

PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY, INC.
Special Meeting
Thursday, August 28, 2025; 9:00 a.m.
via Zoom

Summary

Call to Order & Prayer

The Moderator, Rev. Dr. John DeBevoise, called this Special Meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay to order at 9:00 a.m. The meeting served both as a meeting of the ecclesiastical governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and a meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay, Inc., a non-profit corporation of the State of Florida.

The Moderator then formally opened the meeting with prayer and acknowledged the date as the Feast Day of Augustine of Hippo. He welcomed everyone participating in the meeting on Zoom, and reminded all that business in this special meeting would be limited to the items stated in the call to the meeting:

- Report from the Coordinating Team (CT) proposing amendments to the Presbytery's June 21 action regarding the search process for a transitional presbyter.
- Report from the Committee on Nominations and Representatives (CNR) with nominees for the transitional presbyter search committee and to fill additional vacancies on PTB commissions or committees.
- Report from PTB's Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team (PDAT) on its updated All Hazards Emergency Operations Disaster Plan.
- Report from the Commission on Ministry (COM) recommending, at the request of a session, authorization for an administrative commission to work with a congregation as it approaches the end of its active ministry.
- Report from the Administrative Commission for Forest Hills Presbyterian Church, possibly with a recommendation that it be dismissed.
- Report from the Administrative Commission for Northwest Presbyterian Church, possibly including a recommendation for additional authority.
- Report from the Administrative Commission for Church on the Bayou with a recommendation for additional authorities necessary to complete its work with the session and remaining members of the congregation.

Declaration of a Quorum

Stated Clerk Bill Wildhack explained Zoom's polling feature, which would be used to help track attendance and confirm that a quorum is present. He launched two polls, after which he reported that a quorum was present.

Review of Procedures for Seeking Recognition and Voting

The Moderator and Stated Clerk reviewed how participants would be asked to seek recognition, speak, and vote in the Zoom environment; reminded those who had not already done so to

update their display names in Zoom; and pointed out that Zoom’s chat feature would be limited for participants to communicate only with the Stated Clerk for things like privileged motions, points of order, or amendments.

Approval of the Docket

The docket was approved by acclamation.

Introduction of New Minister Members, First-Time Commissioners and Corresponding Members

The Moderator invited First Time Commissioners, Corresponding Members, and New Minister Members to seek to be recognized and introduce themselves to the presbytery when called upon. First Time Ruling Elder Commissioners were Meredith Odeh (Forest Hills, Tampa) and Bruce Eelman (First, Winter Haven). There were no new teaching elders or corresponding members.

Coordinating Team Report

Reverend Sam Picard spoke on behalf of the Coordinating Team and Chair Ann Marshall. He presented the following modification to the June 21, 2025 motion regarding the search for a transitional presbyter; additions are noted in red and deletions in red with brackets and strikethrough:

1. Direct the Coordinating Team to develop a position description for a Transitional Presbyter.

~~[1.]~~2. Direct the Committee on Nominations and Representation to nominate a broadly representative Transitional Presbyter search committee of at least five members for election by the presbytery at an upcoming meeting to

~~[a. work with the Coordinating Team on developing a position description for a Transitional Presbyter for approval by the presbytery at a later meeting, and b. then to]~~search for and recommend a candidate to the ~~[presbytery]~~
Coordinating Team for final selection.

~~[2.]~~3. Direct the Board of Trustees to propose to the presbytery a strategy for funding this position.

After addressing questions from the floor, the recommendation from CT to amend the original action was approved.

Committee on Nominations and Representation (CNR)

On behalf of the CNR, Chair Ruling Elder Kris Marone moved the following nominations:

SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR TRANSITIONAL PRESBYTER

	<u>Church or Ministry</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Demographics</u>
Will Davidson	Maximo, St. Pete	W	EMW
Elizabeth Hatter	Honorably Retired	W	CFA

Anne Marie Meyerhoffer	Grace Spring Hill	W	CFW
Cindy Kendall	Palm Harbor	W	EFW
Callie Weber	First, Winter Haven	E	CFW
Matt Shick	Cedarkirk	C	EMW
Mike Loudon – Chair	Honorably Retired	E	CMW

Notes:

The letters in the Third column immediately following the names of those nominated refer to geographic regions of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay: E- East, C- Central, W- West

The letters in the fourth column following the names represent the following demographic categories of ordination, gender, and race or ethnicity: C-clergy, E-elder / M-male, F-female / W-Caucasian, H- Hispanic, AA-African American, African, or Black, and A-Asian/Pacific Islander

There were no nominations from the floor, and all nominees were declared elected by acclamation.

