

Consultant's Observations and Recommendations
Giddings Lovejoy Presbytery
March 16, 2026

The Backstory

The Center for Healthy Churches/PneuMatrix was contacted in September 2025 by Rev. Ryan Landino about running a visioning process for the presbytery due to the joint “concern for a sustainable budget” and the “need for a concrete vision of ministry”. Following our hire, we arrived on December 9th. During that period of time, the presbytery had voted to remove Rev. Landino as the presbytery leader. He subsequently requested a stay of enforcement from the synod, Rev. Elizabeth Kanerva was functioning in the role of ad hoc presbytery leader and while there was a general sense of confusion and uncertainty about the future, there was an understanding that having consultants on-board to help the presbytery figure out ‘where to from here’ was more warranted than ever. At the time of this writing, Rev. Landino has been reinstated as presbytery leader, pending the outcome of the synod case, but has been placed on administrative leave. By every indication, Rev. Kanerva continues to function in as the de facto presbytery leader.

To the end of helping the presbytery move forward, Rev. Dr. Reginald Wells and Michelle Snyder, spent a total of four days across two trips interviewing as many people as possible. Michelle had previously spoken with Rev. Landino (prior to the in-person visit and prior to his removal as presbytery leader) and then the two consultants met with a variety of constituencies, committees and stakeholders. These groups included the staff, the Vision Team, committee and commission chairs, the Commission on Ministry, the Personnel Committee, and various sub-groups of both ruling and teaching elders. We also held focus groups in several regions of the presbytery outside of St. Louis and facilitated table conversations at a presbytery meeting. The following report is our best attempt to articulate what we observed and heard as well as what we recommend, in terms of staffing and structure.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Before offering any observations, we start with a basic assumption that underlies our thinking. Whatever differences of opinion we heard, the one characteristic shared by each and every person we interfaced with was a desire to help the presbytery be its best. We met no one with what we would describe as malevolent intent. In a world of decline and scarcity of resources, expectations can lead to disappointment, our own anxieties can cloud our judgement, and we all bring our own baggage and limitations to the ministry. But that said, it was our observation, and it is our conviction, that regardless of the issues at play, there are no ‘good guys and bad guys’. We believe that people of good faith live everywhere across the continuum on the issues the church is wrestling with. And beloved, hard-working children of God are doing their best to figure it out.

We would also like to name that while this era of presbytery leadership has been challenging, by every indication, most of these dynamics pre-dated the tenure of Rev. Landino. We can all put our own particular imprint on a problem that we inherit. But we heard narration of the challenges in this presbytery dating back 20 years or more. So

we ascribe no singular responsibility to 'how you go here' and see the issues your presbytery faces to be long-standing and chronic.

Observations: What's Going On?

The challenge in a complicated system is that there is never a single dynamic at play. There are always intersecting and interacting forces at work that are greater than the sum of their parts. Still, they are best articulated as independent variables.

- 1) Governance – While it can be crazy-making, one of the strengths of Presbyterianism is our decency and order. When things go crazy, get anxious, confused or confusing, presbyterian polity can save the day. Bylaws that tell us who gets to decide, where authority starts and stops, and what the chain of command is, can be incredibly protective.... salvific even....in a world of chaos and confusion. And the lack of those clear polity and process can lead to chaos and confusion as well.

As we met with various constituent groups, one of the most common sentiments we heard was a lack of clarity about who oversaw a particular thing or what their scope of authority was. This ranged from the Vision Team who functions in some ways as an executive committee and in others as an advisory board, to the Personnel Committee who wasn't sure what their authority is to make decisions, hire, or hold accountable. And there was even confusion about who has the authority to clarify the scope of authority.

This lack of clarity has created a leadership vacuum with several consequences.

- In the absence of ownership of authority, staff has filled the gap. We make no judgement about the intent of this overreach, whether for anxious self-serving purposes or for faithful leadership in a vacuum. We simply name that the system dynamic that has emerged has over-empowered the staff to set meeting agendas, maintain a dominant presence in committee and commission meetings and to provide disproportionate weight to decisions that belong to committee and commission deliberations.
 - In a world of over-functioning staff, committee members have rightly felt disempowered and deflated. Due to their decisions sometimes being overridden and sidelined or simply the discouragement that comes from being given responsibility without authority, committee members have often become unresponsive and under-functioning.
 - This cycle has led to a world of insufficient accountability. This has taken any number of forms, such as a leader who, by many accounts, was not effectively fulfilling his job responsibilities without repercussion to questionable financial transparency.
 - When accountability goes out the door, so does trust. And what we have observed in the presbytery is a general distrust for those at the helm.
- 2) Needs of the churches - While not unique to your presbytery, we would be remiss if we did not name one of the most dominant issues facing the mainline church today: decline. Decline takes many forms: aging and shrinking congregations, reduction in viable pastoral candidates, deferred building maintenance, unsustainable structures,

and financial strain. None of this has been caused by the presbytery. And much of it can't be fixed by her either. That said, when churches deal with decline, they are experiencing a gamut of emotions that range from grief to anxiety to anger and they are looking for help.

From the listening sessions, the general feedback we received was gratitude for the ways that the presbytery has, in the past...

- provided support in times of crisis and transition.
- distributed finances and resources for ministry.

...And a desire for the presbytery to provide more in the way of

- assistance with church decline and unsustainability.
- help with infrastructure and pastoral transitions.
- relational connection.

That said, for the rural church focus groups, there was the additional feeling of marginalization. Several factors lend themselves to this critique:

- distance makes it more challenging for people in rural communities to be as involved in presbytery ministry as those closer to St. Louis. Then, because of that, there is the perception that decisions get made by the 'city' churches and their leaders. The word "step-children" was used.
- A disproportionate number of rural churches are small. In one rural focus group, the range of church sizes, of all those represented, was from 15-40 persons in worship. Many of these churches lack pastors who are often the communication liaisons between the congregation and the presbytery. In their absence, these churches experience a lack of information and feeling of disconnection.

See Appendices A & B for the full text of notes from the Regional and the Presbytery-wide Gatherings.

- 3) Vision – The idea of a presbytery vision can be high-minded and aspirational. But it can also be practical and clarifying. Across the life span of the Presbyterian church, presbyteries have served any number of functions, based on where we found ourselves in the arch of Christendom and the state of the world. At one time, they existed to provide theological education and access to global mission. At other times, they have been busy in their service of training and dispatching ordained clergy. They have functioned as resource centers, equipping congregations in their ministry to the larger world. And at other times still, they have provided pastoral leadership to pastors. But the world has changes and the role of the presbytery has changed along with it. Due to changes in global communication platforms, social media landscapes, and post-Christendom realities (decreased numbers of people entering ministry, decreased church attendance), many of those presbytery reasons for being have been reduced in relevance or become almost entirely obsolete. Adding to that,

as churches have been in decline, the resources of the presbytery have declined along with them, thus reducing the scope and breadth of help presbyteries can provide.

The frustration that comes from people remembering what presbytery “use to do” is compounded by a current lack of articulation about what the presbytery can and does do now. While doing our listening sessions, several attempts to name what presbytery is and does were:

“Presbytery is a place where no pastor or church feels alone.”
“We as a presbytery are a community of joy, compassion and care.”
“Presbytery is the pastor to leaders.”
“Presbytery is a pastor to pastors.”

While these vision statements are nice and even aspirational, they seem to lack a synergy with the stated needs of the people we spoke with around the urgency they feel considering how quickly the church is changing and the timeline many of them are on. By one person’s estimate, 50% of the churches in the presbytery will close in the next 5-10 years. And in one focus group we attended, all but one or two church represented feared that it would close in the next three years. These relational sentiments about care, support, and community, while important, don’t rise to the level of the needs of today’s church.

- 4) **Finances** – The presbytery is not financially sustainable. The math is clear. More money is going out than is coming in, to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars per year. While no one likes to live within their means, the alternative is not an option.

In addition, there is a long history of a lack of financial transparency that feeds suspicion and has ultimately led to further reductions from congregations in their mission-giving.

Recommendations

What follows are our best recommendations to help the presbytery begin to move towards health and more healthy functioning, in light of the above realities.

- 1) **Governance** – Trust in a system starts with healthy governance. Data shows that the best way to pull a system out of conflict is to rebuild trust in its leadership and their structures¹.

In order for leadership to function well, it is essential that the following principles and practices be implemented immediately.

- **Communication** – A concerted effort should be made by the leaders of the presbytery (lay and paid) to communicate with the presbytery what you can, when you can. This should include the broad sharing of (a hearty summary)

¹ Holy Cow Consulting macro data set.

