



SPECIAL MEETING OF ALBANY PRESBYTERY

PRE-MEETING PACKET

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

Registration will begin at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Worship and Special Meeting begin at 6:30 p.m.

No meal will be provided at this meeting.

Hosted by the [First Presbyterian Church of Ballston Spa](#)
[22 West High Street, Ballston Spa, NY 12020](#)
Telephone: [\(518\) 885-5583](#)

CHILD CARE will be provided without cost to you. It is, however, essential that you make a reservation for your child. Please call the Ballston Spa office at [518-885-5583](#) no later than Friday, September 8th, giving names & number of children, ages and any special needs. If your plans change after that date, please call to cancel the reservation or to ask if space is available. In the interest of the health of all children and their families who are brought for childcare during Presbytery meetings, please do not bring your child if he or she is showing signs of illness.

[Directions to the First Presbyterian Church of Ballston Spa:](#)

FPC Ballston Spa is located one block west of Route 50 on West High Street (aka Rt 67) in the village of Ballston Spa.

From the south or east: Take Northway exit 12 and head west on Rt 67 for several miles. Rt 67 will join and leave Rt 50 and the church will be on your right after Rt 67 leaves Rt 50.

From the north: Take Northway Exit 13S. After merging onto Rt 9 south, take your first right onto Malta Avenue. After several miles turn left onto Rt 50 (Milton Ave). Proceed 2 blocks and turn right onto Rt 67 (aka West High Street). The church will be on your right.

From the west: Take Rt 67 East from Amsterdam. The church will be on your left after you enter the village.

Parking will be available in the county lot across the street from the church.

Albany Presbytery
Special meeting of Sept. 12, 2017, 6:30 pm at Ballston Spa
Pre-Meeting Packet

We gather for the express purpose of engaging
in patient, worshipful, and collaborative conversations to
clarify presbytery's goals and priorities,
strengthen our community,
and discern the staffing model best suited to supporting shared goals.

This meeting will be facilitated by members of a team
appointed to advise the Presbytery with regard to the way forward.

In addition to your reading the packet materials,
the advisory team asks everyone to prepare through **prayer**.

Please pray upon how we can *hold fast* to

Respect
Inclusivity
Openness & Transparency
Theological Grounding

If you wish a cartoon preview of how a collaborative process can work,
feel free to look at the following brief video,
which will also be shown during the meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU>

Albany Presbytery -- Special meeting: Sept. 12, 2017, 6:30 pm

Meeting at BALLSTON SPA Facilitated by the STAFFING PROCESS ADVISORY TEAM

Call to Worship, Song/Hymn, Opening Prayer – *led by presbytery officers or their appointees*

[1] Introduction of S.P.A.T. members: Who they are; how they were chosen.

The Team's assignment from the Coordination Committee

The Team's interpretation of developments prior to June, 2017:

- Earnest, well-intended contributions have been made by various Teams, former Council, and the Personnel Committee -- all pertaining to vision, mission, structure & staffing. *Refer to the 4-page packet document: "Transition History."*
- Staffing proposals considered since Nov. 2016 have not succeeded in gaining traction.
- Presbytery has ample data, but apparently lacks the best questions and/or criteria for how to use it. This abundance of material may now in fact be part of the problem.
- Certain underlying communal dynamics have also counteracted the process:
 - Insider/outsider perceptions: adversaries, not allies
 - Lack of trust. Lack of full inclusivity
 - Hurt feelings over personal conflicts and/or perceptions of not being heard
 - Anxieties re budget, timeline ("get it done"), & the forthcoming SARC report
 - Anxieties among current staff: "What can you tell us?"
 - Confusion over re-structuring. Difficulties adjusting to a new structure.
 - Lack of consensus regarding presbytery's mission, goals and needs
 - even among presbyters themselves, not to mention local congregations!

The Team's recommendation: **Albany Presbytery should engage in a series of patient, worshipful, and collaborative conversations in order to clarify its goals & priorities, to strengthen its community, and thus to discern the staffing model best suited to support shared goals.**

Right now, this Team can neither foresee the length nor outcome of such process.

