

**PRESBYTERY OF THE CASCADES  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
January 25, 2025**

A Special Meeting of The Presbytery of the Cascades was held on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at Savage Memorial Presbyterian Church, Portland, Oregon. Moderator Chris Murphy being absent, the Reverend Margaret Mitsuyasu, 2024-2025 Moderator Elect of the Presbytery, was in the chair and the Reverend Paul Belz-Templeman, Stated Clerk, was present recording the proceedings.

The meeting was called by teaching elders and ruling elders serving on the Presbytery Leadership Commission for the purpose of receiving the report of the Conflict Assessment and Referral/Recommendation/Reconciliation Team (CART) with presentation and Question and Answer time. By Presbytery rule, the moderator shall call a special meeting at the request, or with the concurrence, of two teaching elders and two ruling elders, the elders being of different congregations. The names of those requesting the meeting are found in the call to the meeting attached as Appendix A.

Article VI.C. of the Presbytery's Bylaws states that the quorum for a meeting of the presbytery, whether stated or special, shall be no fewer than the number of ruling elders required to represent at least ten percent of the congregations of the presbytery, and an equal number of teaching elders of the presbytery. At the time of the meeting, the presbytery was composed of 88 congregations. Thus the quorum for this meeting was 9 ruling elders representing 9 congregations of the presbytery and an equal number of minister members.

**56** presbyters registered attendance at the meeting. Presbyters in attendance were **33** minister- members of the presbytery, **16** elder commissioners from **12** of the congregations of this presbytery, and **7** elders enrolled as commissioners by virtue of presbytery service. A list of the presbyters registering attendance is attached as **Appendix B**.

The meeting was called to order by Margaret Mitsuyasu at 9:30 am. Margaret opened the meeting with prayer and stated the purpose for the meeting.

Sarah Sanderson-Doughty presented the work of CART, noting that the charge to CART was to understand the conflict, not to resolve it. The CART report is attached as **Appendix C**.

Hilary Hughes led the presbytery in a guided meditation in preparation for the morning's work, followed by the singing of a hymn.

Transitional Executive Presbyter Brian Craker introduced Jay Wittmeyer who has been engaged by the Presbyterian Leadership Commission to serve as the mediator the current conflict in the presbytery. Jay provided a framework for the work going forward.

The Sarah Sanderson-Doughty and the CART team led the presbytery in a small group exercise designed to elicit understanding and questions about the CART report.

Margaret Mitsuyasu moderated a plenary discussion of the CART report.

The Meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:42 pm by Moderator-Elect Margaret Mitsuyasu.



Approved by Presbytery Leadership Commission on 02/13/2025- PBT

Paul Belz-Templeman

## Appendix A: Notice of Special Meeting



### NOTICE OF SPECIAL PRESBYTERY MEETING

9:30 am, JANUARY 25, 2025

Savage Memorial Church

1740 SE 139<sup>th</sup> Ave

Portland, OR 97233

A special meeting of the Presbytery of the Cascades has been called by Moderator Chris Murphy upon the request of the Presbytery Leadership Commission\*. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the Conflict Assessment and Referral/Recommendation/REconciliation Team ("CART") report. No other business may be brought up at this meeting. The meeting will be held from 9:30am-12:30 pm on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at Savage Memorial Presbyterian Church, Portland Oregon.

At this meeting commissioners will hear from CART, have the opportunity to ask questions, engage in small and large group discussions and hear from the mediators as to next steps in the process.

\*Members of the Presbytery Leadership Commission voting to request this special meeting include ruling elders Carol Eckerd (Roseburg, First) Dan Vetter (Portland, Westminster), Gail Black (Portland, Rose City Park), Lisa Snodderly (Portland, First), Marilyn Howe (Portland, First), Eileen Sheelar (Keizer, John Knox), Sharon Hasenjaeger (West Linn, Emmanuel), Linda Jackson Shaw (Redmond, Community) and ministers Amy Delaney, Steve Hammond, Ken Hood, Eric Lindsay, Elizabeth Winslea. Special meetings of the presbytery may be called by two ministers and elders from two different congregations.

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### Ruling elders

Chris	Macfarlane	Hillsboro, Tualatin Plains; CART Member
Eileen	Sheelar	Keizer John Knox
Mike	Hubbard	Medford, First
Nancy	Woo	Portland, Calvary
Rebecca	Jewel	Portland, Kenilworth
Amy	Clements	Portland, Multnomah
Lea	Lawrence-Moiso	Portland, Rose City Park
Linda	Reinhardt	Portland, Rose City Park
Lucas	Pomeroy	Portland, Savage Memorial
Marilyn	Paumbo	Portland, St. Andrews
David	Marquis	Portland, Valley Community
Carol	Powers	Portland, Valley Community
Bill	Stewart	Tigard, Rise
Peter	Meyers	Vancouver, Eastwoods
John	Pesson	Vancouver, First
Emily	Richards	Vancouver, First

### Ruling Elders Attending by Virtue of Presbytery Service

Gail	Black	Vice Moderator NE; CART Member
Sharon	Hasenjaeger	Committee on Representation
Marilyn	Howe	Board of Trustees
Evonne	Hubbard	Personnel & Administration
Jackie	Putnam	Commission on Ministry- NE
Roberta	Schlechter	Personnel & Administration
Lisa	Snodderly	Personnel & Administration

### Ministers in Attendance

Paul	Belz-Templeman	Steven	Hammond	Eileen	Parfrey
Patricia	Berger	John	Hasenjaeger	Sarah	Sanderson-Doughty
Brian	Craker	Hilary	Hughes	Clark	Scalera
Beverly	Crow	Suzan	Ireland	Jeff	Sievert
Chris	Dela Cruz	David	Jewel	Diana	Vezmar-Bailey
Scott	Dalgarno	Elizabeth	Leavitt	Kris	Voss-Rothmeier
Amy	Delaney	Jennifer	Martin	Jim	Wallace
David	Dornack	Susan	McDougall		
Joshua	Dunham	Margaret	Mitsuyasu		
Joanna	Dunn	Beth Merril	Neel		
Joyce	Emery	Gregg	Neel		
Mark	Frey	Laurie	Newman		
Christopher	Grewe	Cynthia	O'Brien		