- of this report, on-going communication about how governance structures are being re-worked, etc. As they say in communication theory,
- you should tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.
 - You should tell them 7 times, in 7 ways, that a 7-year-old can understand.
 - When there's nothing to tell them, tell them that.
 - Repeat yourself until you feel redundant.
- Regular updates at presbytery meetings on the actions of the visioning team.
 - Increased financial transparency - That includes regular audits, published budgets, clear reporting of financial distributions and allocations and truth-telling about deficits.
 - Presbytery staff communicating how they are spending their time - Examples of this could include naming where they have been and what they've been doing (ex. Including in presbytery correspondences where each member of staff has spent their Sundays, what churches they've visited, etc. See an example at <https://www.pghpresbytery.org/2026/03/pnews-3-12-26/>)
 - Meeting Agendas and Preparation – For leadership to be trusted and functional, due process is essential. That include agendas for meetings that are created by chairs, with sufficient time given for all members to come to the meetings prepared for the conversations of the day. This will work to eliminate any perception of rubber-stamping of previously decided decisions.
 - Meeting minutes posted in a timely way and in an accessible place.
 - The cultivation of high-functioning committees that are given equal amounts of responsibility and authority. Examples include....

The Vision Team – The Vision Team currently lacks clarity about its role, level of responsibility and level of authority. While the vision team is not “the session” of the presbytery, it is the closest thing this presbytery has to an executive committee and should be functioning accordingly. There is no perfect way to be an executive committee. What is most important is that its role is clear and communicated. Consultants have provided examples of other executive committee structures for the perusal and deliberation of the team (*See Appendices C, D, E*). It is our strong recommendation that:

- A. The Vision Team discern and then articulate it's desired scope of authority and then take that to the larger presbytery for a vote, thus solidifying its role.
- B. Work with each committee and commission on a description of their scope, authority, and job descriptions. This compilation should be taken to the larger presbytery for a vote and incorporated into the bylaws.
- C. Each commission and committee chair have a seat on the Vision Team.
- D. Each Vision Team meeting should include a brief run-down from each chair about the work of their committee/commission.

The COM – The primary work of the Committee on Ministry in presbyteries is to provide support to churches in transition, conflict and crisis, and closure. This is

a huge job and often people come on to COM without training or preparation. We would recommend the implementation of:

- A. Training and On-boarding – It was clear to COM members that they need training in what they are commissioned to do. Whether that training comes from current presbytery staff, the synod, or is outsourced to consultants, all COM members (new and old) could benefit from an overall training on what the work is and how to do it.
- B. A manual of operations – Hand-in-hand with the training is a manual of operations that offers COM members templates and roadmaps for doing each of the three tasks of a COM member.
- C. Every church in the presbytery should have a COM liaison who is in regular touch with them (annual). The current lack of connection with congregations is challenging for both COM members (who lack knowledge about what is happening at the congregational level) AND the churches (who feel disconnected from the practical assistance they need). This assignment of liaisons will help reduce the reactive way COM is currently functioning and the sense from congregations that ‘presbytery is absent’.

Personnel Committee– There has been significant confusion about the role of the Personnel Committee. The articulation of committee job descriptions described above should assist greatly in helping them understand the range of where their work starts and stops as well as what their role is in relationship to the paid head of staff. In the meantime, we would simply suggest the following generalities related to their work:

- A. Presuming that the personnel committee supervises the presbytery leader, there should be some time at every meeting where they are meeting in the absence of any and all staff.
- B. Staff should not be creating or driving the agenda for personnel committee meetings.
- C. The personnel committee should be ensuring that annual reviews are being conducted, whether by them or by the head of staff.
- D. They should be leading the conversation about staffing structure and proactively gathering the information they need in order to do so. Examples of this would include pursuing answers to questions like...
 - ‘How does the stated clerk spend his time?’*
 - ‘How can we help the staff right-size their workload to fit the hours given?’*
 - ‘What percentage of the total budget should be spent on personnel?’*
- E. They need to be communicating, according to the principles named above, for the sake of trust building. Much of personnel work is confidential, delicate and exists below the surface. But that makes it even more important to communicate what you can, when you can, even if it is to say ‘there are things we can’t tell you but we are working on it’.
- F. They need to be communication, according to the principles named above, for the sake of protecting staff. When staffing is reduced for budgetary reasons, often the expectations of them don’t change and the amount of

work does not go down. These expectations can foment frustration with the presbytery staff. It is the role of the personnel committee to communicate appropriate expectations of the staff, on behalf of the staff.

2) Trust building through relationship – Trust can be lost in a moment but takes a long time to build. There is no shortcut to building trust through relationships. Below are some ideas for how to begin that process....

- Each committee and commission should lead with relationship development of some kind each time they meet. We know that meeting-fatigue is real. We also know that some of the most important work that you do is tending to the soil of relationships so that good fruit can grow from it.
- The focus of presbytery meetings should include some element of relationship building, baked-in conversation with people who might not otherwise cross-pollinate, and opportunities for colleagues to celebrate each other in ministry. For this reason, presbytery meetings should be held in-person as often as possible. We know that it is not terribly convenient for some to make it to presbytery meetings, given the long distances. Still, the cultivation of relationships that they make possible would suggest that the benefit outweighs the cost of hosting primarily in-person meetings. Some of this downside can be mitigated by
 - pathways for virtual participation (that includes virtual Zoom rooms where conversations can be had, and relationships are cultivated)
 - regional clusters of in-person gatherings (particularly in rural communities) who participate virtually, while together, in presbytery meetings and other events. This hybrid option reduces the burden of travel while leaning into relationships, through the use of technology.
 - Spreading in-person meetings out across the presbytery to reduce any perception of a St. Louis-centric presbytery. In other words, everyone should have to suffer equally for the sake of relationship building.

3) Finding financial sustainability: Presbyteries need to live inside their means. Period. Full-stop. This is both faithful, to steward the resources for the next generation and also to model what is being asked of the churches facing a similar situation. This is an on-going conversation but some obvious pathways include

- Move to a full remote office - Not only will the cost savings be substantial but the current physical office lends itself to the notion of a St. Louis-based presbytery, thus feeding the frustration and discontent. It does not make financial sense to break the lease which will be up in approximately 3 years. During that time frame, there is also work to do to scan documents, get a new phone system, etc.
- Staff Model- Personnel is the biggest line item in the budget. This size of budget deficit cannot be reduced without attention to costs spent on staffing. To that end, we recommend
 - One executive presbyter. The name executive presbyter, while classic and losing in popularity, represents that the presbyter is one among many presbyters, whose chief job is the executive function. That is not meant to communicate ‘executive branch’ of the presbytery but to

name that their role is not spearheading or directing but instead, executing the will of the presbytery. Another name you might consider is administrative presbyter.

- You do NOT maintain the position of associate presbyter, as by most metrics, your presbytery is not large enough (or financially solvent enough) to support one.
- You create 3-4 new stipendiary positions of regional liaison/minister. The role of these people (they should most ideally be elders but not necessarily teaching elders) would be to gather and support leaders in the various regions of the presbytery, being a communication liaison, providing relational connection and practical assistance to those churches. These roles might be compensated at a rate of \$1,000 per month, per person and should be located geographically present in the region.
- The stated clerk's role stay at 19 hours per week. We are aware that the current stated clerk works considerably more hours than he is currently compensated for. But we are also aware that the stated clerk is being asked to do more work than is necessary for the most-narrow interpretation of the job as per the Book of Order (ie. The stated clerk was the 'staff member' for our regional focus group, attends committee meetings that are also attended by other staff members, etc.). We would recommend that the stated clerk, in collaboration with the personnel committee and the acting head of staff, work to reduce the responsibilities held by the current stated clerk, either passing those responsibilities to other staff members or allowing them to drop.
- The secretary (Janice) be made 3-4 days per week, in part to pick up extra work from the stated clerk and to prepare the office to become fully remote. This would mean adding benefits for her but would eliminate the need to rehire additional office staff and would make Janice's life more sustainable (she is currently working 2 jobs and traveling five hours per day to get to work), thus increasing the likelihood that she would stay in the job.

