

THE PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Stated Meeting

January 21, 2026 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

The Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Cayuga–Syracuse was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by the Moderator, who confirmed that a quorum was present.

The Moderator opened the meeting with prayer.

The Moderator welcomed commissioners and guests and reviewed Zoom procedures. Participants were asked to identify themselves and their congregation when speaking so the transcription and minutes would be accurate.

Rev. Mary Anderson was introduced as Assistant to the Lead Presbyter for Transformation and welcomed to her new role.

The following corresponding members were present to assist with overture discussions and were granted voice, but not vote, without objection:

Fred Milligan
Jim Turner
Bruce Gillette (Susquehanna Valley)

Commissioners were invited to share joys from around the presbytery.

WORSHIP

Worship was led by Rev. Courtney Steininger.

Scripture was read from 1 Corinthians 1:10–18, calling the church to unity in Christ and warning against divisions among believers.

In the sermon, Rev. Steininger reflected on church unity and the anxieties many congregations feel about the future of the church. Drawing on the example of Paul and a creative reflection inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Paul" sermon, she invited the presbytery to consider how fear and competition can distort the church's mission. She reminded the body that the church belongs to the resurrected Christ and that the gospel calls Christians to trust God's abundance rather than scarcity. The message emphasized that Christian unity strengthens the church's witness in the world and encourages congregations to act in faith rather than anxiety.

Music and prayer followed, and prayers of the people were offered for those facing illness, loss, and conflict in the world.

WORK OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The voting procedures were reviewed.

Moderator declared a quorum in attendance.

The Moderator reviewed the docket and invited any changes or additions.

Clarifications included that the overture on repudiating Christian nationalism and the overture concerning recognition that Israel has violated international law prohibiting genocide would be considered during the meeting. A document labeled "Consent Agenda" was clarified as informational only.

The Moderator asked if there was any objection to approving the docket as amended.

Hearing none, the docket was approved as amended.

The minutes of the November 19, 2025 Stated Meeting were presented.

***A correction was noted indicating that the Nominating Committee motion recorded in those minutes had been approved.

The Moderator asked if there was any objection to approving the minutes as amended.

Hearing none, the minutes were approved as amended

Report of the Lead Presbyter for Transformation (report attached)

Lead Presbyter Greg Garis offered a report and reflections on the changing landscape of the church.

Quoting Isaiah 43:19, “I am about to do a new thing,” he encouraged the presbytery to consider how the church might adapt faithfully in a time of change. Drawing on the work of church consultant Gil Rendell, he described the current moment as one of disruption and reordering within the religious landscape.

He suggested that congregations consider a “mixed ecology” of ministry, combining traditional congregational life with new forms of ministry beyond church walls. Examples included community-based gatherings, fresh expressions of church, and other ways of meeting people where they are.

Rev. Garis emphasized that periods of institutional uncertainty can also be moments of spiritual opportunity and reminded the presbytery that the church is a people who live within the mystery of God’s ongoing work.

Written materials referenced in the report were shared with the body.

Report of the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk reminded the body that the statistical reporting portal is now open. Churches were encouraged to complete their reports before the February 20 deadline, when the system closes. Clerks were reminded that assistance is available if login credentials have been misplaced or if help entering statistics is needed.

The Clerk noted that while the phrase “Jesus loves statistics” is not often heard, statistical reporting helps the church understand the ministry of its congregations.

Overtures Presented

Two overtures were presented for possible concurrence.

In-Person General Assembly Meetings

The first overture supports holding General Assembly meetings in person whenever possible, emphasizing the importance of in-person fellowship and conversation for Presbyterian governance.

Following discussion, the presbytery voted to concur with the overture.

Prohibiting Non-Disclosure Agreements

The second overture addresses the use of non-disclosure agreements in employment separations within the church, proposing that such agreements be prohibited to promote transparency and accountability.

Following discussion, the presbytery voted to concur with the overture.

The Stated Clerk presented proposed revisions concerning the election process for Moderator and Vice-Moderator. The revisions would be incorporated into the Standing Rules rather than the bylaws and were presented as a first reading only. Feedback was invited before the proposal is brought for action at a future meeting.

Report of Focus and Coordination (report attached)

Lorrie Cooney presented an update on the work of the Focus and Coordination Team. She noted that the team had originally been known as the Vision Committee but had renamed itself to reflect its work of focusing on the needs of the presbyteries and coordinating communication and planning as the presbyteries explore the possibility of merger.

The team has been meeting regularly and has been working both on developing a vision statement and on considering strategies that may guide the work of the presbyteries in the months ahead. The next step will be to share the vision statement with the councils of both Cayuga-Syracuse and Susquehanna Valley Presbyteries in a joint meeting. Following that conversation, the team intends to share the work more broadly with the two presbyteries, inviting feedback, questions, and conversation through smaller group gatherings.

