

**Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky**  
**Stated and Annual Meeting**  
**May 12, 2025**  
**Cedar Ridge Camp**  
**AGENDA**

**Moderator: Ruling Elder Alicia Bloos**

**Vice-moderator: Teaching Elder Joel Weible**

**Stated Clerk: Teaching Elder Jerry Van Marter**

**Recording Clerk: Teaching Elder Andrew Hartmans**

11:30 a.m. **Session Minutes/Records Review** – Jerry Van Marter, Stated Clerk

11:30 a.m. **Registration, refreshments, Open House**

12:00 p.m. **Mission Committee Lunch and Conversation --** “Congregations and Mission: Past, Present, Future”

1:00 p.m. **Gathering All Together** – Moderator Alicia Bloos

- Opening prayer
- Welcome to our first time Members, Commissioners and Guests
- Welcome and seating of any Corresponding Members
- Welcome from Cedar Ridge Camp
- Declaration of a quorum and approval of the docket

1:15 p.m. **Worship**

- Preaching: Rev. Marian Taylor
- 2024 Necrology Report
- Offering recipient: Cedar Ridge Camp Scholarship Fund

***Break***

2:25 p.m. **Consent Agenda:** Jerry Van Marter

- Approve the minutes of the February 22, 2025 stated meeting.

*-- from the Stated Clerk*

- Approve proposed constitutional amendment 24-K (requires clerks to report any knowledge of sexual abuse to civil authorities) – *from the Church Administration Committee*

2:30 p.m. **Interim General Presbyter's report:** Marian McClure Taylor

2:40 p.m. **Report of Synod Commissioners:** Brad Palmer and Perry Chang

2:50 p.m. **Church Administration Committee:** Perry Chang

- **FOR ACTION:** Disapprove proposed constitutional amendment 24-J (changing the formula for General Assembly participation resulting in an increase in the number of General Assembly commissioners).
- **FOR ACTION:** Approve proposed constitutional amendment 24-C (adding affirmation of diversity and inclusion principles in *The Book of Order* to the standards for ordination).

3:00 p.m. **Coordinating Commission report:** Christine Coy Fohr

- **Mission Committee:** Faye Fedlam
- **Self-Development of People:** Faye Fedlam
- **Finance Committee:** Tom Hughes
- **Church Growth and Transformation:** Paul Seebeck
- **Hispanic/Latinx Ministries:** Tom Vandergriff
- **Christian Education:** John Kuper
  - **UKirk Ministry:** Nell Herring
- **FOR ACTION:** Approve Coordinating Commission nomination for Vince Patton to fill Nominations & Representation Committee vacancy.

3:35 p.m. **Announcements:** Announcements should be no more than one minute in length.

3:45 p.m. **Personnel Report:** Betty Muse

- **FOR ACTION:** Adopt the General Presbyter position description and authorize the Coordinating Commission to approve the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) developed by the search committee.

4:05 p.m.    **Nominations and Representation Committee report:** Pam Clinger

- **FOR ACTION:** Election of General Presbyter Nominating Committee

4:10 p.m.    **Commission on Ministry report:** Marissa Galvan-Valle

- Summary of actions taken since last presbytery meeting
- Welcome new members; farewell to departing members
- Recognition of ordinations

4:30 p.m.    **New Business**

4:40 p.m.    **Report from the Stated Clerk:** Jerry Van Marter

- Attendance and offering reports
- Session records review report
- Acknowledgements and thanks

4:45 p.m.    **Adjournment with prayer**

*Next stated meetings: Monday, September 15, 2024 at Goodness Grows NCD  
Saturday, November 8, 2024 at Shelbyville First*

## Mid-KY Presbytery Church Administration Committee May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report

Mid-KY Presbytery's Church Administration Committee has recommended the presbytery vote at its Monday, May 12 meeting:

- In favor of a proposal to include a commitment to incorporation of diverse voices in the life of the church as something for presbyteries to examine candidates for minister of the Word and Sacrament more explicitly on and for church sessions to examine candidates for ruling elder or deacon more explicitly on ("24-C").
- In favor of a proposal to require clerks of session and stated clerks of presbyteries – when credible allegations of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults are made – not only to inform the session/presbytery and set in motion an investigation of the allegations also to refer the allegations to civil legal authorities ("24-K"). (This proposal the committee has recommended go on the consent agenda for the May 12 presbytery meeting.)
- Against a proposal that would expand the number of commissioners to the General Assembly ("24-J").

