

**Called Meeting
of the Presbytery of Southern New England**

Monday, June 24, 2024

Online Meeting via Zoom

The Presbytery of Southern New England of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) held a Called Meeting on Zoom on June 24, 2024, as authorized by the PSNE Bylaws, Section 17, “Electronic Meetings.”

The meeting was called for the purpose of the following items of business:

- Sharing information regarding the changes to Board of Pensions medical coverage for pastors;
- Acting on the proposed 2025 Minimum Compensation Policy;
- Acting on the proposed warrant for an Administrative Commission for Greenwood, Warwick RI;
- Acting on proposed updates to the warrant for the AC for St. Andrew, Groton CT;
- Receiving information about the Trustees use of funds from the sale of the Turn of River Church;
- Acting on proposed approval of cell tower contracts with congregations;
- Acting on nominations to various offices; and
- Commissioning the commissioners to the 226th General Assembly

Call to Order and Welcome

The Presbytery was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by the former Moderator, Elder Nicole Aronson Champagne, who led the assembly in prayer. The Rev. Dallas Bradel, Moderator, had technical issues, but joined the meeting shortly thereafter.

The Moderator offered a word of greeting and welcome.

A **quorum** was electronically present. The roll for this meeting was formed through Zoom participation data. The Rev. Christopher Tate served as electronic meeting support.

ATTENDANCE	Ministers- 30
	<u>Elders- 29</u>
	Total- 59

MINISTERS PRESENT

The following minister members were present:

Nancy Baseel	Thomas Hawkins	Jovelino Ramos
Dallas Bradel	Scott Herr	Jinny Smanik
Christine Caton	Gregory Keosaian	Stacy Smith
Terrlyn Curry Avery	Dean Lindsay	Pamela Spence Bakker
David Esterline	Peggy Lindsay	Christopher Tate
Jane Esterline	Rachel Mastin	Susan Trucksess
Jamie Faile	Tracy Mehr-Muska	Shannan Vance-Ocampo
Christine Foster	John Merz	Mieke Vandersall
Steve Frazzini	Mark Montgomery	
Dale Green	Patrick Notley	
Jan Hawkins	Joan Priest	

MINISTERS EXCUSED

The following minister members were excused: Eileen Epperson, Bea Hoover-Mulvany, Mary Thies

ELDER COMMISSIONERS

The following Elders represented the Churches of the Presbytery:

Ashaway: Babcock	
Barrington	
Brookfield: Valley	
Cumberland	Peter Cameron, Lillie Koney
Darien: Noroton	
Fairfield: First	Clare Schimpf
Fall River: Calvary	
Granby: Pioneer Valley	
Greenwich: First	
Groton: St. Andrew	
Hamden: New Haven Korean	
Hartford: First	Susan Labins
Milford: United	Wendy O'Brien
New Canaan: First	Cynthia Graziano, Bob Spangler
New Haven: Connecticut Korean	
New Haven: First	Jane Hindenlang, Beth Aura Miller, David Miller
Providence	
Springfield: Martin Luther King	Kitty Brightwell, Joyce Davis, James Watts
Stamford: First	Stephen Hart, Geralyn Plomitallo
Warwick: Greenwood	Denise Mair, Elaine Magyar, Evelyn Murray
Warwick: Woodbury	
Waterford: Crossroads	Molly Dean

West Hartford: Westminster
Westerly: Dunn's Corners
Bruce Yarnall
Wilton

Cynthia Buckley, Janet Wade-Utay
Arthur Ganz, Charles Jones, Bob Santy,

PRESBYTERY ROUNDTABLE

The following Elder members and officers from the Presbytery Roundtable were present:
Nicole Aronson Champagne (West Hartford: Westminster), Rachelle Lee (Springfield:
MLK), and Mildred McNeill (Hartford: First), Barbara Riihimaki (West Hartford:
Westminster).

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS

No Commissioned Ruling Elders were present.

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS

Kate Carlisle, PSNE Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Boston

Lindley DeGarmo, Interim Pastor at FPC Greenwich, Hudson River Presbytery

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

VISITORS

No visitors registered for the meeting.