Reverend Bob Hill has resigned as chair/member of the Commission on Church Vitality. On behalf of CNR, Elder Marone nominated Rev. Dr. Dawn Conti as chair until election of a new chair at an upcoming next presbytery meeting. With no other nominees, Dr. Conti was elected; as a result, she will also be a member of the Coordinating Team as CCV Chair.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team (PDAT) Report

Reverend John Scott spoke on behalf of the PDAT and Chair Les Totten. He asked churches to update the PDAT with church contacts, phone numbers, and email addresses to facilitate timely communication during challenging events. Communication links were included in this meeting's packet as a late addition and will also be sent out in an upcoming eNews to the full distribution list.

Commission on Ministry Report

COM Chair Reverend John Hougen presented the following recommendation on behalf of the COM and, following an opportunity for discussion, it was approved

The Commission on Ministry recommends that:

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay authorize the moderator to appoint an Administrative Commission (AC) to assist the Session of Church of the Reconciler Presbyterian Church, Clearwater, Florida, in taking any required and customary steps to dissolve as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and provide for a meaningful legacy of the congregation's almost 70 years of ministry in Clearwater and Pinellas County. In its work, the Administrative Commission has the following delegated authority and responsibility to act on behalf of the Presbytery in assisting the session:

1. as soon as practical following the appointment of its members, to confirm to the Stated Clerk the election of a clerk of the commission,
2. to proceed, with particular pastoral care and in consultation with the members of the congregation, to take any actions needed to dissolve Church of the Reconciler Presbyterian Church as a congregation of the PC(USA), including issuing letters of transfers to other churches for active members as appropriate before formal dissolution,
3. to take any actions needed to wind down and dissolve CHURCH OF THE RECONCILER, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, INC., a Florida not for profit corporation,
4. when appropriate, to
 - a. act on behalf of the Presbytery to assume original jurisdiction of the session if or when the commission determines it is necessary to do so according to the provisions of the Book of Order (G-3.0303e.),
 - b. take possession of all real and personal property, financial records, inventories, historic records, and arrange for transfer of title when appropriate to the Presbytery of Tampa Bay of all accounts and real property known to be in the possession of Church of the Reconciler Presbyterian Church and/or CHURCH OF THE RECONCILER, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, INC.,
 - c. assert claim, as successor to the congregation and corporation, of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay to any property of Church of the Reconciler Presbyterian Church and/or CHURCH OF THE RECONCILER, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, INC. not known at this time or property which may come to either entity as the beneficiary of a will or trust not known at this time,
 - d. engage legal counsel to advise the Administrative Commission and/or represent the Presbytery of Tampa Bay in this matter as needed.

Report of the Administrative Commission for Forest Hills Presbyterian Church

On behalf of the commission, AC Chair Reverend John Hougén presented the following motion:

The Administrative Commission for the Forest Hills Presbyterian Church recommends that:

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay dismiss the Administrative Commission for the Forest Hills Presbyterian Church effective August 28, 2025.

The AC was appointed in 2023 to meet with and review the work of the Listening and Assessment Team already in place, and to work with the session and pastoral leadership to move the church forward. The AC's report was shared with the session on August 18, 2025. There was some objection at the presbytery meeting to describing the church as having a history of conflict since 1995, but there was no objection to dissolving the Administrative

Commission. The commission was dissolved with thanks to the members and to former Forest Hills pastor Rev. Craig Miller.

Report of the Administrative Commission for Northwest Presbyterian Church

AC Chair Reverend Mike Peacock spoke on behalf of the commission previously appointed to assess Northwest's request for Gracious Dissolution. It has met with and heard from the pastor and session of Northwest in response to their request for guidance from the presbytery on dissolving the church while ensuring that the church's legacy continues in the community. Northwest has a history of addressing the tangible needs of the community: serving the homeless, the food insecure, and those needing cold weather shelter. It seeks to continue those services even if the formality of the church as a presbytery entity ceases.

