

## **PRE-MEETING INFORMATION FOR MARCH 17, 2020, STATED PRESBYTERY MEETING**

### **REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK**

#### **The following are presented for information:**

1. The next stated meeting of Albany Presbytery will be held on **Saturday, May 30, 2020**. Hosts: United Presbyterian Church of Amsterdam and Tribes Hill Presbyterian Church. Meeting will be held at the Amsterdam Church. PC(USA) 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly Co-Moderator Ruling Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri has accepted an invitation to attend this meeting. Meet will begin at 9:00 a.m. with Open Space discussions. The meeting will convene for business at 10:00 a.m.; will include lunch at around noon; and will adjourn around 3:30 p.m.

The remaining stated meetings in 2020 are as follows:

**Saturday, September 19, 2020** - Primarily Education and Spiritual Growth with Worship. Host: United Presbyterian Church of Cambridge.

**Tuesday, November 17, 2020** - Primarily Business with Worship. Host: New Covenant Presbyterian Church, Albany.

2. The membership of the Rev. Molly Dowell-Baum, Minister At-Large, was transferred from the Presbytery of Prospect Hill effective February 13, 2020.
3. The membership of the Rev. George "Blake" Blakesley, III, Interim Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Johnstown, was transferred from the Presbytery of Winnebago effective February 13, 2020.
4. The Administrative Commission to install the Rev. Lynn Horan as pastor of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church in Spencertown met on February 23, 2020, at that church and completed its work. Members of the AC were the Rev. Michael Burkley, Presbytery Moderator, Rockwell Falls Church; Rev. Kathi Jones, First Presbyterian Church, Valatie; Nancy Pienta, ruling elder, First Presbyterian Church, Valatie; Rev. Beth Illingworth, Albany Presbytery Chaplain; Bill & Charlotte Hasselbarth, ruling elders, Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church; Joel Dyslin, ruling elder, St. Peter's Presbyterian Church; and Sandy Fischer, ruling elder St. Peter's Presbyterian Church.
5. **As required by G-3.0109, the Committee on Ministers and Congregations (COMAC) reported to the Stated Clerk that at its meeting on February 13, 2020, it exercised some of the commission powers that have been granted to it and took actions on behalf of the Presbytery. Those actions are duly reported to the Presbytery in the report from COMAC below.**
6. **As required by G-3.0109, the Board of Trustees reported to the Stated Clerk that at its meeting on February 5, 2020, it exercised some of the commission powers that**

**have been granted to it and took actions on behalf of the Presbytery. Those actions are duly reported to the Presbytery in the report from the Board below.**

**The following is presented for consideration and action:**

After months of prayerful discernment, RE Arthur Fullerton (Westminster, Albany) notified the Executive Committee on March 3, 2020, that he humbly requests that Albany Presbytery endorse his standing for election as Moderator of the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PC(USA) to be held in Baltimore, Maryland, beginning on June 20, 2020. Arthur is Albany Presbytery's duly elected Ruling Elder Commissioner to the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and is therefore eligible to stand for election as its Moderator. The Rev. William Schram, Moderator of the Westminster Church session, has confirmed to the Stated Clerk that the session of Westminster acted on February 11, 2020, to recommend that Albany Presbytery endorse Arthur's standing for election as Moderator at the 224<sup>th</sup> GA. Action on Arthur's requested endorsement by Albany Presbytery needs to be taken on March 17, 2020, so that Arthur can notify the Office of the General Assembly of his desire to stand for election. Arthur has experience serving as Moderator of Albany Presbytery and hopes to find a co-Moderator to stand alongside him, but the next step is to secure the blessing of his presbytery, and so he asks for the support of Albany Presbytery.

In sending this request, Arthur shared the following: *"This is a season of change within the church. I think of the PCUSA as wandering in the wilderness, pining for Egypt, where Egypt is remembered as a post WWII time when pews were full of young families, budgets were flush, and Mainline Christianity strode triumphant. Of course, it wasn't a great time for women, minorities, LGBTQ people, or people with disabilities, but that reality gets lost in the gauzy memory of Egypt. We aren't going back to that time and place. Instead we need a new vision of a Promised Land, and I believe the outlines of that vision can be found in the Matthew 25 movement and the Earth Care movement along with a focus on being the Beloved Community outside the walls of the building. This is the church I would like to help be born and this is why I am standing for Moderator."*

**WELSH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION REPORT**

A report will be provided by the AC at the meeting.

**COORDINATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

**The following are presented to the Presbytery for information:**

1. The Coordination Committee met by video conference call using Zoom Video Conferencing on February 13, 2020. The Coordination Committee will meet next by video conference call on Thursday, March 12, 2020.

2. Discussions during the conference calls have centered primarily on coordination issues related to implementation of the new Presbytery Structure; communicating relevant information to Presbytery members in a timely fashion; and coordination with those working on plans for future convocations and retreats.
3. The Coordination Committee is working with the Koinonia Team to evaluate opportunities for education and spiritual growth programs to be provided in 2020. The team will make an oral report at the March 17, 2020, meeting.
4. The officers including Temporary Presbyter Bill Henderson and Immediate Past-Moderator Kate Kotfila meet as the Executive Committee of the Presbytery about 1 week before each Coordination Committee conference call to discuss matters of concern; to plan for Coordination Committee meetings; and to help with the coordination and implementation of the vision, ministry, and mission of the Presbytery as authorized by the Coordination Committee and provided by Standing Rule III.B.

**The following are presented to Presbytery for consideration and action:**

1. Discussion of and possible action to concur with two overtures to GA from the Synod of the Northeast – Reference Updated Overture folder on website.
  - [OVT-005] On Amending G-2.0301 to Allow Congregations to Elect Members as Ruling Elders for Service to the Larger Church
  - [OVT-006] On Establishing a General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils
2. Discussion of and possible action to concur with [OVT-042] Worship Resources For Ministering To Veterans submitted to GA by Blackhawk Presbytery. Reference Updated Overture folder on website.

**COMMITTEE ON CHURCH MISSION REPORT**

See separate report document posted to the website.

**COMMITTEE ON MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS (COMAC) REPORT**

**The following items are presented to the Presbytery for information:**

1. COMAC met at the Malta Presbyterian Church on February 13, 2020. The committee will meet next on March 12, 2020.
2. **Trustee/COMAC Task Force for Churches in Need:** COMAC is assisting in the

creation of this task force. Bill Schram will get the representatives back together after the first of the year to discuss next steps for joint work based on some of the situations that have arisen in the presbytery this year. It has become clear that it is an ongoing necessity to do a church assessment every three years to evaluate the health of the congregation.

3. COMAC is in the process of editing the **COM Manual**, which is currently only accessible to COMAC members as a document in the committee's Dropbox, to change "COM" to "COMAC" along with other editorial changes. Once the editing is completed in February, it will be posted to the Presbytery web site.

**The following commission actions were taken by COMAC on February 13, 2020, and are hereby reported to Presbytery for incorporation in the records of the Presbytery:**

1. **Rev. Molly Dowell-Baum:** COMAC interviewed the Rev. Molly Dowell-Baum and received her as a Member At-Large of Albany Presbytery by transfer from the Presbytery of Prospect Hill (Iowa). She will be introduced to the Presbytery at the March 17, 2020, meeting.
2. **Rev. George "Blake" Blakesley, III:** COMAC interviewed the Rev. Blakesley and received him as a Member of Albany Presbytery to serve as Interim Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Johnstown, by transfer from the Presbytery of Winnebago. COMAC also reviewed and accepted the terms of the contract between the Rev. Blakesley and the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Johnstown. The Rev. Blakesley began this full-time, post-retirement service on February 14, 2020. He will be introduced to the Presbytery at the March 17, 2020, meeting.

At the Rev. Blakesley's request, the Stated Clerk communicated the following by mail with the Board of Pensions to provide the necessary registration report for the Board of Pensions to approve his return to employment with a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation without causing a temporary suspension of his pension benefits: "The Rev. Blakesley's service as an Interim Pastor will be for a limited duration under contract with the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Johnstown, but since it is for more than 20 hours per week, he and the church understand that the session will be assessed post-retirement service dues of 12 percent of the Rev. Blakesley's compensation. It is noted for the record that he never served this church before and did not retire from it."

3. COMAC reviewed and approved the **2020 Terms Of Call** for the following minister members of Albany Presbytery: Alice Trowbridge, Catherine Kotfila, John McAuley, Joseph Shook, Kathryn Beilke, Holly Cameron, Linda Martin, Pam Woodman, Robert Nash, Karen Pollan, Susan Strang, and Ken Applegate.

