe Genau has been closely involved with UKirk Birmingham since its founding, chairing the PNC that called the first Campus Minister, providing meals and support during the first years of ministry, moderating the Steering Team, and then stepping into the void as Supervising Pastor and working directly with students for the past four years.

Edgewood's pitch was that they could take UKirk under their Session and seek to reinvent it in collaboration with UKirk's partners around the presbytery. As one Board member put it: "You mean I could help out at UKirk and not have to worry about its finances and programming? Sign me up!" Edgewood already has the location and leadership familiar to UKirk. The church would be taking on administration of the program, figuring out how to "take a new swing" at campus ministry at the various Birmingham campuses (with deep sadness at the loss of Birmingham-Southern). Pastor Joe Genau would be leading the effort and, much like youth ministry is done at Edgewood, a team of church members would work with him to make the ministry happen. Edgewood plans to incorporate campus ministry work into congregational life while maintaining the collaborative efforts that have served it well this past decade.

If this plan is approved, the UKirk Board will ask Ministry Coordinator Madison Vaughn to stay in her position through September, 2024. Her salary would continue to be paid from the UKirk Restricted Fund. Upon taking stewardship of those funds, Edgewood

plans to use these resources to offer Pastor Joe Genau a modest stipend for the additional work he is undertaking, to promote the program's relaunch this fall, and for ongoing program expenses.

Edgewood members and friends of UKirk will have ample opportunity to continue to support the ministry with gifts to the newly formed designated fund.

We hope that unleashing the passion of a congregation — particularly one forming a new identity with a merger — will help reinvigorate UKirk Birmingham. The Edgewood congregation has provided meals and loving support of UKirk, but from intentional distance.

**MOTION: Approve the two items above and dissolve the Birmingham U-Kirk Board, move the ministry to the Edgewood Session and transfer the U-Kirk funds being held at the Presbytery Office to a restricted fund at Edgewood Presbyterian at the end of the year. Approved**

This will be presented at the November Presbytery meeting.

This move to bring UKirk under Edgewood's direction will allow a group of dedicated volunteers with a deep sense of ownership to pour their Spirit-led souls into campus ministry.

**Executive Presbyter's Report:** Sue Westfall passed out a letter of retirement for January 2026. It also states that Jay will not renew his position as Stated Clerk.

**MOTION: Executive Council adopt the transition plans:**

- 1. Conduct a mission study including a staffing study. As it happens, Jay Wilkins is currently installed in a three-year term that would be up in January 2026 as well and he has indicated that he is not intending to stand for re-election. We will have two positions open in January 2026.**
- 2. Create job descriptions.**
- 3. Complete an MDP and begin searching to fill the position(s) created. Theoretically, have a candidate(s) to present by the November 2025 Presbytery meeting with a start date for the new positions in January 2026. Approved**

Nominating will identify the people to serve on the transition team at the November Presbytery Meeting.

**New Business** We need to appoint someone from Executive Council to serve on the committee that will decide where the funds will go when we sell churches. Jonathan Yarboro will be elected by the Nominating Committee.

**Request from UKirk Birmingham and Edgewood Presbyterian Church:**

**To the Equip, Nurture, and Connect Committee:**

The Board of UKirk Birmingham and the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church ask the ENC of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley to bring the following action to the appropriate council(s) for approval:

1. To dissolve the Board of UKirk Birmingham, giving deep thanks for its witness over the past seven years as a ministry of the Presbytery, and to authorize bringing the ministry under the supervision of the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church.
2. To transfer all funds in the UKirk Birmingham Restricted Fund to a UKirk Fund at Edgewood which will be designated for UKirk Campus Ministry expenses only. All UKirk property, branding, and social media accounts will transfer to Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

These requests have the unanimous endorsement of both the Board of UKirk Birmingham and the Session of Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

**Rationale:** UKirk Birmingham moved its offices to Edgewood in the spring of 2020 and has been holding all of its programming there since. Edgewood Pastor, Joe Genau, has been the volunteer Supervising Pastor for UKirk since 2020, after having served on the Board's predecessor, the Steering Team, since its inception in 2016. Edgewood has been a financial supporter of UKirk since its inception and Edgewood's membership have supported the ministry in many other ways as well.

UKirk Birmingham is at a crossroads. The departure of our full-time Campus Minister in 2020 along with the Covid-19 pandemic hit the program hard. We forged ahead with a new staffing model, leading to countless hours of vital ministry. The current program model seems to have run its course, with the Board struggling to find a path forward.

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loss of Birmingham-Southern). Pastor Joe Genau would be leading the effort and, much like youth ministry is done at Edgewood, a team of church members would work with him to make the ministry happen. Edgewood plans to incorporate campus ministry work into congregational life while maintaining the collaborative efforts that have served it well this past decade.

If this plan is approved, the UKirk Board will ask Ministry Coordinator Madison Vaughn to stay in her position through September, 2022. Her salary would continue to be paid from the UKirk Restricted Fund. Upon taking stewardship of those funds, Edgewood plans to use these resources to offer Pastor Joe Genau a modest stipend for the additional work he is undertaking, to promote the program's relaunch this fall, and for ongoing program expenses. Edgewood members and friends of UKirk will have ample opportunity to continue to support the ministry with gifts to the newly formed designated fund.

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**Proposed Amendments to the Constitution  
And  
Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of  
Ministries**

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These amendments to the *Book of Order* and the agreement were approved by the 226th General Assembly (2024) and recommended to the presbyteries for their vote.

## FROM THE STATED CLERK

The 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries, for their affirmative or negative votes, proposed changes in the language of the *Book of Order* that, if approved, will amend the Constitution. In addition, the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries pursuant to G-5.0203 for their affirmative or negative votes the Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries.

Here are a few notes as you prepare for the vote of the presbytery:

- It is recommended that prior to voting, presbyters and clerks review each proposed amendment and its related information.
- Each amendment has an item number, which is how the General Assembly tracked the business in both committee and in plenary. The entire record for each item is available in PC-Biz.
- Live links to the General Assembly item numbers are available throughout this document. Another option is to go to PC-Biz at [www.pc-biz.org](http://www.pc-biz.org), click Search, and enter the item number. Click on the item number to reach the summary.
- The rationale and advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and other advisory and advocacy entities have been abbreviated for each amendment for this booklet. Please note that the advice applies to the original item of business and not necessarily the final version approved by the assembly.
- Presbyteries may use a consent agenda or omnibus motion to vote on amendments as long as each proposed amendment is identified separately. Each amendment and the agreement has a tracking number of 24-A, 24-B, etc.
- It is recommended that prior to voting, presbyters and clerks also review the proposed Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries.
- Presbytery stated clerks are to report a tally of their votes to the Office of the General Assembly no later than **July 4, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time**. Votes on amendments and the agreement should be entered through the Stated Clerk's portal. Each month an updated tally will be mailed to all stated clerks. In order to make changes and publish the 2025–2027 *Book of Order* in a timely manner, receipt of votes prior to this deadline would be appreciated.

Thank you for your time and careful attention as you prepare to vote on these proposed amendments and this agreement with The Episcopal Church.

Jihyun Oh  
*Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(U.S.A.)*

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## 24-A — F-1.0403

### OPENESS TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### F-1.0403 UNITY IN DIVERSITY (POL-01 1)

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

**Shall F-1.0403 in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity be amended as follows?**  
(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

#### **“F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity ...**

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

#### **Background and Rationale**

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

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

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

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

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

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

#### **Comment – From the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Task Force**

At the 223rd General Assembly (2018), the Assembly approved item 11-13 “On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church.” This statement affirmed the faithful presence and service of LGBTQIA+ folks in the PC(USA). This is one of many overtures passed at past General Assemblies (dating to at least the 221st General Assembly in 2014) in support of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and around the world.

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

#### **Advice and Counsel – From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Comment – From the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)**

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

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

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

## 24-B – G-1.0104

### THE CONGREGATION

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

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

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

***G-1.0104 Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Worshipping Communities, etc.)***

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

#### Background and Rationale

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

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

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

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

#### **Comment – From the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)**

The General Assembly Committee on Representation recommends approval of this item. While there are many types of New Worshiping Communities (NWCs), from the perspective of representation and equity, GACOR notes that many NWCs actually serve historically marginalized communities – particularly communities of color and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. These NWCs provide a vibrant, safe place for the exploration of what it means to be the church in the 21st century. However, under the current provisions in the *Book of Order*, there is no church-wide mechanism for participants in NWCs to receive the sacrament of Baptism, or be counted as members of the larger church. This lack of standing has caused confusion and frustration, as well as a lack of representation in all councils of the church. While this has a daily impact for these NWCs, creating a “second class” of church participants and organization, it also affects the capacity of GACOR to understand the diversity of the church through the annual statistical reporting of the Church. This item would correct these issues while also providing the necessary oversight, allowing NWC participants full standing and representation within the PC(USA).

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

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

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

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

## 24-C — G-2.0104b

### ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

**Shall G-2.0104b be amended as follows:**

(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

**b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404), *the Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01)*, and *in the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403*. Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.**

#### Background and Rationale

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

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

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

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

## **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

Inserting the wording “and in the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination found in F-1.0403” into G-2.0104b adds a requirement for acknowledgment of F-1.0403 in the examination of all candidates for ordered ministry before ordination and/or installation.

Under the proposed amendment, a council is required to examine candidates to be ordained and/or installed, to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Comment – From the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Task Force**

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

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

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

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

#### **Advice and Counsel – From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)**



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

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

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

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

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

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

## 24-D — G-2.0504b

### PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

#### G-2.0504b TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS (POL-05)

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

**Shall Section G-2.0504b, Temporary Pastoral Relationships, be amended as follows:**

(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

...

**Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed ~~twelve~~ *thirty-six* months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. ...**

#### Background and Rationale

An increasing number of congregations are being served by temporary pastors. Extending the specified period of service from 12 to 36 months will provide these congregations a stronger sense of stability. It would save both sessions and presbyteries considerable time and paperwork if they did not have to renegotiate a contract every year, giving them more time to attend to the tasks of interim/transitional ministry rather than continuous contract negotiation. Finally, given that the average time that it takes a congregation to move from the end of one pastoral relationship to the start of another pastoral relationship is longer than 12 months, the church should be able to make provision for temporary pastor contracts that are longer than 12 months.

#### Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve POL-05. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the Assembly that POL-05 identifies a helpful improvement in the language by retaining a specific standardized time length for temporary pastoral relationships, as well as providing a practical time length in response to the current missional context.

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The Assembly Committee on Polity approved Item POL-05, 34/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-05, 397/8.

For the full report on POL-05 go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001129>

## 24-E — G-2.0504b

### PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

#### G-2.0504b TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS (POL-08 2)

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

**Shall G-2.0504b in the Form of Government be amended as follows?**

(Deleted text is in ~~strike~~through; added text is in *italics*.)

#### **G-2.0504b            Temporary Pastoral Relationships**

**Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.**

**Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co- pastor, or associate pastor.**

***When the temporary pastoral relationship ends, no non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.***

***A non-disclosure agreement, also known as a confidentiality agreement, is an agreement that outlines confidential material, knowledge, or information that is to remain confidential. Such an agreement binds the party or parties who have signed it and prevents them from discussing any information included in the contract with anyone not authorized by the agreement.***

#### **Background and Rationale**

In the vows we take at ordination, we (ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons) promise to serve one another, God, and God's church with love (W-4.0404). Non-disclosure agreements indicate the opposite has happened, and tend to engender speculation rather than truth-seeking. While there are specific instances when police or a court may forbid the sharing of information, those circumstances would not require any non-disclosure agreement for the parties specified so the ruling can be honored without any agreement. Similarly, a proper order of a permanent judicial

commission (PJC) would also take precedence over any such agreement entered into by the parties, and this would in no way preclude a PJC from making its own determination.

As pertains to a church and a pastor, a non-disclosure agreement invites speculation that is typically a disservice to all parties. The dissolution of pastoral relationships is similar to divorce in that the absence of information often results in speculation of the circumstances that can be far worse than the actual circumstance and can brand a pastor with erroneous behavior or brand a congregation as damaging to pastors. Further, if the dissolution involved a traumatic event from inappropriate behavior either on the part of a pastor or members of the congregation, the non-disclosure agreement would prevent the congregation from processing the collective trauma appropriately, so they would be unlikely to put it behind them. Dysfunction in the congregation as a result of unprocessed trauma typically carries over to negatively affect the next pastoral relationship.

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

**The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve Item POL-08, with amendment.**

The overture seeks to amend two sections of the Constitution, G-2.0901 and G-2.0504b, by prohibiting non-disclosure agreements at the dissolution of installed and temporary pastoral relationships. There have been numerous General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GA PJC) decisions against contractual non-disclosure agreements, also called “Confidentiality Statements” or “Confidentiality Agreements.” The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly that Item POL 08 identifies a helpful improvement by making explicit in the *Book of Order* a principal prohibition against such contracts. (See GA PJC (1990, 202-1, Baumann v. Bellefield Church); GA PJC (2006, 217-1, Hope, et al. v. Pby of San Francisco); GA (1998, 165, 16.0199, Req. 98-4).)

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)**

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) **approve POL-08.**

The policy statement “[God’s Work in Our Hands](#)” (1995) says:

“The glory of God shines in God’s own first work of creation before it shines in any work of our hands. It can shine in every fragment of faithful human work done in response to the One in whose image we are created. As the Creator God continues to create, we can participate through our work. By working with integrity and responsibility toward all our neighbors and all of creation; by treating other workers and ourselves with respect, compassion, and gratitude and by seeking forgiveness from God for the imperfections in our work; we bring ourselves and our work to God as an offering. This we understand to be good work, pleasing to God.”

It is not infrequent for calls between congregations and ministers, educators, and other church employees to end in acrimony. The practice of requiring non-disclosure agreements as a

condition of severance precludes the opportunity for the light of God's glory to shine on every fragment of faithful human work, inhibits treating one another with respect and compassion, and prohibits individuals and congregations from authentically seeking forgiveness from God for the imperfections in our work.

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The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item POL-08 2, 40/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-08 2, 393/11.

For the full report on POL-08, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001169>

## 24-F — G-2.0610

### PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

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

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

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

(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

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

#### Background and Rationale

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

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

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

#### Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the full report on ORD-05, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001125>



## 24-G — 2.0901

### DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

#### G-2.0901 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (POL-08 1)

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

**Shall G-2.0901 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?**

(Deleted text is in ~~striketrough~~; added text is in *italics*.)