## Appendix C: Report of CART: Conflict Assessment and Referral/ Recommendation/Reconciliation Team



*“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” -Albert Einstein*

*“Conflict can and should be handled constructively; when it is, relationships benefit. Conflict avoidance is not the hallmark of a good relationship. On the contrary, it is a symptom of serious problems and of poor communication.” -Harriet Lerner*

January 14, 2025

Dear Congregations and Members of the Presbytery of the Cascades,

When I stepped into this role as Transitional Executive Presbyter (TEP) in January 2024, I was immediately met with multiple conflict dynamics that were in play in various parts of our presbytery. While the most visible example came in the form of what many described as a “contentious” presbytery meeting on November 3, 2023, further conversations revealed multiple examples of conflict, mistrust, and unhealthy leadership dynamics in less public forms, much of it leading back years. One of my first action items as TEP was to approach the Rev. Dr. Sarah Sanderson-Doughty, the COM Lead for our Conflict Assessment and Reconciliation Team (CART) for their help. Since CART is comprised of members with professional training in conflict mediation, I believed they would be the best resource to assess the conflict dynamics in our presbytery and make honest recommendations for us.

The attached report is the culmination of months of hard work by CART to interview, assess, and define the complexity of our conflict, as well as make prayerful and heartfelt recommendations for our presbytery to consider. CART completed nearly 50 interviews and worked diligently to balance and represent a variety of perspectives. The scope of work this size took considerable time to complete, and there was always the realization that full agreement would be difficult for all who were interviewed. While a portion of the report focuses on the events from the November 2023 presbytery meeting, it also reveals underlying issues that were present long before that meeting, and stress points in our system and structure that promote an environment of continued unhealthy conflict.

Disagreements are normal in a large organization and resources (especially money and property) tend to be fault lines for conflict. I have worked in many functional organizations that have exhibited the ability to handle these matters civilly, and a couple that have struggled on this front. The Laurelhurst transfer showed us that our presbytery struggles with an unhealthy culture for handling disagreements. As a presbytery, we have a long history of being conflict-avoidant, which has had a cumulative negative effect on our relationships, and the ability to work in partnership, and has stifled our abilities to communicate openly and respectfully. Recent events, along with stress points identified by the CART report, are still reverberating in some areas of our presbytery, and in a limited scope, hampering our ability to fully minister to our churches and our churches’ ability to fully minister to their communities.



PRESBYTERY OF THE  
**CASCADES**



While the recent conflict has been limited in scope to a portion of our presbytery, if left unchecked and unspoken, I believe it will continue to grow in scope and severity. **We can do better...and the sharing of this report from CART to our presbytery is meant to serve as a catalyst for that work of healing and improvement.** The issues and needs identified in this report are being taken seriously by our staff, and our elected leadership currently serving on the Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC). The PLC continues to work through the recommendations from the report, and some of that work has already begun, including the hiring of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Institute to assist us in immediate conflict mediation, followed by a workshop this summer on healthy ways for working together in Christian community. Over the coming months, we will continue to work on action steps to address the issues identified in our system and structure as we move toward creating a healthier environment to live out our mission and vision as a presbytery.

Speaking personally, I have a deep love and appreciation for this presbytery. It has been my home for 30 years, and this is the body that validated my calling and examined me for ordination. God has been doing great work in Cascades, and I firmly believe that God has much more in store for us. **We can do better...and in time, I am confident that with God's help and intentionality, we will do better. But we have to be willing to do the work together.** *I encourage all of us to read and reflect on the issues that have been brought to light in the CART report and to find our place in the healing and redemptive work that is to come. For many of us, that process begins on Sat. January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at Savage Memorial Presbyterian Church, as we begin that work of discovery, discernment, mediation, and healing together.* Remember, this report was completed by eight courageous and well-trained members who were outside of the conflict areas but shared the goal of helping identify a path of healing and wholeness for our presbytery. Now it is our turn to share in their courage and begin that journey together.

While conflict can be hard, I firmly believe that God works all things together for good and that God desires to turn conflict into opportunities to deepen our relationships with God and with one another. So, I close with these words of encouragement from the CART Team:

*On the basis of the interviews we completed, we have every reason to have hope for the future of the Presbytery of the Cascades. Even in the midst of conflict, presbyters expressed an abiding care for others and the work of the presbytery. We were reminded of the words in 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." (NRSV)*

Gratefully,

Rev. Dr. Brian Craker  
Transitional Executive Presbyter



## **Conflict Assessment and Referral/ Recommendation/Reconciliation Team [CART]**

### **Assessment Report prepared for The Presbytery of the Cascades**

**FINAL REPORT  
January 7, 2025**

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## SECTION 1

### Introduction

#### ***Team Participants***

Your Conflict Assessment and Referral/Recommendation/Reconciliation Team consists of 8 members- Sarah Sanderson-Doughty (NW- team lead), Gail Black (NE), Hillary Hughes (Central), Chris Macfarlane (NW), Michael O'Brien (NE), Marilyn Palumbo (NW), Murray Richmond (South), Diana Vezmar-Bailey (Central), and Jim Vickery (South).

#### ***Team Charge***

When Brian Craker stepped into his role as Transitional Executive Presbyter, he called on our team to help him assess the conflict dynamics in our Presbytery and make recommendations on the basis of our assessment. He authorized us to conduct widespread interviews in order to complete this task. We were tasked with understanding the conflict dynamics, which we did by relying upon interviews with participants in the conflict and seeking to understand **their** perspectives and personal experience -- the goal being to assess improvements in communication going forward and assessing lessons learned. This should not be considered, and we were not tasked with, resolution of the conflict, conducting an independent investigation of the conflict or seeking to determine the merits of the positions of the various participants in the conflict. As a consequence, any conclusions or articulated positions should be understood solely as the opinion of those interviewed, distilled and/or synthesized by CART for common themes.

#### ***Summary of Assessment Process***

We completed 47 interviews over the course of four months including all members of the staff, PLC, Trustees, New Ministries Team, several members of the Barbie's Village Task Force and leaders from Westminster Presbyterian, former chairs of key committees and teams. We asked the same questions of all interviewees and took notes on all interviews. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality and we intend to destroy notes when our work is completed. (See appendix i for the interview instrument we developed and employed.)

