

On the afternoon of Tuesday, February 15, 2022, over 200 minister members, ruling elders, presbytery staff members, and other participants gathered on Zoom for Chicago Presbytery's first stated assembly of the year.

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New Year, New Ministries

Welcome to 2022! With a new year comes new leadership in the presbytery. At this assembly meeting, we had the pleasure not only of installing Moderator **David Thornton** and Moderator Elect **Barbara Gorsky**, but also of installing Presbytery Executive **Craig Howard** and re-installing Stated Clerk **Ken Hockenberry**.

- Rev. Dr. David Thornton serves as interim pastor at Chicago: Lake View, and has his MDiv from Duke Divinity School and his DMin from New Brunswick Theological Seminary. In Chicago Presbytery he has served as nominating committee moderator, on the mental health committee and CARE, and as a General Assembly commissioner in 2016. (By virtue of his role as moderator, he'll also be a commissioner to this year's GA.)
- Rev. Dr. Barbara Gorsky serves as pastor at Elk Grove. She has her MDiv from McCormick Theological Seminary and her DMin from Columbia Theological Seminary. In Chicago Presbytery she also serves on the Mental Health Committee and has served as COM moderator and on CPM. (She'll serve as a commissioner to the 2024 General Assembly by virtue of her role as assembly moderator next year.)

After being installed, Moderator David Thornton installed and commissioned Chicago Presbytery's leaders for the 2022 year:

- Synod of Lincoln Trails Commissioners: **Jana Blazek** (Class of 2022); **Mary Kay Walsh** (Class of 2023); **Sylvia Hope Daniels** and **Michael Kirby** (Class of 2024)
- Commission on Ministry Moderator: **Julie Peterson**
- Commission on Preparation for Ministry Moderator: **RJ Kang**
- Presbytery Coordinating Commission Moderator: **Erik Khoobyarian**
- Administration Team Moderator: TBA
- Constitutional Procedures Work Group (PCC) Moderator: **Maggie Shreve**
- Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Work Group (PCC) Moderator: **Brian Paulson**
- New Worshipping Communities Work Group (PCC) Co-Moderators: **John Fyfe** and **David Myles**
- Personnel Committee (PCC) Moderator: **Steve Pierce**
- Presbytery Assembly Planning Team (PCC) Moderator: **Barbara Gorsky**
- Mental Health Committee (PCC) Moderator: TBA
- Creation Ministries Team (PCC) Moderator: TBA
- Commission on Anti-Racism and Equity Co-Moderators: **Ariel Gloor** and **Debbie Paton**
- Facilitating Anti-Racism and Equity (CARE) Moderator: **Joyce Perry**
- Mission Committee Co-Moderators: **Lisa Dagher** and **Jeff Lehn**
- Self-Development of People (Mission) Moderator: **Lisa Dagher**
- Nominating Committee Moderator: **Jessica Gregory**
- Permanent Judicial Commission Moderator: **David Handley**
- Havana/Cuba Partnership Moderator: **Kathy Wennerstrum**
- Israel/Palestine Network Moderator: **Pauline Coffman**

We're also pleased to report the following ordination, installations, and covenants:

- **Hyeyoung Lee** was ordained and installed to ministry as a mission worker in Korea.
- **Stuart Barnes Jamieson** was installed as pastor at Skokie: Carter-Westminster United.
- **Quincy Worthington** will be installed as pastor at Highland Park.
- **Vicky Curtiss** is serving as co-interim pastor (part time) at Chicago: Edgewater.
- **Mary Jo Hudson Dean** is serving as interim pastor at Riverside.
- **Nancy Dolan** served as temporary pastor/head of staff (part time) at Wilmette: First while pastor Jeff Lehn took temporary disability.
- **Tassie Green** is serving as temporary supply pastor at Carol Stream: Heritage.
- **Steve Howery** is serving as temporary associate pastor (part time) at Arlington Heights: First.
- **Kent Organ**'s covenant has been renewed to serve as co-interim pastor (part time) at Chicago: Edgewater.
- **John Paul Powell** is serving as stated supply pastor at Mt. Prospect: Community.
- **Laura Sherwood**'s covenant has been renewed to serve as interim associate pastor at Wilmette: First.
- **David Thornton** is serving as interim pastor at Chicago: Lake View.

Expressing Appreciation & Saying Farewell

Presbytery staff and commissioners expressed thanks to Immediate Past Moderator **Mike Welf** for his service to the presbytery. As Mike reflected on his moderatorial year he noted, “It was my honor to serve the Presbytery of Chicago. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of the challenges, believe it or not! I was particularly thrilled to do our international ordination. I’m not sure it has occurred anywhere else prior to that, and it was a very exciting time. I want to show my thanks to all of you for joining me on this journey, and I look forward to continuing to serve the presbytery.”

