

ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHTH STATED MEETING MINUTES OF SALEM PRESBYTERY

November 15, 2025

The One Hundred Forty-Eighth Stated Meeting of Salem Presbytery, held on Saturday, November 15, 2025, at First Presbyterian Church in Statesville was called to order and opened in prayer by the Presbytery Moderator, Commissioned Ruling Elder Steve Braxton at 9:00 a.m.

ENROLLMENT:

Commissioners		Commissioned Ruling Elders	8
Elders	61	Lay Pastors	1
Ministers	51	Corresponding Member	1
		Acting Head of Staff	1
		Stated Clerk	1
		Presbytery Moderator	1
		Presbytery Staff	1
		TOTAL:	126
		(+Visitors - 73)	199

The following were present for this meeting of Presbytery:

Ministers (51):

Blankinship, Joe	Hoyle, Bill	McLaughlin, Alberta
Bowers, Erin	Johnson, John	Milam, Jud
Burleson, Thom	Kim, John	Montoya, Courtney
Campbell, Kathryn	Kim, Kiseok	Moss, Steve
Cannada, Jeremy	Kunkle, Lynn	Mullen, Lisa
Conley, Kevin	Lambeth, Jay	Otterbacher, Glenn
Dew, Frank	Larsen, Eric	Perkins, Samuel
Duffield, Jill	Lee, Charlie	Phillips, Jon
Ealy, David	Lenger, Ruth	Pitts, Wes
Fearing, Stephen	Leshner-Thomas, Troy	Rummage, Brian
Finch-Burriss, Carrie	Levens, Kristen	Senior, John
Fruits, Dana	Lunde, James	Smith, David
Goodman, Kyle	Martin, Jon	Stewart Hoyle, Felicia
Griffin, R.C.	Martin, Susanne	Todd, Mason
Hankins, Stephanie	McCain, Vicki	Wilson, Alicia
Harris, Randy	McCutchen, Joe	Wilson, Emily
Horan, Amanda	McFarland, Bryan	Wisner, Leigh

Ruling Elder Commissioners (61):

Alamance	Wells, Katherine	Fellowship	Harman, Susan
Baird's Creek	Miller, Jinx	Fifth Creek	Steele, Kelley
Bethel	Bennett, Dustin	Grace	Worley, Ernestine
Bethesda, Stvl	Stikeleather, Shirley	Greensboro 1st	Booker, Ginger
Bixby	Robertson, Brenda	Greensboro 1st	Gillespie, Tom
Burlington 1st	Bates, Hal	Greensboro 1st	Hoeger, James
Burlington 1st	Wagoner, Avery	Greensboro 1st	Jones, Leigh
Calvary	Clark, Steven	Greensboro 1st	Veraar, Becky
Church of the Cross	Owen, Caroline	Guilford Park	Searchfield, Donna
Clemmons	Moffet, Sandy	High Point 1st	Faley, Mary
Clemmons	Ayscue, Rebekah	High Point 1st	Mendenhall, Tricia
Community in Christ	Gaddy, Bobbie	Highland	Kamtman, Leslie
Concord	Harris, Chris	Highland	Moore, Steve
Elkin	Folger, Lois	Jamestown	Gonsiewski, Jim

John Calvin	Ward, Shannon	Rumple Memorial	Squires, Hope
Lexington 1st	Check, Nancy	Salisbury 1st	Nagy, Jonathan
Logan	Rucker, Faye	Shallowford	Weber, Sue
Mocksville 1st	Davidson, Debbie	Shiloh, Stvl	Moseley, Elizabeth
Mt. Airy 1st	Pequeno, Beth	Sparta	Braswell, Jenny
Mt. Jefferson	Utt, Douglas	St. Andrews	Sanderson, Rourke
Mt. Tabor	Roberts, Carolyn	St. James	Ward-Alexander, Lucia
Mt. Vernon	Hunter, Garette	St. Paul, GSO	Lancaster, Gayle
New Hope	Hegler, Nissa	Statesville 1st	Harris, Sherry
New Salem	Matlock, Mark	Taylorsville	Mitchell, William
North Wilkesboro	Watts, Karen	Third Creek	Lloyd, Lisa
Oak Ridge	Drugman, David	Thomasville 1st	Hampton, Barb
Old Providence	Pence, Carla	Thyatira	Vaughan, Keith
Pilot Mountain 1st	Smith, R. Wilson	Trinity, Salisbury	Green, Monica
Pittsboro	McAdams, Connie	Trinity, Winston-Salem	Elston, Nikki
Reidsville 1st	Harrill, Jane	Unity	Fleming, Karen
Rumple Memorial	Rhyne, Johnathan		

Commissioned Ruling Elders (8):

Blankenship, Jerry	Langston, Shannon
Brooks, Rachael	Moore, Sue
Collier, Richard	Purcell, Rick
Grissom, Hyatt	Ratchford, Rainey

Lay Pastors (CREs without current commission) (1): Beard, Jim

Acting Head of Staff (1): Jodi Lingan

Stated Clerk, Salem Presbytery (1): Vaughan, David

Presbytery Moderator (1): Braxton, Steve

Corresponding Members (1): Barbee Watkins, Floretta (Synod of Mid Atlantic)

Presbytery Staff (1): Ratledge, Christine

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING PRAYER

The Presbytery Moderator, Commissioned Ruling Elder Steve Braxton called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and constituted the meeting with prayer.

MORNING WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Salem Presbytery was led in worship and celebrated the Lord's Supper under the leadership of Rev. Jeremy Cannada, Rev. Lynn Kunkle and Rev. R.C. Griffin. The sermon was given by Rev. Jeremy Cannada based on Exodus 3:1-15 entitled "Standing Upon all Holy Ground."

QUORUM

The Stated Clerk, Elder David Vaughan, advised the Moderator that a quorum was present for conducting the business of Presbytery, and the Moderator declared a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET

The docket was presented by the Moderator of Salem Presbytery, Commissioned Ruling Elder Steve Braxton.

ACTION:

1. Presbytery approved the docket.
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WELCOME AND REPORT FROM THE MODERATOR AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Moderator welcomed Salem Presbytery to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Elders attending a Presbytery meeting for the first time. Visitors and guests were also welcomed and recognized.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A Land Acknowledgement statement was offered by Elder Beth Hooten, to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live.

REPORT FROM EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER CRE Tony De La Rosa, Executive Presbyter

November 1, 2025

Dear Friends:

Our Presbytery's Mission Statement declares, "Salem Presbytery connects, supports, and strengthens local congregations and worshipping communities to carry out Christ's transformative work of love and justice in the church and in the world." In my final report to you as your Executive, I want to continue to advance this mission by once again highlighting how our local congregations are carrying out Christ's transformative work in their communities and beyond.

Second PC, Salisbury – Confronting Human Trafficking

On August 12th of this year, Second Presbyterian Church in Salisbury hosted an ecumenical workshop confronting some of the brutal truths surrounding human trafficking, including how various societal institutions—including schools, churches, and even law enforcement—unwittingly enable the worst offenders through their inattention and lack of vigilance. Shari Evans, Executive Director of Project Light Rowan, led a presentation that provided participants from a number of Salisbury-area congregations with tools and insights to combat the scourge of human trafficking. Ms. Evans noted that the greater Charlotte area was one of a several centers of human trafficking activity in the U.S., largely due to the presence of Charlotte airport as a transportation hub.

Ms. Evans offered the workshop attendees harrowing stories of victims who were able to escape their captors through thoughtful and sensitive interventions by everyday people and ways they can be watchful of potential trafficking situation. One example featured students in a truck driving school being taught to recognize possible cases of trafficking in interstate rest areas and truck stops and how to report suspicions to law enforcement.

The eye-opening workshop concluded with the church representatives present receiving information and resources to be shared with their respective worshipping communities. Kudos to

Second Presbyterian Church and Parish D Engagement Pastor, CRE James Harley, for having led the organizing effort to sponsor and promote this timely and troubling opportunity for churches to bring healing to a broken world.

Lloyd PC, Winston-Salem & Fieldstone PC, Mooresville – Food Ministries

The headline above does not quite accurately describe the scope of what both the Lloyd and Fieldstone congregations are doing. Most might assume that by “food ministry” the hungry are fed through provision of a community food pantry or soup kitchen, and indeed, many of our Salem congregations are engaged in just this sort of essential offering to their neighbors in need. Lloyd and Fieldstone, however, are both using food to augment their mission in appealing—and notably delicious!--ways. Much like the efforts undertaken by First PC, Kernersville and their chocolate Easter egg ministry I reported on last spring, Lloyd and Fieldstone have applied their unique culinary skills toward mission fundraising.

On September 27, Lloyd’s Clerk of Session and Administrative Commission member Elder Purity Ruchugo and a team of volunteers prepared a culinary feast of native Kenyan dishes for a standing room only crowd of attendees at her home. The event served as a fundraiser for Sister2Sister International Outreach Ministry which operates a children’s home and school in Ngong, Kenya which also provides much-needed feeding and support services for teen mothers and their infant children. Elder Ruchugo’s tireless efforts on behalf of this important mission effort have made both local and national news. For additional information about Sister2Sister, please check out their website at: <https://sistersinternationalwomen.org>.

On October 18, Fieldstone PC, Mooresville, held their annual BBQ cookout fundraiser for their community mission projects. Volunteers from the church spent days of preparation for the event, leading up to a marathon 24-hour session featuring a rotating team of cooks monitoring the BBQ smokers and the pork shoulders within. The scrumptious heaps of BBQ pulled pork, along with Carolina-style coleslaw and candied yams prepared by even more volunteer cooks from Fieldstone, were served up to a packed church hall of sit-down diners and a block-long line of cars retrieving their drive-up to-go orders. In one day’s worth of sales, Fieldstone netted approximately \$6,500 which will go directly to funding the church’s mission efforts. Fieldstone’s pastor and new Salem Presbytery member Rev. Carrie Finch-Burriss helped to lead her committed congregation to another successful year of BBQ preparation and sales.

Whether chocolate Easter eggs, Kenyan delicacies, or Carolina BBQ, food lovingly and graciously prepared can be an important source of both community outreach and provision of needed dollars to serve Christ’s transformative work in our mission fields.

Rumple Memorial PC, Blowing Rock – Hope After Helene Event

On September 27, people throughout the North Carolina High Country observed the first anniversary of the devastating floods and destructive wind damage from Hurricane Helene. The unprecedented loss of life and property in region will impact the region for decades to come. As an important step in the ongoing recovery effort in the region, Rumple Memorial PC Parish Associate Rev. David Henry, his psychologist wife Dr. Jackie Henry, and other ecumenical representatives of area churches and the Appalachian State University Presbyterian Episcopal Campus Ministry led organizing efforts to host a series of events to mark the occasion and foster ongoing healing from the wide-ranging experiences of mourning and loss.

With funding from area congregations and local charities, as well as a \$7,500 grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the anniversary included a series of events designed to process collective grief and commemorate the area’s resilience in the slow recovery efforts in both the past and the future. The day’s events included:

- a community quilting project making a quilt square intended as a form of creative expression for those impacted by Helene that will then be displayed throughout North Carolina;
- a resource fair with fifteen local service groups, including nonprofits and faith-based organizations who have worked on the disaster recovery process, including PDA;
- High Country poet laureates Hilda Downer and Joseph Bathanti reading from their works focused on Hurricane Helene and its impact on the region;
- A keynote speech and concert reflecting on loss and hope performed by noted speaker and performing artist David LaMotte;

- a musical theater performance from Lees-McRae College on a new work, “1940,” recalling another historic flood’s impact on the town of Valle Crucis; and finally,
- A free drop-in community meal open to anyone seeking nourishment and comfort from the painful memories occasioned by the anniversary’s observance.

In addition to Rev. and Dr. Henry, Parish E Engagement Pastor Rev. Kate McGregor Mosley and App State Chaplain Rev. Stephanie Hankins played important roles in the organization of the day. Also present for the day reporters for the Presbyterian News Service who posted a comprehensive article, photos, and video presentation on the day’s events: <https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2025/10/1/western-north-carolina-reflects-anniversary-hurricane-helene>. I can think of fewer more powerful examples of enabling Christ’s transformative work for a weary and hurting people in our High County.

Farewell

As has been communicated to you previously, I have tendered my resignation as Executive Presbyter of Salem Presbytery effective December 31 of this year. While this has been a personally painful and disappointing decision, please know that I harbor no ill will toward anyone involved in this outcome. Above all, I remain adamant in the position that nothing involved in my departure should in any way undermine your ongoing support for the Presbytery. Distractions occasioned by leadership transitions remain only that: distractions.

My prayer is that Salem’s ongoing discernment processes will foster and not impede commitment to its mission “to carry out Christ’s transformative work of love and justice in the church and in the world.” As evidenced by all the congregations mentioned in my report above, that mission remains meaningful, inspiring and relevant—today, more than ever. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you these past two years. Be blessed, dear friends!

In Christ,

Tony De La Rosa

REPORT FROM DESIGNATED PRESBYTER Rev. Jodi Ligan

Hope-filled Greetings Presbytery Siblings!

Church history records several major schisms - irreconcilable differences - across time, such as the Protestant Reformation. On October 1st, the Presbytery was called to meet, hear a report from the Administrative Commission (AC) at First Presbyterian Church Pilot Mountain (FPCPM), and vote on the existence of a **schism** within that church. This is an exceptionally unusual action in the PC(USA) and especially within Salem Presbytery where it has not occurred within anyone’s memory. Despite the enormous amount of Presbyterian polity that occurred to bring us to this point, there remains some misunderstanding of what it means to declare a schism.



What a schism is *not*: a punitive action against PCUSA members who wish to be dismissed to another reformed denomination. The brokenness within FPCPM represents a failure of reconciliation that grieves us all. We recognize that this congregation has served faithfully in Pilot Mountain for generations, and many of its members—on both sides of this divide—have devoted themselves to Christ’s church with sincerity and love. **What the vote did accomplish** is to acknowledge that a break exists within the congregation and the Presbytery now recognizes the group who wish to remain in the PC(USA) as the true church.

