Fairmount Presbyterian Church
2757 Fairmount Blvd
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118
Stated Session Meeting
MINUTES
June 3, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.

The June Stated Session Meeting of Fairmount Presbyterian Church was held on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at Fairmount Presbyterian Church and was moderated the Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor.

THE ROLL
Elders: Rev Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor; Rev Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Carol Adrine, Ian Cameron, Steve Chapman, Tim Cuff (online), Jerry Parker, Katie Wetherbee, Susan Wherley, Peg Zitzner.
Absent: Jesse Bassett, Nancy Gillombardo, Gary Sampson, Ruth Wasem, Rev. Drew Genzler
Moderator: Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor
Clerk of Session: Ginger Van Wagenen
Guest: Vanessa Whiting, Lisa Nester

QUORUM AND OPENING ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS
The Moderator opened the meeting with prayer.
The Moderator determined a quorum was present.
The Moderator reviewed the docket.
The Moderator requested a motion to give privilege of voice to guest Vanessa Whiting and Lisa Nester. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

> **MOTION: to approve the May 2026 Clerk's Report and Minutes of the May 6, 2026 Stated Meeting.** Following correction of typographical errors, the motion was approved unanimously.

UPDATE ON CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Vanessa Whiting, Chair of the Capital Campaign Committee, reported that she has been identifying potential members of the Committee using the names proposed by Elders as well as others she believes would be valuable. She has also been considering the scope and timeline of the campaign and exploring various consultants who might be a good fit. She reminded Session several times that ultimately the Committee will make a recommendation to Session on these matters.

Vanessa Whiting highlighted several additional items:

1) In ultimately defining the campaign, Session should think big, think strategically, knowing that campaigns like this only occur once every 10 or 20 years.
2) The use of a consultant/consulting firm to do a feasibility study (including interviews with likely large donors) is usually wise
3) The capital campaign might be a vehicle to rejuvenate FPC's planned giving program
4) The campaign will begin with a quiet phase during which 60-70% of pledges are made before the campaign goes "public"
5) Educating the congregation about our endowment and other church financial matters can also be part of the campaign's function

ORDER OF THE DAY: End-of-program-year review and planning for 2026-2027

Pastor Ryan began the discussion by asking each person to describe in two or three words the past year at Fairmount with these results:

- Pastor Lindsay – full, connected – full of all sorts of things, but it felt like those things were not just for the sake of doing them, but deeply connected to what our community is interested in, passionate about, needs
- Steve Chapman– hope, joy, growth – Hope – we had 9 folks from Fairmount stand in the parking lot in Youngstown, Pride Sunday – the folks who talked shared about finding home. The gifting of the congregation – there are some strong individuals within the congregation that continue to show up and demonstrate their gifts – it's a really fun place to watch that happen. Grateful that the pastoral leaders "allow" for that occur
- Tim Cuff – joyous, turbulent – world was turbulent, but we still found joy
- Ginger Van Wagenen – joyful, inclusive – a lightness and joy in the church about worshipping God, being in community together, she is happy to be there – this conversation clarified why Ginger feels so good about coming to church; so many of us talked about joy; feels so privileged to worship our God in a community where joy, happiness, laughter, singing are all a part of it
- Vanessa Whiting– courageous, joyful, challenging – mission work is courageous and welcomed outwardly facing stance in trying to address injustices, challenging in a good way
- Lisa Nester – energetic, supportive, growth – Supportive, she had a crazy year and she can't count the number of folks who checked in with her, congratulated her, etc. environment is supportive in every direction
- Jerry Parker – growth, challenging – growth, not easy work being on session, it takes thought; we're faced with a lot of challenges and politics of the church; challenging -this big, beautiful church has a lot of needs; Ryan's study on Genesis helped deepen his faith
- Ian Cameron – musical – music program has been wonderful, developing – some good and some bad hymns; Broken – but working on it, a lot more work to do even though we have done a lot; it is frightening to see some of the work that has been done that hasn't been done well/appropriately