CHURCHES WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

Thirteen (13) Churches were without Elder Commissioner representation.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As a Land Acknowledgment, the Presbytery watched a video featuring an interview with the Rev. Jermaine Ross-Allam, Director of the Presbyterian Center for Repair of Historical Harms.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET

The Presbytery approved the docket for the special meeting as distributed.

ENROLLMENT AND INTRODUCTIONS

First-time commissioners were introduced. Several visitors were also present and introduced themselves.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

The Rev. Dr. Scott Herr, co-chair, reported. A number of resources about Board of Pensions changes to the medical plan for 2025 have been distributed, and both the Board and COM have held conversations with many in the presbytery. The COM's task force working on minimum standards for pastoral compensation has been evaluating the impact and implementation of these changes.

The Rev. Dr. Stacy Smith, Bridge Pastor at First, New Haven, introduced the work of the task force. The task force was asked to respond to the changes that the Board of Pensions has already put into motion. As a Presbytery we don't have a lot of leeway to change the plan. Instead, the task force has been trying to gather as much information and clarity as possible about these changes, prayerfully and thoughtfully seek ways for responding, and offering recommendations to the COM and Presbytery. The task force is aware that there is significant injustice and inequity in the Board of Pensions changes and in the way PSNE recommendations sit at this point. The task force is still working to gather as much information as possible about the specific effects on the members of PSNE, and still seeking options to bring more equity and justice back into the system.

Rev. Smith shared a detailed presentation about the theology of benefits, the new plans taking effect in 2025, and the work of the COM's task force related to these medical plan changes.

The Rev. Dr. Lindley DeGarmo, Interim Pastor at First, Greenwich, outlined the COM's current recommendations for the medical portion of Board of Pensions benefits. The current recommendation is that the church provide at least 50% of the increase due to dependent coverage needed under the new plan.

The Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter, noted that the tight timeline created by the timing of the Board of Pensions rollout means that this is still a work in progress.

Rev. Herr presented the 2025 Minimum Compensation Policy (which omits medical plan info) for Presbytery review. Upon recommendation of COM, Presbytery **approved** the 2025 Compensation Policy as distributed. The Compensation Policy and Board of Pensions Guidelines are appended to these minutes.

Rev. Herr presented the Warrant for the Administrative Commission for Greenwood Community Church, Presbyterian in Warwick, RI. The Rev. Pamela Spence-Bakker, Moderator of Greenwood's Session since (date), shared a pastoral update about the Greenwood Session's work since the death of the Rev. Steve Clark.

Presbytery voted to **approve** the warrant as amended.

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

*Recommendation to establish an Administrative Commission
for the Greenwood Community Presbyterian Church in Warwick, RI*

The Committee on Ministry recommends that the Presbytery **ESTABLISH** an Administrative Commission to work in partnership with the Session of the Greenwood Community Presbyterian Church in Warwick, RI, at their own request, in a letter from the Clerk of Session dated April 23, 2024¹ notifying the Presbytery of an establishment of a Task Force of the Session to discern disaffiliation with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and moving their membership to another Reformed denomination, which was formed in September 2023:

1. To respond pastorally to members of the Congregation and its leadership during their time of grief and heartbreak after the sudden loss of their beloved, and longtime pastor, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Clark.
2. To, alongside the Moderator, advise the Session and its Clerk and to resource it on best practices and process in accordance with the Constitution of the PCUSA, Robert's Rules of Order and additional resources of the Presbytery in times of conflict and challenge.
3. To work collegially through the process outlined in the "[Discerning the Way](#)" policy of the Presbytery and oversee its implementation.
4. The orderly dismissal of members to other congregations of their choosing if requested.
5. The securing, holding, and using of the properties of the congregation through the process outlined in "Discerning the Way."
6. Under the terms of the "Discerning the Way" to report to the Presbytery about the sale or disposition of such property.
7. To request, receive and review any and all materials, documents and information, including financial statements, so as to appropriately do its work collegially with the Session and Trustees of the Congregation.
8. The assumption of original jurisdiction, at an appropriate time determined by the AC, in accordance with Book of Order G-3.0303e, which includes but is not limited to Personnel and Trustee matters.
9. To have full power as per the Book of Order G-4.0207, to if necessary, declare a schism and determine the true remnant.