How did we get there? In March 2025, Salem Presbytery's Executive Council established an Administrative Commission with original jurisdiction over First Presbyterian Church Pilot Mountain after the congregation violated presbytery policy by recruiting an unauthorized, non-ordained speaker without proper approval. Despite multiple attempts at reconciliation over six months, the majority faction seeking dismissal to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) consistently refused to recognize the Administrative Commission's authority or follow the Book of Order procedures. This has not occurred in any situation previously with a church requesting dismissal in this Presbytery. On every occasion the AC has offered the opportunity to discuss either reconciliation or assist in the appropriate dismissal process. On every occasion those offers were refused.

What does this all mean now? The declaration of schism enables us to move forward on assessing how FPCPM may further the mission and ministry of the PCUSA in Pilot Mountain and to *be* the Church.

**We will never
change the world
by going to church.**

**We will only
change the world
by being the church.**

As I continue to worship and visit with our uninstalled churches, I am often greeted with stories about how someone a person knows has seen greatly increased attendance at another church – and that perhaps we might explore doing whatever that church is doing to bring folks to church. For most pastors, leading a church through any kind of rapid growth is not a reality. In Salem Presbytery, the reality is that staying stable or a slight decline is more realistic (for now) because the majority of our smaller churches have either part time ministry or a vacant pulpit. Most of our churches just aren't large enough to support this type of growth. It is important to understand the difference between church growth and church health. **Our priority is on assisting congregations with new, healthy ways of being the Church.**

Right now, there are enormously hopeful signs of resilience and vitality within our Presbytery. The STORM Task Force is a bold and courageous sign of leaning into the future. The Presbytery is also working diligently on adapting to the smaller size and financial limitations of all of our churches by finding the right balance between being the Church and the necessary (biblical!) polity around governing the Church. Today is richer than ever with opportunities to reach out to those who are experiencing hopelessness.



And so....as we prepare to enter the season of Advent, the season of waiting, may we rest with hope in the knowledge that in the midst of whatever uncertainty or anxiety exists, Jesus is here and coming!

With a grateful heart to be serving with you, jodi

STATED CLERK REPORT
David Vaughan

Dear Friends:

I know that you join me in expressing gratitude for the strong leadership of the Rev. Paul Sink as our Stated Clerk. Paul is everyone's friend, and his ministry as Stated Clerk was marked by his steady, loving, calming, and precise presence. We pray God's continued blessings on Paul's continuing pastoral leadership at Taylorsville. He has (always) been a source of reliable counsel to me – and I am grateful for his friendship and witness. Thank you, Paul, for your continued commitment to the Gospel of Jesus, and to your faithful presence in Salem Presbytery.

For Information:**Report from Executive Presbyter**

Attached is a report from our Executive Presbyter, CRE Tony De La Rosa, which I commend to you.

2026 Meetings of Presbytery

The Executive Council has ordered Presbytery meetings in 2026 as follows:

- Tuesday, February 10, 2026 (all via ZOOM)
- Tuesday, May 12, 2026 (in person)
- Tuesday, September 1, 2026 (in person)
- Saturday, November 7, 2026 (in person)

We have received inquiries from several churches about hosting the May/September/November meetings. Please watch Salem Matters for these announcements.

Don't be fearful of hosting the Presbytery in your church house! Ask previous hosts about their experiences in hosting the Presbytery. Without fail, every single church reports a resurgence of congregational energy, excitement, and enthusiasm when preparing to host the Presbytery. And my experience is that, when there is such energy, guests overlook minor snafus. We'd be delighted if smaller congregations would bind together with neighboring Presbyterian church(es) to host.

Committee on Representation – Annual report to Synod of the Mid-Atlantic

The COR's annual report to the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic follows.

For Action:

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church of Winston-Salem: The Session of St. Andrews PC seeks approval of Salem Presbytery to sell two pieces of real property that are contiguous to the church property. These two lots were acquired in the 1990s in anticipation of the expansion of the church plant, but are no longer needed. One lot/house sale is expected to yield approximately \$175,000; the second is expected to yield \$225,000. The Session intends to use the proceeds of the sale to (a) satisfy the current congregational debt on a line-of-credit; (b) provide a supplement to the church budget to offset the loss of rental income, and, (c) to invest funds to support the church's future program of mission, outreach, work, and worship. I will move approval of the St. Andrews request to market and sell these two properties, pending affirmative action on the part of the congregation.

ACTION:

2. Presbytery approved the sell of two pieces of real property by St. Andrews Presbyterian Church of Winston-Salem that are contiguous to the church property.
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SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC 256TH ASSEMBLY REPORT

Elder Lee Woods & Reverend Felicia Stewart Hoyle



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Synod of the Mid-Atlantic (PCUSA)

256th Assembly Highlights

September 8–9, 2025 • Drury Plaza Hotel, Richmond, VA

Two days of worship, courageous conversation, and hopeful decisions to serve our congregations and communities.



Gathering in Spirit

We opened in prayer with a land acknowledgment honoring the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Nansemond, and Rappahannock peoples, entering the weekend grounded in truth, justice, and compassion. Worship featured a message from Rev. Dr. Rebekah Motley on inclusion and discernment, with Communion shared alongside Rev. Kim Priddy.

Plenary 1



Bringing All to the Table

With Rebekah Motley and colleagues: practical ways to engage conflict with grace and compassion—speaking truth in love while listening deeply.

Plenary 2



Topics of Conversation

Tony Larson introduced “Road Trip Theology” and the C.A.R. Framework—Communication, Alignment, Relationship—for courageous dialogue.

Plenary 3



Hearing All the Voices

Leah Epps led storytelling with the THINK model (True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind), helping us listen with “the ear of the heart.”

A New Chapter of Leadership

The Assembly unanimously elected Rev. Dr. Floretta Barbee-Watkins as Synod Executive and Stated Clerk. Well known through the Next Generation Initiative, she brings seasoned pastoral, presbytery, and national leadership.



Rev. Leah Epps was installed as Moderator and RE Debbie Reese as Vice Moderator

Business in Brief

- Approved the 2026 budget and the terms of call for the new Synod Executive/Stated Clerk.
- Per capita set at \$1.50 per member; Emerging Ideas funding increased to \$35,000.
- Authorized purchase of a Synod vehicle (cap \$40,000).
- Jubilee Fund: \$5,000 grant to New Hope Presbyterian Black Caucus to support African American first responders.
- NGI: advancing revitalization through research, partnerships, and new communications.
- Administration: office tech upgrades, Microsoft 365 rollout, and Antiracism Policy Task Force launched.
- Grants: \$28,000 approved for small church needs and renewal projects.

Special thanks to Rev. Bill Reinhold, Cameron Motley, Cindy Hollingshead, and Montressa Barbee-Watkins for steady leadership during this transition.



Passing the Torch

The Assembly closed in worship as Leah Epps was installed as Moderator and RE Debbie Reese as Vice Moderator. Outgoing commissioners were honored, and Past Moderator Barry Parks received a warm thank-you.



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The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic (PCUSA), Richmond, VA

GREETINGS AND REMARKS FROM THE SNYOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC
Reverend Dr. Floretta L. Barbee-Watkins, Synod Executive & Stated Clerk

Reverend Dr. Floretta L. Barbee-Watkins addressed the role of the Synod, underscoring its purpose as a resource dedicated to supporting Salem Presbytery. She noted that, together with the other thirteen presbyteries of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, we are positioned to be both vital and thriving. The Synod's mission, she emphasized, is to serve as a catalyst for transformation rather than merely an administrative body. This mission is advanced through grants that enable new ministries, strengthen small congregations, and initiate mission projects. She highlighted in particular the Jubilee Trust Fund, which invests in African American congregations by supporting leadership development, youth ministries, and innovative programs that enhance congregational vitality. She further spoke of the Synod's commitment to championing emerging ideas, bold, creative experiments in ministry that open new pathways for sharing the Gospel. She concluded by expressing a vision of mid councils recognized not only for governance, fiscal responsibilities, and administrative commissions, but for their prophetic witness and their transformative impact within the communities they serve.

REPORT FROM ORANGE FEATHER SCHOOL AND SALEM CHURCHES
Reverend Charlie Lee

Reverend Charlie Lee introduced Mr. Frank Twum-Barimah, who provided an overview of the Orange Feather Community School, an institution he and his wife founded in Kwabenya, Ghana. Mr. Twum-Barimah reported that the school is a vibrant and growing institution dedicated to providing high-quality education to young learners. He noted that the school has developed a strong reputation within the community as a reliable and mission-focused center of learning. Guided by its motto, *"Every Child by Name and Need,"* the school is committed to creating a nurturing, structured, and stimulating educational environment in which each student is known, supported, and encouraged. He further shared that the school's history reflects a consistent dedication to both academic achievement and personal development. The school's educators, he affirmed, are deeply committed to ensuring that every child is equipped to reach their full potential and prepared for future success. Mr. Twum-Barimah presented a request for the Presbytery and its congregations to consider supporting the Orange Feather Community School as an international mission partner.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
Reverend Charlie Lee, Moderator

Reverend Charlie Lee reported on the staffing transition currently taking place within Salem Presbytery. He assured the body that all essential functions of the Presbytery are being covered. Upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Executive Council has appointed Jodi Ligan to serve as Acting Head of Staff during this interim period. The Personnel Committee is collaborating with the STORM (Salem Task Force on Revitalizing Ministry) group and the Executive Council to develop an interim staffing plan and explore options for a permanent staffing structure. They are working with consultant Wilson Gunn in this process. An update on the interim staffing plan is expected at the February Presbytery meeting.

STORM (SALEM TASK FORCE ON REVITALIZING MINISTRY)
Reverend Kyle Goodman & Reverend Sam Perkins

Reverend Kyle Goodman reported that Jodi Lingan completed a Presbytery empowerment assessment identifying key needs: increasing reliance on reserve funds and church closure proceeds, a long-term decline in congregational support, limited leadership resources despite Salem's size, and low spiritual energy within the Presbytery. The Executive Council tasked the STORM group with studying the Presbytery's current state and making recommendations on mission and vision, staffing, committees, finances, and meeting content. Reverend Sam Perkins confirmed the task force continues its work envisioning Salem's future.

COM TASK FORCE ON EXAMINATIONS

The Rev. Travis Milam, Moderator

For Information:

The Examinations Task Force has successfully examined the following for service in Salem Presbytery.

Faith Journey

Rev. Betsy Lyles Swetenburg

I am a cradle Presbyterian—not a preacher's kid, but a preacher's grandkid. My dad is the son, brother, and father of Presbyterian ministers, and both of my parents were raised and nurtured in the Presbyterian Church. Faith was not something we simply professed; it was the air we breathed. The church was central to our lives growing up.

I was blessed to be formed by the saints of Davidson College Presbyterian Church through the ordinary acts of faith—attending worship, going to Sunday School and youth group, joining mission trips. Those rhythms, repeated week after week, became extraordinarily formative for me. They taught me that grace is most often encountered in the simple, steadfast practices of faith.

As a student at Davidson College, I began asking questions about my theological commitments and discerning whether my faith was truly my own. Through that discernment, I realized that being Christian in a Presbyterian way is the most natural and authentic expression of my beliefs and commitments.

While ministry might seem like the obvious path given my family's story, I was genuinely surprised by it. My senior year at Davidson, I had a job lined up to teach in South Korea when the Rev. Dr. John Kuykendall—then interim president of the college—invited me for coffee. He told me he believed I had “gifts and graces” for ministry and offered me a Church in Vocation fellowship, which covered a year of seminary with no strings attached, only the requirement to go with an open heart.

I enrolled at Columbia Theological Seminary thinking it would make me a great Sunday School teacher. Instead, theological education opened my world. The study of Scripture and the life of faith felt like such a gift that I couldn't imagine not sharing it. Over time, that sense of calling deepened. My path since then has led me to serve in a variety of settings—as an intern I got to experience a solo pastorate, a foundation, and a large congregation. After graduation, I joined the staff of the seminary as the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid. While I loved helping others discover the possibilities of a vocation grounded in theological education, I found myself longing again for the rhythms of church life—the shared joys and struggles of a congregation.

That longing led me back to the local church, first at Trinity Presbyterian in Atlanta, where I helped launch new ministries and lead in mission, stewardship, and worship, and then to Northridge Presbyterian in Dallas, where I was called during the strange and uncertain summer of 2020. Though it was not the easiest time to begin, God has been faithful, and we have built something joyful, grounded, and full of grace together.

Much of my journey has simply been about taking the next faithful step—trusting that God is already present and at work. My call is rooted in the grace and joy that have met me at every turn. I am shaped by the legacy of my grandfather, who served faithfully in the segregated South, doing what many would have called impossible: remaining steadfast to the gospel and hopeful amid injustice. His witness taught me that ordinary faithfulness—showing up, loving people, tending to the slow work of God—is what builds the soil for transformation.

Today, I continue this journey with my husband, Owen, and our two sons—Harris, who is two and a half, and Patterson, who is eight months old. They remind me daily that God's grace keeps unfolding in new ways, and that joy—quiet and abiding—remains at the center of it all.

Rev. Betsy Lyles Swetenburg

Statement of Faith

I believe in a fierce God –
a God who claims,
creates,
restores,
and pardons fiercely.
God, who created heaven and earth,
the sky and the sea,
the known and the unknown;
God, who cares so much for humankind
that God sent God's only Son to live among us.

I believe in a radical Christ –
a Christ who leads,
heals,
loves,
and forgives radically.
God's son, Jesus Christ, who
came to earth,
fully human and fully divine,
to live among us.
God's son, Jesus Christ, who
suffered and was crucified for us.
God's son, Jesus Christ, who
died to offer us new life.

I believe in a passionate Holy Spirit –
a Spirit who acts,
binds,
moves,
and pours out passionately.
A Spirit who
was with God in the beginning.
A Spirit who
continues to be our Advocate as we await Christ's
coming.

