

The Salem Presbytery General Presbyter Nominating Committee

Proudly Presents

TONY DE LA ROSA

Ruling Elder

After much prayerful discernment, diligent searching, and conversations with many qualified candidates, we are excited to present Ruling Elder Tony De La Rosa as our nominee to serve as the next installed General Presbyter to lead Salem Presbytery in its next chapter of ministry as the Church of Jesus Christ!



Education

Juris Doctor

Yale Law School

1984-1987

Master of Divinity

Yale Divinity School

1981-1985

Bachelor of Arts

Yale University

1978-1981

Other Credentials

- Professional Registered Parliamentarian
- Diversity in Leadership Training
- Presbyterian CREDO – National Executive Program
- Clinical Pastoral Education
- Interim Ministry – Pastoral and Executive
- Presbyterian Leadership Formation Program

Hobbies & Interests

- Theater, Trivia, Cooking, Travel, & Wine Tasting

Languages

- English & Spanish



Recent Work Experience

2021

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2023

Synod of Mid-America

Transitional Synod Executive

- Led the Synod in a two-year process of discernment and development of a new Mission, Vision, and Values statement, as well as Mission Goals and Objectives for future years.
- Streamlined financial procedures and reporting to promote transparency and clarity. Spearheaded and promoted Project Jubilee, a distressed medical debt acquisition and relief campaign resulting in \$13.3 million of debt forgiven prior to the 2022 Christmas holidays.

2015

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2017

Presbyterian Mission Agency

Interim Executive Director

- Duties include program oversight of ministry areas in World Mission; Compassion, Peace & Justice; Racial/Ethnic & Women's Ministries; and Theology, Formation & Evangelism; as well as administrative oversight of financial, legal, personnel, communications and funds development functions.

2014

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2015

Newport Presbyterian Church (Bellevue, WA)

Interim Lay Pastor – Head of Staff

- Interim pastoral leader and head of staff of a suburban congregation of approximately 350 members, seven full and part-time staff, and an annual budget of \$636,000. Duties included regular preaching and worship design, pastoral care and visitation, church officer training, moderating Session meetings, and serving as liaison to Presbytery for reporting on interim developmental tasks.

2010

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2013

Presbytery of New York City

Interim Executive Presbyter

- Chief administrator and head of staff of regional church governing body covering the five boroughs of New York City, including 223 minister members, 96 congregations and over 14,500 active members. Monitored annual budget of approximately \$1,100,000 and staff of five persons. Staffed five standing committees (General Cabinet, Board of Trustees, and Committees on Ministry, Nominations, and Personnel) and led implementation of disaster recovery efforts following Hurricane Sandy in October 2012.

Tony's Bio

Service to the Church

- Board of Trustees, Presbyterian Foundation (2015-2017)
- Board of Directors, Board of Pensions (2012-2015)
- Assembly Preacher and Committee Parliamentarian, 220th PCUSA General Assembly, Pittsburgh, PA
- Special Committee on Civil Unions and Christian Marriage (2009-2010)
- Special Committee on Church-wide Compensation Policy (1997-1999)
- Advisory Committee on Litigation (1989-1997)
- Synod of the Northeast Personnel Committee (2010-2013)
- Synod of Southern California and Hawaii Personnel Committee (2001-2003)
- Member of Immanuel Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, California since 2001.
- Ordained to the Office of Ruling Elder in 1996.
- Ordained to the Office of Deacon in 1991.



Ruling Elder Tony De La Rosa has served as Transitional Synod Executive in the Synod of Mid-America, where he is contracted to serve through December 2023. While as Transitional Executive, Tony managed the Synod's adoption of a new Mission, Vision, and Values statements, as well as Goals and Objectives that will guide the Synod's mission activities for the coming years. He also oversaw the re-vamping of the Synod's financial reporting to promote both transparency and accuracy.

He is the former Interim Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A). His duties included program oversight of ministry areas in international mission, social justice; racial/ethnic & women's ministries; and theology, formation, and evangelism. His service included acting as President of the "A" Corporation, the secular corporate expression of the denomination providing administrative oversight of its financial, legal, personnel, communications, and funds development functions at the national level. His tenure saw a stabilization of agency revenues following decades of decline and the production of a new online video series, "Keeping Faith," for mission promotion and support for use throughout the Church.

In 2014-2015, Tony was the Interim Lay Pastor and Head of Staff at Newport Presbyterian Church in Bellevue, Washington, a vibrant congregation of 350 members actively engaged in social mission and community service programs in the greater Seattle area.

From 2010 to 2013, Tony served as Interim Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of New York City. During his three-year term of service in New York, Tony successfully led the Presbytery to adopt unified financial planning and a reconfigured staff design that led to balanced budgets and stable operations throughout his tenure. An experienced California attorney, Tony used his legal skills to complete a thorough revision of the Presbytery's Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual, as well as other components of the Presbytery's Manual of Operations. He also directed the Presbytery's initial disaster relief response to Hurricane Sandy in 2012 by making use of online technologies for remote teleconferencing and funds development.

