



Presbytery of Genesee Valley

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WEBSITE: www.pbygenva.org

A Special Meeting of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley was held electronically via Zoom on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at 6:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to consider a motion to form an Administrative Commission with original jurisdiction for Brockport First Presbyterian Church.

CONSTITUTION

The meeting began with announcements at 6:25 pm. Moderator Aaron Neff (Pittsford) then called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. The Moderator declared a quorum was present and offered a prayer.

CONGREGATIONS: MINISTERS & COMMISSIONERS (CM = Corresponding Members; CP= Commissioned Pastor)

CONGREGATION	MINISTER	COMMISSIONER(S)	CONGREGATION	MINISTER	COMMISSIONER(S)
Albion, First	Susan Thaine		Lyndonville	CP Martha Mitchell	Elizabeth Wolanyk
Attica, First	EX Brad Smith		Medina, First	William Wilkinson	
Avon, Central	Carin Farmer	Barbara Sceusa	Mt. Morris, United	---	Robin Kruppa
Barre Center		Bruce Landis	Mumford, First	CP Roger Estes	
Batavia, First	EX CP Brad Smith	Tom Schubmehl	North Bergen		
Bethany	EX Robert Spratt		Nunda, Trinity		
Brockport, First	---	Kristen Gerling	Ogden		
Byron, First			Ossian, First	---	
Caledonia, First	Vinod Gnanaraj	Mary MacIntyre	Penfield	Twyla Boyer	
Chili, First	EX Brandi Wooten	Brian Gernhardt	Perinton		
Christ Clarion	EX Mark McDaniel		Perry, Brick		
Corfu United	EX Evan Wildhack		Pike Community		
Covington United	Christine James		Pittsford, First (2)	Aaron Neff Erin Jacobson	Janette Henderson
Dansville	Marcia Reiff	Jan Lewis	Scottsville, Union	Kevin Hershey	Donald Tubman
Downtown	Laurie Tiberi		South		
East Avon, First	EX Michelle Allen		Sparta, First	---	
East Bethany			Stone, Bergen	---	Deborah Godlove
Elba, First	EX Barbara Tipton		Summerville	Elanie Loggi	Mary Haverfield
Gates	Laura Bachmann	Thomas Brewer	Third (3)	Rebecca Segers	Bruce Peachey Elizabeth Marvin
Geneseo, Central	Nancy Lowmaster		Trinity Emmanuel (2)	Ernst Krug	
Groveland Fed.			Tuscarora, First		
Holley, First	---	Don Welch	Twelve Corners	EX Jeff Fox Kline	Katharine Iuli
Honeoye Falls	EX Kirk Baker		Victor, First	CM Jimmy Reader	Dean Cornwell
Irondequoit			Warsaw United	---	
John Calvin	---	Ellen Best	Webster		Anita Bocker
John Knox	CM Alan Dailey	Priscilla Thomas	York, United	Michelle Sumption	Kevin Willies
LeRoy, First					
Lima	EX David Kilgore				
Livonia	CP Jerry Swain				

MINISTERS IN VALIDATED MINISTRIES / MINISTERS AT LARGE / RETIRED MINISTERS

(VM = Validated AL = At-large R = Retired IA =Inactive)

Present:

Louise Armstrong (R)	Carolyn Grohman (R)	Charles Roberts (R)
Philip Benier (AL)	Judy Lee Hay (R)	Stephanie Sauve (R)
Viktoria Berlik (AL)	Lisa Lancaster (R)	Walter Stuber (AL)
Bruce Boak (R)	James Renfrew (R)	Ann Waasdorp (R)
Tom Gardner (R)		

Excused:

Elizabeth Beckhusen (R)	Nathan Mochizuki (VM)
Michael Fry (AL)	Carson Mouser (R)
Robert Heppenstall (R)	Jane Watt (R)
Harriet McConnochie (R)	Pat Youngdahl (R)

ADDITIONAL ELDER COMMISSIONERS / CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS (Appointed by Presbytery to correct elder-clergy imbalance)

Linda Badger Becker (Gates)	George Gotcsik (Third)	Karen Pryor (Third)
Lewis Becker (Pittsford)	Susan Orr (Transitional Leader/ Stated Clerk)	Mindy Shaffer (Moderator Elect)
Kathy Coons (Journal Clerk)		Kay VanNostrand (Lyndonville)

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS ENROLLED FOR THIS MEETING (others noted under “Congregations”): None