**An installed pastoral relationship may be dissolved only by the presbytery. Whether the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the congregation, or the presbytery initiates proceedings for dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to consent, or decline to consent, to dissolution. *No non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.***

*A non-disclosure agreement, also known as a confidentiality agreement, is an agreement that outlines confidential material, knowledge, or information that is to remain confidential. Such an agreement binds the party or parties who have signed it and prevents them from discussing any information included in the contract with anyone not authorized by the agreement.*

#### **Background and Rationale**

In the vows we take at ordination, we (ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons) promise to serve one another, God, and God's church with love (W-4.0404). Non-disclosure agreements indicate the opposite has happened, and tend to engender speculation rather than truth-seeking. While there are specific instances when police or a court may forbid the sharing of information, those circumstances would not require any non-disclosure agreement for the parties specified so the ruling can be honored without any agreement. Similarly, a proper order of a permanent judicial commission (PJC) would also take precedence over any such agreement entered into by the parties, and this would in no way preclude a PJC from making its own determination.

As pertains to a church and a pastor, a non-disclosure agreement invites speculation that is typically a disservice to all parties. The dissolution of pastoral relationships is similar to divorce in that the absence of information often results in speculation of the circumstances that can be far worse than the actual circumstance and can brand a pastor with erroneous behavior or brand a congregation as damaging to pastors. Further, if the dissolution involved a traumatic event from inappropriate behavior either on the part of a pastor or members of the congregation, the non-disclosure agreement would prevent the congregation from processing the collective trauma appropriately, so they would be unlikely to put it behind them. Dysfunction in the congregation as a result of unprocessed trauma typically carries over to negatively affect the next pastoral relationship.

**Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve Item POL-08, with amendment.

The overture seeks to amend two sections of the Constitution, G-2.0901 and G-2.0504b, by prohibiting non-disclosure agreements at the dissolution of installed and temporary pastoral relationships. There have been numerous General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GA PJC) decisions against contractual non-disclosure agreements, also called “Confidentiality Statements” or “Confidentiality Agreements.” The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly that Item POL-08 identifies a helpful improvement by making explicit in the *Book of Order* a principal prohibition against such contracts. (See GA PJC (1990, 202-1, Baumann v. Bellefield Church); GA PJC (2006, 217-1, Hope, et al. v. Pby of San Francisco); GA (1998, 165, 16.0199, Req. 98-4).)

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)**

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) approve POL-08.

In the policy statement [“God’s Work in Our Hands”](#) (1995), it is stated:

“The glory of God shines in God’s own first work of creation before it shines in any work of our hands. It can shine in every fragment of faithful human work done in response to the One in whose image we are created. As the Creator God continues to create, we can participate through our work. By working with integrity and responsibility toward all our neighbors and all of creation; by treating other workers and ourselves with respect, compassion, and gratitude and by seeking forgiveness from God for the imperfections in our work; we bring ourselves and our work to God as an offering. This we understand to be good work, pleasing to God.”

“The glory of God shines in God’s own first work of creation before it shines in any work of our hands. It can shine in every fragment of faithful human work done in response to the One in whose image we are created. As the Creator God continues to create, we can participate through our work. By working with integrity and responsibility toward all our neighbors and all of creation; by treating other workers and ourselves with respect, compassion, and gratitude and by seeking forgiveness from God for the imperfections in our work; we bring ourselves and our work to God as an offering. This we understand to be good work, pleasing to God.”

It is not infrequent for calls between congregations and ministers, educators, and other church employees to end in acrimony. The practice of requiring non-disclosure agreements as a condition of severance precludes the opportunity for the light of God’s glory to shine on every fragment of faithful human work, inhibits treating one another with respect and compassion, and prohibits individuals and congregations from authentically seeking forgiveness from God for the imperfections in our work.

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The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item POL-08 1, 40/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-08 1, 393/11.

For the full report on POL-08, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001169>

## 24-H — G-3.0106

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

#### G-3.0106 ADMINISTRATION OF MISSION (POL-11)

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

(Deleted text is in ~~striketrough~~; added text is in *italics*.)

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 be amended as follows:

All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child, ~~and~~ youth, *and adults with vulnerabilities* protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.

#### Background and Rationale

This amendment builds upon the important work carried out by previous assemblies to provide for institutional protections for at-risk populations within our congregations and councils. Specifically, this amendment would create a constitutional mandate for all councils of the church to include vulnerable adults in our protection policies. The amended language fosters a deeper sense of accountability. By explicitly mentioning "vulnerable adults," we acknowledge our responsibility to protect those who may be at risk due to various factors. This enhancement to the policy framework demonstrates our dedication to a comprehensive approach in upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct. Inclusion is a key value of our faith community. By extending the protection of policies to vulnerable adults, we reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and justice. This addition reflects our core values and emphasizes our mission to create a community that embraces and protects every member.

#### Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve item POL-11.

Item POL-11 seeks to amend G-3.0106 by expanding the list of required protection policies to include protection for vulnerable adults. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the Constitution is not intended to serve as a Manual of Operations. Generally, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution would advocate against the creation or expansion of lists. However, because a list is deemed exhaustive unless it states otherwise, an omission is regarded as

exclusionary, not permissive. Therefore, adding “vulnerable adults” to the list of those to be protected furthers the goal of G-3.0106 to provide protection to those in need.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes, however, that the definition of “vulnerable adult” varies by legal jurisdiction. It will be necessary for councils to consult their local legal requirements in developing their policies.

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

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) approve POL-11 with amendment. On this overture, ACSWP recommends the following amendment:

... “All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child[,] [and] youth[, and adults lacking mental capacity vulnerable adult] protection policy, and an antiracism policy...”

This language is consistent with other references in the *Book of Order*.

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The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the original recommendation then approved Item POL-11, 37/1. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-11, 403/1.

For the full report on POL 11, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001131>

## 24-I — G-3.0302d

### THE PRESBYTERY

#### G-3.0302d RELATIONSHIPS WITH SYNOD AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GAP-05)

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

**Shall G-3.0302 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?**

(Deleted text is in ~~strike~~through; added text is in *italics*.)

#### **G-3.0302 Relations with Synod and General Assembly**

**d. proposing to synod such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church, ~~and/or~~ proposing to General Assembly overtures that have received a concurrence from at least one other presbytery, and/or concurring with proposed overtures, and**

#### **Background and Rationale**

The requirement for every overture from a presbytery to have at least one concurrence was designed to ensure that the business coming before the General Assembly was supported by at least two presbyteries. In practice, this requirement has created confusion within the deadlines for the submission of business, a flurry of activity among presbyteries seeking to have at least one concurrence, and the rise of at least one presbytery consistently voting to concur with all of the overtures. In short, this requirement has created more difficulties while not solving the stated problem.

In addition, we seek in our polity and in our constitution to honor voices from the margins of the church and society, recognizing that the call to justice and faithfulness is often a difficult call to hear from within the center. The requirement for a concurrence can create a barrier that further marginalizes the very voices we need to hear. By eliminating the need for a concurrence, while allowing for that practice to continue as a way of showing broad support, we seek to remove an unnecessary barrier to the work of the General Assembly.

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

The request seeks to amend section G-3.0302d regarding the delineated responsibilities of a presbytery in maintaining regular and continuing relationships with the General Assembly as it relates to proposing overtures to the General Assembly. The proposed amendment would overturn the 2012 amendment to the Constitution which requires proposed overtures to the General Assembly to receive concurrence from at least one other presbytery (see 220th General Assembly Minutes, 2012, 72-72, 241, Item 04-01, Rec. 3). The 2012 amendment on concurrences, as proposed by the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies and stated in its report, was to

“improve collaboration among presbyteries, assure that the business before it is both of common concern to the mission of the church (G-3.0302(d)) and about key issues facing the church and society, and to encourage well-considered, significant overtures and resolutions of church-wide significance.”

The rationale for this proposed amendment from the General Assembly’s Standing Committee on Standing Rules states that the concurrence requirement:

has created confusion within the deadlines for the submission of business, a flurry of activity among presbyteries seeking to have at least one concurrence, and the rise of at least one presbytery consistently voting to concur with all of the overtures. In short, this requirement has created more difficulties while not solving the stated problem. . . . The requirement for a concurrence can create a barrier that further marginalizes the very voices we need to hear. By eliminating the need for a concurrence, while allowing for that practice to continue as a way of showing broad support, we seek to remove an unnecessary barrier to the work of the General Assembly.

Amendments to the Constitution are intended to be part of the process of “the church reformed, always to be reforming.” (G-6.01). As such, a process for amendment that is not serving its intended purpose, is creating undue burdens on presbyters and mid council staff, and, indeed, may be presenting barriers to such reformation should be eliminated. While the amendment would remove the requirement for a concurrence, it still permits concurrences to show support.

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The Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures approved Item GAP-05, 36/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item GAP-05, 390/14.

For the full report on GAP-05, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001247>

## 24-J — G-3.0501

### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

#### G-3.0501 COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITY (GAP-04)

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

**Shall G-3.0501 Composition and Responsibilities be amended as follows:**

(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

**The General Assembly is the council of the whole church, and it is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It shall consist of equal numbers of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds (F-1.0403 and G-3.0103), to serve as commissioners according to the following proportions:**

**~~8,000~~ *6,000* members or less: 1 ruling elder and 1 minister of the Word and Sacrament**  
**~~8,001–16,000~~ *6,001–12,000*: 2 ruling elders and 2 ministers of the Word and Sacrament**  
**~~16,001–24,000~~ *12,001–19,000*: 3 ruling elders and 3 ministers of the Word and Sacrament**  
**~~24,001–32,000~~ *19,001* or more: 4 ruling elders and 4 ministers of the Word and Sacrament**  
**~~32,001–40,000: 5 ruling elders and 5 ministers of the Word and Sacrament~~**  
**~~40,001–48,000: 6 ruling elders and 6 ministers of the Word and Sacrament~~**  
**~~48,001 or more: 7 ruling elders and 7 ministers of the Word and Sacrament~~**

#### Background and Rationale

Placing the proportions for determining the number of commissioners in the *Book of Order* creates a system that doesn't allow for flexibility and creates an exceptionally high threshold for change. The current wording is already out of date, with no presbytery fitting into the largest two categories and more presbyteries only being allocated one ruling elder and one teaching elder. This then causes a smaller and smaller number of commissioners to be elected, reducing the number of people who gather for the work of the General Assembly.

#### Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that the 226th General Assembly (2024) disapprove the original recommendation of Item GAP-04. The committee amended the original recommendation.



The Advisory Committee on the Constitution acknowledges that the current system for determining the number of commissioners to the General Assembly is out of sync with the realities of shrinking presbytery membership and declining numbers of presbyteries.

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The Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures amended the original recommendation significantly then approved Item GAP-04 by consensus. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item GAP-04, 400/12.

For the full report on GAP-04, go to <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001246>

## 24-K — D-7.0501

### INVESTIGATION

#### D-7.0501 REFERRAL TO INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE (POL-02)

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

**Shall D-7.0501 Referral to Investigating Committee be amended as follows:**  
(Added text is in *italics*.)

**When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the *person* accused or the nature of the alleged offense and *shall* refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below. Pursuant to G-4.0302, the clerk shall report to civil legal authorities any knowledge of harm, or risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or adult lacking mental capacity. The clerk of session or stated clerk shall also inform the accuser of the disciplinary process and their rights and responsibilities in the process.**

#### Background and Rationale

*Editor's note: The original rationale was written for language which was significantly amended by the General Assembly. This edited rationale is limited to those sections of the rationale which apply to the approved proposed amendments.*

The context for D-7.0501 is the procedure by which submission of a formal accusation of a disciplinary offense prompts the council of a church or presbytery to form an investigating committee and commence the disciplinary process of the *Book of Order*.

Disclosing relevant information as our primary moral obligation follows in G-4.0302, the Mandatory Reporting provision. Here is the explicit mandate to take positive action to protect vulnerable people by disclosing information to authorities. It reiterates the primary moral value which prioritizes protecting people at risk. G-4.0302 makes clear the substantive basis for disclosing: "...knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity..." Knowledge is essential to being able to act preventively.

The second part of the moral and polity framework is our obligation which is implicit in Chapter 7 of the Book of Order Disciplinary Process. D-7.0201a. and D-7.1501b. both address accountability in circumstances when a person "knew, or reasonably should have known of the reasonable risk of sexual abuse of another... [and] failed to take reasonable steps to minimize the

risk.” The moral commitment in Chapter 7 is that we are responsible for recognizing a risk and that once we know, we are obligated to act to reduce the possibility of harm.

**Advice—From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

*Editor’s note: The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that the 226th General Assembly (2024) disapprove the original recommendation of Item POL-02. The committee amended the original recommendation. This edited advice is limited to those sections of the advice which apply to the approved proposed amendments.*

The *Book of Order* includes provisions designed to protect the vulnerable, such as requirements for administrative leave or other restrictions when there has been an allegation of sexual abuse (D-7.09), and requirements for sexual misconduct and child and youth protection policies (G-3.0106). The confidentiality provisions for the exercise of pastoral care state explicitly that confidentiality is not to be used to keep secret allegations of abuse and mandate reporting to ecclesiastical and civil authorities, especially in a situation where an individual “reasonably believes that there is a risk of future physical harm or abuse” (G-4.0302).

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The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the original Recommendation significantly then approved Item POL-02, 37/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-02, 401/4.

For the full report on POL-02, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001123>

## 24-L — D-7.0902b

### ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

#### D-7.0902b ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE (POL-04)

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

**Shall D-7.0902B Administrative Leave be amended as follows:**  
(Added text is in *italics*.)

**Regardless of the employment status of the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the members designated in accordance with D-3.0102, shall determine as quickly as possible, after receiving the written allegations and providing the accused an opportunity to be heard, whether the risk to a congregation and/or to other potential victims of abuse requires *paid* administrative leave or other restrictions upon the minister's service when considered in light of the nature and probable truth of the allegations. Such *paid* administrative leave or restrictions will continue until either the matter is resolved in one of the ways prescribed in the disciplinary process or until the leave or restrictions are altered or removed by members of the commission. *The cost shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary.***

#### Background and Rationale

This amendment would preserve the due process rights of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament accused of sexual misconduct without diminishing the protections afforded to the alleged or potential victims of that misconduct.

