

Serve Council
, 2026

SERVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 4, 5:30 pm

Present:

Ben Sperry, Hedy Westra (via web), Wren Fiebig, Joanne Westin, Jesse Bassett (via web and in person), Peg Zitzner, Jim Thomas, Taylor Smith, Natalie Clark, Donna Sens, Andrew Pruskinki, Steve Chapman, and Ryan Wallace.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Steve Chapman opened the meeting with prayer at 5:35 pm.

Steve reviewed the agenda and provided an explanation of the entire evening's schedule.

Steve noted the agenda's centering question, "How do we share the load/create opportunities for many people to contribute (and not just show up)?" and had committee members review and consider FPC's new mission statement ("Reclaiming our humanity by embodying God's love. A home to find belonging, purpose, potential, and liberation.") and how it links to SERVE Council's mission. Pastor Ryan noted that having reviewed his 2025 calendar, he identified numerous (and more than he would have liked) community events at which he, but not other FPC members, were present.

Introductions

Steve asked those present, in person and on the web, to introduce themselves and highlight some of their past work with FPC's mission partners. (some details are provided below as a vehicle for getting to know and making connections between Council members new and old).

-Donna Sens, who has been an FPC member for a little over a year, noted that she was very involved in serving the homeless population, supporting people experiencing food insecurity and building community in her previous hometown, Chicago. Her current involvement is at North Church providing meals and, along with Jerry Parker (elder), participating in a Bible study there.

-Peg Zitzner (elder), also participates in the provision of food at North Church and is the Session representative to the Batey 105 committee. She has also worked with Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries (LMM).

-Andrew Prusinski, (attendee not member) 8:30 am worship regular. Lives in Cleveland Heights and works for Building Hope in the City, non-profit working with refugees and immigrants

-Jim Thomas, with his wife, Melissa Glorioso, lives in Cleveland Heights. Retired university administrator who has recently moved from the Pittsburgh area. Has been involved with Ecumenical Queer Union for Action & Love (EQUAL), has volunteered at the Cleveland Foodbank, and is a board member of United Protestant Campus Ministries (UPCAM), currently located at Church of the Covenant/CWRU.

-Wren Fiebig, is a retired Cleveland Metropolitan Schools high school English teacher. She has served regularly at the Greater Cleveland Foodbank. She has also worked with food support at North Church and knits hats for homeless persons.

-Joann Westin, a relatively new member at FPC, previously attended Noble Road Presbyterian Church. She is an Earth Stewards member and is beginning work on expanding recycling in the church (recently Earth Stewards did a waste audit). Earth Stewards have written a grant to obtain a water bottle filling

station. She updated the committee on the church's new solar panels which have been supplying nearly 40% of FPC's electricity. Earth Stewards has recently helped form an alliance of Earth Care congregations on the East side of Cleveland.

-Ben Sperry has been active in church for the last few years, and a member for 7 or 8 years. Ben previously chaired the SERVE Council. He is a long-time participant in Earth Stewards. He believes that one of the best ways to get others in the church active in an activity is to ask them directly. He noted that once involved, folks recognize others who they know, make new friends and then remain active. Going forward he would like to work with Cleveland Owns, a group working to support cooperative businesses in Cleveland. He noted he'd be happy to be an ambassador to UPCAM.

-Tim Cuff, a new member as of 2023 and a new elder. Returnee to Cleveland Heights after a 35-year absence. Has been working the Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) Juvenile Justice program and to a lesser extent with the Interfaith Group Against Hate (IGAH).

-Natalie Clark, interested in EQUAL and Cleveland Foodbank. She noted that she believes that healthy congregations are those that focus their work outside of themselves.

-Taylor Smith, her parents (Tony Smith and Vanessa Whiting) were involved at Fairmount since the late 90s. Taylor returned to Fairmount after returning to Cleveland from New York. She has recently been appointed to serve on the board of LMM and is anticipating doing volunteer work with the Cleveland Foodbank. As a teenager she took mission trips to the Dominican Republic, pre-Bridges to Batey. She is interested in learning more about and becoming involved Batey 105 and our work with North Church.

