



PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK CITY

Restructuring & Re-Envisioning Proposal

A Summary of the Report & Recommendations of the Restructuring Team

Formerly titled “*Restructuring Proposal Summary*” · to be renamed the Re-Envisioning / Re-Imagining Proposal

Why We Prepared This Summary

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This summary provides an overview of the full report and recommendations prepared by the Restructuring Team.

It is intended as an accessible entry point — the complete report carries the full detail behind each recommendation.

What it is

A high-level overview of the Team's findings and proposals.

What it covers

Background, vision, process, current state, and recommendations.

Where it leads

A renewed, more flexible presbytery for our current context.

A Changing Landscape

The Presbytery of New York City — along with the PCUSA and other mainline denominations — has faced changes in recent years that affect our ability to live out our mission fully and faithfully:



Declining membership

A steady decline in church membership over the past two decades.



Leadership gaps

Increasing numbers of churches without — or unable to afford — pastoral leadership.



Lower attendance

Reduced church attendance, exacerbated by the pandemic.



Aging buildings

Growing numbers of church buildings in disrepair, with diminishing resources to maintain them.

■ BACKGROUND

What the 2023 Study Revealed

Beyond these realities, a study by outside consultants in 2023 surfaced deeper, underlying concerns:



Latent systemic racism

Underlying systemic patterns identified within the life of the presbytery.



Limited transparency

A perceived lack of transparency and communication across the body.

RECOGNIZING THESE CONCERNS

The Decision to Restructure

At a 2024 presbytery meeting, the Transitional Presbyter proposed — and the presbytery approved — establishing a **Restructuring Team**.

Its charge: to review the presbytery's mission, vision, and ways of working — improving how we work together in our current context, to better reflect our shared values to the glory of God in New York City.

WHO DID THIS WORK

The Restructuring Team

Eleven staff and members were appointed — representing all five boroughs of New York City and a diverse group of teaching and ruling elders serving across a wide range of ministries.

Elder Dr. Warren McNeil	Elder Yzette Swavy-Lipton	The Rev. Dr. Liz Theo-Harris
Ms. Aurelis Figueroa	The Rev. Dr. Jeff Courter	Elder Diana Bartelt
The Rev. Dr. Eric A. Thomas	The Rev. Dr. Rosemary Schaeffer	The Rev. Jose Gonzelez-Colon
The Rev. Alice Kim	The Rev. Chris Romine	5 boroughs represented

OUR VISION

*We are proclaiming and living out
Christ's love.*

The Team's objective was to reimagine, renew, re-envision, and restructure the presbytery's approach to its work to fit its current context. We commend this vision to the presbytery as a whole — to guide our work together going forward.

A Prayerful, Deliberate Process

18–20

months of monthly meetings

WE ALSO SOUGHT INPUT FROM

- Sister presbyteries
- The Synod of the Northeast
- The General Assembly

...on similar restructuring and re-envisioning efforts within our denomination, for comparison.

Inviting the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we prayerfully reviewed:



Current membership numbers



Health & vitality of congregations



Shared values & priorities



Committee & commission structures



Communication & transparency



Financial resources & needs

The Current State

After significant staff reductions in the 2010s, a large governance structure now rests on a very small team.

4

Commissions

9

Committees

13

Bodies in total

4

Staff supporting all 13

Strained capacity

Standing Rule changes have reduced the required size of these bodies — yet many still struggle to reach the quorum needed to do their business.

No dedicated support

There is no communications team or staff person — communication is handled by staff whose primary work is supporting the committees, commissions, and general operations. There are no administrative staff to assist.

Recommendations • Structure & Rules

01

Develop new vision & mission statements

Articulate fresh statements that name who we are and where we are going.

02

Revise the Standing Rules

Reflect today's realities and allow enough flexibility to do the work effectively and efficiently.

03

Institute a policy review cycle

Update and rewrite presbytery policies, then review them every two years for ongoing revision.

04

Reduce committees & commissions

Match bodies to the work that's needed — supporting congregational vitality — and combine those that overlap.

Recommendations • People & Culture

05

Right-size each body

Decrease the required number serving on each body to reflect current — and future — membership.

06

Strengthen congregations

Provide ongoing education, orientation, and training so all members understand and live out Presbyterian polity, theology, and practice.

07

Address historical factors

Name the history that has contributed to declining membership and leadership shortages, and to unhealthy ways of working together.

08

Rename bodies as “teams”

Where the Book of Order allows, shift to “teams” for greater flexibility and a healthier working ethos.

We Further Recommend

Alongside the structural changes, the Team recommends that the presbytery also consider:



Redesign the website

A renewed digital home for the presbytery and its congregations.



Move to a fully virtual office

A leaner, more flexible operating model for staff and bodies.



Recruit new leadership

Intentional effort to raise up the leaders our future work requires.



Support youth & young adults

Invest in the next generation to ensure leadership for the future.



OUR HOPE & RATIONALE

Toward a healthy, faithful, well-functioning presbytery.

It is the Team's fervent hope and prayer that adopting these recommendations will help the presbytery thrive and operate more effectively — with the financial stability to support programs, administration, evangelism, and membership growth.

At the center of this work is God in Jesus Christ our Savior, whose presence and guidance are assured through the Holy Spirit. Our response to God's grace and love is to look deep within and re-imagine, re-envision, re-focus, redesign, and restructure our presbytery.

THE RESULT WE BELIEVE IN

- Greater faithfulness
- Spiritual & financial stability
- Growth in membership
- Security & stewardship
- Deeper connection in communities