I believe in the living scriptures –
scriptures that are inspired,
illuminated,
guiding,
and authoritative.
Scriptures, the Word of God, which
expose God's self to us.
Scriptures, the Word of God, which
must be read in light of Jesus' life, death, and
resurrection.
Scriptures, the Word of God, which
remind us that God's Word itself is life.

I believe in the universal church –
church that trusts,
risks,
loses,
and confesses.
The universal church, which
makes visible God's intentions for
humanity.
The universal church, which
is shaped by the witness of Christ's life,
proclaiming the good news of salvation and grace.

I believe in the extravagant sacraments,
baptism and communion –
sacraments that seal,
mend,
cleanse,
and send.
The extravagant sacraments, which
join us as participants in Christ's
death and resurrection.
The extravagant sacraments, which
remind us of our baptismal promises.
The extravagant sacraments that
mark us for service as we remember once again that
it's all grace.

My parents have been nominally religious for much of my life. Both they and my grandparents were originally Lutheran and part of the ELCA denomination; however, both have left over what they perceive as theological drift in the denomination. My parents were not “attend every Sunday” people and would sometimes bounce around different churches and even denominations, but little ever stuck.

As a child my fondest memories were staying the entire summer every year with my grandparents in South Carolina where they attended St. Matthias Lutheran Church. They were very active in church programs and outreach. I found beauty in the liturgy and symbolism common the Lutheranism. When I was eleven my grandmother had a massive stroke, which she lived through, but it ended my summers with them. This became a religious dark period for me – it was rare that I went to church, and I developed into an atheist by the time I was about thirteen.

In high school some of my friends, including my now wife, began discussing religion with me, and my lack thereof. They challenged me to really study it, and to really study the Bible itself. I do not have a Luther in a thunderstorm, or Paul on the road to Damascus moment, but by the time I was 16 I knew that I believed. As I was growing in my faith after that point, I decided I wanted to learn more about the God that I believed in. I had always wanted to be a teacher or college professor, and so becoming a professor of religion sounded like a great plan. I applied to many schools with Religious Studies programs but ended up attending Gardner-Webb University because they were the school that offered me the most money. To be clear, I was not and am not a Baptist by any stretch of the imagination – though many of the early churches I worked in were Baptist because of connections with the University.

While at university, I fell in with what was known as the young, restless, reformed crowd. Popular figures in the movement included John Piper, Mark Driscoll, Matt Chandler, Wayne Grudem, etc. I no longer agree with much of this movement but am thankful for this time as some of the people I am close with came from this movement and most are Presbyterian, though none are PCUSA. Also, during university, beginning at 18 I became a youth pastor, which I would be until I was 29. I also now know that 18 is far too young to be a pastor of anything and wonder what those churches were thinking.

My plan on graduation was to acquire an MA at Litfin Divinity School outside of Chicago. However, I had gotten married the summer before my senior year and a month before graduation and moving for my master’s we found out my wife was pregnant. Unfortunately, I did not have enough money to attend graduate school and start a family and so we moved back to my wife’s hometown.

After college is when I began leaving my young, restless, reformed ideas behind and began attending my wife’s home church which was a United Methodist church. I was youth pastor there until I was 29 at which point they began the process of disaffiliation with the United Methodist Church over ordination of homosexuals to ministry and have now become in essence a Baptist church – they now no longer believe in or practice infant baptism. This was hurtful for both my wife and me.

Since that time, we have attended a few different churches but have not been members anywhere. We were attending a non-denominational church which is the church that ordained me – and there were discussions about bringing me on staff as an associate pastor, but they have since gone in a direction that is opposed to things I cherish and hold dear. Without disparaging this church, they made a hard turn into modern evangelicalism which brings with it what I view as negatives. They are now trying very hard to be the next Elevation Church or something like it, and I have always had a strong preference for more liturgical churches which had been the plan during planting of the church.

Throughout the time following university, I have continued to study on my own. The most influential authors during this time of my life have been N.T. Wright, James Dunn, C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, Ben Witherington III, and Alvin Plantinga. In October of 2023 I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. On December 14 of 2023 my thyroid was removed, and I have been cancer free for nearly three years. I am now in a bit of a waiting period – I’m not sure what God has for me in the future, but I do know that I am called to pastor a church. I have been serving as pulpit supply at Cooleemee Presbyterian Church since November of 2024 and have enjoyed my time there and the people. The church has grown by about 10 regularly attending in that time, which is encouraging to see.

My statement of Faith would be simple. I have always viewed the Apostles Creed as the simple boundary of what the Christian faith is. If there is agreement on the Apostles Creed, I consider the person to be a Christian and would be perfectly comfortable worshipping with that person, regardless of denominational affiliation. For me, the Apostles Creed is the minimum belief.

I believe that God is a spirit and therefore is neither male nor female. Due to this, I am comfortable with others using gendered language for God – although most often I tend to be rather gender neutral in my speaking about God. I believe that God created all that we see and what we cannot see and that God actively upholds all of creation moment by moment. I believe science is humanity grasping to understand what God has created, and I believe that all truth is ultimately God's truth. Therefore, science correctly applied has no contradiction with my faith. Touching creation, I am fine with any perspective on creation – I think that the point of Genesis is THAT God created and is not intended to be a science textbook. I lean more towards a theistic evolution or old earth perspective, though always admit that I may be wrong.

I am trinitarian and consider the doctrine of the trinity to be a boundary marker for the Christian faith as I find the creeds explicitly trinitarian. I believe that God eternally has existed and will exist in three persons of one substance and power. I find the Nicene Creed expresses this well.

I believe that God condescends to speak to humanity in ways and language that we can understand, although I believe that God is ultimately incomprehensible. If we could fully comprehend God, then God would not be God. I believe that God is love and that God is better than we can ever understand. I do believe that the Scriptures teach a doctrine of Hell, but I am hopeful that it will be empty. I believe that God does not need creation to exist but has freely chosen to create for God's own glory and for the benefit of humanity. I believe that God is holy and hates sin, which is why the message of the cross is both necessary and powerful.

Concerning the person of Jesus Christ, I hold to the Chalcedonian Definition that Christ is fully God and fully man united in one being (i.e. the hypostatic union). I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a life that we could not – in that he lived a perfect life. I believe that Jesus is the true picture of humanity – a re-creation of sorts, as the new Adam. Christ is what Adam (as a representative of all humanity) was supposed to be. I believe that Jesus was crucified for our sins.

I understand the language about penal substitutionary atonement and am not necessarily opposed to that language, though I think I would perhaps take it in a different way. Penal substitutionary atonement typically comes with overtones of propitiation, i.e. that the wrath of God must be satisfied. I would agree with that, however, I think the wrath is directed more at sin itself and Satan than at humanity. I believe that our sin separates us from God, and that we are unable to repair that gap between us and God, which is the reason that Jesus died bringing victory over Satan, sin, and death (Christus Victor). So, for me, the atonement is a blending of those two perspectives. I believe in a literal resurrection of Jesus and after spending more time on earth with the disciples (men and women) he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God.

I believe that Jesus, due to being fully human, understands the things that we go through and is sympathetic to our various struggles that we face on earth. I believe that Jesus is our great high priest and the only mediator between God and man – that he is the bridge between us and God. I believe that salvation is found through faith alone in Christ alone.

I believe that Jesus taught radical forgiveness, and that we are to practice this same forgiveness – seeking reconciliation whenever possible. I believe that a big piece of salvation is our adoption as sons and daughters of God, through the work of Jesus. I believe that Jesus taught compassion for the poor and care for “the least of these”, though who the least of these are can vary based on cultural and historical circumstances. I believe that as the creative agent in the creation, caring for God's creation is also an important aspect of my faith.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. I believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within every Christian to comfort and confront. The Holy Spirit comforts us in our lowest spots and assures

us of the love of God. The Holy Spirit confronts and convicts us when we go astray, or do not live into our calling. I believe the Holy Spirit teaches us and guides us into all truth.

I believe that it is the Holy Spirit at work in our lives that brings sanctification into our lives. Not that we would ever be perfect in this life, but the trajectory of our lives should be that we look more and more like Christ. I also believe that the Holy Spirit gifts the people of God, not for our own benefit, but so that we might serve others.

I believe in two sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe that the sacraments are an outward symbol of inward grace. I also believe that Jesus is present with us in the sacraments, not in the sense of transubstantiation, but that he is genuinely with us spiritually in them. I find the idea that they are merely symbols lacking. I believe that the sacraments are about the work of the Holy Spirit and not the person who is administering the sacrament.

I believe that baptism is tied to circumcision in the Scriptures. Circumcision marked an individual as belonging to the visible people of God. In like manner, baptism marks an individual as belonging to the visible people of God as a child of the covenant. I believe baptism is commanded by Christ but is not necessary to salvation. That being said, I would not want to be negligent or diminish baptism in any way.

I believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus for the edification of the people of God. I believe that through this sacrament we become partakers in a spiritual sense of the body and blood of Christ. I understand the desire of some to fence the table, but I think this is misguided. I believe that the decision to take part of the table rests on the conscience of the individual.

I also have a relatively high view of the Scriptures, although probably not high enough for certain groups in my area. I am comfortable with the language of infallibility but would want to have the word defined to have an intelligent discussion on the topic. For me, infallibility is that the Word of God is infallible in teaching what it intends to teach. It is infallible in accomplishing the purpose that God has for it. I do not view it as a scientific textbook, or a historical textbook at that. The people who wrote the Bible wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit but maintained their own cultural ideology and idiomatic expressions.

I am also not one who takes vows lightly. When I became an elder, I took vows to uphold Presbyterian principles and that is what I intend to do. The only major quibble that I would have with the confessions would be the emphasis on double predestination as presented in the Westminster Standards – although I also know I am not the first Presbyterian to have this issue as seen in the 1903 statement on chapter three of the confession. I find the confessions to be good guides and representations of the faith life of the church through time, but subordinate to the Scriptures. I do not believe that the Church was made perfect in the 1600s, but that we should be a people always reforming. When it comes to election, I am much more Barthian in my interpretation of Scripture.

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY
Reverend R.C. Griffin, Moderator

I. COMMISSION ACTION REPORTED FOR THE INFORMATION OF PRESBYTERY

A. RENEWING A CONTRACT WITH AN INTERIM PASTOR/TRANSITIONAL MINISTER

1. Concurred with the Session of **First Presbyterian Church**, High Point, North Carolina, in renewing the contract with the **Reverend David R. Smith** as Transitional Pastor for a period of six months beginning December 1, 2025.

2. Concurred with the Session of **Forest Hills Presbyterian Church**, High Point, North Carolina, in renewing the contract with the **Reverend Jon M. Phillips** as Transitional Pastor for a period of one year beginning October 1, 2025.

B. SECURING A STATED SUPPLY

1. Concurred with the Session of **Trinity Presbyterian Church**, Salisbury, North Carolina, in securing a Stated Supply contract with **Reverend Dr. Alberta McLaughlin** for a period of one year beginning October 1, 2025.

C. STATED SUPPLY RENEWAL

1. Concurred with the Session of **Grace Presbyterian Church**, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in renewing the Stated Supply contract with the **Reverend Dr. Pamela Mitchell** for a period of five months beginning August 1, 2025.

2. Concurred with the Session of **First Presbyterian Church**, Greensboro, North Carolina, in renewing the Stated Supply contract with the **Reverend Maria Hanlin** for a period of one year beginning June 1, 2025.

3. Concurred with the Session of **Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church**, Woodleaf, North Carolina, in renewing the Stated Supply contract with the **Reverend Otto Gaither** for a period of one year beginning August 1, 2025.

4. Concurred with the Session of **St. Paul Presbyterian Church**, Greensboro, North Carolina, in renewing the Stated Supply contract with the **Reverend Jay Lambeth** for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.

D. SECURING A PARISH ASSOCIATE AGREEMENT

1. Concurred with the Session of **Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church**, Blowing Rock, North Carolina, in securing a Parish Associate Agreement with the **Reverend Kate Mosley** for a period beginning August 18, 2025 and ending December 31, 2025.

E. RENEWING A PARISH ASSOCIATE AGREEMENT

1. Concurred with the Session of **First Presbyterian Church**, Greensboro, North Carolina, in renewing a Parish Associate Agreement with the **Reverend Doug McLeroy** for a period of one year beginning June 1, 2025.

F. SABBATICAL PLAN APPROVAL

1. That the sabbatical plan for **Reverend Mason Todd** was approved (June or July 2026).

2. That the sabbatical plan for **Reverend Kathryn Campbell** was approved (May or August 2026).

II. COMMISSION ACTIONS TAKEN ON BEHALF OF PRESBYTERY

A. SECURING A COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS/LAY PASTOR

1. Concurred with the Session of **Cooleemee Presbyterian Church**, Cooleemee, North Carolina, in securing a contract with **Hyatt Grissom** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.

2. Concurred with the Session of **Bixby Presbyterian Church**, Advance, North Carolina, in securing a contract with **Hyatt Grissom** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.

3. Concurred with the Session of **Love Valley Presbyterian Church**, Statesville, North Carolina, in securing a contract with **Richard Collier** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning August 15, 2025.

B. COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS/LAY PASTORS (RENEWAL)

1. Concurred with the Session of **Third Creek Presbyterian Church**, Cleveland, North Carolina, in renewing the contract of **Jerry Blankenship** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.
2. Concurred with the Session of **Old Providence Presbyterian Church**, Cleveland, North Carolina, in renewing the contract of **Jeffrey Bumgarner** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.
3. Concurred with the Session of **Laurel Fork Presbyterian Church**, Laurel Springs, North Carolina, in renewing the contract of **Jeffrey Bumgarner** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning November 1, 2025.
4. Concurred with the Session of **Siler City Presbyterian Church**, Siler City, North Carolina, in renewing the contract of **Richard LaDew** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning August 18, 2025.
5. Concurred with the Session of **Griers Presbyterian Church**, Leasburg, North Carolina, in renewing the contract of **Chris McClain** to serve as their Commissioned Ruling Elder–Lay Pastor for a period of one year beginning October 1, 2025.

C. TRANSFER MINISTER OUT OF SALEM PRESBYTERY

1. That the **Reverend Liz Troyer** was transferred to New Hope Presbytery.
2. That the **Reverend J. Douglas Sterrett** was transferred to Shenandoah.

