Re-Envisioning/Re-Imagining Proposal Summary
And Supporting Documents for
The Presbytery of New York City
For Presentation to
The General Cabinet for the
October 2026 Meeting
And For
For Recommendation to the
Presbytery of New York City
December 2026

This summary is intended to provide an overview of the full report and recommendations provided by the Restructuring Team. The Rev. Thia Reggio prepared this summary to accompany the longer Proposal for Re-Envisioning/Re-Imagining, which accompanies this summary.

Background

The Presbytery of New York City (along with the PCUSA and other mainline denominations) has experienced many changes in recent years that affect our ability to live out our mission fully and faithfully. These changes include:

- A steady decline in church membership over the past two decades
- Increasing numbers of churches without pastoral leadership or the ability to afford pastoral leadership
- Reduction in church attendance, exacerbated by the pandemic
- Growing numbers of church buildings in disrepair, with diminishing church resources to maintain them

In addition to these realities, a study conducted by outside consultants in 2023 found underlying issues of latent systemic racism as well as a perceived lack of transparency and communication within the presbytery.

Recognizing these concerns and their effect on our ability to function as a body, at a presbytery meeting in 2024, the Transitional Presbyter proposed, and the presbytery approved, establishing a Restructuring Team. The purpose of the team was to review the presbytery's mission, vision, and ways of working with an eye toward improving how we work together considering our current context to better reflect our shared values to the glory of God in New York City.

Team

The following staff and members of the presbytery were appointed to undertake the restructuring work:

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

This team represents the five boroughs of New York City and encompasses a diverse group of teaching and ruling elders, serving in a range of ministries across the city.

We are blessed and fortunate to have a Consultant and a PowerPoint Designer, whose gifts and skills have enhanced the work in which we are engaged. The Rev. Dr. Derrick McQueen has shared analysis, thoughts, advice, and recommendations. In addition, Elder Zayn Silva prepared a PowerPoint Presentation and continues to advise and consult. Thanks to both of you. Elder Nathaniel Christian, our current Moderator of the Presbytery and The Rev. Thia Reggio, Moderator-Elect, have taken sincere and ongoing interest in this work and have lent their voices to the work to re-envision/reimagine/restructure the Presbytery of New York City.
Thank you to all who have shared any feedback, thoughts, ideas, and historical information.

Vision

The team's stated objective was to reimagine, renew, re-envision, and restructure the presbytery's approach to its work to fit its current context. To guide our work, we articulated a vision of who we are as a presbytery:

We are proclaiming and living out Christ's love.

We commend this vision to the presbytery to guide our work together going forward.

Process

Over the course of an eighteen to twenty-month (18-20 months) period, the Restructuring Team met monthly. We prayerfully reviewed and considered the following, inviting the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern the implications of the many factors influencing our presbytery today, including:

- Current membership numbers
- Health and vitality of congregations
- Shared values and priorities of Presbytery
- Current committee and commission structures
- Communication and transparency issues
- Financial resources and needs

We also sought input from sister presbyteries, the Synod of the Northeast, and General Assembly on similar restructuring and reenvisioning efforts within our denomination to use for comparison.

Current state

The Presbytery of New York City currently has 4 commissions and 9 committees. After a significant reduction in staff in the 2010's, the 13 commissions and committees are staffed by the four remaining staff. The required size of these bodies has been somewhat reduced through changes in the Standing Rules, however, many still struggle to meet the quorum necessary to do their business.

There is no dedicated communications team or staff person. Rather communication is managed by staff whose primary responsibilities are supporting the work of the committees and commissions as well as general operations of the presbytery. There are no administrative staff members to assist the staff in its work.

Recommendations

The Restructuring Team recommends the Presbytery of New York City:

1. ***Develop new vision and mission statements.***
2. ***Revise the Standing Rules to reflect the new realities facing our presbytery, and to provide sufficient flexibility to accomplish the work of presbytery effectively and efficiently.***
3. ***Institute a process for updating and rewriting policies of the Presbytery of New York City and reviewing them every two years for ongoing revisions as needed.***
4. ***Reducing the number of committees and commissions to reflect the type of work that needs to be done (i.e. supporting congregational vitality) and combining those with overlapping responsibilities to improve their ability to do their work***
5. ***Decrease the required numbers of those who serve on each body to more accurately reflect current (and future) membership in the presbytery.***
6. ***Focus intentional effort on strengthening congregations by providing ongoing education, orientation, and training so that all members of PBYNYC understand and live out Presbyterian polity, theology, principles, and presbytery practices.***
7. ***Address historical factors of the Presbytery of New York City that have contributed to declining church membership and a shortage of leaders for committees and commissions that have impacted our ability to work together in healthy ways.***
8. ***Where possible given the requirements in the Book of Order, rename commissions and committees as "teams" to provide***

greater flexibility in their way of working and to promote a healthy working ethos.

We further recommend that the presbytery consider redesigning our website, moving to a fully virtual office, and focusing efforts on recruiting new leadership and supporting youth and young adults to ensure leadership for the future.

Rationale

It is the Restructuring Team's fervent hope and prayer that adopting these recommendations will help the Presbytery of New York City thrive and operate more effectively. A key part of that goal is becoming a healthy, well-functioning presbytery with strong financial stability to support church programs, administration, evangelism, and membership growth.