Since the imposition of administrative leave was first authorized on July 3, 2005, until the adoption of Church Discipline on July 9, 2023, all ministers and presbyteries throughout the denomination were subject to a single, standard process when allegations of sexual misconduct were received. That process provided presbyteries the necessary mechanism for imposing administrative leave while requiring that the leave be paid.

The imprecision and ambiguity of the current language in D-7.0902 fails to provide a standard process applicable throughout the denomination. The text of D-7.0902 fails to define the administrative leave as either paid or unpaid. The conspicuous omission or deletion of “paid administrative leave” from the text of D-10.0106 in the Church Discipline, and the substitution of simply “administrative leave” in D-7.0902, lead to at least two plausible interpretations: first, that all administrative leave is to be unpaid, and second, that each presbytery can set its own policy as to whether the leave is to be paid or unpaid. Such imprecision and ambiguity do not provide an acceptable constitutional standard to be applied equally to all ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

**I. Unpaid Administrative Leave is Improper.** If the drafters' intent was that all administrative leave is to be unpaid, that result unfairly and improperly deprives ministers of the Word and Sacrament of vital due process protections.

**A. Unpaid Leave Undercuts the Presumption of Innocence.** The imposition of unpaid administrative leave within days of receipt of allegations, before even an investigative committee has been appointed, is completely inconsistent with and dramatically undercuts the presumption of innocence set forth in D-8.0201.c. Not only is a minister stripped of all ecclesiastical authority, but the presbytery immediately deprives the minister of any right to compensation as set forth in the terms of call to which the minister and congregation have agreed and which the presbytery approved.

**B. Diminished Standard of Proof.** The current language in D-7.0902.b. allows the forfeiture of all compensation based upon a demonstrably lower standard of proof than that required for an ultimate finding of guilt. D-7.0902.b. allows the imposition of administrative leave based on the "probable truth of the allegations." D-8.0902 allows a finding of guilt only "when a comparison and consideration of all the evidence compels an abiding conviction that the material facts . . . necessary to prove the charge are true." Relying on phraseology from the Rules of Discipline, those standards of proof would have been probable cause and beyond reasonable doubt. Regardless of the phraseology incorporated into Church Discipline, the quantum of proof required under D-7.0902.b. is dramatically less than that in D-8.0902.

**C. Pretrial Forfeiture of Compensation is Punitive.** "[T]he exercise of church discipline is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, *not for punishing.*" D-1.01 (Emphasis added). The forfeiture of all compensation within days of receipt of allegations, before an investigation or trial, is tantamount to punishment before an adjudication of guilt and is contrary to the constitutional objectives.

#### **Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve Item POL-04.

Section D-7.0902 provides a process for determining whether administrative leave should be required when an allegation of sexual abuse has been received against a minister of the Word and Sacrament. When the Rules of Discipline were updated in 2022, Section D-7.0902 of Church Discipline replaced D-10.0106. The former D.10.0106 expressly required administrative leave to be "paid." The word "paid" is missing from the new D-7.0902. Section D-7.0902 is equally silent on whether administrative leave should be unpaid. It is simply silent.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution agrees with the rationale offered in support of reinserting the requirement that administrative leave be paid and believes that the omission of the word "paid" was an oversight. POL-04 also inserts clarifying language, "The cost shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary." The Advisory Committee on the Constitution has no objection to the clarifying language and believes it could be helpful to the church.

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The Assembly Committee on Polity approved Item POL-04, 38/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-04, 403/9.

For the full report on POL-04, go to  
<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001127>

## 24-M Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries

Send to presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote pursuant to G-5.0203 (ECU-05)

# Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries

### THE WAY FORWARD

In our current agreement, our two churches agreed “that authorized ministers of our churches may, subject to the regulations of the churches and within the limits of their competence, carry out the tasks of their own office in congregations of the other churches when requested and approved by the diocesan bishop and local presbytery.” Furthermore, a conditional was established on this point of agreement that “because we do not yet have reconciliation and full interchangeability of ordained ministries, all authorization for these special opportunities must conform to the *Book of Common Worship* and the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*.”

Our current agreement also calls the two denominations to “encourage diocesan bishops and presbyteries to provide a regular occasion for planning, discussing, resourcing for missional, educational and liturgical life together. In addition, to explore possibilities for new church development and redevelopment together,” as well as provide a process to support and implement the above recommendations (guidelines).

Our two churches have agreed to be in dialogue for the specific purpose of considering the question of the mutual recognition of ordained ministries, as a step towards the unity that is Christ’s will for his Church. Our current agreement enabled The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in June of 2017 to formally and publicly participate in the

Churches Uniting in Christ recognition of ordered ministry. This public proclamation underscores and casts away possible barriers of our current agreement to move forward in missional partnership.

On the basis of converging but not yet wholly compatible understandings of the ordained ministry, and sufficient agreement in faith and ministry, together with a marked growing together of our two churches over recent decades, this group proposes that our churches deepen our current relationship.

### **Sharing in ecumenical ministry**

We agree with the World Council of Churches' 2013 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* in regard to ordered ministry, there is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament, though all churches would look to Scripture in seeking to follow the will of the Lord concerning how ordained ministry is to be understood, ordered and exercised. At times, the Spirit has guided the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs (cf. Acts 6:1-6). Various forms of ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Spirit. Early writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch, insisted upon the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon. This pattern of three related ministries can be seen to have roots in the New Testament; eventually it became the generally accepted pattern and is still considered normative by many churches today... Among the several means for maintaining the Church's apostolicity, such as the scriptural canon, dogma and liturgical order, ordained ministry has played an important role. Succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church.<sup>6</sup>

Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reflect the threefold ordered ministries expressed by Ignatius of Antioch (bishop, presbyter and deacon), however in our polities express them differently or "locally adapted" and both denominations hold, in the broad ecumenical sense, apostolic succession.<sup>7</sup> Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have recognized the gift of *episkopé*, the ministry of oversight, locally adapted, as expressed in the 2017 Churches Uniting in Christ mutual recognition or ordered ministry.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper No. 214) (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 26. Cf. Ignatius of Antioch's Letter to the Magnesians 6 and 13; Letter to the Trallians 7; Letter to the Philadelphians 4; Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: PCUSA, 1789), "bishop" and "pastor" are interchangeable, and it is the pastor, as moderator of the session, that oversees as a member of the presbytery and presides at the ordination of elders and deacons. Cf. "The Successor to Peter: A Paper for Discussion from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)", Unilateral Discussion PC(USA) and Vatican. Louisville, Kentucky, December 6-7, 2000. Endnote 5, "It may be of some interest that prior to the 1983 reunion of the northern and southern branches of Presbyterianism, the Book of Order of the northern branch, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., offered several titles for ministers of Word and Sacrament, among them the title 'bishop.' If one looks, say, at the roll calls in the minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia around the middle of the nineteenth century one will read 'The following bishops were in attendance.....' The concept was that every installed pastor of a congregation is bishop of a congregationally constituted diocese. He or she is surrounded by presbyters or 'elders' and assisted by 'deacons.'" Here, on a small scale, as a parochial diocese, Presbyterians have the historic threefold ministry expressed by Ignatius.



Specifically, the ecumenical dialogue between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in round two and in this round three, recognize that diocese bishops and presbytery moderators have similar constituted ecclesial authority and expression of the gift of *episkopé* as it relates to presiding at ordination, as well as installing or instituting a presbyter to a pastoral relationship.

Guided by the World Council of Churches' 1982 foundational paper, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, Chapter VI, as well as the 2013 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper No. 214), presbyteries and dioceses are strongly encouraged to invite presbytery moderators and diocese bishops to participate in each other's celebrations of ministry, not only ordinations but also installations and institutions, and bishops and moderators share an ecumenical blessing. It is also strongly encouraged in their ordination of presbyters that each also includes bishops from other denominations with whom each church shares recognition of mutual ministry (i.e. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Northern Province and the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in America). Finally, we fervently pray that when a presbytery moderator is installed, an Episcopal bishop or their designee be present, and when an Episcopal bishop is consecrated, a Presbyterian moderator or their designee be present, and both be invited in those moments of celebration to share an ecumenical blessing.

### **Limited orderly exchange of ministers**

Within the current agreement (2008-2009), and without exceeding the discretion of The Episcopal Church bishops and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbyteries, there shall be provision for the following exchange of ordered ministers between our churches:

- the acceptance of Episcopal presbyters (those ordained and referred to as *priests*) in Presbyterian placements and in ecumenical ministries where the Presbyterian Church has the right of appointment;
- the acceptance of Presbyterian Church presbyters (specifically those ordained and consecrated to the ministry of the Word, Sacrament, and teaching, referred to as *ministers of Word and Sacrament* or *teaching elders*) in Episcopal appointments such as ecumenical ministries and cooperating parishes where the Episcopal Church has the right of appointment.
- This agreement does not enable ordained ruling elders and commissioned pastors (also known as commissioned ruling elders) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), nor deacons of The Episcopal Church or Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), to be considered.

## **THE GUIDELINES FOR LIMITED ORDERLY EXCHANGE OF MINISTERS**

For missional purposes and in consultation between the diocesan bishop and local presbytery, a presbyter may be licensed (permitted) by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority to serve under the following guidelines.

The limited orderly exchange process begins with the identification of a ministry needed by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority of the inviting body and the identification of a presbyter from

the sending body who may serve in that ministry setting.

The Ecclesiastical Authority of the inviting body initiates the process of the limited orderly exchange between the placement or ecumenical ministry to be served and the presbyter. The presbyter does not initiate the process of exchange.

The inviting body shall consult with the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority of the presbyter to determine the suitability of the potential service and to receive the concurrence of the sending body. The presbyter remains accountable to the sending church for the continuation of ministerial status.

Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) agree that experience in and knowledge of one's own tradition is seen as necessary before serving in a different tradition. Therefore, the limited orderly exchange of minister's opportunities are only open to presbyters who have been ordained for at least three years and active within the ministry of their denomination.

Presbyters serving in a limited orderly exchange position shall be temporary under this agreement. The service of presbyters should ordinarily be for a two- to four-year period, which may be renewed. Should a presbyter of one church intend to serve permanently in another church then the process of the transfer or reception of ministerial status should be followed according to the rules of the receiving Church.

Should a disciplinary process be necessary, the presbyter remains under the jurisdiction of the sending body, but the inviting body may be asked to participate as necessary.

Pension and medical coverage is through the church of ecclesiastical membership.

### **Functions**

When a presbyter is licensed or commissioned by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority, the presbyter is authorized to:

- to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility;
- lead public worship as a presbyter under the direction of diocesan bishop or presbytery;
- preach the Gospel;
- celebrate and administer the sacraments within the guidelines specified below;
- prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of diocesan bishop or presbytery;
- and present the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church, assisting with the diocese or presbytery's ministry of evangelism partnership.

While a presbyter serves a particular placement or ecumenical setting because we do not yet have reconciliation and full interchangeability of ordained ministries, as stated in the current agreement, all authorization for these special opportunities must conform to the Book of Common Worship and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Book of

Common Prayer and the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. What this means explicitly is that:

- Presbyterian presbyters will use the authorized or commended worship resources of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) unless authorized by the diocesan bishop to use Episcopal worship resources (with the exception of Eucharist prayers);
- Episcopal priests will use the authorized or commended worship resources of The Episcopal Church unless authorized by the presbytery to use Presbyterian worship resources;
- Priests and presbyters are bound to the Eucharist liturgies of their respective prayer books and denominational resources when they preside;
- Both priests and presbyters may use authorized or commended worship resources of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in which both churches are in full communion, including the Eucharist liturgies, with the authorization of the “inviting” Ecclesiastical Authority.

### **Training, Examination, and Oversight**

A presbyter who serves under the terms of this Agreement on Limited Orderly Exchange of Ministers shall receive such preparation and instruction, or formation, as determined by the diocesan bishop or presbytery to be appropriate to the particular placement or ecumenical setting and length of time shall be determined by the Ecclesiastical Authority’s own rule.

The presbyter shall be examined by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority as to personal faith, motives for seeking to serve, and the areas of instruction determined by diocesan or presbytery.

The presbyter authorized under the terms of this Agreement shall work under the supervision of the diocesan bishop or presbytery. The diocesan bishop or presbytery may at any time withdraw this authorization for reasons it deems good and sufficient. A presbyter shall be assigned as a mentor and local supervisor.

An authorization may be for no more than four years, and no less than two. Within an appropriate time before the expiration of the commission, the presbyter shall review the covenant relationship with the diocesan bishop and presbytery. The commission may be renewed with the consent of all interested parties (i.e. diocesan bishop and presbytery, presbyter, authorized representative(s) of a particular placement or ecumenical ministry).

A presbyter who has been authorized and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve but is not authorized to perform the functions specified above until commission is renewed in order to serve in placement or ecumenical setting by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority.

### **Celebration of an Ecumenical Ministry**

When the diocesan bishop or presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a presbyter to serve a particular placement or ecumenical ministry providing the services described above, it shall

commission and institute/install the presbyter to service as designated by the diocesan bishop or presbytery while also abiding by the following:

Both diocese and presbytery will be invited to the Service.

The inviting diocesan bishop or presbytery moderator shall, at the time of such celebration, read this preface to the Service:

The Ecclesiastical Authority of this Diocese/Presbytery is satisfied that A.B. accepts the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of this Church and desires to serve this Church in full accord to [the Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement]. We are about to confer upon A.B. the grace and authority of Holy Orders/ordered ministry as this Church has received them and requires them for the exercise of the ministry of a presbyter.

The certificates of the commission shall contain the words:

Acknowledging the ministry which A.B. has already received and hereby adding to that commission the grace and authority of Holy Orders/ordered ministry as understood and required by this Church for the exercise of the ministry of a presbyter.

Following the rites of each church for instituting or installation, the presenters present the presbyter saying

*In baptism, N. was clothed with Christ. N. was ordained a presbyter by Bishop N. of the Diocese of N./the Presbytery of N., and is now called by God through the voice of the church to serve as*  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The people respond

We remember with joy our common calling to serve Christ, and we celebrate God's call to N., to serve among us as \_\_\_\_\_.