D. MODERATOR OF SESSION

1. That the **Reverend Bill Goodnight of Costal Carolina Presbytery** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Thyatira Presbyterian Church**, Salisbury, North Carolina for one meeting. That the **Reverend Bill Hoyle** was appointed moderator of Session for **Thyatira Presbyterian Church**, Salisbury, North Carolina after that meeting.
2. That the **Reverend Leigh Wisner** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Hills Presbyterian Church**, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina.
3. That the **Reverend Leigh Wisner** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church**, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina.
4. That the **Reverend David Boger** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Dellabrook Presbyterian Church**, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
5. That the **Reverend Jodi Lingan** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Hills Presbyterian Church**, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina.
6. That the **Reverend Jodi Lingan** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church**, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina.
7. That the **Reverend Will Eads** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Collinstown Presbyterian Church**, Westfield, North Carolina.
8. That the **Reverend Will Eads** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Francisco Presbyterian Church**, Westfield, North Carolina.
9. That the **Reverend Rachael Brooks** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Fifth Creek Presbyterian Church**, Statesville, North Carolina.

10. That the **Reverend Jud Milam** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Grace Presbyterian Church**, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

11. That the **Reverend Emily Wilson** was appointed Moderator of Session for **St. Paul Presbyterian Church**, High Point, North Carolina.

12. That the **Reverend R.C. Griffin** was appointed Moderator of Session for **Sparta Presbyterian Church**, Sparta, North Carolina.

E. REQUEST TO CELEBRATE COMMUNION

1. That Ruling Elder **Jimmy Coore** be allowed to celebrate communion on October 5, 2025, at Mount Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church.

2. That Ruling Elder **Janet Pence** be allowed to celebrate communion at Third Creek Presbyterian Church on September 14, 2025.

3. That Ruling Elder **Faye Rucker** be allowed to celebrate communion at Logan Presbyterian Church through October 2026.

F. PULPIT SUPPLY LIST

1. Added **Reverend Steve Scott** of Charlotte Presbytery to the pulpit supply list.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ACTION OF PRESBYTERY

A. MINIMUM COMPENSATION STANDARDS FOR 2026

That Salem Presbytery adopt the attached changes in the minimum compensation of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (both installed and non-installed), Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Certified Christian Educators, for 2026.

2026 MINIMUM ANNUAL COMPENSATION FULL-TIME INSTALLED MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

Salary:	\$36,796.46
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Housing Allowance (or free use of manse including utilities) <i>(Note: if given a housing allowance, it must be specified in writing and recorded in the minutes of the Congregational Meeting that approves the Terms of Call.)</i>	\$11,398.88
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Auto Reimbursement: (This means that all business miles approved by the church's treasurer are to be reimbursed at the current Federal Allowable Rate)	Provided
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The church shall include supplemental income to the Pastor for ½ of Social Security costs. As the Pastor is considered self-employed by the government, the Pastor is responsible for paying 100% of this cost.

Board of Pensions Pension & Disability Dues: Medical Dues: (Use BOP Dues Calculator at www.pensions.org)	Provided *Provided
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Continuing Education and/or Book Reimbursement It is recommended that this time be used creatively and with flexibility.	\$1,500
Vacation:	4 weeks
Study Leave:	2 weeks
Family Leave (with full pay) includes but is not limited to: Leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child; Leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member; Leave to heal following a loss or tragic event.	12 weeks
Days off per week	2 days
Moving (to the field) expense reimbursement	Provided
Triennial Boundary Training Expense	Provided

If the ministers are provided with a manse in which to live, the churches to which such ministers are called are encouraged to establish an equity allowance for the minister.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation is expected to provide for a three-month Clergy/Educator Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for supply in the educator's absence. Congregations unable to provide this leave shall consult with the Commission on Ministry.

These figures do not include the cost of someone to fill the pulpit when the pastor is away, or the cost of Worker's Compensation Insurance, or other similar expenses.

2026 COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS MINIMUM COMPENSATION

Salary: (based on 80% of the minimum annual compensation for full-time installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament)	\$38,556.27 (\$741.47/week divided by number contracted hours)
In addition, please add \$100 for every year of service, up to ten (10) years.	
Vacation (Four (4) weeks commensurate with the work week, including four (4) Sundays)	4 weeks

2026 MINIMUM ANNUAL COMPENSATION CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Salary:	\$48,195.34
Auto Reimbursement: (This means that all business miles approved by the church's treasurer are to be reimbursed at the current Federal Allowable Rate)	Provided

Board of Pensions	
Pension & Disability Dues:	Provided
Medical Dues:	*Provided
(Use BOP Dues Calculator at www.pensions.org)	

Professional Development: It is recommended that this time be used creatively and with flexibility.	\$1,500
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Vacation:	4 weeks
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Study Leave:	2 weeks
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Family Leave (with full pay) includes but is not limited to:	12 weeks
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Leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child;
 Leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member;
 Leave to heal following a loss or tragic event.

Days off per week	2 days
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Triennial Boundary Training Expense	Provided
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These figures do not include position costs such as Worker's Compensation, Social Security and Medicaid tax.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation is expected to provide for a three-month Clergy/Educator Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for supply in the educator's absence. Congregations unable to provide this leave shall consult with the Commission on Ministry.

* "It is the ethical duty of the church, and therefore all churches are mandated to provide 100 percent of the cost of the major medical insurance premiums to cover Teaching Elders/Certified Christian educators and members of their families."

2026 MINIMUM ANNUAL COMPENSATION PART-TIME MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT NOT IN INSTALLED POSITIONS

Salary: Compensation is to be calculated at a percentage of the full-time minimum of \$48,195.34	$\frac{3}{4}$ time: \$36,146.49 $\frac{1}{2}$ time: \$24,097.66 $\frac{1}{4}$ time: \$12,048.83
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Housing Allowance:	A portion of the above compensation may be designated as "Housing Allowance" per IRS rules.
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Vacation:	Four (4) weeks commensurate with the work week, including four (4) Sundays
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Part-time workers (less than 20 hours) are not eligible for Pension and Medical participation offered by the Board of Pensions PCUSA. However, employing organizations may offer eligible BOP products to eligible employees, and should they choose, provide some or all of the cost of the product. See www.pensions.org.

Auto Reimbursement: (This means that all business miles approved by the church's treasurer are to be reimbursed at the current Federal Allowable Rate)	Provided
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In the seventh year of service, the congregation is expected to provide for a three-month Clergy/Educator Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for supply in the educator's absence. Congregations unable to provide this leave shall consult with the Commission on Ministry.

B. COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REORGINZATION

1. That Salem Presbytery elect representatives to the Commission on Ministry (COM) rather than COM Task Forces, including those currently serving.

C. CALL EXTENDED TO MINISTER MEMBER OF SALEM PRESBYTERY

1. That the call of **First Presbyterian Church**, Greensboro, North Carolina, to the **Reverend Dr. Erin Bowers** to serve as Associate Pastor of Christian Formation be found in order; and the terms of the call (printed below) be approved; and that the call be placed in her hands. The Commission on Ministry is satisfied that this congregation has complied with the EEO provisions of the Book of Order (G-3.0307) and the AAEEO Policy adopted by Salem Presbytery (July 1993) in offering this call. The effective date is November 2, 2025.

<u>Effective Salary</u>	
Cash Salary:	\$ 50,000
Housing Allowance:	\$ 30,000
Supplemental Income (SECA):	\$ 6,120
Other Allowances	<u>\$ 2,500</u>
TOTAL:	\$ 88,620

<u>Other Paid Time Off</u>	
Days Off	2 days per week
Paid Vacation	4 weeks per year
Paid Continuing Education	2 weeks per year

*Full medical, pension, disability, and death benefit coverage under the Board of Pensions is provided. Twelve weeks family leave at full pay.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation will provide for a three-month Clergy Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

2. That the call of **New Hope Presbyterian Church**, Lexington, North Carolina, to the **Reverend Mason Todd** to serve as Solo Pastor be found in order; and the terms of the call (printed below) be approved; and that the call be placed in his hands. The Commission on Ministry is satisfied that this congregation has complied with the EEO provisions of the Book of Order (G-3.0307) and the AAEEO Policy adopted by Salem Presbytery (July 1993) in offering this call. The effective date is December 1, 2025. Under the terms of G-2.0504(c), this call may be established only by a three-fourths vote of the members of Presbytery present and voting.

Effective Salary

Cash Salary	\$ 50,000.00
Housing Allowance	\$ 25,000.00
Automobile Expense	\$ 1,200.00
Business/Professional Expenses	\$ 1,500.00
Supplemental Income (SECA)	\$ 5,737.50
Continuing Education	\$ 1,500.00
TOTAL:	\$ 84,937.50

Other Paid Time Off

Days Off	2 days per week
Paid Vacation	4 weeks per year
Paid Continuing Education	2 weeks per year

*Full medical, pension, disability, and death benefit coverage under the Board of Pensions is provided. Twelve weeks family leave at full pay.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation will provide for a three-month Clergy Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

D. CALL EXTENDED TO MINISTER TRANSFERRING TO SALEM PRESBYTERY

1. That the call of **Westminster Presbyterian Church**, Greensboro, North Carolina, to the **Reverend Betsy Lyles Swetenburg** to serve as Senior Pastor and Head of Staff be found in order; and the terms of the call (printed below) be approved; and that she be allowed to move onto the field. (The call will be extended at the February 2026 meeting of Presbytery.) The Commission on Ministry is satisfied that this congregation has complied with the EEO provisions of the Book of Order (G-3.0307) and the AAEEEO Policy adopted by Salem Presbytery (July 1993) in offering this call. The effective date beginning no later than February 2026.

Effective Salary	\$ 90,000
Cash Salary	
Housing Allowance	\$ 60,000
FICA Reimbursement	\$ 6,885
Board of Pensions Benefits including pastor's medical	\$ 33,500
Medical Coverage – Family	\$ 22,200
Continuing Education	\$ 7,500
Travel Reimbursement (at IRS rate per mile)	
TOTAL:	\$220,085
Other Paid Time Off	
Days Off	2 days per week
Paid Vacation	4 weeks per year
Paid Continuing Education	2 weeks per year

Moving Expense \$24,500 subject to final estimates.

In the seventh year of service following the unpaid Lily Foundation sabbatical (2027 or 2028 TBD), the congregation will provide for a three-month Clergy Renewal Leave (Sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

Twelve weeks family leave at full pay.

E. RE-COMMISSIONING OF COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER

1. That Commissioned Ruling Elder **Jerry Blankenship** be re-commissioned for a three year term.
2. That Commissioned Ruling Elder **Steve Braxton** be re-commissioned for a three year term.
3. That Commissioned Ruling Elder **Rachael Brooks** be re-commissioned for a three year term.
4. That Commissioned Ruling Elder **Jeffrey Bumgarner** be re-commissioned for a three year term.
5. That Commissioned Ruling Elder **Steven Stiles** be re-commissioned for a three year term.

F. RECOGNITION OF COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER RETIREMENT

1. That Salem Presbytery recognize the retirement of Commissioned Ruling Elder **Bill Bates**.

G. REQUEST FOR RETIREMENT

1. That the **Reverend Randy Kirby** be granted the status of Retired effective December 31, 2025.
2. That the **Reverend Bryan McFarland** be granted the status of Retired effective January 1, 2026.
3. That the **Reverend Virginia Wood** be granted the status of Retired effective May 1, 2025.

H. SERVICE OF RETIREMENT

1. That Salem Presbytery recognize the **Reverend Randy Kirby, Reverend Bryan McFarland, and the Reverend Virginia Wood** with a service of Retirement.

ACTION:

3. Salem Presbytery approved the 2026 minimum compensation changes for Ministers of Word and Sacrament (both installed and non-installed), Commissioned Ruling Elders, Certified Christian Educators and Part-Time Minister of Word and Sacrament (not in installed positions).
4. Salem Presbytery approved the election of representatives to the Commission on Ministry (COM) rather than COM Task Forces, including those currently serving.
5. Salem Presbytery approved the call to the **Reverend Dr. Erin Bowers** from First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina and the call was placed in her hands.
6. Salem Presbytery approved the call to the **Reverend Mason Todd** from New Hope Presbyterian Church, Lexington, North Carolina and the call was placed in his hands.
7. Salem Presbytery approved the call to the **Reverend Betsy Lyles Swetenburg** from Westminster Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina.
8. Salem Presbytery approved the recommissioning of Commissioned Ruling Elders Jerry Blankenship, Steve Braxton, Rachael Brooks, Jeffrey Bumgarner and Steven Stiles.
9. Salem Presbytery approved granting the status of Retired to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Bill Bates and participated in a Liturgy of Retirement.
10. Salem Presbytery approved granting of the status of Retired to the **Reverend Randal Kirby** effective December 31, 2025, and participated in a Liturgy of Retirement.
11. Salem Presbytery approved granting of the status of Retired to the **Reverend Bryan McFarland** effective January 1, 2026, and participated in a Liturgy of Retirement.

12. Salem Presbytery approved granting of the status of Retired to the **Reverend Virginia Wood** effective May 1, 2025, and participated in a Liturgy of Retirement.
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Salem Presbytery Retirement of the Rev. Bryan McFarland

This is the second time I've been invited to "eulogize" the ministry of Bryan McFarland among us in Salem Presbytery. In 2019, I shared much of this story when we celebrated our outgoing staff. I'm honored to share it again.

I first met Bryan in the spring of 1999. I was a student at UNCG and a member of the Presbyterian Campus Ministry's PNC. We interviewed several qualified candidates, but Bryan stood out. We were drawn to his humor, his experience with campus ministry, and his passion for spiritual formation. He was part Celtic mystic, part pop culture aficionado, and part social justice advocate. Bryan and I instantly hit it off.

