

Fairmount Presbyterian Church
2757 Fairmount Blvd
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118
Stated Session Meeting
MINUTES
February 4, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.

The February Stated Session Meeting of Fairmount Presbyterian Church was held following the Joint Meeting of Session and Councils on Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 8 p.m. at Fairmount Presbyterian Church and was presented by the Moderator, Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor.

THE ROLL

Elders: Rev Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor; Rev Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Jesse Bassett, Ian Cameron, Steve Chapman, Jim Crosby, Tim Cuff, Nancy Gillombardo, Jerry Parker, Ruth Wasem, Katie Wetherbee, Susan Wherley, Peg Zitzner.

Absent: Carol Adrine

Moderator: Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor
Clerk of Session: Ginger Van Wagenen
Guests: Rev. Andrew Genszler, Steph Washlok

QUORUM

The Moderator opened the meeting with prayer.
The Moderator determined the presence of a quorum.
The Moderator reviewed the docket.
The Moderator introduced the guests, and asked Session to grant them privilege of voice.
The Agenda approved and the guests were granted privilege of voice

CLERK'S REPORT (see See Full Clerk's Report in Share Drive)

MOTION: to approve the February 2026 Clerk's report.

Tim Cuff made the motion, Ruth Wassem seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: to approve the minutes of the January 9-10 Retreat and January 10 Stated Meeting.

Ian Cameron made the motion, Tim Cuff seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: to approve the baptism of Lucas Sawant, son of Andrea Crabb and Onkar Sawant, on March 15, 2026 at the 11 a.m. service.

Steve Chapman made the motion, Ian Cameron seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ORDER OF THE DAY: Elder Assignments

Through an email, Deacon Lisa Cameron raised questions about Elder participation on Care Council. Before opening the matter for discussion, Pastor Ryan reported that our current Council structure was implemented in 2014 and our Deacons were self-governing until then. When the governance change took place, we reduced the number of Elders to 12 (Ian Cameron clarified that we could have as many as 15). As part of the new governance structure, three Elders were assigned to each of the four Councils created at the same time.

Pastor Lindsay shared that she was surprised to learn on her arrival at FPC we have three Elders in charge of the Deacons. This year, pastoral staff proposed a change because the Deacons are feeling disempowered, as if they are just waiting to be told what to do by Session which, of course, was not the intention of the governance model. We want our Deacons to feel empowered and to recruit others. Like Elders, Deacons are also ordained, and there is no hierarchy between them. Pastoral staff has discussed how to empower and lift up our Deacons and has intentionally solicited ideas from them. The co-moderator model will lighten the load and will demonstrate the equality between Elders and Deacons. Steph Washlock (Deacon) and Carol Adrine (Elder) have agreed to co-moderate. Steph was part of the group that helped develop the revised governance structure in 2014 and will be excellent in this new role.

Steph Washlock told Session that she understands Lisa's concerns but thinks Lisa feels reassured after seeing Steph and Carol work together at the Joint Meeting this evening. Steph believes Lisa's biggest concern is that there's only one elder (Carol) to report on Care's activities and worries that Carol might be overruled by the other Elders on Session who weren't present at the Care Council meetings. Steph explained that she does not think that will happen.

Pastor Ryan acknowledged that he didn't provide the background for the change when we first discussed it at the January retreat.

Pastor Ryan then opened the matter for discussion. Ruth Wassem agreed that we should empower our Deacons and that our structure was unusual but is concerned that it wasn't presented well. She suggested a broader discussion about whether we are properly organized - a conversation broader than Deacons and Care Council. Finally, she noted that membership on Care Council should not be limited to Deacons. Ian Cameron said that, as Session, we should have voted on Council assignments. Many of our church documents say that each Council has three Ruling Elders. See

Manual of Operations §1.5.1 - Organizational Chart of Councils and Committees
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1czuT17JgFFggrsscJUKxsy2304D8xcpz1Gv3K3KR0dY/edit?gid=1810655001#gid=1810655001>

Manual of Operations §3.1.4 - Council Oversight
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IPqd8EMSnPNKmpQzyyaoE_pfCMd6BMVEqKW85NLD4kg/edit?tab=t.0#bookmark=id.fuhqws2y833

Manual of Operations §3.2- Deacons
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IPqd8EMSnPNKmpQzyyaoE_pfCMd6BMVEqKW85NLD4kg/edit?tab=t.0#bookmark=id.k3lx0jtimf3a

Manual of Operations §3.3.2 Care Council
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IPqd8EMSnPNKmpQzyyaoE_pfCMd6BMVEqKW85NLD4kg/edit?tab=t.0#bookmark=id.k3lx0jtimf3a

FPC Officer Handbook for Deacons (Class of 2020) and Elders (Class of 2021) at Councils/Structure on page 3 and at Deacons (Care Council)/Structure on page 4 <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0AFc4EAlrKYzuUk9PVA?dmr=1&ec=wgc-drive-her-o-goto>

Ian also noted that every other church he has attended has had three Elders on committees.