The sending bishop or presbytery moderator asks the candidate to reaffirm their particular ordination in regard to a priest or a presbyter.

The inviting bishop or presbytery moderator addresses the presbyter, saying

While affirming and upholding your ordination vows as a presbyter in The Episcopal Church/Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while you labor in covenant relationship with the Diocese of N./Presbytery of N., will you honor the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them? And will you, in accordance with the Constitution/canons of this Church, obey the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop and presbytery, and other ministers who may have authority over you and your work during this covenant relationship?

Answer

I am willing and ready to do so, and I solemnly declare that I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal/Presbyterian Church as required in order to be commissioned to labor as \_\_\_\_\_ under covenant agreement of our two churches.

At the appropriate time during the service of institution or installation, the presbyter kneels facing the people and is surrounded by the bishop, presbytery moderator, and all other priests and presbyters. With the bishop and presbytery moderator's hands laid on the presbyter, as well as the other priests and presbyters, one of the following<sup>8</sup>, or a similar prayer, is said aloud by the inviting bishop or presbytery moderator

*Come to our help, Lord, Holy Father, almighty and eternal God; you are the source of every honor and dignity, of all progress and stability. You watch over the growing family of humanity by your gift of wisdom and your pattern of order. When you had appointed high priests from among the people of Israel to lead your people, you also chose others to serve with them and to help them in their task; and so there grew up the ranks of presbyters and the offices of Levites, established by sacred rites.*

*In the desert, you extended the spirit of Moses to seventy wise men who helped him to rule the great company of his people. You shared among the sons of Aaron the fullness of their father's power, to provide worthy priests in sufficient number for the increasing rites and worship, and elders to care for the spiritual and temporal welfare of God's people. With the same loving care you gave companions to your Son's apostles to help in teaching the faith: they preached the gospel to the whole world. Lord, grant also to us such fellow workers, for we are weak and our need is greater. Provide for us presbyters who will provide for the worship and care of your people as we seek to be the body of Christ in the world.*

*Almighty Father, strengthen by your Holy Spirit this servant of yours the dignity of your eternal priesthood in Christ, as a servant of servants. Renew within him/her/them the Spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with bishops, pastors and fellow presbyters may he/she/they be faithful to the ministry that he/she/they receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct. May he/she/they be faithful in working with your people, as well as ordered deacons, fellow presbyters and pastors, so that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth, and the family of nations, made one in Christ, may become God's one, holy people. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*  
*Amen.*

OR

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<sup>8</sup> Prayers adapted from Catholic Church, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, *Ceremonial of Bishops: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope John Paul II* (Revised), "Rite of Ordination of Presbyter". Liturgical Press, 1989.

*O God, the source of all holiness, whose grace is ever effective, whose blessing is ever fulfilled, pour out on these servants of yours the gift of your blessed Holy Spirit. By their noble and exemplary lives let them prove that they are elders of the people, true to the Gospel of Christ our Lord and to the norms for presbyters as laid down by Paul to Timothy and Titus. Let them meditate on your law day and night, so that they may believe what they have read, teach what they have believed, and practice what they have taught. May justice, constancy, mercy, courage, and all the other virtues be reflected in their every way of life. May they inspire others by their example, and hearten them by their admonitions. May they keep pure and spotless the gift of their calling. For the worship of your people may they celebrate the mystery of Holy Communion and living a sacramental life in community. May they through persevering charity mature in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, reflecting Christ clearly, and rise on the day of the Resurrection with a good conscience, true faith, and the full gifts of the Holy Spirit. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Followed by a declaration similar to

*N., you are instituted/installed to service in this church as \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

*Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him.*

Following the service of institution or installation, the Eucharistic celebrant shall be the bishop in Episcopal settings, and ordinarily the authorized presbyter in PC(USA) settings.

## **RATIONALE**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Representing the Episcopal Church: the Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton (co-chair), the Rev. Canon Elise Johnstone (co-vice chair), Dr. Michael Booker, Elizabeth Ring, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Wolyniak, and Richard Mammanna and the Rev. Margaret Rose serving as staff.

Representing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Ruling Elder Anne Bond (co-chair), the Rev. Dr. Neal Presa (co-vice chair), the Rev. Terri Ofori, the Rev. Dr. Christian Boyd, the Rev. Robert Foltz-Morrison, the Rev. Brooke Pickrell, the Rev. Brian Entz, and Ruling Elder Dr. Dianna Wright serving as staff liaison.

### **PREAMBLE: The Urgency of the Times**

#### *Such a Time as This*

The Book of Esther recalls a time of great challenge. Likewise, our current time finds our world amid many challenges, including a global pandemic with still yet unknown overall effects on the Church. The global Christian Church around the world has found itself in a season of reinvention and redefinition. The events of 2020 have called us to ask ourselves what it truly means to be Christian.

Individual congregations have been challenged to adapt to a changing world in ways that have shattered our links with the past and old ways of doing church. In so doing, we have focused on the core duties of being Christ in the world. This has created both challenges and opportunities.

#### *Global Pandemic and Racial Endemic*

Our time stands in particular need of unity. Both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Episcopal Church acknowledge the historical and present reality of sin of racism and white supremacy that denies the impartiality of God, the reconciling work of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit poured forth into all persons. Both bodies acknowledge their complicity and that they are called to end all racial discrimination, repenting and ministering to those injured by it. We cannot remain silent about this divisiveness, nor did Jesus: “Recognizing what they were thinking, Jesus said, ‘Any country that divides itself into groups which fight each other will not last very long.’” (Matt 12.25, GNT). Reform always comes from the margins, whether it be that prophetic voice crying in the wilderness or activists on city streets protesting the death of another person of color as if Black lives do not matter.

Accordingly, there is a present and historical urgency borne in this agreement is to move both churches toward that unity in mission. The triune mission of God is the foundation of the church’s unity and its mission in the world. It is among the last of Jesus’ prayers: “That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17.21, ESV) This document represents the culmination of many decades of dialogues between the Episcopal Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).<sup>1</sup>

The Church, guided by God’s wisdom, can embrace this opportunity and examine how ecclesial



bodies can work together.

### *Tearing Down Ecclesiastical Barriers*

Old walls had prevented mission and ministry together, and in this time of notable change, the participants of the bi-lateral dialogue between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) invite our ecclesial bodies to consider this limited exchange agreement on the local sharing of ministries for passage at the General Convention 2021 and General Assembly 2022.

The old walls preventing work together have been torn down through a vastly changing world and church context. With the foundation of the 2008 Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement, our common full communion partners of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces), our work together through Churches Uniting in Christ, work together in public witness as well as numerous collaborative local ministries, a pathway has been created for continued mission and ministry together, toward the unity that God calls us to.

Thus, the Presbyterian/Episcopal Dialogue requests our respective authorizing bodies to consider the following Agreement; to continue the Dialogue with future deliberations; and that both of our Heads of Communion commit themselves publicly to this effort and to consider a public celebration of our progress to date and our hope for the future.

*Psalm 133:1 Oh, how good and pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity! (St. Helena Psalter)*

## **INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>**

The Church does not live for itself. It is called into being by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to serve the mission of the triune God in the world. 'The Church belongs to God. It is the creation of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. It cannot exist by and for itself.'<sup>3</sup> The mission of God is a single, all-embracing mission which confronts the Church with a range of complementary tasks. Impelled by the joyful duty of giving praise and thanks to God for all the blessings of creation and redemption, the Church seeks to serve God by making known the Good News of salvation and by meeting human need wherever it finds it. In accordance with God's purpose to 'gather up all things in Christ' (Eph. 1:10), the Church is called to embody in an anticipatory way the reconciliation and communion of all people.

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<sup>1</sup> The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been in ecumenical dialogue since the 19th century.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *For the Sake of the Gospel: Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministries in the Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia*, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 181 (Geneva: WCC, 1998), §9.

The Church knows well that its mission is compromised at every point by its disunity, which continues at many levels despite the great ecumenical achievements of the last century. How can the Church credibly proclaim the unity of humankind when it is too fractured to recognize a common baptism and to gather around one eucharistic table in the one apostolic faith? We have institutionalized divisions in the Church and come to accept them as normal, forgetting that they are a stumbling-block and a barrier to faith for many. We overlook the fact that they stand in conflict with the will of Christ and amount to a refusal of the unity which is his gift.

The witness of the Church – its service of the mission of God – will be greatly enhanced by the overcoming of historic divisions between the churches<sup>4</sup>. The removal of barriers between our two churches, The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while not providing an instant or complete solution to the problems and challenges confronting the Church, will be a step of great importance, especially when seen together with other comparable steps being considered by our churches. In many places in rural and urban parts of the United States, for example our churches have diverse communities that have benefited greatly from the sharing of ordained ministries. Missionally, our two churches could expand in joint planting of new worshipping communities, as well as a partner in union or federated parishes which are referred to as *ecumenical congregations*.<sup>5</sup> The matter is not less urgent, nor are the advantages less significant, in the deepening of our covenant relationship in order to establish new eucharistic communities and mission projects which feed the body, mind, and souls of God's people.

The proposals in this paper have been formulated out of our obedience to the Gospel and the better discharge of our call to mission. Unity is for the sake of mission. Changes in the socio-economic pattern of life in the U.S. in recent years provide an opportunity to develop the unity between our two churches. When Christians demonstrate in their lives that the barriers which divide the rest of society do not divide the Church, the Gospel is proclaimed. We may be certain that we are called, together, to grow in mission, the mission of the Church, within the mission of the triune God.

## **AFFIRMING THE CURRENT ECUMENICAL AGREEMENT**

This group affirms the current Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement of 2008. Among these were:

- We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;
- We acknowledge that in our churches the Word of God is authentically preached and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are duly administered;

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<sup>4</sup> See The Book of Common Prayer p 855: "The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."

<sup>5</sup> See *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jooseop Keum (Geneva: WCC, 2013).

- We acknowledge one another's ordained ministries as given by God and instruments of grace, and look forward to the time when the reconciliation of our churches makes possible the full interchangeability of ministers;
- We acknowledge that personal and collegial oversight (episcopate) is embodied and exercised in our churches in a variety of forms, episcopal and non-episcopal, as a visible sign of the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission, and ministry.
- We agree that The Episcopal Church will invite members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to receive Holy Communion in their churches and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will invite members of The Episcopal Church to receive Holy Communion in their churches. We encourage the members of our churches to accept this Eucharistic hospitality and thus express their unity with each other in the one Body of Christ.

In short, we recognize and affirm the validity of one another's churches which provide for their covenant communities word and sacrament, ordered ministries, as well as the embodiment and exercise of the ministry of oversight (communally, collegially, and personally). However, due to the divergence in our equally valid ecclesiastical polities, and to some extent, existing church traditions and customs limit interchangeability of ordered ministers, and thus full communion, at this time. Despite this recognition, this group believes it has prayerfully discerned a way forward through which our two churches may continue to journey together in a complementary manner and enriching each other as we participate in the mission of God.

## **PRESBYTERIAN GLOSSARY**

**\*Apostolic function of episkopé** –The apostolic function of those who oversee the ministry of the church, as reflected in various New Testament texts, is the function exercised by the apostles in spreading the Gospel and exists so that the Church maintains its witness to Jesus Christ.

**\*Apostolic succession** – Continuity with the ministry of the early church, especially the disciples of Jesus. Reformed and Roman Catholics believe that there is an apostolic succession, though they locate that succession differently.

**\*Apostolic era** –The period of the history of Christianity when the original apostles of Jesus were still alive.

***The Book of Common Worship (BCW)*** – A liturgical resource in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consisting of various liturgies and prayers consistent with the *Directory for Worship* section of Book Two of the Constitution, *The Book of Order*. The BCW's most recent edition was published in 2018.

**\*Catholicity** – As described in the baptismal catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem, refers not simply to geographic extension but also to the manifold variety of local churches and their participation in the fullness of faith and life that unites them in the one community.

**Church** – The one holy catholic apostolic church in every time and in every place. Depending on context, may also refer corporately to an ecclesial communion/denomination, e.g. The Episcopal Church, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**Churches** – Fellowship of ecclesial communions/denominations, e.g. Churches Uniting in Christ, World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches.

**church (lowercase “c”)** – The local expression of an ecclesial communion/denomination, i.e. congregation, parish.

**Commissioned Pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder)** – A ruling elder authorized by a presbytery to limited pastoral service assigned by a presbytery for a limited time. Commissioned pastors may be authorized by the presbytery to moderate session, administer the sacraments, and officiate marriages where permitted by state law.

**Commissioning** – An act of God through the voice of the Church whereby a council of the Church authorizes, blesses, and entrusts to an individual, usually one who is in ordered ministry, to discharge the duties and responsibilities of a particular ministry.

**\*Communion(s)** – The community fellowship gathered at the table together. Since we have not yet realized the goal of all churches being in communion with each other – essentially recognize

our being one Church as Christ prayed we would be –we are different communions gathering at different tables with only imperfect unity in Christ.

**Constitution of The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** – The governing documents that frame the ecclesial life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Constitution consists of two parts: Book One is *The Book of Confessions*, expressing in twelve creeds, catechisms, confessions, and statements of faith what Presbyterians believe; and Book Two is *The Book of Order*, expressing how Presbyterians live out their confessional belief with respect to governance, church discipline, and principles of worship.

**Councils** – Duly constituted gatherings of ruling and teaching elders for discernment and decision-making for the spiritual welfare of the church. The councils of the church are the session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Each council is distinct but mutually related to one another, the action of one council is understood to be an action on behalf of the whole and the whole church's act through that appropriate council, with the larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, governing the smaller. The session consists of all teaching elders serving in a local congregation and active ruling elders. Presbytery, synod, and General Assembly consist of an equal number of teaching and ruling elders. (adapted from *The Book of Order*, F- 3.0203)

**Covenant Partnership** - An ecclesiastical and ecclesial relationship whereby each participating communion acknowledges that it is undertaking a serious commitment, one that involves actions as well as words. Covenant partnership cannot be achieved without awareness of existing differences and similarities among the partners; it will demand dedication to walking and working together in ways that may, at times, represent a break with the past. Walking together involves not only the likelihood, but also the certainty of mutual challenge and change; because of this commitment, each body will eventually be different in ways that presently cannot be seen. The partner churches commit themselves to this new relationship with seriousness of intent, and full assurance that the One who calls us to greater visible unity is faithful and worthy of trust. (*Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Covenant Agreement with the Moravian Church*, p. 9)

**\*Diakonia** – The ministry of service. Many churches ordain deacons, in others deacons are officers of the church but not ordained.