At the center of this work and direction is God in Jesus Christ our Savior, whose presence and guidance are assured through the Holy Spirit. Our responses to God's grace and love are to look deep within our hearts and souls to re-imagine, re-envision, re-focus, redesign, and restructure our Presbytery. We believe the result will be greater faithfulness, operating in in a way that promotes spiritual/financial stability, growth in membership, security, stewardship, and greater connection in communities. Please see below:

<u>"REFORM, REVISE, RENEW"</u>

A New Direction for the Presbytery of
Of the Presbytery of New York City
A Draft Proposal For
Presentation and Review
To the Presbytery of New York City

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This draft proposal is for the Presbytery of New York City (PBYNYC) as we continue in transition, prepare for calling an installed executive presbyter, and to live well/thrive into the future. The Task Force on Reform, Revision, and Renewal will present this document at the General Cabinet on August 18, 2026. Drawing on meetings, conversations, shared history, presbytery minutes, and other materials, the Task Force submits the following report. This executive summary shares in brief the details that are followed in the full report.

The Re-Envisioning/Re-Imagining Task Force invites your written comments as we continue to prepare the best document for approval by the Presbytery. Upon Presbytery approval, we will move forward with the needed redesign. Your written feedback is essential.

Originally named the **"Task Force on Restructuring"** or **"Restructuring Task Force,"** this Team organized following a recommendation from the Transitional Presbyter and approval by the Presbytery of New York City. This Team is representative of the make-up of the Presbytery. It is diverse, consists of a range of leaders and members in age, gender, racial diversity, sexual orientation, and seeks to continue to support the peace, unity, and purity of the PCUSA. The Task Force has met, conversed, planned, prayed, and studied the work of the PBYNYC. The Task Force is a team of committed presbytery leaders who serve with commitment and love for the entire Presbytery.

Because the Task Force needed to adjust its plans and conduct deeper study, it was necessary to revise the original proposal as the work continued. This proposal outlines a new goal and direction for the Presbytery of New York City. The goal is to help the Presbytery of New York City thrive and operate

more effectively. One key element of the goal is unity in spirit, vision, mission, and servant leadership. A key part of that goal is becoming a healthy, well-functioning presbytery with strong financial stability to support church programs, administration, evangelism, and membership growth.

At the center of this work and direction is God in Jesus Christ our Savior, whose presence and guidance are assured through the Holy Spirit. Our responses to God's grace and love are to look deep within our hearts and souls to re-imagine, re-envision, re-focus, redesign, and restructure our Presbytery. We believe the result will be greater faithfulness, operating in a way that promotes spiritual/financial stability, unity in spirit and work, growth in membership, security, stewardship, and greater connection in communities.

For at least 15-20 years, the Presbytery of New York City has experienced consistent decline in membership, leadership capacity, and congregational strength. While these trends have specific causes, the Presbytery must respond intentionally and work to reverse them. One clear consequence is a smaller pool of people available to serve on committees and commissions. As this proposal explains, these challenges reflect broader patterns across mainline denominations, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Considering these realities, the Presbytery of New York City must reimagine, renew, re-envision, and restructure its work to fit its current context. Transformation, change, and renewal are essential values. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Task Force recommends that the Presbytery of New York City ***reform and revise to renew***.

What priorities will empower and enable the Presbytery of New York City to move forward and be faithful to God's call and charge? How shall our Presbytery answer the call to redesign and reorganize its life and witness?

Our work in totality must include the following priorities, upon which our Presbytery will focus as we continue in the transition period:

****Understanding the history of the Presbytery of New York City and the factors that have contributed to declining church membership**

and a shortage of leaders for committees and commissions (will be referred to as "teams")

****New vision and mission statements; new vision and mission**

****Renaming committees and commissions to be called "teams," consistent with Number 1**

****Rewriting the Standing Rules**

****Unity in spirit and practice**

****Better communication between commissions, committees, and task forces**

****Updating and rewriting policies of the Presbytery of New York City and updating them every two years**

****Review of the Standing Rules so that the changes are recorded and become policies upon approval by the Presbytery of New York City**

****Restructuring committees and commissions into Teams to strengthen unity, communication, and shared purpose**

****Adjusting the number of Teams to a smaller number to reflect the Presbytery's current size and composition; as such, to decrease the number of those who serve on the teams**

****Combining groups with overlapping responsibilities to improve efficiency and effectiveness**

****Focusing intentional effort on strengthening congregations by providing ongoing education, orientation, and training so that all members of PBYNYC understand and live out Presbyterian polity, theology, principles, and presbytery practices.**

****Continuing our commitment as a Presbytery to Matthew 25.**

As the ministry of the Task Force and our Presbytery continues, the importance of a new vision and mission statement are essential parts of the new direction and focus. The new vision that the Task Force is recommending is below, consistent with Number 2 above.

Please see below:

Recommended New Vision Statement
for the PBYNYC

"We are proclaiming and living out Christ's Love"

The members of the Task Force are below:

Members of The Task Force for Reform, Revise, Renew
(Re-Envisioning/Re-Imagining Task Force)

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. Dr. Alice Kim
The Rev. Chris Romine

We give thanks for the faithfulness witness, commitment, and time this Team continues to give for the work of our Presbytery. **THANK YOU ALL!!**

This Executive Summary is an overview. The following pages lay out the details of redesigning, re-imagining, and re-envisioning our Presbytery.

Proposal for a Church Sustainability and Vitality Assessment Initiative

Prepared for the Presbytery of New York City

Executive Summary

The Presbytery of New York City is uniquely positioned to support congregations navigating significant demographic, financial, leadership, and community changes. While individual churches often possess a general understanding of their strengths and challenges, there is currently no standardized framework for assessing congregational sustainability and long-term viability across the Presbytery.

This proposal outlines the development and implementation of a Church Sustainability and Vitality Assessment designed to provide pastors, sessions, other church leaders, and the Presbytery of NYC (PNYC) with actionable insights regarding financial health, membership trends, leadership capacity, ministry engagement, operational effectiveness, synod and General Assembly communication, and community impact.