Prior to his church executive experience, Tony served as the Associate Counsel and Director of Board Administration of L.A. Care Health Plan, the nation's largest public HMO, with over 1.2 million Medicaid, S-CHIP and Medicare members. In the 1990s, Tony was the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, legal services agency dedicated to addressing pressing advocacy needs for the predominantly Latino communities of East and Northeast Los Angeles.

Tony received his Bachelor of Arts, Master of Divinity, and Juris Doctor degrees from Yale University. He and his husband of eight years, Michael Bendgen, are originally from Los Angeles, California.

Faith Statement

By God's grace, I live. I am a child of God, who has named and blessed me into being as part of the richness and diversity of Creation. I live as a part of God's sacred history, one that has seen humankind fall into sin in a misplaced desire to break its dependence on God. Humankind, by itself, cannot heal the rupture of its relationship with God. Both my life and my place in God's Creation are a gift and a responsibility, for they are offered to my benefit as an eternal witness to a loving Creator and entrusted to my stewardship to advance God's design.

I owe God an unfathomable debt, advanced on my behalf by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus - God made human - heals, instructs, prays, redeems, and reveals for all humankind the promise of eternal life. Jesus lived a life that exalted the Holy One through service in accord with God's Will, most specifically to the reviled and outcast - the poor, the sick, the lonely, the lost - who reflect God's image and challenge us to respond with empathy and concern. Christ fulfills God's sacred history, calling all to acknowledge our break with God and live into the wholeness that God intends for us.

The Holy Spirit moves and inspires me, a constant and enduring divine presence that steers me aright when I would veer askew. Through the Spirit, I have been blessed to receive faith in God through Christ, a gift that is God's alone to grant. I seek to honor this gift by receiving God's Word in Scripture, which the Spirit inspires and illuminates, and by participation in the life and witness of Christ's Church.

The Church disseminates God's promise of redemption to all whom it touches, through the proclamation of the Word and by celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were gifted to the Church by Christ working through the Holy Spirit. In baptism, the promise of redemption begins by engraving us into a community of believers in Christ. In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit offers to all believers Christ's redemption in holy commemoration of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Thus, I am humbled to be embraced by a God so powerful and so compassionate. In gratitude, my life is dedicated to the One who has bestowed upon my being richness beyond measure, grace without merit, and love without end.

Please Note: Tony's current contract to serve the Synod of Mid-America continues until December 31. The committee respectfully asks all the members of Salem Presbytery to refrain from reaching out to Tony until his first day with us, which we anticipate to be

January 1, 2024.

The Search Process

- The Nominating Committee was elected at the 137th Stated Meeting of Salem Presbytery (February 21, 2023)
- Committee Members: TE Stephen Fearing, RE Donna Hines, RE Catrelia Hunter, TE Charlie Lee, TE Rosa Miranda, and TE Paul Sink.
- Our inaugural meeting was at Yadkinville Presbyterian Church on April 18 for training by Warren Lesane, Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.
- Our position profile went live on the "Church Leadership Connection" system around June.
- Throughout the summer we reviewed submissions and began conducting initial zoom interviews.
- In August, we began narrowing our search to our top candidates and conducted in-depth interviews with approximately six candidates.
- After these conversations, the committee was unanimous in our enthusiasm for Tony as our nominee!
- Towards the end of the summer, we found mutually agreeable terms of call and notified the Executive Council that we expected to present our nominee to the Presbytery at the Stated Meeting in November.

From the Nominating Committee

- **Ruling Elder Donna Hines (Mt. Jefferson Presbyterian Church)** – “I love the fact that Tony is not afraid to challenge the status quo, and suggests that maybe the way something has been done up to now is not necessarily the way it has to continue. Something just clicked in my brain and in my heart when Tony said at one point in his interview, “Trust is not earned; it is a gift, an act of will.” The fact that he is willing to gift Salem Presbytery with his trust in being willing to come here is ineffably powerful.”
- **Teaching Elder Charlie Lee (Starmount Presbyterian Church)** – “We interviewed many wonderful candidates for this position, all with proficiencies in various skills and talents. However, in our conversations with Tony, it became clear that he possessed the broad spectrum of leadership, relational, interpersonal, and organizational skills required for this position. Tony demonstrated keen insight to the challenges our Presbytery is facing and empathy for the unique struggles of clergy and lay leaders in our congregations. We believe Tony is well equipped to serve Salem Presbytery in this season of dramatic and adaptive change.”
- **Ruling Elder Catrelia Hunter (Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church)** – “Tony De La Rosa has provided exemplary leadership at all levels of our denomination, throughout the USA. I believe that he is a visionary and transformational leader with extensive and impressive credentials and professional experiences that have surely equipped him to lead Salem Presbytery forward.”
- **Teaching Elder Stephen Fearing (Guilford Park Presbyterian Church)** – “From the get go, we acknowledged that we needed a balanced leader for this presbytery; one who was equally adept at both the administrative and pastoral aspects of leading a mid-council such as ours in an ever-changing ministry landscape. Tony is about as well-rounded of a candidate as we could have hoped to find! He has the critical mind of a leader experienced in strategic change and the compassionate heart of a servant with a genuine pastoral sensitivity.”
- **Teaching Elder Rosa Miranda (Validated Ministry, Presbytery Mission Agency)** – “Always coming prayerfully before God looking for guidance and wisdom to collectively discern among wonderfully capable and skilled candidates to serve Salem Presbytery, from its first meeting, this committee centered on the missional history, needs, challenges and celebrations of Salem Presbytery. During our conversations with Tony de la Rosa we were able to observe how the rich diversity of his experiences in ministry and leadership, his humor and simplicity in sharing, as well as his clarity in building pastoral relationships based on presence and trust to collaborate in the mission, make Tony one who may provide the sensitive and sensible lead in the reality and context that Salem faces today.”
- **Teaching Elder Paul Sink (Taylorsville Presbyterian Church)** – “From my first impressions of Tony via his PDP information to then hearing him preach by way of online recorded services, I was simply overcome with a sense of God’s leading and calling us together. Tony was kind and gracious in early correspondence and such a very impressive person in our interviews. His wide range of experiences in life and service to the church puts him in a unique position to be exactly who Salem Presbytery needs as our next General Presbyter.”