-Hedy Westra, on SERVE council for years, a member @ FPC since 1981, has worked with and now coordinates the Cleveland Foodbank effort at FPC, She also works with Carolyn Cuff and Wrean Fiebeg on FPC's food drives for Refine Church.

-Jessie Bassett, at FPC since 2022, along with his wife (Lauren) and 3 daughters, new elder this year. He believes that relationships and direct invitations are the way to get folks involved. His professional work is in the area of juvenile justice and is interested in the GCC's work in that arena. He also is interested in recent efforts with the immigrant community and WamWao.

-Steve Chapman, chair—SERVE. He is involved with GCC and IGAH and has been a frequent participant in FPC's work at North Church. He joined the church about 4 years ago, lives in Akron, and works for a logistics software company.

Discussion of how SERVE works and the 2026 SERVE Budget

-Steve described elements of SERVE's nature and activities

-the Council meets monthly with a break in the summer

-the Council has a shared Google Drive at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sraQE5T5H3q1cKMQLIQjfrHWbrhgi6Fw>

-non-church members can participate on the work of the Council

-Steve noted the existence of the SERVE charter (attached and at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1327FtSBei7J5mDVJe2irlPW2XdaL6B6mMj-4484wMc/edit?tab=t.0>)

-Pastor Ryan noted that there is a need to update the new FPC website

-SERVE has a notable operating budget (\$64,000) approved by Session (an increase from 2025)

-some budget items are directed toward specified activities/needs (Batey, Mary Wilson Hunger Fund),

-other funds are distributed following grant requests

-a standardized grant process is in place, regularized grant decision-making is scheduled for May and November

-grants are also awarded on an on-going basis between those months

- Pastor Ryan noted that there are non-endowed restricted funds that the Council can utilize and distribute. (about \$101,000 in restricted/reserved funds)
- Ben asked if grants should be solicited by members? Steve noted that this has not been discussed explicitly but that some of our community partners have requested grants in the past
- Donna noted that there are lots of FPC folks serving at the Cleveland Foodbank (Hedy says on average 12 folks serve each time)

Upcoming SERVE involved/led Projects

- a. Refine Church Food Drive (Hedy Westra and Wren Fiebeg)
 - i. Eight congregations (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) known to be assisting Refine Church
 - ii. FPC's next assigned time to coordinate a food drive for Refine Church will be in August
 - iii. Thinking of expanding length of time over which food/\$\$\$ collection takes place
- b. North Church (Donna Sens)
 - i. FPC is providing a Sunday meal 4 times a year (meals prepared for 50 people)
 - 1. FPC is next providing a meal on Easter Sunday
 - a. A bit of concern exists as to staffing from FPC on that date
 - ii. North Church has applied for and received a \$3500 grant
- c. Batey Task Force Update (Peg Zitzner)
 - i. met via ZOOM with Mango Tree and International Partners in Mission (IPM) to discuss/evaluate potential for partnerships
 - ii. next week FPC/Batey group will travel to the Dominican Republic and maybe again in June
 - 1. these trips and meetings are part of establishing relationships to help facilitate the work of Bridge to Batey
 - iii. current restricted monies for Bridges to Batey are likely to be transferred to the Cleveland Foundation which will serve as an oversight/administrative partner for Bridges to Batey program

Pastor Ryan Updates

- 1. Americans Making Immigrants Safe (AMIS) grant request
 - a. AMIS is a local partner a local Heights immigrant support group
 - i. previous support for refugees was very practical (bus route info, housing info, rent assistance, etc)
 - ii. now AMIS is doing crisis management (e.g. Pastor Luis (Refine Church) has 100 persons in detention)
 - b. AMIS is seeking support of up to \$5,000 for legal services which helped access a bond hearing for a detained individual
 - i. Pastor Ryan told AMIS he would figure the \$\$\$ out and is requesting some monies from SERVE Council
 - c. After discussion of a variety of issues (likely frequency of such requests, previous \$\$\$ sent to AMIS, size of grant budget, questions over if we feel a calling to support this one individual as opposed to supporting larger numbers of people in some way) a decision was made to table for the time being.

Steve closed in meeting in prayer at 6:29 pm.