4) Qualities of the next leader – The next executive leader will have some considerable challenges to face in bringing both order and trust to the presbytery. The ability for this person to succeed in the job will require particular skill-sets and personality traits. These are some that we see as essential:

- *Strong administrative skills* – Assisting the committees in healthy and efficient functioning will be important in re-infusing confidence and ownership in that role. This presbytery needs a leader who can create solid containers and communicate policy and process with clarity. While administration is not always the most warm and fuzzy spiritual gift, trust is first built through competence that produces confidence.
- *Differentiated* – Anxiety has been a primary driver of the presbytery for some time. Anxiety creates over-functioning, under-functioning, triangulation, and defensiveness. During our time with the presbytery, we observed each of these in different forms. This presbytery is also used to functioning with a

- much larger staff than it currently has. The pressure to over-function is ubiquitous in this system and it will require a very differentiated and confident leader to resist the urge to do so and to retrain the system's expectations about what is possible, given the current realities. This presbytery needs a leader who can exist in the same space as that much anxiety and that many expectations without absorbing them but can instead provide compassionate direction through it all.
- *Relational* – This presbytery is relational. Trust is built through relationships. In a world where we can't fix everything that's broken, we can at least let people know they are cared about.
 - *Imaginative*– The church is changing and therefore, so are its needs. The role of presbytery is changing and therefore, so should its way of functioning. A leader who has some imagination for
 - what could be done in and through the church.
 - how presbytery could think and function differently (ideally because they've worked in other presbyteries and bring some cross-pollination of ideas).
 - how technology can be used to interface more frequently and intentionally with congregations would be an asset to this system.
 - *Energy for the work* – Building trust is hard and relational work. The next executive presbyter needs to be prepared to be preaching in a different church every week, having frequently lunches with pastors, showing up at gatherings across the region, etc. There will be no substitute for visibility, presence and relationship. They need to be up for that.

5) Vision: Support for Congregations – As we listened to the voices of people across the country in general and in this presbytery in particular, it became quite clear that what is needed from middle judicatories today is help for congregations. We would recommend a vision that is something like *Helping Churches Provide Faithful Witness For Such a Time As This*. This vision should be lived out in the form of assisting congregations...

- To think strategically about sustainability and/or legacy
- To be imaginative and connectional about pastoral leadership.
- Practically with resources around transitions, facilities, and insurance.
- To think missionally about relevance and faithfulness in the community and the larger world.
- Move from good to great, in cases where there is congregational health and vitality.

Some practical and concrete ways for the presbytery to live out this support that were immediately obvious to us are....

- The presbytery should develop a clear formula for how to utilize the resources of church building sales. Given that the money is coming from a historic presbyterian witness in a particular community, we would recommend that the monies be utilized to reinforce and support that presbyterian witness in

- new and renewing ways. We might suggest a breakdown of something akin to 5 equal parts:
- *Congregational Revitalization Efforts* – Small churches need an extraordinary amount of help thinking about creative ministry and pastoral leadership models, right-sizing for the church they are becoming, sustainability, consideration of the building as an ministry asset, and legacy. You might consider running a cohort model (*see Appendix E*) that specifically supports them in that way.
 - *Support of Leaders – ie. Dynamic Leaders Committee* – Part of having healthy churches is having healthy leaders. Providing resources for leaders to stay healthy, energized and educated is a faithful use of presbytery money. We also heard that the Dynamic Leaders Committee is “one of the things in the presbytery that is going really well” and we believe in supporting things that are going really well. We would note that in some presbyteries, it’s easy to equate ‘leaders’ with ‘pastors’ but in your presbytery, 1/3rd of the churches have no pastoral leadership. We would encourage this committee to make sure they are considering how to support leadership in places that are lacking in traditional models.
 - *New Church Development Grants* – John. 12:24 tells us that when a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it has the potential to bear much fruit. Given that, when a church ceases to be and the presbyterian witness in that community is lost, we believe that some of that money would faithfully spent considering what new manifestations of faithful witness might be born out of those seeds.
 - *Creative New Initiatives Congregational Grants* – In an age of experimentation, offering money for churches to ‘try new thing’ may be where the good ideas come from. As Tod Bolsinger says, “experimental innovations are the key to surviving in a changing world.”²
 - *Presbytery Operations* – While most of the money should not be utilized for this, there are some operational realities that ‘keep the trains running on time’. Using some fraction of facilities sales to support the ongoing ability for the presbytery to function is faithful, particularly in a world where a declining number of churches will have the financial ability to support the infrastructure. Naming this percentage will also help reject the narrative that ‘presbytery just wants our money to pay themselves’, with the ability to say “only 20% of any building sales goes to future presbytery operations”.
 - Pastoral transitions are a considerable pain-point, both because churches can’t afford to pay called and installed pastors and because the pastors aren’t always out there to call. The lay-leader model/CRE is an important puzzle piece for many churches who will need to rely on other pathways outside of the classic called and installed pastor model. For this reason, the presbytery should invest in
 - bulking up the CRE program. This could mean...

² *Canoeing the Mountains*, Tod Bolsinger

- creating a more affordable and efficient lay-leader program.
- more broadly advertising the possibilities and proactively recruiting for them.
- Further subsidizing the training to assist congregations who can't afford the fee.
- Spearheading yoked-leadership models by providing leadership and vision for the clustering of churches and potential financial subsidies to incentivize pastoral interest.
- Bulking up the pulpit-supply options, either through intentional recruitment, cultivating relationships with full-communion partners or providing further financial incentives to pastors to go to rural communities.

While there are many other ways to support congregations from this sense of vision, at least these should be attended to as quickly as possible.

Staging of Recommendations

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither do presbytery's change that fast. Due to your current situation, the roll out of the above recommendations would happen over a period of approximately three years. The following is our best attempt to explain what that timeline might look like:

Given the facts of your current staffing model (Rev. Landino on administrative leave), your financial situation likely makes it challenging to make any staffing changes before the end of 2026. In this calendar year, we would recommend that you focus on the recommendations related to

- Governance and polity – this is a great time to write your by-laws, committee descriptions, job descriptions and your manuals, ask presbytery to clarify the roles of the vision team, finish your financial audit, create financial policies about church closure, etc.
- Increase the hours of the administrative assistant so that she can immediately help alleviate some pressure points from the state clerk and can also help prepare the office to be ready to move virtually.
- Communicate – Begin now to communicate. And over-communicate. And repeat.
- Build Relationships – Have presbytery meetings in-person. Encourage Rev. Kanerva to spend her time in churches. With pastors. Being visible. Being present. She already has a great reputation for this. We would simply suggest that she continue to be encouraged to prioritize this in a world where time is a limited commodity.
- Invest in small, rural churches – Given the urgency of their situation and the bandwidth of the current staff, we would recommend that you run The Center for Healthy Churches *Designing for a New Norm* Cohort model for the small churches in your presbytery. *See Appendix F for more information.*

In 2027, it is hopeful that the case with Rev. Landino will be resolved, thus freeing up additional personnel money to begin the process of....

- Hiring the new executive presbytery and sundowning the role of associate executive.
- Following one pilot, you may consider running a second iteration of the Designing for the New Norm Cohort, in light of the fact that you may not want to hire the regional liaisons until 2028 (after the new executive arrives).

In 2028, with the new leadership in place, you will be prepared to

- Hire 3-4 regional liaisons who can begin to invest in building community among the rural and small congregations.
- Accelerate the process of being ready to move out of the leased office space to become entirely remote.
- Once the office is remote, intentionality should be made to host committee meetings and presbytery gatherings more broadly (geographically) across the presbytery, in the churches of the presbytery.

We are aware that this role-out does not immediately eliminate your budget deficits and goes slower than some might wish. Still, deliberate and calculated roll-out is best practice when making system change. It is our hope that the communication and governance shifts will buy the political capital to compensate for the speed of the process.

We have been grateful, over the past few months, to be given the opportunity to hear your stories and your heart. We appreciate the confidence placed in us, both for your willingness to share with sufficient candor to help us see the whole picture and to allow us voice to speak into your situation. Our recommendations are not perfect and are meant to be thrown into your larger conversations and discernment. Still, in good faith, we offer you our best and most expert advice, in hopes that it will help you more effectively and sustainably live out your witness in this place and time. We feel hopeful for God's work among you.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dr. Reginald Well and Michelle Snyder

ADDENDUM: Staffing Recommendations

Due to the number of questions received during our in-person presentation of the report about the absence of a recommendation to increase to the stated clerk's hours, we have attached this addendum with some additional research and explanation as fodder for your thinking.