The half a dozen folks on the committee have already met with Stated Clerk Jerry Van Marter and Interim General Presbyter Marian Taylor on Zoom several times in 2025.

Following the committee's recommendation, the presbytery – at its Saturday, February 24 meeting on the seminary campus – voted in favor of 9 of the 12 amendments to *The Book of Order* that the 226<sup>th</sup> (2024) General Assembly had proposed. At that meeting, the presbytery also voted in favor of a proposed agreement between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Episcopal that expands possible shared local ministries between the two. These proposals were all part of the February 24 meeting's consent agenda.

The committee had recommended the presbytery consider two proposals – on their own, outside of the consent agenda – because one of them ("24-C") seemed to be the only controversial of the proposals and the other ("24-J"), again, the committee had recommended that the presbytery reject.

To keep the presbytery meeting from going on too long, however, the committee's presentations about these two proposals - and the presbytery's votes on them - were postponed until the May 12 presbytery meeting at Cedar Ridge Camp.

At that meeting, the committee will highlight these remaining two proposals:

- The one proposal ("24-C") that some presbyteries have rejected. Committee member Ben Stewart (HR) will speak at the May 12 presbytery meeting in favor of this proposal to emphasize incorporation of diverse voices in examinations for ordination (with one of the presbytery's two 2024 GA commissioners, Perry Chang [also a member of the committee], alluding to some arguments against it).
- The one proposal that the committee recommended against ("24-J"). Perry Chang will explain why the committee recommended that the presbytery reject this proposal that would expand the number of GA commissioners.

The Church Administration Committee left out in error the proposed requirement that allegations of abuse be referred to civil legal authorities ("24-K"). Otherwise, approving it likely would have

been on the consent agenda for the February 24 meeting. The presbytery has more recently recommended that the presbytery approve it and do so via the consent agenda for the May 12 meeting.

Stated Clerk Jerry Van Marter has informed the committee that – of all of the proposed changes – only 24-C has received a substantial number of negative votes. Even it will probably eventually be ratified by the required majority of the 166 presbyteries. Presbyteries have until the one-year anniversary of the GA – July 4 of this year – to vote on these proposals.

In other activities:

- The committee has continued to work with the presbytery Stated Clerk to facilitate peer review of session minutes by clerks of session and colleagues, before each presbytery meeting.
- The committee has continued to work with the Stated Clerk on a review of the presbytery's Standing Rules. Recently, leaders/members of each of the presbytery's commissions and committees have been approached about possible updates/changes to descriptions of their composition/work in the Standing Rules.

-Submitted by committee member Perry Chang

**Mid-KY Presbytery Mission Committee**  
**May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**  
Del Braaksma, Chair

In recent meetings, the Mission Committee met with Nancy Leach of Beulah Presbyterian Church to plan for the assembly of the PDA kits. It was decided to incorporate the September 15<sup>th</sup> Presbytery meeting which will be at Goodness Grows Goshen (the old New Goshen Presbyterian Church) in which congregations could bring their donated supplies. Supplies can also be dropped off at Beulah Presbyterian Church (Bardstown Rd at the Synder) Monday, 9/15/25 from 9:00 AM to Noon and Tuesday, 9/16/25 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Volunteers are invited to help sort and organize supplies Tuesday – Friday, 9:00 – 4:00, at Beulah Presbyterian Church. **Assembly will be September 20, 2025, 10 AM to 1 PM**, so mark your calendars. Our goal is 1,000 Kits! This information is being included in the Mid-Kentucky Calling Newsletter and more detailed information will be coming so stay tuned and would encourage congregations to begin organizing to make this effort successful!

Also, with new clarity of the Mission Committee's role from our recent visioning retreat earlier this year, the committee has been involved in planning on how to best carry out our new priorities. We decided to focus on the first two priorities being:

- Communication both to and from the committee
- Identification of the mission assets and the needs of the congregations

One activity we landed on was to provide a luncheon at the May 12<sup>th</sup> Presbytery meeting with a focus on learning more about the missions of our congregations and building communications in order to better support them. A big thank you to all of you who attended! We will be organizing our information from the luncheon and sharing it with you.

Another aspect of the luncheon was to share what mission our Presbytery is involved in. These include historical partnerships with Changhua Presbytery in Taiwan, Bellewood and Brooklawn, the Presbyterian Homes and Services of Kentucky, and SDOP.