Reference List of Current Community Partners, not just grantees, but places to invest time.

Informing the congregation, enabling congregants to serve, celebrating the work of Christ and the body outside the building.

- GCC: Greater Cleveland Congregations
- IGAH: Interfaith Group Against Hate
- WAMWAO: We are many. We are one.
- EQUAL: Ecumenical Queer Union for Action & Love
- Cleveland Owns: is an economic democracy incubator that builds cooperative businesses and leads campaigns for community control of resources.
- Cleveland Food Bank:
- North Church: congregation meeting at LMM headquarters, with many unhoused individuals. Assisting with basic needs, meals once a quarter, and bible studies.
- LMM: Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries
- UPCAM: United Protestant Campus Ministries
- Batey105: Dominican Republic commitment

FAIRMOUNT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SERVE COUNCIL CHARTER (attached simply for reference)

Ratified by Serve Council March 15, 2023

The role of the Serve Council is to assist the Fairmount Session in managing Fairmount Presbyterian Church's philanthropic and volunteer community outreach, supporting the church's mission to create a just and flourishing community where all people experience the love of God.

I. MISSION

Serve Council's mission is to represent Christ's love for all people by offering our congregation's support, in contributed dollars and volunteer assistance, to community-serving nonprofit organizations, Fairmount-sponsored programs and needy individuals and families. Our giving addresses core priorities of youth, poverty, and education and reinforces Fairmount's congregational commitment to the principles of Matthew 25, Earth Stewards, More Light, and Greater Cleveland Congregations.

II. COMMITTEE TYPE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Serve Council is a standing council of Fairmount Presbyterian Church and reports to Fairmount's Session.

Membership in the committee is by appointment. Session appoints up to three current Elders who serve up to three-year terms on the committee. The appointed Elders, in consultation with the Senior Pastor and/or Clerk of Session, will appoint up to nine additional members who are adult members of Fairmount Presbyterian Church. One of these members will be a representative of Fairmount's Bridges to Batey mission program.

Appointed members are voting members and have privilege of voice in committee meeting. Any member of Fairmount Presbyterian Church may attend a Serve meeting as a silent participant and may be granted privilege of voice by the Council.

Serve Committee members may serve a term of up to three years. Members may return for a second three-year term one year after their first term concludes.

III. SERVE COUNCIL CHAIR

Session ordinarily appoints the Serve Council Chair. Session may choose to delegate the Chair's selection to the Elders appointed to the Serve Council. If so delegated, these Elders will annually elect a chair. The elected elder may serve no more than three consecutive years as chair.

The Chair is responsible for moderating Council meetings, preparing agendas, and overseeing the Council's grant-giving activities. The Chair also works with the Director of Operations to oversee Council-directed church accounts and ensure expenditures adhere to their budgeted amounts. The Chair ensures that grant-giving activities adhere to church policies and ethical standards.

The Chair maintains the records of the committee. The Chair will appoint a member of the committee to serve as Recording Secretary to take meeting minutes. The Chair reports Council decisions to Session and circulates meeting minutes to that body, the Senior Pastor, and Director of Operations.

IV. SERVE COUNCIL AUTHORITY

A. Grantmaking

Session authorizes Serve Council to administer the congregation's charitable giving budget and to oversee expenditures from the Serve Council's Operating Account and donor-restricted accounts established for charitable purposes, listed in Appendix I. The Council's authority varies by account type:

Budgeted Serve Accounts (Operating Account)

Serve may award grants to non-profit organizations and missions of the church up to the budgeted amount authorized by Session in each calendar year.

Donor-Restricted Funds – Designated Serve Missions

Donor-Restricted Funds are created by contributions or bequests that stipulate charitable purposes. These funds are intended to be spent in their entirety over time, not held as endowed funds. There is no annual spending limit on these funds.

Serve Council oversees the distribution of these funds. The Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor may also authorize expenditures from donor-restricted funds to organizations or needy individuals or families, up to \$1,000 per request, without Serve Council approval. These requests are often in response to an emergency or sudden need or opportunity. The Pastor's requests for \$1,000 or more will be approved by the three Elders on Serve Council. The Senior Pastor will report any expenditures to the Serve Council Chair, who will in turn inform Serve Council.