The assessment will generate both church-specific recommendations and aggregate Presbytery-wide findings that can inform strategic planning, resource allocation, leadership development, revitalization efforts, and future ministry investments.

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to:

- Establish a consistent framework for evaluating congregational health and vitality.
- Identify churches that are thriving and those requiring additional support.
- Provide data-driven recommendations for sustainability and growth.
- Support strategic decision-making by Presbytery leadership.
- Create a baseline against which future progress can be measured.

Project Objectives

The assessment will:

1. Evaluate the financial sustainability of participating congregations.
2. Measure membership and attendance trends.
3. Assess leadership capacity and governance structures.

4. Examine ministry engagement and volunteer participation.
5. Evaluate facility utilization and operational effectiveness.
6. Measure community engagement and outreach impact.
7. Develop an overall Church Vitality Index to assist in comparative analysis and strategic planning.

Assessment Framework

Financial Health (35%)

Key indicators include:

- Annual operating revenue
- Giving trends (including per capita payments)
- Budget performance (keeping balanced budget; endowments, investments, participation with the Presbyterian Foundation)
- Cash reserves
- Debt obligations
- Revenue diversification
- Financial controls and reporting practices

Membership and Attendance (20%)

Key indicators include:

- Weekly worship attendance (in-person, online, telephone)
- Membership trends (confirmation classes, children/youth ministry)
- New member acquisition
- Retention rates
- Youth and family engagement
- Visitor-to-member conversion trends

Leadership and Governance (15%)

Key indicators include:

- Leadership structure
- Session and committee effectiveness planning
- Strategic planning
- Transparency and accountability practices

Ministry Engagement (10%)

Key indicators include:

- Volunteer participation
- Small group involvement
- Ministry activity levels
- Leadership development efforts

Facility and Operations (10%)

Key indicators include:

- Building condition
- Deferred maintenance needs
- Facility utilization
- Technology infrastructure
- Risk management practices

Community Impact (10%)

Key indicators include:

- Community partnerships
- Outreach initiatives and Evangelism
- Individuals served through ministry
- Congregational reputation and visibility
- Community engagement growth

Assessment Methodology

The project will utilize a mixed-methods approach consisting of:

Phase I: Survey Administration

A standardized assessment instrument will be distributed to participating congregations.

Phase II: Document Review

Where available, the following materials may be reviewed:

- Financial statements
- Budgets

- Annual reports
- Strategic plans
- Session reports

Phase III: Leadership Interviews

Structured interviews may be conducted with pastors, session members, and key ministry leaders to provide context for quantitative findings.

Phase IV: Analysis and Reporting

Data will be analyzed and scored using a weighted Church Vitality Index.

Each participating congregation will receive:

- Individual assessment report
- Strength's analysis
- Risk indicators
- Strategic recommendations

The Presbytery will receive:

- Aggregate findings report
- Congregational health trends
- Common challenges and opportunities
- Strategic recommendations for Presbytery-wide support initiatives

Deliverables

The final project deliverables will include:

1. Assessment instrument and scoring methodology
2. Individual church assessment reports
3. Church Vitality Index scoring system
4. Presbytery-wide findings report
5. Strategic recommendations presentation
6. Executive summary for Presbytery leadership

Benefits to the Presbytery

This initiative will provide:

- Objective and measurable indicators of congregational health
- Early identification of churches facing sustainability challenges

- Data-informed resource allocation
- Enhanced planning for leadership development and revitalization efforts
- Stronger accountability and stewardship of Presbytery resources
- A repeatable assessment model for future use
- Congregational health
- Active Session
- Pastoral presence; presence in the presbytery

Consultant Qualifications

Unique Positioning for Successful Implementation

A critical factor in the success of this initiative will be the ability to gather accurate information, facilitate candid conversations, and build confidence among participating congregations. Our current property consultant, The Reverend Georgiette Morgan-Thomas and her team are uniquely positioned to carry out this work because of the trusted relationships already established with church leaders throughout the Presbytery. Through years of engagement with congregations around property stewardship, facility planning, and organizational challenges, Reverend Morgan-Thomas has developed both a deep understanding of the diverse realities facing New York City churches and the credibility necessary to encourage meaningful participation. Rather than approaching congregations as an outside evaluator, Reverend Morgan-Thomas enters this work as a known and trusted partner, increasing the likelihood of honest assessment, stronger participation rates, and actionable outcomes that churches and Presbytery leadership can embrace with confidence.

She is a community-based leader with extensive experience in nonprofit management, organizational assessment, strategic planning, program evaluation, and stakeholder engagement, and brings a practical and mission-centered approach to organizational sustainability.

Her team's experience includes evaluating organizational performance, designing data-informed improvement strategies, managing complex community initiatives, and facilitating collaborative planning processes that strengthen institutions and improve outcomes.

Proposed Timeline

Phase I – Project Design and Finalization: 30 days

Phase II – Data Collection: 60–90 days

Phase III – Analysis and Reporting: 30 days

Phase IV – Presentation of Findings: 15 days

Total Project Duration: Approximately 4–6 months

Conclusion

The Church Sustainability and Vitality Assessment Initiative offers the Presbytery of New York City an opportunity to better understand the current realities facing its congregations while creating a practical roadmap for future ministry, stewardship, and growth.

By combining quantitative metrics with qualitative insights, the initiative will provide a comprehensive picture of congregational health and help ensure that churches are equipped to thrive in service to their communities for years to come.

DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR RESTRUCTURING THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK CITY FOR REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION "REFORM, REVISE, RENEW"

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Presbytery of New York City continues to seek faithful and effective ministry while struggling to fill the full number of members needed to serve on its committees and commissions. Although the Presbytery has worked diligently to staff these bodies, as noted in the Executive Summary, PBYNYC has experienced a 15- to 20-year decline in the number of congregations, pastors, church members, and presbytery members. As a result, the pool of available leaders for committee service has also declined.

The Committee on Nominations, the Transitional Presbyter, the Stated Clerk, and other members of PBYNYC have worked consistently to fill every

committee and commission to its maximum size. The Committee on Nominations continues to seek new and younger leaders and to reach out to congregations, pastors, and other potential volunteers. Even when new leaders are identified and elected, however, the Presbytery often must rely on the same individuals to rotate from one committee to another because of the limited leadership pool. In some cases, members complete two terms, rotate off, and are then re-elected to the same committee a year later. This process continues year after year, resulting in committee and commission members who rotate and continue to serve for more than 20 years on one committee or commission. This pattern can hinder needed change and keep the Presbytery operating in familiar but less effective ways.

For several years, the Presbytery has been unable to fill the maximum number of committee and commission positions required by the Standing Rules. Given the Presbytery of New York City's current size and composition, that goal is no longer realistic. As a result, PBYNYC continues to carry vacancies across multiple bodies.

Therefore, this proposal seeks approval to reform, revise, renew, re-envision, reaffirm, redesign, and restructure the Presbytery of New York City. The goal is not only to create a clearer vision and stronger strategy, but also to deepen the Presbytery's faithfulness to God in Christ Jesus. PBYNYC must respond to the reality of fewer churches, fewer presbytery members available to serve, and a smaller pool of leaders for committees and commissions. Restructuring will reduce the number of positions that must be filled, making it more realistic to staff the Presbytery's work and allowing it to operate more efficiently and effectively.

To support the transition to an innovative design, the restructuring process will develop a proposal for Presbytery approval, including any needed interim measures. That proposal will identify which committees and commissions must remain active for the Presbytery to function effectively, explain how the work of other groups will continue under a new structure, propose updated mission, and vision statements, and account for the requirements of Presbyterian polity and New York not-for-profit religious corporation law.

Underlying all of this is the critical need for fewer committees, commissions, or teams, and fewer members on each.

The Re-envisioning Team will conduct this work in communication with all committees and commissions, including the Committee on Standing Rules, and the Committee on Nominations. In collaboration with the Committee on Nominations, the Team will also help identify and research new leaders for PBYNYC who could begin serving on January 1, 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter. **Flexibility in start dates will support a smoother transition.**

Some of PBYNYC's major needs include the following:

Virtual Office: PBYNYC is actively considering plans and recommendations for a virtual office, and research on this transition is ongoing. This critical area of ministry has been under active discussion for the past two years following an earlier proposal.

New Vision and Mission Statements: Developing revised vision and mission statements is a key part of the Re-envisioning and Re-imagining Task Force's work. **The proposed vision statement appears in this document.** The mission statement is being developed and is expected to be presented at the October Presbytery meeting.

New Website for PBYNYC: The current PBYNYC website is outdated and needs substantial improvement. The Re-envisioning and Re-imagining Task Force has discussed this need in its meetings and recognizes the importance of moving forward with a new website.

New Leadership and Focus on Youth and Young Adults: The Task Force continues to emphasize the importance of recruiting and electing new leaders for committees and commissions. This priority also includes strengthening ministries with youth and young adults, including the YAV Program, youth ministry, and young adult leadership.

Systemic, Effective methods for repairing and renovating church properties for worship, community use, and programs: The Commission on Corporate Finance and Responsibility (Trustees) hosted a retreat recently

and two of the members produced a document that is included in this document with permission. It is well done and provides excellent direction for moving forward as the PBYNYC cares for church properties.

PURPOSE

At the heart of the work proposed by the Re-envisioning/Re-imagining Team is ***change/transformation***. Seasons of transition create opportunities for change, transformation, and renewed focus that can shape a new future for organizations, congregations, and presbyteries. This revised draft proposal for the Presbytery of New York City expands on what is essential as PBYNYC moves forward. At the heart of this work is also the ***health of the Presbytery of New York City***.

The need for re-envisioning and restructuring is urgent at this point in the life of PBYNYC. In its current form, the Presbytery is not operating in ways that consistently support effective ministry. Committees do not always communicate well with each other, some work is duplicated, and many policies are more than ten years old. As a result, policies are not always followed, and some committees and commissions make inconsistent decisions. A clear understanding of the roles of staff, committee and commission members, and chairs is essential for effective functioning. It is also important for the Presbytery to understand the role of the Commission on Corporate and Financial Responsibility (Trustees) under New York law governing religious and nonprofit boards, and for the Trustees themselves to have a clear understanding of their role within PBYNYC.

The Re-envisioning/Re-imagining Task Force believes that 2027 should be a year of renewal and operational improvement for PBYNYC. Priorities include updating policies, refining vision, and mission statements, reducing the number of people required to staff committees and commissions, and streamlining operations to strengthen ministry and service. Many Presbytery policies are at least ten years old. Although some have been updated and others are in progress, significant work remains. By restructuring and updating these policies, PBYNYC can begin 2027 in a much stronger operational position.

Another central purpose of re-envisioning, reimagining, and restructuring is to support the healthy spiritual and numerical growth of congregations and strengthen their presence in the communities they serve. As noted earlier, PBYNYC includes eighty-nine congregations across the five boroughs. Forty-three do not have installed pastors, some currently have no pastoral leadership, and others have declined in membership to the point that routine ministry, pastoral compensation, Board of Pensions benefits, and stable operations have become difficult to sustain. In addition, several of the congregations cannot sustain or maintain the church property. As a result, PBYNYC has some congregations who currently worship by telephone only.