· Katie Wetherbee – joyful and inclusive; inclusive – she loves coming to Fairmount and knowing that every single person has a space and is not only welcome but part of the family
· Susan Wherley - outdoorsy, neighborly, growing – we were out in the world this year, a particular focus on our sister congregations, God's congregation of the world, appreciated that we were in many different places. Also shared that after recapping the year in Faith Formation, she has church FOMO (fear of missing out) for the things she wasn't able to be a part of
· Pastor Ryan – broken, joyful, clarifying: broken hearted in a good way; clarifying – never been clearer about his vocation in the world;
· Carol Adrine – joyful, proud - of what we are attempting to do; prayerful – that we can continue to do it in the spirit of love and grace; joyful in that she can relate what we are doing to others and other churches who are inspired by what we are doing

Planning for 2026/2027

Pastor Ryan then turned the discussion to planning for program year 2026/2027. The spiritual theme will be "Come to the Table: Live into Communion". He also presented a month-by-month overview (attached below).

Pastor Ryan elaborated on the structure of the year, starting with setting the table and discussing who is invited. The theme of Advent connects the incarnation to communion, emphasizing the body of Christ. Epiphany focuses on turning the table and reclaiming the original meanings of Communion. Lent involves learning Jesus's communion etiquette, including practices like giving thanks, breaking bread, and washing feet. And Easter emphasizes taking communion out into the community and finding communion. With his overview completed, Pastor Ryan asked for reaction from those present, with these results:

· Ian Cameron – likes it a lot – a return to talk about one of our 2 sacraments, communion is important, he likes to serve communion, serving in different ways might make people more cognizant
· Jerry Parker – serving and receiving communion is very special – would be in favor of doing it more often. Take it very seriously, meditate while receiving communion, it's good topic- in favor
· Pastor Ryan – the pastors spent time talking about how we have experienced serving communion – we experience a small and beautiful moment with each person who comes through. Pastor Lindsay added that, by the time she finishes serving she doesn't even need communion, she's already full.
· Steve Chapman – thinking about Eastertide and bigger table – saw that this past Lent with all the different congregations, he saw how big the table is and how big God wants us to make the table. It's a really good picture. Grateful for the leadership for seeing this as a theme, as it's a really important piece of who we are at Fairmount, and also the wider body out in community
· Katie Wetherbee – once heard a message given to kids receiving their 1st communion – set up a card table, "the kid's table", but today you get to come to the

grown up's table – this is a table where everyone is welcome all the time. Fairmount does a god job representing/demonstrating that in all we do – you don't have to let the elements pass you by, we want you at the table

· Susan Wherley – communion can feel a little rote at times, we depend on the same people to serve it and prepare it; this is a great time to refresh the congregation's view on communion, and get more people involved in serving communion. Steve Chapman added that he saw it this Sunday with Mary Ann and Bob Conn-Brody, when Bob held the elements. Mary Ann spoke to how inclusive it felt.

· Ginger Van Wagenen – love this idea because we only have 2 sacraments – when you only have 2 it seems having a really deep understanding of why it's a sacrament, why we are celebrating it, why are we participating in it, why are we doing it in our daily lives. It's going to be one of those don't miss Sunday years.

Pastor Ryan noted that focusing our spiritual year on communion does not "box us in" to focus on baptism next year.