Temporarily Restricted Endowment Funds

Temporarily Restricted Endowment Funds are created by contributions or bequests that stipulate charitable purposes to which income or principal from the funds should be directed. Serve Council may allocate a portion of the fund's asset value annually pursuant to the spending rules authorized by the Endowment Committee.)

Serve Council must document all funding allocations by a memorandum or approved meeting minutes and provide this documentation to the Director of Operations, who oversees payment.

B. Fairmount Covenant Program Support

Serve Council also evaluates and authorizes expenditures from both budgeted and donor restricted funds in support of Fairmount Covenant Programs. Covenant Programs are ongoing initiatives that, by approval of Session, operate under Fairmount's governance, financial oversight, and tax-exempt status. These programs are the Bridges to Batey mission and the Little Free Pantry project.

The Bridges to Batey program is supported by an annual budget allocated by Session (1.50740 – Bridges to Batey Support) and two donor-restricted funds, the Batey 105 Fund (1.70535) and Batey 105 Education and Citizenship Fund (1.70540.) Distributions to offset expenses for the Batey project occur throughout the budget year. Serve Council authorizes these distributions in response to written proposals brought forward by the designated Batey Serve Council member.

Serve Council may allocate funds from the Mary M. Wilson Hunger – Annual Contribution (1.507120) Fund (an annual budgeted fund) or Hunger Agency/Pantry (1.70505), a donor restricted fund, to support requests from volunteers and staff in support of the Little Free Pantry.

C. Mission Volunteer Programs

Serve Council advises Fairmount members who wish to organize church-sponsored groups in support of community organizations or causes associated with the church's mission priorities. The Council may help

the group identify potential Fairmount members who may wish to join the group, review requests for contributed support, and communicate on behalf of the group to the congregation and Session. To receive this support, prospective mission groups must present a written description of their group's purpose and proposed activities to Serve Council, who is authorized to approve it or may choose to bring the initiative forward to Session for approval.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

Serve Council is responsible for:

- A. Organizing and administering Fairmount Presbyterian Church's grant programs in accordance with its mission priorities and church policy.
- B. Serving as a point of communication with community organizations and programs who are seeking or have received Fairmount grant funds.
- C. Work to engage, equip, and organize members of our congregation to serve in the ministries that the Council supports.
- D. Administering a fair and transparent process for grant application, evaluation and awarding of funds.
- E. Manage the budgeted operating account and donor-restricted funds under Serve Authority in a fiscally responsible manner.
- F. Communicate with the Session, Senior Pastor and staff, and congregation about grants made, grantee programs, and opportunities to learn about and assist Fairmount-supported community organizations.
- G. Oversee the work of mission volunteer groups approved for Fairmount sponsorship.
- H. Promote Fairmount's contribution and volunteer commitments in the greater Cleveland community as a representation of the church's commitment to service and charity to our community.
- I. Perform other responsibilities as Session shall determine.
- J. Periodically review and update this Charter.

VI. OPERATING PROCEDURES

A. Meetings and Minutes

Serve Council shall meet regularly in accordance with a schedule set forth annually by Session. The Council will meet, at a minimum, six times per year, either in person or via video conference as determined by the Chair in consultation with Council membership. A quorum shall consist of 50% or more of Council membership.

The Chair will circulate an agenda and related meeting materials no later than 24 hours before the meeting. The Recording Secretary appointed by the Chair will take meeting minutes and provide them to the Chair no later than one week prior to the next meeting. The Chair will seek email approval or revisions to the minutes and provide the final minutes to the Session before its next stated meeting. The Chair will also post the minutes on the Fairmount Realm Serve page for Council member access and will post them on the Serve webpage on the Fairmount site so they are available to the congregation.

B. Grantgiving Procedures

Entities eligible for contributed support from Fairmount accounts overseen by Serve Council are:

- Nonprofit corporations that have received tax-exempt status from the US Internal Revenue Service
- Covenant programs of Fairmount Presbyterian Church (currently Batey 105 and Little Free Pantry)
- Families or individuals identified by the Senior Pastor requiring church benevolence support for need or emergency.

