



NORTHEAST GEORGIA
PRESBYTERY

PROPOSED ADDENDUM TO THE HANDBOOK

ONEHUNDREDANDTWENTY-FOURTHSTATEDMEETING

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA PRESBYTERY
FEBRUARY 28, 2026**

**HOSTED BY
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1065 GAINES SCHOOL ROAD
ATHENS, GA**

Recommendation of the Northeast Georgia Presbytery Transition Team
REVISED
February 2026

The Presbytery's Transition Team (made up of Steven Barnes, Andy Cooke, Teresa Franklin (Chair), Nancy Miller, Esther Moore, and Elaine Wiegert), charged in October 2025 to research and recommend a new staffing model for the Presbytery, now recommends:

1. Hiring a full-time General Presbyter/Stated Clerk (GP/SC), **via a search beginning** in 2026, replacing our current part-time Stated Clerk and part-time Transitional General Presbyter, with full Board of Pension benefits, at a total annual cost to Presbytery of no more than \$150,000;
2. Allowing the newly-hired GP/SC to assess specific administrative needs and to **provide input to the Coordinating Team and Personnel Action Team for the purpose of hiring** ~~hire~~ staff support as appropriate, providing for bookkeeping/accounting needs (currently performed by Business Administrator, Anita Green), communication needs (currently performed by Communications Director, Libby Christiansen), and other administrative or support requirements (currently performed by the part-time Stated Clerk or Business Administrator).

Report of the Transitional General Presbyter and Treasurer
ADDENDUM

MOTION: That Northeast Georgia Presbytery authorize Rev. Ed Rees, Transitional General Presbyter and Rev. Jacob Douylliez, Stated Clerk, to sign the statement "A Call to Christians" **SEE APPENDIX #1**

The following statement comes from acalltochristians.org and has been signed by more than 400 ecumenical faith leaders around the nation, including Rev. Dr. Jihun Oh, Stated Clerk of the PCUSA, along with other leaders within and beyond our denomination.

STATEMENT

Why We Write

There are moments that call for repentance and resistance, courage and conviction, faith and fortitude. This is one of those moments.

The question is, what will we do now?

We are facing a cruel and oppressive government; citizens and immigrants being demonized, disappeared, and even killed; the erosion of hard-won rights and freedoms; and a calculated effort to reverse America's growing racial and ethnic diversity— all of which are pushing us toward authoritarian and imperial rule. What confronts us is not only an endangered democracy and the rise of tyranny. It is also a Christian faith corrupted by the heretical ideology of white Christian nationalism, and a church that has often failed to equip its members to model Jesus's teachings and fulfill its prophetic calling as a humanitarian, compassionate, and moral compass for society.

Therefore, as Christians in the United States, representing the breadth of Christian traditions and one part of our nation's religiously plural society, we are compelled to speak out more boldly at this time.

We call on all Christians to join us in greater acts of courage to resist the injustices and anti-democratic danger sweeping across the nation. In moments like this, silence is not neutrality—it is an active choice to permit harm.

This call is particularly dire as our nation commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a time of celebration and reflection on our historic racial and human rights progress and setbacks, as we seek both democratic and civic renewal. Instead, current trends and forces assault our core rights and freedoms and threaten to derail and even destroy our democracy. This is not a distant danger or a future possibility. It is a present and urgent reality.

The government-sponsored cruelty and violence we are witnessing stands in total opposition to the teachings of Jesus. We refuse to be silent while too many people who call themselves Christians aid, abet, or simply stand by and allow these atrocities.

This political crisis is driven by people who have fallen for the temptation of absolute power—undermining democratic checks and balances, entrenching economic inequality, exacerbating divisions, and normalizing corruption and the indiscriminate use of violence.

Freedoms and rights once assumed to be secure are being stripped away, redefined, or selectively applied. Decades-old civil rights protections are being dismantled. Truth is being replaced by lies and propaganda. Governance is being hollowed out and replaced with corruption, loyalty tests, intimidation, and the normalization of lawlessness. The architecture of democracy and the rights secured by the separation of powers are being eroded from within, while we are told to accept it as “law”, “order,” or “God’s will.”

Sadly, the crisis is not only political—it is one driven by a moral and spiritual collapse showing up in alarming levels of polarization. Our faith is being tested. Christians cannot pretend otherwise and must make a decision to act.

We refuse to baptize domination. We refuse to sanctify cruelty. We refuse to confuse authoritarian power with divine authority. **We choose to resist, calling forth the righteous demands of our faith rooted in the teachings of Jesus.** Religion should not be used to deify politicians or justify their abuses. When it is, faith ceases to be faithful and becomes a weapon of both heresy and hypocrisy.

