
PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE

Elder Commissioner Parity Report

Allocation of Ruling Elder Commissioners to Presbytery Meetings

Purpose of this Report:

This report establishes the formula by which ruling elder commissioners are allocated to each congregation for the purpose of attending and voting at meetings of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse. The formula is designed to achieve approximate parity between the number of eligible voting teaching elders and the total number of ruling elder commissioner slots — as required by G-3.0301 of the Book of Order — while ensuring every congregation has a voice and correcting for known structural imbalances.

Prepared by the Stated Clerk

The Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye

Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse

Based on 2025 Statistical Data • Effective upon adoption by Presbytery

Constitutional Basis

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order, G-3.0301, requires that the membership of a presbytery include both teaching elders (ministers of Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders commissioned from congregations, and that the presbytery take care that both are adequately represented. The standing rules of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse further require that elder commissioners be allocated by formula to achieve approximate numerical parity between teaching and ruling elders in attendance at presbytery meetings.

Parity does not require an exact one-to-one correspondence at every meeting. It requires that sessions have the right to send enough commissioners to achieve approximate balance, and that no congregation be without voice. This report establishes that right.

The Numbers: Teaching Elders and Congregations

The parity formula rests on two foundational figures:

Eligible Voting Teaching Elders: 36

This figure represents teaching elders under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse who are eligible to attend and vote at presbytery meetings. It excludes ministers who have relocated outside the region, those known to be non-participating, and those serving in structurally constrained roles (see below). All teaching elders, including those honorably retired, retain full membership and voting rights in presbytery unless removed by death, discipline, or transfer.

Active Congregations: 33

Thirty-three congregations are included in this parity calculation. Hannibal Community Church is excluded as it is currently in the process of leaving the denomination. All other congregations, including those that did not submit 2025 statistical reports, are included. Every congregation is entitled to send at least one ruling elder commissioner to every meeting of the presbytery.

The Formula: Three-Component Allocation

The allocation formula has three components. Together they produce a total elder commissioner pool that is approximately equal to — and in this case slightly exceeds — the number of eligible voting teaching elders. The small excess (39 vs. 36) is constitutionally acceptable and is entirely accounted for by the structural offset described below.

Component 1: Floor Allocation (1 per Congregation)

Every congregation in the presbytery is guaranteed one ruling elder commissioner slot regardless of size. This is the irreducible expression of the Reformed principle that every community of faith has voice in the councils of the church. No congregation may be rendered voiceless by a formula that favors size alone.

Floor allocation: 33 congregations × 1 slot = 33 slots

Component 2: Proportional Allocation (by Membership)

After the floor is established, the remaining slots needed to reach the TE target of 36 are distributed to the largest congregations by active membership. With a floor of 33 and a target of 36, three additional slots are available. These are awarded to the three congregations with the highest reported active membership:

- **First Presbyterian, Skaneateles** — 212 members — receives 1 additional slot (total: 2)
- **Westminster Presbyterian, Auburn** — 179 members — receives 1 additional slot (total: 2)
- **First Presbyterian, Cazenovia** — 166 members — receives 1 additional slot (total: 2)

Proportional allocation: 3 additional slots, bringing the base total to 36.

Component 3: Structural Offset (Constrained Teaching Elder Voices)

Presbyterian polity assumes that every installed teaching elder functions as a voice for their congregation's perspective in the broader church. However, certain offices within the presbytery structurally constrain a teaching elder's ability to speak and vote: the Stated Clerk does not speak pro or con on matters before the body; the Moderator presides and votes only to break ties; the Vice Moderator functions similarly.

When a congregation's installed teaching elder serves in one of these roles, that congregation effectively loses its ministerial voice at the presbytery table. Equity requires a remedy. Therefore, each congregation whose installed teaching elder currently serves in a structurally constrained role receives one additional elder commissioner slot, ensuring their congregation retains full voice through its ruling elders.

- **Stated Clerk** — Does not speak pro or con on matters before the presbytery and does not vote, except in matters of record.
- **Moderator** — Presides over the assembly and votes only to break ties.
- **Vice Moderator** — Functions in a similarly constrained capacity when presiding.
- **Lead Presbyter / Assistant Lead Presbyter** — These staff positions are currently held by persons who are not teaching elder commissioners. However, should either position in the future be held by a teaching elder who would otherwise be eligible to serve as a commissioner, the offset provision shall apply equally to the congregation of that teaching elder.

Structural offset: 3 additional slots (current cycle), bringing the final elder total to 39.

Note: Structural offset slots are tied to the office, not the individual. If an officer changes, or if a new office qualifies or is vacated, the allocation is adjusted at the next parity review. The presbytery may by action add or remove offices from the constrained list.