Ian Cameron remarked that he is fully in favor of the proposed theme, at which point there was general agreement about the proposal. Pastor Ryan then asked what Session found missing from the proposal and/or whether there was anything in the proposal that didn't fit our mission. Session agreed nothing was missing or out of place.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

<u>Admin Council:</u>

Ian Cameron reported for Ruth Wasem, beginning with Building & Grounds. He noted that:

1) The fire sensor in the sanctuary is operational again. The Cleveland Heights Fire Department should be out shortly to review the updates and sign-off on them.
2) Some electrical junction box issues have been corrected.
3) Work will be needed on the existing stonework next year.
4) The HVAC system work is being evaluated by Osborn Engineering (HVAC/Electrical Consulting firm)
5) Roofing contractors have indicated that recent roof issues have been identified and repaired.
6) The clean energy credit has been applied for and money should appear in the not-too-distant future.
7) Heating pipes in the basement are going to need attention in the not distant future.
8) On the financial side, the numbers are progressing as anticipated

<u>Serve Council:</u>

Steve Chapman noted that:

1) The SERVE Council will meet on June 10 to have a discussion with the Governance Review Task Force,

2) SERVE itself conducted a survey of Council member priorities for the use of SERVE funds.

3) Steve, Jim Thomas, and Tim Cuff are working on developing a process to ensure that SERVE funds are distributed intentionally, not reactively. They will bring it back to the Council for consideration later this year.

Faith Formation Council:

Susan Wherley reported that:

1) Two youth group trips are planned for the summer.
    a. Middle school youth will travel to Montreat to the Monterey Middle School conference.
    b. High School youth are headed to Kentucky for an Appalachian Immersion Trip. Kate McFadden will lead the trip. Funding for the trip will be partially provided by a brunch fund-raiser on June 14 held following the 10 am worship service.
2) The women's retreat was very successful. Forty (+/-) participants, excellent facilitator. Good time had by all.
    a. Some folks who are nearly exclusively 8:30 am worship service attendees were stunned by the goodly number of young women at the retreat, persons who are regular 11 am attendees. It was enlightening to those folks.
3) Faith formation brought two items to be considered by Session for approval:
    a. The implementation of a "prayground" (an age-appropriate liturgical play space within worship space) in the chapel for use during the 8:30 a.m. service. (See attached proposal)
        i. Lisa Nester described that the "prayground" would likely include the following types of items:
            1. A rug to delineate the space
            2. Plush dolls (Christian themed)
            3. Coloring supplies
            4. Age-appropriate books
        ii. The "prayground" would be in the front of the chapel so that children would be able to see what happens during worship
        iii. Questions were raised about
            1. the impact that a "prayground" would have on long-time 8:30 service attendees. Noted as something to be considered and consulted about.
            2. Where the "prayground" would be (anticipated directly in front of the pulpit in the chapel, although discussion around this was not conclusive)
    b. The creation and placement in the sanctuary of a "intergenerational liturgical library" (See attached proposal)
        i. Intended for worshippers of all ages

ii. Purpose is to recognize and welcome the entire spectrum of neuro diverse folks into worship and equip them with the tools that help them to have a positive worshiping experience.

iii. Supplies might include fidget toys (quiet), coloring supplies, noise canceling headphones if you're sound sensitive, small weighted lap blankets to help with emotional regulation (see proposal for more detail)

iv. The effort is being made in order to make folks who might not feel welcome initially know that they are welcome

v. Items that are noisy, messy, or potentially dangerous are NOT being considered for inclusion in the liturgical library

Motion: to approve 1) the creation of a "prayground" space in the chapel to be utilized during the 8:30 a.m. service, and 2) the building and placement in the sanctuary of an intergenerational liturgical library.

The motion was brought by the Faith Formation Council (and thus needs no second). The motion passed unanimously without abstention.

Care Council:

Carol Adrine reported that:

1) Senior brunch
   a. was enjoyed by many.
   b. Some questions arose, from guests, around the lack of "entertainment" (which had been a feature of past brunches). Efforts were made to secure entertainment but were not successful.
2) The Strawberry Festival is next on the Care Council agenda. Volunteer strawberry hullers and cutters are still being sought.
3) Care Council is scheduled to chat with the Governance Review Task Force on June 14.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

Update on Presbytery Meeting

Ryan Wallace noted that things went smoothly when the Presbytery of the Western Reserve held its meeting at FPC. He thanked Session members Carol Adrine, Steve Chapman, Jerry Parker, Ruth Wasem, Katie Wetherbee, Susan Wherley, and Peg Zitzer for their assistance. Ryan also noted that he gave Gordon Landefeld a sketch of FPC as a gift of appreciation for his service to FPC and the Presbytery.