As Christians, we must never preach nationalism as discipleship, confuse American and Christian identity with whiteness, or mistake allegiance to modern-day Caesars for faithfulness to Christ. We must never surrender our prophetic voice by aligning with powers and principalities rather than with the One who calls us to be purveyors of justice and righteousness.

Now is the time to boldly embrace fidelity to the message of Jesus: to defend the image of God in every person; to love our neighbors -- no exception; to reject retribution; extend grace, mercy, and compassion; reflect the radical counterculture of the Beatitudes and live out the call of Matthew 25 with special care for persons who are poor, vulnerable and marginalized.

As followers of Jesus, we must take these principles seriously, as we seek to renew, deepen, and fortify our faith, resist false religion, build Beloved Community, and become a truly multi-racial, inclusive democracy.

The Sovereignty Of God

In every generation, the Church is called to declare without fear or favor, “Thus saith the Lord,” bearing witness to the sovereignty of God over every system, party, and power.

As Christians, our ultimate allegiance belongs to God alone, and we believe that any political leader who demands absolute power places themselves in opposition to God’s sovereignty.

Allegiance to such leaders is idolatry and manipulates the teaching of Jesus as a tool of oppressive power, replacing compassion with control and unity with division. A faithful Christian witness is fundamentally incompatible with nationalist power and the suffering it is producing in our nation and around the world.

The Word Of God

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh. His life and teachings reveal God's way and must shape our lives, our conduct, and our public witness, especially in this moment. Jesus became human to reconcile us back to God and to one another. This moment is a critical test of our primary allegiance to Him.

Jesus announces His mission in His first sermon: to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19). **Any gospel that contradicts this is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus teaches in the parable of the Good Samaritan that love of neighbor knows no political, social, or ethnic boundaries (Luke 10:25-37). This love stands in direct opposition to a politics of exclusion and discrimination.

Jesus declares that truth and freedom are inseparable: "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). Yet, every day we hear lies and distortions that seek to divide and demonize. Truth liberates us from the captivity of lies and brings us into a deeper relationship with God and all others.

Jesus blesses peacemakers, calling them children of God (Matt. 5:9). The Hebrew and Greek words for peace, Shalom and eirene, mean a resolving and restoring of broken relationships. All forms of political violence stand in contradiction to the way of Christ, and Christians must reject them at every turn.

Jesus gives His final test of discipleship in Matthew 25:31-46, making clear that the measure of our faith is revealed in how we treat those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, strangers, or imprisoned. To say, as some do, that this passage is only about taking care of fellow Christians is an incorrect theological interpretation. It is for the nations, ethnoi, for all peoples. This passage names people who are, even now, being directly and deliberately targeted and harmed by those in political power. **To serve and defend the most vulnerable is to serve and defend Christ Himself.**

The Spirit Of God

In this moment, we believe the Holy Spirit is moving us to stand, speak, and act with greater courage to serve the most vulnerable and advance God's reign of justice and peace.

Therefore, we commit to:

- **Protect and Stand With Vulnerable People:** We will defend immigrants, refugees, people of color, and all who are in harm's way; resist cruel, unjust, and illegal policies and violent enforcement, and surround those under attack with pastoral care, solidarity, and prophetic public witness.

- **Love Our Neighbors:** In obedience to Jesus, we will love our neighbors without exception, especially those who are different from us, and reject the politics of fear, exclusion, and dehumanization. We will reject the language of “others” and “us and them,” and remember that Christ came “so that [we] may all be one” (John 17:21).
- **Speak Truth to Power:** We will confront lies and hatred towards immigrants, people of color, Jews, Muslims, and other religious minorities and political opponents; oppose the rollback of civil rights and racial justice protections; name racism as a sin from which we must repent and turn from; and resist the erasure of history and truth. Silence in this moment is complicity.
- **Seek Peace:** We commit to persistently building peace and pursuing justice, including by acting nonviolently to protect those threatened by violence and advocating for a foreign policy that favors diplomacy, respects national sovereignty, and supports democracy, human rights, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding.
- **Do Justice:** Guided by the prophets, we will challenge unjust laws, defend poor and marginalized people, and persist in the work of uprooting racism and white Christian nationalism. We will commit to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Isa. 10:1; Micah 6:8).
- **Strengthen Democracy:** Honoring the image of God—*imago dei*—in every person (Gen. 1:26) in a democracy means each person’s vote is their voice. We will, therefore, defend the right to vote, resist voter suppression and intimidation, encourage greater participation in our democratic process, and equip clergy and lay leaders to support free and fair elections. We will defend constitutional rights and freedoms, including speech and assembly, due process, the rule of law, and religious liberty, and will uphold democratic norms and practices.
- **Practice Hope:** In a time of fear, intimidation, and despair, we will choose hope, which is more than optimism. It is trusting and believing that God is still at work. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”(Heb. 11:1).
- **Ground our Discipleship:** Knowing that following Jesus in this time requires deep wellsprings of spiritual courage, we will be rooted and grounded in prayer and love (Eph. 3:17-19), developing practices and commitments to nurture resilience in our inward journey for the outward witness we embrace as our calling.

