

Fairmount Presbyterian Church  
2757 Fairmount Blvd  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118  
Stated Session Meeting  
**MINUTES**  
March 1, 2026 - 12:15 p.m.

The March Stated Session Meeting of Fairmount Presbyterian Church took place on Sunday, March 1 at 12:15 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, Carol Adrine, Jesse Bassett, Ian Cameron, Steve Chapman, Tim Cuff, Nancy Gillombardo, Jerry Parker, Katie Wetherbee, Susan Wherley

Absent: Jim Crosby, Ruth Wasseem, Peg Zitzner

Moderator: Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor

Clerk of Session: Ginger Van Wagenen

Guests: Rev. Andrew Genzler, Jim Riggs

QUORUM

The Moderator opened the meeting with prayer.

The Moderator confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Upon motion by Steve Chapman a second by Nancy Gillombardo, the docket was unanimously approved.

The Moderator introduced the guests.

**MOTION: to approve privilege of voice to Rev. Drew, Amy Carlson (Treasurer) and Ginger Van Wagenen (Clerk) through December 31, 2026.**

**The motion was by Steve Chapman, seconded by Katie Wetherbee and approved unanimously.**

**MOTION: to approve privilege of voice to Jim Riggs.**

**The motion was by Nancy Gillombardo, seconded by Steve Chapman, and approved unanimously.**

Pastor Ryan requested that Session begin with a discussion of the Spirituals Project (moved from Miscellaneous Business), which had been paused due to polity questions raised by Ian Cameron and then asked Jim Riggs to introduce the Project.

Jim explained that the Project is a social justice issue in terms of reparations. Spirituals were not copyrighted, and have since been arranged and rearranged by others, with the resulting royalties going to those arrangers. Fairmount's proposal is to collect funds each quarter from members of the congregation relative to the number of Spirituals sung or performed that quarter. For the first quarter of the Project, the monies raised will go to A Grace Mims Fund at the Cleveland Foundation. Ms. Mims was a soloist at Fairmount for more than 20 years, and the Fund supports graduate students (primarily Black) studying voice. The recipient of the funds will change each quarter. Congregational members can choose to donate a specified amount for each spiritual sung or performed during a particular quarter or by setting a fixed amount for the quarter or year.

Pastor Ryan then opened the proposal for questions. Ian Cameron asked if there is a specific dollar goal; the answer is no. Carol Adrine mentioned that the congregation members she has talked to are very excited about the Project.

Steve Chapman reported that there has not been a request to Serve Council concerning this Project, but when Serve met recently, it agreed it would provide support if needed. Pastor Ryan added that he had spoken to the Serve Council Elders who thought it was proper to bring the topic directly to Session.

Jim added that he would report quarterly the number of spirituals sung or performed and the amount raised.

Jesse Bassett asked how long Fairmount would participate in the Project. Jim Riggs proposed that Fairmount try it for one year and then evaluate. Steve Chapman asked whether there would be a Sunday devoted to Spirituals? Jim said no that he would simply insert them throughout the quarter as they fit.

Ian Cameron suggested that a fundraising QR code be inserted in the bulletin, which Jim agreed was a good idea.

Nancy Gillombardo and Katie Wetherbee agreed this is a fantastic Project.

Ian Cameron recommended that Session vote on the proposal. He explained his view that, previously, because the proposal didn't go to Session, Admin or Finance, it was hard to support because the facts weren't clear. Now it seems simple.

**MOTION: to approve the Spirituals Project through 2026.  
The motion was by Ian Cameron, seconded by Steve Chapman and approved  
unanimously.**

At this point, Pastor Ryan excused Jim Riggs from the meeting.

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

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

Ian Cameron and Steve Chapman observed that the attendance count for the last Sunday of January was inaccurate. They agreed to work together to obtain the proper numbers and provide them to the Clerk so the February Clerk's Report could be corrected. At this point, an amended **Motion** was made by Tim Cuff and seconded by Jerry Parker to postpone approval of the February 2026 Clerk's Report until the required corrections had been made. The Motion was **approved unanimously**.

**MOTION: to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2026 Stated Meeting.**

The Clerk noted and read aloud the Addendum to the Minutes provided by Lisa Cameron after the Minutes had been drafted concerning the discussion therein of having one Elder serve on Care Council and advised that the Addendum would be included in both the February and March folders in the Share Drive.