## **Mid-KY Presbytery Hispanic/Latinx Committee May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**

The Hispanic/Latinx Committee continues its work by meeting each month in-person and via Zoom. Over the last few months we have added new members to our committee, have increased our budget, and have worked hard to keep the MKP community aware of what we are doing. An intentional effort has also been made to keep folks aware of what is happening in our nation regarding activity apropos to our committee's work.

Part of our effort has been aimed at increasing the committee's budget. Through a series of concerts and intentional requests to increase awareness of need, the diaconal fund has increased. Likewise, the Preston Highway ministry emergency fund has increased. To continue assuring transparency and to increase the efficiency of how money is given and received, the committee voted to use the Presbytery's QR code for contributions directed to our ministry via the Presbytery's budget. Money collected from the members of the ministry will continue to be deposited in a line item of Fourth Presbyterian church for use in emergencies. Having the ministry's emergency fund in an account with Fourth PC makes turnaround time much faster.

In addition to monetary giving, the committee has urged Presbyterians to give food to a pantry at Beechmont Presbyterian as well as gift cards for shopping or food delivery. We've also tried to do all we can to build relationships between various communities within the presbytery to build trust between those various communities.

Finally, the committee discussed its portion of the standing rules and voted to change it slightly to allow for more non-voting participants to be added to the committee. The committee also voted to recommend that the May 12 presbytery offering be directed to the Camp Cedar Ridge scholarship fund. Our report at the May meeting will aim to inform the Presbytery of the connection between the work of our committee and that of Camp Cedar Ridge.

Tom Vandergriff  
Committee Chair

## **Mid-KY Presbytery Church Growth & Transformation May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**

**Beechmont Grant Request:** Upon review the Finance Committee recommended allowing up \$20,000.00 for the (an addition of about \$7000 more than requested) and to disperse it in \$5,000.00 increments.

CGT is considering what we would like to learn from and with Beechmont as they utilize this grant. The committee will discuss further at our next meeting in May potential opportunities for us to come alongside Beechmont and others who are looking to update their space to learn with and support their ministries.

**Action Taken:** CGT approves the Beechmont grant and concurs with the Finance Committee to extend the grant up to \$20,000.

**CGT Committee Update:** We had one member resign. The Rev. Dr. Perzavia Praylo, who in addition to running the Black Church Studies program spent about 8 years on the PCUSA's Mission Development Grants committee, gladly accepted to be nominated. She should be on the slate of nominations to vote on at the May 12 meeting.

**Goodness Grows Update:** Goodness Grows, now has occupants in the building and is providing overflow space for Grace and Glory Lutheran's food pantry. We are discussing plans to invite DeEtte Decker from the PCUSA's Office of Innovation to the MKP September meeting at Goodness Grows, so that our MKP congregations know about PCUSA resources including the Good Futures Accelerator Program.



**Mid-KY Presbytery Christian Education Committee  
May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**

**REPORT FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

The committee met on March 10 and on May 5 (not yet met at the time of this report being submitted).

Highlights include:

- Gratitude for the Workshop leaders at the Feb. 22 Presbytery Meeting was expressed
- **Youth Retreat** at Cedar Ridge Mar. 7-9 was delayed due to a light registration. Rescheduled until the Fall.
- **Youth Triennium** is this summer! Adrian White is the registrar for the presbytery. Contact them for more information ([adrian.white@hpclouisville.org](mailto:adrian.white@hpclouisville.org))

**Mid KY Presbytery Nominations & Representation Committee  
May 2025 Presbytery Meeting**

The following teaching and ruling elders were asked and accepted our committee request.  
For Presbytery approval:

**General Presbyter Search Committee**

Jenny Edlin  
Galen Zavala  
Dianne White  
Nolan Huizenga  
Tom Hughes  
Alicia Bloos  
Greg Cohen  
Chelsea Gunther-Benham  
George Love

**Nominees accepting vacancies on other committees:**

Mission Committee: class of 2026 - Jonathan Sutphin

Church Growth and Transformation Committee: class of 2026 - Dr. Perzavia Praylow

## **Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky Commission on Ministry Report May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**

The Commission on Ministry (COM) continues to provide vital support to congregations and ministers across the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky. The following summarizes our key activities and ongoing priorities from our March and April 2025 meetings.