#### ***Naming Strength***

We are immensely grateful for the trust invested in us and the many faithful and thoughtful participants in our process. We experienced a high level of transparency and a strong desire for the health of the Presbytery. We witnessed an admirable depth of commitment in the Presbytery's leaders, staff, and committee members. We also perceived a great deal of personal responsibility taken and deep conviction. On the basis of the interviews we completed, we have every reason to have hope for the future

of the Presbytery of the Cascades. Even in the midst of conflict, presbyters expressed an abiding care for others and the work of the Presbytery. We were reminded of the words in 1 Peter 4:8, “Above all, maintain constant love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (NRSV)



## SECTION 2

### Our Understanding of Conflict

Before we offer a definition of the conflict in the POTC and the issues and themes we observed, we wish to offer our meta understanding of conflict. We believe that conflict is to be expected in a diverse body seeking to engage in collaborative work and corporate decision-making. Conflict is also to be expected in times of transition. It is a normal and natural phenomenon, and it can be an engine for discernment, growth and progress.

That said, how we manage conflict matters. As Paul reminds us, the body is in need of all of its parts, working together for the benefit of the whole. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’” (1 Cor 12:21 NRSV). Making space for all voices to be heard, careful listening and speaking, the use of I-statements, clarity of roles and responsibilities, clarity of mission and purpose, making amends for hurt or offense, making positive assumptions about one another—these are examples of healthier practices. Avoiding or denying conflict, taking matters personally, attacking others, making negative assumptions, engaging in indirect communication—these are examples of unhealthy practices. “You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.” (James 1:19-20, NRSV).

## SECTION 3

### Contextual Framework

Conflict resides in a contextual framework. To fully understand the conflict within the Presbytery of the Cascades we need to examine these historical, social, and organizational contexts. We offer the conclusion that much of the conflict was fueled and exacerbated by the following circumstances:

#### *Pandemic and Virtual Communication*

In March 2020, the world literally shut down and did not ease out of the pandemic until well into 2022. Like other institutions, the church conducted most activities and ministries remotely. While the use of Zoom provided an important tool to stay connected, in many circumstances this reliance created an inadequate means to full and satisfactory communications and connection. People lived in electronic boxes, texted, and emailed instead of sitting across the table from each other, sharing coffees, talking casually, hands joined in prayer—all behaviors that were no longer possible in the constricted Zoom meeting. It was not until April 2023, three years after the shutdown, that the Presbytery of the Cascades felt assured to gather for an in-person (hybrid) meeting in Albany, Oregon.

#### *Staff Transitions*

During the 2022-23 timeframe, changes in key staff and important volunteer leaders created discontinuity and, in some cases, a vacuum in leadership. In June 2022, the Treasurer of POTC completed his term, and the Presbytery was not able to fill this position. The Stated Clerk assumed that additional role until Thomas Lundy, a newly hired staff member, accepted the position in a temporary role in late 2023. Also in 2022, the Board of Trustees and the Personnel and Administration Committee each received a new chair. During this timeframe the Presbyter for Vision and Mission expressed his desire to pursue a new career and resigned in early 2023 with a significant severance.

#### *Vacant Properties Policy*

While the church is not in the property business, it becomes the responsibility of the Presbytery when a congregation closes its doors, and the building and/or property requires disposition. Beginning in December 2016, with the closure of the Presbyterian Church of Laurelhurst and a few months later with the closing of Cooper Mountain Presbyterian (March 2017) and St. Mark Presbyterian (June 2017), major decisions needed to be made regarding three large assets—sell? lease? gift? In response, the Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC) commissioned a task force to study and recommend a policy and process by which properties could be managed/sold/leased. The Presbytery accepted their report

in July 2018 (Appendix ii).

This policy transformed the New Ministries Team (NMT) (previously known as the New Church Development Team) by granting them the responsibility of assessing all vacated properties to determine if they might be able to be used to support new ministries and allocating 25% of all funds obtained through the sale of properties to the New Ministry Team. The Trustees still had responsibilities as fiscal and property managers and thus the policy fostered a sensitive relationship between the bodies. In April 2023, the Vacant Properties Policy was revised to clarify the roles of the NMT and the Trustees. (Appendix iii).

### ***Reduced Resources and Budget Deficits***

The reality of church decline over several decades has left the Presbytery with dwindling financial resources and a radically reduced staff. The Presbytery has been running a deficit budget, even despite staff reductions, and drawing heavily on reserves for several years. The previous Presbytery treasurer worked with the previous Presbyter for Vision and Mission to complete a 10-year budget projection identifying where potential funds might be utilized as buildings were returned to the POTC. Based on their work, it was suggested if buildings continued to become available at the anticipated rate, for every three buildings, we would need to/could sell one and consider turning a second into affordable housing and gifting a third one. While reported to CART during our interview process, it is unclear if this proposal became official and if or how it influenced recent processes. CART found no evidence as to the origins, existence, or acceptance of this proposal.

## SECTION 4

### Defining the Conflict in the Presbytery of the Cascades

Conflict in some form or another has always existed in the Presbytery of the Cascades (POTC). In a general sense, unresolved conflict laid a foundation for and/or exacerbated the most current conflict associated with the disposition of the property formerly owned by the Presbyterian Church of Laurelhurst. For more than a two-year period, multiple entities within and outside the Presbytery engaged in a process to transfer the property: New Ministries Team (NMT), Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC), Board of Trustees (BOT) as well as the Future Generations Collaborative (FGC), Barbie's Village Task Force (BVTF) that included members of the Leaven Community Land & Housing Coalition (LCLHC), and the Core Sacred Organizing Team of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Portland.

While we were asked to assess the most recent conflict, it became clear during the course of our interviews that the conflict was rooted in an "us versus them" mentality attributable to a failure to identify a shared mission in the Presbytery. Instead, different entities pursued different tasks/missions without clear communication structures. Although the PLC is composed of representatives from various boards and commissions, a clear sense of oversight and continuity was missing. The PLC membership changes each year based on length of term served on representative positions. Members report little to no training is provided on how to serve, which results in little understanding of their purpose and means for engaging in the process.