Ian Cameron noted that the Minutes accurately reflected the comments made at the February Stated Meeting, but they didn't accurately reflect Lisa Cameron's stance on having one Elder on Care (as indicated in her Addendum). For this reason, Ian proposed that the comments reflecting Lisa's stance should be deleted from the minutes. The Clerk objected because the comments had been made as recorded and Session cannot delete statements from the minutes because someone disagrees with the position taken by the speaker. Ian responded that, at a minimum, the minutes should reflect Lisa Cameron's Addendum, and the Clerk should attach that Addendum to minutes.

At this point, an amended **Motion** was made by Tim Cuff and seconded by Jerry Parker, to postpone the vote on the approval of the February Stated Meeting to allow the Clerk to add information about the Addendum to the minutes. The Motion was **approved unanimously**.

**MOTION: to approve minutes of February 15 Congregational Meeting.**

**A motion was made by Steve Chapman, seconded by Jesse Bassett, and approved unanimously with one abstention by Pastor Lindsay because she had absented herself during the Meeting.**

ORDER OF THE DAY:

To create a preliminary strategy for review and revision of Fairmount's governance structure, including identifying our stated goals.

**(A)** Pastor Ryan introduced the topic, articulating the goal to start our thinking and discussion at a high level, creating a preliminary structure for the process of review and revision: what are our hopes for the outcome? He then asked each person present to take a few minutes to consider that question and then share our thoughts.:

- Ginger Van Wagenen: to develop a governance structure that is clear and efficient with clear lines of authority, accountability and reporting.
- Steve Chapman: to balance between polity and procedure with purpose and empowerment
- Katie Wetherbee: greater participation from members at large via a structure that is interdependent and predictable, and to reduce the burden of minutia put on paid staff
- Nancy Gillombardo- agree with Ginger Van Wagenen and Steve Chapman
- Ian Cameron- agrees that Session must be cognizant of talking to and listening to the members of the church
- Tim Cuff - we need a new revised Code of Regulations, an Operations Manual, maybe a personnel manual
- Jerry Parker - specify the number of Elders on each Council, with a rule regarding how to change it if deemed necessary; identify what documents need to be revised. Ian added that each Elder needs to read the Operations Manual because we need to know what we have before we can revise
- Carol Adrine- Deacons don't feel valued or know what their place is. We want our Deacons and our members to know there's a place for them.
- Jesse Barrett- we need to find a balance in healthy governance and process that furthers our ministry
- Drew Gentzler - we should seek broader involvement among members and come to an understanding that governance is cyclical and should be reviewed in a non-anxious way; we should seek some codifying of orbiting groups (Guild, Memorial, William Berkitt, Williams)
- Susan Wherley - we should develop a structure that isn't dependent on any specific individual gifts; we seek a governance structure that is flexible and adjusts to the gifts of those then holding those positions

**(B) Themes -**

Pastor Ryan then asked Session to state the predominant themes:

- Susan Wherley: clarity (i.e., everyone understands and can describe),
- Ian Cameron- organization and eliminating redundant references.
- Steve Chapman - he has a charter for Serve Council, but it's not in the Operations Manual
- Jesse Basset - collective responsibility
- Jerry Parker - anything to do with governance needs to be reviewed (operations, by-laws, code of regs. Ian Cameron added: it all must relate back to

the Book of Order. Steve Chapman - Operations Manual was developed late 2025. Session did not have conversations about it as it was being put together, and it was not reviewed on completion.

- Pastor Ryan - for clarification, none of what we prepare can conflict with the Book of Order but there is a fair amount of flexibility within that Book. We can review the Operations Manual and determine if it is in alignment with the Book of Order as well as in alignment with FPC's needs. Pastor Ryan then summarized the themes. After that summary, Steve Chapman added "empowerment" of Councils and to keep FPC's mission front and center so we don't get stuck in "polity hell."

- Ian Cameron suggested we form a task force to review every 2 years via a codicil to our Code of Regulations. He clarified that Session could change that if it chooses to but will need a clear amendment process which identifies when to amend, what else is affected, etc.

Pastor Ryan then asked Session to consider the appropriate **process to reflect our mission and values:**

- Pastor Lindsay Harren-Lewis - grace, trust and assuming the best of each other

- Ginger Van Wagnen- nimble process

- Steve Chapman - proper balance between polity and procedure with purpose and empowerment as called by a priesthood of believers

- Carol Adrine- doing and showing our community who we are (e.g., Batey 105); hopefully we can find solutions to the problems we see; we have enough and we share it - we can't lose sight of the wider community

- Tim Cuff - finding balance and clarity between procedure and purpose with clear demarcation which leads to efficiency by eliminating time spent dealing with whether procedure was followed. Pastor Ryan added that not all policies are equal and Tim agreed: we need to find the balance

- Steve Chapman - seek the value of liberation - if the policies are right, there's freedom or liberation in being able to lead the church

- Jesse Bassett - humility. When the church becomes too self-important, it leads to issues. Stay focused on the gospel.

- Pastor Drew - look to future orientation - we're making decisions that can stand for 20 years, even though decisions must be made for our time

## **(C) Pathways**

### **1. Vehicle (who will lead)**

Ideas from Pastor Ryan

- Session,
- A Task Force that would make recommendations to Session,

- Administrative Commission that would have the delegated authority to decide,
- Referral to a Council (perhaps Admin).

## **2. Tools and Resources**

- Tim Cuff - each Council should review the Operation Manual for matters that pertain to it and provide comments
- Pastor Lindsay Harren-Lewis - have a conversation with the 2014 task force. Ian Cameron pushed back that it doesn't matter what happened then. Katie Wetherby countered that we could learn from their process, to which Ian agreed.
- Pastor Ryan and Katie Wetherbee - talk to other churches
- Ginger Van Wagenen - don't be too wedded to the current Operations Manual at the outset because that will likely constrain our thinking. Better to identify the process best for us and then go through the Operations Manual to see what in it works and what doesn't
- Steve Chapman - be aware of any changes around structure and relationships to Council and how they might affect the congregation
- Jesse Basset- consider congregation involvement and opportunities to participate, not just a "Session down process." Katie Wetherbee agreed because that will lead to a sense of belonging
- Carol Adrine - invite participants from the groups and committees
- Tim Cuff- is the council structure under review? Pastor Ryan - everything is on the table. Steve Chapman agreed, given what prompted this conversation (Elders on Councils), we must look at everything.
- Jerry Parker asked if we should look at other non-profits? Pastor Ryan suggested that we might with the understanding that churches really are unique
- Pastor Ryan added that we could get feedback from staff and recent past council chairs. And we could conduct a visioning exercise (who do we want to be in 5 years)
- Steve Chapman emphasized flexibility. A lot of change is occurring in the US and the world. How do we respond? How do we meet the moment? We need to live our mission with intention.
- Pastor Drew - governance inevitably reflects the sociology of the time. Here we see the rise of Christian Nationalism on the one hand, and casual spiritual gatherings on the other. The long arc of the church is waning.
- Ian Cameron noted that, prior to 2014, FPC had many more Elders and Committees than it does now

### **(D) Pastor Ryan - where are we at this point? How do we want to proceed?**

Susan Wherley - it's Session's job and she's willing to attend special meetings to accomplish it. Jesse Bassett agreed. Ian Cameron recommended that every Elder read the materials in the Operations Manual that pertains to his/her Council. He also suggested that we add people other than Elders to the process.

Carol Adrine observed that she comes from a tradition where the church was autonomous and she's still struggling with the Book of Order, wondering how much credence we have to give it since we're trying to minister to a local church and a local community. Pastor Ryan reminded us that, within the Book of Order, "shall" is mandatory, "should" is recommended, and "may" is voluntary.

Katie Wetherbee noted that we could miss out on important wisdom if we don't include other voices. We should reflect our church, not just the 2026 Session.

Jerry Parker - let's pull in Steph Washlock and Hedy Westra (and others from the 2014 Task Force, if available). Ian Cameron countered that each of us can just read the section from the 2014 Task Force in the Operations Manual (link to 2014 Governance Structure Proposal:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pQ6mQR3gLQSoEuYXaEo-s6p7eLhs\\_jpf-z4419sbkWs/e/dit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pQ6mQR3gLQSoEuYXaEo-s6p7eLhs_jpf-z4419sbkWs/e/dit?tab=t.0) )

Susan Wherley and Jesse Bassett clarified that they proposed that Session should take the lead, not that we would exclude others.