The Congregational Vitality Team (formerly RGJ07), together with the Congregational Vitality Fund, can help provide pastoral leadership support, operational assistance, and training in areas such as healthy congregations, congregational conflict, fiscal responsibility, and connections with partners such as the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (PILP), the Presbyterian Foundation, and others.

One practice that has been used across the denomination is merger. A merger brings together two, and sometimes three, congregations into one newly named and often newly located congregation. When approached strategically and carefully, merger can lead to a stronger and healthier congregation.

The merger process takes time and begins with conversation and planning. It involves sessions, pastors, the Commission on Ministry, the Committee on Nominations, the General Cabinet, Trustees, and the full Presbytery.

Another option is the Shared Ministry Program administered through the Board of Pensions. This program can provide a grant of up to $10,000 to support one pastor serving two or even three congregations, when that arrangement is manageable. More information is available through the Board of Pensions and can be shared by the Transitional Presbyter, the regional Board of Pensions consultant, or another Board representative. Plans are underway for a second presentation to PBYNYC later this year. Pastors and church leaders continue to express interest in this option.

This initiative also includes an all-presbytery book study on change, church growth, and evangelism. Such a study could benefit the Presbytery of New York City as it moves forward with the re-envisioning process by giving members an opportunity to gain experience together as one body and strengthen communication across Presbytery. The Transitional Presbyter will highlight suggested books in the Presbytery of New York City's biweekly newsletter for reading and review.

Goal: A Thriving Presbytery

Please review the following material developed by mid-council leaders during the 2025 Mid-Council Leaders Gathering. It reflects a vision of what is needed to encourage a healthy, well-functioning presbytery in the Presbytery of New York City. That focus is essential for presbytery growth, spiritual vitality, healthy functioning, and long-term flourishing.

The outline below shares the work of a group that met in Louisville, KY, in November 2025. It shares the heart of mid-council (presbytery) life and witness, and shares what presbyteries like ours work toward. It is being used here with permission.

(USED WITH PERMISSION)

What Thriving Mid-Councils Look Like

(synthesized from group work done by mid council leaders during Mid Council Leader Gathering in November 2025 in Louisville, KY).

A thriving mid council is one who has adopted a missional focus built on relationships, trust, adaptability, and serving congregations and new expressions of Christ's church and its leaders more than maintaining institutional structures. A thriving mid council is marked by the following characteristics:

Clear Vision & Purpose

- Shared sense of God's mission that excites the presbytery
- Future-oriented focus on God's work, not just institutional maintenance
- Contextually appropriate ministry
- Moving beyond metrics of membership/attendance to measuring community engagement

Relational Foundation

- Strong trust and connections between presbyters, congregations, and leaders
- Regular communication outside formal meetings
- Broad participation from both teaching and ruling elders
- Safe spaces for diverse voices

Adaptive Leadership

- Curious, nimble, and flexible approach
- Healthy boundaries that enable (not restrict) collaboration
- Competent, spirit-filled leadership
- Willingness to try new things and accept failure

Supportive Role

- Resource provider and advocate (not just judge/gatekeeper)
- Equips congregations and other expressions of church for mission
- Develops and trains spiritual leaders
- Connects churches and shares resources

What Mid-Councils *Need* to Thrive (some of this is what they need from PL&W)

Resources

- Adequate funding ("enough" without scarcity mentality)
- Centralized resource sharing to avoid reinventing policies
- Better databases and communication portals
- Ongoing training for presbytery leaders and clerks

Structural Changes

- Lighter institutional load
- New models beyond traditional structures

- Better coordination across GA agencies
- Advance notice before major announcements

Cultural Shifts

- Move from competition to collaboration
- Trust over distrust
- Transparency and accountability
- Listening to congregations ("bottom-up") rather than top-down directives
- Celebrating Presbyterian identity rather than fighting it

Key Assumptions to Challenge:

- That thriving requires returning to old models
- That more resources automatically equals thriving
- That presbytery staff alone is the presbytery
- That higher councils exist to "fix" things
- Top-down, colonial decision-making structures
- Focus on institutional survival over mission

Overall Message: The overall message emphasizes moving from survival mode to thriving, missional focus built on relationships, trust, unity, adaptability, and serving congregations rather than maintaining institutional structures.

*****The next several pages will share the highlights from a recent retreat held by the Commission for Corporate and Financial Responsibility (Trustees). These documents share essential information about the state of several of the churches in the Presbytery of New York City and potential ways to solve essential issues.***

The following information is being used with permission.

Trustee Retreat Discussion: Property Strategy for the Presbytery of New York City

The most productive discussion may be less about individual property problems and more about creating a property strategy for the next 5–10 years.

The challenge is not that churches have boilers, roof leaks, insurance issues, or violations. The

challenge is that the Presbytery is primarily reacting to crises rather than managing risk proactively.

1. What is the true condition of our property portfolio?

Consider:
- Do we have a complete inventory of every church property's condition?
- Which buildings have deferred maintenance?
- Which have outstanding violations?
- Which are underinsured or difficult to insure?
- Which have aging mechanical systems?
- Which properties pose the greatest financial risk to congregations and to the Presbytery?

One possibility is creating a Property Health Index:
- Green – stable and well maintained
- Yellow – emerging concerns
- Orange – significant deferred maintenance
- Red – major risks requiring intervention

2. Are we funding emergencies or preserving ministry?

Questions:
- Is the Martinez Fund sufficient for today's construction costs?
- Should grants be limited to emergencies?
- Should grants also support preventive maintenance?

A $10,000 maintenance project today often prevents a $100,000 emergency five years later.