It is also important to consider the role and charge of the New Ministries Team. Over the past few years, the mission of the NMT significantly evolved. Instead of focusing on church planting, the NMT looked toward more creative and innovative ways to further the mission of Christ and reach the underserved. Their change in direction was well-intentioned and likely faithful to current circumstances, but it is unclear the degree to which the wider Presbytery was made aware of or involved in their work. As a free-standing team with the oversight of a significantly large fund, the NMT's practices raised concerns about accountability. Further, the vacant property policy gave them the responsibility of property assessment, which some reported may have made their mission murkier. There have been multiple struggles with communication and honoring established time boundaries in the work of property discernment and transfer.

As to the transfer of the Laurelhurst property, in 2021, the PLC authorized BVTF to explore the possibility of the transfer of this property to FGC. The Board of Trustees worked with BVTF with the support of Presbytery staff to ensure that processes met the necessary legal and fiduciary requirements, including the Trustees establishment of a two year lease, and other protections in the event that the FGC, a nascent 501(c)(3), did not endure. The different entities pursued different tasks/missions. All parties reported many experiences

of frustration and tension that permeated emails, Presbytery meetings, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, POTC staff, especially the Stated Clerk, in their efforts to provide support to the two groups were caught in a state of sustained tension, which affected them professionally and personally.

At the end of 2022 and through most of 2023, BVTF worked to organize support for the transfer of the property through community organizing that involved public events and lobbying. The Presbytery presented no official public message regarding this project, in part, due to the absence of an Executive Presbyter, for which this responsibility would have traditionally fallen. Public messaging was submitted by members of the BVTF and the FGC, which due to the absence of official messaging from the Presbytery, was seen by some as authoritative information regarding the property transfer. This led many, even certain church leaders, to assume that the transfer was a foregone conclusion. At the November 2023 Presbytery Zoom meeting that included guests from the FGC and their supporters, the motion was presented to transfer the Laurelhurst property. The meeting exposed considerable conflict within the Presbytery. Throughout discussion on the floor of Presbytery, various parties expressed and challenged the motives of others. The Board of Trustees who had been working with an incremental approach with the FGC, presented opposition to the motion due to the absence of a reversionary clause safeguarding the Presbytery's intentions should the FGC collapse and no longer exist. After significant discussion, the motion passed with a clear majority and without a reversionary clause. Another motion ensued to move the facilitation of the property transfer from the Trustees to the PLC. The Trustees objected to this on the basis of their interpretation of the by-laws. This challenge from the by-laws was reviewed by an independent parliamentarian and was not sustained. The PLC then appointed a Transfer Task Force Team led by Thomas Lundy, Missional Resource Manager, that met with FGC and recommended a transfer of the property with terms that included a reversionary clause. This was authorized unanimously by the PLC on March 13, 2024, and the property was transferred to FGC in April 2024. Subsequently, at its April 2024 meeting the Presbytery affirmed that if the property reverted to Presbytery, then it would be transferred to another organization whose main purpose is to benefit Native Americans.

In the aftermath of the November Presbytery meeting, it became clear the current conflict had reached crisis level and needed to be addressed. Relationships, processes, and communication need healing and a path forward to create a healthy Presbytery for all members. There is a persistent tension within the Presbytery between mission and fiduciary responsibility.

## SECTION 5

### Articulation of Issues and Themes

Given the interrelatedness of many of the issues, it proved challenging to organize themes. In the end, CART determined to organize them into 4 broad categories:

- A. Structural Issues
- B. Barriers to Constructive Interaction
- C. Presbytery's Relationship to Conflict
- D. Transitional Dynamics

#### ***A. Structural Issues***

##### ***A1. Lack of training / Lack of clarity about roles***

*Many presbyters felt that a lack of training and clarity about their roles increased confusion and fostered conflict.*

Presbyters commented that they felt adrift in their committee, commission work or standing teams. Having answered the call, they received no formal training for their work. This had several undesirable effects. First, there was a lack of clarity about what was being asked of them. There was also a lack of understanding about *how* work was to be done. This lack of clarity made some presbyters hesitant to engage effectively in the governance; inquiry was diminished, expressing concerns or opinions were minimized due to “not knowing what was expected.” Consequently, power was concentrated in fewer hands. Some reported that it was only within the last few months of their terms on a committee that they began to feel as if they could participate meaningfully.

##### ***A2. Failure to follow explicit procedures / Unclear organization or lack of clear procedures***

*Authority was not always clearly delegated. In other instances, explicit procedures or protocols were not followed.*

The Presbytery structure is intended to be one of mutual support; it also entails checks and balances. Authority for functioning is delegated by the whole to the part; no part is autonomous. There appear to be instances where authority was overstepped. In other instances, presbyters mentioned that they were not always certain as to the limits of their responsibilities and authority. For example, Personnel and Administration (P and A) created a severance package for the former Presbyter without thorough engagement of the budget

committee of the Trustees.

While we cannot comment definitively on whether procedures were *intentionally* ignored or overstepped by some individuals or presbytery bodies, there is a strong sense among some that this is so. This has helped to foster an “us versus them” mentality and spur conflict. We received a number of detailed responses in our interviews regarding the Personnel Committee’s severance package for a former Presbyter that affected the Trustees’ commitment to create a balanced budget. This prompted the Trustees’ motion at the April 2023 Presbytery to shift monies if necessary, from the NMT fund resulting in a major eruption on the floor between the Trustee member and an NMT member (no monies were ever shifted).

All leaders are called to engage in both faithful mission and ethical stewardship of the resources entrusted to us; however, these two values have been delegated respectively to the PLC and the Trustees. This segregation of purpose requires meaningful collaboration between these bodies that has not always been present.

In the midst of leadership transitions, it appears that there was a pattern of failing to expressly delegate responsibilities or authority, thereby creating a leadership vacuum that puts pressure on staff and key leaders.

### ***A3. Pace of Decision-Making Concerning Laurelhurst Property/ Range of Stakeholders Needs and Expectations***

*Presbyters indicated that their work is done largely in isolation of other standing bodies. Communication between stakeholders was limited. Presbytery bodies were working at different speeds based on differing concerns and time-tables.*

Presbyters noted that New Ministries Team (NMT), Trustees, and Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC) all work in relative isolation from one another. Communication concerning the transfer of the Laurelhurst property was confused at best. No point person or group was put in charge of the overall process. Stakeholders were often unaware of how others were operating. This lack of coordination was exacerbated by the differences in the speed of decision-making and deliberation between entities.