We also expressed appreciation to Presbytery Communications Specialist **Dennis Cobb**, who has resigned to begin work as director of the Food Pantry at The Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas (described by Craig Howard as the “Fourth Pres of Kansas”). Dennis moved to the Kansas City area last year, when his husband, Rev. Dale Jackson, became the Presbyter for Vision and Leadership in Heartland Presbytery. While we celebrate the opportunities that await Dennis (as well as the greatly reduced commute!), we’ll miss him dearly. Blessings to you in this new chapter, Dennis!

We also celebrated the honorable retirements of **Joy Douglas Strome** and **John McFayden**.

- Joy reflected, “It’s been a privilege to serve the two churches I’ve served. My life has been so enriched by both of those calls.... I leave those calls – both calls – with renewed hope about the future of the church, and I continue to challenge us all to be on high alert about how we’re called, and to seek new ways to bring the good news to those who starve for it. I’m excited by and have great confidence in the gifts of the next generation of leaders and I’m happy to pass the baton.”
- John gave two words of encouragement: “First, to congregations... I would encourage you to always give your pastors grace to grow and space to spread their wings and freedom to fly. In other words, don’t clip their wings. And together that way you as a congregation with your pastor will flourish. And then to my colleagues in the clergy... there’s something to be said for packing light, for a willingness to pick up stakes and pack up our tents and sojourn, like Abraham and Sarah, to unknown places to which God beckons us. But don’t confuse that with ambition, which may reward you with accolades and even a treasure, will also inevitably (if not held in check) take its toll. In other words, I very positively encourage you to plant yourself where you are, because in the end it will be the people in the pilgrimage you’ve shared who are more important than anything.”

Nannette Sawyer also led the assembly in a moment of silence in memory of **Dirk Ficca**, who completed his baptism on December 21, 2021. As Nannette observed, Dirk was a mentor to many, and a visionary and international leader in religious interrelations, and he will be missed.

Caring for One Another

Ken Green, our **Board of Pensions** regional consultant, provided an update on BOP benefits at the February assembly:

- The Board of Pensions in its current iteration supports church workers of all types – in fact, they serve more lay employees than pastors at this point.
- The **Assistance Program**, entirely supported by donations, offers grants to active and retired members of the BOP who are in financial need.
 - In 2020, more than \$9 million was distributed in over 1,300 grants.
 - Nine types of grants are available in 2022; [find information about the grants here](#).
 - Emergency grants may be available to church employees who are not currently on the BOP plan.
 - Eligibility requirements for the grants are expanding, and funding amounts are increasing.
- The BOP also offers **Care Navigation through Quantum Health** to help members “receive the right care at the right place at the right time.”
 - Care Navigation begins April 1, 2022, and is available to medical plan members enrolled in PPO, EPO, or HDHP at no additional cost to members or employers.
 - New medical ID and prescription cards will be mailed to members; they’ll have contact information to Quantum Health Care Coordinators on the back.
 - Medical and prescription coverage, medical care and services, and plan administration will all stay the same. The BOP will also remain the primary point of contact for all the financial coverage plans (pension, death and disability, term life, Medicare supplement).
- Starting February 1, **ESI will process over-the-counter COVID tests**.
 - BOP members should save receipts for OTC tests purchased after January 15, 2022.
 - Up to 8 tests per member per month will be reimbursed; ordering directly from ExpressScripts will have a \$0 copay.
- During the height of the pandemic, the BOP was covering 100% of COVID-related hospitalizations; they’re going back to the **standard 80/20 coverage plan**.
 - Teladoc appointments for PPO/EPO will be \$10; high deductible plans will be \$20 after the deductible is met.
 - Telemedicine appointments are available 24/7 at <http://www.teladoc.com/Enter> or by calling 1-800-TELADOC.
- **BOP Member Services** are available 8:30 AM – 7:00 PM ET at 1-800-PRESPLAN or by emailing memberservices@pensions.org; Ken Green is available for questions or consultation at kgreen@pensions.org or by calling 215-587-7384.

The Commission on Anti-Racism and Equity continues its hard-but-good work:

- One-day **Introduction to Systemic Racism** Zoom Workshops are scheduled for March 19 and May 21, and will last from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. [Click here to register](#); all presbytery staff and leaders are strongly encouraged to attend.
- **Conversations around *The Color of Compromise*** video will take place on [April 29](#), [July 15](#), and [October 21](#), from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Click on the date to register for the meeting you’d like to attend.
- CARE is working with the Mission Committee to host **CROAR’s 2.5-Day Antiracism Workshop** in 2022; watch for an announcement and registration information in Presbytery Connect.