Background and rationale: In September 2023 the Session voted to form a Task Force to discern next steps for the congregation in terms of its membership in/out of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) due to the expected retirement in 2024 of the Rev. Dr. Stephen Clark. During

the fall of 2023 and early 2024, Rev. Clark's health deteriorated, following a short leave of absence he took in mid-2023 to seek medical treatment in Ohio. In early February of 2024 Rev. Clark corresponded with the Presbytery to notify us of his deteriorating health, and to request that the Rev. Christine Foster be appointed Moderator of Session if he became unable to fulfill those duties. At the same time the COM learned that Rev. Clark had been quite unwell since December 2023 and unable to fulfill the work of his pastoral office following Christmas and that there were other items including a line of credit against the investments of the Congregation and a cell phone tower on the property of which the Presbytery was unaware. As of this date, both administrative items have been dealt with appropriately by the Presbytery Trustees. At the February meeting of the COM, the Rev. Christine Foster was appointed Moderator, and at the same time, Rev. Clark entered the hospital. On March 8, 2024 the Rev. Steve Clark passed away.

At present:

1. Greenwood Community Presbyterian Church in Warwick, RI has 265 active members. Of these numbers, their weekly attendance is approximately 100 people in person with about 15 online.
2. The leadership of the Session is strained, grief-stricken, and overwhelmed with the multiple sudden duties which have been thrust upon them, whereas they had depended upon the Rev. Clark for much leadership prior to his untimely death. There is interpersonal and theological conflict within the Session.
3. The Session is filling the pulpit week to week and they are working with the COM to engage the services of a Bridge Pastor during this time of discernment. They are working through personnel issues related to filling the pulpit, as the current Director of Music and majority of the choir will not attend worship if the person filling the pulpit is not male. The Rev. Christine Foster did fill the pulpit on one Sunday and on Maundy Thursday since the death of the Rev. Clark at the request of the Session but the music director and choir were not present and outside music leadership had to be secured.
4. The Commission on Ministry directed the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to send two letters²to the Session in April 2024 regarding the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) related to gender parity in ordained leadership. This is in process. The Session is continuing to only place men in the pulpit (ruling and teaching elders) and has decided to allow the preferences of the music director, rather than the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to have authority.
5. The needs of the Session leadership for partnership and guidance at this time is high. The first Moderator appointed to the Session by the COM, the Rev. Christine Foster, worked with them for a little under two months. The COM has now appointed the Rev. Pamela Spence-Bakker as Moderator and the first few meetings she has moderated have both needed a second person to attend alongside her for support and featured many visitors at each meeting with specific requests of the Session. This has been disruptive to the work of the Session who despite their challenges, is working diligently in this time of transition and grief. The Session itself is split in terms of decision-making and there are some elders on Session who have openly dismissed the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to which they have taken ordination vows, including concerns voiced that most clergy in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are atheist, that the complete and correct Westminster Confession is not included in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.), and voiced inaccuracies about the ordination process, interfaith relationships, christology and the parity of men and women in ordained leadership

6. On June 5, 2024 at a called Special Meeting of the Session, the Session voted to receive the report, findings, information and recommendations³ from the Ecclesiastical Task Force around whether or not to disaffiliate with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) they appointed in September 2023. There are many inaccuracies and misinformation in this report that remain unaddressed. The Session ultimately decided to receive the report and keep the Task Force in place to work with the Presbytery Listening Team/AC once appointed. They did not approve the dissemination of the report to the Congregation. The Session struggled throughout this meeting in significant ways with their relationships with each other, their own Task Force, and it is clear that conflict in the leadership of the Congregation is very high.
7. There are other lingering conflicts in the Congregation related to theological and social differences, which has caused some to no longer attend worship and withhold giving.