Update on Governance Review

Council Chairs were reminded to let Ginger Van Wagenen know when they would be meeting to converse about the Governance Review so that Ginger, Jesse, and/or Tim might join to help facilitate the discussions.

Personnel Committee Update

Carol Adrine noted that the Personnel Committee is still working on finding two at-large members and, after they have agreed to be nominated, she will provide brief bios so that the congregation will have some knowledge of them while considering whether or not to vote them onto the Personnel Committee.

PASTORS REPORTS

Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Associate Pastor, noted her excitement about the upcoming worship service which will include an end of program year recap followed by the Strawberry Festival.

Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor, expressed gratitude for the strong finish to the program year and pleasure at the way worship, book groups, and art exhibits throughout the year tied together nicely. Additionally, he noted:

1) That an immigrant, Alex, who FPC and Ryan have had a relationship with has been freed on bond from the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center and is home with his family. Fifty percent of the $10,000 bond was provided by FPC members.

After closing prayer, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Ginger Van Wagenen, Clerk

Come to the Table:
Live into Communion

Setting the Table: Communion and communion (September)
What's the difference between Communion and communion?

A Seat at the Table: Practicing an "Open" Table (October)
Who's invited to the Table?

Table for One (November)
What's keeping us from the Table?

Communion as Incarnation (Advent)
In C/communion, we incarnate God in the world.

Turning the Table (Epiphany)
How do we need to reclaim or reimagine C/communion?

Table Manners: Learning Jesus' Communion Etiquette (Lent)
What did Jesus do at the Table?

We Need a Bigger Table (Eastertide)
How can we push tables together into one Table?

Proposal for Pray-ground in the Chapel

What is a pray-ground?

Not to be confused with a **play**ground, a pray-ground is a designated area within a worship space where children who are too young to engage with written worship materials can experience worship in the way they learn best - through play.

Where does a pray-ground go?

Ideally, a pray-ground goes in the front of a worship space so that children have a front row seat to see what is happening during the various parts of the service. If the front of a worship space isn't conducive, they can also be placed to the side or at the back, keeping in mind that children will be more likely to engage with what is taking place if they have line of sight.

What goes in a pray-ground?

What goes in a pray-ground is flexible and situational. General guidelines include that all included items should encourage quiet play, be age appropriate and washable, and encourage some participation in the act of worship during play. Seasonally or thematically appropriate items can be transitioned into and out of the space as appropriate to keep the space interesting and connect it with the life of the congregation.

Isn't a pray-ground noisy and distracting?

While there is a learning curve involved in getting a pray-ground up and running, once children are familiar with expectations, a pray-ground is not any more noisy than having children seated with their parents. Children can actually be quieter when they are close to "the action," and parents can sometimes experience some uninterrupted time for worship themselves.

Why should we have a pray-ground?

Children learn through observation and participation, and thrive best in spaces where they feel welcomed and comfortable. A pray-ground allows children to be themselves while in a worship space, and reduces the need for children to be removed from worship. Having a space designed just for them makes them feel seen and included in the life of the church from a very early age.***Pray-Ground Proposal***

I would like to propose that Fairmount establish a small pray-ground space in the chapel for use by children in the 8:30 worship service. We currently have one toddler who attends that service regularly, and additional families might choose to attend if they were aware that children were welcome in that space. The prayground could also be used for other events held in the chapel space. The pray-ground area would consist of:

- A 4'x6' area rug to delineate the space
- A preschool sized table with 2-4 small chairs
- Three fabric bins for storage
- Toys for quiet play
- The existing small bookshelf stocked with board books
- Coloring supplies and paper