The last meeting of that first school year, Bryan showed up with a guitar. A whole year had passed, and none of us knew he played. He sang a song he'd written, and we were blown away. I said, "Bryan, I was on the PNC! Why did you keep that talent hidden from us?" He smiled and said, "Kyle, my ministry here is about students, not me playing guitar." That humility and self-awareness made an impression. Nevertheless, with our encouragement, Bryan started bringing his guitar more often.

Bryan's gifts as a musician and songwriter have served him well. When Campus Ministry funding collapsed in the mid-2000s, he shifted into part-time congregational ministry and a validated call as musician and workshop leader. Bryan produced three studio albums. His songs are about vocation, self-care, sabbath, family, generosity, and justice- themes that followed him throughout his ministry.

About eighteen years ago, Bryan became Salem Presbytery's part-time Hunger Action Advocate. That work was about far more than distributing Pennies for Hunger grants. He built partnerships between our presbytery and hunger relief ministries, locally and globally, and advocated for justice for the millions who are hungry or food insecure. He worked with organizations like Bread for the World and preached hunger awareness wherever he went. Bryan would often say that no matter what scripture appears in the lectionary, there's always something that speaks to feeding hungry people.

Bryan's third album, *Until All Are Fed*, united his music and his hunger ministry. Structured as a service of worship, it was a prophetic cry for justice for the poor and hungry. Its songs have been sung at General Assemblies and beyond. In 2018, "Until All Are Fed" was performed, this time not with guitar, but on grand pipe organ in a cathedral in Amsterdam during the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

During another staff transition, Bryan became our associate presbyter. As Associate Presbyter for Send, he continued to be an advocate for justice and a builder of community. As East Neighborhood associate, Bryan fostered friendships and helped organize clergy lunches in our eastern counties, a forerunner to the parish model our presbytery later adopted. Behind the scenes, he made matches for clergy in the CLC and offered pastoral care, frequently taking us to breakfast or out for a beer on his own dime.

He also assumed responsibility as communications coordinator, creating *Salem Matters*, rebuilding the website, and overseeing our online directory. He integrated video conferencing into committee meetings long before Covid forced us all onto Zoom. Many of us were better equipped for that abrupt transition because of his work for our presbytery.

Through rhythm and rhyme, countless meetings and visits, his pastoral presence and inspiring preaching, his hunger advocacy and prophetic witness, Bryan's ministry to Salem declared something vital about scarcity and abundance. He proclaimed that the world does not lack food, water, or resources; there is enough for everyone. Our problem lies not abundance but in our generosity. There is enough, if only our hearts are willing enough to share it.

When staff restructuring ended Bryan's position in 2019, his ministry to Salem entered one more chapter. He was called as transitional pastor at Community in Christ Presbyterian. It was his first congregational pastorate in 35 years, but it went so well that CIC sought permission to call him as installed pastor. Bryan brought to CIC all the same gifts he had shared with the presbytery: pastoral care, Celtic spirituality, technological skill, and a passion for justice and advocacy.

The church I serve is in the same community in southeast Guilford. It was a joy to have my friend close by. Our relationship allowed our churches to partner in ways they hadn't before, and his ministry at CIC helped that congregation flourish.

On a personal note, when I think of the times in ministry, I've full-body laughed, a disproportionate number have been with Bryan McFarland. In my hardest moments and greatest joys, Bryan has been one of my first phone calls. He has been a pastor to me, and, more importantly, a dear friend.

I join this presbytery in giving thanks for him. We pray his retirement will be restful and rejuvenating, filled with meaning and purpose. Thank you, Bryan, for your ministry, your music, your witness, and your friendship.

Dear Bryan,

"Don't you feel it growing day by day? / People getting ready for the new / Some are happy, some are sad / Whoa, we gotta let the music play.

"What the people need is a way to make 'em smile. / It ain't so hard to do if you know how. / Gotta get a message; gotta get it on through....

Whoa-oh-whoa, listen to the music...."

- Tim Johnston, The Doobie Brothers, Listen to the Music

Begging your indulgence for a bit of pop culture in this tribute to my dear friend Bryan McFarland, this song tracks through my brain when I attempt to describe this caring musician and pastor.

Bryan made a lasting impact in Salem Presbytery through his original music and his advocacy for hunger-relief efforts. His unique ministry combined songwriting, musical performance, his love of Christ, and concern for feeding the hungry with a passionate urgency to share the message.

"I'm singing my heart out to God ... / God is my strength; God is my song, and, yes! God is my salvation. This is the kind of God I have / and I'm telling the world. / This is the God of my father – I'm spreading the word far and wide!" Exodus 15:1 The Message

When talking with Bryan, one can feel music in a spiritual connection, as if his very words might translate into song. He seems to function best to the music within and surrounding him. Bryan hears in music, he thinks in music, he loves in music, and he communicates this with us most effectively when his activities include music. Like a stringed instrument, Bryan's very life thrums with music.

Thank you, Bryan, for your musical message, your passion to feed our world's hungry, and your obvious love of our Lord, that you shared with us so graciously throughout your journey with us here in Salem Presbytery. May your retirement be a song of joy and songs of Hallelujah to our Lord who gave you this gift. Now, throw that guitar in the trunk of your car, and may you continue to share the music you hear with eager ears and hungry hearts for many good years to come. "Whoa-oh-whoa," listen to the music...."

Elder Jinx Miller

Salem Presbytery
Retirement of The Rev. Dr. Randy Kirby

On the occasion of his retirement, Salem Presbytery celebrates and gives thanks for the ministry of Randy Kirby. Randy has served with a steady presence, compassionate care, well-rounded wisdom, and a generous spirit that makes one hopeful for the church.

Randy received an MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1982. Randy was ordained in September 1982 by Birmingham Presbytery. He served as pastor of Fairfield Highlands Presbyterian Church in Midfield, Alabama, Chaplain at Richmond Memorial Hospital in Richmond, Virginia supply pastor of Milford Presbyterian Church in Milford, Virginia. He and his wife Barrie co-pastored in southside Virginia while he earned his PhD in from Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education. His dissertation was *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Hope: Correlation of Hope in the Selected Theological works of Jürgen Moltmann and the Family Systems Theory of W. Robert Beavers*. In 2001, Randy took a call to serve as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, North Carolina where he has served for the past 24 years. In Salisbury, Randy also taught courses on grief, marriage, and family systems at Hood Theological Seminary as an Adjunct professor.

By the numbers, Randy has officiated over 260 funerals, delivered 250 prayer shawls, taught weekly bible study for 23 years, attended 18 confirmation retreats, 15 youth mission trips, served with 6 heads of staff, and made countless pastoral visits. Yet, numbers convey only a fraction of the impact of Randy's ministry.

God has richly blessed First Presbyterian Church through Randy's ministry these last 24 years. He has served with the young and old alike always guiding them further up and further into God's hopeful future as it unfolds all. Like a ballast keeping a ship upright in both calm and rough waters, Randy has steadied the church through two pastoral transitions, several sabbaticals, and two parental leaves. Sitting in Randy's office, many have received the blessing of being truly heard and the gift of well-rounded wisdom. Randy's generous spirit was evident throughout his ministry having shared ministry with his wife as co-pastors and later in welcoming and supporting two young co-pastors in leadership at First Presbyterian Church. His wise counsel has more than once kept them on the right path. His generosity continued in the founding of the Stephen Ministry program at First Presbyterian Church where he equipped others to share in the ministry of care and support. Randy has been a man of integrity leading by example with faithful wisdom, generosity, and care.

Randy is also known for his love of Disk Golf where he is a top contender for his age group in Virginia tournaments. His is a loving father and grandfather.

Randy's ministry at First Presbyterian Church will be greatly missed but we give thanks to God for gift of Randy's longstanding love.

Salem Presbytery
Retirement of The Rev. Virginia Wood

We are grateful for Rev. Virginia Wood's faithful service in Christian ministry for thirty years. During her fulfilling career she served as a Christian Educator at Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Hartford, CT; as Associate Pastor of the West Avon Congregational Church in Avon, CT (in a dual appointment with the Presbyterian denomination); as Senior Pastor at Presbyterian Church of Madison in Madison, NJ; at Guilford Park Presbyterian in Greensboro, NC, and at Madison Presbyterian Church, Madison, NC, both in Salem Presbytery.

Virginia's personal tragedy in 1996, near the beginning of her seminary study, shaped her ministry and witness throughout her pastoral appointments. She experienced the heartbreaking loss of her precious young daughter, Samantha, from a vehicular accident. When others may have questioned or rejected their faith and purpose, Virginia found her

calling into the area of pastoral care. Many times Virginia has seen God's hand in the twists and turns of her life. She is a testimony to Romans 8:28 and is an inspiration to others.

Virginia's compassion, kindness and empathy comforted our congregation through losses of aging long-time members. In several instances during her tenure, we lost vibrant young members. Virginia guided the church and those families through the pain of illnesses and transition while celebrating God's great mercy and promises of everlasting life.

A 1999 graduate of Yale Divinity School, Virginia crafted her sermons in a way which reflected her theological education encased in relevant and relatable examples and explanations to encompass the understanding of God's Word. She is notable for the variety of experiential worship services she led which provided sensory connections to biblical teachings. Our Biblical Dinner and Tenebrae service included guests from the community, a menu of biblical foods (including Virginia's delicious Roast Lamb), and meaningful reflection of scripture.

While Madison Presbyterian Church is small, Virginia guided the church to actively participate in community affairs and put faith into practice. A women's craft group continues to make blankets and prayer shawls. The Backpack ministry continues to deliver food to students in the local schools. She also mentored those who currently lead the church.

We are grateful for Virginia Wood's ministry and for the opportunity to commend her good and faithful service, particularly while at Madison Presbyterian Church in Salem Presbytery.

Carolyn Hughes, Ruling Elder
Diane Peebles, Ruling Elder
Anthony Wall, Ruling Elder
Janet Silvers, Deacon
Jean Bullins, Congregant

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
Rev. Courtney Montoya, Beth Hooten, Alice Milam, Co-Moderators

The CPM offers the following report:

1. CPM approved candidate Elizabeth Barksdale for Certified Ready to Receive a Call status.

The CPM moves the following motion:

1. That Salem Presbytery examine Grace Kim, member of Korean First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro and a graduate student of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, and that following her successful examination, she be enrolled as a Candidate for the office of Teaching Elder.

Grace Kim- Journey of Faith Statement

"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:7)

As if it were yesterday, I remember the day I completed my Women's Leadership Program in 2020 at my previous seminary in New York City. During the graduation ceremony, my mentors blessed me with this scripture. In that moment, I felt an incredible surge of electricity running through my body—an indescribable strength as if I had been zapped with courage I had never known before. With boldness I proclaimed, *"Yes, God for You I will go wherever You lead me."* Looking back, I claim that this was truly the moment when my journey of seeking God's presence and "God sightings" in my life began in a new and faithful way.

My journey of faith has been a continual discovery of God's grace, guidance, and presence in every season. From an early age, I was surrounded by the stories of Scripture and the love of a faith community, which planted in me the seeds of belief in a God who is both loving and faithful. Over time, I have come to understand that faith is not simply a set of beliefs but a living relationship with God one that shapes how I see the world, how I treat others, and how I respond to life's challenges.

As a Korean American woman, finding my place in leadership and having my voice heard has been a challenging journey. Yet I know this struggle is not mine alone, it is one faced by women in the Korean community for generations. My grandmother made a courageous move in the 1970s: not only by immigrating to a foreign country, but also by finding her voice through attending seminary and being ordained in a non-Korean Christian denomination. Her bold step in leadership inspired my mother, who also became an ordained reverend.

Now, in this present time, I believe I have received the baton to continue this movement one that extends beyond Korean American women to include women from all backgrounds. My hope is that they, too, may find strength and a firm foundation to live out the calling God has placed on their lives. Our identity is not to be restrained by culture or limited by traditions that sometimes overshadow our faith. Instead, our identity is in Christ beloved as we are and empowered as we are called to be by God.

Of course, there have been moments of doubt and struggle. Yet in those times, I have experienced God's faithfulness, learning to persevere by trusting in God's love. I have seen how God meets us both in the ordinary and the extraordinary, often revealing grace in unexpected ways. My experiences in worship, prayer, and service have deepened my trust in God and shown me how God works through ordinary people to bring hope, healing, and transformation to others.

My sense of call to ministry grew out of these experiences. I have been drawn to teaching, mentoring, and shepherding others in faith, and I have witnessed the ways God equips ordinary gifts for extraordinary purposes. Through these opportunities, I have learned that ministry is not about personal recognition but about walking alongside others as God works in and through their lives.

I believe that God continues to shape me through Scripture, prayer, and community. My journey has taught me to listen for God's guidance, to trust in God's timing, and to act with courage and humility. As I step forward in this calling, I do so with a heart committed to serving God and the church, eager to share the hope, love, and life I have received in Christ.

My journey is ongoing, and I remain deeply grateful for the people, experiences, and challenges that have drawn me closer to God. I am committed to following God faithfully, trusting that each step whether joyful or difficult is part of God's unfolding story in my life.

ACTION:

13. Salem Presbytery successfully examined and welcomed Grace Kim as an enrolled Candidate for the office of Teaching Elder.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Rev. Courtney Montoya, Moderator

The Executive Council met on September 2, September 18, October 16, and October 27, 2025.

The Executive Council received regular reports from Tony De La Rosa, Jodi Lingan, and David Vaughan.

FOR INFORMATION:*Actions Taken on behalf of Presbytery:*

- On recommendation of the Administrative Commission, agreed to execute the sale of the Dogwood Acres PC property. The church has closed.
- Agreed to the sale of the property of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant (Greensboro). The congregation remains, using space belonging to UKirk of Greensboro.
- Elected Elder David Vaughan to the office of Stated Clerk (Interim) of Salem Presbytery for a term concluding February 28, 2026.