### **1. Pastoral Transitions and Support**

- COM approved Beulah Presbyterian Church's invitation to the Rev. José Luis Casal to serve as part-time pastor and approved the terms of call.
- COM granted the Rev. Whit Malone (member of Western North Carolina Presbytery) permission to labor within the bounds of Mid-Kentucky Presbytery so that he provides pastoral services to Portland Avenue Presbyterian Church.
- The COM approved renewed terms of call for Rev. Marissa Galván-Valle with Beechmont Presbyterian Church, affirming a continued and healthy pastoral relationship.
- COM authorized Ruling Elder Kevin Kouba to serve as a Pastoral Resource Person at Briargate Presbyterian Church, with sacramental authority, pending his commissioning as a Commissioned Pastor. The COM and stated clerk will guide his preparation.

### **2. Shared Ministry Model Exploration**

- Keenan Rodgers from the Board of Pensions presented the new *Shared Ministry* benefits model. This model provides dues subsidies for benefits when two or more congregations desire to work together to call full-time pastoral leadership. This approach could offer new pathways for smaller congregations to afford a pastor. COM members expressed interest in exploring this model further, potentially during a retreat or future COM meeting.

### **3. Resource Updates and Process Improvement**

- COM approved the updated 2025 Temporary Pastor Agreement and a revised documents to guide meetings between sessions, PNCs, pastors and the COM. These resources streamline our support for churches in transition and clarify expectations during leadership changes.

### **4. Leadership Appreciation**

- COM formally received and acted upon a request from Rev. John Stanger for release from the exercise of ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and agreed to send a letter expressing gratitude for his service.

### **5. Care of Church Professionals**

- Ministers' Retreat is set for October 20, 2025 at Cedar Ridge.
- We have updated the prayer partners list.

## 6. Benefits Regional Summit

COM chair participated in the Benefits Regional Summit: Understanding the Value of the Benefits Plan, held in Chicago on April 7-8, 2025. These were the topics that were discussed:

- **A Theology of Benefits:** the scripturally-based foundation of our work at the Board of Pensions also guides the course we chart
- **Living by the Gospel:** a guide to supporting ministers through the Board that details employer incentive programs and includes salary study information
- **Benefits Plan details:** guidance, information and resources for members to help them better understand and use their benefits
- **Dues packages:** eligibility, benefits and dues for the packages that can be offered to members
- **Ministry innovation:** the Board's investment in innovative ministry solutions and new forms and contexts as ideas surface from within the Church
- **Assistance Program:** need-based grants that embody our connectional Church at its best
- **Lifelong Learning:** educational programs for members of the Benefits Plan, their spouses and surviving spouses, employers, and seminarians.

This is a reminder of the *Assistance programs* that are available:

For All Members (Active, Retired, and Surviving Spouses)

- **Adoption Assistance:** Provides \$6,500 per child to help cover adoption-related expenses, including agency and attorney fees.
- **Emergency Assistance:** Offers one-time grants to address unforeseen financial emergencies. Groups affected by natural disasters may also qualify.
- **Transition-to-College Assistance:** Grants up to \$3,000 to eligible families for expenses related to a child's transition to college, such as purchasing a computer.

For Retirees and Surviving Spouses

- **Housing Supplements:** Ongoing financial support to help with housing costs, enabling retirees to remain in their homes or move to retirement facilities.
- **Income Supplements:** Provides monthly income support to retirees and surviving spouses who had modest earnings during their service.
- **Retiree Medical Grants:** Up to \$2,500 every three years to reimburse dental services and/or hearing aids for retirees, spouses, and surviving spouses aged 65 or older.

For Ministers in Active Service

- **Sabbath Sabbatical Support:** Grants up to \$10,000 to assist ministers in taking sabbaticals for personal and professional renewal.
- **Minister Educational Debt Assistance:** Provides up to \$25,000 to help ministers repay educational debt, along with access to debt coaching services.

Eligibility for these grants varies, and interested individuals are encouraged to review specific requirements for each program. For more information or to apply, visit the Board of Pensions' Assistance Program page: [pensions.org](https://pensions.org).

This is a reminder of the *Lifelong Learning educational programs* that are available for members. The Board of Pensions' Lifelong Learning program offers a comprehensive suite of educational resources designed to support the spiritual, health, financial, and vocational well-being of Benefits Plan members, their families, and affiliated employers. These offerings are tailored to accompany individuals through various stages of life and ministry, fostering holistic growth and resilience.