**The following are presented to Presbytery for consideration and action:**

1. **Bethany, Menands and RE Darren Gundrum:** COMAC recommends that Presbytery commission RE Darren Gundrum to serve as the part-time, pastoral leader of the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Menands for one year (2020). Darren is already commissioned to serve as the Protestant Chaplain for the Russell Sage Campus Ministry sponsored by TAUM.
2. **COMAC recommends that Albany Presbytery appoint a COMAC interviewing team as an Administrative Commission** to meet with and interview Kathryn Kelly on March 26, 2020, with the authority to approve her restoration to ministry at her request in accordance with G-2.0507 (see text below) if the examination is satisfactory. Kathryn is seeking restoration so she can activate her PIF with the Church Leadership Connection (CLC). This will assist her in her search for a pastoral position. She wishes to be restored as a “Minister At-Large” which was the status she held when she was released from ministry by Albany Presbytery in April 2018 in accordance with G-2.0507 at her request. She now lives in Illinois and is unable to attend the Presbytery meeting on March 17, 2020; hence the need to appoint an AC.

*G-2.0507 Release from Ministry as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament*

*When a minister of the Word and Sacrament against whom no inquiry has been initiated pursuant to D-10.0101 and D-10.0201, against whom no charges have been filed, and who otherwise is in good standing shall make application to be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry of minister of the Word and Sacrament, the presbytery shall delete that person’s name from the roll and upon request of a session dismiss that person to a congregation. Release from the exercise of ordered ministry requires discontinuance of all functions of that ministry. The designations that refer to ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall not be used. The person so released shall engage in the ministry shared by all active members of congregations. Should a person released under this section later desire to be restored to the ordered ministry of minister of the Word and Sacrament, that person shall apply through the presbytery which granted the release, and upon approval of that presbytery, the reaffirmation of the ordination questions, and the resumption of a ministry that qualifies that person for membership in the presbytery, shall be restored to the exercise of the ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament without re-ordination.*

3. **Waterford.** COMAC recommends that Albany Presbytery establish an AC to work alongside the session of the Waterford Church in evaluating the church’s future. See separate recommended motion document from COMAC to be posted to the website when it becomes available.

**COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND FINANCE REPORT**

A report from the Budget and Finance Committee will be included as a separate document in the pre-meeting information for the March 17, 2020, stated meeting when it becomes available.

## **COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION AND NOMINATIONS**

The Committee nominates the Rev. Kate Kotfila to the Permanent Judicial Commission, Class of 2025.

The Committee nominates the Rev. Kukjin An to the Committee on Leadership Development, Class of 2022.

## **COMMITTEE ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

See separate report document to be posted to the website, if available.

## **COMMITTEE ON CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND VITALITY**

See separate report document to be posted to the website, if available.

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

See separate report document to be posted to the website, if available.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT**

### **The following are presented to the Presbytery for information:**

1. The Board met on February 5, 2020, at the Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church. The Board will meet next on March 4, 2020.
2. The Board continues to meet regularly with representatives from the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss financial and accounting matters including revisions to existing loan agreements with the Cambridge and the Hudson Churches.
3. The Board continues to deal with property related matters and the significant financial losses incurred when trying to sell the vacant church properties that become their responsibility to maintain and insure when congregations are dissolved.
4. Trustee Don Drew expressed a willingness to be the trustee representative for the discussion of how to advise and deal with churches who no longer can afford their church buildings nor are able to sustain growth in their church.
5. **Renewing the Building Assessment Team:** The Board agreed to offer Building Assessments to congregations again at no cost. Don Drew will continue to be the contact person to request these assessments.

**The following commission actions were taken by the Board of Trustees on February 5, 2020, and subsequently by electronic poll vote and are hereby reported to Presbytery for incorporation in the records of the Presbytery:**

1. **Carlisle Property Sale:** A contract with Ann Linda Tharp and Esther Antosha Tharp-Kindley to purchase the Carlisle Church property for \$55,000 was accepted by the Board. Details will be provided when the sale is closed.
2. **Oakwood Property Transfer:** The Board of Trustees acted unanimously by electronic poll on February 11-13, 2020, to affirm its earlier discussions which has led them to officially approve transfer of ownership of the former Oakwood Avenue Presbyterian Church property in Troy, NY, including all fixtures and personal property currently in the building, to the Oakwood Community Center at no charge when the way becomes clear and the necessary deed restrictions have been extinguished. Details will be provided when the transfer is completed.