**\*Ecclesiology** –The theology of the nature and purpose of the church.

**\*Ecumenicity** –The character of being ecumenical –being concerned with the unity of the churches.

**\*Episcopacy** – The office of oversight of the church and its ministry. Every church has some way of overseeing the church, keeping it faithful to the Gospel, fostering its unity, and overseeing the work of the ministry and the work of the church in service to the world. In this dialogue, we have focused on episcopacy as a central ecumenical issue. Thus in this document the meanings of episcopacy are somewhat different in each communion.

**\*Episkopé** – A Greek word meaning “oversight” from which we get the English word “episcopal,” indicating reference to a bishop or governance by bishops. In ecumenical dialogue, the use of the word episkopé has become the standard way to refer to the ministry of oversight, which includes, but is not limited to, the office of bishop. This use of episkopé has also become a way to invite those churches that have not retained the episcopal office to recognize that the ministry of that office is nevertheless present in and vital to their churches.

**Executive Presbyter/General Presbyter** – A chief administrative staff member employed and called by a presbytery to help provide pastoral care and guidance, administrative functions, and other such duties as determined by a presbytery in order to effectively support the mission and ministries of congregations, validated ministries, and teaching/ruling elders in that presbytery.

**\*Feast of Eucharist** – The Lord’s Supper, the word “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving,” the feast of the Lord’s Supper is a meal of thanksgiving. Also known as Holy Communion to denote that in the feasting of the bread and cup, the assembled community is in communion with the triune God and with the Church universal in every time and in every place.

**Full Communion** – An ecclesiastical and ecclesial relationship between churches characterized by the following: recognition of each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God; withdrawal of any historic condemnation by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today; continuation of recognition of each other's Baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord's Supper among their members; recognition of each other's various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament; establishment of appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches; commitment of themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service; pledge themselves to living together under the Gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for the other will have a chance to grow. (*A Formula of Agreement Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ on Entering into Full Communion on the Basis of “A Common Calling,” p. 1*)

**Holy Orders** – Also known as ordered ministry, these designate ordained offices into which women and men are called by God and confirmed by councils of the church to serve the people of God. These offices include bishop/priest, pastor, elder, and deacon.

**Interchangeability** – Mutual recognition and mutual exchange of ordained ministers between two communions who have been duly authorized and commissioned by their respective ecclesiastical authority (diocesan bishop or presbytery).

**Installation** – A liturgical service whereby a council of the church officially places an ordinand in a particular ministry. An installed ordinand is ready to be commissioned with specific responsibilities and duties.

**\*Koinonia** – A Greek word meaning community, communion, or fellowship. ~

**\*Legitimate diversity** – Legitimate diversity is diversity that does not violate a legitimate norm. Churches differ in what they consider legitimate diversity to include. “The Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling--The Canberra Statement” of the World Council of Churches, 1991 states that, “Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8); salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in Holy Scripture and preached by the apostolic community.”

**Moderator** – A constitutional office of the various councils of the church whose origin is from the Church of Scotland, representing the unity of the Church in council. The office of moderator is to preside over the proceedings of the appropriate council, guiding the council to discern the will and mind of Christ, ensuring that such deliberation is done “decently and in good order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40) The moderator of a session is usually a teaching elder of a local congregation, or a commissioned pastor authorized by a presbytery, or another presbyter authorized by a presbytery. The moderators of a presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are elected by that respective council. The Moderator/Co-Moderators of the General Assembly is an ambassador of the Assembly, representing the “sign of the bond of unity, community, and mission in the life of the church.” (*Organization for Mission*, IV.A.2, pp. 6-7)

**Ordered Ministry** – Christ’s ministry and authority exercised through the ministry of the whole people of God, from whom certain women and men are specially called to particular functions in specific offices. The New Testament describes two primary ordered offices and their ordered ministry: the office of deacon to the ordered ministry of *diakonia* and the office of presbyter to the ordered ministry of Word and Sacrament (in the case of teaching elder) and the ordered ministry of shared governance (in the case of ruling elder).

**Ordinands** – Individuals who are inquiring or candidates for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament and who are under care by a session and a presbytery.

**\*Presbyterian and presbyterian** – Presbyterian refers to a form of church organization in which the governance of the church is in the hands of the elders (presbyteros, oin Greek). Presbyterian with a capital P is the name of particular churches, which characterize themselves by their presbyterian polity and subscribe to the Reformed theological tradition.

**Presbytery** – A governing council in Presbyterian polity consisting of an equal number of teaching elders (ministers of Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders commissioned by the sessions of local congregations in a designated region.

**\*Recognition** – “Accept[ing] the legitimacy and authenticity of other churches as the Church in the dialogical process towards fuller communion.” (Timothy T. N. Lim, *Ecclesial Recognition with Hegelian Philosophy, Social Psychology, and Continental Political Theory* [Boston: Brill, 2017], 5.)

**Reformed** – A Protestant theological tradition that is “in continuity with the classical Reformed theologians of the sixteenth century like Calvin and Bullinger, for example, and with the confessions of that tradition” (Jane Dempsey Douglass, “What is Reformed Theology?” The Princeton Seminary Bulletin 11, no. 1 (1990): 4.)

**Ruling elder** – Active members in a local congregation who have been elected by a local congregation, and ordained and installed by that congregation’s session to exercise shared spiritual leadership in the session and councils of the church with teaching elders.

**Sacraments** – “The Word of God enacted and sealed in the life of the Church, the body of Christ. They are gracious acts of God, by which Christ Jesus offers his life to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are also human acts of gratitude, by which we offer our lives to God in love and service. The Sacraments are both physical signs and spiritual gifts, including words and actions, surrounded by prayer, in the context of the Church’s common worship. They employ ordinary things—the basic elements of water, bread, and wine—in proclaiming the extraordinary love of God. The Reformed tradition recognizes the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (also called Eucharist or Holy Communion) as having been instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of the Scriptures and sustained through the history of the universal Church.” (*The Book of Order*, W-3.0401)

**Session** – A local governing council in Presbyterian polity consisting of the pastoral staff and ruling elders of a local congregation.

**Stated Clerk/Clerk of Session** – A constitutional office of the various councils (called a clerk of session in the case of a session) who preserves and defends the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with the moderator of the appropriate council interpret the actions of that council, and insures the accurate recording of the appropriate council’s deliberations. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is understood to be the head of communion, and together with the Moderator/Co-Moderator of the General Assembly represents the unity of the Church. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is the chief ecumenical officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is the chief executive officer of the Office of the General Assembly, one of six national agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**Synod** – “The intermediate council serving as a corporate expression of the church throughout its region. It shall consist of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specific geographic region.” (*The Book of Order*, G-3.0401)

**Teaching elder (also known as a minister of Word and Sacrament)** – An ordained office in Presbyterian polity to exercise spiritual leadership in and through the councils of the church by the ministries of preaching and teaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, and attending to the health of ecclesial life in a ministry context.



**World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)** – A global fellowship founded in 2010 with the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council consisting of 233 member churches in 110 countries representing 100 million Christians from the Reformed, Presbyterian, United, Uniting, Congregational, and Waldensian theological traditions. The WCRC secretariat's headquarters is in Hanover, Germany, and is governed by a General Council that meets every seven years, and between General Councils is governed by an Executive Committee.

**World Council of Churches (WCC)** – A global fellowship founded in 1948 consisting of 350 member communions in 110 countries representing over 500 million Christians worldwide. The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are founding members of the WCC. The WCC secretariat's headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland and is governed by an Assembly that meets every seven years, and between Assemblies is governed by a Central Committee.

\*From the "Glossary" section of *The One Body Of Christ: Ministry In Service To The Church and The World*, Roman Catholic –Reformed Dialogue of the United States, Round Eight: 2012-2017. pp. 4-5.

## EPISCOPAL GLOSSARY

**+Anglican Communion** - Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury throughout the world. Member churches exercise jurisdictional independence but share a common heritage concerning Anglican identity and commitment to scripture, tradition, and reason as sources of authority. The Episcopal Church is the embodiment of the Anglican Communion in the USA and several other countries.

**+Anglicanism** - This way of life is the system of doctrine, and approach to polity of Christians in communion with the See of Canterbury (the bishop/diocese that is the ecclesiastical center for England and eventually all of the Anglican Communion). The term derives from the word which, in a variety of forms, refers to the people of the British Isles, and especially the English.

**\*\*Archdeacon** - A clergy person with a defined administrative authority delegated by the diocesan bishop.

**#Bishop** - One of the three orders of ordained ministers in the church, bishops are charged with the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the church. They stand in the historic succession, maintaining continuity with the ministry of the early Church and between Christian communities today. Bishops serve as chief pastors of the church, exercising a ministry of oversight and supervision. They are consecrated bishops for life. Since the bishop's ministry is a ministry of oversight, the term "episcopal" (derived from the Greek episcopos, "overseer") is applied to matters pertaining to bishops. An "episcopal" church is a church governed by bishops, and "episcopal" services are led by bishops.

**\*\*Bishop – Assistant** - A bishop, ordinarily a full-time member of the diocesan staff, who is appointed rather than elected and assists in carrying out the episcopal ministry of the diocese.

**\*\*Bishop – Assisting** - In common usage, a bishop who aides the diocese by providing additional episcopal services on a temporary basis. Appointed by, and serves at the pleasure of, the diocesan bishop, or the Standing Committee if there is no bishop.

**\*\*Bishop Coadjutor** - The elected bishop, with the right of succession upon the resignation of the diocesan bishop, who serves with the diocesan bishop.

**\*\*Bishop, Diocesan** - Also known as the Ordinary of a diocese. A diocesan bishop, as distinct from a suffragan, assistant, or coadjutor bishop. The term apparently springs from the understanding of "ordinary jurisdiction" which is held in canon law to be the jurisdiction "permanently and irremovably annexed to" the office of bishop. By canon, a bishop may not

resign jurisdiction without the consent of the House of Bishops. A bishop must resign from all jurisdiction at the age of seventy-two.

**\*\*Bishop, Presiding** - Chief Pastor and Primate of the Episcopal Church.

**\*\*Bishop Provisional** - If a diocesan bishop resigns with no bishop coadjutor (who has the right of succession) a diocese may call a bishop provisional who serves as the bishop, with full authority, for an interim period of up to three years, until the consecration of a new diocesan bishop.

**\*\*Bishop Suffragan** - A bishop who does not automatically succeed a diocesan bishop. Elected by the diocese to serve indefinitely at the direction of the diocesan bishop.

+ ***The Book of Common Prayer*** - Official book of worship of the Episcopal Church. The BCP provides liturgical forms, prayers, and instructions so that all members and orders of the Episcopal Church may appropriately share in common worship. Anglican liturgical piety has been rooted in the Prayer Book tradition since the publication of the first English Prayer Book in 1549. The current and defining edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* for the Episcopal Church was ratified in 1979.

**\*\*The Book of Occasional Services** - Book of optional services and texts prepared by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

**\*\*Canon** - The word has several different meanings in the church.

- 1) The canon of scripture
- 2) Church law
- 3) As an ecclesiastical title, a canon may be a member of the clergy or laity on the staff of a cathedral, diocese or other institution
- 4) In liturgy, the fixed portion of the Great Thanksgiving

**\*\*Canon to the Ordinary** - Clergy or lay person who serves as assistant to the diocesan bishop.

**\*\*Canonical Residence** - Clergy serving under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authority of a diocese are canonically resident in that diocese. Clergy may move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction pursuant to canonical procedures.

**Church** – The one holy catholic apostolic church in every time and in every place. Depending on context, may also refer corporately to an ecclesial communion/denomination, e.g. The Episcopal Church, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**Churches** – Fellowship of ecclesial communions/denominations, e.g. Churches Uniting in Christ, World Council of Churches.

**church** (lowercase “c”) – The local expression of an ecclesial communion/denomination, i.e. congregation, parish.

**Churches Uniting in Christ** – A covenant relationship among eleven Christian Communions--mainline American denominations (including both predominantly white and predominantly black

churches), and was inaugurated on January 20, 2002 in Memphis, Tennessee on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. It is the successor organization to the Consultation on Church Union<sup>9</sup>.

**\*\*Commission on Ministry (COM)** - Pursuant to Title III, Canon 1, each diocese is required to establish a COM to assist the bishop in determining the present and future needs for ministry in the diocese.

**Consultation on Church Union (COCU)** - Was an effort on the part of several ecclesial bodies towards church unity in the United States, that began in 1962 and in 2002, it became Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).

***Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*** - The Constitution and Canons is the official set of governing rules for The Episcopal Church's bodies (*General Convention: House of Bishops and House of Deputies*). *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* is a part of the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church*.

**\*\*Curate** - The term typically refers to an assisting priest in a parish.

**\*\*Cure** - The pastoral and geographical responsibility and charge of a member of the clergy.

**\*\*Deacon** - One of three offices to which people can be ordained in the Episcopal Church, along with priests and bishops. The deacon's vocation lies in serving – especially the weak, the poor, the sick, the lonely – and in interpreting to the church the needs and hopes of the world. The sign of the office of deacon is a stole worn over the left shoulder and fastened under the right arm. In the Eucharist, deacons read the gospel, lead the Prayers of the People, introduce the confession, prepare the altar, assist with the distribution of the bread and wine, perform the ablutions, and dismiss the people.

**\*\*Diocese** - A geographical area that serves as the primary unit of organization in the Episcopal Church. A bishop and a legislative body—a convention or council—oversee each diocese.

**\*\*Diocesan Convention** - Annual meeting of lay and clerical representatives from the congregations of a diocese to elect members of diocesan committees and deputies to General Convention, make decisions about diocesan policy, conduct other diocesan business (e.g., budget, program) and from time to time, elect a bishop for the diocese.

**\*\*Diocesan Transition Minister** - The clergy or lay member of the diocesan staff responsible for assisting the bishop, worshipping communities and individuals in transition.

**Ecclesial body** - A religious fellowship whose congregations are unified in their observance to its beliefs and traditions.