Summary of Parity Calculation

Total Congregations (excl. Hannibal)	33
Total Active Members (reported)	2,091
Eligible Voting Teaching Elders	36
Floor Slots (1 per congregation)	33
Proportional Slots (top 3 by membership)	3
Structural Offset Slots	3
Total Elder Commissioner Slots	39
Parity Ratio (Elders : Teaching Elders)	39 : 36

“Thirty-nine ruling elder commissioner slots against thirty-six eligible voting teaching elders represents a 108% ratio — well within constitutional tolerance, and the three-slot excess is precisely accounted for by the democratic remedy of the structural offset.”

Complete Elder Commissioner Allocation by Congregation

The table below shows the full allocation for all 33 congregations. Congregations with structural offsets are shaded. The Total column shows the number of ruling elder commissioners each congregation is entitled to send to each stated meeting of the presbytery.

How to read this table:

Floor = guaranteed base slot (all congregations). Prop. = proportional slot for the three largest congregations. Offset = structural offset for congregations whose installed TE serves in a constrained role. TOTAL = the number of ruling elder commissioners that congregation may send to any stated meeting of the presbytery. ‘Seeking’ indicates a congregation currently without an installed minister.

Congregation	City	Members	Floor	Prop.	Offset	TOTAL
First Presbyterian	Skaneateles	212	1	1	—	2
Westminster Presbyterian	Auburn	179	1	1	—	2
First Presbyterian	Cazenovia	166	1	1	—	2
Pebble Hill Presbyterian	DeWitt	117	1	—	1	2
First Presbyterian	Liverpool	94	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Marcellus	94	1	—	—	1
Robinson Elmwood United	Syracuse	86	1	—	—	1

Congregation	City	Members	Floor	Prop.	Offset	TOTAL
Northminster Presbyterian	North Syracuse	83	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Baldwinsville	82	1	—	—	1
Park Central Presbyterian	Syracuse	80	1	—	—	1
Onondaga Hill Presbyterian	Syracuse	80	1	—	—	1
Korean Presbyterian	Syracuse	72	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Chittenango	69	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Scipio Center	64	1	—	1	2
Columbian Presbyterian	LaFayette	57	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Weedsport	54	1	—	—	1
Morrisville Community	Morrisville	51	1	—	—	1
United Church	Fayetteville	50	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Auburn	49	1	—	1	2
First United	East Syracuse	45	1	—	—	1
Whitelaw Presbyterian	Canastota	34	1	—	—	1
Collamer United	East Syracuse	33	1	—	—	1
Jamesville Community	Jamesville	32	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	Mexico	31	1	—	—	1
Faith United	Oswego	30	1	—	—	1
First United Church	Fulton	27	1	—	—	1
Otisco Presbyterian	Tully	27	1	—	—	1
First Presbyterian	King Ferry	25	1	—	—	1
United Ministry of Aurora	Aurora	22	1	—	—	1
Sennett Federated	Sennett	17	1	—	—	1
Amboy Belle Isle United	Syracuse	16	1	—	—	1
Federated Port Byron	Port Byron	9	1	—	—	1
New Hope Presbyterian	Parish	4	1	—	—	1
TOTALS		2,091	33	3	3	39

Governing Principles and Review

- **Every congregation has voice** — No congregation may be without a floor slot regardless of size, vacancy status, or reporting history. The formula is based on congregational existence, not ministerial presence or statistical compliance.

- **Commissioned Ruling Elders do not affect the teaching elder count** — Congregations served by a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) rather than an installed teaching elder are not disadvantaged in the formula. CREs are counted on the ruling elder side of the parity ledger.
- **Yoked and multi-point parishes** — Each congregation in a yoked or multi-point arrangement is treated as a separate congregation for parity purposes and receives its own floor slot. A minister serving multiple congregations counts as one teaching elder.
- **Ministers not under jurisdiction of this presbytery** — Associate ministers, stated supply ministers, and others whose membership is held in another presbytery do not count toward the Cayuga-Syracuse teaching elder total for parity purposes.
- **Congregations on the Fine Line** — Congregations currently on the Fine Line are included in the allocation unless and until the presbytery takes action to dissolve or dismiss them. Hannibal Community Church is excluded from this cycle as it is in the process of leaving the denomination.
- **Review cycle** — This formula shall be reviewed annually and formally re-adopted whenever the number of eligible voting teaching elders, the number of active congregations, or the list of structurally constrained offices changes materially. The Stated Clerk shall bring any recommended revisions to the next stated meeting following such a change.

This report is submitted to the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse for adoption. Upon adoption, it supersedes any prior parity formula and takes effect immediately for the current and all subsequent stated meetings until revised.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye

Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse

Based on 2025 Statistical Data and Current Fine Line