But the Team believes that a healthy process will bear the following characteristics:

Respect

Inclusivity – extending even to stakeholders who rarely attend Presbytery

Openness and transparency

Scriptural/theological grounding

Tonight, we hope to launch a healthy process, building upon what has already taken place.

Whenever Reformed Christians seek God's renewal, they begin by entering into a time of humble confession... *-Rev. Kate Kotfila*

Assurance of Forgiveness, Passing the Peace

[2] It has been three months since Presbytery met. For most of that period, the (former) full-time executive position has gone vacant. To bring us up to date, the Team has invited two sets of persons to offer brief status reports: [a] Committee chairs; [b] Current staff members.

We will hear from those who are physically present.

We will distribute at the registration table the written statements from others.

We affirm that all current staff and committee chairs were invited to participate.

Let us pray for these servants – staff and chairpersons – as they seek to be faithful during uncertain times. -Rev. Lynn Brown

[3] Now, let us talk and listen to one another. This happens best in groups of 3 to 5. Ideally, your group will involve folks you know and others whom you don't – at least, not well.

Break out into groups, facilitated by S.P.A.T. members to the extent that is possible.

Brainstorm for 15 minutes: What do you think are the most important questions Albany Presbytery needs to wrestle with and/or resolve in order to move forward?

For an additional 5 minutes: Which two of your group's questions seem like top priority?

An additional 10 minutes: What scriptural/theological issues are at stake in those top two?

An additional 10 minutes: Who else, besides present attendees, can help the presbytery to resolve these questions? By what method(s) do you propose engaging them?

Everyone reassembles. Samantha Brewer (Hoosick Falls) will read the scripture.

[4] The Team will gather your ideas and aspirations, and will share them soon on a special section of the presbytery web site. Also through that forum, the Team extends an offer for anyone else (not present tonight) to [a] suggest questions, [b] comment on questions, [c] offer opinions on any related matter; with this key proviso: nothing anonymous. All participants in this conversation about goals, priorities and staffing must own their views publicly.

We want to include non-electronic folks as well. Therefore, we have created sheets for you to take home and distribute to anyone else who might wish to participate. The sheets deal with the same matters we have just been discussing. We also offer envelopes addressed to the Team. Please advise all pen-&-paper folks that their inputs, once read, will be uploaded to the web site. And if any input comes anonymously, the Team will disregard it.

To catch a vision of what God might do with tonight's beginning, look at this 3-min. video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU> "Where Good Ideas Come From"

Lastly, there will be homework – so as to sustain the conversation until our next face-to-face opportunity. As you read the questions posted on the forum, please choose at least one and offer your response – whether an answer, a perspective, or an improvement to the question – prior to Sept. 30, the meeting with Todd Bolsinger. And remember, you must be identifiable.

Hymn or praise song, Closing prayer, Benediction – *led by presbytery officers or their appointees*

Albany Presbytery Staffing Process Advisory Team

Samantha Brewer, Ruling Elder of First United Church, Hoosick Falls. Samantha served as Young Adult Advisory Delegate for Albany Presbytery at GA in June 2016 and at Synod in October 2016. She works as a Customer Care and Data Specialist for Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York.

Lynn Brown, Transitional Pastor at United Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam. Prior to her ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament, Lynn was a member of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church, Spencertown. In Presbytery, she has served previously as Financial Manager.

Harold Delhagen, Leader of the Synod of the Northeast. A member of Geneva Presbytery, Harold joined the Synod staff in 2011, having served as pastor and administrator in a variety of congregations and mid-councils in the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Terry Diggory, Ruling Elder at the Presbyterian—New England Congregational Church, Saratoga Springs. Terry has served previously as Presbytery Moderator and currently serves on the Committee on Representation and Nominations.

Katy Stenta, Pastor at New Covenant Presbyterian Church. Albany. As current co-chair of the Committee on Church Mission, Katy also serves on the Coordination Committee.

