

THE PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Stated Meeting

September 17, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location: Zoom

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is on file in the Stated Clerk's files and available upon request.

CALL TO ORDER

A regular Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse was called to order at 6:02 PM on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, on Zoom platform. Meeting was opened with prayer by the Moderator, Rev. Michael Hill. The Moderator then welcomed commissioners and other participants, giving as well an introduction to the facility.

First-time commissioners were introduced.

Rev. Greg Garis, Lead Presbyter of Susquehanna Valley, was seated as a corresponding member with voice but not vote.

The Moderator offered a Land Acknowledgment and call to justice, humility, and compassion.

Good news from around our presbytery was shared.

WORSHIP

A meaningful worship service was held. Elder/CRE Lynn Jacques officiated the installation of our new Vice Moderator, Rev. Dr. Shavonn Lynch. Thanks were offered for Elder Jacques service.

WORK OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The voting procedures were reviewed.

The Stated Clerk declared a quorum in attendance.

After some initial questions and clarifications about the state of current terms of call (when they will be released, etc), the presbytery **VOTED** to approve the distributed Docket.

The minutes from March 15 2025, May 17, 2025, and the August 14, 2025 special meeting were approved with amendments and corrections.

Human Resources Committee Report

Presenter: Liz Duvall (Member, 1001 Worshiping Committee - Isaiah Table; Human Resources Committee)

The HR Committee has been meeting jointly with the HR group from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley regarding the Assistant to the Executive Presbyter position (Greg's position). Phone interviews for the position have been completed. In-person interviews are being scheduled next, with the goal of selecting a candidate by mid-October. As previously noted, Greg will begin his new role on October 1. Greg has participated in HR Committee meetings throughout the summer; members expressed appreciation for his engagement and look forward to continuing to work with him.

Social Justice Committee Report

Presenter: Rev. Derek Adamczyk (he/him), Pastor of the Collamer United Church and First United Church of East Syracuse on behalf of: Rev. Monica Styron, Chair (currently on vacation)

Rev. Adamczyk expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak and noted how the committee's work aligns with the themes shared earlier in the meeting—doing all the good we can, in faith and public witness. He described the committee's mission in the spirit of Karl Barth's call to, "take your Bible and your newspaper and read both, but interpret the newspaper from your Bible."

The committee is currently addressing four key areas of concern:

1. Palestine

The PC(USA) Stated Clerk has described the ongoing violence in Gaza as genocide, a position the committee affirms. Rev. Adamczyk emphasized the human toll—particularly among children—and cited Matthew 19:14 ("Let the children come to me..."). The committee has adopted the Redwoods Presbytery resolution and will monitor a strengthened version expected to come before the 2026 General Assembly. The committee continues to engage in advocacy, including meeting with Rep. John Mannion and supporting Dr. Osama Khalil's humanitarian fund aiding families in occupied Palestine.

2. Immigration

Rev. Adamczyk reported on the ICE raid in Cato (Cayuga County) on September 9, in which 69 workers were detained without evidence of criminal activity. The committee intends to request \$500 in next year's budget, to be combined with \$500 from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley, supporting the Immigration Advocacy Group in Ithaca. Rev. Bruce Gillette (Susquehanna Valley SJC) recently visited Roger Wang, a detained restaurant owner in Owego, modeling the ministry of visiting those in prison as Christ calls us to do.

3. Anti-Racism Initiatives

The committee hopes to invite Rev. Ashley Tatar-Burt of the Center for Jubilee Practice to speak at the November Presbytery meeting. The Center, co-led by former GA Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase, focuses on restorative action and "brave spaces" for growth and healing. The

committee plans to allocate \$2,000 from its anti-racism task-force budget to support this engagement.

4. Transgender Identity and Faith

The committee recently hosted a webinar featuring a trans teenager and their mother, highlighting the positive support they experienced in their congregation. Although the session was not recorded (to protect privacy), there is interest in sharing similar educational resources—such as Dr. Khalil’ s presentation—with congregations to foster inclusive, life-affirming dialogue.

Finance and Property

Presenter: [Elder Bob Davenport, Finance and Property Chair]

The presenter reviewed highlights from the first-read budget distributed in the meeting materials. This is a preliminary presentation; no vote will be taken until the November Presbytery meeting to allow time for review and suggested revisions.

