

THE PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Stated Meeting

March 15, 2025 at 10:00 AM

First Presbyterian Church of Skaneateles

97 E. Genesee Street, Skaneateles, New York 13152

Minutes.

Attendance

Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Note: MaL= Member-at-Large, VM= Validated Ministry;

Eric Adamcik (P)

Garrett Anderson (P)

Mary Anderson, VM (A)

Lorrie Anson (E)

Brigid Anne Boyle (A)

Karen Chamis (P)

Lorrie Cooney, MaL (A)

Brian Copeland (P)

Adam Demetros (P)

Kirsty Dickson-Maret (E)

Karen Dimon (A)

Beth DuBois, MaL (A)

Ben Fitzgerald-Fye (P)

Karen Green (A)

Kathleen Griffen, MaL (A)

Patrick Heery (A)

Jenna Heery (A)

Michael Hill (P)

Yong Ju Jee (A)

Gyeong Kim, VM (A)

Bob Langston (A)

Shavonn Lynch (A)

Dan McCollister (A)

Sarah McTyre (A)

Shawn Reburn (P)

Harvey Sindima, MaL

Kathleen Waters (A)

Courtney Steininger (P)

Retired Ministers.

Note: Retired ministers are automatically excused unless present.

Harold W. Abram

Susan Alloway

Donald C. Byers

Lawrence V. W. Black

N. Scott Cupp

Jane Elizabeth Dasher

George R. Demass

Roger DeNoyelles
Linda Even
Dennis Doerr
Thomas R. Drake
Robert French
Robert Godbout
Stuart Hayes (P)
Clarice Martin
Roger Martin
Diane Monger
Banu Moore
James Moore
Janet Newman
Thomas Oak
Steve Plank
Gerald Platz
Howard Rose
Harold Sanderson
Jerald Shave
Peter Sheidemantle
Lester Staton
Monica Styron (P)
Deb Thomas
Eugene Turner
Philip Windsor
Eileen Winter
Allen Wollenberg
Ken Wonderland
Susan Faye Wonderland

Corresponding/Temporary Members.

Roosevelt Baums, UMC, Amboy Belle Isle (A)
Barbara Blom, UCC (A)
Gary Ferner, UCC (A)
David Harris, ABC (P)
Andrew Hinman, UCC, Oswego (A)
George Huffsmith, Sennett (A)
David Movsovich, ABC, Port Byron (A)
Paul Rack, Geneva Presbytery, Stated Clerk (P)
Leon Runner, ABC, Fulton (A)
Joseph Tagliaferre, Missouri Union Presbytery (A)
Charles Vollmer, Chittenango (A)

Note: a Corresponding Member is a member of another PCUSA presbytery; a Temporary Member is a member of another denomination serving in a PCUSA church: ABC= American Baptist Church, UCC = United Church of Christ, UMC= United Methodist Church.

Ruling Elders from Local Church Sessions.

Amboy-Belle Isle	Robert Armstrong (P)
Auburn, First	
Auburn, Westminster	Linda Russell (P)
Aurora, United	
Baldwinsville	
Cazenovia	Sharye Skinner (P)
Chittenango	Charles Albee (P)
Collamer	

DeWitt, Pebble Hill	Lynn Jacques (P)
East Syracuse	Rita Hooper (P)
Fayetteville	_____
Fulton	_____
(Hannibal)	_____
Isaiah's Table	_____
Jamesville	_____
King Ferry	Mary Heather (P)
Korean	_____
Lafayette	[Illegible] (P)
Liverpool	Bill Newell (P)
Marcellus	Charles Smith (E)
Mexico	Susan Stillman Smith (P)
Morrisville	_____
New Hope	David W. Sperling (P)
Northminster	Frank McDowell (P)
Onondaga Hill	Ryan Collins (P)
Oswego	_____
Otisco	_____
Port Byron	_____
Scipioville	_____
Skaneateles	Ginny Fennessy (P)
Sennett	_____
Syracuse, Park Central	_____
Syracuse, Robinson Elmwood	_____
Weedsport	Sandra Kreplin
Whitelaw	_____

Ruling Elders Serving in the Presbytery.