Business of the Executive Council:

- Approved the appointment of the Rev. Jill Duffield as Vice Moderator of Salem Presbytery;
- Established dates for 2026 meetings of Presbytery: February 10 (via ZOOM), May 12, September 1, and November 7, 2026;
- Agreed with Budget & Finance Committee that the Presbytery conduct a full financial audit on a five-year cycle, with a full audit being conducted for 2025 financials, and a financial review being conducted for the succeeding four years (unless changes in accounting services for financial anomalies occur);
- Authorized Budget and Finance to re-bid auditing services for 2026;
- Endorsed Budget and Finance's plan to participate in the General Assembly's "Funding Model Development Team program," if participation is offered to Salem;
- Empowered STORM to propose revisions to the Gracious Dismissal Policy, to re-imagine how funds from dismissal and sales of churches would be deployed, and to extend the work of STORM, targeting a final report for the February 2026 Presbytery meeting;
- Heard regular reports from Salem's Black Caucus;
- Endorsed Budget and Finance's proposed 2026 budget;
- Approved STORM's engagement with the Rev. Wilson Gunn (a retired mid-council leader in National Capital Presbytery) as a consultant on proposed Presbytery staffing complement;
- Approved minutes of previous meetings of the Executive Council and the Presbytery.

FOR ACTION:

1. The Executive Council nominates the following individuals for service on the Presbytery's Committee on Representation: CRE LaQreshia Bates-Harley, Elder Jinx Miller, Rev. Paul Sink – all for the Class of 2028.
2. The Executive Council will ask the Moderator to recognize Elder Ronda Tatum to bring a report from the Budget and Finance Committee.
3. The Executive Council will ask the Moderator to recognize the Rev. R.C. Griffin (STORM) to present a revised Gracious Dismissal Policy for the Presbytery.

ACTION:

14. Salem Presbytery approved the nominees for service on the Presbytery's Committee on Representation.
-

BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
Ruling Elder Ronda Tatum, Moderator

Salem Presbytery received a thorough report from the Ruling Elder Ronda Tatum on behalf of the Executive Council's Budget and Finance Committee regarding the Presbytery's financial sustainability.

SALEM PRESBYTERY 2026 BUDGET		INTERIM 2026 BUDGET APPROVED BY PRESBYTERY 11.15.2025		
		2026 Budget	2025 Amended	Yr to Yr Change
INCOME				
Acct #	SUPPORT INCOME			
3010	¹ Support Receipts	10,000	15,000	(5,000)
3020	² Local Church Support/Pledges	500,000	563,571	(63,571)
3030	Other Receipts	-	-	-
	TOTAL SUPPORT INCOME	510,000	578,571	(68,571)
	³ INVESTMENT INCOME			
3310	Investment Income	30,000	60,000	(30,000)
3350	Other Interest	40,000	17,485	22,515
3360	Unrealized Gain/(Loss)	-	-	-
3370	Gain (Loss) on Investments	-	-	-
	TOTAL INVESTMENT INCOME	70,000	77,485	(7,485)
	⁴ PROPERTY INCOME			
3610	Proceeds - Property Disposals	50,000	-	50,000
3620	Sales Proceeds for Carrying Costs	100,000	-	100,000
	TOTAL PROPERTY INCOME	150,000	-	150,000
	OTHER SOURCES & TRANSFERS FROM OTHER FUNDS			
	Reimbursement - El Buen	82,035	77,585	4,450
	EC Approved Use of Designated Reserves (10 months)	-	90,488	(90,488)
	⁵ Withdrawal from Undesignated Reserves	11,186	11,520	(334)
	⁶ Transfer in from Campus Ministry Fund	19,000	10,000	9,000
	TOTAL OTHER SOURCES & TRANSFERS FROM OTHER FUNDS	112,221	189,593	(77,372)
	TOTAL INCOME	842,221	845,649	(3,428)
EXPENDITURES				
	⁶ CAMPUS MINISTRY			
4010	Appalachian State University	37,000	36,000	1,000
4020	St James Ministry at A&T (FaithPointe)	28,000	20,000	8,000
4030	Ukirk of Greensboro	36,000	35,000	1,000
4050	Listening Post (UNC School of the Arts)	4,000	4,000	-
4055	Korean Presbyterian Church	-	1,000	(1,000)
	Campus Ministry Total	105,000	96,000	9,000
	SEND			
4210	⁷ GA Per Capita	127,893	129,950	(2,057)
4220	⁸ Synod Per Capita - (100% x \$1.50/member x 17474 membership)	26,211	21,210	5,001
4040	Resource Center	1,320	1,320	-
4230	NC Council of Churches	1,000	1,000	-
	Send Total	156,424	153,480	2,944
	COMMITTEES/COUNCIL			
4310	Committee on Ministry	8,100	8,100	-
4320	Preparation for Ministry	7,535	7,535	-
4360	Comm on Representation	100	100	-
	Committees/Council Total	15,735	15,735	-
	ADMINISTRATION			
	⁹ Compensation			
5010	Salaries	258,680	273,406	(14,726)
5020	Housing	26,524	25,750	774
5080	Hispanic Ministry Compensation	82,035	77,585	4,450
5090	Salary - SECA	16,077	7,959	8,118
5110	Insurance/Benefits	61,374	95,567	(34,193)
5120	Employer Payroll Taxes (FICA/Medicare)	5,742	14,927	(9,185)

5130	FSA Fees	100	-	100
5150	Continuing Education - Executive Presbyter	2,000	2,000	-
5160	Continuing Education - Other Staff	1,000	1,000	-
	Compensation Total	453,532	498,194	(44,662)
	Travel & Professional Expenses			
5210	General Presbyter	10,000	7,000	3,000
5215	Stated Clerk	2,230	2,230	-
5220	Engagement Pastors	2,500	2,500	-
5230	Transformational Ministry Presbyter	4,800	4,000	800
5240	Communications Director	1,500	1,500	-
5240	Other Staff	3,000	2,500	500
	Travel & Professional Expenses Total	24,030	19,730	4,300
	Administrative			
6010	¹⁰ Engagement Pastors	10,800	10,800	-
6015	Office Supplies	1,100	1,100	-
6020	Telephone/Internet	3,000	5,900	(2,900)
6030	Computer Support	2,200	7,700	(5,500)
6040	Website	1,000	1,000	-
6050	Dues & Subscriptions	5,500	-	5,500
6060	Postage/Copying/Printing	1,900	1,900	-
6110	¹¹ Professional Fees (Audit, Legal Fees,Consultant)	20,000	14,000	6,000
6120	¹² Bank & Payroll Fees (Miller Mgmt Contract)	18,000	2,500	15,500
6130	Insurance Expense	17,000	17,110	(110)
6210	¹³ Bad Pledge Expense	2,500	-	2,500
6310	¹⁴ Closed Church Expense	3,000	0	3,000
	Miscellaneous	1,500	500	1,000
	Administrative Total	87,500	62,510	24,990
	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$842,221	\$845,649	-\$3,428
2026 PER CAPITA ASK		\$45		
Notes to the 2026 Budget Proposal:				
1	Support Receipts - Salem Presbytery participates in 2 programs through Brotherhood Mutual (Safe Ministry Program & Ministry Partner Program). \$0 is for the Safe Ministry Program & \$10,000 for the Ministry Partner Program. The Safe Ministry Program award is based on the total dollar amount of claims divided by earned premium. Because the past year's percentage was above 45%, Salem Presbytery did not earn that reward. The program review starts in December each year.The 2026 budget assumes no receipt of the Safe Ministry Program reward.			
2	Local Church Support/Pledges - The ask of churches is \$45 per member The 3 parts to the Per Member Ask are: 1) <u>Per Capita for GA</u> ; 2) Per Capita for Synod Assessment at 100% of assessment ; and 3) General operating funds for the Presbytery which includes staff expenses, insurance, committees, engagement pastors, campus ministries, annual audit, etc.			
3	Investment Income Category: Includes 4 categories of investment activity: 1) Investment income is based on the General Fund portion of the investment portfolio. The investment policy allows for use of investment income to go towards operating expenses thereby minimizing use from reserves. Currently all investments associated with the General Fund are through Merrill Lynch. Potentially moving investments to Presbyterian Foundation/New Covenant in 2026 to assure compliance with socially responsible investment practices of the PCUSA; 2) Other Interest is interest income from the Allegacy checking, savings, and Money Market accounts; 3) Unrealized Gain/(Loss) is not budgeted because it is it refers to an increase or decrease in the value of an asset held, but not yet sold. These gains/losses are considered "unrealized" because they only exist on paper and do not affect the financial situation until the instrument is sold; 4) Gain/(Loss) on Investments refers to the profit or loss realized from selling an investment and is the difference between the selling price and purchase price.			
4	Property Income - This category of income includes funds available from the sale of closed churches. 1) Proceeds - Property Disposals is based on 10% of the net sales available for general operations. 2) The Sales Proceeds for Carrying Costs is based on 20% of the net sales proceeds to be used to offset the carrying costs for unsold properties (i.e. lawn maintenance, utilities, insurance, etc.). There is some movement to look at designated funds to create an endowment that would be help possibly cover the cost of a position(s) and this would change the current sale of property policy that allocates 70% of net proceeds of church property sales to Church Growth & Transformation.			
5	Withdrawal from Undesignated Reserves - used to balance the budget. The intent is to have other revenues received, including pledges, be sufficient to cover operating expenses.			
6	Campus Ministries - Request from Campus Ministries Task Force = \$105,000. Base budget of \$86,000 from Presbytery & recommend using \$19,000 from Campus Ministries Fund to make up the difference. As of 8/31/2025 - Campus Ministries Fund has a balance of \$84,089.24.			

7	GA Per Capita - The full G.A. assessment for 2026 is based on \$11.26 per Presbytery member based on the 2024 member number (17,474) or \$196,757.24. 2026 Proposed Send is based on the GA rate of \$11.26/member and remitting 65% of the assessment. (11.26 x 17,474= \$196,757.24 *.65 = \$127,892.21 rounded to \$127,893).			
8	Per Capita - Synod of the Mid-Atlantic - Based on remitting 100% of the assessment at \$1.50 per member using the 2024 member number of 17,483 or \$26,224.50			
9	Compensation - 2026 Compensation & Benefit Schedule @ 3% COLA	<u>Salary/Housing Allowance</u>	<u>BoP/SECA/FICA/Medi</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Executive Presbyter - FT	\$103,000	\$23,758	\$126,758
	Presbyter -Transformational Ministry or Associate Presbyter - FT	\$85,231	\$31,575	\$116,806
	*Stated Clerk - PT	\$21,925	\$1,677	\$23,602
	Communications Director - PT	\$14,632	\$1,120	\$15,752
	Administrative Assistant - FT	\$60,416	\$22,867	\$83,283
	Dental/Vision Employee Only Offering to eligible employees		\$2,196	\$2,196
	Employee Compensation Totals	\$285,204	\$83,193	\$368,397
	- Budget includes FSA (flexible spending account) fees not been previously budgeted.			
	- Executive Presbyter position budgeted with no 3% COLA included for 2026			
	*Assumes status quo with Part Time Stated Clerk. No decision has been made as of this document generation.			
	- All eligible staff receiving Covenant Plan benefits for 2026			
	- All eligible staff receive employee-only dental & vision coverage. Does not include Director of Communications.			

ACTION:

15. Salem Presbytery approved the 2026 interim budget.
-

STORM (SALEM TASK FORCE ON REVITALIZING MINISTRY)
Reverend R.C. Griffin

Salem Presbytery was presented with a revised dismissal policy.

INTRODUCTION¹

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved Commissioners' Resolution Item 04-28 that urged: "...that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local congregations a process that exercises the responsibility and power 'to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members' (Book of Order, G-3.0301a) with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency." Believing that trying to exercise this responsibility and power through litigation is damaging to the cause of Christ, impacting the local church, other parts of the Body of Christ and ecumenical relationships, and our witness to Christ in the world around us, the General Assembly urges congregations that consider leaving the denomination, presbyteries and synods to implement a process using the following principles:

- **Consistency:** The authority of the Presbytery is guided and shaped by our shared faith, service and witness to Jesus Christ.
- **Pastoral responsibility:** The requirement in G-3.0301a to consult with the members of a church seeking dismissal highlights the presbytery's pastoral responsibility that must not be submerged beneath other responsibilities.
- **Accountability:** For a governing body, accountability rightly dictates fiduciary and connectional concerns, raising general issues of property (G-4.02) and specific issues of schism within a congregation (G-4.0207). But full accountability also requires preeminent concern with "caring for the flock".
- **Gracious witness:** Scripture and the Holy Spirit require a gracious witness from us rather than a harsh legalism.
- **Openness and transparency:** Early, open communication and transparency about principles and process of dismissal necessarily serve truth, order and goodness, and work against seeking civil litigation as a solution.

The rationale supporting this resolution stated that it is tempting to "emphasize the property trust responsibilities of presbytery/synod oversight to the exclusion of the pastoral responsibility of caring for the congregations (members staying and leaving) and the responsibility of public witness to Christ with the larger body of Christ and the community and world." Secondly, it was suggested that presbyteries should strive for consistency in their response to congregations seeking dismissal and that all parties should engage in a grace-filled exchange.

PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live lives that glorify God; that advance the work of the Kingdom of God, that show forth his love in how we honor and relate to one another as colleagues and friends in service to the Lord. While we desire to preserve the peace, unity and purity of the PC(USA), we realize that in days of controversy, friends and colleagues

¹ Salem Presbytery would like to thank Presbytery of the Peaks for their work in developing a faithful and balanced policy that is gracious both to potentially departing congregations and to the Presbytery at large. We have drawn heavily upon their work. Salem also thanks Grand Canyon Presbytery who wisely and explicitly put forth the legal justification for the policy, especially concerning matters of property.

may differ. Yet Jesus calls us to exercise his love even in the midst of disagreement.

This love may be tested when some of us come to the place where we sense that faithfulness to our understanding of Jesus' call and to our denomination seems at odds. We may even hold to the conviction that continued shared ministry within the boundaries of the PC(USA) has become untenable.