Tony's Call to Salem

- **Tell us a little about your faith journey** – The prophet Jeremiah wrote that he was called from the womb. As a lifelong Presbyterian, I do not think my sense of call arose quite that early! What I can tell you is that age five, I wanted to be a minister, and at age twelve I wanted to be a lawyer. At the age of nineteen, I decided I wanted to be both, so I graduated from Yale with an M.Div. and J.D. My thinking at the time was that the most likely venue to exercise my dual pursuits was in mid council church service, but God had a rather circuitous plan for me in mind. I became a candidate for ministry while still in school, and at that time, I had the support of my home church (Calvary, South Pasadena, CA) and my presbytery for my grand plan. I passed all my ordination exams on my first attempt, took one unit of CPE, and interned in both congregational and mid council settings. Although the status of "certified ready" did not exist yet, I probably have been certified but for the intervening denominational battle over LGBTQIA inclusion in the life and witness of the church and its leadership, and I was summarily removed as a candidate by the presbytery ostensibly because I was "not serious" about pursuing a church vocation. Plan B had me instead practicing law in California as a civil litigator. With some dissent, I was finally ordained as a ruling elder by my home church, and I remained active in denominational leadership despite my setback. After a 23-year delay occasioned by the PCUSA's "constitutional disagreement," I finally called to serve in several interim/transitional leadership positions, starting in New York, then Seattle, Louisville, and most recently, Kansas City. I experienced serving in all four councils of the Church: local church, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly, and in each one, I have had to access at least some of the skills I acquired from my 23-year diversion from my original vocational plan. I only wished God had filled me in on what was in store for me from the beginning!
- **What unique and/or critical talents and abilities do you bring to Salem Presbytery?** Perhaps arising from my dual professional education and experience, I have been told that I have strong administrative and financial management skills, especially in times of organizational crisis. (Ask me sometime about how I handled my church's becoming a Superfund site during Holy Week.) On a recent Celtic pilgrimage tour of Scotland, the tour leader remarked about my ability to respond to the occasional gnarly situations that arose during the trip without getting emotionally overwrought or upset. "I can see you getting serious and thoughtful, but you don't lose it," she said. "How do you do that?" The best explanation I could come up with was that my interim/transitional ministry training had taught me about self-differentiation, the ability to stay above the fray and remaining focused and resolved.
- **What is your vision for Salem Presbytery going forward and how do you intend to implement it?** As a Presbyterian church leader, I know full well that any visioning for the future of a church body is never solely my own; it is the collective's discernment that determines goals and directions. That being said, I do believe that Salem Presbytery's embrace of the Matthew 25 mission focus areas and intersectional priorities provide a helpful framework for shaping our mission efforts and direction of our resources for the coming years. Beyond guiding implementation of our collective discernment, I would hope to be able to fashion communal activities for church leaders in the Presbytery that enable all to feel welcome, engaged, invested, and committed to the Church's mission.

Terms of Call

- **Effective Salary** - \$100,000
- **Board of Pensions** - 100% Medical coverage (member), pension, death & disability. The terms of call shall include employer paid benefits to the amount required to provide the coverage needed.
- **Travel/Professional Expenses** - \$10,000
- **Continuing Education Expenses** - \$2,000
- **Cell Phone Reimbursement** - \$1,200
- **Vacation** - 4 weeks
- **Continuing Education** - 2 weeks
- **Family Leave** - 12 weeks w/ full pay & benefits
- **Days off per week** - 2 days
- **Moving expenses** - full and reasonable
- **Sabbatical** - three months w/ full pay and benefits in the seventh year of service.
- **Dental** - full
- **Vision** - full



SALEM PRESBYTERY

PC(USA)