

**Presbytery of Southern New England
Commission on Ministry**

Recommendation to establish an Administrative Commission
for the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT

The Committee on Ministry recommends that the Presbytery **ESTABLISH** an Administrative Commission to work in partnership with the Session of the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT, at their own request, to assess that Church's continuing viability for ministry and mission.

If as a result of this assessment, it is the determination of the Administrative Commission that the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT is not able to continue as a congregation of the Presbytery, then the Commission shall have the power and authority to carry out all matters related to either a merger with another Church or Churches, or the dissolution of the Church, to include:

1. The assumption of original jurisdiction, at an appropriate time determined by the AC, in accordance with **Book of Order G-3.0303e**
2. The pastoral care of the members
3. The arrangement of an appropriate celebration of the ministry and mission of the congregation
4. The orderly dismissal of members to other congregations of their choosing
5. The securing, holding, and using of the properties of the congregation
6. The making of recommendations to the Presbytery about the sale or disposition of such property
7. The dissolution of pastoral and staff relationships including fair and equitable severance
8. The authorization of disbursement of Presbytery funds for timely payment of severance and other obligations under purview of the AC, to be reimbursed through the sale of property

Background and rationale: Beginning in April 1961, a conversation began between The Presbytery of Connecticut Valley and individuals interested in organizing a Presbyterian fellowship in Groton. The fellowship became the United Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew in May 1963. The St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT has served as a Christian witness in Groton since 1963, becoming a Presbyterian congregation in 1964. The pastoral relationship with the former installed pastor, the Rev. Jason Santalucia was dissolved after 3 years (2017-2020). During the interim, it was determined that the congregation could call another full time pastor, and in October of 2022 installed the Rev. Dallas Bradel. However, in the short time (19 months) since her start, it has become clear that the congregation was not on track with their strategic plan and the finances provided during the interim were overly optimistic.

On December 12, 2023, the COM liaison to St. Andrew met with the session and received a request that the presbytery form an Administrative Commission. The liaison from the COM, the Rev. Jinny Smanik, and General Presbyter, the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, have been working with the Session at an expanded capacity for the last 4 months and share that:

1. At present St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT has 57 active members. Of these numbers, their weekly attendance is approximately a maximum of 30 people.
2. It is not clear if there is capacity to fulfill the terms of call for the Rev. Dallas Bradel through June of 2024 along with paying other staff members of the congregation which includes a part time office administrator, a preschool director and a part time director of music ministries.
3. The Session of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT engaged a strategic plan from 2020-present which did not yield the intended results.
4. The leadership of the Session is strained, and there is a lack of energy for future ministry.
5. Challenges with pastoral leadership have been documented and identified during the last two interims and two installed pastorates.
6. If the way be clear, there are still a few projects in the works of which St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Groton, CT can be impactful and celebrate the 61 years they have been serving this community and through which may leave a legacy.