



Dear Siblings in Christ –

One year ago, Hurricane Helene slammed into the Big Bend region of Florida as a Category 4 storm system, and roared northeast through Georgia and all the way to western North Carolina. Even far inland the winds still raged near 100 miles per hour, and as much as 30 inches of rain was dumped in places. More than 250 people died, and over \$200 billion in property damage was recorded.

The Augusta area, where I live, is still struggling with recovery, as numerous homes have yet to be repaired or rebuilt, and over 75% of the tree canopy in this region was destroyed. But in the immediate aftermath of the chaos, before anyone from FEMA or any other agency showed up, people from across Northeast Georgia Presbytery jumped in to help those impacted by the storm. Teams of volunteers from multiple congregations came to spread sheets of blue tarp over ruptured roofs, clear fallen trees, and haul away debris. Others helped to coordinate the delivery of food, water, and other supplies. Week by week, the faithful presence of our brothers and sisters from across the presbytery spoke clearly of God's own presence and provision for those in need, and that work is continuing to this day.

If you've heard me preach recently, you know I keep coming back to these words of Jesus:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35) The love of Jesus was beautifully revealed in the way the people of Jesus showed up for each other in the wake of Helene's destruction, and it's only that kind of love that is going to give us any credibility with the world. Notice that Jesus sets this love as the benchmark for others to use in judging whether or not we are truly Christ-followers – how we treat one another.

Our culture is being twisted and torn by those who seek to demonize anyone who could be categorized as "other," and we are pushed relentlessly to identify with whatever group constitutes "us" so we can stand against "them." As the people who belong to Jesus, it is imperative that we model what Paul called "a more excellent way," the way of love. The early church was a polyglot community, with significant social, economic, and racial differences. There was no political or cultural benefit to being a Christian; indeed, it was costly in every aspect.

And yet, because of the way those early Christians loved one another, the church transformed the world around it. That love took the shape of radical hospitality, radical generosity, and radical devotion to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and it's that love which is the only thing we have to offer the world today. Our congregations are made up of people with wildly divergent views on everything from politics to sports to music, yet we dare to proclaim that we are one in Christ Jesus. May the Lord grant that as we gather for worship, for witness, and for service, the world might catch a glimpse of the kingdom of love that Jesus inaugurated, and may we be eager to invite all to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

Yours in Christ,
Ed

Reviewing 2024 Session Minutes

Dear Clerks of Session,

Grace and peace to you! I hope this finds you well and encouraged in your faithful service to your congregations. The work you do as Clerk is essential, and I want to thank you for the time and care you give to keeping the records of your Session accurate and complete. These records tell the story of your congregation's ministry, and together they reflect the life of our presbytery.



As part of our shared responsibility, each Session's minutes and required policies need to be reviewed for 2024. To make this as smooth and flexible as possible, you have three options for completing your review:

1. Express Review

Send copies of your constitutionally required policies and procedures to me by email or mail. The minimum documents needed are:

The Session Records Review Checklist (signed and dated by Clerk and Moderator)

Your congregation's policies on sexual misconduct and harassment, child/youth/vulnerable adult protection, anti-racism, and financial review

A copy of your 2024 budget and financial review

Including your minutes is not required but is very helpful for the review.

2. Peer Review

Partner with another Clerk of Session to exchange minutes. After reviewing one another's records, both of you submit a completed Checklist affirming the accuracy of the minutes and required policies.

3. In-Person Review

If you would prefer, I am glad to meet with you in person at your church to go through your records together.

If you have any questions or need support along the way, please don't hesitate to reach out. You can contact me by phone at (912) 674-6270 or by email at statedclerk@negapby.org

Thank you again for your faithful service. The ministry you carry out behind the scenes is a true gift to your church and to the presbytery.

With gratitude in Christ,
Rev. Jacob Douylliez
Stated Clerk, Northeast Georgia Presbytery

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

Announcements & Opportunities

We celebrate with Rev. Jacob Douylliez, our Stated Clerk, who has accepted a part-time call as Associate Pastor at Buford Presbyterian Church. With permission from the Committee on Ministry, he will serve outside the bounds of Northeast Georgia Presbytery. Please remember the Eatonton Church in your prayers as they begin the search for new pastoral leadership.