- **Process observation** with presbytery entities continues.
- If you serve on a presbytery entity and have not yet taken the **Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)**, please contact [Barbara Wilson](#) or [Thom Cunningham](#) to schedule.

Making sure we have proportional representation – or, as we Presbyterians like to call it, **parity** – between minister members and ruling elder commissioners at our presbytery assemblies is important. It means that we're able to have a robust conversation, and to consider multiple perspectives about the issues that we face. At the February assembly we approved the continuance of the historic plan of numerical parity, using the same numbers as we used last year. Thanks go out to **Bill Dillon**, who has once again faithfully “crunched the numbers” for us.

Stewarding God's Resources

While the numbers aren't completely finalized yet, we're happy to announce that **Chicago presbytery ended the 2021 fiscal year in the black!** This is due in large part to the per capita and mission collaboration participation of our member congregations – 72 out of our 82 churches contributed to per capita, supplying 92% of the budgeted capita funds, and we actually received \$10,000 *over* our budget on mission giving! From the bottom of our hearts, **thank you for your generosity** in your time, your talent, and your treasure. We literally couldn't make it without you. Comprehensive financial reports are currently being written; in the meantime, [you can access the detailed operations report here](#).

COVID brought new realities not only to the congregations of Chicago Presbytery, but also to the presbytery itself. The “new normal” of remote work and meetings means that we have the opportunity to discern if and how God might be leading us to quarter ourselves somewhere other than 815 West Van Buren. An **Office Relocation Task Force** has been formed; their work will be ongoing over the next few months. Please pray with and for us, and we'll keep you updated as decisions are made.

At the February assembly, we voted to approve the sale of the property held by the recently-merged **Niles Community Church** to Mil Oak Properties (aka Jerry's Fruit Market) for the purchase price of \$1,150,000. 20% of this value will be donated to charitable organizations as designated by Niles's former Session; details of those recipients will be shared at May's presbytery assembly.

The **Mission Committee** has been hard at work! At their November 2021 meeting, they approved 5 mission grant requests for a total of \$15,905, which brought the **total 2021 mission grant awards to \$498,587**. [Check out the full list of grant recipients here](#), and if your congregation could benefit from a mission grant, [click here for an application](#) or email mission@chicagopresbytery.org. (Application deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.)

Most of the grant monies awarded went to the **Salary Supplement Program**, which is going strong in its third year. The first cohort has received all three years of funding and will continue to be supported by monthly coaching through 2022; the second cohort has received their second round of funding and will begin monthly coaching in March/April; and the third cohort (a small

church program with only programming provided) attended a leadership training weekend in February, and their congregations have begun meeting in small groups using the New Beginnings curriculum as a guide. If you're interested in applying for a future cohort, click the following links to learn more about the [Salary Supplement Program](#) and the [Small Church Program](#).

Gearing Up for General Assembly

At this presbytery assembly, we voted to concur with Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery on an overture that has been titled “[On Advocating for a Peace Agreement in the Korean Peninsula](#).” This overture (if all parties agree) will replace another overture we concurred with, “Regarding a Korea Peace Treaty,” that was brought to GA224 (in 2020) and was referred to GA225.

After prayer and discernment, the Sessions of Oak Park: First United and Chicago: Lake View decided to withdraw their overture “Stop Using Empire Religion to Justify Colonial Domination in Israel/Palestine: Confronting Our Complicity in Global Colonialism, White Supremacy, and Exceptionalism.” [Read a copy of their withdrawal letter here](#).

At our May meeting, we'll also be commissioning our commissioners and Young Adult Advisory Delegate to General Assembly:

- Minister Commissioners: **David Thornton, Jane Tuma, RJ Kang, Raymond Hylton**
- Ruling Elder Commissioners: **Mike Welf** (Chicago Heights: First), **Olga Ricketts-Pearl** (Evanston: First), **Mary Kay Walsh** (Arlington Heights: Southminster), **Jasmin Cruz** (Chicago: Faith Community)
- Young Adult Advisory Delegate: **Lucy McDermott** (Chicago: Fourth)

Two of Chicago Presbytery's staff members will also be serving as volunteers during General Assembly: **Ken Hockenberry** will be coordinating the floor parliamentarians and **Jodi Craiglow** will be serving as a tracker. Join us in May as we pray for and bless our siblings in their work!

Our Next Presbytery Assembly

Our next stated assembly is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 17, 2022, at 4:00 PM**. Stay tuned to Presbytery Connect for registration and (maybe?) location info.