- **E-Learning:** Accessible, on-demand modules covering topics such as financial planning, clergy taxes, and vocational development. Notable series include Faithful Decision-Making, Personal Financial Planning, and Terms of Call. These resources are available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Korean.
- **Webinars:** Monthly live sessions focusing on aspects of wholeness-spiritual, health, financial, and vocational. Participants enrolled in the Medical Plan can earn Call to Health points by attending.
- **Well-Being Wednesdays:** Quarterly virtual gatherings that provide a space for reflection and learning on wellness topics. Each session includes centering prayer, workshops, and discussions, aiming to rejuvenate participants' spirits. [pensions.org](https://pensions.org)
- **Well-Being Retreats:** Three-day in-person events offering rest and renewal, with activities designed to deepen participants' connection to their vocation and personal well-being.
- **Seminars:**
  - *THRIVE:* A holistic retirement planning seminar for those within ten years of retirement, addressing identity, vocation, and financial preparedness.
  - *First Call, First Steps:* Targeted at seminarians and candidates for ordination, this seminar covers practical aspects of entering ministry, including benefits and compensation.
  - *Third Act Seminar & Luncheon:* An annual event for retirees and surviving spouses, focusing on topics relevant to wholeness in retirement.
- *Education Resource Center:* A repository of materials on financial and retirement planning, as well as tax issues specific to ministers and congregations.

## 7. Future Conversations

- The COM recognizes the need to engage in deeper reflection on staffing models, leadership development, and congregational vitality. Discussions are underway to schedule opportunities for further discernment and strategic planning in these areas.

### Orderversaries April - June

1 Year	40 Years
Patrick Long - June	Roger Durham - June
Ellen Marie Sherby - April	Don Garton - May
	Hattie Wagner - June
5 Years	55 Years
Katherine Kupar - June	Gerald Cooper in June
30 Years	65 Years
George Love - June	Peter Salerno in April

Respectfully submitted,  
Marissa Galván-Valle  
COM Chair  
April 23, 2025

## Statement of Faith - Rev. J. Whit Malone

When I say, “I believe in God,” it is my grateful response to what God reveals. God makes the first move, choosing to be known in creation; in the words of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures; and most fully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. And though God is free to speak and act in unexpected ways, what I believe finds its primary source in the preaching of Holy Scripture in regular corporate worship, in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, in probing the depths of the creeds and confessions of the Church, and in the voice of God’s Spirit as it speaks through sisters and brothers in faith.

The Bible is the written Word of God and the primary source of what I believe. Interpreted within the community of faith, using both mind and heart, and illumined by the Holy Spirit, the Bible is the authoritative rule of faith and life, both for me and for the Church. The God revealed in Holy Scripture requires a response. That response is to follow Jesus; loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. The Bible reveals to us what that means.

I believe in one, holy, and living God who reaches out to us in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. God is essentially relational. Each one of this three is wholly one only in relationship to the other persons. God lives in mutual love and equality and intends this relatedness and mutual love to mark human relationships. This is mystery, of course. God’s eternal essence is always greater than our human understanding.

I believe God is creator. In love God creates all the worlds that are and everything God creates is good. God creates human beings in God’s image to love God and others. God gives us a vocation

to be stewards of all God has made and to live with others in justice and love. God also sets limits, giving us freedom to obey or violate them. We reject God and disobey God's commandments. Yet, God does not reject us; keeping God's covenant promises down to this day.

I believe God is savior. In God's fullness of time and love, God came to us in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' involvement in our humanness is God's involvement in our humanness. Jesus was human. He was like us in every way except without sin. And in the living of his life, he revealed what it means to be truly human. Jesus is divine. Being God, he is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves – to love us unconditionally, to forgive us, and to restore God's image within us.

I believe God is the living God. God's Holy Spirit is alive and active in our world in ways both seen and unseen. It is the Spirit who makes God real to us in Scripture and preaching and the sacraments. God's Spirit convicts us of our sin, assures us of forgiveness, and calls us to live new lives. And it is through the Spirit that God enables us to respond with trust and obedience and gathers us into the church.

Christ's church does not exist for itself, but for the world. Gathered by the Spirit, in its life together the church is to be a witness to the world of God's intention for human life. Sent by the Spirit, the church proclaims the gospel, strives for justice in all relationships, and shows compassion for all people.

In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has overcome the power of hatred, injustice, and death in the world. Yet, the many expressions of sin remain strong. Still, we hope. Even in the face of evidence to the contrary, we trust that God will finish what has begun in Christ.