**\*\*Ecclesiastical Authority** – The responsible individual or body in a church institution. In a diocese, this authority rests with the diocesan bishop. Should the episcopate be vacant or the bishop be incapacitated, the responsibility falls upon the Standing Committee or other bishop

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<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches\\_Uniting\\_in\\_Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_Uniting_in_Christ)

**The Episcopal Church** – A Christian ecclesial body made up of 111 dioceses or convocations in the United States and 17 countries. The Episcopal Church is a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

**\*\*Episcopal Church Center** - The churchwide ministries office of the Episcopal Church housing the office of the Presiding Bishop, his or her staff, and other church-related offices. Located in New York City.

**\*\*Executive Council of the Episcopal Church** - The national body that administers the program and policies adopted by the General Convention.

**Ecumenical congregations** – A congregation comprising of at least two or more ecclesial bodies.

**Episcopal/episcopal** – Episcopal refers to being of the Episcopal Church; episcopal is a term referring to bishop, from the Greek *episkopos*, meaning ‘overseer’. As above, an "episcopal" church is a church governed by bishops, and "episcopal" services are led by bishops.

**Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement of 2008** - The Agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was approved by the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) and ratified by presbyteries in 2009. The 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church approved the Agreement in 2009. Both churches authorized another round of dialogue to continue to address theological and missional issues.

**\*\*General Convention** - The national legislative body of the Episcopal Church. It consists of a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies (four lay persons and four clergy persons from each diocese). Convention meets every three years.

**\*\*House of Bishops** - Part of the two-house legislature of General Convention. All diocesan, suffragan, coadjutor, assistant, and most resigned and retired bishops are members of this body, which also meets periodically between General Conventions.

**\*\*The Hymnal 1982** - The collection of hymn texts, tunes, and service music authorized for use in the Episcopal Church. Also widely used: *Lift Every Voice and Sing II (LEVAS)*; and *Wonder, Love and Praise*.

**Institution** – Occurring in a service of Celebration of a New Ministry, a bishop shares a letter of institution conferring the responsibilities of a priest in charge of a parish.

**\*\*Office for Transition Ministry** - A church-wide office that maintains a database of Episcopal and other clergy and lay professionals in Communion with the Episcopal Church, and the worshipping communities of the Episcopal Church. OTM has a website that allows clergy and lay leaders to search for worshipping communities that are themselves in search, using each other's gifts, skills and experiences to identify possible opportunities for ministry together in order to assist the church to live into God's mission in the world.

**\*\*Pastor** (as used in the Episcopal Church) - Term for a member of the clergy. It evokes one aspect of the priestly role, which is that of pastoral ministry: caring and protective responsibility for the sick, the grieving, the needy, and those in pain. It is a term especially appropriate for

bishops, since they are ordained to “feed and tend the flock of Christ,” who is the Good Shepherd. (It does not normally mean a clergy person in charge of a parish as in the ELCA.) The laity shares in the pastoral role of the clergy, and a growing number of parishes have lay pastoral care teams.

**+Priest or presbyter** - From the Greek *presbyteros*, "elder." In the NT, "presbyter" indicates a leader of the church. The English word "priest" is derived from "presbyter," and used as a synonym for presbyter. After the Reformation, some churches began to use the term "presbyter" for the minister who preaches the word and administers the sacraments. The Anglican Church used the term "priest" for this order of ministry. The 1979 BCP, and thus the Episcopal Church, uses both terms. For example, directions for the Ordination of a Priest require that "at least two presbyters must be present". The Catechism notes that "the ministry of a priest or presbyter" is "to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God."

**\*\*Priest, related terms:**

**Priest-in-Charge** - Practices vary widely among dioceses. In a parish without a rector, the priest-in-charge generally contracts with the vestry, in consultation with the bishop, to perform many of the functions of a rector.

**Rector** – Elected by the vestry of a parish in consultation with the bishop and serves as the leader of the parish with respect to its spiritual life and mission. In charge of liturgy, music, education, outreach, and pastoral care, the rector has full use of the parish property to carry out his or her office, hires and supervises lay and clerical staff, and is generally entitled to preside at all vestry and parish meetings.

**Vicar** – The title applies to the priest-in-charge of a mission congregation, serving at the pleasure of and representing the bishop.

**\*\*Primate** - The chief bishop in an Anglican Province is called a primate. The term relates to primacy, which in ecclesiastical terms is the status of being first, or presiding, among other bishops.

**\*\*Province**

1) An internal division of an autonomous national church of the Anglican Communion. There are nine provinces in the Episcopal Church, including overseas jurisdictions.

2) An autonomous national church member of the Anglican Communion.

**Sacrament** – From the Catechism of the 1979 BCP: an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. In The Episcopal Church there are two great sacraments: Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. There are five sacramental rites: confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction.

**\*\*Standing Committee** - A body that shares the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese with the bishop in certain defined areas (e.g., clergy discipline, property of parishes, ordination). In the absence of a bishop it sometimes becomes the sole ecclesiastical authority. Its members are elected by the diocesan convention. It also serves as the bishop's council of advice.

**+Vestry** - The vestry is the legal representative of an Episcopal parish with regard to all matters pertaining to its corporate property. The number of vestry members and the term of office varies from parish to parish. Vestry members are usually elected at the annual parish meeting. The presiding officer of the vestry is the rector.

**+Warden** - Officers of a parish. Two wardens are typically selected to serve with members of the vestry. The wardens are generally ranked "senior" and "junior." The senior warden is usually the primary elected lay leader of the congregation, and serves as a principal liaison between the parish and the rector. The junior warden is often given responsibility for the upkeep of the parish buildings and grounds.

+Glossary definitions used or adapted from "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians," Church Publishing, New York, 2000, Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, editors.

**\*\*Glossary definitions used or adapted from the Episcopal Glossary of "Principles for the Orderly Exchange of Clergy between the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces" from 2009/2010.**

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The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Partnerships approved Item ECU-05 by 45/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item ECU-05 by consensus.

For the full report on ECU-05, go to <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001207>

**Report of the General Presbyter  
Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley  
November, 2024**

Nearly five years ago, in January 2020, I began my work as your Transitional Executive Presbyter. Two months later we got shut down in light of a global pandemic (the two things were not causally related.) Nonetheless, as our congregations scrambled to remain in contact with each other and offer some kind of worship and connection opportunity, our congregations came together to help one another figure it out. We formed a tech team who schooled us in what has now become commonplace – Zoom! We used each others' on-line Bible studies and sermons, freely shared. For those first several years a revolving group of pastors and congregational leaders met every Thursday afternoon via zoom for prayer and conversation. And so we began our ministry together.

I have loved working with you all! As you've heard me say before, this presbytery is filled with extraordinary leaders and human beings! I appreciate the sense of comradery, collaboration, and effectiveness you exhibit. We have done some good work together – becoming a Matthew 25 presbytery, regularly offering opportunities to confront the racism in ourselves and in society, faithfully shepherding our remarkable candidates and inquirers (and thank you to all the churches who have seen gifts and encouraged them in this path), being faithful stewards of our resources, helping congregations in change, in turmoil, in death. We have rejoiced in the Living River Camp which, when I first arrived was teetering and now is thriving. I could go on (and will in the future).

Now it is time for me to begin to retire. I have a decade birthday coming up in January of 2026 and that seemed like a good time, after what will be 44 years, to retire from professional ministry. I'm not really ready to retire as I still have a great deal of energy and passion for the work of our presbytery's life together. When I was back in my 40's I vowed I would not be one of the pastors who just wouldn't retire. And then I became one! But now I really am going to retire and see what God has for me next.

As you will see from their report, the Executive Council has designed a year of transition to insure a seamless segue to your new leadership. At this meeting you will vote on a slate of candidates for a Transition/Search Committee. They are tasked to lead the presbytery in a review of staffing patterns (Jay's three year term as Stated Clerk is up in 2026 and he has indicated that he does not intend to run for a second term), develop a mission study, write a Ministry Discernment Profile, write job descriptions, and search for new leadership which, hopefully, they will be able to present for election at the November 2025 presbytery meeting. It is an exciting time and I know you will have many good candidates from which to choose.

Meanwhile, Jay and I will continue to serve you in all the ways we do so you will have continuous leadership. I anticipate that it will be an exciting and generative year ahead!



The Presbytery Of Sheppards And Lapsley

Report Of The Commission on Preparation For Ministry — November 2024

INQUIRERS

Theodore Longlois  
Abby Bunn

CHURCH

Independent  
Church of the Covenant

INSTITUTION

Princeton  
Columbia

CANDIDATES

Annabelle Beavers  
Peyton Chandler  
Patrick O'Connor  
Barbara Tomek-White  
Daniel Killilea  
Teddy Vaughn

First, Tuscaloosa  
Independent, Birmingham  
Immanuel, Montgomery  
First, Auburn  
South Highland, Birmingham  
Grace, Tuscaloosa

Union (Richmond)  
Graduate - Vanderbilt  
Graduate - San Francisco  
Graduate - Austin  
Louisville  
Graduate - Columbia

**FOR INFORMATION:**

At their request, the CPM approved the dissolution of the relationship between Candidate Avery Arden (Grace, Tuscaloosa) and the CPM of Sheppards and Lapsley.

At their request, the CPM approved the dissolution of the relationship between Inquirer Anne Kearney Patton (First, Birmingham) and the CPM of Sheppards and Lapsley.

**FOR ACTION:**

The CPM requests approval of the following individuals to serve as ordination exam graders in 2024:

Teaching Elder - Emily Frandsen

Ruling Elder - Jeff Johnson

Alternate (Ruling Elder) - Adrienne Stokes

Submitted on behalf of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry:

Rick Atkerson (2025), Jim Bannon (2024), Sheila Holland (2024), Jeff Johnson (2025), Nicole Newton (2025), Kathy Wolf Reed (2026), Emily Frandsen (2024), Adrienne Stokes (2025), Lee Walthall (2026), Luke Ponder (2026), Henry Kline (2026), Cort Gatliff (2026).

Respectfully,

Rev. Nicole Newton, Moderator

## **TRIBUTE TO BEVERLY DODSON**

**On the occasion of her retirement from the CLP/CRE Program  
At the Meeting of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley  
August 15, 2024**

In late 1993 and early 1994, two concerns were voiced about the state of available clergy in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley to serve the member churches:

1. So many of the churches in the Presbytery were being served by ministers of other denominations and not functioning as Presbyterian churches.
2. A growing number of churches were not financially able to support even part-time ordained clergy, but were still capable of being viable worshipping Presbyterian congregations.

*But what was the solution? There was no clear path available at the time.*

By April 1995, the first class of 12 ordained elders were gathered from across the Presbytery to begin a course of study to become Commissioned Lay Pastors. This class was the result of the determination of one woman, Bev Dodson.

Bev began the process decently and in order by obtaining an “Opinion of Need for a CLP Program” from the Executive Presbyter. Having that permission, Bev contacted 12 other presbyteries who were implementing similar programs to get an idea of what was being done in those locations. She then wrote a draft program which best fit the needs and abilities of our presbytery. The plan was approved at the Presbytery meeting in January 1995. And Bev allowed no grass to grow under her feet!

She set up a working relationship with the Lay Institute for Faith and Life at Columbia Theological Seminary to help provide professors to assist in training those interested in the program. Supplemental sessions

were to be taught by local pastors. (After the first two classes of training were complete, this part of the process changed for the following two classes, and is currently an online curriculum through Dubuque Seminary.). The students agreed to meet at least once a month over a two-year period with the following requirements for admission to the program:

- Baccalaureate Degree.
- Member of a PC(USA) congregation for at least 3 years, including regular and faithful participation, and approval of the session.
- Ordained Elder.
- Statement of Faith.
- Fulfill all in-person contact hours.
- Attend Summer Lay Scholars at Columbia Theological Seminary at least one year.
- Submit written and oral exams based on subject material.
- Preach and lead Worship at the Presbytery level.
- Training Areas to include:
  - Bible
  - Reformed Theology & History
  - Worship/Preaching & Sacraments
  - Presbyterian Polity
  - Religious Education
  - Pastoral Care & Support
  - Evangelism
  - Required Reading including: Book of Confessions; Book of Order; Theological Authors such as Shirley Guthrie, Daniel Migliore, Joan Gray, Fred Craddock, Walter Brueggemann, Charles Cousar; Book of Common Worship.
- Agree to 10 hours per year of Continuing Education.

In 1996 the General Assembly approved the Commissioned Lay Pastor Program, and the office was included in the Book of Order in 1998. In its approval, GA issued the following statement:

*“ The primary focus of the CLP program is the participation of persons to preach in churches as occasional supply when pastors are away from their pulpit or as temporary supply for pastorless churches. In some circumstances the Committee on Ministry may approve a particular CLP for a continuing temporary supply relationship with a pastorless congregation.”*

Thanks to Bev Dodson, the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley was already a step ahead. In April 1997, the Presbytery examined and approved the first class of 12 persons as suitable to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors. Within 2 years these 12 were serving 40/100 congregations, preaching 600+ sermons, and 8/12 commissioned to specific churches. Two of these first twelve from 1997 are still serving churches as supply pastors today 27 years later, Bill Sauser in Union Springs and Bev Dodson at Green Pond.

I was blessed to be a part of the second class of 12 who began training in May 1999 and completed the CLP courses, before the alphabet soup of renaming the program to Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) or Commissioned Pastor (CP) or Lay Pastor (LP) took place! Bev gave me so much encouragement and support throughout the two years that I ended up commissioned as CLP to Carbon Hill Presbyterian Church (officially) and to Center Point (unofficially). Without this experience, I would have never had the confidence and courage to attend seminary to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament. I cannot tell you how much of an advantage this program gave me as I studied in seminary. This experience changed my life!

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley should be proud of and honored by the work and dedication of Bev Dodson in furthering the ministry of Jesus Christ among us, creating and sustaining a path of faithful service where there was no path.

Sincerely in Christ's love, Rev. Sharon A. Schuler, HR

**Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC)  
Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC)**

To: Committee on Ministry  
Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley  
Date: 10/07/2024  
Re: Call of Nicole Newton

Please find attached documents that will provide the background information for the call of Nicole Newton to a new Associate Pastor for Discipleship position at IPC. We have included the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP), Nicole's Personal Discernment Profile (PDP), the original and updated job descriptions, and the terms of the call.

