

Fairmount Presbyterian Church
2757 Fairmount Blvd
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118
Stated Session Meeting
Agenda
November 5, 2025

The November Stated Session Meeting of Fairmount Presbyterian Church took place on Wednesday, November 5 at 6:30 pm at Fairmount Presbyterian Church.

THE ROLL

Elders: Rev Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor; Rev Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Ian Cameron, Jim Crosby, Vicki Mentrek, Peter Scheid, Ben Sperry, Sarah Stone, Steve Chapman, Nancy Gillombardo, Jerry Parker, Ruth Wasem, Susan Wherley

Absent: Jim Crosby, Peter Scheid

Via Zoom: Peg Zitzner

Moderator: Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor

Clerk of Session: Sarah Stone

Guests: Rev. Andrew Genszler, Ginger Van Wagenen. Incoming elders Carol Adrine, Timothy Cuff, Katie Wetherbee

QUORUM AND DOCKET

The Moderator Rev. Wallace opened the meeting by greeting new elders. He determined a quorum was present and reviewed the docket, asking if there were proposed revisions. Hearing none, the docket was approved. Rev. Wallace introduced guests to the meeting and requested the privilege of voice. The motion to grant it was passed unanimously.

Rev. Wallace then began the meeting with prayer and a reading from Isaiah:40

CLERK'S REPORT (see See Full Clerk's Report attached)

Clerk Sarah Stone referenced the previously distributed minutes and asked for approval of the motion below:

MOTION: Session recommends approval of the October 2025 Clerk's Report and minutes of the October 1 Stated Session meeting and October 19 Congregational Meeting. The motion was passed unanimously

She also reported on member requests to be removed from the rolls from Christopher Higley, Em and Jake Ezell, all of whom have moved away, and Tom Bennett who is a member at another congregation. Session voted unanimously to accept these requests with gratitude.

ORDER OF THE DAY:

Batey 105 Report Update and Process Discussion - Rev. Wallace

Rev. Wallace opened by asking that the elders respond to the results of the pre-meeting survey focusing on next steps in the Batey discussion and plans for a special session meeting on December 7. Sarah Stone briefly summarized the survey results and pointed out the recently distributed documents from the Batey Committee and Elder Peg Zitzner.

Ben Sperry, referring to these documents and the survey, asked the group if there was a consensus about the idea of identifying a third party to assist in administering the Batey project. Peg Zitzner responded that the Batey Committee all contributed to the written response and that almost everyone involved in this group expressed willingness to work with a third party. Steve Chapman and Ruth Wasem, both members of the Batey Task Force, expressed surprise that the majority of Session did not rank the continuation of a 25-year commitment as important.

Ian Cameron expressed the view that Session should not have made a 25-year commitment without identified funding and added that recently Session chose to fund a commitment to Shiloh Baptist Church within the 2025 budget rather than bind future Sessions to monitoring a loan agreement. He also pointed out that Rebecca Rubenstein's report outlined possible concerns about the local management of finances within the Batey. Sarah Stone noted that Batey 105 reserve funds have dropped from over \$116,000 in 2022 to approximately \$50,000 currently and the entire Batey Education Fund of \$20,000 has been spent, with annual financial outlays exceeding the operating budget; she asked that the Batey group outline a future financial plan. Peg Zitzner added that Fairmount has not totally funded Batey projects in the past and the committee has raised funds from outside the congregation. She expressed concern that a third party would still result in financial obligation to Fairmount. Steve Chapman responded that this might be a fundraising opportunity. He also added that the discussion has not yet dealt with the Task Force's other charge to celebrate the achievements of the last 10 years and we need to be sure to honor the work that has been done.

Rev. Wallace asked whether Session felt that Bridges to Batey should continue under FPC with a third-party manager or whether the Bridges to Batey project would move to a third party organization with FPC support. Ruth Wasem asked that the joint meeting consider a narrowing of focus of the Batey mission, possibly underwriting educational opportunities which might be more affordable given current resources.

Sarah Stone restated the questions that elders had discussed and asked if this was a complete list:

- 1) Is there consensus that the first option Session and Bridges to Batey should explore is the use of a third party to administer the program?
- 2) Would Bridges to Batey continue to operate under FPC with a third party administrator or would it move to the third party with FPC funding? Should both options be tested for feasibility? How will this research go forward?
- 3) Could we find a partner that might match our resources and provide administrative talents and support? Who are the candidates?

- 4) Could Bridges to Batey narrow its focus to a priority such as education support in order to operate within current resources?
- 5) Given the current spending plan and dropping resources, what changes does the Bridges to Batey committee propose in the short term to preserve a funding base for the future?
- 6) Session would like to hear the Bridges to Batey committee's response to Rebecca Rubenstein's report and how they would adapt their approach in light of those findings.
- 7) How do we celebrate the achievements of Bridges to Batey's first ten years and communicate them and the developing future plans for the Batey project to the congregation?