- Across the PCUSA, there are approximately 13 presbyteries that had between 60-70 churches (recognizing that as churches close, merge and are planted, this is a moving target). We have listed their current staffing configuration:

<u>Presbytery</u>	<u># of churches</u>	<u>Staffing Configuration</u>
Presbytery of East Tennessee	61	FT EP/ PT SC
John Knox Presbytery	60	FT EP/ PT SC
Blackhawk Presbytery	64	One position (1/2 EP, 1/2 SC)
Presbytery of Eastern Virginia	64	FT EP/ PT SC
Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley	60	FT EP/ PT SC
Presbytery of Baltimore	65	FT EP/2 associate EP's/ PT SC
Presbytery of the Coastlands	67	FT EP/PT split between SC & administrative co-leader.....so the specific job of SC is less than half time)
Presbytery of Western NY	66	One Position (1/2 EP, 1/2 SC)
Presbytery of Redstone	65	One Position (1/2 EP, 1/2 SC)
Presbytery of Transylvania	65	FT EP/ PT SC
Presbytery of San Francisco	68	FT EP/FT Associate/ PT SC (Note, she is currently working FT as a 25-hour stated clerk, 15 hour admin while they are in an EP search)
Holston Presbytery	69	FT EP/ PT SC
Beaver-Butler Presbytery	70	FT EP/ PT SC

In fact, you have to go all the way up to the 7th largest presbytery in the PCUSA, by number of members at 23,000, to find a full-time stated clerk (your presbytery currently have slightly over 8,000 members). And you have to go up to the 6th largest presbytery in the country by number of churches, at about 85 churches, to find a full-time stated clerk. Nearly all of these stated clerks from the above presbyteries work in some retired or bi-vocational capacity.

- Our recommendation is also mindful that while the above is the current configuration of staffing for presbyteries your size, by nearly every metric and trajectory, you are trending down in numbers of both members and churches. While guess-timates range in terms of how many churches will close and when, there is virtually no argument that your presbytery will continue to get smaller over time and for the foreseeable future. In light of this, we would suggest that it is unwise to trend in a direction counter to the overall direction of the PCUSA given your current budget deficit and your imminent and on-going decline.

- We heard loud and clear that your churches are in need of help with vitality, sustainability and legacy. So if there is additional money to be spent on personnel, we believe that it should be congregation-facing in the ways that we highlighted in the report. Spending more money on the bureaucratic function of the presbytery diverts money from uses that can be assisting congregations. You can see in the list above that even in presbyteries where the financial resources exist to pay for additional staff (ie. Baltimore and San Francisco), they have utilized those resources to hire additional associate executives for positions that are more congregational-focused and they have maintained the part-time nature of the stated clerk position). We realize that there may be a need for some administrative support and we did suggest that adding an extra day to the current office administrator (which, among other things, was a recommendation we received from Rev. Kanerva), thus possibly taking some administrative load off of the stated clerk, the bigger is that we believe her position is also capable of and oriented towards helping congregations in a more generalist way with those additional hours.
- Finally, from a practical perspective, increasing her hours would not necessarily commit you to the confines of the PCUSA Board of Pensions (as it would if you were to increase the hours of the current stated clerk), thus giving you freedom to provide some modicum of benefits in a more cost-effective way than the alternative.

Again, we don't say this believing that the current job description of 19-hours per week currently aligns with the workload of the stated clerk. And we don't say it to undervalue that work either. Bureaucracy is not a bad word and the functions of the stated clerk keep our structures with the decency and order that we hold so dear. In fact, we believe (and have named in the report) that the stated clerk should be paid at a rate that is above that of presbytery minimum and strongly advocate that the personnel do a salary analysis to get your stated clerk's salary up to at least the average of the stated clerks in your synod.

We know the work of ministry is always bottomless and that without the entire system working together to assist the current stated clerk in aligning his time with the hours he is compensated for, you do him a disservice. We simply name that in world of hard choices and limited resources, that hard work of system alignment is a more faithful use of your resources than increasing the hours of the job so that the system does not have to change.

Appendix A

Regional Conversations at Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery

February 28, 2026

Facilitated by Michelle Snyder and Reginald Wells

1) What are the ways you personally (or your church) have been recipients of the ministry of the presbytery?

- 1) Pulpit supply / EP came to preach
- 2) During transitions (pastoral)
- 3) Ordained me
- 4) Elder/communion training
- 5) Attendance and hosting meetings
- 6) VBS grants
- 7) Disaster relief
- 8) Youth triennium grant
- 9) Education – presbytery meetings
- 10) Leadership issues staff helped with
- 11) Grants (technology, feeding the hungry)
- 12) Pulpit supply
- 13) Pastoral care (staff and colleagues)
- 14) Presbyterian Women
- 15) Ordination to serve
- 16) Connectionalism

AI Says the 3 Key Takeaways:

- **Sustaining Pastoral Leadership & Transitions:** The presbytery plays a critical role in the life cycle of pastoral leadership. This includes direct support during transitions (such as search processes), providing pulpit supply and interim leadership, and the formal acts of ordination and installation.
- **Capacity Building through Training & Education:** A core function is equipping both clergy and laity. This is achieved through structured elder and communion training, educational opportunities at presbytery meetings, and specialized leadership support to help staff navigate complex congregational issues.
- **Resource Sharing & Collaborative Mission:** The presbytery acts as a hub for connectionalism, moving resources to where they are needed most. This manifests as financial support through grants (for VBS, technology, or hunger programs) and coordinated responses to emergencies, such as disaster relief

2) What are the challenges that will be facing your congregation in the next 5-10 years that concern you?

- 1) Aging (mentioned in both groups) – No children
- 2) Shrinking
- 3) Building insurance
- 4) Board of Pensions dues
- 5) Reduced number of pastoral candidates
- 6) Technological complexities
- 7) Resourcing/understanding the challenges of small/rural churches
- 8) “Soccer on Sundays” – programming for kids competing with worship
- 9) Geographical fringe
- 10) Declining
- 11) Survival → Relevance and messaging (when we’re competing with mega-churches)
- 12) Demographics
- 13) Not enough leadership to sustain our current structures
- 14) Insurance
- 15) Finances (deficits)
- 16) Technological expertise
- 17) Urgency

AI says the 3 Key Takeaways Are:

- **Demographic Decline and Vitality:** The most frequent concerns revolve around **aging** members and **shrinking** numbers, specifically a lack of children and young families. This leads to a crisis of survival and relevance, as the church struggles to compete with cultural shifts (like "Soccer on Sundays") and larger mega-churches for the attention of a changing demographic.
- **Escalating Operational Costs:** Financial pressure is a major hurdle, specifically driven by rising "fixed" costs like building insurance, Board of Pensions dues, and general budget deficits. These mounting expenses create a heavy burden for congregations that are simultaneously dealing with declining membership and shrinking revenue.
- **Structural and Leadership Gaps:** There is a significant worry regarding the sustainability of current church structures. This is compounded by a reduced number of pastoral candidates, a lack of lay leadership, and the "technological complexities" of modern ministry that many smaller or rural churches feel unequipped to handle.

3) Have there been resources that you have needed from the Presbytery that you did not get?

- 1) Not always very nimble
- 2) Not always clear who to ask / where to find info
- 3) During transition, COM wasn't as helpful as it could have been
- 4) Limited number of ordained pastors
- 5) Pulpit supply list doesn't include this far south
- 6) "I feel like a step-child"
- 7) Getting information is hard
- 8) "We need regional meetings"
- 9) Can't get a call back from the presbytery
- 10) "We didn't know who owned our building for years"
- 11) Churches are between 15-40 structures. We're inherited don't support small churches.
- 12) Pastors sometimes get information but members don't

AI Says the 3 Key Takeaways are:

- **Breakdowns in Communication and Accessibility:** There is a significant frustration with the Presbytery's responsiveness and transparency. Respondents noted that it is often unclear "who to ask" for information, and some reported difficulty getting calls back or finding specific data (such as building ownership). This lack of clear communication channels makes the Presbytery feel inaccessible and slow to react ("not always very nimble").
- **Geographic and Structural Marginalization:** A strong sense of being "left out" exists among churches on the "geographical fringe" or those with smaller congregational sizes. This is evidenced by pulpit supply lists that don't extend to southern regions and a feeling that the Presbytery's structures are "inherited" and designed for larger churches rather than supporting the 15-40 member congregations that feel like "step-children."
- **Insufficient Support During Critical Transitions:** Despite the Presbytery's role in pastoral transitions, respondents felt that committees (like the Committee on Ministry) were not as helpful as they could have been during these times. There is a specific need for more localized or "regional" engagement and a larger pool of available ordained pastors to fill vacancies and provide pulpit supply.

4) Anything else we need to know?

