



**Administrative Commission for
St. Andrew Church in Groton, CT
Final Report to the Presbytery - May 9, 2026**

The Presbytery formed the Administrative Commission in February 8, 2024 with the following mandate:

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

At no point in time did the AC need to exercise original jurisdiction.

When we first began our work, our first task was working with the Session of the congregation to determine what path forward for their ministry they would want to engage.

Out of these initial conversations we:

- Reviewed the financial and missional stability of the ministry:
 - Explored ways to maintain the present congregation while expanding with other community partners or creative worshiping ideas;
 - Spent time with the members of the congregation through worship, sharing meals, and meetings;

- Set up “town hall” listening sessions with the members to find out what they wanted and their expectations, where they saw their church and their outreach, how did they want to move forward, who did they think could support them, and discussed various timeframes for next steps.
- Out of these conversations and meetings for discernment, both with the Session and the larger congregation, a consensus emerged of recognizing many of the senior members of the congregation could not continue the work needed to keep the church as it had been - noting fewer younger people joining the congregation. Coming to grasp the need to close the church since they could not financially continue to support the large property and a full time salaried pastor.
- The Session voted on May 21, 2024 to call a Congregational Meeting on June 16, 2024. At this meeting we assisted in the sharing of the discernment from these meetings and conversations of the Session with the AC, with a recommendation to close the church and bring the ministry of the congregation to an end. The Session stood in solidarity with the AC as this was presented. The Congregation voted June 16, 2024 to end the ministry with a final worship date of August 25, 2024 and a final day for financial and legal purposes of August 31, 2024.

Before and after the meeting of the Congregation to vote on dissolution, the AC undertook the following tasks for an ordered transition:

- Interviewed local realtors to represent the property which was first listed July/August 2024.
- Established fair and equitable severance pay for pastor and staff - dissolution of pastor relationship in May 2024.
- Provided pastoral support and worship leadership once salaried pastor was gone;
- Worked with the pre-school program staff to establish termination date for building use and close of the pre-school.
- Corresponded with all former pastors of the Congregation, notifying them of the decisions that were made, thanking them for their service, and offering them an opportunity for a pastoral conversation if needed.
- A team from the congregation gathered all historical church materials needing to be archived, following the archive check-out list from the Presbyterian Historical Society, and then shipped all relevant items to Philadelphia in November of 2024. We also provided for a payment of \$5,000.00 to the Presbyterian Historical Society at closing to cover the cost of initial archiving and long-term storage.
- Two AC members were added to all Groton Bank accounts which we managed for a few months until the accounts were clear of activity. The Presbytery financial administrator then managed all payments and tracking after this for the AC.

- Created an inventory list for every item belonging to the church. A team of members determined where items could be contacted but if they were specifically given by someone to the church, the donors were contacted to see if they had interest in the item. All items were accounted for and donated to local community partners and churches. A few members tirelessly worked to clean out the building and make sure it was in good shape to sell - all items were removed and good homes were given to many of the items.
- Met and worked with local congregations to establish church options for members of SAPC - Mystic UCC, Crossroads Presbyterian Church, and Dunn's Corners Community Presbyterian Church. Two Sundays were identified as visiting Sundays to explore some of the church options. It was important for members to know that the AC supported them in their faith journey - wherever it took them.
- The St. Andrew Presbyterian Church mission committee provided recommendations of where they would like ministry gifts/donations to be made once the property was sold, which we honored. Gifts made at closing were offered to the following local ministries:
 - Mystic Congregational (UCC)
 - Safe Futures
 - New London Community Meal Center
 - FRESH New London
 - Always Home New London
- We decided to provide an additional mission gift to the Martin Luther King Community Presbyterian Church in Springfield, MA to honor the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Terrlyn Curry Avery who served as interim pastor at the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church prior to the ministry of the Rev. Jason Santalucia. This gift enables the furtherance of ministry of another congregation in our Presbytery and represents the largest individual gift of one congregation in PSNE to MLK for the rebuilding after the arson and hate crime directed towards them.
- Established the closing date of August 31, 2024 with August 25, 2024 as the Celebration of Ministry Sunday. Worship was held that day with the presence of the AC and worship leadership from the Rev. Blake Blackley.