## The Five Questions – Rev. Whit Malone

### 1. What events or persons have significantly affected your ministry?

As I reflect on more than forty years of pastoral ministry, I am keenly aware of how blessed I have been with wonderful mentors and pastoral colleagues along the way. During seminary field education; through my early, formative years of ministry; supporting me through difficult times in my personal, family, and pastoral life; and continuing to this day, God has provided me with teachers, mentors, and friends with which to walk the journey. I am convinced this is why I have been blessed with a relatively long pastoral ministry. I certainly could not have done it without them.

In addition, and again reflecting back, my pastoral journey has led me to churches that were struggling with grief, change, division, distrust, not to mention, a pandemic! The events leading to the struggle occurred before I was called. Yet, within these congregations I found genuinely faithful people who love Jesus and their church and who devoted themselves to be a part of the healing and reconciliation of their relationships. These events and these people have shaped my ministry.

### 2. What theological beliefs have emerged as critical to your practice of ministry?

The doctrine of election is truly foundational for me as I practice ministry, because for me this is simply another way of saying that we are saved by God's grace. The realization that the God of the universe takes the initiative and chooses to come to us in love just floors me. The understanding that throughout history, the God of the universe has chosen blessed frail and fallible people like us to be a blessing to others gives me value, purpose, and direction in life. Election is for service as well as salvation. The doctrine of election says to me that even my faith is a gracious gift of God. It is a gift that calls for my response.

### 3. What experiences have challenged or affirmed your faith?

My faith was most challenged when my first marriage ended in divorce, leading not only to the loss of my spouse, but years of geographical separation from my daughter. I asked all of the typical questions: Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Where are you, God? I don't think I can do this "pastor thing" anymore. It was the most difficult experience I have faced. And yet, my congregation, my family and friends, my counselor, and the less visible, but real presence of the Spirit got me through.



On the other hand, my faith has been affirmed, less by big events or experiences than by small ones – a kid from youth group calling 25 years later to say thanks, families being housed one build at a time, a pastoral mentee thriving in ministry, a congregation beginning to heal and look with hope to the future.

4. What is your view of the sacraments in light of your practice of ministry?

At the Table, speaking of bread and wine, we say, “These are the gifts of God for the people of God.” The same can be said of baptism, because our sacraments are “gifts” of God to nourish and strengthen our faith and obedience. It is hard to improve on the well-known description that sacraments are outward and visible signs of a reality, a truth, that is inward and invisible. Christ calls us to believe where we have not seen, yet we are human. He knows it helps us to be able see what we cannot adequately articulate. And so, in grace, we are given Baptism and Eucharist so that we can see the Gospel right before our eyes. In Baptism we see and hear and feel the water that represents God’s initiative in loving, forgiving, and saving us. In Eucharist, we see and smell, feel and taste the bread and wine which represent Christ’s body and blood – again, at God’s initiative to forgive us and reconcile us to God and one another.

5. What is your view of the government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in light of your practice of ministry?

Having grown up Southern Baptist, all I knew when I got to seminary was a congregational form of church government. Our PC(USA) polity has therefore, been an “acquired taste” that has developed over many years. That being said, it has developed. I appreciate the desire to reflect the guidance of Scripture and our tradition in the way we “do church.” I appreciate being reminded that Christ is head of the church. I appreciate our representational leadership and the emphasis on communal discernment. Because of this, our polity can be messy and cumbersome and downright frustrating at times. Even so, I wouldn’t trade it for another way.

## **My Faith Journey**

### **Kevin D Kouba**

I am a cradle Presbyterian. And I've been leading worship in one way or another since I started playing piano in Sunday School about age 10.

Part of my spiritual formation was through Presbyterian Confirmation Classes in the 1960s. That basic catechism was great training. However, because my parents thought one of the teachers recognized and might be encouraging what I now believe was a healthy attitude toward my growing up gay, they perceived danger. We were swept off to join a very conservative church a.s.a.p. and were re-baptized (immersed) for this "saving" to take effect.

This sect believed in rigorous bible training, an education I am still thankful for. However, they also taught me to both hide and despise myself. I believed I was not an acceptable person to God if I lived my truth as a gay young man.

I persisted in trying to convince myself to hold these conservative, homophobic beliefs throughout my college years. I travelled as part of a "Revival Team" from the Baptist Student Union and went all over the state as a substitute musician quite frequently. My first job after college was as Minister of Music and Youth at a large Baptist church in Missouri.