- a. Clerks don't get information.
- b. Hard to find minutes from Presbytery gatherings.
- c. "We don't know what's going on anywhere else"
- d. Weekly newsletter is good and thorough but with lots of political overtones
- e. November meeting illustrated a lack of transparency and chaos
- f. Need different modes of communication. Also, more timely and accessible
- g. We were hurt by what Ryan did with the three small churches
- h. Lack spiritual leadership and need "a face" (to do a monthly service, funerals)
- i. Further collaboration with seminary
- j. We need help rethinking church (adaptive change innovations, creative reuse)
- k. Could presbytery committee reports be sent out early to shorten meetings?
- l. We struggle to find session members.
- m. Balancing the presbytery budget is essential for long-term sustainability.
- n. Connecting churches to resources
- o. Presbytery website outdated
- p. More community building at presbytery meetings.
- q. Meetings have a lot of insider baseball.
- r. "I don't know what gets decided at presbytery meetings or where to find the agenda."

AI Says the 3 Key Takeaways are:

- **Systemic Information & Transparency Gaps:** While the newsletter is praised by some, many feel disconnected from the Presbytery's actual business. The lack of accessible agendas, minutes, and committee reports—combined with "insider baseball" meeting dynamics—creates a sense of chaos and a lack of transparency that leaves Clerks and members feeling uninformed.
- **Desire for Relational & Spiritual Presence:** Beyond administrative tasks, there is a deep hunger for the Presbytery to be "a face" of spiritual leadership. Churches are asking for more community-building, a pastoral presence for services or funerals, and better connectionalism to hear "what's going on anywhere else" rather than just receiving political or administrative updates.
- **Need for Adaptive Change & Innovation:** Congregations are looking to the Presbytery for help in "rethinking church." This includes navigating the struggle to find Session members, exploring "creative reuse" of buildings, collaborating with seminaries, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Appendix B

PRESBYTERY MEETING RESPONSES GIDDINGS-LOVEJOY PRESBYTERY 2/28/2026

Question #1: In what ways have you or your congregation been a recipient of the ministry of the presbytery?

- Commissioned lay pastor training
- Validating a ministry
- Participating in New Worshipping Communities
- GLPBY advocacy for CPE
- Assistance with staff difficulties/conflict
- Opportunity to participate in international mission
- Financial support (Minister grants, construction loan, associate pastor support)
- Fellowship with presbytery folks (pastors retreat), collegiality with others
- Triennium
- Presbytery staff attended church leadership training
- COM assistance during difficult conversations re. dissolution of call
- Support during/after tornado
- Not using educational resources
- Sunday Schools do not want to change and have been studying together for 75 years – churches don't take advantage of 17 (?)
- Churches close to presbytery could use educational resources
- COM during pastor transition
- Grants for community events like VBS and movie nights
- Would satellite offices help?
- Commission ruling elders
- Communion training
- Disaster relief
- Guidance from COM
- Session moderators
- Benefit from the leadership of COM during an "interim" time
- Another church said not so much. (?)
- Presbytery was helpful in finding an interim position
- Visiting worship leadership at their church's request
- Received some grants for summer outreach program
- Social justice journey to Alabama
- Assistance with supply pastors
- Met a lot of people (connections) through presbytery meetings
- Importance of presbytery during challenging times in church

- Care and relationships of presbytery to pastor – when in conflict things to too far before reaching out to presbytery
- Telling the truth with love and grace, honest approach to ministry
- Commitment to anti-racist work of DRAWP
- Peace witness of guns to gardens
- Community grounded in spirituality
- Grant from presbytery to enhance technology use in the church
- Support during pastoral transition
- Process and procedure assistance with healthy communication practices
- Leadership support to alleviate anxiety and affirm healthy process
- Training opportunities, such as boundary awareness
- Guest speakers for education and connection with larger network of the denomination
- Enabled us to get a pastor
- Help with mission
- They have been fill-ins when not having a full-time pastor
- Good support at the beginning of lay pastor program and then nothing – where does it stand?
- Pastoral support when church is in transition if you are in the city
- Grants from presbytery
- PCHAS – always welcomed and given opportunity
- Triennium – daughters been able go to – scholarships
- Information – guidance for EIN numbers for solar power (to communicate with IRS)
- Support for establishing yoked partnership (First: Union and Pacific)
- Approval (clearing the way) for sale of Pacific's building
- We have received grants for technology and a grant for our drama/music camp for children in the summer
- Working with Committee on Ministry to get a pastor
- Assistance and education to merge churches
- Sharing information between congregations
- Presbytery diversity provides a table for all to gather
- Called interim and associate pastors
- Social justice efforts – insurance for events, gift cards, support
- DRAWP Committee and writing Overture of Apology
- Working together
- Churches merging
- Support/advice for pastors on leadership, etc.
 - Pastor retreats
- Connections to people
- Welcoming all members to work on committees – empowerment
 - Promoting living in Christ

- Leadership opportunities, serving on teams
- Planning calendars, Books of Order supply
- Volunteer accelerator
- Recipient of the mentorship
- Faith / Des Peres (**Note from C – this is the name of one of the churches in the presbytery)
 - Help with discernment to path forward – help from Ryan
 - Help from various ministers of presbytery
- Nice to know there is plan to turn
- LoveJoy – minister colleagues – relationships and community fo faith with presbytery people
- Opportunities for connection
- “Church” for teaching elders
- During covid – tech grants
- Training for use of tech
- Officer training – stewardship
- Welcome and help from presbytery members for not get ordained (?)
- Worship and Elder Hour – inspirational and helpful
- Journey to Justice trip to AL (and committee which enabled trip)
- Pastoral support of presbytery staff (largely informal)
- (From where to presbytery staff receive their own pastoral care?)
- As part of GA steering committee, good support from presbytery staff and presbytery members
- Mediation team helpful to pastor and session (13 years ago)
- Not enough credit given to staff for coordinating presbytery meetings, especially in tech age

KEY AI SUMMARY TAKE-AWAYS

- **Critical Support During Transitions and Crisis:** The presbytery is most valued as a lifeline during "liminal" moments. This includes navigating the Committee on Ministry (COM) process to find new pastors, assistance with church mergers or dissolutions, and providing immediate disaster relief (such as after a tornado) or mediation during staff conflicts.
- **Financial and Resource Empowerment:** Congregations heavily rely on the presbytery for tangible growth tools. This includes technology grants (especially during COVID-19), funding for community outreach like VBS and summer camps, and specialized training for commissioned lay pastors and ruling elders.

- **Relational Connection and Shared Identity:** Beyond administrative help, the presbytery serves as a "church for pastors," offering a sense of collegiality and spiritual community. Initiatives like the "Journey to Justice" trips, anti-racism work (DRAWP), and youth events like Triennium foster a connection to the larger denomination that individual churches cannot maintain on their own.

Question #2: What are the challenges that will be facing your congregation in the next 5-10 years that concern you?

- “Death tsunami” ® of members (?)
- Congregations facing closure and conversations related to closing
- Transition from long tenured pastor
- Matching grant funds for New Worshipping Communities
- Pastoral care of ministers of closing churches
- Aging buildings
- Churches learning to adjust to virtual meeting; also incorporating AI
- Maintaining community. Ages 20-40 kids and since those kids often move, connecting with these kids who are not from area
- Anniversary celebrations for aging churches
- Accessibility and different elevations
- Physical plant, roofs
- Adapting music to be relevant
- Insurance costs
- Declining (AGING) membership
- Leadership (pastor)
- Building maintenance (large building, small congregation)
- Maintaining and growing membership
- Continue to come out of a budget deficit
- Older building and capital campaign
- Changing neighborhood
- As churches decline and face closure – how does presbytery assist with helping the people find a new faith community and be supportive?
- Insurance/real estate – what are resources that can help?
- Satellite model to help struggling congregations
- When churches assimilate, honest conversations about how it will change everyone and each church
- Connections!
- Numerical and financial sustainability

- Tension between individual and collective identity when faced with opportunities to merge
- Practices of evangelism and discipleship
- Growing and sustaining ministry and community for youth, children, and families
 - Confirmation that leads to deeper commitment not “graduation” from church
- Youth, drifting away, not going to church when they move away
- Pastoral leadership availability
- Finances
- Aging congregation
- Churches closing
- Maybe 2-5 years – being OK with church looking different as we go forward
- Accept of change
- Aging congregation
- How can we get youth back in the church?
- Select sports keeping kids away from church
- Kids live in different neighborhoods so they don’t go to school together
- Education needed
- Negativity of some member
 - Leadership wonder why some are presbyterian (theological)
- Need to connect Bible and social justice
- Aging of members – smaller congregations – budget issues
- Hearing voices across political divide
- Retiring pastor (change in leadership)
- Shrinking membership
- Aging population
- Racial segregation, community adaptation
- Higher emotional/spiritual needs of new members
- Need more community engagement – other churches, organizations banding together
- Are we facing our death?
- People stuck with “how we’ve always done it”
- Small churches – can’t find people who want to relocate to rural area
- Pastors not wanting to go to rural Missouri
- Lack of empathy for spouse needing work in small communities
- People coming into candidates are often from larger churches
- Keeping property maintained in older churches
- Insurance for pastor and congregation
- Focus on survival
- Racism within U.S. on rise, coupled with white fragility. How can we as a congregation develop ways (with minority community closeby) to address historical

harm done? Exper. [Experience?] of Second Presbyterian STL – needs to be mandate for all congregations

- Hospitality to those perceived as “different” – folks on spectrum, multitude of racial and gender identities
- Public health crises including mental illness
- More than half of congregations in presbytery have no pastor. Alternatives? Many congregations want full-time pastor but cannot afford. Many congregations have resources and have had no “hits” in a year’s time.

