



A weekly news update from the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley in Iowa and Nebraska. Distributed by email only to the churches, Clerks of Session, ministers, Presbytery Officers, committee members, and others who wish to be on the list. Published by the presbytery. \*\*\*\*There is a new address for the office as of October 15, 2025: PO Box 390113, Omaha, NE 68139-0113\*\*\*\*

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MM 2026 #16

## A place of prayer and reflection

Loving God, on this Mother's Day, we are mindful of the tremendous calling of being a mother, and we thank you for our mothers: biological, adoptive, and in community, who have nurtured and cared for us, fed us and led us, selflessly served us and rooted us on. What a gift they have been, and we thank you for those faithful women you have placed in our lives. For those whose mothers have passed from this life, we ask your compassion and comfort and look forward to that glad reunion to come.



We pray for mothers who are struggling right now with all the demands of motherhood: on sleepless nights with uncomforted newborns, with exploring toddlers and shy preschoolers, with curious elementary students and youth wrestling with identity and independence. Give these mothers wisdom and patience, perseverance and strength, along with much-needed rest. We pray for mothers of adult children that they will know how to best share experience without being bossy, how to support and encourage without inhibiting growth.

We pray for those women who wanted children but did not or could not bear them, that you would remind them of their great value and purpose when judged by the world. We pray for women undergoing infertility treatments, that you would make procedures successful and bless their homes with the laughter of children, as is their great hope.

And lastly, mothering God, we pray for all those who did not have a great relationship with their own mother and for all needing tender, loving care this morning: the sick, the outcast, the dying, and the grieving. Remind us of your unconditional love for us, your desire to gather us as a mother hen gathers her chicks, and your stubborn refusal, like any nursing mother, to forget her own.

We ask these blessings in the name of Jesus, who cared for his mother and whose mother stayed with him to the very end on the cross, [in his name we pray. Amen]

Prayer written by Tracy Davenport for Presbyterian Outlook Worship on May 10, 2026

## NEWS FROM THE PC(USA)

### A SHOUTOUT TO GOD'S GHOSTWRITERS

#### Dr. Candida Moss delivers the 2026 Grawemeyer Lecture at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

April 27, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Dr. Candida Moss, the [winner of the 2026 Grawemeyer Prize in Religion](#) and the author of "[God's Ghostwriters](#)," likes to lift up some of the lesser-known heroes of the Bible: enslaved people whose talents helped bring us important texts, including Paul's letter to the Romans.

*Dr. Candida Moss delivers her Grawemeyer Lecture at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary's Caldwell Chapel. (Photo courtesy of Louisville Seminary)*

[Moss](#), the Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, delivered her Grawemeyer Lecture on April 16. It's available [here](#).

Each year the Grawemeyer Awards honor the power of creative ideas to improve our culture via music composition, world order, education, religion and psychology. Business executive and philanthropist H. Charles Grawemeyer established the awards in 1984 at the University of Louisville.

Academics and community members choose among nominees from around the world to ensure that each winning idea is both innovative and accessible. The [University of Louisville](#) and [Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary](#) announce the winners in December and present the awards at a ceremony the following April. The five award winners receive \$100,000 each, which they may use, if they choose, to develop and accelerate the spread of their powerful ideas. Learn more [here](#).

Speaking at LPTS' Caldwell Chapel, Moss said her book "is about invisible labor and the many enslaved and formerly enslaved people who helped produce the New Testament and nurtured an embryonic religion that would change the world."

She initially focused on Tertius, the scribe of Paul's letter to the church in Rome, a letter that's "widely regarded as the most theologically sophisticated and influential book in the New Testament," Moss said. "There's no questioning its importance, and unlike so many other books in the New Testament, no scholar has ever doubted that Paul himself wrote it."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/27/shoutout-gods-ghostwriters>



### WORSHIP AND MUSIC LEADER TALKS UP THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATORY MUSIC

#### Dr. Maren Haynes Marchesini is the most recent guest on the Presbyterian Association of Musicians' 'Sounding Board'

April 27, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service



LOUISVILLE — Choral director, cellist, composer, vocalist and scholar Dr. Maren Haynes Marchesini is director of worship and music at [Hope Lutheran Church](#) in Bozeman, Montana. Amidst all her varied duties, which include the [Roots in the Sky](#) chamber choir, Haynes Marchesini managed to fit in 77 minutes to speak to Sarah Abushakra and Jeremy Roberts, the hosts of "Sounding Board," a production of the [Presbyterian Association of Musicians](#). Their conversation is available [here](#), [here](#) or [here](#).

Roberts asked Haynes Marchesini, what brought you to where you are today? Raised in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Haynes Marchesini said her grandmother and great-grandmother "were church music people" at [Hysham Community Presbyterian Church](#) in Hysham, Montana. Haynes Marchesini earned her undergraduate degree at [Whitworth University](#) in Spokane, Washington, then served a year as a [Young Adult Volunteer](#). All of that "set a trajectory for being interested in ministry but wanting to do other kinds of

things," she told the hosts. *Sounding Board with Maren Haynes Marchesini*

She went to graduate school “and ended up with a job at a Lutheran church while pursuing my doctorate,” Haynes Marchesini said. She studied a Seattle megachurch for her dissertation project, but has worked since then “leading a church choir and doing a lot of other interesting things,” some of them related to [ethnomusicology](#), the study of music in its social and cultural contexts. She traveled to orphanages in Kazakhstan to adopt two children and worked on the U.S.-Mexico border and in Guatemala, “getting to know the migration situation there,” as well as spending “a bit of time” in Israel-Palestine.

Click here to view: <https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/27/worship-and-music-leader-talks-importance-participatory-music>

## 'HE BUILT BETTER THAN HE KNEW': THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM TENNENT AND THE MISSION TO SAVE HIS HISTORIC HOME

**'Founders & Faith' banquet dinner to benefit the William Tennent House Association will be held on May 30**

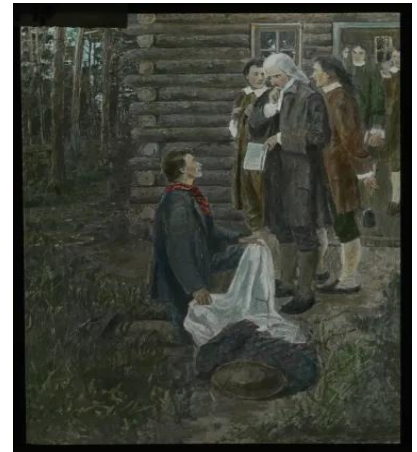
April 28, 2026 McKenna Britton, Presbyterian Historical Society Presbyterian News Service

In the Fall 1993 edition of [Presbyterian Heritage](#), the biannual print newsletter published by the [Presbyterian Historical Society](#), readers were re-introduced to a colonial Presbyterian minister named William Tennent.

*William Tennent talking to Charles Beatty at the Log College, painting done in 1937, [Pearl Digital Collections](#), Presbyterian Historical Society.*

Tennent had been the topic of a dozen or so articles printed in [The Journal of Presbyterian History](#) in years past — take, for example, Henry Funk's "[The Influence of the Presbyterian Church in Early American History](#)," part two of which was published in October 1925 and dealt primarily with the Log College; or, perhaps, Anthony Blair's "[More Than a Log College: Clergy Education and the 18th Century Presbyterian Revivals](#)," from the Winter 2015 edition — so this biographical sketch was brief, running just around 200 words.

In it, readers learn that Tennent emigrated from Scotland in 1718, applying for admission into the Presbyterian Church immediately upon his arrival in the colonies. Two years later,



he began his service as a minister, serving in various New York pastorates until 1727, when the congregation he served in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, erected a church of their own. After meeting for years in a private home and other such places, Tennent settled into this freshly-built pulpit in [Bucks County](#) and began the the ambitious project of building a school for the training of young ministers — a theological academy of sorts. The result was the Log College at Neshaminy, a modest log structure set on a small plot of land that became a cornerstone pioneer institution in Presbyterian education.

*Log College Building, [Pearl Digital Collections](#), Presbyterian Historical Society.*

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/28/he-built-better-he-knew-legacy-william-tennent-and-mission-save-his-historic-home>

## CLAIBORNE, HALL AND PEERBOLTE TO HEADLINE 2026 STEWARDSHIP KALEIDOSCOPE CONFERENCE

**Act by June 30 to secure early-bird registration fee for the popular event in Baltimore, Sept. 21-23**

April 28, 2026 Emily Enders Odom, Stewardship Kaleidoscope Planning Team Presbyterian News Service

Registration for the annual [Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#) Conference is now underway, with the early-bird registration deadline fast approaching for the Sept. 21-23 event to be held at the [Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel](#).

The popular conference, which will again offer both in-person and virtual attendance options, will feature three sought-after plenary speakers:

[Shane Claiborne](#), bestselling author and activist

[Robert Hall](#), consultant and author of “This Land of Strangers: The Relationship Crisis That Imperils Home, Work, Politics and Faith”

[Bethany Peerbolte](#), an ordained PC(USA) minister known to many as the “[TikTok Pastor](#).”



A prolific author, Claiborne's books include "Jesus for President"; "Red Letter Revolution"; "Common Prayer"; "Follow Me to Freedom"; "Jesus, Bombs and Ice Cream"; "Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers"; "Executing Grace"; his classic, "The Irresistible Revolution"; "Beating Guns"; and his newest book, "Rethinking Life."



In great demand as a consultant, Hall has authored more than 200 published articles on leadership, strategic direction, culture and relationships. His work has appeared in Forbes, The New York Times, The CEO Magazine and The Huffington Post.

Peerbolte, the founding pastor of [OurTapestry](#), an online New Worshiping Community of the PC(USA), first started creating TikToks as a youth pastor.

"Stewardship Kaleidoscope 2026 invites church leaders to explore faithful stewardship in a time of uncertainty," said Caralee Wheeler, event co-chair and development program associate for the [Presbyterian Foundation](#). "Together, participants will reflect on creative and adaptive approaches to generosity — with the hope that every attendee will walk away having named their next three actionable steps for ministry."

Those who attend the conference in person will be invited to choose from dozens of [workshops](#) and enjoy unique opportunities to connect with participants from across the country. Virtual attendance includes all plenaries, worship services and eight selected workshops.

Drawing leaders from across the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#), the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#), [The Episcopal Church](#) and other ecumenical partners, Stewardship Kaleidoscope is designed to ignite generosity in faith-based communities, give practical tools for cultivating generosity in congregations, expand the leadership capacity of those who lead stewardship initiatives, and cultivate adaptive approaches for funding Christ's mission.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/28/claiborne-hall-and-peerbolte-headline-2026-stewardship-kaleidoscope-conference>

## PRESBYTERY PODCAST SHARES THE WISDOM OF A NASA DOCTOR

### Dr. Heidi DeBlock joins the Rev. Dr. Shannan Vance-Ocampo of the Presbytery of Southern New England on 'Connecting Our Conversations'

April 28, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

*Astronaut Karen Nyberg uses a fundoscope to image her eye while in orbit. (NASA photo)*

LOUISVILLE — "Connecting Our Conversations," a podcast of the [Presbytery of Southern New England](#), featured a timely guest during a month that included [the launch and successful return of Artemis II](#): Dr. Heidi DeBlock, a critical care physician living in Maine who's worked for more than 30 years as a visiting research scientist at NASA's Johnson Space Center's [Cardiovascular Laboratory](#).

DeBlock is married to the Rev. Dr. Scott DeBlock, the resource presbyter for the [Presbytery of Northern New England](#). The host of this edition of the podcast, named "Space, Science and Wonder," is the Rev. Dr. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, general presbyter of the Presbytery of Southern New England. Listen to her 55-minute conversation with DeBlock [here](#).

DeBlock said she began going to the Johnson Space Center in 1990 as a student. "They kept asking me back, and I kept going back, willingly," she told Vance-Ocampo. Beginning in 1995, she got involved in a large research study that required her to attend a number of NASA landings. "It's fun to see them come down, because so much has happened to our bodies while we've been in space."

The last time she was working in the lab at NASA's [Human Research Program](#), "they asked me to put all the data into the archives, and I realized it was my own data," she said. "I've been here a while."

In addition to data, "we glean so much technology from NASA," DeBlock said. Monitoring systems in intensive care units in hospitals across the nation "were invented because we went to the moon and we monitored the astronauts," she said. "There's all sorts of fun stuff I work with every day that's a result of NASA having to create it."

Drug delivery systems such as patches were invented to enable long space flights. Insulin pumps came from space technology, and "a lot of the work we did in physiology refined how we monitor and control patients' blood pressure on Earth," DeBlock said. "We had to learn about our own body and our own physiology. We're not built for space at all."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/28/presbytery-podcast-shares-wisdom-nasa-doctor>



# PC(USA) CONGREGATION IN BALTIMORE WILL CELEBRATE ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A COMMUNITY EVENT

## Roland Park Presbyterian Church offers 'Come and See: Art & Soul' on May 15

April 29, 2026 Roland Park Presbyterian Church Presbyterian News Service

Roland Park Presbyterian Church in Baltimore will kick off its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration with a special community event, "Come and See: Art & Soul," from 6 p.m. through 8 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, May 15. The event will mark both a milestone in the church's history and the reopening of its newly renovated space.



Founded in 1901, RPMC has been a longstanding presence in the Roland Park neighborhood, committed to pursuing justice, practicing hospitality and engaging curious faith. The May 15 event invites neighbors, friends and the wider Baltimore community to experience the church's renewed facilities and welcoming spirit firsthand.

*PRESENCE acrylic paint and mixed media on stretched canvas. (Painting by Rena Diana)*

The event will feature:

An art exhibit by local artist Rena Diana, displayed throughout the sanctuary and fellowship spaces

Live music by Shaun McMullen

Light refreshments in a relaxed setting

An ice cream social and building-wide scavenger hunt for children and families

Opportunities to explore the church building and grounds at one's own pace.

"This is truly an open invitation to our neighbors and the wider community," said the church's pastor, the Rev. Mark Hanna. "Whether you've been here many times or have

never stepped inside, we hope you'll come and see — to experience the space, meet the people and simply enjoy being together.

It's a chance to celebrate 125 years of growing in love, and to share that spirit with everyone."

The event will be held rain or shine. With fair weather, guests are encouraged to enjoy the church lawn, where music will take place outdoors and attendees are welcome to bring blankets or chairs.

Recent renovations have enhanced the church's accessibility, safety, and gathering spaces, reflecting RPPC's ongoing commitment to being a place where all feel welcome. The event is designed to be intergenerational and accessible, with features such as ramp access and an elevator to ensure full participation.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/29/pcusa-congregation-baltimore-will-celebrate-its-125th-anniversary-with-community-event>

# UNIFICATION COMMISSION APPROVES ITS COMMENTS ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY ITEMS OF BUSINESS

## The UC addresses ordination, pay equity, artificial intelligence and more

April 29, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Tuesday's online meeting of the Unification Commission resulted in commissioners approving comments on some of the items of business coming before the [227<sup>th</sup> General Assembly](#), which will be held online and in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 22-July 2. Learn more about the business that will come before commissioners [here](#).

*The Unification Commission, photographed during a March meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, met online April 28, 2026.*

Among their comments that commissioners voted to amend Tuesday was [COM-22](#), the Ordination Task Force Report. The UC, which for now is also the governing board of [Presbyterian Life & Witness](#), says that among the recommendations of the task force, financial implications "may not be obvious." If passed, the report "would have financial, logistical and staffing implications for Presbyterian Life & Witness," according to the UC's comment. The UC also notes that the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates does not currently evaluate ordination exams but rather oversees evaluation of the standard exams. One task force recommendation "substantially changes the text of G-2.0607d, adding evaluation to the responsibilities of the PCC for both the current standard exams and the proposed portfolio."

The Unification Commission, photographed during a March meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, met online April 28, 2026.



Other comments to receive UC approval on Tuesday were:

- On [COM-32](#), “Agency Pay Equity Recommendations and Rationale,” which would set caps on executive salaries, the UC notes that the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of PL&W “now has a significantly expanded job description and portfolio responsibility.” Future recruitment for this position could be hindered by the proposed salary cap, according to the UC.
- Regarding [COM-34](#), “The Algorithm and the Almighty: Navigating AI through a Reformed Lens,” the UC suggests that GA commissioners refer some of the recommendations, including creation of a “Center for the Future,” to PL&W “for assessment on what can be accomplished with existing staff, resources and networks.” The aims of this recommendation “are laudable and in many ways align with priorities of PL&W’s [Office of Innovation](#) in addressing AI and emerging realities facing our world.”
- On [OVT-004](#), “On Prohibiting Non-Disclosure Covenants in Employee Relations,” which the UC previously approved, the UC said that the document former World Mission employees were asked to sign, “Employee Covenant: Together in Transition,” were intended “to set expectations that employees lean into grace and professionalism during a time of major denominational and organizational change. The request was what any employer may ask of its employees at any time but particularly during a major organizational shift: professionalism, discretion, and discernment.” That document, the comments says, “reflected the desires of the [then Interim Unified Agency, now PL&W], and the A Corporation which supports it, to do the difficult work of closing World Mission and transitioning to a new way of being present with mission partners in a fashion that would be as positive, productive, and orderly as possible so that the General Assembly’s mission and ministry could continue as PL&W felt called.” It was not a legal contract, the UC noted, and “did not, nor would it have, included a non-disparagement or non-disclosure provision, which are two distinct legal concepts.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/29/unification-commission-approves-its-comments-general-assembly-items-business>

## VETERAN CARE PROVIDERS FROM PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE ROUND OUT SIX-WEEK COURSE ON EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

### The Rev. John Cheek and the Rev. Dr. Kathy Riley share their experiences caring for survivors of human-caused disasters

April 29, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

OUISVILLE — During the last of a six-part series on providing disaster emotional and spiritual care, the Rev. John Cheek, a member of the [National Response Team](#) for [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#), and the Rev. Dr. Kathy Riley, PDA’s National Associate for Emotional and Spiritual Care, offered up some of what they’ve learned while caring for the survivors of human-caused disasters, including mass shootings, terrorism, arson and other intentional acts of violence.



*The Rev. Dr. Kathy Riley, center, listens to people talk about their experiences with the Eaton Fire in Southern California last year.*

It was the second straight week that PDA presented among a handful of partners providing training to those caring for people who’ve experienced trauma. Last week, NRT members Marilyn Stone and the Rev. Suzanne Malloy [offered a helpful talk on tools for resilience](#).

“Helping others recover from disaster is hard work. We talk about being able to give our best selves,” Riley said. “Care providers need to pay attention to their own resilience and well-being.” Some of those tools can be found [here](#). Cheek went over some of the stress reactions survivors often exhibit: shock, numbness, feeling helpless or hopeless, survivor’s guilt, difficulty with sleeping, problems with appetite, restlessness and difficulty concentrating, as well as emotional outbursts, irritability, spiritual questions, doubts and anger, especially toward clergy or even toward God. However, “most people do not develop post-traumatic stress disorder,” said Cheek, a retired pastor who lives in Tucson. “Most recover over time using their own support systems.”

There’s often overlap between the effects of natural disasters and human-caused disasters, Riley said. “We know grief occurs in both kinds,” she said. There may be optimism early on, “then a descent to disillusionment and disappointment.” Care providers can also be survivors, she said.

Survivors of human-caused disasters can feel the loss of “a relative sense of safety” at home or in their school, stores and place of worship. “Entire communities can be affected,” Riley said.

“In a human-caused disaster, there’s always someone to blame,” Riley said. “For some people, no public space will feel safe, at least for a while.”

When there's loss of life, "there is of course grief and shock, compounded by this feeling of loss of safety" among survivors, Riley said. "But most people do recover."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/29/veteran-care-providers-disaster-assistance-round-out-six-week-course-emotional-and-spiritual-care>

## COMPASSION AND COLLABORATION AIDING HAWAII'S RECOVERY FROM SEVERE STORMS AND FLOODING

### 'Community is everything' when you live on an island

April 30, 2026 Darla Carter Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Hawaii recently received a [Major Disaster Declaration](#) from the federal government, following a series of fierce storms earlier this year, and is continuing on the road to long-term recovery with help from compassionate groups.

In March, two Kona low weather systems brought heavy rains, damaging winds and some of the worst flooding seen in many years to various parts of Hawaii. Additional downpours followed in April.

Though the storms caused devastation from collapsed roads and flooded homes to airport, school and hospital damage, they also brought opportunities for people from various faiths and backgrounds to work together for the common good.

"In a recent coordination call for disaster response organizations, the [Hawaii VOAD](#) (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)

identified the various groups providing disaster response support — from disaster case management, muck and gut work, and the delivery of clean up supplies," said the Rev. Kathy Lee-Cornell, national disaster associate for [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#). "It was a beautiful reminder and witness of the ways individual efforts are a part of a larger network."

She added, "The response to this event reminds me of why we foster relationships with so many partners in this field. Collectively, we are able to accomplish more than we could ever do alone."

One of the churches that has gotten engaged in helping residents is [Community Church of Honolulu](#), a United Church of Christ congregation with a leader who is PC(USA) ordained, the Rev. Melissa Martin.

Housed on a campus with multiple churches, including [Taiwanese Presbyterian](#), Community Church of Honolulu helped to collect essentials such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and various cleaning supplies for Oahu's North Shore, one of the areas hardest hit by the storms, said Martin, Community Church of Honolulu's executive pastor.



*An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew assigned to Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point in Kapolei, Hawaii, flies over a flooded neighborhood in Waialua on the north shore of Oahu in March. Successful rescues were made by Coast Guard and Navy aircrews. (U.S. Coast Guard photo from Air Station Barbers Point)*

"Even though I'm working with a UCC congregation, there's still Presbyterians on campus, and ... there's really sweet connection there, and that's how we did the collections for the supplies for the North Shore," she said. "It was first a reach across our campus, then with our Presbyterian partners on island, and then with a couple other of the local UCC churches."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/30/compassion-and-collaboration-aiding-hawaiis-recovery-severe-storms-and-flooding>

## GLOBAL DELEGATION HEADS TO UN MIGRATION FORUM TO AMPLIFY GLOBAL PARTNER VOICES

### PC(USA)-convened group prepares for advocacy, worship and civil society engagement at International Migration Review Forum

April 30, 2026 Beth Waltemath Presbyterian News Service

A delegation of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leaders and global partners will travel to New York over the weekend to participate in the second [International Migration Review Forum](#) (IMRF), a major United Nations gathering focused on global migration policy and advocacy from May 4-8.



*Representatives from the Mesoamerica Migration and Mission Network participate in the second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration. The Rev. Santiago Flores and Joseph Russ will join the IMRF. (Photos courtesy of Joseph Russ)*

Held every four years, the IMRF evaluates progress on the 2018 [Global Compact for Migration](#) and produces a negotiated declaration, while incorporating regional input and shaping international policy priorities. The process allows civil society organizations to attend the proceedings, facilitate side events, submit questions, reports and speak on their own expertise while helping shape global migration priorities.

For the PC(USA), the delegation reflects collaboration across Presbyterian Life & Witness, including Global Ecumenical Partnerships, Immigration Advocacy and the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. According to the orientation document produced by Clare Balsan, associate for advocacy at the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations, "The general objective of the PC(USA) IMRF 2026 Delegation is to strengthen

multilateral collaboration on advocacy on migration issues around the world pertinent to the GCM and beyond."

Joseph Russ, a U.S.-facing Global Ecumenical Liaison within Global Ecumenical Partnerships, described the forum as both a policy space and a platform for lived experience. "The IMRF is when the United Nations come together to discuss the Global Compact for Migration," said Russ, "but it's also a great opportunity for organizations working on the ground and people of faith to share their own feedback and ideas for the process."

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/30/global-delegation-heads-un-migration-forum-amplify-global-partner-voices>

## GIVING BABIES A BETTER CHANCE AT LIFE BY IMPROVING FARMWORKER CONDITIONS

### Study finds positive results for program with Presbyterian ties

April 30, 2026 Darla Carter Presbyterian News Service

*An auditor with the Fair Food Standards Council interviews a worker. (Courtesy of the Fair Food Program)*

LOUISVILLE — A program that has been protecting the rights of migrant farmworkers for more than a decade has a new reason to be proud: Researchers have found that it's good for infants and their hard-working mothers.

A study in the journal *Demography* centers on the [Fair Food Program](#) (FFP), which was started about 15 years ago by the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) (CIW), a longtime partner of the [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#).

Farms that participate in the Fair Food Program agree to uphold ethical labor standards to ensure that migrant workers receive health and safety protections and fair wages. There's a code of conduct aimed at eliminating abusive practices that workers would otherwise be vulnerable to.

Additional program features include vigorous monitoring, worker education, a 24-hour complaint hotline, and a bonus on workers' paychecks.

"The area of Southwest Florida where the program was born was known to federal prosecutors as ground zero for modern day slavery, and that was because of the numerous cases of forced labor impacting hundreds of workers ... so you had people being held against their will, subject to wage theft, violence, sexual assault and dangerous working conditions," said Laura Safer Espinoza, a former judge who's executive director of the Fair Food Standards Council, which monitors and implements the FFP.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/30/giving-babies-better-chance-life-improving-farmworker-conditions>



## IT'S CRITICAL WE COME TO GRIPS WITH THE MINING OF CRITICAL MINERALS

### Last week's Presbyterian Advocacy Hour explored the industry's impact on indigenous populations and on the Earth itself

April 30, 2026 Mike Ferguson Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — The mining of critical minerals is making headlines in recent months, and so during the Presbyterian Advocacy Hour held last week on Earth Day, the Rev. Jed Koball, a Peru-based [Global Ecumenical Liaison](#), led a panel discussion on the problems and



opportunities such mining can bring to the surface. Watch the 82-minute webinar [here](#).

Clare Balsan, advocacy associate at the [Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations](#), led off the discussion by defining critical minerals as those with a high risk of supply chain disruption and serve an essential function in one or more energy technologies. Critical minerals include cobalt, lithium, nickel, copper and graphite.

*Clare Balsan is advocacy associate at the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations.* While critical minerals are seen by many as a necessary component of the green energy transition, there are environmental concerns over mining them, Balsan said. There are also human rights concerns, including child labor and dangerous working conditions, as well as the displacement of communities.

Speaking in French, Grace Muzinga of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the program director at the nonprofit [La Sentinelle de Ressources Naturelles](#), a global partner of the [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#), said her country has “enormous” reserves of critical minerals. DRC is the world’s leading producer of cobalt.

DRC is also “touched by abject poverty,” she said, with millions of people living on less than a dollar a day. “But we have a great wealth of underground riches,” Muzinga said. “Many corporations want to come here and fight for their own interests. They do not contribute to our communities, which are not happy to see these corporations because there is no reinvestment — and if they do reinvest, it doesn’t reach the local population.”

“We have hopes about improving working conditions in the mines and hopes about agreements that will make it mandatory to invest in local communities,” Muzinga said. “We hope the United States will truly cooperate with our government around this.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/30/its-critical-we-come-grips-with-mining-critical-minerals>

## HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE, PRESBYTERIANS INCLUDED, RALLY OUTSIDE THE HIGH COURT WEDNESDAY FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE STATUS

### The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to hand down its ruling this summer

May 1, 2026 Cindy Corell, Global Ecumenical Liaison

Presbyterian News Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Hundreds of people gathered in front of the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday morning. Festive music, waving flags and exuberant greetings belied [the weightiness of the appeal being argued inside](#).

*Hundreds of protesters gathered in front of the Supreme Court Wednesday as the court considered a case regarding Temporary Protective Status holders. (Photos by Cindy Correll)*

The justices heard from plaintiff’s attorneys sharing the many positive contributions of well-vetted and hard-working immigrants from Haiti and Syria living under temporary protected status in communities across the country. D. John Sauer, the U.S. Solicitor General, argued for the government that the immigrants’ home countries have stabilized enough for their return.

In the meantime, 1.3 million TPS-holders from 17 countries remain on edge. The court is expected to announce its decision by early-to-mid-summer. Should TPS-holders lose protected status, public health physician Dr. Bernadette Fouché, said, communities across the U.S. where immigrants live and work will feel the loss.

“These are no strangers to America,” she said. “They are the nurse who held your mother’s hand in the last hour. They are the teacher who learned your child’s name on the first day of school. They are the pastor, the farm worker.”

“We understand how painful this continues to be for our people,” Guerline Jozef told the crowd. She is co-founder of Haitian Bridge Alliance. “We hear you. We see you. We are here with you and for you.”

Haitian Bridge Alliance is one of many advocacy and accompaniment groups hosting Wednesday’s rally.



Two cases before the justices hold the fate of those in the country with temporary protected status. While Wednesday's case specifically was whether the Trump administration illegally terminated TPS for people from Haiti (300,000) and Syria (6,000), the fate of TPS-holders from 15 other countries likely will be impacted by the decision.

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/5/1/hundreds-people-presbyterians-included-rally-outside-high-court-wednesday-temporary-protective>

## ONE WOMAN'S OUTREACH TO KENYA GROWS AND RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM LOCAL PRESBYTERY

### Sister2Sister International Outreach Ministries brings wholeness to the lives of women and children

May 1, 2026 Kristen Gaydos

Purity Ruchugo's Sister2Sister International Outreach Ministries transforms lives by providing nourishment and education. Founded in Ruchugo's home country of Kenya, the organization was created from her personal experience witnessing hunger as a child. Over the years, Sister2Sister has grown to include housing and educational opportunities to young girls and mothers and is supported by Ruchugo's local presbytery, Salem Presbytery in North Carolina.

Watch to hear from Purity and learn more about Sister2Sister

Click here to watch video or copy and paste link into your browser: <https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/5/1/one-womans-outreach-kenya-grows-and-receives-support-local-presbytery>



## THIS MONTH IN PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

### The Committee on Freedmen submits its first annual report, Henderlite makes history, More Light Churches gather, and Purchase volunteers

May 1, 2026 McKenna Britton, Presbyterian Historical Society

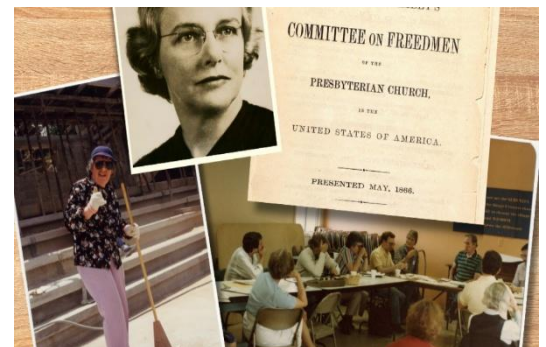
*In May 1866, the Committee for Education of Freedmen shared its first annual report with the Old School faction of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*

Both sides of the denomination had gathered that year in St. Louis, Missouri, for their General Assembly meetings — the New School at First Presbyterian Church, the Old School at Second.

The PCUSA had split in 1838 over social and theological issues, including slavery, infant baptism, and ecumenism in foreign missions. Minutes of the 1866 Old School GA report that “the assembly expresses its fraternal affection for the other branch of the Presbyterian Church and its earnest desire for reunion.” New School minutes show that the two assemblies held a joint celebration of the Lord’s Supper on May 23, 1866, at the Second Presbyterian Church.

As the Civil War came to an end, the Old School's General Assembly organized the Committee for Education with the purpose of establishing churches and schools among the communities populated by the formerly enslaved. Their report shares that “The American Bible Society has donated 2000 volumes of the Word of God to be distributed among the Freedmen, under direction of this Committee ... Thus encouraged, the Committee entered upon its duties ...” From June 1865 to May 1866, the committee sent 36 missionaries and teachers into the field.

Upon their reunion in 1870, the Old School's Committee for Education of Freedmen merged with the Freedmen's Department of the New School Committee of Home Missions. The new group was named Committee of Missions for Freedmen. In 1883, the



Freedmen's Committee was formally incorporated as the Board of Missions for Freedmen. [Access PHS's Guide to the UPCUSA Board of Missions for Freedmen Records here.](#)

## CHURCH-NESTED COUNSELING CENTER EXPANDS ACCESS TO CARE IN ATLANTA

### Samaritan offers a replicable model for inclusive mental health care during Mental Health Awareness Month

May 1, 2026 Beth Waltemath Presbyterian News Service

ATLANTA — On a busy stretch of Peachtree Street in midtown Atlanta — steps from the High Museum of Art, Symphony Hall and Center Stage Theatre — an unassuming sign points toward a quieter kind of work. Mounted on the side of [First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta](#), facing the [Woodruff Arts Center](#), the sign simply reads: [Samaritan Counseling Center](#).



*The Rev. Dr. Tony Sundermeier, senior pastor of [First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta](#), the Rev. Dr. Katie Sundermeier, and the Rev. Dr. Carol Pitts, associate executive director of Samaritan Counseling Center of Atlanta, stand with Matt Josey and Ben Fletcher, leaders of the 2026 couples retreat, a collaboration between the counseling center and the church. (Photo courtesy of Katie Sundermeier)*

Inside, Samaritan Counseling Center of Atlanta offers something both deeply rooted and widely needed: accessible mental health care, grounded in faith but open to all.

Founded as a separate nonprofit in 1999 by First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, Samaritan today serves thousands of clients each year, offering counseling regardless of age, income, culture or

religious background. According to its 2025 annual report, Samaritan provided 6,782 counseling sessions through October, with about 64% of those sessions offered at reduced rates or supported through insurance. Nearly half of all clients receive subsidized care, with fees as low as \$30 per session, a commitment the organization describes as central to its mission.

“Mental health care should be available to all and not a luxury for some,” Samaritan’s annual report states.

That vision has taken shape under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Katie Sundermeier, who marks 10 years as executive director in May, aligning with [Mental Health Awareness Month](#). When Sundermeier began in 2016, Samaritan was emerging from a period of organizational rebuilding. Today, it is a growing, professionally staffed center offering individual, couples and family counseling; spiritual direction; group therapy; supervision for clinicians; and community education.

“We are distinct from First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, and we are also huge supporters and collaborators,” Sundermeier said in an interview. “We hold both very clearly.”

<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/5/1/church-nested-counseling-center-expands-access-care-atlanta>

## NEWS FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

### UPCOMING PRESBYTERY MEETINGS

May 7 – 5:30 in person – First Presbyterian Church of Omaha

August 15 at Calvin Crest

November 7 - 10am-12noon in person - Location to be determined

### Your church could host a Presbytery meeting!!

Please check the Events Calendar on the PMRV website for specific committee meetings and their location.



#### PMRV Youth Events for all!

- One of the functions of the PMRV Youth Ministry Group is to provide quarterly presbytery-wide events for youth in grades 6–12. These are wonderful opportunities for students to experience faith and fellowship together. These events are great for a church youth group to attend, or even an individual student from a church.
- Gathering on the Green | Sunday, June 7 | 12:30-3pm | This is a FREE Youth event sponsored by PMRV for 6th-12th grade students. Come for a relaxed afternoon of food, fun, and community as we gather outdoors to connect and hang out together | [REGISTER HERE](#)
- Synod School | July 26-31, 2026 | Synod School is a learning and personal enrichment experience for people of all ages. People come from all over the country with their friends and families to share in this week of worship, study, play, and life together. | [More information and registration HERE](#)
- Skinny Bones | Sunday, September 27 | 3-7pm | Join us for a fun fall outing to Skinny Bones Pumpkin Patch! Youth are invited to spend the day enjoying all the classic autumn activities—pumpkin picking, corn mazes, games, and more. It's a great chance to hang out with friends, soak in the season, and make some awesome memories together. Don't miss this festive adventure! More information coming soon.
- Winter Break Youth Event | Sunday, December 27 | Time TBD | Stay tuned for a special youth event coming over winter break! While the details are still being finalized, we're planning a fun opportunity to gather, connect, and make the most of the holiday season together. College students who are home for break are especially invited to join us—we'd love to have you back! Keep an eye out for more information coming soon.

[More info about PMRV Youth Group](#)



## THEOLOGY ON TAP

What's better than talking theology? Talking theology over lunch with the chance for good beer! You are invited to Theology on Tap on **Thursday, May 21**. **THEOLOGY ON TAP MEETS ON THE THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH**, at 11:30 – 1:00 at the Brazen Head Irish Pub (319 N. 78<sup>th</sup> Street). Join us at our reserved table to have a great lunch and talk theology with colleagues. What theological issue is at the top of your mind just now? Share your thoughts and hear the thoughts of others...just as John Calvin intended! For more information, please contact Bob Keefer @ [keefer.robert@gmail.com](mailto:keefer.robert@gmail.com) Sponsored by the Presbytery's Worship and Spirituality Committee.

## Dear friends of our Presbytery: NICARAGUA PARTNERSHIP

Our partners in Nicaragua have completed and distributed the school uniforms, backpacks, and supplies that the people of our Presbytery have so generously funded! Pictured are the children who received packets this year and the members of the Cooperative who made them.

We are committed to providing support for packets again in 2027, so your contributions will continue to help school children in the city of La Concepción, Nicaragua. Also: we are planning to send a group from Missouri River Valley to be present next January when the uniforms and supplies are distributed!

For more information about our partnership with churches and pastors in Nicaragua, contact Bob Keefer ([keefer.robert@gmail.com](mailto:keefer.robert@gmail.com)) or Josh Widman ([josh.widman@gmail.com](mailto:josh.widman@gmail.com)).



**THE LUNCH BUNCH... Tuesday, May 19th at 11:30am at the Arboretum Village, 8141 Farnum Drive, Omaha. This is open to all active and retired pastors, their spouses and surviving spouses. The Arboretum provides a nice menu to choose from. Please plan to pay with a credit or debit card as they are unable to take cash. If you wish to attend, please make a reservation with Cindy Harvey at 308-224-0476 or [crharv@aol.com](mailto:crharv@aol.com) by Thursday, May 14th. It's always a lively time and we hope you will come and join us.**



## First Mondays

The Palestine Justice Network of the PC(USA) invites you to First Mondays: Christlike conversations on Palestine and Israel; scripture and theology; and the mission of Jesus in the lands of the Bible today!

Next Gathering: Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Location for May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026:** Trinity Lutheran Church (6430 N 30<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha – west of Miller Park on Redick Avenue)

6:30–8:30pm on the first Monday of the month  
hosted at different locations throughout the presbytery area  
Questions? [pnj.pmr@gmail.com](mailto:pjn.pmr@gmail.com) or 210-478-7672

[Email for more information](#)

Questions: [pnj.pmr@gmail.com](mailto:pjn.pmr@gmail.com) or 210-478-7672

# Nebraska Presbyterians Foundation

## Apply for a Grant

If your church is located in Nebraska and your congregation has an outreach or mission project which demonstrates putting your faith into action or reaching out to your neighbors in need, consider applying for a grant to help fund your idea! The grant application process starts twice each year, and you may apply either June 1 or December 1. For more information on the grant process, please visit their [website](#) or contact Audrey Richert or 402-420-9877.

## Emergency Assistance Funds

The Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation offers financial assistance for PCUSA pastors or a surviving spouse who is experiencing an urgent financial crisis. Applicants must be an active or retired installed or commissioned pastor who has, or is currently serving, a Nebraska congregation and currently residing in Nebraska. For more information on the Kessler Fund, please visit their [website](#) or contact Audrey Richert at 402-420-9877. [Email Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation](#)



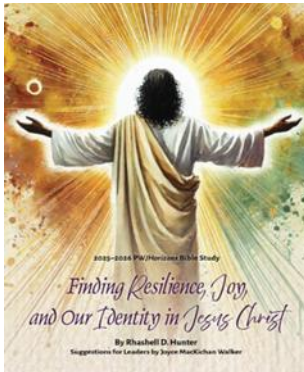
## SLAP PW Sit & Sip

Join other Presbyterian Women from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for a monthly round table discussion on issues prominent in today's world.

Our Sit & Sip events will be held via Zoom from 11 a.m. to noon Central Time. So, grab your favorite beverage, get comfortable, and join the conversation!

Our next meeting is on May 30: continuing to discuss the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and the war in Iran. To register, please contact Kathleen Keefer at [kathleenkeefe20@gmail.com] for the Zoom link.

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## FINDING RESILIENCE, JOY AND OUR IDENTITY IN JESUS CHRIST

We will meet on the following date: May 18 at 6:30 pm CT

You must register to receive the Zoom link by sending an email to [kathleenkeefe20@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenkeefe20@gmail.com)

You can purchase the Bible study (cost is \$14.00) through Presbyterian Women - <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/curren-bible-study/>

## OPSF RETREATS IN 2026

### LIVING VESSELS

MUSIC & LITURGY AS STORYTELLING

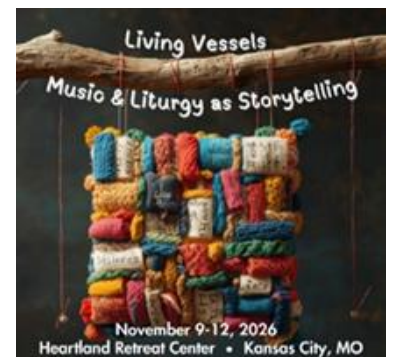
DATES: NOVEMBER 9-12

LOCATION: HEARTLAND RETREAT, PARKVILLE, KANSAS

LEADER: KARL HEIMBUCK

LEARN MORE: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-anage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=4d68442436&e=8162e3efab>

REGISTER: <https://omahapresbyterianseminaryfoundation.us10.list-anage.com/track/click?u=df47e0b165a2313aae68d581e&id=039996c90e&e=8162e3efab>





**IOWA INTERFAITH  
POWER & LIGHT**

### **Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts: A Continuing Education Opportunity for Clergy**

Ready to inspire your congregation to care for creation and act on climate change...but feel you need to learn a lot more yourself first? Iowa Interfaith Power & Light's new Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts are here to guide you. Our new 1-year program helps clergy and their congregations to become leaders in environmental stewardship. Through mentorship, training, and connections with other faith leaders, Iowa clergy will gain tools to bring climate-conscious practices and resilience to their faith community and its ministries.

Join this network of faith leaders working together to instill hope, take action, and grow sustainable, empowered communities. Learn more and apply at <https://iowaip.org/cohorts>.



**Happy Mothers' Day!**

# PRESBYTERY EVENT CALENDAR

May 3, 2026 – May 30, 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Saturday
3 5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Older Adult Week begins; Legacy Giving Sunday	4	5 SJP (Social Justice & Peacemaking) Committee Meeting via Zoom  National Day of Awareness and Action for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People	6 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	7 Thursdays in Black  National Day of Prayer; Path Building to Just Peace; Moving Beyond Militarism	8	9 World Fair Trade Day
10 6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Mothers' Day	11	12	13 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	14 Thursdays in Black  PMRV Christian Education Meeting  Ascension of the Lord	15 Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day	16
17 7 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	18	19 Lunch Brunch Leadership Team Zoom Meeting	20 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	21 Worship & Spirituality Committee  Theology on Tap  FELD  Thursdays in Black	22	23
24 Day of Pentecost Heritage Sunday	25 Memorial Day	26 COM  Mission & Evangelism	27 Weekly Pastor Gathering via Zoom	28 Thursdays in Black	29	30

Please check with the Presbytery Office for specific meeting information

**Living in a world without violence against women and children.** Pause for a moment of silence on Thursdays at noon your local time to remember and honor those who have died at the hand of sexualized or gender-based violence. Go online at

<https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/thursdays-in-black> and commit to the pledge below:

I commit to: **Thursdays in Black.**

In solidarity. In protest. In mourning. For awareness and In hope. By supporting to wear black on Thursdays, I stand

- In solidarity with 1 in 3 women worldwide who face violence in their lives
- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form
- In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence
- For awareness and knowledge about the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In the hope that a different reality is possible. MAKE THE PLEDGE. #THURSDAYS IN BLACK. STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE.



# Presbytery Prayer Calendar

May 4, 2026 – June 6, 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	4 We pray for the work and ministry of Florence Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	5 We pray for the work and ministry of Fort Calhoun Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	6 We pray for the work and ministry of Gethsemane Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	7 We pray for the work and ministry of Hope Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	8 We pray for the work and ministry of Korean Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Southeastern Illinois Presbytery	9
10	11 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Missouri Valley  We pray for the work and ministry of the Wabash Valley Presbytery	12 We pray for the work and ministry of Mount View Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Whitewater Valley Presbytery	13 We pray for the work and ministry of Murray Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Synod of the Living Waters	14 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Neola  We pray for the work and ministry of the East Tennessee Presbytery	15 We pray for the work and ministry of New Horizon Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Holston Presbytery	16
17	18 We pray for the work and ministry of New Life Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Middle Tennessee Presbytery	19 We pray for the work and ministry of Riverside Parish  We pray for the work and ministry of the Mid-South Presbytery	20 We pray for the work and ministry of Peace Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Mississippi Presbytery	21 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Plattsmouth  We pray for the work and ministry of the North Alabama Presbytery	22 We pray for the work and ministry of Red Oak Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Sheppards & Lapsley Presbytery	23
24	25 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Shelby  We pray for the work and ministry of the South Alabama Presbytery	26 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Shenandoah  We pray for the work and ministry of the St Andrew Presbytery	27 We pray for the work and ministry of Sudanese American Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Transylvania Presbytery	28 We pray for the work and ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Western Kentucky Presbytery	29 We pray for the work and ministry of Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Synod of Mid-America	30
31	June 1 We pray for the work and ministry of United Faith, Sidney  We pray for the work and ministry of the Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery	2 We pray for the work and ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Villisca  We pray for the work and ministry of the Heartland Presbytery	3 We pray for the work and ministry of Walnut Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the John Calvin Presbytery	4 We pray for the work and ministry of West Hills Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Missouri Union Presbytery	5 We pray for the work and ministry of Westminster Presbyterian Church  We pray for the work and ministry of the Northern Kansas Presbytery	6