During that period, I learned that being a church musician could be more meaningful than providing a pre-show before preaching started. I enjoyed good, solid pastoral relationships with many congregants, including the young people. But I was forced to show movies and teach from books such as "Left Behind." And I was still in that terribly painful closet. I finally opened that door and developed a serious gay relationship, thus ending my ministry. When that relationship ultimately failed, I took off across the country, working as a shady campground membership salesperson. I was certain I was ultimately going to hell anyway, so it didn't matter.

I ended up moving to New York, and there received a health scare that thankfully did not include HIV, which had been part of the story for many of my friends. This convinced me that I needed to swing back to living "the straight life" again. I moved back to my parents' basement, and almost immediately became the Minister of Music at Missouri's largest Baptist church, where my family went. The pastor there believed that to possess the skills I needed to serve in such a high-profile position I needed to be seminary-educated. Thus, I was on my way to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I worked hard in grad school and was prepared to live in the closet to be a good Minister of Music. However, chastity was not my strong suit. Ultimately, a classmate, who was also my accompanist on Sundays at area churches, decided to "out" me to the seminary administration, claiming my sexuality had caused her own poor performance during the previous semester. I was told that if I got therapy (and "learned to be straight again") I could finish my degree. That's how I ended up NOT completing my degree at SBTS. I made the decision to stop lying to myself (and to God) about being gay.

I still believed that Christian ministry was my path. I took a job at the Presbyterian Center, where I worked in the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations office. I took three part-time music director jobs over several years before starting my time at Briargate. My faith, and my sense of call, were stronger than ever.

During my 25 years there, I've been able to minister to and with people, through a variety of events, everything from weddings, births and graduations to a murder, and to a gruesome assault. I served as de-facto pastor between multiple ministers.

I have never felt more called. I believe time and experience have me well-prepared for this next part of my journey.

## **The Five Questions**

**Kevin D. Kouba**

### **What events or people have significantly affected your ministry?**

My ministry, in all its permutations, has been impacted by my participating as a musician in so many varied traditions. I started developing my love for ecumenical and interfaith collaboration in middle school, after a tour of a Synagogue during Bible School. I have seen how different churches understand the work of musicians. I believe the congregations that celebrated my calling as a minister, and not a cheerleader, have had the largest impact on who I am today.

### **What theological beliefs have emerged as critical to your practice of ministry?**

I am thoroughly Christian and try to live into everything I believe Jesus taught. I read the Bible eagerly, interpreting it faithfully because of the priesthood of believers. Despite the roadblocks and challenges I've faced while pursuing my call to ministry, I've seen good results, and maintained relationships with a huge variety of people, in many ministries.

### **What experiences have challenged or affirmed your faith?**

The most challenging event was my unsuccessful attempt at keeping a favorite choir member safe through the process of leaving her abusive husband. After the pastor and I believed we'd dissuaded her from going home and risking her safety, she still went back "just to get some clothes," and the husband shot and killed her. Walking through that pain and anguish with her family and the church family was excruciating. However, watching the same church family come together to celebrate her, and to work at educating people about domestic abuse, gave me joy that the church can participate in helping the world be a better place.

### **What is your view of the sacraments in light of your practice of ministry?**

I was baptized as an infant. I was also immersed in my teen years. I believe that the first experience was the most hopeful expression of what baptism is intended to be, even if I didn't understand it until I grew into my faith. The subsequent immersion was more of an acquiescence to receive the right to the second sacrament.

I've been a participant in many different versions of the Eucharist. I've seen churches require people to be "saved" to partake. I've seen "closed" communion that required communicants to be a member of that one particular congregation. I've seen plates passed with little crackers and tiny cups, enjoyed intinction, gone to the rail and had the pastor place the elements in my mouth for me, occasionally with them having the assumption that I believed in the transubstantiation to which that group ascribed. I believe that they all represent the sign and seal of Christ's command to "take, eat, in remembrance."

### **What is your view of the government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in light of your practice of ministry?**

The PC(USA) constitution is organized, specific, and clear as it advises and informs every aspect of congregational and higher councils' relationships with members and leaders. The level of detail is mind-boggling to me, yet it makes those interactions and practices understandable and orderly. I enjoy having the *Book of Order* to explain and direct every aspect of ministry, and I am thankful that it makes special provisions for someone like me that wants to do more. I'm looking forward to the expert help I will be receiving to develop more understanding about Sacraments, confessions, and polity.

## Kevin D. Kouba

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bearwood223@gmail.com

### Overview

Musician, minister, teacher and chef. Over 35 years serving churches in Kentuckiana. Creative problem solver.