We do not believe it is proper to divide congregations and denominations if it is avoidable. Separation should not be done lightly. But we believe that when it becomes clear that friends and colleagues can no longer walk together, it is not conducive to the larger mission of the presbytery or the PC(USA) to engage in protracted disputes with a church desiring to depart. Thus, we have sought to create a clear and respectful process by which these sad waters may be navigated; one that even in the midst of painful disagreement can still proclaim the love of Christ that binds us together.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

A. Unity

The congregations and members of Salem Presbytery ("the Presbytery") seek to uphold one another, respect each other's integrity and affirm freedom of conscience, even as we acknowledge significant differences in our views of what the Bible teaches about a number of issues. We desire to encourage peace and unity, while minimizing confrontation between our congregations and members, as we seek together to find and represent the will of Christ. In all that we do, it is our prayer to strive to be a church modeled on the body of Christ, a church made up of many different parts, all of which are necessary "for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God"(F-1.0202). Our spiritual unity is derived from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14).

B. Decision-making

Presbyterians have always recognized significant differences of opinion on issues that matter. This ethos is currently noted in the historic language found at F-3.0105: ... "We also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other." Our covenant demands that we strive to work together in peace and unity, even in the midst of our diversity. Through our theology, we understand that "Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ." "Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern" (F-3.0204 and F-3.0205). At the same time, the church is committed to being open to voices sharing minority opinions. At some points in our history, minority views eventually became those of the majority. Thus, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes "The church reformed, always to be reformed according to the Word of God in the power of the Spirit" (F-2.02).

There are times when members find they cannot in good conscience go along with the majority. The Presbytery encourages all presbyters and congregations to "...concur with or passively submit to" the vote and wisdom of the majority (G-2.0105, footnote 1). If their consciences will permit neither, the Presbytery will be gracious in considering requests by congregations and presbyters with strong issues of conscience to pursue peaceable withdrawal through dismissal to another Reformed body.

A congregation that is convinced that to be faithful to the Lord Jesus, it must disassociate from the PC(USA) and the Presbytery, should do so in strict accordance with the Book of Order and in a way that seeks to promote the unity of that congregation. Closely divided congregations should remain as they are and where they are as a consensus has not yet been achieved.

C. Dialogue and Reconciliation

The goal of this Presbytery will always be reconciliation and continued relationship with all congregations in the Presbytery, without the threat of isolation, estrangement or blame. The Presbytery is to be a servant to the congregations God has entrusted to us, encouraging and supporting them toward becoming healthy, growing congregations. This is especially true for those congregations for whom the bonds of unity are stretched and ecclesiastical connections are frayed over issues of conscience to the point of considering disaffiliation.

1 John 4:18 states: *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love."*

The Presbytery's commitment to this passage means that we are to engage the leaders of a congregation, or the congregation as a whole, without threat of punishment. It is likewise incumbent upon the leaders of congregations wrestling with issues of conscience to share their concerns with Presbytery leadership in a timely manner, being assured that the response will not be hostile, but instead one of prayerful dialogue and a commitment to act in love and in the best interests of the congregation as well as the Presbytery's mission.

D. The Property Provisions

The Form of Government ("FOG") section of the Book of Order contains several provisions which establish that all real and personal property (regardless of legal or record title) held by a congregation or its trustees belongs to the PC(USA) and the denomination's respective presbyteries. For instance, according to the Book of Order (G-4.0203): *"All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)."*

As a Presbytery, we recognize that Chapter Four of the FOG states that except where otherwise provided, *"all property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ... is held in trust nevertheless for the use and*

benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)". Presbytery, at its discretion, may dismiss congregations from the PC (USA) in possession of their property (G-3.0303b). We affirm the responsibility of the Presbytery to provide for and insure the mission, church property and government of the PC(USA) throughout its geographical district (G-3.0301).

We also affirm to each congregation its right to seek dismissal under chapters three and four, of the Book of Order, and we ask all of our congregations to act with love, forbearance, dignity and discretion in pursuing this right (G-4.02; G-3.0303f).

It is our hope that as this policy is followed by all involved, litigation in secular courts can be avoided in light of our mutual recognition of these respective rights in this regard, as defined and set forth in the FOG. In the spirit of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), we peacefully seek to resolve any disagreements as brothers and sisters in Christ to avoid the harm that is done to the Gospel and Christ's body when Christians resort to civil litigation and public disputes.

Section 2 (Property) of *The Legal Resource Manual for Presbyterian Church (USA) Councils and Churches*, 4th ed., 2020 shall serve as a guiding resource for Salem Presbytery in addressing property-related matters.

All conversations and actions regarding issues of dismissal/dissolution shall be undertaken in accordance with current *Book of Order*, *Book of Order Annotated Edition*, and relevant Permanent Judicial Commissions cases. The following summary of pertinent decisions shall be considered when pursuing such conversations and actions.

- Each case must be considered on a case-by-case basis. (PJC [2014, 221-03, Tom et al v. Pby of San Francisco]).
- When dismissing a particular congregation within its geographic region, the presbytery must fulfill its fiduciary duty under the Trust Clause (G-4.0203) to consider the interest of the PC(USA) as a beneficiary of the property.
- A full fiduciary review must be undertaken in all cases (PJC [2014, 221-03, Tom et al v. Pby of San Francisco]).
- There is no unilateral right of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation to depart from the denomination or its presbytery of membership. No authority is given to a congregation or to session to vote to leave the denomination. (GA [218th, Item 4-20]; see also PJC Sundquist v. Heartland, Remedial case 210-02, 2008. See G-1.0503 and G-3.02).
- Presbyterian Churches may only be dismissed to another reformed denomination. The other option that a congregation has which desires to leave the PC(USA) is to seek to be dissolved. Those people may then reconstitute themselves as whatever type of community that they desire. It may be possible for the Presbytery to then sell them the building at a negotiated rate, or otherwise work to seek the viability of that congregation (G-4.0205). The procedure for dissolution in this type of case, shall be the same as the procedure for dismissal in this policy. (This policy shall not guide dissolutions of local

congregations for other reasons.)

- It is important for the presbytery to prayerfully discern and consider the mission of the church in its district and of the whole church as it decides whether to dismiss or dissolve a congregation (G-3.0301; G-3.0303a).
- The full presbytery, meeting in plenary, has exclusive right to determine the final terms of dismissal/dissolution (G-3.0301a).

In acceptance of the above polity provisions, the presbytery is disallowed from creating a formula by which all dismissals/dissolutions will proceed. Therefore, each request for a dismissal/dissolution shall construct such terms as negotiated by the Administrative Commission and the congregation, through its Session or a Session authorized committee, according to the values articulated above.

INITIAL PROCESS

A. Initial Contact and Exploration

When a session notifies the Presbytery that a congregation may be in disagreement with Presbytery and/or the denomination to the extent of considering withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), this information should be brought immediately to the attention of the General Presbyter or Stated Clerk, who will notify the COM. The COM will appoint a small team of 3-5 people to initiate communication and discussion with that session and church staff. At the initial meeting, the Session shall provide a written rationale for their desire to seek dismissal as well as a current membership roster with up-to-date contact information for all members (physical/mailling addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses).

If it appears that progress can be made toward reconciliation through continued and constructive dialogue, congregational leadership and the COM Team will establish a mutually agreeable timeline for talks to be held, and proceed to engage in such dialogue. If not, then the session will proceed with the steps outlined below.

B. The First Congregational Hearing

The session of a church shall request that the Presbytery call for a congregational hearing for the purpose of discussing the question, "Shall our congregation consider being dismissed from the PC(USA)?" Due notice of such hearing shall be given to all active members of the congregation by mail and orally at regular worship services on at least ten (10) days, including two (2) Sundays. At least 50% of the active members of the congregation shall be present.

At this hearing, the representatives from the COM Team will be present to hear reasons for the request, outline the process, answer questions, and clarify any misinformation. These representatives shall have the privilege of the floor. The purpose of this hearing is not to "request dismissal" as the congregation has no authority to do so (G-1.0503). Rather it allows for a "straw poll" for the purpose of giving the Presbytery a sense of the congregation's desire regarding dismissal. After discussion and prayer, further guidance on this question may be

sought by a secret written ballot - the only choices being "Continue to consider being dismissed" or "Do not consider being dismissed." The Session can take the results of this straw poll under advisement as they continue in their discernment process.

C. Following the First Congregational Hearing

Following the first Congregational Hearing, if the Session is still determined to proceed, the Session should provide to the COM Team, in written form, a formal request to proceed with dismissal along with minutes from the Session meeting at which that decision was made. Once received, the COM shall request that the Stated Clerk, if s/he has not already done so, appoint an Administrative Commission (AC), which shall include some with financial expertise - the membership of the AC is at the discretion of the Stated Clerk. The AC shall work with the session to review the terms of possible dismissal, plan any additional hearings with the congregation and review the property and financial records of the congregation.

The Session will provide to the AC copies of all executed documents concerning the congregation's incorporation and by-laws, real property (including cemeteries and columbariums) and other assets including, but not limited to, current deeds of trust, loan agreements, liens, property and casualty insurance, and statements of tangible and intangible assets. Concerning cemeteries and/or columbariums, the Session shall provide documentation of compliance with current State law regarding such property. The AC shall obtain an appraisal of the property by a licensed appraiser (selected by Presbytery in consultation with the Session), the cost of which shall be borne solely by the Session seeking to be dismissed.

Representatives of the Session and the AC will review these documents to determine whether Presbytery, synod or any Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) body is named therein and/or is exposed to any liability claims that exist or may arise under these documents. Due consideration should be given in cases where the church has received grants from an entity of the PC(USA) within the past 12 years.

In order for the dismissal process to proceed, steps must be taken to repay in full any indebtedness owed to or guaranteed by the Presbytery, the synod, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or to refinance such indebtedness through an independent creditor without support from the Presbytery, synod, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Appropriate action must also be taken to amend any organizational documents, as necessary, and to ensure that adequate insurance coverage of all property is maintained until dismissal is completed. Similarly, if the congregation has established a foundation or received grants or endowment(s), related documentation must be examined to identify any terms or restrictions affected by the proposed dismissal involving the Presbytery, Synod or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Action must be taken as appropriate.

The church shall be responsible for paying all legal and other costs incurred by both sides in this negotiation. The church shall, unless granted a waiver by the Presbytery, remit all back payments of the per capita assessment.

At this time, the Session will work to procure a Letter of Transfer from the Stated Clerk of the

Reformed body to which the Session seeks dismissal, providing that letter to the AC.

The AC will notify the Executive Council, who shall engage in a discernment process to identify the Presbytery's mission plan for the area served by the departing congregation.

D. The Second Congregational Hearing

With concurrence from the AC, the Session shall call for a second hearing of the congregation to discuss dismissal the AC will represent the Presbytery. The AC will be responsible for working with the church's leadership in ensuring a decent and orderly process by which the wisdom of this request can be discerned as God's call for both this congregation and the larger mission of the Presbytery. As part of this process, the following procedures shall govern this request for separation:

- Due notice of such a hearing shall be given to all active members of the congregation by mail, and orally at regular worship services for ten (10) days, including two (2) Sundays.
- Though the Presbytery may not set the quorum, it is hoped that at least one-half of the active membership will be present.
- The AC, along with related Presbytery staff, shall be present throughout and shall have the right to speak and to present the separation proposal. The AC will represent the Presbytery.
- The question to be discussed is: "Shall our session request the Presbytery for dismissal to _____ according to the terms agreed upon by the Session and the AC?"
- Ample time shall be provided for speakers wanting dismissal and speakers wanting to stay with the PC(USA).
- After discussion and prayer, further guidance on this question shall be sought by a secret written ballot - the only choices being "Request dismissal" or "Do not request dismissal."
- Again, as the congregation has no authority to request dismissal, the Session will take the results of this second straw poll under advisement as they discern whether they will or will not formally request the Presbytery to dismiss the congregation to another Reformed body.
- After reviewing the proposed terms of dismissal negotiated between the AC and session as outlined below, it is expected that the Presbytery may approve or disapprove the terms of dismissal. Whether to dismiss the congregation is a purely discretionary decision on the part of the Presbytery.
- If any member contests the regularity of the congregational meeting, he or she may initiate a complaint pursuant to Chapter VI of the Rules of Discipline.

TERMS OF DISMISSAL

A. Status of Minister Members of Presbytery

If a congregation is to be dismissed by Presbytery, one of the paramount concerns of this process is to ensure that the rights and status of minister members are considered and

handled according to the constitution

Ministers may request transfer to the Reformed body to which the congregation is requesting dismissal, or they may remain as members of the Presbytery. If transfer is not requested and their call at the church ends, the minister may request to be granted member-at-large status that will allow the minister to seek calls within the PC(USA) and to receive a severance package negotiated among the congregation, the AC, and the Committee on Ministry and approved by the Presbytery. Transfers may be requested concurrently with the congregation's request or they may occur separately. If the transfer is not requested or granted concurrently, the minister may request to labor outside the bounds of the Presbytery to serve the church which has been dismissed for a period of up to 12 months following the dismissal of the congregation (G-2.0503). This service will ordinarily be designated as a validated ministry of the Presbytery and is understood as a gracious means for facilitating continuity in ministry during a limited period of transition.

Transfers to another Reformed body will normally be approved unless the minister is the subject of a pending judicial or investigative action (per D-10.0105). The reasons for not granting transfer may be communicated by the Presbytery's Stated Clerk to appropriate persons.

B. Status of Members Under Care of Presbytery

Special attention should be given to members of the congregation who are preparing for ministry and are under the care of Presbytery. Each member under care, together with his/her liaison from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry ("CPM"), should be advised immediately of the congregation's desire to seek dismissal. The member under care will be given the option of being dismissed with the congregation or transferring their membership to another congregation within Presbytery and/or the PC(USA) (G-2.06). If a transfer to another congregation within Presbytery and/or the PC(USA) is requested, the AC and the CPM liaison will assist the member in seeking a waiver of the usual six-month requirement for church membership in order to maintain care status.

C. Status of Members of the Congregation

It is important that, throughout the dismissal process, both the session and the COM Team/AC communicate carefully so that divisiveness is minimized between those in the congregation who wish to withdraw and those members who want to remain in the PC(USA). Upon Presbytery's approving a congregation's dismissal, the Stated Clerk in consultation with the Clerk of Session shall contact all members as to their desired membership status. The AC, on behalf of the Presbytery, will follow up with those wishing to remain with the PC(USA).