Background: The APNC was formed in late 2022 to call a third associate pastor for IPC, filling a void created when Lucy Turner retired in 2020. The Session and Pastoral Staff determined that a focus on the vital ministry areas of Young Adults and New Member Engagement was needed to foster the continuing growth of the church and diversity of membership. In early October, 2024, the position was broadened to include discipleship for all ages. However, a focus on young adults and new members remains.

Process: Starting in early 2024, the APNC reviewed over 20 potential matches in the CLC system and contacted 6 additional potential candidates that were not in the CLC system. From this candidate pool, 3 members of the APNC (Houston, Cook, Virginia Grisham, and Mary Stewart Beasley) conducted initial interviews with 7 potential candidates. Then 4 candidates met with the entire committee and visited the church.

Fit for the Position: The APNC believes that Nicole Newton will be a strong fit for this position. Nicole has a passion for discipleship and has demonstrated a commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church. She is a gifted teacher and preacher with a strong commitment to continuing education. With respect to this position, Nicole is a focused listener who builds relationships in a thoughtful and caring way by understanding everyone's unique place and circumstances. In addition, she is well organized with an effective focus on communication. Nicole continues to demonstrate an ability to be a leader within the Presbyterian Church.

# MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROFILE

## MINISTRY PROFILE INFORMATION



*This form is only to be used by the COM, Session, and PNC as a tool of discernment before posting the MDP online.*

**Ministry Name:** Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Membership

**Congregation or Organization Size (select one) :**

NA

Under 100 members

101-250 members

251-400 members

401-650 members

651-1000 members

1001-1500 members

X More than 1500 members

**Average Worship Attendance:** 285

**Church School Attendance:** 188

**Curriculum:**

**Community Type (select one):**

N/A

Rural

Village

Town

Small City

Suburban

X Urban

College

Recreation

Retirement

**Intercultural Composition (Race/Ethnicity - Percent of Congregation):**

Prefer not to answer

Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian

Black/African American/African

Hispanic/Latinx

Native American/Alaska

Native/Indigenous

Middle Eastern/North African

White

99%

Multiracial

Other

1%

## MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROFILE: POSITION REQUIREMENTS

### Position Type (*select one*):

- |                          |   |                               |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Administrator</b>                            | <b>Pastor, Yoked Ministry</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Associate Director                              | Pastoral Counselor            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Associate Pastor (Christian Education)          | Seminary Staff                |
| X                        | Associate Pastor (Other)                        | Solo Pastor: Installed        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Associate Pastor (Youth)                        | Solo Pastor: Temporary        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Campus Ministry                                 | Stated Clerk Presbytery       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chaplain  | Synod Executive               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Christian Educator (Certified)                  | Transitional Pastor           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Christian Educator (non-certified)              | Youth Director (Non-ordained) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Church Business Administrator                   |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Co- Pastor                                      |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | College/Seminary Faculty                        |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Commissioned Ruling Elder                       |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Communicator                                    |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Coordinator                                     |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Director of Music (non-ordained)                |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evangelist or Mission Pastor                    |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Executive Director                              |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Executive Pastor                                |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance Manager                                 |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Funds Developer                                 |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | General Assembly Staff                          |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | General Presbyter/Executive                     |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Presbyter/Presbytery Leader                     |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Stated Clerk Presbytery                         |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Synod Executive                                 |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transitional Pastor                             |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Youth Director (Non-ordained)                   |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastor Interim                                  |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Head of Staff / Senior Pastor                   |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Media Specialist                                |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mid-Council Program Staff                       |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastor, Yoked Ministry                          |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastoral Counselor                              |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Seminary Staff                                  |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Solo Pastor: Installed                          |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Solo Pastor: Temporary                          |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Minister of Music (ordained)                    |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mission Co-worker (International)               |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastor (Bivocational/Tentmaker)                 |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastor (church planter, new church development) |                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pastor Interim                                  |                               |

**Experience Required (*Select one*):**

**No Experience/First Ordained Call**

Up to 2 Years

☒ 2-5 Years

5-10 Years

More than 10 Years

**Specify Title / PT Work Hours (if applicable):** NA

**Employment Status:**

☒ Full-time

Part-time

Full-time/Part-time

Bi-vocational

**Training/Certificate Requirements:**

**Interim Ministry Training**

Certified Christian Educator

Conflict Mediator Training

Interim Executive Presbyter Training

Certified Business Administrator

Clinical Pastoral Education Training

**Other Training:**

**Language Requirements:**

☒ English

Spanish

Korean

**Statement of Faith Required:**

☒ Yes

No

**Are you open to a clergy couple:**

Yes

☒ No

**MDP Application Deadline (if applicable):** NA



**Church Mission/Vision Statement (1500-character limit which includes punctuations and spaces):**

From our Jewish roots to our Scottish heritage, from the first among us to the least of these, IPC exists to glorify God in truth, beauty, and service to others. Christ-centered and cross-cultural, we experience God fully in life beyond ourselves -- for the world is our parish!

**IPC Guiding Principles:**

We are...

1. Christ-centered and Trinitarian in our worship, study and service;
2. Presbyterian in doctrine and polity-- "Reformed and always being reformed" according to God in Scripture;
3. Growing our relationship with God, by seeking to understand Scripture, prayerful discernment of gifts, and being a part of the body of Christ in Birmingham and in the world;
4. Theologically diverse with openness, love and respect for one another when we differ on matters of faith and practice within the essential tenets of the Reformed faith;
5. Glorifying God in art, music, education and action;
6. Joining God in the world by sharing the Gospel in both evangelism and social justice ministry.

We believe God calls us to be a Christian community, actively engaged in transforming lives through our living faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Tasks, expectations, duties, supervision, assignments, and responsibilities for the position (1500-character limit which includes punctuations and spaces):**

This position is responsible for developing and overseeing a vital ministry to the young adults of IPC, including offering pastoral care, coordinating educational, fellowship and outreach opportunities, and helping to integrate them into all aspects of leadership and service.

This position is also responsible for overseeing the church's New Member program, actively inviting, welcoming, and engaging prospective members of all ages to participate, join and become active members to utilize their time and talents in service to Jesus Christ through the life and ministry of IPC.

- Provide spiritual leadership, pastoral support and organizational direction to IPC's Young Adult (20's & 30's) Ministries.
- Develop a ministry at IPC for college and university students.
- Develop an effective New Member program—working with other church staff and lay-leaders in implementing a theologically-sound approach to evangelism focused on invitation, welcome, education, integration and use of spiritual gifts.
- Support and advance the Small Group ministry model.

- Supervise staff as assigned, helping to develop plans for individual and team development; this includes but is not limited to the Director of Member Engagement and Assimilation.
- Lead staff meetings and retreats as assigned.
- Lead worship as assigned, including preaching as called upon by the Sr. Pastor.
- Other clergy duties (weddings, funerals, sacraments, visitation, Session, etc.) and tasks as assigned by the Sr. Pastor.

**A range for the Effective salary is needed for matching purposes. The maximum effective salary is not published anywhere. Effective salary is cash salary plus housing allowance or manse value and other compensations. See Effective Salary Definition at Board of Pensions of the PC (U.S.A.).**

**Minimum Effective Salary:      \$60,000**  
**Maximum Effective Salary:      \$75,000**

**Housing Type (*select all that apply*):**

- Manse**  
☒ Housing Allowance  
       Open to either  
       N/A

**MDP Narratives. Please fill out the following narrative questions about your congregation (*1500-character limit per question, including punctuations and spaces*):**

**Question 1: How would you describe the congregation's/organization's specific vision for ministry? Is the congregation part of a ministry vision or program? How will this vision impact the community?**

We believe God calls us to be a Christian community, actively engaged in transforming lives through our living faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. All are invited to worship here and to discover ways to grow in faith, serve in ministry to others, and build relationships through fellowship.

*Grow Faith*

Committed to the spiritual development of ourselves and others, we seek to spread the light and love of Christ to our congregation and our greater community through inspired worship, meaningful fellowship, committed discipleship, and thoughtful evangelism.

*Serve Others*

For more than 100 years, IPC has committed itself to following Jesus' call to love your neighbor as yourself. Through IPC Community Ministries and our community partners, the hungry obtain food, the needy receive help, and children are nurtured and loved.

### *Build Relationships*

Just as the early church experienced the power of community in Acts, IPC members believe in the importance of fellowship to faith. We believe in sharing our burdens and our joys, practicing reconciliation and forgiveness, and gathering in small groups to feel the presence of God in our midst.

We are a within the presbytery of Shepards and Lapsley, which exists to “partner with and equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors.” S&L churches partner on various initiatives to serve Alabama residents through programming like Living River, our camp on the Cahaba River.

**Question 2: What is the nature and context of the community in which your congregation lives out its mission/vision? How will you address the emerging needs that are impacting your community?**

Birmingham, like many communities, has a diverse population and a diverse set of needs. IPC has established a Community Ministries Team to address the unique opportunities that are best suited to our congregation. An overview of the Community Ministries Team can be found at the link below:

<https://ipc-usa.org/serve/ipccm/overview.html>

To fulfill this purpose, there are five sub-committees that help deliver our ministries locally (greater Birmingham) and globally (including Wilcox County, AL, Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya, Ukraine, Chiapas, Mexico, etc.).

- Hunger and Food Insecurity
- Children’s Fresh Air Farm – Facility in Bluff Park area (Hoover AL) that provides summer camp and learning opportunities for elementary school students
- Earth Care Team
- Global Missions Team
- Homelessness & Housing Team

In addition to the work done by the Community Ministries Team, IPC is blessed with a Foundation that supports the church directly as well as local and global communities. The IPC Foundation has a total of \$68.4 million in assets (12/31/2022). There are 2 sets of funds in the foundation. Unitized Funds that are primarily dedicated to support the church directly (\$20.2 million). The Beeson Fund that supports IPC as well as a local and global missions through a grant process like a community foundation (\$47.9 million). The annual report for the foundation can be found at:

[https://issuu.com/ipcbirmingham/docs/ipc\\_foundation\\_report\\_2022\\_final?fr=sODQ1YTQ0NzM0NDM](https://issuu.com/ipcbirmingham/docs/ipc_foundation_report_2022_final?fr=sODQ1YTQ0NzM0NDM)

**Question 3: How will this call help complement the responsibilities of other staff/volunteer positions, and the life of the congregation/organization, so that you may accomplish your short and long- term goals for ministry?**

The addition of an Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Membership will fill a current void at IPC and assist IPC, its pastors, staff, volunteers, and congregation in the work of the church, its missions, and goals. The Associate will be responsible for increasing and growing an involved membership to aid in all areas of IPC and its missions, growing leadership to ease the load on aging members, increasing and encouraging more involvement and leadership of young adults, and assisting the current staff as needed/possible.

The Associate will help encourage visitors and new members to become connected with and engaged in IPC. Committing more resources and leadership to these areas will help steer IPC to becoming a more welcoming church, intentionally extending invitations to worship, service opportunities, special events, Bible studies and the like.

IPC has an opportunity to grow young adult membership and provide opportunities for young adults to engage and lead with new and innovative ideas, focuses, outreach, community service, etc. The Associate should be knowledgeable and in tune with the young adults age group and able to suggest and direct members where they will best fit, paying close attention to their passions and interests in serving. The Associate will help current pastors and staff connect with and understand the needs of the growing young adult population.

**Question 4: Provide a description of the skills, gifts and training the person you hope will become a part of your ministry must have, to lead the congregation towards the vision and mission established.**

We believe the nominee should possess the following skills and gifts to assist in the purpose of leading the congregation towards IPCs vision and mission. The Associate should:

- Pray with and for others comfortably.
- Demonstrate a commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church.
- Posses deep knowledge and love of Scripture and Christian theology.
- Effectively manage staff and volunteers.
- Demonstrate strong organizational, time management, and planning skills.
- Teach and preach theology winsomely, faithfully and with passion.
- Build strong relationships with and show the love of Christ to the congregation and the community.
- Work well as a member of a team.
- Lead worship as assigned, including preaching as called upon by the Sr. Pastor.
- Fulfill all clergy duties and tasks as assigned by the Sr. Pastor such as weddings, funerals, sacraments, visitation, Session presentations, etc.
- Have strong communication skills, both written and verbal.

We believe the nominee should have achieved the following training and experience to assist in the purpose of leading the congregation towards IPCs vision and mission.

- Seminary graduate with M. Div.
- PC(USA) Ordination
- At least two years of ministry experience

**Question 5: What areas of ministry do you expect the person called to be responsible for? Share specific tasks, assignments, and programs.**

Principal Mission for the position: This position is responsible for developing and overseeing a vital ministry to the young adults of IPC, including offering pastoral care, coordinating educational, fellowship and outreach opportunities, and helping to integrate them into all aspects of leadership and service.

This position is also responsible for overseeing the church's New Member program, actively inviting, welcoming and engaging prospective members of all ages to participate, join and become active members who are able to discover and utilize their time, talents and treasure in service to Jesus Christ through the life and ministry of IPC.

List any links that support the answers to your narratives or highlights ministries within your church/organization.

<https://ipc-usa.org/>

**Equal Employment Opportunity:**

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.

There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than stated in this Constitution. (F-1.0403) Each Pastor Nominating Committee and Search committee is expected to undertake its search for a Teaching Elder in a manner consistent with the good news that in the Church '...as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Please accept the following:**

The Pastor Nominating Committee and Search committee has affirmed its intention to follow the Form of Government in this regard.