Ted Wright, Honorably Retired. Ted recently rejoined Albany Presbytery, having served previously as pastor at the Presbyterian United Church of Schaghticoke from 1978-1982. Since then he has pastored congregations in Langhorne, PA, and Gaithersburg, MD, and worked for PC(USA) World Mission in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

Convener of the Team, and liaison to presbytery's Coordination Committee (who created the Team to act on behalf of the Presbytery):

Kate Kotfila, Pastor at United Presbyterian Church of Cambridge. Kate currently serves on the Board of Trustees and is vice-moderator-elect of Presbytery.

September 12, 2017

This file serves as a history of developments leading up to the current report by the (Albany Presbytery) Staffing Process Advisory Team.

1. BACKGROUND & RESOURCES openly available on the PRESBYTERY WEBSITE

[Go to the "Resources" tab, and click on "Transitional Planning"](#)

2015 January: [Presbytery Council's "Overview of Transitional Process"](#)

– *very similar* in vision & values to what SPAT is currently proposing.

Transition from what, to what?

From "governing body" to "missional council"

as envisioned by Foundations of Presbyterian Polity.

Affirms this mission statement:

"Led by the Holy Spirit, Albany Presbytery encourages, challenges and equips its members and congregations to thrive as disciples of Jesus Christ."

Names 3 current goals: Vital congregations, Healthy relationships, Missional living

Lists and describes 4 core values for guiding the transitional process:

Biblical/theological

Transparency/sharing

Presbytery as Learning Community

Watch words: Creativity, Risk-taking, Abundance, Prophetic

During the Transition Process the Presbytery will work to:

- ⊙ Integrate *learning and discernment* into its life and work.
- ⊙ Experiment with using "teams" (instead of "committees") for our mission and ministry in order to give greater emphasis to vision, goals, purpose, unity, equal effort, and accomplishment.
- ⊙ Give ourselves permission to be more *fluid and flexible* in our meetings, in our teams, in our ministry, and in our life together.
- ⊙ Make *ecumenicity* a major emphasis in all aspects of our ministries.
- ⊙ Work to *build a community of love and trust* as the necessary foundation for an effective missional council.

2015 March: ["God's Preferred Future for Albany Presbytery"](#)

["Biblical Images for God's Preferred Future"](#)

2015 April: ["Council View of Presbytery Priorities"](#) – which builds upon the previous two

2015 June: Silver Bay "Big Picture" presentations by Jan Edmiston and J. Herbert Nelson
Documents are not available.

2015 September: [“Where Are We Headed?”](#) (Power Point)

Stewardship & Mission Interpretation committee report

2015 September: [“Vision Team Report to Presbytery”](#) Items noted include:

- Albany Presbytery region scores high for “*unchurched*” and “*not friendly*.”
- Top down management vs. networks is an emerging trend, with *networks* being the preferred way of leading in this time.
- *Race* is a huge issue in our time in the North American/U.S. context. The church is woefully behind in addressing race issues and remains highly segregated.
- Within the bounds of Albany Presbytery are increasing enclaves of *ethnic groups* who have a history of Presbyterianism. Can we approach them in post-colonial ways?
- The trend/creativity used to be in megachurches. Now it is in *small congregations that intentionally replicate* and build additional small communities. Think microenterprise.
- We need to reclaim the *love* of the Church and the love of the Presbyterian Church!
- *Technology* is a large place of creativity and ministry--how can we join in?
- There is a real hunger for *community* that is deep and wide throughout the Presbytery. This is a place for creativity!
- There is a need to “market” ourselves! We have good stories to share, let’s share them much more than we already are!

2015 Nov, Dec: Landscape Surveys by “Holy Cow! Consulting”. [Summary Report](#) online

Identifies 3 top priorities for the presbytery across all groups:

- Equip congregations to be more effective in addressing problems affecting their surrounding communities.
- Cultivate a higher level of trust within the presbytery.
- Equip pastors and other leaders in congregations with strategies that enable them to reach new members.

Includes paragraph-length remarks pertaining to 7 categories: Conflict, Engagement, Governance, Collegiality, Leadership, Morale, and Support to Congregations.

2016 March & April: [2nd Draft for Albany Presbytery Mission Statement](#)

Includes questions for reflection.