Choosing Faithfulness

“Choose you this day whom you will serve.”—Joshua 24:15

Faith and democracy do not die in a single moment; they erode when we trade courage for conformity, substitute the gospel for power, and fall silent in the face of wrongdoing.

This letter is made in a spirit of humility and solidarity. It is an invitation for each of us to ask what faithfulness to Christ and love of neighbor demand of each of us at such a time as this.

If we as Christians fail to speak and act now—clearly, courageously, and prophetically—we will be remembered not only for the injustices committed in our time, but for the righteous

possibilities we allowed to die in our hands. History and future generations will record our choices, but the God of heaven and earth will judge our faithfulness.

Now is the time to take risks for the sake of the Gospel and our democratic rights and freedoms.

We call on Christians to remember that we serve a mighty and awesome God, who is sovereign over nations and rulers.

We serve a God, through our Lord and Liberator Jesus Christ, who equips us with the courage and fortitude to stand for justice and peace. We will always stand in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable among us.

Now is the time to speak and act.

May God guide us, empower us, and strengthen us.

VISION 2026 – NORTHEAST GEORGIA PRESBYTERY

Presented by the Vision26 Collaborative and approved by the Northeast Georgia Presbytery on February 22, 2025.

VISION

Northeast Georgia Presbytery is a diverse community of faith, called into being by the grace of the Triune God to re-member Christ in our lives together and in our ministry in the world. Our vision is to demonstrate the joy of life in Christ through worship, education, compassion, and radical hospitality.

CORE VALUES

Openness

- We expect and welcome change.
- We are reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Learning

- We embrace faith that seeks understanding through intellectual curiosity and spiritual formation.
- We value critical thinking and theological reflection in the life of faith.
- We strive to grow inwardly and to impact outwardly.

Connection

- We abide by a polity of shared, distributed power through collaboration and cooperation.
- We value the many voices that come to the table.
- We look after one another. We share our joys and burdens as a community of faith to ensure all are built up.

Servanthood

- We believe that we are called to actively engage in the world, to serve our communities, and to love our neighbors.
- We recognize the ability and gifts of each congregation and ministry to participate in the leadership of the presbytery and in their own local settings.

Inclusion

- We seek to practice authentic diversity in our outreach, inclusion, participation, and leadership exhibiting the fullness of God's kingdom here and now.
- We seek and welcome those who have been neglected by and excluded from the church and society.

Some Sample Congregational Applications

[Included in the 2nd reading of the V26 Report]:

- Shared education
- Shared service projects and mission trips
- Invitations to shared efforts for action and thought leadership that lower the barriers to faithful living
- Develop and share worship resources
- Encourage joint worship services, especially in times of crisis/observations
- Partnerships for officer education
- Lay educational events
- Identify and train candidates for Commissioned Ruling Elder
- Develop leadership of younger generations in/for African-American, Asian congregations
- Partnerships in youth ministry
- Intentional partnerships between congregations of different racial makeups
- Connecting pastors to pastors for support and development
- Connecting churches through combined events (internal mostly)
- Connecting churches through pulpit exchanges
- Connecting small churches and all churches
- Connecting through mission projects
- Pastor to Pastors
- Supporting person to person relationships
- Putting the unique context of each local church at the forefront
- Addressing poverty and mission/outreach to the local community

Discussion Questions

- *Where do we see our Vision and Core Values already embodied in our current work and ministry together — and where are we the most challenged?*
- *Considering the list of sample Congregational Applications and imagining your own, what new Presbytery initiatives or ministry opportunities would you be interested in building and being part of? Be specific / practical.*
- *What gifts and experiences do you have – both as individuals and congregations – to contribute to new Presbytery initiatives and opportunities? Be specific.*