After discussion, Session concurred that these questions were a good starting point for the December 7 meeting agenda. Ian Cameron asked whether Rebecca Rubenstein and Danny Martinez would be invited to attend the meeting and receive the Bridges to Batey Task Force report and Rebecca Rubenstein's appendix; the consensus of Session was yes to both questions. Session also concurred with the survey results that preferred researching a single option (rather than multiple options) as the next best course.

Rev. Wallace indicated that Session needed to make a motion to call a Special Session Meeting for December 7 after the 11 am service for the purpose of discussing the Task Force Report and next steps in the Batey project with the Batey 105 Committee. Sarah Stone made this motion and it was approved unanimously.

Rev. Wallace added that he and Sarah Stone would reach out to Rebecca Rubenstein and Danny Martinez to invite them to the meeting and would also communicate the questions from Session and a meeting agenda to the Batey 105 Committee.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Admin Council: Chair Ruth Wasem referenced the Admin Council report and asked for questions. She reported that Jim Crosby and Rob Faxon are continuing to work on identifying future legal counsel for Fairmount. She also said the Finance Committee is wrapping up the 2026 budget for consideration at the December 3 Session. Noting that 2025 financial results were positively affected by unfilled open salary positions, offset by overspending on emergency building projects. She asked Rev. Genzler to elaborate.

Rev. Genzler distributed a financial report for the month ending September 30, 2025. He noted that while tithes and offerings were a bit behind, FPC expects 25-40% of its contribution payments in December; there are currently \$240,000 in unrealized pledges against an anticipated \$730,000. This has been somewhat offset by additional revenue of \$78,000 from federal Employee Retention Credits and other sources.

On the expense side, underspending on personnel was offset by overspend of over \$106,000 on building maintenance due to HVAC repairs. Rev. Genzler indicated that Buildings and Grounds will return with a proposal for a large HVAC capital upgrade. He noted that Session approved the 2025 budget with a \$73,000 deficit and added a \$16,000 grant to Shiloh Baptist Church, and that

at present this projected deficit is now forecast at approximately \$45,000. He also reviewed the components of the solar project funding, which included a \$45,000 commitment from the FPC Capital Improvement Fund, contributions of \$25,000, and an anticipated \$38,000 rebate from the federal government, the proposal for which has just been submitted. He reported that FPC has received just over 50% of the \$750,000 pledge goal for 2026, with 70 pledges totaling approximately \$400,000. He projected that Session will have a completed budget draft at its December meeting now that the Personnel Committee has submitted its budget recommendations.

Buildings and Grounds Chair Ian Cameron announced that the ramp project is complete, with some savings on concrete enabling the necessary replacement of the ramp handrail for a total of approximately \$35,000. Rev. Genszler updated Session on the drain line project, saying that the City of Cleveland Heights will complete its second inspection next week and that FPC is resolving a dispute with the city about its responsibility to connect the new lines to city drainage.

Rev. Genszler announced that Buildings and Grounds was on the verge of selecting an engineering firm from an identified list to oversee the implementation of the HVAC project. Vicki Mentrek asked that Session be advised that the current state of the boiler's lack of shut-off valves poses a safety issue and that the church's coverage by insurance in that event should be investigated. Rev. Genszler announced that a summit meeting of Admin Council and Buildings and Grounds was planned for next month to discuss the capital project and its financing plan before coming back to Session for approval.

Serve Council: Chair Steve Chapman reported that an FPC food drive in October had collected 72 pounds of rice and other food and \$175 in cash to support Refine Church and Serve Council had authorized an additional \$500 for the FPC committee to spend on additional food for the project. Serve Council also approved a grant of \$2,000 to Project Green Thumb which is to be matched by other contributions. The Council also approved a grant of \$3,500 to North Church for general operations as well as \$500 for its hygiene products projects. Council is delaying a decision on food-related grants to determine if special support is needed to support SNAP recipients. Rev. Wallace noted that he had assisted North Church in applying for \$6500 for a part-time grant writer from the Presbytery Vision Fund. Jerry Parker, liaison to North Church, reminded Session about its quarterly meal and new soup service.

Faith Formation Council: Chair Ben Sperry announced the upcoming performance of "The God I Know" by Getting to We on November 13 and 14th in Andersen Hall, along with an interactive discussion with Rev. Wallace and Debby Plummer. Complementary tickets are available. He announced that the November 9 No Strangers Club has been postponed to December 14.