We also give thanks for the ministry of Rev. Mari Turner, who has accepted a call as Pastor of Milledgeville Presbyterian Church. We invite you to lift up the Dahlonega Church in prayer as they, too, enter a season of seeking new leadership.

Pulpit Furniture Available – Make an Offer

Sardis Presbyterian Church has several pieces of pulpit furniture available, including a communion table, pulpit podium, five pulpit chairs, an offering box, a baptism font, and pews. If your congregation or someone you know could make use of these items, please reach out to Elder Sandra Aker at Sardis Presbyterian Church, 652 Gordon Street, Jefferson, GA 30549. She can be reached by phone at 706-870-3393 or by email at EPsardis@gmail.com



Pastoral Search – First Presbyterian Church, Statesboro

First Presbyterian Church of Statesboro (Savannah Presbytery, Synod of the South Atlantic) is prayerfully seeking a compassionate and affirming pastor, rooted in the Reformed tradition and committed to the inclusive love of Christ. We hope for a leader who will nurture our congregation through preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, while guiding us in our call to be a welcoming Matthew 25 church.

Learn more in our Ministry Discernment Profile:

<https://clc.pcusa.org/mdp/12521/view/>

Heritage Presbyterian Church is seeking to immediately fill a Remote Bookkeeper position (10–15 hours per month). This role includes general bookkeeping entry and financial reporting for all church accounts in a 150-member congregation with a large facility and vibrant mission programs. The ideal candidate will have experience in fund-based accounting, including restricted and grant funds for churches or nonprofits, and should be proficient in (or willing to quickly learn) Church Windows Management Software.

Interested candidates are invited to send a resume and letter of interest to office@heritagepres.com



Help Us Stay Connected!

Have a story, event, or ministry update to share? We invite submissions for the NEGA Presbytery monthly newsletter from clergy, congregations, and ministry teams.

Please submit articles as Word documents (.doc or .docx), including a title, author's name, and role. Photos or graphics are encouraged as separate attachments.

Deadline: 15th of each month for publication at the end of that month. To repeat content in a future issue, just send a quick reminder.

Send submissions to newsletter@negapby.org.

We also love sharing church news on our NEGA Presbytery Facebook page, so send us your events and celebrations—we'd love to highlight the good work happening in your community!

Ordination Anniversaries

We celebrate and give thanks for the NEGA clergy marking ordination anniversaries this month. The Clergy Care Committee encourages you to hold these individuals, their families, and their ministries in your prayers.

Burnetta Armour	Stephen Jackson
Arch Baker	Lee Koontz
Tom Buchanan	Anna McArthur
Brandi Casto-Waters	John McCrosky
Charles Crane	Jim Pippin
John Hill	Carol Strickland

Remember the mustard seed? The yeast? The shepherd boy?

God chooses small things to make a big difference! Our small churches make a big difference in the lives of their members, in their communities, and in the beloved community!



Leaders of small membership churches in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina are invited to the Association of Smaller Congregations (ASC) Monthly Zoom Conversation

First Tuesday of the Month, 7-8 pm EDT / 6-7 pm CDT via ZOOM.

Register to Receive the Zoom Link. You will receive information and the zoom link about each month's conversation, and then choose to attend if you are interested in the topic and/or available that month. <https://form.jotform.com/251396018295159>

Discovering Renewal Retreat at Montreat October 13–16, 2025

Montreat Conference Center invites pastors, church leaders, volunteers, and anyone seeking rest to a four-day retreat designed for spiritual and personal renewal. The theme comes from Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

In a culture that glorifies constant work, this retreat offers intentional Sabbath practices, creative activities, and time in God's creation. Each day will include morning devotionals led by Rev. Paul Roberts, President of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, along with workshops on spiritual resilience, opportunities for peer connection, and recreational experiences such as yoga, hiking, fly fishing, and art. Comfortable accommodations and meals are provided at the beautiful Montreat campus in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

A special resiliency track, led by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, is available for those serving in disaster recovery work, recognizing the particular challenges faced by those who walk alongside communities in times of crisis.

Whether you come for spiritual growth, rest, or recreation, Montreat provides the sacred space to breathe deeply, rediscover balance, and return refreshed to your ministry and daily life. For registration details or more information, visit Montreat Conference Center website or call 828-669-2911.