Donna Chapman, Commissioned Pastor, Whitelaw (A)
 Robert Davenport, Finance Chair (E)
 Steve Eidl, Congregational Vitality Chair (P)
 Ann Wiley, Treasurer (P)
 Nancy Wind, Commissioned Pastor, Isaiah's Table (E)

Guests/Observers/Staff.

Sarah Buckshot, Staff (P)
 Sam Dance (P)
 Jill Fandrich, Westminster (P)
 Larry Weiss, Skaneateles (P)

Call to Order

A regular Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse was called to order at 10 am on Saturday, March 15, 2025, at the First Presbyterian Church of Skaneateles, New York, 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-commissioners were introduced from King Ferry and Pebble Hill, along with first-time minister-member, Rev. Adam Demetrius, and new Temporary Member, Rev. David Harris.

The presbytery **VOTED** to approve corresponding member, Rev. Luke Choi, guest Elder Jill Fandrich, and Temporary Member, Rev. David Harris.

In the Land Acknowledgement, the Moderator noted that he recently purchased a home, and was even more conscious of the people who lived on this land before the arrival of Europeans, and the tragic and unjust way it came to us. Is it being used for good as given by God? As people who live on land that belonged to others, whom we have treated wrongly, we need to demonstrate gratitude and humility.

Good news reported from the congregations included the Onondaga Hill church welcoming Rev. Karen Chamis as Interim.

The Moderator noted that the Covid '19 pandemic hit five years ago this month. We figured it out.

The voting procedures were reviewed.

The Stated Clerk declared a quorum in attendance.

The presbytery **VOTED** to approve the distributed Docket with some changes in the order of business and the addition of the Installation of a new Stated Clerk.

Financial reports not requiring Docket time are in the Appendix, as is the Minimum Terms of Call Worksheet.

Worship.

The presbytery then gathered for a time of worship. A sermon was preached by Rev. Paul F. Rack, Stated Clerk (Geneva Presbytery), and the presbytery celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Stated Clerk

Rev. Paul Rack reported. The presbytery **VOTED** to approve the Minutes of the January 15, 2025, Stated Meeting, as distributed.

The Stated Clerk then introduced Elder Steve Eidt who brought a motion from the team working on the merger with the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley. The presbytery **VOTED** that the Presbytery of Cayuga Syracuse, pursuant to the synod requirements for merger, establish a three-member team to meet with the three-member team from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley to form a Visioning Committee to begin formal merger discussions. It is understood that these discussions will involve coordination with the various committees of and groups within the presbyteries. The members of the team will be Steve Plank, Lorrie Cooney and Steve Eidt.

Human Resources Committee

Rev. Garrett Anderson reported.

The presbytery **VOTED** to receive the 60 day notice request of Rev. Paul F. Rack to terminate his service as Stated Clerk, as of March 15, 2025.

He brought the name of Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye for election as Stated Clerk of the presbytery. There being no other nominations, the presbytery **VOTED** to elect him to this position and approve the contract below. The presbytery then proceeded to his Installation, using the order in the *Book of Occasional Services*.

Stated Clerk Contract

The employment contract for the Stated Clerk, dated March 15, 2025, is entered into by the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse and Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye. This document constitutes an employment agreement between these parties and is governed by the laws of New York State.

IN CONSIDERATION of this employment contract, the parties agree to the following terms and conditions. The contract shall be official upon a presbytery affirmative vote.

1. Employment

The employee agrees to carry out the responsibilities and duties set out by this contract and the job description. The employee also agrees to comply with all Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse policies and procedures.

2. Position

It is the duty of the Stated Clerk to perform all essential job functions and duties included in the job description. Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse may add other duties within the scope of the employee's position. This position will be from March 15, 2025 through January 31, 2026.

3. Compensation

The employee will be paid \$2,000 per month before applicable taxes for a 15-hour work week. Travel expenses, such as mileage (IRS rate) and office supplies related to performing duties of the Stated Clerk, can be submitted for reimbursement. Wages will be paid on the 30th of each month.

4. Benefits

The employer offers no benefits. There is \$250/year for professional expenses.