Appends 2 pages of paragraph-length description regarding 8 different *Mission Partners* funded through the presbytery budget.

2016 April & May: [Webinar #1 – Mission & Vision](#)

[Webinar #2 – Staffing and Structure](#)

[Webinar #3 – Ministry for the Future](#)

The presbytery web site posts each complete one-hour webinar, plus a list of the original attendees, plus feedback received after each webinar.

2016 June: Six resources from the Silver Bay retreat have since been posted on the web site:
[Transitional Presbyter report](#) (YouTube, slides & audio, almost 35 minutes length)
[Structure slides](#) (containing various ideas & proposals)
[Trustees report](#) with financial projections and policy recommendations
2015-2016 [Congregations in Action](#) (slides & music)
[Updated Vision/Context Statement](#) - for information & reflection, not adoption.
[Ingredients for Success](#) (a chart by Tim Coombs)

2016 Summer/Fall: Resources produced by Congregational Revitalization and Renewal Team

- [Congregational Renewal & Pastoral Leadership Recommendations](#)
Discusses what is a “Ministry Snapshot” and how to develop a “Ministry Plan”
Includes strategy for triennial visits; describes various assessment tools
- [Webinar video](#) re the proposed new Ministry Plan
(YouTube, 66 min., Tim Coombs & Jennifer Wegter-McNelly, air date: 9/6/2016)
- [Webinar Attendee List and Feedback](#) report from the original Sept. 6 presentation
Note: Only 18 persons are listed as attendees...

2016 Summer/Fall: Report of the Staffing and Structure Team

- [Proposed New Presbytery Structure](#)
- [“A New Day, A New Structure”](#) blog post by presbytery officers
- [Webinar video](#) re the proposed new Structure
(YouTube, 64 min, Jerry McKinney & Cara Molyneaux, air date: 8/31/2016)
- [Webinar Attendee List and Feedback](#) report from the original Aug. 31 presentation

2016 Nov/Dec: two reports by the Staffing Transition Team

[Part 1 – Options for Staffing Patterns](#)

[Part 2 – Staffing and Contracting Needs for the Future](#)

Two recordings of [conference calls seeking feedback](#) re staffing are up on the website.

2016 December: an [updated version of the Congregational Renewal Recommendations](#)

2017 February: an [updated version of the new Structure for Albany Presbytery](#)

This is the version that got adopted!

2017 July: **two blog posts** reporting on meetings of the **Staffing Process Advisory Team**

[July 6, regarding the meeting of June 30](#)

[July 26, regarding the meeting of July 21](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES available by [password](#):

Minutes of all [presbytery meetings](#) beginning in the year 2015.

[Fall, 2015: Transitional Planning,](#)

[from Stewardship & Mission Interpretation / Trustees and the Vision Team](#)

This appears as the very last item under the “Presbytery Meetings” tab on the website.

[Nov. 2016: Presbytery Council summary of, and recommendations relating to, the report by consultant James Fenimore of Samaritan Counseling Center](#)

On the website, go to “News & Events.” Click on “Presbytery Meetings.”

Scroll down to resources for the Nov. 16, 2016 meeting at Cambridge.

This consultation report appears as the fifth document there.

The Staffing Process Advisory Team understands that Mr. Fenimore’s findings could play an important role in the soon-to-be released report by the Synod Administrative Review Commission (SARC). While we have not seen that report, we are told it will become available on or about the second week of October. We anticipate that it will help to illuminate reasons why Albany Presbytery’s considerable efforts in vision, mission, structure & staffing have not yet produced sufficient consensus either to fill staff vacancies or to implement a new model.

Nov. 2016: [Staffing Transition Team report and appendices](#)

Listed with resources for the presbytery meeting of Nov. 16, 2016 at Cambridge

[Staffing Transition Team report, part 3, revised 3-20-2017](#)

Listed with resources for the presbytery meeting of March 29 at Glens Falls

[Albany Presbytery Transition Staffing Beginning on July 1, 2017](#)

Listed with resources for the presbytery meeting June 6 at Northville