Care Council: Chair Vicki Mentrek discussed budget overages as a result of increased cost of food. Care Council recently purchased 6 soup kettles so that FPC could serve soup at the church or elsewhere. She announced that Deacons are in charge of communion and will be assigning elders to assist on the first Sunday of the month at 11 am. Carol Adrine asked if home-bound communion is being offered and Rev. Harren-Lewis indicated there was low demand for this service.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

1. Feb 22 worship with Shiloh Baptist Church

Rev. Wallace reviewed the history of the 2025 Shiloh Baptist Church project and indicated that FPC has been invited to worship with them on February 22.

After discussion, Session made a motion to approve worshipping at Shiloh Baptist Church at 11 am on 2/22/2026, retaining the 8:30 am service in the Fairmount Chapel on that date. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Advent Study

Rev. Wallace announced that Fairmount will again join with Antioch Baptist Church for a joint online Bible Study during Advent co-moderated by Rev. Napoleon Harris and himself.

3. Report from meeting with St. Mark's Pastor Nominating Committee

Rev. Wallace announced that he is now the Presbytery Liaison for St. Mark's PNC, which has been without a permanent pastor for several years. He convened a meeting with FPC leadership and the St. Mark's group to discuss concepts for collaboration in ministry going forward. This will start with invitations to church events, including a Men's Day at St. Marks. Carol Adrine remarked that Forest Hills has reached out about collaborating as well.

4. Looking ahead to January 9 Session Retreat

Rev. Wallace announced that the 2026 Session Retreat will take place on January 9 and 10, beginning at 4 pm on Friday at Bellwether Farm. Christine Winters will send out more information and an advance survey.

5. December Office Hours

Rev. Wallace requested that Session consider closing the office on Friday, December 26 and a half day on December 31. He added that the December 3 Session meeting will be devoted to the 2026 budget.

After discussion, Elders made the motion to give the Senior Pastor discretion to close the church on 12/26 and 12/31, which was approved unanimously.

PASTORS REPORTS:

Rev. Harren-Lewis announced that she had met with several churches to plan the annual Blue Christmas Service. She reported on leading a successful whale-centered spiritual retreat in California and expects to repeat it again. She indicated that Club 4-5 would soon be learning about communion and requested a motion to serve communion in class.

Motion: Session authorizes Rev. Harren-Lewis to conduct a communion service with Club 4-5 in the second half of the 2025-26 program year. The motion was approved

unanimously.

Rev. Genzler reported that he had no new business to bring to Session and reflected gratitude about his experience at Fairmount.

Rev. Wallace acknowledged the support of Rev. Harren-Lewis and Lisa Nester in pastoral care, which was highlighted in the recent All Saint's Day which named 25 people who passed away during the past year. He reflected that that weekend included Scareborough Trick or Treat neighborhood cider and candy, a major Fairmount Choir performance, Club 4-5, and Breaking Bread Sunday, all of which went smoothly. He also recognized Rev. Genzler and Treasurer Amy Carlson for excellent work on the budget and Vicki Mentrek and Susan Wherley for assembling a full slate of nominees and distributing candidate bios to the congregation. Looking forward, Advent will include worship plans focusing on "enough" and liberation, Advent bags, and a meditative self-guided space in Room 114.

Reporting on community activities, Rev. Wallace noted:

- FPC has received a \$17,000 grant from the Cleveland Foundation to form a new network of LGBTQ+ inclusive churches, funding a consultant and staff time.
- Rev. Wallace was meeting with 20 nonprofit execs from around Ohio to discuss strategies to address emerging crises and handle services that are disappearing. He is also working with elected officials to raise awareness about ICE detention in Youngstown prisons.
- Next week Rev. Wallace will represent Greater Cleveland Congregations in Washington DC at a Just Power Alliance conference. He will also be participating in a statewide gathering of faith, business, and veterans nonprofits to discuss ways to preserve democratic values. In January he will participate in a national gathering of faith leaders led by Jim Wallace at the Georgetown Center for Faith and Justice to work on a new confessional statement and coordinate a faith response.
- Rev. Wallace asked for prayers for Jonas for his immigration hearing this week in face of possible deportation to the Congo.. He is also assisting a pastoral colleague in Springfield, Ohio who ministers to Haitians and is experiencing death threats..
- Rev. Wallace also noted that he is working with ReSource Cleveland and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to provide funding for immigrants who have legal status who will permanently lose their SNAP benefits in the current budget legislation. He requested authorization to apply for \$5,000 from the Presbytery's Vision Fund for this project.

Motion: Session authorizes Rev. Wallace to apply to the PWR Vision Fund for a grant of \$5,000 to be used to fund ReSource Cleveland and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's support of immigrant SNAP benefit relief. The motion was approved unanimously.

Elder Jerry Parker offered a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Stone, Clerk