Covenant Presbyterian Church Dedicates New Playground

Covenant Presbyterian Church in Augusta has dedicated its new inclusive playground, built nearly a year after Hurricane Helene destroyed the original. The project was made possible by an anonymous \$30,000 donation and the generosity of the community. Co-Pastor Andy Cooke shared that the playground has always been open to the public, making it a meaningful space for families throughout the area. The new playground now stands as a joyful reminder of resilience and community partnership.



Post Cards from Covenant Augusta's Mission Trip

Rather than traveling out of state for its annual mission trip to assist in disaster recovery, Covenant Augusta remained in town the week of September 8th-12th to serve those whose homes had been severely damaged by Hurricane Helene a year ago. Most of their time was spent at two homes.

At one, they hauled out EVERYTHING from the home transferring the contents to PODS because the home had been so badly damaged it was scheduled for demolition. The Mennonites will build the family a new home on the same site beginning in October.

At the other home, the week was spent mudding and sanding two rooms to prepare the walls and ceiling for painting. A huge tree had fallen on that side of the house and the outside wall, roof and rooms had been rebuilt.

For information on how your congregation can serve your neighbors in the greater Augusta area, please reach out to Dionte Wilder, Volunteer Coordinator, at 850-501-9392.



I was surprised at how much need there is in our own neighborhood a year later. I'm so glad that people are still willing to come to Augusta. -Andy C.

I recommend this experience to discover how fulfilling it can be to experience caring for neighbors as an action. -Harvey C.



This was my first mission trip, and I wasn't sure I had much to offer. My experience working at our house has been limited to painting and weeding, but we were told not to worry. And that we would be shown how to do what we needed to do. My team was asked to spackle drywall in two rooms of a house which was badly damaged by Hurricane Helene. No one on the team had experience. Our first results weren't pretty, but we learned and improved over the week. I also learned that our presence was in some ways more important to the homeowner than our progress. I hope to have the opportunity to do this again. -Charlotte E.



Polity "Back to Basics"
A Leader Formation Webinar
October 23, 2025 | 7:00-8:30 pm (EDT)

Focused specifically on the continued formation of deacons and ruling elders, this webinar will provide an overview of how the PCUSA is structured, the who, when, and how of decision-making, and the role of membership and ordination in the life of the church. The discussion will center on the polity framework that supports the work of councils within the broader community of faith, as well as the foundational theological convictions that underpin the polity.

This event is provided for free for participants and is funded through your per capita dollars. It does not come without cost, however. Knowing the diversity of language within the PC(USA), this webinar will be provided in several languages with interpretation based on requests made through the registration process. As a result, there is a registration deadline of October 15, 2025, in order to be able to have time to arrange for those services. Advanced registration is not necessary for access to the recording which will be available in English following the event.

This event will be led by Flor Vélez-Díaz, a ruling elder in the role of Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Manager for Judicial Process and Social Witness within the Interim Unified Agency. Flor is an attorney and former civil litigator who has served at every level of denomination, most recently as part of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission. A third-generation Presbyterian, Flor comes from a family tradition of church service. She married Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, and together with their faithful pup, Niko, they moved from sunny Puerto Rico to frigid Louisville to fulfill her current role. Alongside Laurie Griffith, Flor works in the Office of Constitutional Interpretation and helps untangle church tangles, particularly in judicial process and church discipline matters.

Register for the webinar by October 15, 2025 at this [Link](#)

Christian Nationalism: Compromising Both Church & State



Sponsored by the Progressive
Religious Coalition of Augusta

A presentation by

David P. Gushee, Ph.D

Panel

Paul Harris, Ph.D

Mark Albertin

Moderator

Rev. Dr. Sid Gates

October 6, 2025

7:00 pm

**Sacred Heart Cultural
Center, Augusta GA**

David P. Gushee, Ph.D



- Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University
- Chair in Christian Social Ethics, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Past-President, American Academy of Religion, Society of Christian Ethics

Paul Harris, Ph.D

- Professor Political Science, Auburn University
- Comparative Immigration Policy
- Author/Lecturer

Mark Albertin

- Award winning Photographer/Videographer
- Author/Lecturer
- Noted Eco-Justice Advocate