The proposed location of the pray-ground is the front left corner of the chapel in front of the lectern, approximately where the first row of chairs is currently located. If this placement is determined to be too disruptive of current worship practices, alternatives include to the far left against the wall, or in the center back with line of sight down the aisle. (Proximity to the piano should be avoided, as the music can be loud and startling.) The initial cost for establishing the pray-ground would be no more than $500, and ongoing supplies and upkeep would be combined with existing children's ministry purchases for worship bags, Club 4/5 pews, WE time supplies, etc.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Nester
April 4, 2026

[Photos of Pray-grounds from other churches omitted]

Liturgical Library Proposal

For many of us, worship is a time of reflection, calm, and deep connection with God and one another. However, for our neurodivergent siblings, the experience of worship can be quite the opposite - loud, bright, unpredictable and overwhelming. As more information is coming to light about the needs of our neurodivergent siblings, schools and other institutions serving children have adapted to provide tools for emotional self-regulation and successful participation for people of all brain chemistries. Our churches have the opportunity to do the same!

This proposal suggests the replacement of the children's worship bags and Club 4/5 pew bins with the installation of a Liturgical Library[1]. A liturgical library offers a variety of creative tools for all ages to use to engage in worship. With such a library, worshipers can self-select what tools they'd like to engage with during worship. While children are often our best teachers for how to engage in worship through movement, creativity, play and delight, the materials are available for persons of all ages to support their worship experience.

The proposed Liturgical Library for Fairmount would be housed in a cart at the front of the sanctuary along the wall by the Andersen Hall entrance, approximately where the worship bags are currently stored. A rolling cart made of wooden slats stained to match the color of the sanctuary woodwork would be ideal, if volunteers with skill in building can be found to create it. Alternatively, a metal gridwall or freestanding pegboard could be purchased for the same purpose (prices begin at $400).

The cart would be laid out with baskets, shelves, and hooks (cost approx. $100, depending on style of cart) for hanging neuro-affirming worship engagement tools, such as:

- Weighted lap blankets for emotional regulation - 4 @ $22ea
- Ear protection headphones for noise regulation - 6 pack $41.00
- Tote bags for carrying supplies to the pew - already used for worship bags
- Sensory supports we already have on hand, such as:
  - Fidget toys
  - Chenille stems
  - Worry stones
  - Ribbon wands
  - Coloring supplies
  - Clipboards
  - LED candles
- Sensory supports that could be purchased, such as:
  - Marble maze mats - 4 pack $10
  - Magnet men - 2 @ 10 pack $16
  - LCD Writing tablets - 20 pack $40
  - Liquid Bubbler Towers - 2 @ 4 pack $19
  - WikkiStix - 468 pack $30
  - Color by number books - 2 @ $10
  - Infinity Cubes - 12 pack $16

○ Olive Wood Clutch Crosses - 4 @ $10
○ Finger Labyrinths - 3 @ $17

To accompany the introduction of the cart, instruction for all worshipers on its purpose and intended use would be offered in the form of a Time for Young Disciples lesson, with additional teaching offered during WE Time and Club 4/5 for young children, and by request for adults. It is anticipated that the children will already be well versed in the proper use of these kinds of tools, as they are commonly used in school classrooms.

The approximate cost for completing the entire project with all of the bells and whistles, including a prefabricated 4’ wide by 5.5’ high pegboard stand made of wood ($750), would be $1400. The project could be completed for less if the cart was made by volunteers and the supplies were not all purchased immediately. A starting supply of supports consisting of 2 lap blankets, hearing protection, and a limited number of sensory tools could be accomplished with a budget of $300.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Nester
April 4, 2026

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[1] The Liturgical Library idea was developed by Jenna Campbell, Certified Christian Educator in the PC(USA) and Director of Children and Youth Ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, OK