Key AI Takeaways:

- **Demographic Decline and Aging Membership:** The most pervasive concern is an aging and shrinking membership, often referred to as a "death tsunami." This trend is leading to a loss of youth and families, a "graduation" mindset after confirmation, and a general struggle to maintain community as younger generations drift away or move.
- **Financial and Infrastructure Crisis:** Many congregations are grappling with the heavy burden of "aging buildings" and high maintenance costs (roofs, insurance, accessibility) while operating with smaller budgets and fewer members. This includes a critical "pastoral leadership gap," where many churches cannot afford full-time pastors or struggle to find candidates willing to relocate to smaller or rural communities.
- **The Identity and Survival Struggle:** There is a profound tension between maintaining a traditional identity and the necessity of change. This includes navigating church closures, mergers, and "satellite models," while also trying to adapt to modern needs like AI, virtual meetings, social justice engagement, and fostering hospitality for a more diverse range of racial and gender identities.

Question #3: Have you ever needed resources from the Presbytery that you did not get?

- Important to ask presbytery if you need something. Shouldn't feel alone. Must see your church as connected to presbytery.
- Spiritual crisis – preach to the larger world
- Delay in closing churches that have shrunk
- Change the time of presbytery meetings to 10am – not 9am
- Who to contact?? At presbytery for info or answer question

- Needed someone to give a “I have a dream” speech about the presbytery / inspiring for congregation
- More presence of leaders at regular (non-conflicted) meetings and worship services
- Rural churches
- Not having access to exit interview
- No one coming to support family during crisis
- Not attending to “big” moments of New Worshiping Community
- Not having help framing / writing required anti-racism policies
- More presbytery representation at life events (especially for New Worshipping Communities) – see this as an issue of fragmented community
- Emails, phone calls not responded to in timely bases
- Lack of inclusion of non-parish minister members
- Help during pastor transitions – it takes too long and it’s not clear how to get help if you’re not getting it. People want to help but staff not sufficient to follow this other baked (?) into the decades-old process.
- Sometimes presbytery causes harm by enforcing rules without offering help to comply with said rules
- Help with moving process along
- 2 liaisons who did not show up
- Resources for insurance and maintenance
- Legal assistance not provided
- Presbytery not being helpful with transitional pastor becoming new permanent pastor (now possible through NFOG as of 2011)
- When pastors are in crisis or conflict with church – take care of the family of the pastor
- Please don’t pass on the problems to other places just to be rid of issues
- Boundaries help to build community
- Presbyteries, church, culture are all in flux
- Finances dictate decisions instead of decisions dictating finances
- Process works when you work the process!
- Time with people (or a person)...
 - To vent
 - Sounding board
- Wish website were more helpful, more user-friendly
- Wood River and College Avenue merger made different by shifting communication structures at presbytery during that time
- Granite City – delay in vetting our current minister
- Connect with other non-presbyterian groups in the community
- Sometimes don’t know what to ask for
- As an elder or church member, didn’t know what the presbytery could offer me
- Book of Order seems just rules – hard to understand

- Someone told me “We, as a presbytery, spend a lot of time in reorganization – let’s spend more time doing.”
- Greater transparency relating to finances, mission work
- Response to emails/calls in timely manner
- CPM – streamline process for inquirers and candidates
 - Need more information and support
 - Especially for people of color
- Commissioned pastor program needs more support
- Better visa/immigration support for pastors of color
- Officer training support – materials online, etc.
- Resource list for PCUSA contacts – info for leaders to get help
- Staff not always responding to email
- Direction for process – not always getting answers – CPM
- Lack of common understanding with CPM process
- Denomination not providing as much guidance because of transitions there – contact could be difficult
- Presbytery – too much “you’re on your own”
- Commissioned Pastor Program
- Needs to be raise in importance
- Lack of pastoral care at time clergy member needed it, from presbytery staff
- “Send us a pastor” expectation
- Not presbytery, but CLC matching system not able to provide enough names. Dip in seminary enrollment part of picture. Grads not wanting to live/serve rural areas. Also lower numbers of AP positions available to interested grads.

Key AI Takeaways

- **Communication and Navigation Gaps:** There is significant frustration regarding slow response times to emails and calls, a "user-unfriendly" website, and general confusion about who to contact. Members often feel they "don't know what to ask for" or what the Presbytery even offers, leading to a sense of being "on your own."
- **Administrative and Transitional Delays:** The processes for pastoral transitions, candidate vetting (CPM), and church closures are seen as slow, bureaucratic, and understaffed. Congregations expressed a need for more "hands-on" legal, financial, and immigration support, noting that the Presbytery sometimes enforces rules (like the Book of Order) without providing the practical help needed to comply with them.

- **Lack of Relational Presence and Care:** There is a deep desire for more "human" connection, including pastoral care for clergy in crisis, attendance by Presbytery leaders at local church milestones, and support for rural or new worshipping communities. Many felt the Presbytery is too focused on "reorganization" and rules rather than showing up as a visible, inspiring presence during "big moments" or family crises.

Question #4: Other things to keep in mind in planning future

- Technology required for small churches to participate in remote presbytery are difficult
- Carpooling is under-utilized
- Used to have worship later, involve more people
- Remember Scripture and prayer should be our marketing strategy
- A lot of churches are not here because of geographical distance as well as those far away do not have the technology to attend on Zoom or Facebook. The need to be in person is important.
- Geographical issues
- Lack of internet
- Vision team – division/gap between Vision Team and rank and file
- Presbytery meetings – start Saturday meeting later – maybe at 10:00am
- Make meetings worth coming for
- Presbytery (*or possibly February?) – ADVERTISE
- Presbytery – practice grace
- LoveJoy, IL feels like the forgotten child. Don't forget about us.
- Lots of churches are not here
- Technology is hard
- New worshipping communities need our support
- Need to break down barriers between leadership and others
- Awesome that we're together
- Thanks for going out to the hinterlands
- Meetings are too early
- Pick low hanging fruit that is fruitful (how much energy does it take and how much do we get from it)
- Presbytery should, every few years, do a training to make sure everyone knows the rules and is following them

KEY AI Takeaways:

- **Bridging the Geographical and Technological Divide:** There is a strong feeling that "hinterland" and rural churches feel forgotten or excluded. Between

long travel distances and the "tech barrier" for those without reliable internet or Zoom skills, the Presbytery needs to simplify remote access and continue traveling to outlying areas to ensure everyone is included.

- **Improving Meeting Accessibility and Value:** To increase attendance, the Presbytery should consider logistical "low-hanging fruit." This includes starting meetings later (e.g., 10:00 AM instead of 9:00 AM), better advertising, utilizing carpooling, and—most importantly—ensuring the content of the meeting is "worth coming for" by focusing on worship and prayer rather than just business.
- **Closing the Leadership Gap with Relational Support:** There is a perceived "division" between the Vision Team/leadership and the "rank and file" members. The Presbytery needs to prioritize "practicing grace," breaking down barriers, and providing consistent support for New Worshipping Communities and smaller congregations (like LoveJoy) so they don't feel like "forgotten children."

Appendix C

Coordinating Council Description
Presbytery of Utica, NY

Manual of Operations: The Coordinating Council

Presbytery of Utica, New York

Amended per the Book of Order 2023-2025

I. Constitutional Foundation

The Coordinating Council operates under the authority of the **Presbytery**, which the *Book of Order* defines as a corporate council of the church consisting of all the congregations and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within its district (G-3.0301).