3. Should the Presbytery create a Property Assistance Program?

Many congregations do not need money first. They need expertise.

The Presbytery might consider:
- Volunteer property advisors
- Retired architects, engineers, contractors, and project managers
- A vetted contractor list
- Technical assistance teams

4. How do we distinguish between viable and non-viable property situations?

Questions:
- Are we investing in buildings that have a sustainable ministry future?

- What criteria should guide major property investments?
- At what point does property become an obstacle to ministry rather than a tool for ministry?

Possible discussions:
- Shared space arrangements
- Partnerships
- Redevelopment
- Sale of excess property
- Alternative uses of facilities

5. What is the Presbytery's responsibility?

Should the Presbytery:
- Primarily advise?
- Provide grants?
- Provide loans?
- Intervene in high-risk situations?
- Act as a strategic property partner?

A Possible Proposal: Property Sustainability Initiative

1. Assessment
- Complete a property risk assessment of all churches over 2–3 years.

2. Technical Assistance
- Property advisors and project consultation.

3. Financial Resources
- Martinez grants.
- Loan fund.
- Exploration of a larger capital reserve or endowment dedicated to property preservation.

Retreat Discussion Starter:

“Every year we spend significant time responding to roof failures, boilers, violations, insurance demands, and emergency repairs. What would it take for the Presbytery to move from crisis management to strategic stewardship of the properties entrusted to our congregations?”

Board of Trustees Retreat Briefing Paper

Property Stewardship and Sustainability in the Presbytery of New York City

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to assist the Board of Trustees in considering how the Presbytery can more effectively steward the physical assets entrusted to its congregations. While the Presbytery is blessed with churches that are thriving in ministry and mission, many congregations face growing challenges related to property maintenance, capital improvements, municipal compliance, insurance requirements, and aging infrastructure.

The Board is increasingly confronted with requests for assistance involving emergency repairs, code violations, roofing failures, boiler replacements, accessibility concerns, and other significant property-related issues. At present, the Presbytery's primary resources for responding to these challenges are the Martinez Fund and a limited loan program. While these resources provide valuable support, they are insufficient to address the growing scope of need across the Presbytery.

This retreat provides an opportunity to move beyond case-by-case crisis management and consider a long-term strategy for property stewardship.

Current Challenges

Several themes have emerged repeatedly across congregations:

Deferred Maintenance

Many churches have postponed necessary repairs due to limited financial resources. Deferred maintenance often leads to larger and more expensive emergencies in the future.

Aging Infrastructure

Numerous congregations operate facilities with aging boilers, roofs, electrical systems, elevators, and other critical building systems that are approaching the end of their useful life.

Violations and Regulatory Compliance

Churches are increasingly challenged by municipal violations, accessibility requirements, environmental regulations, and building code compliance.

Insurance Pressures

Insurance carriers are imposing stricter underwriting standards and inspection requirements. Some congregations face rising premiums, increased deductibles, or difficulty obtaining coverage.

Limited Financial Capacity

Many congregations lack the reserves necessary to undertake significant capital projects and often seek assistance only after a crisis has emerged.

A Strategic Question

The Board may wish to consider the following question:

Is the Presbytery's current approach primarily reactive, and if so, what would it take to become more proactive in supporting the long-term sustainability of congregational properties?

The issue before the Board is not merely the condition of individual buildings. Rather, it is the stewardship of a portfolio of ministry assets across the Presbytery.

Recommendation 1:

Develop a Presbytery-Wide Property Assessment Program

The Presbytery cannot effectively prioritize resources without understanding the overall condition of its property portfolio.

A comprehensive assessment process could identify:

- Major capital needs
- Deferred maintenance concerns
- Outstanding violations
- Insurance vulnerabilities
- Accessibility issues
- High-risk properties

The assessment could result in a Property Health Index classifying churches as:

Green

- Stable condition

- Routine maintenance needs

Yellow

- Emerging concerns requiring monitoring

Orange

- Significant deferred maintenance
- Moderate financial or operational risk

Red

- Immediate concerns requiring intervention

This information would provide the Board with objective data to guide future decisions.

Recommendation 2:

Expand the Focus from Emergency Funding to Preventive Stewardship

Current funding mechanisms tend to address problems after they become emergencies.

The Board should consider whether future grantmaking should also support preventive maintenance activities such as:

- Roof maintenance
- Boiler servicing
- Accessibility improvements
- Water infiltration prevention
- Safety upgrades

A modest investment today often prevents a significantly larger expenditure tomorrow.

The Board may also wish to evaluate whether the Martinez Fund remains appropriately structured given current construction and labor costs.

Recommendation 3:

Establish a Property Assistance Network

Many congregations require expertise before they require funding.

The Presbytery could develop a network of volunteer advisors including:

- Architects
- Engineers
- Contractors
- Attorneys familiar with real estate matters
- Property managers
- Project management professionals

Such a network could assist congregations with:

- Project planning
- Contractor selection
- Budget development
- Municipal compliance
- Insurance requirements

Providing technical assistance may substantially reduce project costs and improve outcomes.

Recommendation 4:

Create Criteria for Major Property Investments

The Board should consider developing clear criteria to guide decisions involving substantial grants, loans, or other assistance.

Potential considerations include:

- Congregational vitality
- Financial sustainability
- Community impact
- Alignment with mission priorities
- Long-term viability of the facility

Such criteria would help ensure that limited resources are directed toward projects with the greatest ministry benefit and likelihood of success.

Recommendation 5:

Explore New Financial Resources

The Board may wish to investigate additional funding mechanisms, including:

Property Preservation Fund

A dedicated reserve for capital needs and emergency assistance.

Endowment Development

Encouraging donors and congregations to contribute toward a permanent property stewardship fund.