Jerry Parker observed that this had been a good discussion.

Pastor Ryan clarified that Session would keep ownership of this process and will need to set the next meeting.

#### COUNCIL REPORTS:

Admin Council: Ian Cameron reported that he had

- a meeting this week with Osborne Engineering and a representative from the boiler company regarding the upgrade of the boiler.
- a call re grease-trap.
- identified a bad smoke detector in the sanctuary but parts ordered.
- taken an old copier and other miscellany to a recycler (\$39).

Pastor Drew reported on the \$21,000 carve-out from \$500K authorized for our larger HVAC issues. He acknowledged that the Finance Committee owes Session a report and noted that the Finance Committee is moving its regular meeting to the 3rd week of each month in order to timely report to Session at its Stated Meeting at the beginning of the following month.

Jerry Parker asked for clarification on the mentioned \$21,000; Ian Cameron elaborated on issues regarding controlling the boiler as well as the recommendation for the HVAC. He further explained that the church has replaced the condensate pump, dealt with leaks etc. as they come up, and will probably need to replace all the lowest pipes in the building over the next 10 years. Pastor Drew added that fire inspection issues have been identified that we will have to address. Pastor Drew advocated for a decision-making structure that allows Admin to spend to a specific maximum limit without having to come first to Session

Serve Council: nothing to report

Faith Formation Council: nothing to report

Care Council: nothing to report

#### MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

Pastor Ryan asked Session to confirm or reset the date of its April Stated Meeting since it will be during Holy Week. After discussion, Session agreed to keep the Stated Meeting on April 1, so no motion was required.

Ian Cameon noted that boundary training is required by the Presbytery, but we don't have a policy on it. He also opined that our pastors should be reporting on hospital and homebound visits since it was addressed in the 2025 survey conducted as a part of the 360 review. Ginger Van Wagenen observed that anything associated with the 360 review would be within the Personnel Committee's jurisdiction. Pastor Ryan suggested that Ian draft a proposal to send to Personnel.

Pastor Ryan turned the discussion to Admin's request for time to discuss capital needs and the need for time to continue the governance discussion. He suggested a special meeting for governance and devoting the April 1 Stated Meeting for Admin as two options. Susan Wherley recommended we keep April 1 for Stated Meeting and Nancy Gillombardo suggested that we use the Order of the Day of that Stated Meeting for Admin Council. After discussion, Session agreed that it would devote the Order of the Day at the April 1 Stated Meeting to Admin's proposal for capital needs and a broader discussion of a capital campaign. Pastor Drew reminded the Elders that Session should drive any capital campaign

Pastor Ryan announced that Fairmount will hold its Annual Congregational Meeting at the end of April. The Clerk will send additional information about what is required.

Session agreed to hold a Special Meeting regarding governance on Wednesday, April 8 at 5:30 pm, with everyone to bring his/her own dinner, as preferred.

#### PASTORS REPORTS

Neither Pastor Lindsay nor Pastor Drew reported, given the lateness of the hour.

Pastor Ryan reported that

- He had visited several members and friends of the congregation.
- He is on a Metro Hospital advisory board which discussed CCF's proposed Trauma Unit and has requested a meeting with the Clinic's CEO to discuss its redundancy.
- The first ecumenical Lenten Wednesday was great, and the second will be at St Mark's.

- The Call to Christians has 8000 signatories. Elders and other members can sign at <https://acalltochristians.org/>.
- The film screening of *From Pain to Purpose* will be on March 15 at Shaker Square Cinemas.
- The WAMWAO ecumenical gathering will be at Fairmont on March 8.
- The William Birkett Williams lecture series was endowed by an FPC member who died in WWII.
  - The committee now has just 3 members and should have a Faith Formation Elder.
  - WBW has acted autonomously in the past and typically without concern.
  - Dr. Peter Koritansky, director for CSU's Center for Civics, Culture and Society (created per Ohio SB 1 which banned DEI initiatives and mandated the creation of such Centers to "increase intellectual diversity")
  - This year, due to the invitation to Dr Koritansky, at least three Fairmount members have expressed concern.
  - The WBW Committee has elected to move forward, and the lecture will be on March 24.

Closing Prayer  
Adjournment