Supporting Documents provided to presbytery:

1. Letter dated April 3, 2024 from Stated Clerk the Rev. Kate Carlisle to Clerk of Session Ruling Elder Elaine Magyar.
2. Letter dated April 23, 2024 from Stated Clerk the Rev. Kate Carlisle to Clerk of Session Ruling Elder Elaine Magyar.
3. Letter dated April 26, 2024 from Clerk of Session Ruling Elder Elaine Magyar to Stated Clerk the Rev. Kate Carlisle.
4. Report of the Ecclesiastical Relations Task Force (report and protest packet background information) formed by the Session of the Greenwood Community Presbyterian Church on September 19, 2023. This report was reviewed, discussed and received by the Session on June 5, 2024.
5. Discerning the Way policy of the Presbytery of Southern New England.

Rev. Vance-Ocampo shared a few additional pastoral words inviting the Presbytery's prayers for Greenwood in this process.

The Compensation Worksheet for 2025 and the updated moderator/pulpit supply have been provided for congregational use.

The Commission also included in a written report that, in accordance with the authority granted under Chapter 8 of the Bylaws of the Presbyter, it has:

1. Approved to ordain, if the way be clear, Candidate Gerson Roca to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, on behalf of the Presbytery of Northern New England, at Providence Presbyterian Church, Providence, RI; and to allow COM to approve the ordination date, commission members, and other details as needed by email.
2. Approved the sabbatical plan for the Rev. Brandi Drake
3. Approved the terms of call between Woodbury:Union and the Rev. Deborah Packard
4. Examined the candidate and approved the terms of call for the Rev. Virginia Courtney and Dunns Corner Community Church Presbyterian (DCCCP) beginning August 1, 2024; and to receive the Rev. Virginia Courtney, if the way be clear, from Mission Presbytery as a minister member of PSNE.
5. Approved, if the way be clear, Sophie Beal into membership from Denver Presbytery, and to validate Sophie's ministry pastoral residency at Green's Farms Church (UCC) in Westport CT.
6. Approved the Administrative Commission to ordain Candidate Rachel Park to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament at New Haven Korean Church, Hamden, CT, on May 19 at 2pm
7. Dismissed the Administrative Commission that ordained the Rev. Rachel Park on May 19, with thanks, and to let the record show that the Rev. Mark Montgomery, Co-Pastor, Wilton Presbyterian Church, served on the commission instead of the Rev. Dr. Shannan Vance-Ocampo;
8. To approve the sabbatical leave contract between Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Hartford, CT, and the Rev. Virginia Smanik, beginning June 1;
9. To approve the transfer of the Rev. Jocelyn Cadwallader to National Capital Presbytery, effective February 27, 2024

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Rev. Dean Lindsey, chair, reported. A written report has been distributed with the following items for information:

1. Turn of River: The Presbytery received \$805,009.20 from the sale of the Turn of River property and \$302,036.76 which was the remaining balance in the the TOR checking account. These funds, totaling \$1,159,045.96, have been deposited into a Money Market (interest bearing) Account at Liberty Bank.

2. **Hiring of Consultant Team:** The Trustees solicited proposals from several groups that offer consulting services for church properties and received presentations from two separate teams. The Trustees recommended to and received from Presbytery's Roundtable Leadership Team the hiring of Vandersall Associates to begin a process of study and planning to best utilize church facilities to serve the work and mission of congregations in transition. The principals of this consultant team are Mieke Vandersall, a member of our Presbytery, and Tim Anderson of Minneapolis. The team includes six other leaders with deep experience in congregational ministry, fund raising, and property assessment. Initial focus for the consultants will be on developing goals for the Presbytery as a whole as we seek to faithfully use our resources and working closely with three of our churches—MLK, Springfield and our two Hartford congregations--to help with planning and visioning. Approximately \$90,000 from the TOR sale fund this process.

Upon recommendation of the Trustees, Presbytery **approved** the changes to the Administrative Commission warrant for St. Andrew in Groton (as highlighted in italics below)

**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 *locally and with the larger Presbytery.*
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. *To select a commercial realtor to handle the disposition of the property, and to then bring a recommendation to the Presbytery about the sale or disposition of such property when an offer is made.*
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

Upon recommendation of the Trustees, Presbytery **approved** the lease agreement between Dunns Corners and The Towers, LLC of Boca Raton FL to provide for the construction of a cell phone tower on behalf of Vertical Bridge Communications. The tenant will pay a monthly lease of \$1750, to be increased when additional broadband carriers are added, for an initial term of five years.

Upon recommendation of the Trustees, Presbytery **approved** the lease agreement between Providence Church and Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC to place cell communication equipment within and upon the church building. The original lease was dated 2004 and has been subsequently amended and updated, most recently on January 1, 2024. The current lease amount is \$2528.90/month.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Elder Nicole Aronson Champagne reported. The following slate of nominees was placed before presbytery.

Roundtable:

- Rev. Nancy Baseel (Hartford) - Co-chair Antiracism & Equity Task Force - 1 year

Commission on Preparation for Ministry:

- Rev. Susan Olson (Validated) - 3 years

Trustees:

- Rev. Brandi Drake (Noroton) - 3 years (change from 1 year term)
- Rev. David Esterline (Retired) - 1 year

Ordination Exam Readers:

- Rev. Eileen Epperson (Validated)
- Elder Margaret Das (Brookfield)
- Elder Ralph Jones (New Haven)

The moderator asked for nominations from the floor. No nominations were made from the floor.

Presbytery **approved** a motion to close nominations and to elect, as a slate, the above nominees to their respective positions.

REPORT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

Elder Barbara Riihmaki reported.

Upon the nomination by Roundtable, Presbytery **elected** the Rev. Jane Esterline to the Nominating Committee.

COMMISSIONING TO THE 226TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Moderator led a commissioning service for participants in the 226th General Assembly in Salt Lake City:

- *Rev. Anne Weirich, Teaching Elder Commissioner*
- *Elder Nicole Aronson Champagne, Ruling Elder Commissioner*
- *Rev. Kate Carlisle, Stated Clerk and staff support*
- *Rev. Dr. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, Corresponding Member*

The Moderator adjourned the meeting in prayer at 7:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kate Carlisle, stated clerk

Policies for Pastoral Compensation For the Year 2025

The Presbytery of Southern New England (PSNE) annually reviews and establishes policies for compensation of Teaching Elders, including persons serving in this role from another denomination, serving a PSNE congregation in an installed or temporary position (see G-2.0502-4 for these terms). When considering a call to a non-PSNE church, PSNE members may use this policy as a guide. The intention of these policies is to assist congregations and Teaching Elders in their discussion about the components of compensation and to ensure that there be fair pastoral compensation facilitating effective ministry with a particular community.

*It is strongly suggested that all congregations raise their ministerial compensation on an annual basis to keep pace with the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment. Failure to do so does not keep the position at the minimum of competitive salary and also does not live up to the vow taken to “pay your pastor fairly” as they have cost of living adjustments as does everyone else. It is further suggested that congregations consult with the Commission on Ministry (COM) about pastoral compensation as it relates to gender and racial considerations for fair and equal pay with their colleagues. In 2018 the COM began to consider issues related to these realities as requested by the 223rd General Assembly and it is clear that there is a wide gender pay gap and to a degree a racial pay gap in this Presbytery. **Since 2018, the COM would note that this trend has continued unabated in PSNE, and worsened. This is a justice issue that only can be resolved by consistent and steady attention by both congregations and the Presbytery and is holy work we do in community with each other as we live into the Gospel to which we are called.***

1. General Provisions:
 - a. All calls shall conform to the requirements of the *Constitution* of the Presbyterian Church (USA), be in writing, and include all agreements between the Teaching Elders and the congregations. They shall be reported to the PSNE Commission on Ministry and when appropriate, recommended for approval by PSNE.
 - b. Annual meetings with the Teaching Elder(s) and the Session or their Personnel Commission(s) shall review the adequacy of each element of the calls and modify these as may be advisable. The liaison from the COM should discuss compensation issues with the Session annually, including any Presbytery recommendations regarding Cost of Living salary adjustments.

- c. Congregations shall comply with Equal Employment Opportunity provisions and shall adhere to fair employment practices without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender identity, age, disability, marital status and/or sexual orientation.
- d. PSNE and its Commission on Ministry exist to support mission and ministry and recognize that particular situations may not fit these compensation policies. Local churches may seek approval of such calls. When doing so they shall either submit a plan that brings them into compliance within three years or request an exception to the policy by documenting the particular circumstances that prevent compliance. Such exceptions, when granted, must be included in the written call.
- e. All pastoral calls are now required to be in compliance with new language as of July 9, 2023 in the Book of Order, G-2.0804, which reads: “The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirement of the presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall review annually the minister’s terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the presbytery’s minimum requirements. The call shall include **provision for a minimum of twelve weeks paid family medical leave and** participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.”
- f. This compensation policy becomes effective January 1 of the year following approval. The compensation for both new and continuing Teaching Elders shall comply with these minimum standards.

2. Requirements and Guidelines:

- a. Effective Salary: The definition of Effective Salary is given on the Board of Pensions website www.pensions.org and in the instructions for Board of Pensions form ENR-111. The BOP calculator provides guidance for churches which have manses and those which do not. The BOP website should be the first stop for PNCs working on developing salary packages. Churches are required to report the total compensation package for clergy each year. A copy of the Pastoral Compensation Worksheet is found on the PSNE website for your information.
- b. Presbytery Mandates: Presbytery mandates that new calls meet Presbytery minimums and approves recommendations for those minimums. Salaries for less than full time calls should be prorated. It is important for churches with established calls to ensure that at least the current minimum is maintained and to consider other factors mentioned in this guideline.
- c. Current Presbytery minimums: **Entry level Minimum effective salary for 2025 is \$71,000. We are tentatively recommending a 3% COLA**

for 2025. <https://www.ssa.gov/cola/> (final COLA numbers are usually available in the fall of each year and we will provide an update if necessary to this preliminary recommendation at the October 2024 meeting of the Presbytery).

- d. Other Considerations: In determining a fair effective salary churches need to take into consideration significant factors, such as widely varying housing costs in different geographic parts of the Presbytery, experience level, scope of responsibilities, and size of congregation (number of members). Considering these factors requires adjustments beyond the minimum figures.

i. Geographic differences. There are significant differences as to median income level and housing costs in our presbytery, which need to factor into fair compensation. Several resources are available to help determine this. The HUD website www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html provides county by county figures for median family income. The HUD website www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html provides fair market value for rents by county. This could provide a benchmark for determining a housing allowance. Median housing values can be secured through local realtors. For CT, the website www.ctrealtor.org provides information. For MA it is www.marealtor.org and for RI, www.rirealtors.org. Ideally, ministers should live in the same community where they serve. However, for some communities with churches without manses, who must provide a housing allowance, prohibitive housing costs make that difficult. Churches providing a housing allowance need to allow for flexibility in housing arrangements, recognizing that ultimately the choice of where to live is the minister's.

ii. Experience level. Churches should consider an adjustment to the minimum salary based on years of experience. A suggested expectation would be to add 1% for each year since ordination for the first ten years and .5% for each year thereafter on top of all other increases.

iii. Size of church. Churches should consider an adjustment beyond the minimums based on the size of the church (number of members). A suggested expectation would be 5% more for each 100 members beyond 200. Thus, for example, the adjustment for a church of 200-299 members would be 5%, for a church of 300-399 members would be 10%, etc.

iv. Gender and Race disparities. There is still considerable disparity in effective salary between male and female pastors in full time installed positions. Similar disparities are present

as well for racial ethnic ministers. Churches are urged to review the Board of Pensions document Living by the Gospel and consider ways to rectify that concern. The Commission on Ministry, in reviewing calls, will look at comparative situations in order to ensure more equity in this matter.

- v. Associate Pastors - It is recommended that effective salary for Associate Pastors should be between 70 and 85% of the salary for Pastors/Head of Staff, depending on experience, church members and scope of responsibilities.
- e. Benefits Plan Dues: ***[Due to major changes to the Board of Pensions medical plan for participating ministers in 2025, the Commission on Ministry is, as of June 2024, handling discernment of recommendations and requirements benefits through the Board of Pensions as a separate matter from this Compensation document. Previous requirements have been stricken; omission of Board of Pensions benefits details from this document shall not be considered as a lessening of mandatory BoP enrollment provisions.]***
- f. Self care: Attention to self care is essential to the well-being of both Teaching Elders and congregations. The responsibilities of ministry often cannot be fully planned or scheduled, so it is important to establish norms and intentionally maintain them on average. Expectation of regular service beyond a typical full-time work week often leads to problems. The number of hours of service expected per week should be clearly laid out between the Teaching Elder and the congregation. At least two days off per week should be provided. A full-time workweek is considered 40 hours/week.
- g. Paid Holidays: Paid holidays and/or a floating date in lieu of the holiday if the clergyperson is required to work on that day shall be provided. The Presbytery follows the federal holiday schedule.
- h. Annual Vacation: Four full weeks of vacation annually and five weeks after ten years of continuous service in a congregation shall be provided. The church is to provide coverage for all pastoral functions in the Teaching Elder's absence, including but not limited to conducting worship services. Any changes to vacation beyond this requires a meeting of the Congregation as this is a terms of call issue.
- i. Annual Study Leave: Two weeks annually of paid study leave shall be provided. Unused portions may accumulate to not more than six weeks. The study leave shall be approved by the Session as far in advance as possible and normally should not immediately precede, follow, or be mixed with vacation time. As with vacation, the church is to provide coverage for all pastoral functions in the Teaching Elder's absence.

- j. Early Ministry Institute: Teaching Elders whose first parish ministry is in PSNE shall participate in the Early Ministry Institute of the Synod of the Northeast or its equivalent. The church shall provide appropriate time off and funds for participation in this program.
<https://www.synodne.org/early-ministry-institute>
- k. Sabbatical leave: A three-month sabbatical with full salary and benefits shall be arranged between the Teaching Elder and session after each sixth year of continuous installed service.
<https://psne.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Update-to-Sabbatical-Guide-lines.pdf>
- l. Leave: All congregations are required to adhere to the Presbytery, General Assembly and Board of Pensions policies on disability and paid-family leave along with the family leave provisions in the Book of Order. These policies are posted on the PSNE website under the COM page.
- m. Accountable Reimbursement Plan:
 - i. Continuing Education allowance – A reimbursement budget of at least \$2,500 against paid receipts for expenses for books, continuing education, and study leave shall be provided. This allowance may be accumulated for up to three years.
 - ii. Automobile and Professional expenses – Terms of call shall include a reimbursement account to cover the cost of a Teaching Elder’s driving to meetings and pastoral visits, and other appropriate travel as well as other professional expenses such as professional memberships, subscriptions, and so forth. Expenses for the use of the Teaching Elder’s personal car preferably should be reimbursed at the mileage rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service for business travel.
 - iii. Provision for moving costs shall be included in the terms of call of the Teaching Elder. Given changes and complications to the US Tax Code regarding clergy moving costs, it is the recommendation of the COM that a hiring bonus is provided to clergy coming into PSNE of at least \$10,000.00 for them to use however they see fit for relocation expenses. This uncomplicates things for both the congregation and clergy member in year-end reporting.
- n. Self-employment Contribution Act (SECA) Tax Allowance: A Social Security offset payment of one half of the Teaching Elder’s self-employment tax to prepare for adequate retirement income is listed on the terms of call sheet.
- o. Housing Equity Fund (Retirement savings plan) - Churches that require the minister to live in a manse are encouraged to contribute to a housing equity fund, so the minister might build equity in anticipation of housing needs in retirement. The recommendation is \$200 per month. The Board of Pensions offers a retirement savings plan through Fidelity Investments (which can be

for housing equity), to which the church could contribute. The plan number is 57887. Contact (800) 343-0860 for further information.