To complicate matters, presbyters noted that working with agencies and bodies outside of the Presbytery accelerated the rate at which decisions were expected to be made and finalized. Promises were made prematurely and publicly. This created a sense of urgency in the BVTF to finalize the transfer of the Laurelhurst property while the Trustees reviewed details of the arrangement and sought to

exercise diligence and caution anticipating a two-year window for this work.

Additionally, the lack of a specific point-person with the media was problematic. Comments made to the media gave the impression that the transfer of the property was imminent. Not all parties held this view. This put both Trustees and BVTF in compromising positions and generated conflict.

Lastly, some noted that a “leadership discontinuity” existed during property deliberations, and this may have further complicated matters. The departure of the Presbyter for Vision and Mission and the resulting increased pressure put upon Presbytery staff may have meant that there was less connective oversight between Presbytery committees and teams at a critical time.

#### ***A4. Factors Diminishing Community Formation***

*Covid, Zoom meetings and the large size of our Presbytery have fostered disconnectedness.*

Many presbyters noted that the after-effects of Covid were still being felt. The disconnectedness and lack of face-to-face contact has increased the sense that we do not know one another as well as we once did. While Zoom meetings have allowed presenters from different regions to meet more easily, it has also led to a difficulty in getting to know one another, especially for newer presbyters. The typical rituals that are associated with face-to-face meetings were lost. Non-verbal communication was hampered. Informal spontaneous connections could not occur.

The geographic size of the Presbytery also makes knowing other presbyters more challenging than in smaller geographic presbyteries. Presbyters are more aware of issues which affect their region (Northwest, Northeast, Central, South).

## **B. Barriers to Constructive Interaction**

#### ***B1. Anxiety and Grief in Midst of Transition***

*The rate of change in church and society has triggered both anxiety and grief, both of which complicate a shared understanding of mission.*

There is grief over all that has been lost- e.g. a robust programmatic Presbytery with staff in four regions, many congregations, many church members, financial resources. There is also anxiety and anticipatory grief about the future of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The issue is more than the issue of membership decline.

At the core, the issue is “What does it mean to be Christ’s faithful church now and



what will it look like in the near future?” Different answers to this question yield different visions about how to do ministry now.

Our constitution describes the purpose of the church in this way:

*The great ends of the Church are:  
the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;  
the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;  
the maintenance of divine worship;  
the preservation of the truth;  
the promotion of social righteousness; and  
the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.*  
(Book of Order, F-1.0304)

Mission has both interior and exterior dimensions. The nurture and maintenance of the church and the pursuit of social righteousness and exhibition of the kingdom to the world are complementary not competing goals.

Interviewees expressed differing views of mission. This was reflected in the language used. One set of terms focused more on interior needs of congregations and the operations of the Presbytery: such as “stewardship” and “process” and “fiduciary responsibility”. The other focused outwardly and discussed ministry in terms of “outreach”, “mission”, and “justice”. Presbyters typically focused on an inward or outward view of ministry, not both. These different commitments engendered distrust and suspicion and hindered collaboration.

In a positive sense, these differences could be understood as an expression of the body of Christ, different parts with different functions working for the common good. However, this was not always the case. Presbyters seemed to have a natural affinity with one set of terms and seldom used the other. Alignment with one camp often presupposed competition with those of “the other party”. One presbyter noted that aspects of the November meeting were like watching two teams don their prospective jerseys and go to battle.

## ***B2. Concerns About Typecasting, Labeling and Virtue Signaling***

*The cross-cultural aspects of the property transfer decision made the issue difficult to evaluate for presbyters. The prospect of being labeled made it harder.*

A common theme expressed by presbyters was that while they may have been in favor of the transfer of the property, they were uncomfortable with tone and the “optics” of the public deliberations. This is particularly true of those who wanted to ask clarifying questions. Presbyters feared being typecast or labeled as racist, obstructionist or unsupportive of justice issues while those favoring the transfer of the Laurelhurst property occupied the “high moral ground”.

Some presbyters mentioned that they felt ill prepared to enter into the discussion about transferring the Laurelhurst property because they were aware that there were cross-cultural factors in play, but they felt they lacked competency to know how to proceed with cultural sensitivity. Others indicated that they believed that “white guilt” had been a driving force in our timetable and decision-making. Still others noted that there was an “air of self-righteousness” in the discussions, each party certain of the correctness and superiority of their position.

Presbyters indicated that they had overheard pejorative terms used by members of one faction towards another. The most outspoken members of either faction were typecast as aggressors while perceiving themselves as victims.

## ***B3. Unexamined Dynamics of Privilege, Race, and Culture***

During our interviews we were reminded that the Presbytery of the Cascades is an overwhelmingly white body, located in a region with a tragic racial history of exclusionary laws, displacement, and genocide of indigenous peoples, actions rooted in an ideology of white supremacy. Some in the Presbytery have undertaken significant work in becoming aware of implicit bias and institutional racism and growing as anti-racists, but there has not been a significant systemwide commitment to this formation and work. Even by supporting book studies, author workshops, and land acknowledgment practices, 400 years of racism is much to repair. We need to continually learn from partner organizations and the witness and experience of marginalized peoples.

Some interviewees expressed deep sadness about the way that people of color are sometimes treated by the Presbytery and in the ways that our policies and procedures often reflect the norms of white dominant culture. Interviewees reported multiple incidences of hurtful actions, some of which were experienced as racist, though not perceived as intentional. One interviewee acknowledged never having met or engaged with an indigenous person.

Many interviewees at the center and at the fringes of the conflict, recognize the need for the Presbytery to commit to anti-racist training as part of the solution to address the unexamined dynamics of race and culture that can be the insidious foundation of injustice.

We are not yet able to say, “There is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all, and is in all!” (Col 3:11 NRSV)

#### ***B4. Barriers to Equity of Voice***

*Presbyters noted that a lay/clergy hierarchy exists within the Presbytery. Women also experience that their voices are marginalized relative to male voices, particularly when compared to older “well-established” males.*

Equity of voice was a significant theme. In general, clergy seem to dominate most discussions and often it is male clergy who fill this role. Some female presbyters noted that their perspectives and opinions on matters were dismissed within the confines of committee work, even when they were professionals with significant experience in the matters being discussed. Women also noted that in instances of controversy on the floor of the Presbytery, it is often older males who engage in floor debates. For their part, some women noted (and owned) their own hesitancy to enter into discussions which bounced between opposing views. More than one noted that the staccato nature of the format and discussions were not conducive to conveying their thoughts, intuitions and concerns. There also seems to be significant generational differences among Presbytery leaders and perhaps even distrust across generations.