Susan Whereley noted that her prior church had Deacons who were self-governing. She agreed that there is much to discuss here, suggesting we need a broader conversation. Katie Wetherbee noted that she appreciates this background and learning that our Deacons have been feeling disempowered. Katie suggested that we operate under the new structure while we have a broader conversation, especially since both Care Council and the Deacons are excited about it.

Steve Chapman noted that both Deacons and Care Council must feel empowered and engaged; we should invest in that group. He suggested that Session invite Steph Washlock to our Stated Meetings and give her privilege of voice. He too came from a church where Deacons were self-governing, but an open conversation on this topic was needed.

Jesse Bassett agreed that we need a longer conversation on this topic, especially concerning the procedural issues. In the meantime, it is important to empower our Deacons so they don't feel there is a hierarchy.

Pastor Ryan agreed with everything just voiced. He described two emerging issues: The first, broader issue is what our governance should look like. The second issue is narrower and more immediate: do we continue with co-moderators for now or move two more Elders onto Care Council?

Steph Washlock reported that during the 2014 task force discussion, there was much talk about Deacons and Trustees, both of which were then independent. The task force ultimately decided to put Deacons into Care Council but membership was never supposed to be just Deacons. Instead, the intent was to include additional members from the congregation. Tim Cuff asked Steph how our Deacons and Care Council members felt about the revised structure. She answered that she and Carol Adrine work well together. She doesn't want to go back to the Care and Deacon team and tell them that we're going back to the old model. She concluded by telling Session that she's happy to try this new co-moderating model throughout the year. Jerry Parker asked how Lisa Cameron was feeling after the earlier Joint Meeting. Steph responded that Lisa didn't say much during that Meeting but seemed comfortable with the co-moderator model for this year.

MOTION: to approve a one- year trial with co-moderators of Care Council while exploring broader governance issues.

Susan Whereley made the motion, seconded by Katie Wetherbee. The motion passed passed with 11 ayes, 2 nays and 0 abstentions

NOTE RE LISA CAMERON ADDENDUM: After the minutes were drafted, Lisa Cameron sent an addendum (attached and in the February 2026 and March 2026 Folders on the Share Drive) explaining that she had not expressed her feelings at the February Joint Meeting about the use of Co-Moderators of Care Council rather than three Elders; that she did not agree with that proposal; and that Steph Washlock's expressions to Session of Lisa's reaction were incorrect.

Pastor Ryan then turned the discussion to the composition of the 2026 Personnel Committee and reviewed the names of six candidates. He passed around paper ballots, asking Elders to vote for those that each believes should serve. Any candidates with a majority of votes would be asked to serve.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Admin Council: Ruth Wassem provided 2025 Budget highlights, noting that we ended the fiscal with a deficit just under \$5K. She also presented the following motion:

MOTION: to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation to add \$17,814.78 to the Youth Ministry account to address a negative balance in the Youth Mission Support Account (see Share Drive/Session/2026 Session/02-February or https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yNOeTjfqB3l_BPtneFtt9z2YFZzoF6xK?dmr=1&ec=wgc-drive-hero-goto)

Following the motion, Pastor Drew explained that FPC always subsidizes the youth mission trip to some degree. The motion here is to replenish the donor restricted fund. That sum is already figured into the 2025 budget report, but Admin wanted to ensure that Session was aware of the situation.

The motion passed with 12 ayes and 1 abstention.

After the vote, Jerry Parker asked how we can avoid this kind of overage in the future? Ruth Wassem reiterated her comment during the Joint Session that each Council must be aware of how much money is available to it, including the money in restricted funds. Pastor Ryan further explained that the Batey trip is planned months in advance without knowing precise expenses or number of participants. In particular, we will need to be smart about scholarships in the future.