Northwest has been presented with an opportunity to develop its property with workforce housing while continuing as a church. Accordingly, the session has tabled its request for "gracious dissolution" for the time being. The COM appointed Rev. Sam Picard as moderator of the session.

After discussion on aspects of the workforce housing and its effects on the church's neighbors, thanks were expressed by the presbytery to the AC and Rev. Picard as the church transforms its role into a mission service rather than a traditional church.

Report of the Administrative Commission for Church on the Bayou

AC Chair Rev. Dr. Dawn Conti presented the following motion to amend the June 21, 2025 motion as follows:

The Administrative Commission recommends that the Presbytery of Tampa Bay amend the action taken on June 21 to authorize appointment of the commission by adding the additional authorities indicated in **red** below and adapted from the charge to the AC for Gulfport Presbyterian Church and other prior ACs in similar situations.

1. Direct the Moderator to appoint an administrative commission (AC) for Church on the Bayou, Tarpon Springs, with the following responsibilities:
 - a. Meet with and hear from the session and members of Church on the Bayou, Tarpon Springs, Florida, in response to their requests for guidance and assistance from the presbytery in discerning their future as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) following the loss of their property due to hurricanes Helene and Milton.
 - b. Following consultation with the session and church members, make any appropriate recommendations as needed to the presbytery and/or the Commission on Ministry and any other commission or committee of the presbytery regarding the future of the congregation under the presbytery's responsibility and power for "organizing, receiving, merging, dismissing, and dissolving congregations in consultation with their members." (G-3.0301a.)

- c. Should the AC, following the provisions of G-3.0303e., and a full opportunity for the session to be heard, conclude that the session cannot exercise its authority or “is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs,” the AC has the authority to assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, which shall cease to act as the session until the AC or presbytery otherwise directs.
- d. When appropriate, with particular pastoral care and in consultation with the session and members of the congregation as needed, to take any actions required in dissolving Church on the Bayou as a congregation of the PC(USA), including issuing letters of transfers to other churches for active members as appropriate before formal dissolution,**
 - i. take any actions needed to wind down and dissolve THE CHURCH ON THE BAYOU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), INC., a Florida not for profit corporation,**
 - ii. take possession of any real and personal property, financial records, inventories, historic records, and arrange for transfer of title when appropriate to the Presbytery of Tampa Bay of all accounts and real property known to be in the possession of Church on the Bayou and/or THE CHURCH ON THE BAYOU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), INC.,**
 - iii. assert claim, as successor to the congregation and corporation, of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay to any property of Church on the Bayou and/or THE CHURCH ON THE BAYOU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.), INC. not known at this time or property which may come to either entity as the beneficiary of a will or trust not known at this time,**
 - iv. engage legal counsel to advise the Administrative Commission and/or represent the Presbytery of Tampa Bay in this matter as needed.**

As with other churches severely damaged by weather disasters, Church on the Bayou is concerned that its legacy of service to the community continues through the disposition of its real property even as the church is dissolved. Accordingly, the motion to amend was approved.

Comments from the General Presbyter

Reverend Doctor Holly Dillon spoke on endings and beginnings, as she nears the end of her ministry as General Presbyter. We cannot have a new beginning if there is no ending, just as there can be no resurrection if there is no death. She quoted from the PC(USA)’s Brief Statement of Faith, which says: “In life and in death, we belong to God.”

Announcements

Stated Clerk Bill Wildhack reminded attendees that the next stated presbytery meeting is October 30, 2025 at First Presbyterian Church in Inverness. Rev. Dr. Dillon congratulated Administrative Assistant Annel Belmont on her two-year anniversary with the presbytery on September 5, 2025.

Adjournment with Prayer

With no other business remaining for this special meeting, Moderator Rev. Dr. John DeBevoise thanked all for their participation today and adjourned the meeting with prayer at 10:16 a.m.

Submitted by,

Rev. William A. Wildhack III
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Tampa Bay