- A. Non-Profit Corporations wishing to receive contributed support from Fairmount must apply to the Council in writing, following grant application instructions found on Fairmount's Serve Committee webpage. As a rule, Council will consider grant applications from outside organizations at the June and December meetings of each year, though interim requests may be brought forward at the Chair's or Senior Pastor's discretion. The Senior Pastor may also make emergency allocations to nonprofit corporations, up to \$1,000, without Serve Council approval.

The Chair will circulate grant applications no later than one week before the meeting at which they are to be considered and will summarize the request at the meeting. Council members who have an identified conflict of interest with the applicant organization (See Appendix II) or who are trustees of the applicant organization will absent themselves from the discussion of the grant and its vote. Grant decisions will be made by a simple majority of Council members present and those who have cast their vote in writing or by email to the Chair in advance. The Recording Secretary shall note the grant decision in the minutes of the meeting, including the account number from which the grant will be paid.

- B. Fairmount Covenant Programs requesting support from their identified budget lines will present their request in writing no later than one week prior to the meeting at which the Council will consider the request. Allocations are approved by a simple majority of Council members present and those who have cast their votes in writing or by email to the Chair in advance.
- C. Benevolence Requests for Individuals or Families requiring Serve Council Elder Approval (over \$1,000) must be presented to the three elders on Serve Council by the Senior Pastor or the Associate Pastor by email or in writing and approved in person or by email. Approvals for benevolences may occur at any time to respond to sudden need or emergencies, or they may also be considered at Serve Council meetings, where they are approved by a simple majority of Council members present and those who have cast their votes in writing or by email to the Chair in advance.

Ratified by Serve Council March 15, 2023

APPENDIX I. FAIRMOUNT ACCOUNTS AND FUNDS UNDER SERVE COUNCIL OVERSIGHT

Budget Accounts:

- 1.50700 – Local Mission – Support
- 1.50710 – Mission Support – Immediate Need
- 1.50720 – Mary M. Wilson Hunger – Annual Contribution
- 1.50730 – International Mission Support
- 1.50740 – Bridges to Bateys Support
- 1.50750 – Youth Mission Support

Donor Restricted Funds:

- 1.70505 – Hunger Agency/Food Contribution Fund
- 1.70514 – Jail Education Fund
- 1.70520 – Refugee Assistance Fund
- 1.70525 – Tools for Schools Fund
- 1.70535 – Batey 105 Fund
- 1.70540 – Batey 105 Education and Citizenship Fund
- 1.70550 – Borchert Racism, Truth and Reconciliation Fund

In addition, Serve Council may allocate Temporarily Restricted Endowment Funds in accordance with policies established by the Endowment Committee:

- 1.80040 – Mary Marm Wilson Hunger Fund

\$10,000 (or other budget amount determined by Session) shall be allocated annually to the Mary M Wilson Hunger – Annual Contribution 1.50720 budget account for distribution by the Serve Council. Should the Session-approved budgeted amount prove to be less than 5 percent of Wilson Fund 1.80040 asset value by December of each year, Serve Council may also allocate any unexpended portion of the 5 percent value by the conclusion of that calendar year.

- 1.80070 – K. Mills Mission Scholarship Fund

Established by gift from the family of Os Mills, the Katie Mills Mission Scholarship Fund provides scholarship support (i) first, to fund the tuition and related costs necessary to permit one or more youth residents of Batey 105, near La Romana, Dominican Republic (as it may from time to time be named otherwise) to attend secondary school through graduation and (ii) if the Church ceases to be in partnership with Batey 105, or if the Session of the Church determines not to continue to provide tuition support for youth residents of Batey 105 (in either case such that the intention described in clause (i) above no longer can be met), then to fund assistance to youth of the Church in need of such assistance to permit participation in youth service trips, local or out-of-town, that will serve as a faith learning and growing experience. Disbursements from the fund shall equal 5% of the average principal balance of the fund for the preceding five years. Recipients of the scholarship fund shall be determined by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the family or other Fairmount staff the Pastor deems appropriate.

Appendix II.

A CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY TO BE PROVIDED TO SERVE COUNCIL FROM THE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE.