

The Vine

NEWS FROM PRESBYTERY OF THE JAMES

*I am the vine;
you are the branches.*

John 15:5

Living the Call of Matthew 25

PC(USA) Invites Your Congregation to Make the Pledge

Matthew 25:31-46 calls us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities.

Convicted by this passage, the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to see our neighbors through Jesus's eyes and serve those who are marginalized or in need — people who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned, strangers, poor or oppressed in other ways and in need of welcoming.

When Rev. Liz Hulme Adam approached the session of Tabor Church about PC(USA)'s invitation to become a Matthew 25 congregation, she did so in stages, first by simply facilitating conversation around the scriptural charge.

She also shared resources from the larger church about the vision, and used preaching and teaching to prompt all members with the question: "What is a Matthew 25 church?"

"By the time the session formally addressed the question of joining this call, we recognized we were already living out our faith and mission in this way," she shared.

Jerry and Suzie O'Dell (pictured) and Joe Shaver coordinated the creation and installation of a peace pole on Tabor's grounds. Painted by congregation and community members, the art includes the word peace in 33 languages.



Rev. Liz Hulme Adam

Then it wasn't so much "should we," but how. After committing to the program in October 2021, the session embraced all three of the initiative's principles.

They already had a track record of working to address the pressing problem of racism. They also had a history of outreach to the "least of these."

"Continuing our focus in those two areas would bolster congregational vitality," Hulme Adam shared, "as long as we also continued our commitment to spiritual practices and faith formation."

As a small church, Hulme Adam feels their size affords agility.

"Through connections with school personnel, we quietly meet needs that come up, like tearing down a dilapidated porch and building a new one for a family in need."

See MATTHEW 25 on page 6



How Does a Church Commit to Matthew 25?

The themes of the Matthew 25 invitation are grounded in the gospel. Jesus calls us to serve with and for "the least of these" — not as a group to be pitied, but as people who are deeply loved by Jesus. With that in mind, Matthew 25 congregations embrace one or more of these three tenets:

Building congregational vitality by challenging members to deepen and energize their faith and grow as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with their community.

Dismantling structural racism by fearlessly applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice, and oppression of people of color.

Eradicating systemic poverty by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans, and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

STATED MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Presbytery Holds Successful Hybrid Meeting

The 112th stated meeting of the Presbytery of the James was held on October 15. The meeting, which was the first truly hybrid meeting, was held at Westminster Church (WPC) in Richmond with 57 present in person and 140 participating by Zoom. There were 89 minister members, 85 ruling elders representing 49 congregations, and 23 others totaling 197.

Moderator Dan Jordanger (Providence, Gum Spring) called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and led the presbytery in prayer.

Melissa Phillips (Salisbury), moderator of the Examinations Committee, welcomed new ministers to the presbytery:

- Karen Allamon (Shenandoah Presbytery), pastor, Madison Church
- Kimberly Clayton (Presbytery of Greater Atlanta), interim pastor, The Presbyterian Church, Fredericksburg
- Hannah Creager (Eastern Virginia Presbytery), director of Christian formation, Tuckahoe Church
- Russ Kerr (Salem Presbytery), campus minister, VCU
- Rev. Sai Hyung (Alex) Lee (Presbyterian Church of Korea), covenant pastor, Lord Jesus Korean Church

Ruling Elder Steven Hicks (Mitchells Church) was elected stated clerk for a three-year term.

Morning worship included the installation of the stated clerk, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the reading of the Necrology. Rev. Ashley Diaz Mejias (Voices of Jubilee) delivered the message with music provided by the WPC Band led by Jennifer Morgan.

The body divided into groups to hear preaching by two candidates for ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament:

- Sarah Godbey (Presbytery of Charlotte) to serve as chaplain in the Bon Secours system
- Leigh Anne Ring (Salisbury Church) to serve as presbyter for relational care for the Presbytery of the James

Both were approved.

The presbytery approved Commission on Ministry's (COM) request to create two parish models of church administration and finance. These models allow small congregations to share the expenses of pastoral and/or non-spiritual services.

The presbytery also approved that COM be granted commission powers to form administrative commissions to commission ruling elders for pastoral service after the person has completed appropriate training and examination.

The Committee on Nominations presented names for open positions on COM, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, the Permanent Judicial Council, the Leadership Connections Team, and the Mission and Service Team. View those elected in the meeting summary available at presbyteryofthejames.com/112th-highlights.

The presbytery took time to read the "Sexual Misconduct/Harassment Policy" as required by policy.

The business of the day also included the following:

- Adoption of the Balancing of Commissioners Proposal for 2023.
- Presentation of the 2023 budget for its first reading.



Rev. Karen Allamon



Rev. Hannah Creager



Rev. Russ Kerr



Steven Hicks



Sarah Godbey



Rev. Leigh Anne Ring

- Creation of an administrative commission to assist Trinity Church in dissolving the congregation.
- Approval of Ruling Elder Marjorie Clark (Second, Richmond) to serve as Region E member on the Committee on Nominations and the Committee on Representation.
- Adoption of a motion to sell the former Lakeside Church property to Lakeside Preschool and Childcare, Inc., for \$250,000.

2023 Presbytery Meetings

February 18, 2023

June 20, 2023

October 21, 2023



What Good News Will Your Congregation Share?

Spread word of your ministry, milestones, and happenings throughout the presbytery. We welcome your story ideas or articles, photos, videos, and events for the Vine (produced three times a year), our weekly email newsletter for church leadership, or on Facebook at facebook.com/presofthejames. Send to editor Kelley Hope at khope@presbyteryofthejames.org.

Building a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for All God's Children

Nearly 1,800 miles from her home in El Salvador, Carmen Diaz smiled as her interpreter Joseph Russ introduced her to a group at Gayton Kirk.

As one of PC(USA)'s 2022 International Peacemakers, Diaz was visiting congregations in the United States to share information about her country and her work building peace in her community. During her one-week visit to Presbytery of the James, she spoke at six events.

A small country on the western coast of Central America, El Salvador is bordered on the north by Guatemala and the east by Honduras. The three are referred to as the Northern Triangle Countries.

Like Guatemala, with which our presbytery has a mission relationship, El Salvador suffers from low economic growth, poverty, violence, and natural disasters that cause its citizens to seek

opportunity and safety elsewhere, often in the United States.

The population statistics Diaz shared paint a dire picture. At least one third of households live in poverty. More than half of the population is under 30 years old. Because of issues such as war, immigration, and poor health, few exceed age 60.

Thirty-seven percent of children live without one or both parents. This might be because the parents died, abandoned the family, or migrated.

Diaz lives in the heavily populated municipality of Soyapango, a suburb of the capital city San Salvador. In addition to the challenges facing the country as a whole, Soyapango also has environmental concerns.

"Due to population, commercial, and industrial growth, the municipality has high rates of pollution from industrial waste and sewage," Diaz said.

Diaz's church, the Calvinist Reformed Church of El Salvador (IRCES), a PC(USA) partner for more than two decades, works to address the challenges facing the community around them. They focus on projects relating to peacebuilding, food security, evangelism, and migration.

Diaz draws on her training in educational sciences and psychosocial care to help her church's efforts.

When citizens are deported to El Salvador, they arrive with very little.



PC(USA) International Peacemaker Carmen Diaz (RIGHT) and Joseph Russ, a mission co-worker in Central America, visited three other presbyteries before arriving at Presbytery of the James on October 4.

Government support is minimal. Diaz's church created a reception room to provide temporary shelter along with food and medical care for those in need. However, they are only able to help a few hundred of the 10,000 people who are deported annually.

While returned Salvadorans come without physical possessions, they often have skills that can be assets to the community. These include trades such as cooking and construction. Without proof of training and experience, though, people face hurdles to finding employment. Community organizations are working to establish programs to certify and license these citizens so that they can find jobs and support themselves.

See PEACEMAKER on page 5



See God at Work in Mission Trip to Guatemala

Join Presbytery of the James and Presbytery of the Peaks on a joint mission and learning trip to Guatemala in April 2023.

Engage with our mission partner, CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America), to experience their dynamic approach to mission and transformation. Meet amazing people whose lives God has changed through CEDEPCA. Find renewal, energy, and inspiration for our mission here.

The trip costs approximately \$2,000. This includes airfare, meals, lodging, travel within Guatemala, guides, and translators. Financial assistance is available for Presbytery of the James congregation members.

Learn more about this opportunity at presbyteryofthejames.com/world-mission.



Ecumenical Board Works Together to Strengthen Camp Hanover's Ministry into the Future

Camp Hanover's Board of Directors met October 28 and 29 for their annual retreat. They spent the weekend worshipping, enjoying time with each other, and planning for the future.

"The extended time of a retreat allows us to see the heart of each board member, their gifts, and their passions for camp," said Jennifer Gwyn, board president and a member of River Road Presbyterian Church.



Jennifer Gwyn

Camp Hanover incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 2019. In the years since, the board has been maturing into its role managing the non-profit, creating policies, roles, and responsibilities for the board and committees.

This year's retreat theme was succession planning and leadership. As current members reach term limits, filling those positions with new faces and voices continues the energy and momentum of the team.

The board seeks volunteers with a mix of gifts and talents, such as skills in property management, finance, development, and programming.

Reflecting the diverse community Camp Hanover serves, the board also is ecumenical. Current board members worship at Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, and non-denominational Christian churches. Some are clergy; others are laypeople.

What brings them together is a desire to continue Camp's 65-year history of ministry in God's beautiful creation.

Will Kirk, who attends Hill City Church, has been on the board since 2017.



Will Kirk

Describing his motivation, he said, "I hope to carry the torch as best I can so that this outdoor ministry will continue to serve children and adults for many years to come."

Kate Fiedler, associate pastor at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, joined the board in September 2021 because of her fond memories of attending a PC(USA) camp near her childhood home in North Carolina.



Rev. Kate Fiedler



Board member Leroy Jefferson does some heavy lifting for a service project at a community garden in Richmond.

"I grew up excited for that week," she shared, "and I'm delighted to be a part of creating outdoor, small-group experiences for youth today."

Service by board members is not limited to Camp. In August, board members volunteered at a community garden in Richmond.

The Camp Hanover team, which included staff, family members, and friends, weeded garden beds and helped improve the garden's accessibility for physically challenged and older residents in Northside Richmond. This included building a raised garden bed, a bench, and a paver pathway.

Leroy Jefferson, who worships at Lighthouse Christian Center in Highland Springs, lead the board's participation in the project.

"This was a great opportunity for us to share our gifts with others," he shared. "We look forward to volunteering with them again."



At their annual retreat, board members enjoy contributing to a project on the property. This year, attendees winterized the porches of Knoxwood Lodge by covering the screens with heavy plastic. This annual chore allows the porches to be used as additional gathering spaces during winter events. Pictured are Sam Pilc, Matthew Mahoney, and Will Kirk.

If you're interested in helping Camp Hanover grow into the future, share your contact information using the board, committee, and volunteer interest form at camphanover.org/volunteer.

Discover the Beauty of Camp Hanover in Winter at Youth Camp

Winter Camp, like Camp Hanover's popular summer offerings, is filled with fun, faith, and fellowship. There are just a few differences in the packing list!

Even with coats and hats, campers will enjoy camp favorites such as archery, campfires, cookouts, hikes, and games.

Winter break will be here before you know it. Register your 5th through 12th grade camper for this fun getaway, December 28-30.

Register at camphanover.org/winter-camp.



Powhatan Church Ensures Home Is Where the Heart Is

Twenty years ago, the congregation of Providence Church in Powhatan made a generous gift of a portion of the church's property to serve those in need in their community.

Managed by the Coalition of Powhatan Churches, a house on that property provides temporary shelter for families who have experienced a hardship. The home offers a bit of respite while the occupants are saving for and securing a more permanent home.

After the most recent family moved on in September, the Providence congregation took on the task of readying the house for new residents. They cleaned, caulked, repainted, repaired, and replaced so that the next family to move in would feel welcomed in the warmth of God's love.



ABOVE Wayne and Else Hackett, new members at Providence Church, lead the congregation's work at the emergency shelter.

Peacemaker

Continued from page 3

Involvement in gangs is one of the negative experiences some deported citizens bring to the community. Diaz's church works to deter young people from gang involvement by offering them alternative activities such as sports and social events. They also help the youth develop skills in conflict resolution and goal setting.

The church is seeing returns on its investment in the outreach. One of the participants stopped extorting money from members of the community after joining the youth program. Another, whose biggest dream had been becoming part of a gang, instead

attended law school and now works at city hall.

By sharing stories of their work and witness, peacemakers such as Diaz help us understand peace and justice concerns around the world and provide insights that can inspire us to greater faithfulness. Their visits broaden our sense of God's inclusive family and help equip us to build a culture of peace and nonviolence for all God's children.

Learn more about the PC(USA) International Peacemaking Program at presbyterianmission.org/international-peacemakers.



Bon Air Church hosted a dinner and program for members and guests to learn from peacemaker Carmen Diaz.



Mitchells Church Ruling Elder Elected Stated Clerk

At the October 15 presbytery meeting, Steve Hicks was elected stated clerk, replacing Marilyn Johns who had been serving as interim stated clerk since Rev. Fred Holbrook retired in June.

“I am honored for the opportunity to serve you,” Hicks commented.

Hicks is a ruling elder and clerk of session at Mitchells Church. His service to the presbytery includes membership on Mission Council (previously the Communications and Coordination Team) and being president of the Trustees of Presbytery of the James, Inc, positions from which he stepped down to take on the stated clerk role.

“This is an exciting and challenging time for our presbytery as we adopt a new leadership model,” Hicks shared about his new role. “I look forward to contributing to the excellent work that has been carried out in the past.”

The role of stated clerk that Hicks assumes was separated from the general presbyter position last year as part of the presbytery’s new strategic plan. The position is part time, at 15 hours per week, for a term of three years.

“I am grateful for the help and encouragement of my new coworkers in the presbytery office during this time of transition,” Hicks added.

Outside his involvement with the Church, Hicks is the controller for Fauquier Habitat for Humanity. He lives in Culpeper with his wife, Kim. They have three children and two grandchildren.

PC(USA) NEWS

Your Photo Could Appear in Next Presbyterian Planning Calendar

PC(USA) seeks photos each year from congregations and worshiping communities, camps, conference centers, and education centers for use in its annual Presbyterian planning calendar.

Ideal photos feature church members and friends engaged in activities such as worship, mission service, creativity and the arts, and direct outreach.

The deadline to submit photos for the 2023-2024 edition is Feb. 14, 2023.

Learn how to share your photos at presbyterianmission.org/story/your-photos-tell-your-story-4.



Proposed Amendments to Book of Order Ready for Review

The 225th General Assembly (2022) proposed changes in the language of the Book of Order that, if approved, will amend the Constitution.

Presbyteries will submit their affirmative or negative votes on these proposed changes by July 2023. More information will be coming from Presbytery of the James in advance of our February 2023 meeting.

The Book of Amendments is available for review in English, Korean, and Spanish. Find it at oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/proposed-amendments-constitution.

Matthew 25 Cont. from page 1

Earlier this year, the congregation raised \$5,000 for Ukraine by partnering with a local artist who displayed his artwork in their building.

“We take this call seriously,” Hulme Adam concluded, “and continuously seek ways to take our living faith into our community and the world.”



Dr. Erdal Adam and other Tabor congregation members volunteer with Remote Area Medical (RAM) multiple times a year. The organization’s clinics provide free, quality healthcare to the underserved or uninsured.

Matthew 25 Worshiping Communities in Presbytery of the James

All Nations Fellowship	Second, Richmond
Covenant, Petersburg	Tabor
Lord Jesus Korean	Tappahannock
Olivet	Voices of Jubilee
Orange	Woodville

Congregations who make the Matthew 25 pledge recognize Christ’s urgent call to be a church of action, where God’s love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. They rejoice how our re-energized faith can unite all Presbyterians for a common and holy purpose: our common identity to do mission.

Becoming a Matthew 25 congregation is as simple as taking the PC(USA) pledge, tracking the impact of your ministry, and sharing your stories with the PC(USA) from time to time.

Learn how to join the initiative at presbyterianmission.org/become-a-matthew-25-church.

Presbyter Ring Ordained to Ministry

As a preacher's kid, certified Christian educator, and now ordained minister, Leigh Anne Ring feels prepared for her role as presbyter for relational care, serving her colleagues in Presbytery of the James.

"God planned this identity for me long before I dared to dream it for myself," she shared.

Ring was born while her father, Rev. Chuck Klotzberger (Honorably Retired), was a student at Union Theological Seminary.

After graduating from Mary Baldwin College, she went into the "family business," earning a Master of Christian education from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education.

She served three presbytery congregations before stepping out in faith on the path to ordained ministry. Although COVID-19 greatly changed her seminary experience, she found the course work, an internship, and clinical pastoral education clarifying her call to ministry.

"I am excited about accompanying and caring for those who are serving in



ABOVE Ring's husband, Jim (LEFT), and children, Caroline and Joshua, gather after her ordination service. RIGHT Ring followed the footsteps of her father, Rev. Chuck Klotzberger (Honorably Retired), into ministry.

ministry in the POJ," she said about her new position in the presbytery office, which began August 15.

Ring's service of ordination was held November 20 at Salisbury Church.



Volunteers Needed for Disaster Relief Trip in January



Disaster Relief Ministry volunteers repair a ceiling in Little Gasparilla, Florida in October.

After a successful trip to Florida in October to help with cleanup efforts following Hurricane Ian, the presbytery's Disaster Relief Ministry is organizing a second trip for January 2023.

Volunteers do not need to have a background in construction as a variety of skill levels will be needed. However, volunteers must be able bodied and willing to do manual labor (at their own pace).

Contact ministry leader Brown Pearson to get involved. The presbytery thanks Southminster Church for administrative support of the Disaster Relief Ministry.

Learn about the Disaster Relief Ministry and how to volunteer at presbyteryofthejames.com/dr.



Pastor Channels Early Church Leader

John Grotz, pastor of Kirk O'Cliff Church in Louisa, presented a special worship service to the congregation on October 30. Dressed in costume with a few helpers, he reenacted the life of Saint Athanasius, defender of the Nicene Creed (325 A.D.). Athanasius repeatedly faced death and exile while proclaiming Jesus as "true God of true God."

Our soul waits for the LORD;
 he is our help and shield.

Our heart is glad in him,
 because we trust in his holy name.

Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
 even as we hope in you.

Psalm 33:20-22

Send submissions, corrections, or requests for additional copies to editor Kelley Hope at khope@presbyteryofthejames.org.



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275 Years of Ministry at Providence Church

On October 22, Providence Church in Gum Spring celebrated 275 years of ministry with an educational and fun community event. Heritage Day highlighted the time when the church started in 1747. Participants enjoyed Brunswick stew and cornbread, bluegrass music, reenactments, and craft demonstrations. Children had special activities just for them. Providence's church building is the oldest Presbyterian church in continual use in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Learn about the congregation's witness and service to Christ at providencepcgumspring.org.