### Employment History

Briargate Presbyterian Church Louisville, KY  
***Music Minister and Chef Manager*** February 2000 to Present

Directed choirs and accompanied worship, adjusting to membership decline. Developed menus and methods for exponential growth of feeding ministry.

Habitat for Humanity of Metro Louisville Louisville, KY  
***Program Manager, Homebuyer Development*** April 2022 to present

Developed curriculum for training program participants, providing skills for construction, financial literacy, home repair, decorating. Performed inspections on homes when completed.

Bearwood Gardens, Inc. Louisville, KY  
***President, Owner*** November 1998 to January 2011

Designed and built cottage gardens, commercial landscapes and water features. Employed up to 8 employees, including felons and special needs persons.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Louisville, KY  
***Administrative Assistant*** July 1990 to October 1998

Worked first in Research Services, then in Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations office. Wrote for regular publications and booklets. Interacted with US and international partners. Organized international and domestic meetings for constituents. Also, led Worship committee and coordinated daily services for staff.

**Area Churches Served:** Beulah, New Goshen, Shawnee, Trinity and Briargate Presbyterian churches, Organist and Director at St. Paul's Episcopal in Jeffersonville, IN, and as Cantor at St. Martin of Tours and St. Frances of Rome in Louisville.

### Education

University of Missouri Columbia, MO  
***Bachelor of Science Business Administration***

Southern Baptist Seminary Louisville, KY  
***Masters in Church Music (incomplete)***

## **Statement of Faith**

### **Kevin D. Kouba**

I believe in one amazing God. I am thankful we've inherited a great way to describe this immense energy in names we can possibly fathom: Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit. This omniscient and omnipresent being is so complicated that, without such a nomenclature, we would not be able to focus on or worship them properly. Characterizing our God as three separate beings makes it possible for me to recognize and resonate with the blessings, joy, and love which we are continuously being gifted.

God created everything, everywhere. God designed all living beings, animal, plants, and every form of life. God gives all energy and embodies all consciousness. God gave us the wherewithal to recognize that holy creativity, giving us the power to think, to love, and to analyze things. God gives us the choice to create ways to improve our world, or to destroy it. We are our own worst enemies.

Because of that destructive, unbridled ignorance we call sin, God knew we would all need redemption. So, in yet another miraculous stroke of generosity, God decided to come to earth as a human being and spend a few years here, teaching and praying and performing miracles. This Christ gave us all the information we needed to live into what God intends us to be, but also knew that we ultimately weren't going to accept it. So, with that knowledge, Jesus sacrificed his human life as atonement for our sin, reconciling us to the Creator. That atonement was achieved by a brutal, hard-to-fathom political death that was the last word on our estrangement from God. His death was then followed by his resurrection to everlasting life with the Creator.

I believe that the third person of this Holy Trinity is experienced in many ways, and is always with us to encourage and lead us. The Spirit motivates us to listen to and commune with God and startles us with thoughts and desires for good. We recognize a motion, like wind, moving through us and our world, that is that Spirit. We are given gifts through which we encourage one another, and to love each other in ways that are only possible because of the love we received from God in the first place. The Spirit also motivates us to find new ways to investigate the world, and to use the knowledge we received from Jesus' life and teachings to make world a better, more God-like place.

I believe we have been gifted with the church, to help us decipher and discuss scripture, and to help us discover more about God, Jesus, and the Spirit. I believe the Bible is God's guidebook, to be used as instruction for interaction with and worship of God. We dedicate our children and offer ourselves in the sacrament of baptism. We are instructed to receive and appreciate the gifts of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

I believe the church has been given the responsibility of offering the facts needed for humankind to believe in and worship God, and to seek understanding of our mutual humanness, for the purpose of making God's will a reality, on earth as it is in Heaven. I can't wait to learn more.

**Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky Commission on Preparation for Ministry**  
**May 2025 Presbytery Meeting Report**

The Commission met on April 15, 2025.

Highlights include:

- Conducted orientation for new CPM members
- Reviewed the Commission's MKP Standing Rule and made the following recommendations:
  - Standing rules 7.4.1.a – f : no changes
  - Standing rule 7.4.1.g: delete, no longer necessary for the work of the commission
- Conducted a final assessment with Candidate Sung Soo Hong and certified him ready to be examined for ordination pending a call. He was authorized to create his PDP and circulate it, noting that the 1-year anniversary of his candidacy is May 20, 2025.

The Commission meets next on Tuesday, May 20.