5. Termination

This working relationship may be terminated by either party for any reason with 60 days proper written notice or by mutual agreement.

Moderator

Rev. Michael Hill reported that the Administrative Commission to work with the Parish New Hope church now has members and is ready to begin work. The members are Elder Lynn Jacques, Elder Rita Hooper, and Rev. Courtney Steininger.

The Board of Pensions of the PCUSA

Rev. Luke Choi reported.

He provided helpful information about the "Healthy Pastors, Healthy Congregations" program, noting that modified ministry debt relief is available for participants, up to \$5K for personal debt. It is need-based gift and therefore not taxable. Then he spoke about the "Shared Ministry Program," inviting presbyters to find details on Pensions.org. It involves an agreement between partner churches, the Board, and pastors. When two or more PCUSA congregations work together sharing a PCUSA minister the Board may support up to 50% of the pension dues up to \$10K, diminishing over time. It is open to ministers

serving in both Installed or Temporary positions. Churches or ministers who are interested should consult with the Commission on Ministry. The minister(s) must commit to at least 20 hours per week or more, full-time preferred. He also noted that "Tax Resources" are available on the web site. Finally, he reminded the presbytery that the Covenant Package can be offered to any church employee, even at less than 20 hours per week. He is available to do a new member orientation for new ministers, as well as retirement counseling.

Synod Update

Elder Linda Russell reported, referring to her written report.

Report on Synod Mission and Ministries Commission **Elder Linda Russell, Commissioner**

The Synod of the Northeast's Mission and Ministries Commission held a stated meeting on January 31-February 1, 2025, on Zoom. I am assigned to the Mission Working Group. Highlights of the Commission's work follow.

- The Synod is in its third year of discerning a new vision for the Synod. A first read of the New Vision Proposal will be presented to the M&M Commission on September 19, followed by the Phase III Report and Final Vision Proposal on October 15. The **New Vision Proposal** will be presented to the Synod Assembly Meeting on November 15, 2025.
- The Commission voted to increase the **Youth Triennium scholarships to \$150 per individual up to age 25**. Scholarships will also be offered to middle school students to attend the Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center in Harrisonburg, VA.
- The **2025 Early Ministry Institute (EMI)** for newly called pastors within the first five years of ministry is scheduled for May 19-23, 2025, at Silver Bay YMCA Retreat and Conference Center, and offers an enriching experience focused on growth, learning, and fellowship. **Rev. Carol Howard** and **Rev. Dr. James Fenimore**, co-authors of the insightful book *Wounded Pastors*, will guide participants through engagement with the theme **Engaging Conflict**, providing valuable tools and perspectives for addressing and transforming conflict in ministry settings.
- The Mission WG approved four **"Youth and Young Adult Leadership Development"** grants totaling \$28,500. (Details on www.synodne.org)
- The Mission WG approved 12 **Campus Ministry** grants totaling \$30,000. (See www.synodne.org)
- Under the **Synod's new funding structure for 2026, Innovation Grants** will be set at \$10,000 in the first year, with an additional \$15,000 available in the second year, *contingent on demonstrated progress and sustainability*. On March 17, 2025, Synod will launch its first monthly newsletter, *Funding Through Faith*, and will feature the Innovation Grant. These grants will be reviewed at the April M&M Commission meeting.
- Applications for **Emerging Gospel Community Grants** are due August 2025.
- Applications for **Campus Ministry Grants** are due in December.
- Applications for **Youth Leadership Development** are due in December.
- **The Wurfell-Sills Scholarship & Interest-Free Student Loan Program application deadline is April 30, 2025.** Applicants must be a member of any Presbyterian Church (USA) within the Synod of the Northeast. The application is open to full-time undergraduate students, full-time or part-time (at least half-time) students enrolled in seminary studies leading to a Master of Divinity (MDiv) or Master of Religious Education (MRE), and students enrolled in a seminary study program to fulfill Commissioned Pastor/Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) certification

requirements. Students taking non-credit courses and graduate studies (other than MDiv, MRE, or CRE certification) are not eligible to apply. Applications are all done online and include the submission of a personal essay and required supporting documents.

- Connectional Ministries WG approved four **Emergency Migrant Grants** of \$5000 each. Funds for these are all donated outside of the budget. \$15,000 is currently available.
- A Synod-wide **Indigenous Mission Day** with the Jimersontown and Wright Memorial Churches in the vibrant Seneca Nation in Western New York will be held Saturday, June 14, 2025.
- Despite shortfalls in income from Mission and Per Capita, 2024 Financials were more favorable than anticipated due to under-spending. Synod did not have to transfer as much from its unrestricted funds as had been anticipated.
- Cayuga-Syracuse was thanked for paying its 2025 Synod **Per Capita** in full.

Persons with questions about the work and ministry of the Synod are welcome to contact Linda Russell (Westminster-Auburn) at lsruss@aol.com or 315-730-6930. See also Synod website: www.synodne.org.

Finally, she noted that despite shortfalls in per capital and mission receipts, the synod's financial balance was more favorable due to underspending. The synod has also thanked the presbytery for paying its 2025 per capita in full.

Presbyterian Peace Network for Korea

Elder Linda Russell continued to report. There will be a Korea Peace Journey in October, 2025, with a theme of hearing the cries of the Korean people divided and at war for 70 years. Participants will learn about origins of the conflict, how it continues to affect the people, and life in Korea and the diaspora, the barriers to peace maintained by the US and others, and efforts to overcome them. The trip will connect participants to families affected by the war. It is organized in partnership with our Korean sister denominations.

Elder Russell then took a moment of personal privilege and noted that, at the national level, the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency are being merged into an Interim Unified Agency (IUA). This is happening mainly based on financial considerations. The ripple effect is that seventy-nine Mission CoWorkers are being either fired or reassigned. All this will happen by the end of March. The future is unsure for some of the people we have relationships with. The future emphasis will be on the lower levels of our system -- synods, presbyteries, and sessions -- developing ecumenical relationships. Please hold all our mission workers in prayer. Out of change some good things can come.

Triennium

Rev. Courtney Steininger reported. She is the registrar for this presbytery, working on a seven-presbytery delegation for mutual coordination. They need at least to know if churches have people considering attendance so they can plan. There is a new track for college aged students (due to the pandemic). The Triennium is no longer at Purdue University but in (air-conditioned!) hotels in Louisville. This provides an opportunity to think about Triennium in different ways in an urban setting.

Social Justice Committee

Rev. Monica Styron reported. Her committee is developing a working relationship with their counterpart in Susquehanna Valley.

She introduced Ms. Marwah Alabaidi who spoke on the InterFaithWorks Refugee Resettlement program. She is a former refugee from Iraq, arriving in 2008, as a young person. She later graduated from Syracuse University with a computer engineering degree. She has been working with IFW for the last fourteen years. In 2024 they resettled 1015 refugees, a new high. They settled another 430 in an early 2025 "push." Recent Presidential Executive Orders thereafter paused all resettlement activities both overseas and domestically. On January 24 they received information that payments were "paused." The vulnerable population program also "paused." USCIS, which helps refugees get permanent residency and a path to citizenship, was "paused" too. On February 28 the State Department cancelled resettlement programs with ten national agencies. Workers were laid off. Refugees for resettlement have risen over the last five years; but the number is already going down for 2025. Many are caught in transition. We have 1424 Ukrainian refugees in central NY since 2022, who will be subject to deportation.

She shared her experience as a refugee. There is repeated and thorough vetting throughout the process. It takes two-three years of interviews and clearing by several agencies. Refugees are arguably the most vetted people in the world.

They currently need gift cards, financial donations for programs and rental and utility assistance. (New York State is already out of funding for energy assistance.)

Then a family was introduced to the presbytery who spoke through a translator of their own experience in refugee resettlement. They came for a better life, but now they are having a problem with paying rent. Their lives are in danger back in their home country. They have been resettled by IFW, and sought work. Just getting children to school is a hardship. They are negotiating with landlords. IFW's funding was cut off by the new administration and refugees are unsure of what to do. Then IFW got a grant from the Presbyterian Church and were able to help with their rent.

The translator also came from the same place. They are now helping refugees, and are thankful to America for these opportunities.