Key points included:

1. The main change in the proposed budget is the inclusion of half of Greg’s salary (new Presbyter) and half of the anticipated Assistant to the Presbyter salary.
2. The combined budget line for both positions totals just over \$111,000.
3. The per capita rate remains \$40 per member.
4. To balance the budget, the presbytery will use approximately \$163,000 from savings/operating funds.
5. It was noted that achieving a fully balanced budget without using reserves would require a per capita of approximately \$75 per member, which is considered unsustainable for most congregations.
6. The presbytery currently has sufficient funds in the MT operating account to cover the deficit for the coming year, and significant additional reserves and investments available for expenses beyond 2026.
7. Investment and operating income have increased by approximately \$150,000 year-to-date.

The first-read budget was presented for information, with the final budget vote scheduled for the November meeting. The presenter concluded by inviting questions from commissioners.

Treasurer Reports were received.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

Presenter: Rev. Courtney Steininger, Pebble Hill

Rev. Steininger reported that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) met with candidate Brianna [last name omitted in transcript] on August 26. During that meeting, the committee:

Reviewed Brianna's Statement of Faith, ordination exams, and spiritual gifts, Engaged in conversation about her sense of call and ministry direction, and discussed her preaching and readiness for ministry. Following this discussion, the committee unanimously recommends that Brianna be certified "Ready to Receive a Call." Brianna's Statement of Faith and biographical summary were included in the meeting packet. She was present at the meeting to respond to questions.

Questions from the floor:

When asked what kind of call she envisions, Brianna shared that she feels particularly called to digital ministry, where she hopes to devote significant time and energy.

When asked about the connectional nature of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Brianna reflected that its openness and ecumenical spirit foster a sense of belonging and connection among those from many backgrounds.

The presbytery affirmed the committee's report and welcomed Brianna's thoughtful responses.

MOTION: CPM MOVES that Brianna Vaught's status be updated to "certified ready to call."

Action: Approved unanimously.

Prayer was offered for Brianna.

Korea Peacemaking Update

Presenter: Elder Linda Russell, Westminster

Elder Russell reported that the Korea Peace Journey will begin October 19, with a group of approximately 15 participants traveling throughout the Korean Peninsula and Jeju Island. The purpose of the trip is to study the relationship between the United States and South Korea, including historical and contemporary geopolitical dynamics. The group is also developing a draft overture (to be finalized into one overture) for submission to the 2026 General Assembly.

Three areas under consideration for inclusion in the overture are:

1. Lifting the U.S. travel ban that prevents individuals from entering North Korea;
2. Acknowledging and addressing the U.S. role in the April 3, 1948 Jeju Island massacre following World War II; and
3. Opposing the annual joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, which are viewed by many as provocative.

The delegation will meet with representatives of both the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the

Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)—the two main Presbyterian denominations in Korea, representing conservative and progressive perspectives respectively. Elder Russell expressed joy that a member of the PCK planning team is someone who previously participated in the Cayuga-Syracuse / Pyongyang Presbytery exchange, and looks forward to renewing that relationship. The deadline for submitting General Assembly overtures is April 26, 2026, and Elder Russell hopes to bring a proposed overture to the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse in time for concurrence and submission.

Questions were invited during or after the meeting.

Synod of the Northeast Report

Presenter: Elder Linda Russell, Westminster

Elder Russell also serves as Commissioner to the Synod's Mission and Ministries Commission, and as part of the Mission Working Group.

The working group is currently reviewing 15 grant applications for Emerging Gospel Communities, totaling over \$250,000 in requests. The Synod has only \$50,000 available for these grants, making discernment particularly difficult given the number of worthy proposals.

Elder Russell reminded the presbytery that she is currently the sole commissioner from Cayuga-Syracuse to this commission, and encouraged the election of an alternate commissioner to ensure representation if she is unable to attend future meetings. Her term concludes at the end of 2026, at which point she will be term-limited. The presbytery should begin identifying candidates for both commissioner and alternate roles prior to that time

Adjourn with Prayer

At 7:27 PM the presbytery **VOTED** to adjourn with prayer by the Moderator.

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Fitzgerald-Fye', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye, Stated Clerk