- **Principles of Administration:** The Council shall be guided by the "Principles of Presbyterian Government," ensuring that all decisions are made by presbyters (Ruling and Teaching Elders) gathered in council (F-3.02).
- **The Council as "Council":** Per G-3.0106, the Coordinating Council is responsible for maintaining a regular gradation of governance, ensuring that the acts of the Council are the acts of the whole church.

II. Identity and Composition (G-3.0103)

The Council is designed to reflect the "Unity in Diversity" of the Body of Christ (F-1.0403).

- **Parity:** In its membership and the formation of any task forces, the Council shall strive for a balance between Ruling Elders and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.
- **Representation:** The Council is constitutionally mandated to ensure that the "voice of the whole church" is heard, with particular attention to the inclusion of categories of persons often marginalized (G-3.0103).

III. Core Operational Responsibilities (Constitutional)

1. Mission and Governance Oversight (G-3.0301)

The Council is the primary body responsible for the "strategy of mission" within the Presbytery's bounds. This includes:

- **Developing Strategy:** Coordinating the work of its committees to reach the Presbytery's specific mission goals.
- **Ecumenical Relationships:** Engaging in "Conversations" and partnerships with other Christian bodies and mid-councils, as seen in the 2024-2025 regional discussions.

2. *Administrative and Judicial Safeguards*

- **Records and Minutes (G-3.0107):** The Council must ensure that the Stated Clerk maintains accurate, attested proceedings. These records are subject to at least annual review by the Synod.
- **Review of Lower Councils:** While the Council does not handle judicial business (per Bylaws), it provides the administrative framework that supports the Presbytery’s role in visiting and counseling sessions of local churches (G-3.0303).

3. *Financial Stewardship (G-3.0113)*

The Council ensures that the Presbytery fulfills its constitutional duty to:

- **Adopt a Budget:** Support the mission of the church at all levels.
- **Financial Review:** Ensure that a full financial review (audit) of all books and records is conducted annually by a public accountant or committee.

IV. The Narrative Cycle (The Council’s Seasonal Work)

Quarter	Focus Area	Constitutional / Local Link
Q1 (Jan–Mar)	Accountability	G-3.0104: Gathering Annual Statistical Reports for the General Assembly.
Q2 (Apr–Jun)	Policy & Prep	G-3.0401: Preparing overtures and business for the Synod and General Assembly.
Q3 (Jul–Sep)	Strategic Vision	G-3.0106: Evaluating mission task forces against the "Great Ends of the Church."

Q4 (Oct–Dec)	Transition	G-3.0110: Ensuring the election of officers and the transition of the "Manual of Operations."
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V. Delegation of Authority (G-3.0307)

The Presbytery may delegate specific powers to the Council. Any such "delegated authority" must be clearly recorded in the minutes, and all actions taken under this authority must be reported back to the full Presbytery at its next stated meeting to ensure transparency and constitutional compliance.

VI. Pastoral and Counselor Role

In alignment with G-3.0307, the Council (through its chairs, particularly COM) shall support the Presbytery's role to "serve as pastor and counselor to its ministers... and to facilitate relations between the presbytery and its congregations."

Final Summary Note:

By anchoring this manual in the *Book of Order*, the Coordinating Council of the Presbytery of Utica affirms that its administrative work—from Zoom docket to budget reviews—is a spiritual discipline intended to "strengthen and nurture the faith and life" of the people of God (F-3.0202).

Appendix D

Presbytery Council Description Presbytery of Hudson River

Purpose: The purpose of the Council is to oversee the mission and ministry of the Presbytery of Hudson River (HRP) in order to focus, align and coordinate its resources toward the presbytery's approved ministry goals.

Accountability: The Council shall be accountable to the HRP.

Authority: The Council may act on behalf of and with the full authority of the Presbytery in between meetings of the Presbytery (G-3.0109) in any and all matters and shall act on recommendations from Budget, Finance and Property Committee, Grants Committee and Personnel Committee.

Membership: No less than nine (9) and no more than (12) voting members with two ex officio members:

- The Chairperson of or the year-long Chairperson Designee from Budget, Finance and Property Committee, Grants Committee and Personnel Committee.*
- The Presbytery's current Moderator, Moderator-Elect and immediate past Moderator.*
- At least three (3) and not more than six (6) at-large persons, each serving three year staggered terms nominated by the Committee on Representation and Nominations and elected by the presbytery.*
- Two (2) ex officio members with voice but no vote: the General Presbyter, who will act as an ex officio resource, and the Stated Clerk, who shall record and distribute the minutes.*
- Overall composition shall strive to conform to principles of inclusiveness, representation and participation for race and gender, as well as the following principles:*
- Voting members shall serve no more than two (2) successive terms or a maximum of six (6) years without at least a one (1) year interval of non-service.*
- No at-large member shall serve concurrently on the Budget, Finance and Property Committee, Grants Committee and Personnel Committee.*
- No more than one member shall be from or be serving a particular church.*
- No two people shall be in the same family.*

Quorum: A quorum of the Council shall consist of majority of its membership and shall be required for business to be conducted.

Meetings:

- *Regular Meetings. Council will ordinarily meet monthly.*
- *Special Meetings. Council shall meet upon the call of its Moderator or any three (3) members with vote. Notice of a special meeting shall be sent to each member not less than three (3) days in advance of such meeting.*
- *Reports. The Budget, Finance and Property Committee, Grants Committee, Personnel Committee and any teams or task forces of the Council will make regular reports, ordinarily a draft of their minutes, to Council.*
- *Agenda. The proposed Council agenda will be developed by the General Presbyter, in consultation with the Stated Clerk and HRP moderator. It may include, in addition to the proposed items, any other business necessary for the work of the presbytery between Stated Meetings of HRP.*

Responsibilities:

1. *Coordinate and evaluate the ministry and mission of HRP by overseeing the following: ongoing visioning and strategic planning that identifies ministry goals; communication strategies both within and beyond the presbytery; and a long range calendar.*
2. *Oversee, monitor and evaluate the ministry teams as well as any task forces and teams created by the Council.*
3. *Recognize, support and relate to the partnerships of HRP.*
4. *Support the Budget, Finance and Property Committee by: providing guidance for, then affirming its recommendation, for the annual budget, the amount of Per Capita and the percentage of Mission Giving for the presbytery, synod and General Assembly; assisting it in its responsibility to ensure that the financial resources are available for the work of the presbytery and aligned with the overall mission and goals of the presbytery; and recommending to presbytery the election of the Treasurer.*
5. *Support the Grants Committee by: acting on recommendations for grants awarded from Legacy Fund; and ensuring that grants are aligned with the overall mission and goals of the presbytery.*
6. *Support the Personnel Committee by: approving the overall staff design of the presbytery; and*

recommending to presbytery the election of the Stated Clerk.

7. Oversee the meetings of HRP, approving the place, time, date, and the general docket of all meetings of Presbytery and the coordination of worship including the authorization and celebrations of the sacraments. (Note: the docket will ordinarily be developed by HRP Moderator, Moderator-elect, Stated Clerk and General Presbyter who may then be tasked by Council to produce a final version.)

8. Nominate for election by HRP the members and moderator of the Committee on Representation and Nominations.

9. Recommend to HRP any needed revisions/amendments to the presbytery's Bylaws and Manual of Operations (G-3.0106). Faith and Order Committee will then evaluate and provide comment to HRP on any changes to the By-Laws as recommended by the Council.

10. Work with the HRP committees and staff, when necessary, to develop and maintain a positive and supportive connection with HRP's congregations and members.

11. Coordinate HRP's relationship with the General Assembly, Synod and other Presbyteries and our ecumenical partnerships.

12. Provide any needed support and counsel to the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk.

Appendix E

Pittsburgh Presbytery Operations Manual – Executive Council

2. Executive Committee

There shall be a Presbytery Executive Committee, which shall be directly accountable to Presbytery. It shall make a full report to Presbytery of its meetings and its recommendations shall require action by Presbytery for implementation. Presbytery may, from time to time, delegate stated and specific responsibilities to Executive Committee, provided Executive Committee makes a full report of its actions to Presbytery at its next stated meeting.

Executive Committee is hereby authorized to act on behalf of Presbytery during those times when Presbytery is not in session and there are more than forty-five (45) days intervening between stated meetings of Presbytery or when time is of the essence. Executive Committee shall make a full report of its actions to Presbytery at its next stated meeting. The power and responsibilities of Executive Committee shall be limited to those powers and responsibilities assigned by this Manual or by Presbytery and shall be within its approved budget.