Pastor Drew clarified that money is being moved from a youth ministry budget line so it is not taking funds from another mission project. He also directed us to the Account Summary showing funds available to each Council and the fund management Policy and Procedure. Together, the documents address Jerry's question. (both in the Share Drive/Session/2026 Session/02-February or https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yNOeTjfqB3l_BPtneFtt9z2YFZzoF6xK?dmr=1&ec=wgc-drive-hero-goto)

Ian Cameron reported on behalf of Building & Grounds that the condensation pump and tank failed again last week and it will cost \$4700 to purchase a new one. Ian noted that he is not authorized to spend that money but he and Pastor Ryan together have authority up to \$5K so the pump and tank were purchased.

Ruth Wassem noted that these are important decisions and expressed her hope that Session is willing to carve out time to have the deep discussion these topics merit.

Serve Council: Nothing in addition to the report at the Joint Session, per Steve Chapman.

Faith Formation Council: Susan Wherley reported that our high school youth are looking at a domestic trip (e.g., Appalachia, Arizona/Mexico border), which prompted a brief discussion about fundraising in light of earlier conversation about mission fundraising as well as the stresses and burdens placed on our youth as a result of school and extracurricular activities.

Susan also reported Silent Saturday is March 28. Pastor Ryan added that Lindsay, Kate and Ryan met with youth and their parents to tell them that there won't be a youth trip to the Dominican Republic for at least the next year.

On behalf of Care Council, Pastor Lindsay urged us all to attend the Mardi Gras celebration and to bring friends! She also reported that Care is excited about its two new Deacons Sunday Uka and Gary Maddox.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

MOTION: to approve Ash Wednesday service at Christ Episcopal Church on February 18 at 7 PM

Upon Ruth Wassem's motion and second by Jesse Bassett, the motion was approved unanimously.

Pastor Ryan noted that there will be an opportunity to get ashes at FPC during the day.

Pastor Lindsay reported that Care Council is hoping for an amendment to the 2026 budget because it was disappointed not to have received more money. Care Council knows it can come to Session if they need more money, but was hoping to address the issue now. Upon discussion, Pastor Lindsay reported that Care was afforded an increase in funding for 2026 but not as much as it requested. Pastor Lindsay observed that Care doesn't spend a lot of money but the items it does purchase do cost a lot (e.g., food for Breaking Bread Sundays). Ruth Wassem responded that Finance has discussed checking in periodically with each Council to see where each is with its spending to determine whether there is money that could be moved from one Council to another, but that discussion is ongoing. In the meantime, she urged Care to return to Session if it needs additional funding.

MOTION: to approve rescheduling of the Congregational Meeting from February to February 15 following the 11 a.m. service to review and approve terms of call.

Upon Steve Chapman's motion and Tim Cuff's second, the motion was unanimously approved

MOTION: to reschedule the next Stated Meeting from Wednesday March 4 to Sunday March at 12:15 p.m. in the Ganson Room to accommodate our 2026 Lenten Schedule.

On Jess Basset's motion and Steve Chapman's second, the motion passed unanimously.

Pastor Lindsay tabulated the votes for the Personnel Committee and reported that seven votes constituted a majority. Megan Bennett, Nikki Bush, Gary Sampson, Amy Seekley, and Debbie Wilbur each received a majority of votes.

MOTION: to approve the election of Megan Bennett, Nikki Bush, Gary Sampson, Amy Seekley, and Debbie Wilbur to the Personnel Committee.

On Susan Wherley's motion and Nancy Gillombarlo's second, the motion passed with 9 ayes, 0 nays and 3 abstentions.

The PASTORS REPORTS were deferred because they were given at the Joint Council/Session Meeting.

Closing Prayer
Adjournment

Addendum to Stated Meeting Minutes from Lisa Cameron:

Deacon Steph Washlock's opinions noted in the Session minutes on February 4, 2026 on how Deacon Lisa Cameron felt regarding the proposal of having co-moderators for the Deacons replacing three Elders represented on Session were incorrect.

I am not in agreement with the proposed change. I believe my email stating my concerns of this proposed change which was sent only to the Elders of Session – the governing body – were pretty clear about my concerns. My email was not discussed at the Deacons meeting which was held prior to the Session meeting. There was no discussion at the Deacons meeting of not having three elders representing the Deacons on Session. The agenda item discussed was a “Celebration of Co-Moderators”, which was a bit of a surprise since that indicated a decision had been made before Session even discussed my email / researched and prayerfully discerned the proposal, or voted on it (Presbyterian Polity?). I did not believe the Deacons meeting was the forum for this discussion and continued to participate in the meeting professionally.

I hope that this is a learning lesson -- that when you have a question -- ask the person directly related to the question – not someone's opinion who doesn't even know that person. No-one should speak for someone else when a decision of importance is to be made.