### **References**

*(Please enter at least three references of individuals who have had connections with the congregation and are not currently involved in the congregation):*

#### **Reference #1**

Name: Jeff Leonard

Relationship:

Phone:

Email:

#### **Reference #2**

Name: Richard Hannah

Relationship:

Phone:

Email:

#### **Reference #3**

Name: Jay Wilkins

Relationship:

Phone:

Email:

**Assign a PNC Chair Contact. Fill out the contact information for the individual that will serve as the Pastor Nominating/Search Committee Chairperson/Mid-council Search Committee Chairperson for this MDP:**

Name: Houston Cook

Preferred Phone: 205-796-4726

Alternate Phone or Email: jhoustoncook@gmail.com

Address: 4244 Old Brook Trail

City: Mountain Brook

State: AL

Zip Code: 35243

### MDP Competency Match Criteria

*Please note this section is not part of the MDP. This section of your matching preferences will be made available under your MDP list panel, in the actions when your MDP has been approved by your Clerk of Session and COM Chair. The icon is a clipboard.*

**Read the descriptions of each trait. Evaluate and discern how important each trait is for the particular position the organization is seeking a candidate. When the PNC has evaluated the traits, select a percentage number, according to the discernment the PNC has come to, in each description.**

Type in a number from 0-100, in increments of 5)

Expresses concentration in a conversation by being attentive, making good eye contact and not interrupting others, showing interest, and showing empathy for what is being said.	90
Analyzes their audience before talking to them, adjusting to different circumstances and audiences, so to make each individual feel as they are speaking to them.	70
Can communicate the observations they make when identifying weaknesses within ministry, themselves, or the community in a wise and discerning way, explaining their vision, and responding why and what kind of change is required.	60
Embraces the humanity and Christian principles from the values, stories and objectives passed through generations, using Reformed Theology as their root of principles and vision, using traditions in worship or ministry as a means of comfort and belonging.	50
Takes time to examine the task, needs and capabilities of the situation and people, choosing the best way to respond to each one by assessing their approach to lead a team, and shares their plans with the members of the team.	30
Self-motivated individual that takes the initiative to start and finish a task given, while working towards a goal, so they can enjoy the rewards of solving a problem.	90
Values their experience in life, they continue their education, builds on strengths, and seeks assistance to develop the weak traits.	50
Creates learning opportunities for active participants and as a collaborative way, by designing lesson plans that teach concepts, facts, and theology.	30
Contributes intentionally to the happiness and well-being of others, by having genuine interest in seeing others thrive, providing honest and genuine feedback and acknowledging relationships.	90
Thrives in challenges with humility and vulnerability, recognizing that asking for help makes them better at their job and surrounding themselves with people that can be smarter at different things.	50
Recognizes how their emotions affect their performance, their inner resources, abilities, and limits, and are honest in their positive and negative biases, and own strengths and weaknesses.	40
Sees the differences in society as values for ministry and recognizes the strengths and weaknesses in each by studying, talking, and involving themselves in the discussion of issues.	30
Communicates goals and expectations clearly, delegating onto others certain tasks they acknowledge to have a better result and is able to plan, prioritizing and studying the capabilities of the organization financially or in human resource.	30



## Matching Personal Discernment Profile

ID# 101824

### Narratives

How do your particular gifts, experiences, and training help you in the ministry setting you believe God is calling you?

**This question applies to the following positions: Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Associate Pastor (Other), Executive Pastor, Head of Staff, Bridge/Gap/Acting Pastor, Solo Pastor: Installed**

#### Response:

Having served in congregations ranging from 4,000 members to 40 members, I've had the opportunity to see both the gifts and the structure necessary to grow ministry in a variety of settings. This has made me a well-rounded and curious pastor, always on the lookout for the work of the Spirit among the people, and seeking new ways to support that work through leadership cultivation and structural support. Having served in various capacities, from worship leader to educator, to installed associate, I am also keenly aware of the kinds of support that church staff need to be successful.

As a systems thinker, I'm adept at taking stock of what is working well and what needs work in any system and then setting about the relational work necessary to make those changes possible. Each call that I have had has required me to leverage this ability in to streamline processes and offer new ideas that re-enliven ministry areas and connect congregations more deeply both internally and externally.

As a pastoral leader with extensive pastoral care experience, I'm able to relate across generations even in the toughest of situations to make people feel seen, heard, and loved. Connecting with people, learning what they love and are gifted at, and helping them plug those gifts into the work of the church is one of my greatest joys.



How do your particular gifts, experiences, and training help you in the ministry setting you believe God is calling you?

As a clergy leadership coach with the Office of Christian Formation, I've had the opportunity to come alongside pastors, educators, and lay leaders from across the denomination, asking thoughtful questions, and journeying alongside leaders as they seek to build the right programs and change the culture of their particular context.

Explain with theological details what areas of ministry you value most in your calling.

**This question applies to the following positions: Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Associate Pastor (Other), Executive Pastor, Head of Staff, Bridge/Gap/Acting Pastor, Solo Pastor: Installed**

Response:

I deeply value the stories, relationships, vulnerability, and openness found in good congregational ministry. As we share our stories and consider how they intersect and are changed by the gospel, we are building value systems, moral imperatives, individual identities, and an eschatological hope that our lives have meaning and purpose.

Jesus himself was a master storyteller, spinning provocative parables and weaving webs of stories that are still drawing us in more than two thousand years later, calling us to live differently because of it. That story doesn't just stop with the historical Jesus though; it has been told and retold, handed down through the generations, adapting as it went, remaining relevant in the reimagination and the retelling. It is the type of retelling that we do every time we gather around the communion table--remembering, retelling, living out again a story of Jesus. Whether that retelling happens from the pulpit, at the bedside, at the graveside, or over coffee, each sharing is a sacred and powerful gift, evidence of God's goodness and love for all of us.

Describe a moment when you have "served using your energy, intelligence, imagination and love", that led change positively.

**This question applies to the following positions: Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Associate Pastor (Other), Executive Pastor, Head of Staff, Bridge/Gap/Acting Pastor, Solo Pastor: Installed**

Response:

One of the most rewarding opportunities to lead change came by spearheading a collaboration between staff, lay leaders, and parents to discern the most faithful and sustainable path forward for children's ministry in a previous setting. When I arrived, their program was struggling just to stay afloat, let alone flourish. There were no long-range plans in place, no teacher or volunteer training, and very little sense of ownership or responsibility for the ministry at the session, committee, or individual levels. During my tenure there, we worked through a systematic review of the current ministry offerings and their performance based on attendance, use of resources, and the experiences of children, families, and volunteers. This helped us celebrate our strengths and acknowledge our growing edges. More than simple technical changes though, it required us to listen deeply, to invest in relationship building, and to be willing to call on outside resources when needed. With the support of the session, I was able to collaborate with Ministry Architects to deepen this discernment process, set clear goals, and create a timeline for the first phase of a major revitalization effort. We quickly saw improvement in volunteer morale and family engagement, which carried over even into the early stages of the pandemic, giving us the volunteer capacity and commitment needed to continue to serve families even while the building was closed. More importantly, though, we began to shift the narrative surrounding children's ministry from one of exhaustion and despair, to one of hope.

Please describe how have you dealt with failure or disappointment before.

**This question applies to the following positions: Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Associate Pastor (Other), Executive Pastor, Head of Staff, Bridge/Gap/Acting Pastor, Solo Pastor: Installed**

Please describe how have you dealt with failure or disappointment before.

**Response:**

I don't believe in outright failure. Every disappointment or suboptimal outcome is a chance to take stock of what worked, what didn't, what needs strengthening, what accountability looks like, and what the next step forward should be. Some disappointments sting more than others though. When those times arise, I double down on the things that I know center me and help me move forward: I take time away to rest, recover, and reconnect with God, I move my body, I lean into the relationships that nurture me, and I get my hands into the soil. I also depend on my spiritual director and my counselor to notice the movement of the Spirit even in the disappointment of the situation and to help me notice patterns that might need to change. Each of these practices helps me come back to my most grounded and balanced self and that, in turn, helps me honestly evaluate the situation, and discern the best way to move forward with hope and determination.

Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of effectiveness and fulfillment.

**This question applies to the following positions: Associate Pastor (Christian Education), Associate Pastor (Other), Executive Pastor, Head of Staff, Bridge/Gap/Acting Pastor, Solo Pastor: Installed**

**Response:**

Last summer, one of our youth was diagnosed with cancer. He immediately began aggressive treatment which wreaked havoc on his body, requiring multiple transfusions per week to keep him alive. As we struggled to figure out how to best support the family, it dawned on me that one of the most tangible ways to help both Bennett and our wider community was to offer our space to the Red Cross as a blood drive center. The morning of our first blood drive, as people from all over the community poured in, Bennett greeted each one with a silly "Thank you for bleeding for me!" comment and a moonwalk. The local news crew picked up the story and came in, allowing me to talk about how important blood donation is, how this type of giving fits perfectly with our theology of self-giving love, and that all are always welcome in this space. We've since hosted regular blood drives in honor of Bennett, highlighting the need in our community and God's call to love one another. Every time, I'm

Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of effectiveness and fulfillment.

overwhelmed by people's willingness to show up for their neighbors, to give of themselves, and to support one another. I'm not sure any other moment in ministry has been as fulfilling as these moments are.

Personal Information

Name	Email	Pronouns
Rev. Nicole Newton	delphia.newton@gmail.com	
Address	Phone Number	Secondary Phone
1040 Montevallo Rd Leeds, AL 35094	9106202240	
Ecclesiastical Status	Presbytery of Membership	Ordination Date
PC(USA) Minister of Word & Sacrament	Sheppards And Lapsley	2019-05-05

Preferences

Employment Type	Minimum Effective Salary
Full-time	75000

Formal Education

Training/Certification

**Week 1 (Introductory) - Seattle, WA (2022)**

-

Clinical Pastoral Education Training: Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center - 2019

**Formal Education**

Bachelor of Art, English - University of North Carolina at Charlotte, (2003-06-01 - 2007-05-01)

Master of Divinity - Wake Forest University School of Divinity, (2014-08-01 - 2017-05-12)

Master of Art in Christian Education - Union Presbyterian Seminary, (2017-04-01 - 2019-05-01)

PhD, Regenerative Leadership - Southwestern College, (2023-08-21 - Current)

**Continuing Education**

ACC Level ICF Accredited Coach Training Program from Vibrant Faith Coaching

Transitional Ministry Training

**Work Experience**

**9/30/2022 - Present**

Other Clergy Coach

Office of Christian Formation -

PC(USA)

Louisville, KY

(.)

**3/6/2021 - Present**

Church Associate Pastor

First Presbyterian Church,

Birmingham, AL

Birmingham, AL

(Urban, 101-250 members)

**5/4/2019 - 2/20/2021**

Church Associate Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church  
Wilmington, NC  
(Urban, 1001-1500 members)

**7/31/2018 - 4/30/2019**

Other Chaplain Resident  
Wake Forest Baptist Medical  
Center  
Winston Salem, NC  
(, )

**5/31/2018 - 8/31/2018**

Church Stated Supply Pastor  
Macedonia Presbyterian  
Church  
Biscoe, NC  
(Rural, Under 100 members)

**7/31/2017 - 7/31/2018**

Church Eleanor Belk Ministry  
Intern  
Myers Park Presbyterian  
Church  
Charlotte, NC  
(Suburban, More than 1500  
members)

**7/31/2015 - 4/30/2016**

Other Chaplain Intern  
Wake Forest Baptist Medical  
Center  
Winston Salem, NC  
(, )

**11/30/2014 - 7/31/2018**

Church Elementary Ministry  
Coordinator  
Myers Park Presbyterian

Church  
Charlotte, NC  
(Suburban, More than 1500  
members)

7/31/2007 - 5/31/2010  
Other English Teacher  
Stanly County Schools  
Norwood, NC  
(, )

## Service to the Greater Church

12/31/2023 - Present  
Chair of CPM  
,

## Statement of Faith

I believe in the mystery of a triune God—the Voice, the Word, and the Listener; Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

I believe in God, the architect, and artisan of all creation. Having been created in God's image, humanity is intertwined with all creation, a patchwork that gives us a glimpse of God's glory and wonder. As stewards of creation, we are called to care for the earth and all her inhabitants with joy and tenderness.

I believe in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who, out of great love, took on flesh to walk among us as the fully human and fully divine incarnation of God. In word and deed, Christ's life proclaimed God's call to justice, reconciliation, and compassion for all people. Crucified by the world's powers, Christ was then resurrected through God's grace, overthrowing even death for our redemption. Through Christ's living, suffering, dying, and rising, we belong to God.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer who dances among us, the moving, breathing presence of God. Through the Spirit, we come to know wisdom, grace, comfort, and renewal. The Spirit inspires our worship and reveals God's word in Scripture. Through baptism and communion, the Spirit gathers us into one community out of time, remembering the body of Christ in the world through these outward signs of God's inward grace.

I believe in the church universal, the active body of Christ in the world. Composed of many with diverse gifts and convictions, the church is called to unity and reconciliation, serving humankind with love and compassion, seeking justice for the oppressed, release for the captives, and inclusion for all. Through such bold and prophetic witness, we proclaim to the world the hope of the resurrection and live into becoming the beloved community we are called to be.

## Optional Links

1/24/24 Sermon - Calling the Disciples -

<https://youtu.be/gZbn6bleAAI?si=hxvWmA25J2GwLzPb>

Advent 4 Sermon 2024 - -

<https://youtu.be/hUkRAj5R408?si=UyM9gJFAjibZqo9K>

10/1/23 Sermon - Love One Another -

<https://youtu.be/Wmv4V2JnciY?si=ahaYo4IriRFgQD0j>

9/17/23 Sermon - Mary & Martha -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLSHuGCermY>

Mark 2 Sermon - -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZgFPHHAYq0OefiWm->



[MsoSLQRJ\\_vdJ5Op/view?](#)

[usp=drive\\_link](#)

Video Faith Statement - From  
confirmation class 2020 -

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AwliktmDsOhjp7HlxqlzoEIIWQTGDQNP/view?](#)

[usp=drive\\_link](#)

John 4 Sermon - From first  
Sunday of Covid lockdown -

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qoMgaq-](#)

[ZNRnJnGoLI9\\_sM1K2NZNsFslZ/view?](#)

[usp=drive\\_link](#)

3/10/24 Sermon - -

[https://youtu.be/vGeKSJmhYgY?](#)

[si=PnRhZkeiFD34md4](#)

## References

### Reference #1

Lindsey Clifton

Colleague

336-906-3481

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### Reference #2

Millie Snyder

Former Supervisor

704-516-8785

[msnyder@myersparkpres.org](mailto:msnyder@myersparkpres.org)

### Reference #3

Terry Hamilton-Poore

Colleague/Current HOS

415-686-4799

thamiltonpoore@fpcbham.org

## Sexual Misconduct Self Certification

I certify below that no civil, criminal, or ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained\* or is pending\* against me for sexual misconduct; and I have never resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons related to sexual misconduct.

I have read this certification and release form and fully understand that the information obtained may be used to deny my employment or any other type of position from the employing entity. I also agree that I will hold harmless the employing or judicial authority or any other entity from any and all claims, liabilities, and causes of action for the legitimate release of any information related to sexual misconduct.

## Committee Notes

Add Committee Notes Here.

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