3. Ministry Teams

In consultation with the General Minister, the Executive Committee shall establish, direct, and dissolve ministry teams as the mission of the presbytery warrants. It may, if it chooses, determine an ending date for a ministry team when such team is created, and may, if it chooses, limit or determine parameters for the respective terms of ministry team members. Members of ministry teams shall be teaching or ruling elders, deacons, or members, of the constituent congregations of the Pittsburgh Presbytery. All ministry teams shall be reportable and responsible to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, through the General Minister, shall from time to time take note of what ministry teams exist, and their respective disciplines and missions. The ministry teams shall prepare their own mission statements, setting forth the scope of their mission and work, the boundaries within which each ministry team may operate and the minimum number of members who will serve on the team. Such mission statements, and any revisions to them, shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. The boundaries within which each ministry team may operate shall include at least the following: Scripture, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), this Manual, the mission statement of Presbytery, the current Presbytery budget, and the fact that the General Minister speaks for Presbytery. Ministry teams are responsible to the Executive Committee through the General Minister. Whenever a ministry team wishes to take any action outside the boundaries established for it, the ministry team shall take the proposed action to the Executive Committee for approval. If a ministry team needs to take a proposed action to Presbytery for approval, it shall first submit the proposed action to the Executive Committee, through the General Minister, for information and advice before taking its proposal to Presbytery.

4. Committees of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall have the following standing committees ...

... Ecclesiastical,

... Finance,

Such persons shall be bound by the following ...

... At any meeting of the Executive Committee, or a standing or special commission or committee, or a Ministry Team of Presbytery, no person may speak about or advocate for matters relating to any situation in which he or she may have a conflict of interest without first disclosing to the Executive Committee, commission, committee or Ministry Team the existence of the conflict of interest. Furthermore, a person having a conflict of interest in any such matters shall always abstain from voting on such matters .

... At any meeting of Presbytery no person may participate in debate upon matters relating to any situation in which he or she may have a conflict of interest without first disclosing to the presbyters the existence of the conflict of interest.

... No person may preside as Moderator of Presbytery or as Chair of the Executive Committee, a commission, a committee of the Executive Committee, or a standing or special commission or committee of Presbytery, or a Ministry Team at any meeting during such time that any matter regarding which he or she may have a conflict of interest is debated and voted on.

9. Officers of Commissions/Committees/Executive Committee

The officers of the Executive Committee, committees of the Executive Committee and the standing commissions and committees of Presbytery, shall be a Chair and a Vice Chair or Co-chairs, as the Executive Committee and the commissions or committees may determine. Each such officer shall be a teaching or ruling elder, and if a ruling elder shall be designated as a commissioner to Presbytery for his/her term of office. The officers shall be members of Executive Committee or their respective commission/committee, and shall be included in the number of members set forth in this Manual.

Mode of Election

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually by such Executive Committee from among its elected membership, following nomination by a task force of three (3) members of the Executive Committee appointed by the General Minister and the Stated Clerk, both of whom shall be members of the task force ex-officio without vote. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee shall be elected at the last Executive Committee meeting of the year to serve the following year. Both the Chair and the Vice Chair shall be eligible for re-election. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the standing commissions and committees of Presbytery shall be elected annually from among the membership of the standing commissions/committees, at its first stated meeting following the December meeting of Presbytery. All Chairs and Vice Chairs will be reported to Presbytery at the February stated meeting of Presbytery. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on

Nominations shall be nominated to Presbytery by the Ecclesiastical Committee through Presbytery's Executive Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair of all standing commissions and committees of Presbytery shall be eligible for re-election.

10. Quorums for Commissions/Committees/Executive Committee
Except as otherwise set forth herein, the quorum for the Executive Committee, the commissions and committees of the Executive Committee, and the standing commissions and committees, and any special committees, of Presbytery, shall be one-third (1/3) of the voting membership. Provided, however, that the quorum for the Commission on Ministry, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry, and the Permanent Judicial Commission shall have a quorum equal to a majority of their members.

11. Regular Reviews

Internal Review

The Executive Committee, each standing commission and committee of Presbytery, and each Ministry Team, shall conduct an annual internal review of the minutes and records and program of its standing commissions, committees and task forces. Each special committee shall be responsible for submitting an annual written report concerning its work to the Executive Committee which, in turn, shall report to Presbytery.

Program Review

The Executive Committee and each standing commission and committee of Presbytery, if not otherwise regularly reporting, shall present through the Executive Committee a brief written summary of its work to Presbytery at the December meeting.

The Executive Committee and its standing committees/commissions shall be reviewed in each even year in which there is not a review of the total structure of Presbytery. The review shall be made by a special committee appointed by the Moderator at the December meeting prior to the review. The results of this review shall be reported to Presbytery no later than the May/June meeting of Presbytery. Presbytery structure and the work of all standing commissions, committees, and ministry teams of Presbytery shall be reviewed every fourth (4th) year by the Executive Committee, through a special committee appointed by the Chair of the Executive Committee at the Executive Committee meeting immediately preceding the December meeting of Presbytery prior to the review.

Article 11: The Presbytery Executive Committee

1. Membership

The Presbytery Executive Committee shall consist of twenty-four (24) members with vote in three (3) classes. In so far as possible, elected members shall equally represent all four branches. Overall composition of the Executive Committee shall conform to principles of inclusiveness, representation, and participation for race and gender, and

shall include equal numbers of ruling and teaching elders. Of the teaching elders on the Executive Committee, at least two-thirds (2/3) shall be teaching elders currently serving in churches within Presbytery. The Executive Committee shall also include the following ex-officio members without vote: the Moderator, the Senior Vice Moderator, the immediate Past Moderator, the General Minister, the Associate Presbytery Ministers, and the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk shall be the secretary of the Executive Committee. The members of the Executive Committee shall be teaching elders and ruling elders.

2. Purpose

The Executive Committee shall work with and support the congregations of Presbytery, set goals and do strategic planning for Presbytery, monitor the performance of the General Minister, and have general oversight of the ministry teams and of the ecclesiastical responsibilities of Presbytery as a governing body. The Executive Committee shall be the Board of Trustees/Board of Directors of the Corporation of Pittsburgh Presbytery. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee shall be the President and the Vice President respectively of the Corporation and the Board of Trustees. The Stated Clerk shall be the secretary of the Corporation and the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer of the Corporation shall be elected annually by the Executive Committee from among its membership. The Trustees/Directors, except as otherwise provided in this Article, shall exercise all powers granted to a board of directors under the Nonprofit Corporation Law of Pennsylvania, including without limitation the power to acquire, own, encumber, lease, and dispose of property; to borrow or lend money, to enter into obligations appropriate for the transaction of the affairs of Presbytery; to invest and reinvest the funds of Presbytery; to engage auditors to conduct an annual audit of the books and accounts of Presbytery; to engage legal counsel; and to manage and build up the permanent endowment funds of Presbytery.

3. Standing Committees of the Executive Committee

In order to fulfill its purpose, the Executive Committee shall have the following committees shown below. The Chairs of such committees shall be members of the Executive Committee and appointed by the Chair of the Executive Committee with the consent of the full Executive Committee.

Appendix F

Designing for the New Norm Cohort for Small Churches Reimagining a Sustainable, Missional, and Vital Future for your Church

The landscape for the American church has shifted. With rising costs and changing attendance, patterns, of doing things often feels like an uphill battle. Yet, in this; God is doing something fresh. We invite your church to move beyond survival mode and into a season of prayerful, strategic discernment.

The Opportunity

This 9-month journey is not a one-size-fits-all model and is designed to provide tools to help you look in the mirror at your congregation and out the window at your community to exegete your unique context and discern a future that is both faithful to God's call and sustainable for your people.

The Roadmap

All participating churches from the classis (up to 13) will send their teams to an in-person gathering that will be facilitated by experts in church transformation and adaptive change. The cohort model blends collective learning with customized coaching to help each congregation move from what now to a clear what's next.

- 3 In-Person Gatherings of all Congregational Teams: Launch, mid-point check-in, and a final celebration/reporting session.
- Monthly Zoom Coaching: Personalized sessions to keep your team on track between gatherings.

The Deliverable: A discerned Pathway for the Future, including concrete next steps based on your assets, capacity, and calling.

The Commitment

Who: A team of 5-6 leaders (including the pastor) from your congregation to serve as your team. They will be thought leaders, liaisons to the consistory and help guide the congregation through the discernment.

When: Launching Fall 2026, running through Spring of 2027

Where: A mix of local in-person host sites around the Classis (Coaching sessions will be done virtually)

Why Join?

You don't have to navigate this transition alone. By joining the cohort, your church will benefit from the shared wisdom of other congregations, expert facilitation, and a structured process that honors your church's history while preparing it for a vital future.