#### ***B5. How We Experienced Our Conflict and What it Engendered***

*Conflict engenders a range of different emotional responses for presbyters, predominantly negative.*

It is worth noting the range of emotions and estrangement experienced by many presbyters. The heightened emotions and tension had differing effects. Some common experiences included:

- A sense of personal hurt and estrangement
- A sense of being backed into a corner with pressure to make important decisions
- Anger
- The need to “clam up” (suppression of expression)
- Cynicism

In general, these emotions served to alienate presbyters from the Presbytery and our work together.

## C. Presbytery's Relationship to Conflict

### *C1. Differing Responses to and Expectations of the Interview Process*

*Most presbyters responded favorably to the interview process, and engaged with openness, honesty and humility, though there were competing expectations about the outcome of the process.*

Members of Presbytery, for the most part, were willing to engage in difficult conversations. Even in cases where people were initially hesitant, most valued the opportunity to share openly, even in matters of personal hurt. Many were also self-reflective about how their actions, words or silence may have fostered conflict. We view this resiliency, courage, and trust as assets within the Presbytery.

A few dynamics occurred during the interview process that bear noting. The first was that some presbyters seemed to put a disproportionate amount of trust in the interview process itself. Others were skeptical of the work and expressed cynicism that the interview process would bear fruit. Most presbyters responded very favorably to the interviews and mentioned how much they appreciated being heard. Most also expressed hope that the Presbytery could work through whatever issues we face.

### *C2. Dominant Pattern of Conflict Avoidance*

*We tend to delay meaningful engagement of controversy or prematurely seek to conclude processes due to our substantial discomfort, leaving many issues lingering and unresolved.*

Presbyters with an extended history in the Presbytery noted that conflict is not new. Regularly, the Presbytery of the Cascades has experienced times of heightened conflict. The pattern noted is that when conflict arises, it is typically buried. When it is not buried, it is explored, and reported on, and that seems to conclude matters. Put differently, even when conflict is aired, it is still buried and not fully processed or healed. Some presbyters wondered how the Presbytery might function differently if there were training for its members around conflict management.

The pattern seems to be that forbearance is taken to an unhealthy extreme while honestly addressing issues in a gracious and timely manner is avoided.

### ***C3. Unhealthy Practices in the Midst of Conflict***

*Presbyters noted that we seem to lack the tools to “fight fair”.*

With respect to the November Presbytery meeting, presbyters noted the following:

1. *Certainty and Self-righteousness* - Presbyters were disturbed by the tone of moral certainty with which parties in conflict presented their respective positions. There appeared to be no middle ground.
2. *Imputation of motives* - Presbyters noted that comments from the floor too often imputed negative motives to those with differing views. These comments created an unsafe environment making it difficult for presbyters to get clarifying information and/or participate in an important decision.
3. *Lack of listening* - Presbyters noted that once factions formed, the floor debate “heated up,” and listening ended.
4. *Perception of Pressure*- The tools used to generate support for the transfer of the Laurelhurst property (e-mails, calls, house parties) were experienced by some as political pressure inappropriate to a body discerning the mind of Christ together.
5. *Patterns of Indirect Communication and Triangulation*- It was reported that conflicting parties talked about one another, not with one another, and drew others into the conflict. This was interpreted by some as taking the form of recruitment or the building of alliances, while others felt this was just a matter of processing or venting frustrations. In interviews, presbyters made negative assumptions about the speech of other people because they didn’t have direct access to the speech. We heard many descriptions of aggressor, victim, rescuer dynamics within the Presbytery.

These seem in opposition to Paul’s admonition: “<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” (Phil 2:3-5 NRSV)

### **D. Transitional Dynamics**

As discussed above, the Presbytery has undergone a significant amount of transition over the past several decades and certainly in recent years. Transition often invites anxiety into systems and can lead to discontinuity in mission and ministry. Continuity or lack of continuity may have contributed to the current state of affairs.

## SECTION 6

### Recommendations

Guided by our analysis of 47 interviews, and specifically the responses to the question, “*What would be a good resolution to this Presbytery conflict?*”, we created two areas of recommendations:

#### **R1. Organizational Clarity**

#### **R2. Building Constructive Relationships.**

We understand that some of the work has already begun while in most cases the recommendations will rely on Presbytery staff and volunteer leaders to begin the restorative work. These recommendations are offered for the discernment of the PLC and are open to discussion and adjustment.

#### **R1. Organizational Clarity**

*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbi dei  
reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God.*

##### ***R1A. Organizational Review***

1. *Construction of a retroactive timeline to provide a framework for identifying the chain of events which led to the current crisis.*
  - a. We strongly suggest that the staff undertake this work.
  - b. The previous Interim Presbyter and Presbyter for Vision and Mission may be helpful resources in this task.
2. *Create a clear chart of organization to be used for reference and training*
  - a. Delineate staff: roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, protocols, and liaisons.
  - b. Delineate volunteers: roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, protocols, and liaisons.
  - c. Delineate commissions, committees, boards: roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, protocols, and liaisons.
  - d. Delineate clear communication channels/expectations and practices between commissions, committees, and teams.
3. *Consider restructuring the PLC towards the goal of greater continuity.*
  - a. Reconsider annual turnover in chair.
  - b. Reconsider automatic assignment of members.
4. *Establish annual training and standardized onboarding practices for all Commissions, Committees, and Teams focused on a unified mission (including team building, mission clarity, structural orientation,*

*conflict management principles, and anti-racism formation).*

5. *Consider restructuring the New Ministries Team's Practice and Polity*
  - a. Consider removing the responsibility for discernment of the use of properties from the New Ministries Team, create a path to let the Trustees and PLC know when a proposed new ministry is in need of property, and ask for consideration of transfer or sale and lease of Presbytery property to said ministries.
  - b. Explore the possibility of creating a New Ministries Commission with the same criteria for membership as other commissions/boards.
  - c. Establish a clear commitment to reporting and accountability in the holding and awarding of funds in their trust.
  - d. Request regular demonstration to the Presbytery of the progress of recipients of grants.
6. *Establish clear media engagement policies and identify spokespeople.*