After the church was closed our work turned to the dissolution of the property:

- Hiring a local management company to assist with regular cleaning, monitoring the property, keeping the grounds tidy, and being available was very important since the property took longer than expected to be purchased.
- Worked with a realtor to show the building and throughout the first year made several price changes due to the market and the building not selling.

- Worked with the State of CT to close out the payroll tax bill. This was not properly accounted for by the payroll company, and led to some surprises along the way. We wish to thank our Stated Clerk, the Rev. Kate Carlisle for keeping up with this process which was lengthy and frustrating. In the end, the State of CT owed us money, as reflected on the financial spreadsheet!
- Through the Presbytery administrator, all billing, payments, and financial organization was managed after late 2024. We wish to thank the Rev. David Bennett for all of his help with this and our accounting team at Jitasa.

Final sale information:

We were pleased that after a lot of twists and turns, the property sale closed on May 1, 2026 to the Saint Mary And Saint Moses Coptic Orthodox Church of Lyme, CT for \$955,000.00. They lost their church building to a fire, and so this represents a new start in ministry for them. They are an Egyptian Coptic congregation, and so we are very pleased that this will continue to be a place of worship for another part of our larger Christian faith family. They have extended an offer to our Presbytery for us to join them in worship at some time in the future, which we look forward to sharing in.

Attached to this report are the closing documents and the property check out financial spreadsheet. Some of these numbers will shift slightly and that is noted in our motion to the Presbytery. The mission gifts identified are being dispersed this week and a letter is being sent to all former members of the congregation notifying them of the sale and how funds for mission were spent. The Trustees of the Presbytery will manage remaining funds. We draw your attention as a Presbytery to the significant cost the Presbytery had to incur to care for the property until sale, and the organization which this took, including significant time for the AC as volunteers, the chair of the Trustees, and the staff of the Presbytery. These costs (financial) have been reimbursed to the Presbytery from the sale of property.

As we close our work, there are four specific people we would like to thank and honor:

- Our PSNE attorney, Jo-Ellen Jagos, Esq. who provided assistance and guidance to us throughout this entire process.
- Elder Diane Snider of the St. Andrew congregation served on the AC as an elected member up until the closure of the congregation's ministry when her membership was transferred to the UCC congregation in Mystic, CT. Her ministry among us was invaluable.
- PSNE minister member, the Rev. Christa Swenson, whose congregation in Mystic, CT took in the largest number of former members of the St. Andrew

congregation. This included Penny Webster, the wife of the Rev. John Webster, a retired minister member of PSNE who worshipped with St. Andrew, and their family then began worshipping with the Mystic congregation. Penny passed away last month, and that congregation offered incredible pastoral support and accompaniment to the Webster family.

- Dr. Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter, who provided guidance, invaluable expertise, and support throughout the entire process.

The ministry of the Mystic UCC congregation, their leadership, and shared ties with St. Andrew grew over decades of local mission service, and represents some of the highest ministry hopes and goals contained in our decades long relationship with the United Church of Christ and our shared “Formula of Agreement”. That, in addition to the sale of this property to a Coptic Church, and the final mission gift to the Martin Luther King Community Presbyterian Church in Springfield, MA represents the ecumenical spirit we strive for in our ministry as a Presbytery in the larger New England community. We are grateful that through the leading of the Holy Spirit we were able to honor those goals in our service to the Presbytery.

Elder Beth Aura Miller (New Haven), chair

Rev. George Blakesley (HR)

Rev. Jinny Smanik (HR)

Rev. Jessica Jones (Wilton)

Motion:

That the Presbytery:

1. Receive the report of the Administrative Commission, including the closing documents and financial spreadsheet;
2. Dismiss the Administrative Commission with thanks;
3. Task the Board of Trustees, and the Presbytery administrator, the Rev. David Bennett, with the final supervision of funds for the congregation; we expect some shifts to this spreadsheet as final utility bills come in. The Trustees will provide a finalized spreadsheet at the fall meeting of the Presbytery this year to show any changes to this document. The Presbytery Trustees will also share at that time how they have determined to use and/or invest the remaining funds of this ministry.