

Salem Presbytery Staffing Model Proposal

S.T.O.R.M. (Strategic Taskforce on Reviving Ministry)

Revised for Executive Council: January 29, 2026

Rationale

Salem Presbytery has been in a state of staff transition for nearly a decade. Our former General Presbyter, the late Sam Marshall, retired in 2017. At that time, the presbytery employed four full-time ordained staff members.

In 2019, the presbytery adopted the “Dream Team” model, calling for three new full-time positions and effectively ending the tenure of transitional General Presbyter Steve Scott and the other ordained staff roles. The search for those positions ended abruptly when it became clear that the presbytery lacked the financial resources to sustain the model.

Before the presbytery could regain its footing, the COVID-19 pandemic began. During that time, Barbara Smith was called as Transitional Presbyter and led the presbytery ably through the crisis. Her largely remote leadership fit the moment but left many longing for more present leadership. Using designated funds, the presbytery temporarily called Jodi Ligan as Presbyter for Transformation, partially fulfilling the Dream Team vision. At the end of 2023, Tony De la Rosa was called as the first installed General Presbyter in six years.

Further transitions followed. Longtime Stated Clerk David Vaughan retired and was succeeded by Paul Sink. Financial Administrator Renee Carter resigned, and her responsibilities were assumed by Office Administrator Christine Ratledge. In late 2025, the presbytery made the difficult decision to part ways with Tony. Paul Sink had already resigned, and funding for Jodi’s position expired. Without Jodi’s continued service and David Vaughan’s return to the work, the presbytery would have been left with only an office administrator and a part-time communications director on staff.

S.T.O.R.M. has not been developing a new staffing model in a fair-weather moment for Salem. Our work has taken place in the swirl of another crisis. We contend this difficult circumstance offers us a new opportunity. We have been reminded again why the Dream Team suggested substantive staffing changes in the first place. In a moment of dysfunction, we have sought a model oriented toward actual transformation. We have held in mind Jodi’s prophetic P.E.A. We cannot afford to keep doing the same old things over and over again.

What we are proposing is rooted in the original Dream Team vision. We believe it speaks to the needs of the present moment. It is NOT business as usual. And... we do know how to pay for it.

Proposal: Two Presbyters Staffing Model

Overview

S.T.O.R.M. recommends that Salem Presbytery hire two full-time presbyters, both exempt employees. Each would be ordained as a Ruling or Teaching Elder in the PC(USA) and bring significant leadership experience appropriate to their area of ministry.

Presbyter for Transformation and Leadership Development

This presbyter would focus on ministries that equip, support, and strengthen congregations. Responsibilities would include:

- Engaging churches in new ministry initiatives
- Developing and offering training for clergy and laity
- Representing Salem Presbytery in denomination-wide mission conversations
- Providing particular support to BIPOC congregations
- Planning two presbytery-wide education and training events annually

Presbyter for Administration / Stated Clerk

This presbyter would oversee the administrative life of the presbytery, including:

- Fulfilling all Book of Order duties of the Stated Clerk
- Resourcing the Commission on Ministry
- Overseeing Budget and Finance
- Supporting Administrative Commissions and Task Forces
- Planning two annual presbytery business meetings

Shared Leadership Model

These two presbyters would be co-equal in compensation, authority, and accountability, analogous to a co-pastor model. Both would report to the Personnel Committee on behalf of Executive Council, jointly direct presbytery staff, and resource Council, committees, and commissions. Their work would be a proactive partnership; collaboration will be essential.

Assistant Stated Clerk (Part-Time, Designated)

In addition to these positions, S.T.O.R.M. proposes a temporary, part-time Assistant Stated Clerk to be called upon as needed. Paul and David have attested that the work of the Stated Clerk ebbs and flows significantly. This model allows the presbytery to contract short-term administrative support when needed. Imagine having a bullpen of folks like David Vaughan who can be called on to step in when the administrative work piles up. Having this additional staff member on hand would help ensure that the essential work of transformation and leadership development continues uninterrupted in Salem Presbytery.

Other Staff Considerations

The roles of Office Manager and Communications Director would continue under this model.

This proposal eliminates the Engagement Pastor positions. While S.T.O.R.M. affirms the value of that work, actual engagement from our clergy is just as varied as their geography. We recommend shifting our engagement focus toward four annual presbytery gatherings: two business meetings and two conference-style education and training events. We hope that those parish relationships can continue organically.

S.T.O.R.M. has been charged with proposing a financially sustainable model. While Engagement Pastor compensation represents a relatively small portion of our staffing cost, those funds are needed to support two competitive, full-time presbyter positions.

Compensation and Funding

Once more, with feeling, S.T.O.R.M. will not present a staffing proposal without a clear funding plan.

Each presbyter would receive an effective salary of \$90,000–\$95,000, higher than the old Presbyter for Transformation position and slightly lower than the former General Presbyter salary.

Funding for both positions would come from four sources:

- Funds already included in our annual budget
- \$10,000 – Reallocated Engagement Pastor compensation
- \$40,000 – Savings from participation in the General Assembly Per Capita pilot program
- ~\$80,000 – Annual earnings from a newly established Salem Presbytery Endowment Fund

Timeline

S.T.O.R.M. seeks Executive Council approval to move forward with this proposal in principle. Final details will be refined in consultation with the Budget and Finance and Personnel Committees.

- February Presbytery Meeting: Presentation on Staffing Model, Endowment, and Presbytery Meeting Changes
- March: “Co-PNCs” organized by Executive Council. S.T.O.R.M. recommends that Council name two PNCs that will work collaboratively through the search process. S.T.O.R.M. further recommends that one of its members be included on each P.N.C.
- Spring Called Presbytery Meeting: Formally elect “Co-PNCs” to seek candidates for both presbyter staff positions.
- April Executive Council Meeting: S.T.O.R.M. final presentation to Executive Council
- May Presbytery Meeting: Education and Training Event, headlined by Jen James from Next Church. S.T.O.R.M. makes its final report to the presbytery.