

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is currently in a search process for the position of General Presbyter. Inquiries may be directed to Jane Clayton, Chairman of the Search Committee, at janeclayton106@gmail.com.

Information about the position follows:

The vision of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is rooted in our name and history—a legacy that calls us into a bold, inclusive, justice-centered future. At our first meeting in Selma in 1988, we chose to name ourselves after William and Lucy Gantt Sheppard and Samuel Lapsley—Black and white Alabama Presbyterians who served as missionaries together in Congo. Their witness continues to inspire our commitment to Christian fellowship, racial reconciliation, and global mission. Today, as a Matthew 25 presbytery, we are focused on building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty. This is not abstract work—it lives in our congregations' ministries and the leadership we strive to offer. We build congregational vitality by equipping leaders, encouraging adaptive ministry, and nurturing vibrant, intergenerational communities rooted in worship, discipleship, and mission. We dismantle racism by fostering inclusive leadership, continuing anti-racism education, and encouraging honest engagement with our communities. We pursue partnerships, embrace diversity, and work for real change. We confront poverty both through immediate care and by addressing systemic causes. We support innovation, especially in the Black Belt, and urge congregations to speak boldly for economic justice. Together, we equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors in a rapidly changing world.

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is a vibrant community of churches serving both dynamic urban centers and deeply rooted rural communities across central Alabama. While some areas face challenges like population shifts, aging facilities, and financial strain, our congregations remain rich in faith, history, and resilience. We see these changes not as obstacles, but as invitations to reimagine ministry for a new day. As a Matthew 25 Presbytery, we are committed to building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty. Across our presbytery, churches are embracing fresh approaches—strengthening leadership, deepening digital outreach, and forming partnerships that extend their reach and impact. We also recognize the Spirit's call to grow, equip, and plant **multiracial, multicultural** congregations that reflect the fullness of God's kingdom and the rich diversity of our communities. While our presbytery has long engaged the Black-white racial dynamics of central Alabama, we now live in an increasingly diverse landscape that includes **Hispanic, Latinx, and Asian** communities. We are called to meet this moment with creativity, hospitality, and a commitment to inclusive ministry. By sharing

resources, telling our stories, and walking together in faith, we are discovering new energy, creativity, and hope for the future Christ is calling us to build.

As the head of staff, the General Presbyter oversees the permanent staff of a Presbytery Administrator and Bookkeeper, a Presbytery Treasurer, a Stated Clerk, and a Recording Clerk. These people participate in monthly meetings to keep all other staff abreast of the needs and the happenings of the Presbytery.

As the head of staff, the General Presbyter involves volunteers collaboratively as they plan for their respective responsibilities. There are three volunteer coordinators at present: a Volunteer Mission Coordinator, a Volunteer Nurture Coordinator, and a Volunteer Liaison for African American Churches. These people are good self-starters who collaborate on what they are hearing from the congregations around the Presbyter.

The GP participates in monthly meetings with the staff and the volunteer staff who share what they have heard and any activities they have planned. All staff set yearly goals which are touched on periodically.

The whole staff, both permanent and volunteer, works to carry out the equip part of the mission and the connect part of Matthew 25.

A General Presbyter should be ordained as a teaching or ruling elder with knowledge of and leadership experience in the PC(USA). This person should exhibit vital and evident faith with commitment to Christ, and ability to articulate what Jesus Christ means to him/her/them. The GP should show a willingness to embrace new media and contemporary digital technologies in the service of the church. Also necessary is an effectiveness at establishing and maintaining relationships. Other needed skills include an ability to relate to a diversity of theological perspectives, cultures, races, ethnicities, ages, and socioeconomic levels, moving comfortably among these. Additionally, the GP should be able to provide innovative and visionary leadership rooted in spiritual depth, bringing to the presbytery hope and enthusiasm in confronting declining membership and dollars, and promotion of vision and empowerment of presbytery toward meeting its goals and reversing these trends. A GP should maintain appropriate role boundaries and respect of others and possess the ability to organize self and others. Important gifts would include collaborative and compassionate leadership with strong communication and listening skills. The ability to build trust, embracing both truth and grace, equipped to lead transformation with humility and courage.

The person called to be the General Presbyter of Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley will lead in translating the presbytery's vision of its common calling by Christ into tangible, relevant, and effective forms of ministry for the current time; in strategic visioning and

spiritual discernment of where Christ is calling the presbytery; in empowering local congregations and ministers to serve where Christ is leading them; and in coordinating regular and useful communication among congregations, the presbytery, and the broader church.

Responsibilities include the following:

leading the presbytery in decision making related to strategy, program, mission, and resources

as head of staff, work with the Personnel Committee to oversee and supervise other paid presbytery staff and volunteers

providing primary staff report to Executive Council

providing primary staff support to the Executive Council, Commissions on Ministry and Preparation for Ministry, the Committee on Nominations and Representations, the Board of Trustees, and other committees and task forces as appropriate

Collaborating with the Executive Council in developing new forms of ministry

Collaborating with the Commission on Ministry to assist pastors and sessions in developing leadership within their congregations; participate in pastoral care of minister members and congregations of the presbytery, especially during times of crisis, pastoral vacancy, life transitions, and exceptional need; serve as agent of peace and reconciliation in times of conflict

Serving as the public representative of the PCUSA in the region in ecumenical relations to the press, and along with the Stated Clerk, to civil authorities and agencies

Cultivating and developing fellowship among the pastors and congregations of the presbytery, collaborating with COM in assimilating new ministers into the life of the presbytery, celebrating ministers at retirement

Planning with the Finance Committee for financial management and budget development and monitoring along with the Treasurer, Trustees, and Council

Liaise between the presbytery and sessions, Synod, General Assembly, and other bodies in relation to presbytery and coordinating the work of Synod and General Assembly staff within the presbytery

Representing the interests of the presbytery to the broader church, and the interests of the broader church to the presbytery

Serving on the Board of Directors of Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba with rights and privileges accorded other members of the board, including vote. The term of service shall be the same term of service as General Presbyter.

Assisting in appropriately responding to other topics and issues as they arise.