Updated by PSNE on September 19, 2015

Updated by PSNE on February 6, 2016

Updated by COM September 14, 2016

Updated and Approved by PSNE November 19, 2016

Updated and Approved by PSNE November 18, 2017

Updated and Approved by PSNE November 17, 2018

Updated and Approved by PSNE November 18, 2020

Updated and Approved by PSNE September 21, 2022

Updated and approved by PSNE September 20, 2023

Updated and Approved by PSNE June 24, 2024 (pending Presbytery vote)

2025 Board of Pensions Medical Plan Guidelines for Congregations

Significant changes are underway for the 2025 medical plan for pastors and their families. Please refer to the Board of Pensions site for all plan documents, including an updated benefits dues calculator. Below is the preliminary guidance from the Presbytery for 2025. We understand that most congregations will be developing their Terms of Call and budget for 2025 over the summer months. We may revise these guidelines into policy by the October 2024 meeting of the Presbytery, but after much reflection and discernment, this is where the Commission on Ministry has landed in terms of best advice to congregations. We also refer you to the slide deck from the Special Meeting of the Presbytery in June 2024 and to the Rev. Dr. Carrie Mitchell who is our regional representative with the Board of Pensions. If pastors/congregations need assistance over the summer months with negotiating these new plans and terms of call, please reach out to the COM through its co-chairs who are ready to assist you.

Benefits Plan Dues: Compensation shall include payment of the Board of Pensions' mandated dues for medical, death and disability insurance, and pension benefits, also called the Congregational Pastors Participation plan. Dues are mandatory for all installed pastors regardless of hours served. *(Transitional Pastor's Participation is available to employers who have a minister in Pastor's Participation as of Dec. 31, 2024, to transition from the current dues structure to the new one. Transitional Pastor's Participation continues the noncontributory dues structure of Pastor's Participation as a percentage of effective salary through Dec. 31, 2027, subject to cost increases.)*

Other teaching elders may be enrolled in either the Congregational Pastors plan or in the Covenant Package plus one of the Health & Wellness Plans, including one of the medical options (PPO, EPO, or HDHP) menu options. For other teaching elders enrolled in the Congregational Pastors Participation, there is a 20-hours per week minimum scheduled working-hour requirement for participation. For other teaching elders enrolled in the Covenant Package menu options, there is no minimum scheduled working-hour requirement for medical coverage but there is a 20-hour minimum scheduled weekly working-hour requirement for all other benefits.. **PSNE requires employing organizations to pay the Board healthcare and pension dues for Member-only PPO medical coverage for the congregational pastoral leader and all the**

income protection benefits included in the Congregational Pastors Package (or Transitional Pastor's Participation plan if eligible). Coverage for eligible family members under the Congregational Pastors Package is optional. PSNE requires employing organizations to cover at least 50 percent of the cost of such optional dependent healthcare coverage regardless of the pastor's family status and regardless of whether a minister member's spouse and dependents have healthcare coverage through an alternative source. The Commission on Ministry may grant exceptions in extenuating circumstances. The dues are specified by the Board each year as percentages of Effective Salary. The Board annually specifies flat dollar amounts for the minimum and maximum dues basis for the components of the benefit plan.

Note that the Board has special provisions concerning clergy couples, those serving under the Formula of Agreement, and those in BOP grant programs. For calculating these benefits, please reach out directly to the Board of Pensions.

The Board website provides a dues calculator at:

<http://www.pensions.org/AvailableResources/Calculators/Pages/Dues-Calculator.aspx>.

Congregations can use the Board of Pensions Decision Guide for assistance:

<https://www.pensions.org/decision-guide/>

All information about the new plan and changes can be found at:

<https://www.pensions.org/file/what-we-offer/benefits-guidance/forms-documents/Documents/2025-Benefits-Plan.pdf/>