Another asylum seeker spoke, who has been working with IFW since 2022. He and his family arrived seeking a safe space. He has good professional experience. Now he vets landlords in the Syracuse area and works with them and the newly arrived refugees as they get settled.

Rev. Styron noted that the Cazenovia, Skaneateles, First Auburn, and Pebble Hill churches have helped to provide meals for refugees recently.

She mentioned that the LGBTQ community is also at risk now, and, of course, we need to keep in mind the on-going atrocities in Palestine - Gaza and the West Bank. We hope to send a delegation to meet with Christians in the West Bank, area of Palestine.

The joint Justice committees of both presbyteries are working together on the challenges people are facing especially the marginalized.

Rev. Styron noted that the Cazenovia, Skaneateles, and Auburn Westminster churches have helped to provide meals for refugees recently. She mentioned that the LGBTQ community is also at risk now, and, of course, we need to keep in mind the on-going atrocities in Palestine (Gaza). We hope to send a delegation to meet with Christians in

Palestine. The joint presbyteries also work together on Korea. Commissioners were urged to take this to their church mission committees for support.

From the 226th General Assembly:

Amendments to the Constitution of the PCUSA and the Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries. The presbytery **VOTED** as a consent agenda:

Approval of Amendment B
Approval of Amendment D
Approval of Amendment E
Approval of Amendment F
Approval of Amendment G
Approval of Amendment H
Approval of Amendment I
Approval of Amendment J
Approval of Amendment K
Approval of Amendment L
Approval of Amendment M
Approval of Amendment N
Approval of Amendment M

Separately, the presbytery **VOTED** approval of Amendment A and Amendment C.

The vote was unanimous in all cases.

Commission on Ministry

Rev. Shawn Reyburn reported referencing his distributed written report.

COM Report
Presbytery Meeting
March 15, 2025

Greetings to you all. I pray that the peace of Christ would rest on you all in this season of Lent. Since our last meeting on January 15, the COM has met regularly on the second Tuesday of each month. We try to keep track of the congregations that are in transition and the clergy who are under our care. We are rewriting the dissolution documents that we have been using. Some folks have found that this agreement does not take into account the people who serve in joint witness congregations and other ministries. With that in mind we are asking you all to say thank you and celebrate with the people who have retired in the last couple years; Rev. Linda Even, Rev. Deb Thomas, Rev. Karen Chamis, Rev. Robert Langston, and Rev. Karen Green. Thank you for your service and may your retirement be blessed and quiet. We are looking at the Boundary training that is required and someone who is able and willing to do it. Please stay tuned. Rev. Lorrie Cooney R. is trying to gather terms of call worksheets from everyone. Please send them to her as soon as you can. Along those lines you have received the "terms of call" worksheet and this will help as we continue to move forward together. You will see some changes. We have also

been participating in red flag checks, background checks, and conversations with "new" clergy within the Presbytery. We are excited that the folks in Sennett and Westminster Auburn as they have called pastors. Welcome Rev. David Harris and Rev. Adam Demetros. We also took care of transfers, stated supply/bridge contracts, and retirements papers. A couple congregations are in the process of thinking and talking about shared leadership. We are also keeping an eye on the problem with the land deeds and taxes with South Valley. We hope that we can continue to serve and be helpful as we continue to do ministry together.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Shawn Reburn

He then presented as well the distributed Minimum Terms of Call worksheet form (see Appendix).

The presbytery had discussion of the date of boundary training, manse policy, and the "strong suggestion" for Social Security offset.

The presbytery **VOTED** to approve the form and content of the Minimum Terms of Call for 2025, with the following amendment regarding the Social Security offset: "If a church chooses to provide another option as negotiated with the pastor it must be reported to the COM."

He also noted that the presbytery Dissolution Agreement is being revised by the Commission.

Finally, he turned to the recognition of several retiring ministers. We have missed some opportunities to say farewell to folks in the past, but now we celebrate the ministries of: Karen Chamis, Linda Even, Karen Green, Robert Langston, and Deb Thomas

The Moderator prayed.

Adjourn with Prayer.

At 2:17 pm the presbytery **VOTED** to adjourn with prayer by the Moderator.

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Appendix.