Expanded Loan Resources

Increasing the availability of low-interest financing for qualified projects.

External Funding Sources

Exploring partnerships with foundations, preservation organizations, and government programs that support historic and community-serving properties.

Discussion Questions for Trustees

1. What are the greatest property risks facing the Presbytery over the next ten years?
2. What level of responsibility should the Presbytery assume in assisting congregations with property challenges?
3. How can we balance compassion for struggling congregations with responsible stewardship of limited resources?
4. Should the Presbytery prioritize emergency response, preventive maintenance, or both?
5. What criteria should guide decisions regarding grants, loans, and major property investments?
6. What resources, financial, professional, or volunteer—can be developed to strengthen congregational property management?
7. How can property stewardship be viewed as supporting ministry rather than simply maintaining buildings?

Proposed Action Items

At the conclusion of the retreat, the Board may wish to consider authorizing the following steps:

Within Six Months

- Create a Property Sustainability Task Force.
- Develop a preliminary inventory of congregational property conditions.
- Review the structure and effectiveness of the Martinez Fund.
- Identify volunteers and professionals willing to serve as advisors.

Within One Year

- Launch a Presbytery-wide property assessment initiative.
- Develop property risk categories and reporting standards.
- Establish technical assistance resources for congregations.
- Evaluate opportunities to expand loan and grant capacity.

Within Two Years

- Publish a comprehensive property stewardship plan.
- Create a sustainable funding strategy.
- Implement ongoing monitoring and support systems.
- Develop long-range recommendations for high-risk properties.

Conclusion

The Presbytery's buildings are not simply real estate assets. They are instruments of ministry, worship, mission, and community engagement. Effective stewardship requires more than responding to emergencies; it requires intentional planning, prudent investment, and a shared commitment to sustainability.

The challenge before the Board is to determine how the Presbytery can move from managing property crises to cultivating a long-term strategy that strengthens congregations and preserves resources for future generations.

Trustee Retreat Discussion: Property Strategy for the Presbytery of New York City

The most productive discussion may be less about individual property problems and more about creating a property strategy for the next 5–10 years.

The challenge is not that churches have boilers, roof leaks, insurance issues, or violations. The challenge is that the Presbytery is primarily reacting to crises rather than managing risk proactively.

1. What is the true condition of our property portfolio?

Consider:
• Do we have a complete inventory of every church property's condition?
• Which buildings have deferred maintenance?
• Which have outstanding violations?
• Which are underinsured or difficult to insure?
• Which have aging mechanical systems?

• Which properties pose the greatest financial risk to congregations and to the Presbytery?

One possibility is creating a Property Health Index:
• Green – stable and well maintained
• Yellow – emerging concerns
• Orange – significant deferred maintenance
• Red – major risks requiring intervention

2. Are we funding emergencies or preserving ministry?

Questions:
• Is the Martinez Fund sufficient for today's construction costs?
• Should grants be limited to emergencies?
• Should grants also support preventive maintenance?

A $10,000 maintenance project today often prevents a $100,000 emergency five years later.

3. Should the Presbytery create a Property Assistance Program?

Many congregations do not need money first. They need expertise.

The Presbytery might consider:
• Volunteer property advisors
• Retired architects, engineers, contractors, and project managers
• A vetted contractor list
• Technical assistance teams

4. How do we distinguish between viable and non-viable property situations?

Questions:
• Are we investing in buildings that have a sustainable ministry future?
• What criteria should guide major property investments?
• At what point does property become an obstacle to ministry rather than a tool for ministry?

Possible discussions:
• Shared space arrangements
• Partnerships
• Redevelopment
• Sale of excess property
• Alternative uses of facilities

5. What is the Presbytery's responsibility?

Should the Presbytery:

- Primarily advise?
- Provide grants?
- Provide loans?
- Intervene in high-risk situations?
- Act as a strategic property partner?

A Possible Proposal: Property Sustainability Initiative

1. Assessment
- Complete a property risk assessment of all churches over 2–3 years.

2. Technical Assistance
- Property advisors and project consultation.

3. Financial Resources
- Martinez grants.
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- Exploration of a larger capital reserve or endowment dedicated to property preservation.

Retreat Discussion Starter:

"Every year we spend significant time responding to roof failures, boilers, violations, insurance demands, and emergency repairs. What would it take for the Presbytery to move from crisis management to strategic stewardship of the properties entrusted to our congregations?"

COMMITTEE MAKEUP AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CURRENT COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MAKEUP

The Presbytery of New York City reports a membership of a little over 11,000, with some growth indicated in 2026. We give thanks for this reported increase. The Presbytery includes eighty-nine congregations and 15 New Worshipping Communities.

At the same time, the Presbytery must respond to declines in membership and in the number of elected members available to serve on committees and commissions. The Committee on Nominations faces significant challenges in recruiting members, especially new and younger leaders.

As a result, the Presbytery continues to rely on dedicated individuals who often serve two terms, rotate off for a year, and then return to the same committee or commission. This practice has been taking place for many years. Over time, this pattern can limit fresh perspectives and make change more difficult.

The Presbytery of New York City currently has the following committees, commissions, task forces, and teams:

Personnel Committee
Commission on Ministry
Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Committee on Nominations
Committee on Representation

Commission for Mission, Finance, and Corporate Responsibility/Trustees

- Audit Committee
- Budget Committee
- Property Committee
- Insurance Committee
- Law Committee
- Finance Committee
- Grant Committee (Martinez)
- Loan Committee

Recommendation: Combine the Property and Insurance Committees, the Audit, Budget, and Finance Committees, Loan and Grant Committees, other related groups as appropriate.