***R1B. Long-term Budget Analysis and Planning***

1. *Develop a multi-year budget attentive to the Presbytery's resources and mission.*
2. *Regularly provide the Presbytery with a comprehensive budget report based on our mission and programs.*
3. *Examine and clarify the relationship between the program/administrative budgets and the monies held in trust for new ministries.*
4. *Promote collaboration between the Personnel & Administration Committee and the Trustees to ensure the cohesion of program, personnel and budget, and the fiscal impact of mandated items.*

***R1C. Bylaws Review***

1. *Examine language for clarity, intent, and relationships among the entities of the Presbytery.*
2. *Include new language that results from work emanating from the above recommendations.*

## R2. Building of Constructive Relationships

1. *Engage the services of a professional mediator or professional mediators*
  - a. Provide an opportunity for one-to-one professionally guided mediation between wounded individuals, where there is openness to such engagement.
  - b. Consider group mediation between groups that have been opposed (New Ministries Team, Board of Trustees, Personnel and Administration Committee, Barbie's Village Task Force, possibly others), to explore and repair their relationships to create healthy conditions to support the mission and vision of the Presbytery.

2. *Meet in person three times annually-* Reestablish the convention of the Presbytery to convene in person three times a year with the locations rotating between all parts of the Presbytery.

3. *Establish regular rhythms of training and orientation for all new volunteers and chairs.*

We believe this is especially important for all core leaders of the Presbytery. See above (R1A.4.) for the recommended content of that training. The anti-racism/cultural bias training and healthy conflict management training are particularly significant to the development of relational trust.

4. *Establish protocols for check-ins at all meetings.*

All meetings are an opportunity for relationship formation and tending. Members of Commissions, Committees, and Teams as well as commissioners to Presbytery meetings, need to be helped to know one another and form relationships of trust with one another.

5. *Establish an annual in-person retreat for the PLC, Board of Trustees, and Staff together.*

Individual commissions and teams may wish to hold at least one in person gathering per year, but it is crucial that all key leaders meet in person together at least once annually. Some of the training goals could be realized at this retreat.

6. *Make space for all the clergy in our Presbytery.*

Seek to be mindful of all the clergy in our Presbytery, including the honorably retired, those in designated ministry, those at large, and work to make space for the gifts and participation of all.

7. *Work toward deeper equity in Presbytery process.*

Be more attentive to the voice and experience of female, non-binary, and non-white clergy and lay leaders. Further attend to equity of voice across generations. Consider the use of pauses in decision making processes, time for silence or prayer or song, to give less empowered voices more time to



find their voice. Moderators could also ask to hear from an unrepresented voice (a ruling elder, a woman, a person of color) before hearing from another overrepresented voice.

8. *Establish routines and practices of accountability when leaders, volunteers, or staff engage in unhealthy conflict practices (e.g. personal attack, regular indirect communication, operating on negative assumption).*

Create a process by which this accountability can be established.

## **SECTION 7**

### **Conclusion**

The good news is that members of the Presbytery repeatedly expressed the same desire: we want to further the mission of Christ, and we'd like to find a way forward. We are a community of individuals who can and should unite towards a common purpose rather than operate in isolation or silos. We're better together! To move forward there must be a concerted effort to communicate with one another, recognize our shared priorities, and respect and appreciate the checks and balances we offer one another. Each of us is called based on our strengths. More than likely conflict will continue to occur; however, we can learn from this situation to approach conflict in a healthy manner. Recognizing and acknowledging the strengths of each other, offering grace, and treating each other with kindness will go a long way in healing the current hurt and easing future conflict.

We are grateful to everyone who spoke with us and to all the faithful staff and leaders and members of this Presbytery.

## Appendices

### Appendix i- Interview Instrument Used by CART

Thank you for your service to the presbytery and your willingness to share your time and perspective with us today.

I am\_\_\_\_ and I am\_\_\_\_ and we are members of the Conflict Assessment and Referral/Reconciliation Team for the Presbytery of the Cascades.

As Brian Craker stepped into his role, he reached out to the Conflict Team Leader because of dynamics he observed at the November Presbytery meeting and in its aftermath. He requested the assistance of our team in assessing the conflict in the Presbytery and authorized us to conduct widespread interviews so that we might have a better understanding of what has happened, is happening, and the consequences of all these dynamics.

We are committed to confidentiality. What this means is that while we will be producing a report for the Presbytery staff and the PLC, and maybe for the Presbytery as a whole, we will only be reporting themes, dynamics, issues, and recommendations. We will not attach particular names to anything we report. I am facilitating this interview, and \_\_\_\_\_ is taking notes. These notes will be destroyed after our work is concluded. We are interviewing you in your capacity as \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. member of PLC and chair of COM).

Let's begin with prayer.

Gracious God, may your Spirit enable clear communication and comprehension. Help us in our speaking and in our listening. We pray for the health and peace of the Presbytery of the Cascades and all its members and leaders. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Questions for Assessment Interviews in POTC Conflict

1. What is your role? How long have you been in this role?
2. What is working well? What are challenges?
3. What is your relationship to the Presbytery?
4. What kind of support do you receive from the Presbytery?
5. What is your relationship with the others in your group?
6. In your understanding, what has been happening in Presbytery lately?
7. How would you describe the conflict in the Presbytery?
8. Where do you think the conflict began?

9. What is your role in this conflict?
10. How is the conflict affecting you personally?
11. Has this affected your relationship with the Presbytery or anyone in the Presbytery?
12. What would be a good resolution to this Presbytery conflict?
13. Who else do you think we should talk to?
14. Is there anything else you think we should know?

## **Appendix ii- Vacant Property Policy 2018**

### **Vacant Properties Policy**

**Adopted by Presbytery June 29, 2018**

**Affirmed by action of the Presbytery of the Cascades  
at the June 30, 2018, Stated Meeting**

Our overarching understanding:

**Property is a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. (G-4.0201)**

#### **Managing vacant church properties**

Trustees, through their Property Management Committee, are responsible for overseeing the day-to day management of vacant properties. The Trustees will ensure that a property manager is in place to carry out this responsibility from the time the congregation is dissolved until the property is conveyed to a new ministry at that location or is sold. Transition from congregational management to Presbytery property manager will be a joint responsibility of the Administrative Commission working with the congregation and the chair of the Property Management Committee. Trustees will assure that major maintenance issues of the building(s) and property are addressed during this interim management period.