After a period of listening, relationship-building, and information sharing, the team anticipates beginning the detailed work of developing a potential merger proposal for consideration by the presbyteries.

It was also reported that Geneva Presbytery had initially expressed interest in participating in merger conversations and had attended several meetings. At this time, however, Geneva has chosen to explore other options and is no longer participating in the discussions.

The team asked the presbytery to continue to hold this work in prayer as the process moves forward and expressed hope that members of the presbytery will participate in the conversations and opportunities for engagement that will be offered in the coming months.

The vision statement currently being developed reads:

“We follow God’s call to be the hands and feet of Jesus. The presbytery will support this vision through dynamic collaboration with and support for our congregations and their leaders, encouraging them to reflect the Spirit’s gifts of love, grace, and justice in their midst, in their communities, and in the world at large.”

Members of the team include Ruling Elder Steve Eidt and Teaching Elders Lorrie Cooney and Steve Plank. Lead Presbyter for Transformation Greg Garis provides staff leadership. The team is also working in partnership with three members from Susquehanna Valley Presbytery.

Report of Combined Social Justice Committees

The presbytery considered several overtures related to social witness and environmental stewardship.

Green Future Endowment Fund

An overture titled Green Future Endowment Fund was introduced calling on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to establish a denominational endowment dedicated to supporting environmental sustainability initiatives and creation care ministries across the church. **Following discussion, the presbytery approved the overture.**

Regenerative Farming and Creation Care

An overture titled Regenerative Farming and Creation Care was introduced encouraging the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to promote regenerative agricultural practices and sustainable land stewardship as part of the church’s commitment to care for creation. **Following discussion, the presbytery approved the overture.**

Changing Course for a Green Future

An overture titled Changing Course for a Green Future was introduced calling on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to deepen its commitment to environmental stewardship and to strengthen policies encouraging sustainable investment practices and climate-conscious decision making. **Following discussion, the presbytery approved the overture.**

On Taking Action to Repudiate Christian Nationalism and Affirm Our Faith Commitments

The overture titled On Taking Action to Repudiate Christian Nationalism and Affirm Our Faith Commitments, which had been tabled at the previous meeting of the presbytery, was brought back before the body for consideration. The overture calls on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to repudiate Christian nationalism as a distortion of the Christian faith and to reaffirm the church's commitments to the lordship of Christ, democratic principles, and religious freedom.

Following discussion, the presbytery voted to concur with the overture.

On Recognizing that Israel Has Violated the International Law Prohibiting Genocide

An overture titled On Recognizing that Israel Has Violated the International Law Prohibiting Genocide was brought before the presbytery requesting concurrence. The overture asks the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to recognize that Israel's actions in Gaza meet the definition of genocide under international law and to advocate for accountability and protection of human rights. **Following discussion, the presbytery voted to concur with the overture.**

Report of Finance and Property

Finance Chair Bob Davenport presented a report indicating that the presbytery remains in a strong financial position and that investment performance has been positive. Appreciation was expressed to congregations for their faithful payment of per capita.

Financial Reports Received:

Budget Report – 11/30

Statement of Activity – 11/30

Statement of Financial Position – 11/30

Per Capita Report – 12/31

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee presented nominations for General Assembly representation:

-Rev. Eric Adamcik – General Assembly Commissioner

-Rev. Courtney Steininger – Alternate Commissioner

The Moderator called for nominations from the floor.

Hearing none, the Moderator asked if there was any objection to approving the nominations.

Hearing none, the nominations were approved.

Report on the Jeju 4.3 Overture

Elder Linda Russell presented an overture titled On the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy in South Korea and requested that the Presbytery of Cayuga–Syracuse serve as the originating presbytery. The overture asks the 227th General Assembly (2026) to acknowledge and grieve the loss of life during the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy, to encourage investigation of the role of the United States Army Military Government in Korea during that period, and to strengthen partnerships with Presbyterian and ecumenical partners in Korea through shared study, worship, pilgrimage, and reconciliation efforts.

An amendment was proposed to revise language to read: “the Interim Unified Agency or any successor agencies.”

The amendment was approved.

The overture, as amended, was approved.

Other Business

Stated Clerk Contract

A motion was made to extend the Stated Clerk’s contract through the annual meeting. **The motion passed.**

Youth Advisory Delegate

Emma Hill of First Presbyterian Church of Skaneateles was nominated to serve as Youth Advisory Delegate to the General Assembly. **The nomination was seconded and voted approved.**

Future Meeting Dates

March 14 – In-person meeting

Joint meeting – date to be determined

June 13 – Proposed Annual Meeting

September 19 – In-person meeting

November 18 – Zoom meeting

With no other business to come before the presbytery, at 8:30 PM the presbytery **VOTED** to adjourn

with prayer from the moderator.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye, Stated Clerk