D. Issues of Property

The issue of property should not be a means by which order and discipline are to be maintained, but the interests of the various constituencies must be guarded in a fair and equitable way. In making its recommendations on property, the AC will assess the needs of the congregation, those wishing to continue in the PC(USA), and the overall needs and

mission of the Presbytery.

If the AC in its process of consulting with members of the congregation decides that they are united in their conviction to disassociate from the PC(USA), the AC may recommend to the presbytery that the congregation be allowed to depart with the real and personal property the congregation or its trustees then hold under such conditions as have been negotiated (as per Section C in the process above).

The Session and the AC must negotiate any terms of dismissal based on God's call to mission to the faction within the congregation desiring to be dismissed; God's call to the faction within the congregation desiring to remain in the PC(USA) and God's call to the Presbytery regarding ministry in the geographic location in which the congregation is located.

The AC may recommend that the congregation be dismissed with all of its property with the following provisions:

- In consideration of the ongoing work, ministry, and life of the presbytery the departing congregation will agree to pay any past due per capita apportionments² as well as at least three (3) years of the most recent requested per capita apportionments. This will give the Presbytery time to make necessary adjustments going forward. Full payment may be made prior to the third year or other specified payment completion date. For any congregation that makes such financial contributions to the Presbytery subsequent to the adoption of these policies, such action shall be memorialized in a written binding agreement between that congregation and the Presbytery.
- Originals of all extant minutes of the Session, Board of Deacons, and congregation, as well as records of baptisms, marriages, burial and membership rolls to the date of dissolution or dismissal, and other historical church memorabilia shall be conveyed to the Presbytery's Stated Clerk for appropriate historical repositories prior to the date of dissolution or dismissal.
- The name of the PC(USA) congregation is an action of the Presbytery that must be negotiated and/or preserved appropriately. Therefore the future name of the dismissed or dissolved congregation shall be a part of the settlement between the congregation and the AC.
- All PC(USA) signage, logos, iconography, and other PC(USA) memorabilia shall be removed from the property within 3 months.
- Dismissal may not occur unless and until the terms of an agreement that includes both the matters set forth above and the retaining by Presbytery of a right of reverter* for ten (10) years have been reduced to writing and approved by the Presbytery. Upon such signing and

² Salem Presbytery began stating Per Capita apportionments in 2022. Thus, departing congregations are required to be current on their Per Capita apportionments from 2022 to the present – even if the congregation has a longer history of financial disconnection from the Presbytery.

approval, the congregation may be dismissed even if the financial terms are not completely fulfilled for a number of years.

Congregations that are divided on the question of dismissal from the PC(USA) must work out a property settlement with the AC that provides a proportional settlement for the ministry and worship needs of the minority. This may be done through establishment of a designated fund under the auspices of the Presbytery for the minority or by agreement with another congregation of the PC(USA) with which the minority may associate and worship and serve the Lord or any other means acceptable to the Presbytery.

- Once this settlement has been reduced to writing, the AC may then recommend to the Presbytery approval of the settlement and dismissal of this congregation with real and personal property held by the congregation or its trustees as part of its report at the Presbytery meeting described below.
- Originals of all extant minutes of the Session, Board of Deacons, and congregation, as well as records of baptisms, marriages, burial and membership rolls to the date of dissolution or dismissal, shall be conveyed to the Presbytery's Stated Clerk for appropriate historical repositories prior to the date of dissolution or dismissal.
- The name of the PC(USA) congregation is an action of the Presbytery that must be negotiated and/or preserved appropriately. Therefore the future name of the dismissed or dissolved congregation shall be a part of the settlement between the congregation and the AC.
- All PC(USA) signage, logos, iconography, and other PC(USA) memorabilia shall be removed from the property within 3 months.
- Dismissal may not occur unless and until the terms of an agreement that includes both the matters set forth above and the retaining by Presbytery of a right of reverter* for ten (10) years have been reduced to writing and approved by the Presbytery. Upon such signing and approval, the congregation may be dismissed even if the financial terms are not completely fulfilled for a number of years.

THE MEETING OF PRESBYTERY

At the meeting of Presbytery to consider a request for dismissal, the Presbytery shall hear from the AC:

- On the recommendations it brings regarding the request for dismissal, based on the guidelines noted above;
- On provisions that will be made for those members who wish to remain in the PC(USA);
- On provisions that will be made for any Teaching Elders, Christian Educators or Commissioned Ruling Elders for Particular Ministry associated with the congregation;
- On how the congregation's dismissal will affect the larger mission and ministry of the Presbytery;

- On any financial contributions to the congregation by the Presbytery, synod or General Assembly.

It should be noted that renegotiation of the terms for dismissal through use of amendments from the floor of Presbytery would invalidate months of work between the AC and the congregation. The AC will bring recommendations to the Presbytery concerning the negotiated agreement. The proposal will be presented as a whole with the request that it be accepted and voted on without amendment.

The effective date of dismissal will occur no earlier than ninety (90) days after the Presbytery vote, provided the Presbytery is satisfied the congregation has met all agreed upon terms and conditions by that date.

THE VOTE

After hearing from the AC and allowing for discussion and prayer, and if no substantive amendments have been approved, the Presbytery shall then vote by written ballot on this question: “Shall the congregation of _____ be dismissed to _____ according to the terms agreed upon by the AC, the session, and the congregation?”

The only choices shall be “Yes” or “No”.

If a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, votes in favor, the congregation shall be dismissed according to the terms agreed upon.

ACTUAL DEPARTURE

A final worship service will be conducted in which representatives of the Presbytery, the congregation and the new Reformed denomination will be invited to meet, worship and transfer the congregation to its new denominational home. As part of this worship gathering, both representatives of the Presbytery and the departing congregation will offer prayers on each other’s behalf, give thanks for the years of ministry shared together, and share words of blessing even as we go separate ways.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Following the provisions of our constitution, we affirm that it is our policy not to take action to remove a pastor or session solely as a result of a decision to discuss withdrawal or seek dismissal to another denomination. Elders and pastors engaged in these difficult decisions are to conduct themselves in a Christ-like manner. How we treat one another reflects and impacts directly our witness to Christ in this geographic area. Faithfulness to our witness compels us to conduct ourselves in a way that honors God and one another if we are to expect God's blessing to reside upon our ministries going forward. We should conduct ourselves in such a way as to bring honor upon the gospel in the eyes of neighbors and potential members from our communities.

WAIVER OR DEVIATION BY PRESBYTERY

Presbytery retains the absolute authority and discretion to waive and deviate from any of the terms, conditions and procedures set forth above in the Gracious Dismissal Policy.

AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION

In response to the ruling of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in Remedial Case 2012-221-03 (Tom et al. v San Francisco Presbytery), Salem Presbytery shall understand and interpret its Gracious Dismissal Policy (adopted 5-10-12) as follows:

To honor the Trust Clause (G-4.0203) of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), exercising its mandated fiduciary duty, Salem Presbytery shall take into consideration the financial position and the value of property used by any congregation that seeks dismissal with that property, prior to authorizing any transfer of that property or any portion thereof. In determining how such financial position and property value impact the mission of Jesus Christ in its district, the Presbytery shall proceed on an ad hoc basis, not relying on any particular formula to provide the basis for settlement of a request for dismissal. Further, to assure that a congregation dismissed to an approved Reformed denomination is encouraged to settle down in its new denominational home, the Presbytery shall retain a right of reverter* for ten years upon the real property of such congregation, such right to be exercised should the congregation seek to leave its new home for another denomination or independency or should the congregation fail to fulfill all the agreed-to obligations in the separation agreement. This right of reverter* may subsequently be waived by vote of the Presbytery in particular circumstances.

Definition of Right of Reverter: A right of reverter gives an organization the opportunity to resume ownership of property when that property is not being used in accordance with the requirements laid out upon the transfer of the title of that property.

ACTION:

16. Salem Presbytery approved the revised dismissal policy.
-

COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION Rev. Sam Perkins, Moderator

1. The following individuals are nominated for committee service in Salem Presbytery:

Budget and Finance:	Craig James (2028) Jennifer Apker (2028)
Church Growth and Transformation:	Kristen Levens (2026) Ginny Taylor-Troutman (2028) Janet Silvers (2028) Lucia Ward Alexander (2028)
Commission on Ministry:	Kate Harper (2026) Phanta Lansden (2028) Steve Braxton (2028) Ruth Lenger (2028) Jim Beard (2028) Christopher McClain (2028) Jeff Smith (2028) Carrie Finch-Burriss (2028)

	Shannon Ward (2028)
	David Mount (2028)
	Cindy Salter (2028)
	Newton Cowan (2028)
	Tim Parker (2028)
	Hyatt Grissom (2028)
	Bill Hoyle (2028)
Committee on Preparation for Ministry:	Karen Watts Yehudah (2028) Karen Huddleson-Gillespie (2028)
Personnel:	Dana Fruits (2028) Lynn Gardener (2028)
Synod Commissioner, Elder	James Harley (2028) Synod Jubilee
Fund Committee	Dwayne Culbertson (2028)

2. The following individuals are nominated as Commissioners to the 227th General Assembly (Summer 2026):

Teaching Elders:

Rev. Matt Bussell (Presbytery Moderator-Elect) (First, Greensboro)

Rev. Kyle Goodman (Alamance)

Rev. Vicki McCain (Church of the Cross)

Ruling Elders:

CRE Rick Purcell (Bethany, Graham)

RE Ronda Tatum (Logan)

RE Carol Wilson (Grace)

Young Adult Advisory Delegate:

Rebekah Rich (UKirk, Winston-Salem)

For Information:

Included in this packet is a description of Presbytery committees. A nomination form is also included for you to use liberally to self-nominate or nominate others for service on Presbytery committees. A summary of continuing vacancies will be published in Salem Matters very soon.

ACTION:

17. Salem Presbytery approved the slate of nominees for service on the committees as they are listed.

PEACE AND JUSTICE TASK FORCE
Elder Beth Hooten, Committee Member

Elder Beth Hooten reminded the group about Salem Presbytery's Racial Equity Equipping, with upcoming sessions scheduled for November 2025 and March 2026. She noted that 58% of those serving churches have completed the training. Curriculum information and registration links are available on the Racial Equity Equipping homepage. The book

Unsettling Truths by Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah will be discussed via Zoom on Wednesday, December 10 at 1:00 PM. The book examines the lasting impact of the 15th-century "Doctrine of Discovery" and its continuing effects on Indigenous and minority communities. Elder Hooten also announced the documentary *Evicting the American Dream*, a 50-minute PDA film on families facing eviction and homelessness. It is available on Amazon and other streaming services. Members are encouraged to watch prior to the discussion planned for January or February. Additional details are in the Peace & Justice newsletter. A donation from the Peace & Justice Task Force was made to The Council of Churches in honor of its 90th Anniversary. The Council supports faith communities in addressing issues of economic justice, human well-being, equality, compassion, and peace.

CHURCH GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION
Rev. Emily Wilson, Moderator

Reverend David Ealy spoke about the booklet *Discovering God's Future*, a step-by-step guide to discerning where God is at work in the local neighborhood and how congregations can engage in that ministry.

INVITATION TO LUNCH AND PRAYER OF BLESSING

The Presbytery Moderator, Commissioned Ruling Elder Steve Braxton led Salem Presbytery in a prayer of blessing for lunch.

ADJOURNMENT AND BENEDICTION

The Presbytery Moderator adjourned the meeting with the benediction.

Recorded by:
Christine Ratledge, Office Manager
David Vaughan, Stated Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Vaughan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Appendix A

Ministers Absent from the November 2025 Presbytery Meeting (excluding HR, unless she/he is currently serving a congregation)

Asher-Lawson, Marybeth	Harley, James	*Peters, Rebecca Todd
Austin, Taylor	Harper, Kathryn	Phillips, Caroline
Bates, Timothy	Harris, Randy	Porter, Timothy
Bates-Harley, LaQreshia	Harrison, James	Priddy, Kim
*Beach, Kathryn	Hazelrigg, Marti	*Pruitt, John
Beck, Frederick A.	Henry, David	Puryear, Sam
Berry, Kent	Heyward, William Bailey	Rigel, Jessica
Boger, David	Higgins, Cindy	Robertson, Wayne
Braxton, Steven	Hoffman, Kymberley	Sandlin, Mark
Brim, Marty	Ingle, Cynthia	Sarvis, Michael
Bruner, Olen	Jordan, Stephen	Schaick, Steven
Bumgarner, Jeffrey	Joyce, Boyd	Schooley, Christopher
*Bussell, Matthew	Kim, Peter	Scott, Stephen W.
Caldwell, Lynne	*Kirby, Randal V.	Shores, Lee
Choplin, Patty	Kisner, Jeff	Simmons, Allison
Clark, M. Gray	LaDew, Richard	Sink, Paul
Coppage, Jeffrey A.	Lansden, Phanta	Smith, Jay D.
Cowan, Daniel Newton	Lawson, Scott	*Smith, Jeffrey S.
Crews, Evelyn	*Layman, Debbie	Speaks, Christopher
Crunk, Sidney	McClain, Christopher	Stiles, Steven
Davee Lomax, Amanda	McGregor Mosley, Kate	Sutphin, J. Grant
Donovan, John	McLeroy, Douglas	Taylor-Troutman, Andrew
Durham, Larry	Milam, Travis	Taylor-Troutman, Mary Virginia
Eads, Will	Mitchell, Pamela	Tickle, Austin
Freese, Scott	Moore, Robert	Todd, Katie Barrett
Fulp, William	Moore, Timothy	Tysinger, Laura
Gaither, Otto	Musser Gritter, Joshua	Vazquez, Jorge
Gaska, Jonathan	Musser Gritter, Lara	Weed, Larry
Gipe, Will	Nesbit, Thomas	Weed, Mae
Godbey, Sarah	Newsome, Stedman	Wray, Tom
Greene, Patricia	Oliver, (Gregory) Jones	Zacarias, Rigoberto
Hanlin, Maria	Parker, Tim	

***Notes an excused absence**