#### **Strategies for ministries**

The New Ministries Team, within six months of notice that a church/property is being vacated, will recommend to the Presbytery Leadership Commission:

- a) how the property may be used as witness to Jesus Christ serving in the geographic area in which it is located; or,
- b) that the Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC) direct Trustees to negotiate terms of sale or long-term lease of the property, returning a proposal to Presbytery for approval.

#### **Guidelines for disposal of real property**

It shall generally be the policy of the Presbytery of the Cascades that when a vacant church property is disposed of, after all debts secured by the property are liquidated, 25% of the net proceeds shall be reserved for New Ministry Development, 10% for the Barnabas Fund, 10% for the Vitality Fund, 5% for the Technology Grant Fund and 50% for Unrestricted Program Reserves. The Board of Trustees may draw from the Unrestricted Program Reserves to re-supply the needs of the four recipients. The allocation percentages will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees and adjusted, if needed, annually.

#### **Actions leading up to a property becoming vacant**

If the AC discerns that church closure is probable, it shall invite the New Ministries

Team to begin a ministry study of the geographic area in which the church is located. If the AC determines a congregation is to be dissolved, it shall recommend to the Presbytery:

- the transfer of all accounts to Presbytery ownership with documentation on all restricted funds;
- the transfer of title and registrations to Presbytery;
- the transfer to Presbytery of all legal contracts in force (preschools, renters, etc.).

If the AC determines a congregation is to be dissolved, it shall:

- conduct an inspection, independent of congregation members, of the building to determine repair and maintenance requirements.
- develop pro-forma income and expense statements (rentals, utility payments, maintenance);
- develop a proposal for how and when to pay off any existing loans.

#### **Guidelines for properties that are currently vacant**

For those properties that are currently vacant, the New Ministries Team shall make a recommendation to the PLC as soon as possible whether to sell the building/property or repurpose it for a Presbyterian supported ministry.

#### **Guidelines for trustees when considering long-term leases**

Lease terms should, to the extent possible, provide a return to the Presbytery equivalent to those restricted funds managed in the Presbytery's Endowment Fund, computed using a thirteen-month moving average of market value of the endowment on December 31 of the preceding year. Leases should be triple net with the lessee assuming primary responsibility for maintenance and upkeep necessary to preserve the property's functionality. Leases may anticipate redevelopment of existing structures or their demolition and development which support the mission of the lessor.

**Vacant properties are to be used for the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

## **Appendix iii--Vacant Properties Policy 2023**

### **As Revised April 22, 2023**

Our overarching understanding:

Property is a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world.  
(G-4.0201)

#### **Managing vacant church properties**

Trustees, through their Property Management Committee, are responsible for overseeing the day to-day management of vacant properties (“vacant” here meaning a church property without an active congregation of the Presbytery). The Trustees will ensure that a property manager is in place to carry out this responsibility from the time the congregation is dissolved until the property is conveyed to a new ministry at that location or is sold. Transition from congregational management to Presbytery property manager will be a joint responsibility of the Administrative Commission working with the congregation and the chair of the Property Management Committee. The Trustees will ensure that major maintenance issues of the building(s) and property are addressed during this interim management period.

#### **Strategies for ministries**

The New Ministries Team, within six months of notice by the Presbytery Leadership Commission that a church/property is being vacated, will recommend to the Presbytery Leadership Commission:

- a) how the property may be used as witness to Jesus Christ serving in the geographic area in which it is located; or,
- b) that the Presbytery Leadership Commission (PLC) directs the Trustees to negotiate terms of sale or long-term lease of the property, returning a proposal to Presbytery for approval.

#### **Guidelines for disposal of real property and allocation of proceeds**

It shall generally be the policy of the Presbytery of the Cascades that when a vacant church property is disposed of, after all debts secured by the property are liquidated, 25% of the net proceeds shall be reserved for New Ministry Development, 10% for the Barnabas Fund, 10% for the Vitality Fund, 5% for the Technology Grant Fund and 50% for Unrestricted Program Reserves. The Board of Trustees may draw from the Unrestricted Program Reserves to re-supply the needs of the four recipients. The allocation percentages will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees and adjusted, if needed, annually.

### **Actions leading up to a property becoming vacant**

At the earliest opportunity, either by an invitation of the session of a congregation, or by outreach of the Presbytery, if it is discerned that church closure is possible, three aspects of the work of the Presbytery shall begin concurrently: (A) the Presbytery when convening an Administrative Commission (AC) for the congregation shall ensure it includes a liaison from the Trustees and the New Ministries Team; (B) it shall invite the Trustees to begin a survey of the property as described below and; (C) it shall invite the New Ministries Team to begin a ministry study of the geographic area and community in which the church is located for ministry opportunities.

With regard to finances, if the AC determines a congregation is to be dissolved, it shall recommend to the Presbytery:

- the transfer of all accounts to Presbytery ownership with documentation on all restricted funds;
- the transfer of title and registrations to Presbytery;
- the transfer to Presbytery of all legal contracts in force (preschools, renters, etc.);
- the timely transfer to Presbytery of all usernames, logins, passwords, keys, etc., to ensure prompt and thorough access to all accounts and facilities.

With regard to property, if the AC determines a congregation is to be dissolved, the Trustees will:

- conduct an inspection, independent of congregation members, of the building to determine repair and maintenance requirements;
- develop projections for income and expense statements (rentals, utility payments, maintenance);
- develop a proposal for how and when to pay off any existing loans.
- develop a plan for maintaining the property while it is under Presbytery care with a timeline and a budget until such time as the property can be transitioned to its next role in fulfilling the mission of the larger church.



### **Guidelines for properties that are currently vacant**

For those properties that are currently vacant, the New Ministries Team shall make a recommendation to the PLC as soon as possible whether to sell the building/property or repurpose it for a Presbyterian supported ministry. To support the good stewardship of Presbytery resources a vacant property should ordinarily not be maintained by the Presbytery for more than 6 months without adequate provision for the care of that property from another source (rental income, endowment of the congregation, other grant funds etc.).

**Vacant properties are to be used for the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

*Originally adopted June 29, 2018.*

*Revised November 12, 2021, and April 22, 2023.*