- Property and Insurance Committee
- Audit, Budget, and Finance Committee
- Law Committee

Grant and Loan Committee

Please see the section below for the recommended combinations.

Commissioned Pastors/Commissioned Ruling Elders
Committee on Congregational Ministry and Nurture
Justice Ministries and Self-Development of People Committee
Permanent Judicial Commission
Session Records Review Committee
Committee on Standing Rules

New York City Chapters of PCUSA Organizations

*Presbyterian Women
*Presbyterian Men
*National Black Presbyterian Caucus / New York City Chapter (The Collective)
*National Hispanic Coalition / New York City Chapter
*National Korean/Asian Caucus / New York City Chapter
*National Indigenous American/Native American Caucus / NYC Chapter
Please contact the Transitional Presbyter if names or titles are incorrect. This list is offered in a sincere effort to be inclusive of these organizations, and we apologize for any errors.

Task Forces:

Young Adult Volunteer Task Force (Formerly Administrative Commission)
RGJ07 Task Force /Task Force on Congregational Vitality Fund
Beloved Community Task Force

Re-envisioning/Reimagining Team and Restructuring Task Force

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE FOR THE PRESBYTERY

Recommended structure for the Presbytery of New York City:

**Committees and Commissions may be renamed “Teams” except those required by the General Assembly; in those cases, the name “Committee” or commission will remain until further research with the Stated Clerk of the PBYNYC and the General Assembly Office

****MINISTRY AND PREPARATION (to include) Commission on Ministry, Commission on Preparation for Ministry (1 Team)**—would be ***“MINISTRY AND PREPARATION”. This commission would automatically include Commissioned Pastors/Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs), COM, CPM, AND CRE.***

****Congregational Vitality*** (to include Mission, Evangelism, New Worshipping Communities, CMN, and RGJ07). All will be combined as one Team, including Reimagining/Reenvisioning, to be named ***CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY***

****Social Justice Ministries and Self-Development of People Team***

****Beloved Community and Racial Equity Team***

****Personnel Team***

Permanent Judicial Commission

Committee on Representation and Nominations

*** Session Records Review and Standing Rules Team***

Youth and Young Adult Ministries (YAV, Triennium, Youth and Young Adults)

Other Organizations of the Presbytery

Presbyterian Women
Presbyterian Men

****As mentioned above, the Trustees would combine the following committees to maximize communication and efficiency.**

Property and Insurance Team
Audit, Budget, and Finance Team
Grant and Loan Team
Law Team

Commissions and Committees

Ministry and Preparation Team will include Commission on Preparation for Ministry and the Committee on Commissioned Pastors/Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs), which will become one Team. Each commission and committee will consist of members who will monitor the process for those feeling called to become inquirers, candidates and who will progress to seeking a call. In addition, in collaboration and connection with the Synod of the Northeast, the PBYNYC has and will continue to work with Dubuque Theological Seminary.

Our Presbytery, the Presbytery of New York City, is part of the Synod of the Northeast, which has completed the online CRE/CP Program through Dubuque Theological Seminary. This program will contain a complete certification process for those within our Synod bounds who are committed and feel called for this ministry. The Commissioned Pastor (or Commissioned Ruling Elder) Ministry and Preparation section of the Team will report to the full Team.

Mission, Evangelism, and New Worshipping Communities (MENWC)

The Committee on Congregational Nurture and Ministry has struggled for a long time with how to proceed, how to best conduct its responsibilities, and how to serve the Presbytery of New York City. In the past, this committee has not felt that assessing the vitality of a congregation was part of its responsibility. This Committee will do well with a fresh start and clear focus.

The new focus will include mission (local, community, world mission) and the partnership in which PBYNYC is engaged; in addition, this committee will be responsible for the New Worshipping Communities, New Church Development, 1001 New Worshipping Communities. The Committee will be restructured into a team that will expand and broaden its focus upon ministry in the areas outlined. The new name, as mentioned, will be Congregational Vitality Team.

SERVICE UNTIL THE TASK FORCE ON RE-ENVISIONING/RE-IMAGINING COMPLETES ITS WORK

The appointed Leadership Team consists of leaders from throughout the Presbytery. It includes in collaboration the Stated Clerk, Moderator of the PBYNYC (as able to attend), Moderator-Elect, and leaders throughout the Presbytery to serve until the Team's work is completed. We thank Elder Zayn for preparing the PowerPoint Presentation, and all others, namely

The Rev. Dr. Derrick McQueen, The Rev. Dr. Eric A. Thomas, and so many others for your comments, for reading the document and providing excellent feedback, and to the entire Presbytery of New York City for your commitment to our needs. The plan is to provide this proposal to the Presbytery of New York City for final review and approval at the October 2026 meeting, or December at the latest. We are planning to hold a general presentation and discussion on an appropriate date. The plan for implementation will be January 1, 2027, or as soon as possible in 2027.

All dates of revisions to the Draft Proposal are listed below. This effort is ongoing until approved by the Presbytery of New York City and placed into final form. As such, much effort remains to provide a perfected document for the Presbytery that will result in the desired goal of maximum efficiency and effectiveness, service for all congregations in the Presbytery, and growth in numbers and in outstanding, vital ministry.

REVISIONS TO THE ORIGINAL DRAFT

Revised April 25, 2025
Revised May 6, 2025
Revised July 31, 2025
Revised April 15, 2026
Revised May 20, 2026
Revised May 23, 2026
Revised August 8, 2026
Revised August 17, 2026
September 18, 2026
Revised May 9, 2025
Revised May 14, 2025
Revised March 20, 2026
Revised May 14, 2026
Revised May 21, 2026
Revised August 4, 2026
Revised August 10, 2026
Revised September 17, 2026