REGISTERED VISITORS including PRESBYTERY STAFF and COMMISSIONED PASTORS not serving churches:

Cheryl Battaglia (Staff)	Lisa Morrill (Caledonia)
Lisa Bennett (Staff)	Jon Terry (Brockport)
Philip Davis	

SUMMARIES OF 2023 MEETINGS	Jan 28	Feb 28	Apr 29	July 25	Sept 19	
Total Minister Members of Presbytery	109	109	106	105	105	
Total Minister Commissioners Present	49	31	45	41	30	
Total Elder Commissioners Present	54	36	43	48	34	
Parity (expressed in terms of Elders, + or -)	+5	+5	-2	+7	+4	
Total Churches Unrepresented by Elders	21	34	28	26	36	
Total Churches Unrepresented by Elders & Pastors	13	19	19	15	27	
Total Registered Visitors	16	7	12	21	7	
TOTAL REGISTERED ATTENDANCE - 2023	119	74	100	110	71	

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Moderator – Elect Mindy Shaffer read the Land Acknowledgement statement in which we pay respects to the indigenous people on whose traditional land this meeting was collectively held tonight. Presbyters were encouraged to work toward partnership with our indigenous siblings with a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration and address the historic injustices toward indigenous people, especially the injustices that occurred at Presbyterian affiliated schools.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET

Having no objections, the Presbytery **VOTED** to approve the following docket for this meeting:

6:25 p.m.		Announcements	Aaron Neff
6:30 p.m.		Call to Order and Opening Prayer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Acknowledgement 	Aaron Neff
		Introductory Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaration of Quorum Privilege of the Floor Approval of Docket 	Aaron Neff
6:35 p.m.		Committee on Ministry Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motion to form Administrative Commission for Brockport Presbyterian Church 	Charles Roberts
7:15 p.m.		Adjourn with Prayer	Aaron Neff

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Item for Presbytery Action

Rev. Charles Roberts (R), moderator of the Committee on Ministry (COM), gave the report of the Committee. He indicated COM has been working with the Session of Brockport Presbyterian Church during the past year on their concerns about the future of the church. He noted the church is continuing their ministries, but it has become difficult to find leadership and they are at an impasse. The current Session has five elders which is less than the six to nine required by the church’s bylaws. Session requested assistance in discerning how to move forward. COM presented options to the Session and the elders requested that an Administrative Commission be formed to work in partnership with the Session in their discernment of how to proceed. The Administrative Commission will include the five currently serving elders plus five members from the Presbytery as appointed by the Presbytery Moderator, and together will act as the Session of the church, with original jurisdiction. A question and answer period followed. Presbytery then **VOTED** by unanimous poll vote to:

- Form** an Administrative Commission to assume original jurisdiction of the Session of Brockport Presbyterian Church, Brockport, NY (the “Church”) upon their request. Members of the Administrative Commission (“AC”) shall be appointed by the Presbytery Moderator in consultation with the Leadership Team of the Committee on Ministry and shall be comprised of five ruling elders and teaching elders to work alongside the five current Session members of the Church. The Administrative Commission shall appoint a chair and a clerk and shall keep records of all proceedings in accordance with G-3.0109b. The quorum for the Administrative Commission shall be a majority of the AC members and no less than three members designated by Presbytery.

Rationale: The Church's by-laws state Session membership shall be 6-9 members; currently, there are only five members presently active. Therefore, the Session is not duly constituted.

2. **Approve** the Charge to the Administrative Commission as recommended by the Committee on Ministry.
Appendix A: Administrative Commission for Brockport Presbyterian Church
Appendix B: Background Information re: Brockport Presbyterian Church

The Moderator reported that the following have been appointed to serve on this Administrative Commission:

RE Linda Badger Becker (Gates)
RE Barbara James (Summerville)
TE Lisa Lancaster(R)
TE Carson Mouser (R)
TE Charles Roberts (R)

ADJOURNMENT WITH PRAYER

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. with prayer by Moderator Aaron Neff.

ATTEST: _____

Susan Orr, Stated Clerk

Kathleen L Coons, Journal Clerk

Appendix A

Administrative Commission for Brockport Presbyterian Church

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley affirms the basic principle that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) strives to be a church modeled on the body of Christ as described in 1 Corinthians 12: a church made up of many different parts, all of which are "...necessary for its mission to the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God..." (Book of Order, F-1.0202). The congregation's responsibility must be seen in light of its call to fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the Glory of God (G-4.0104). Unity in Christ and the relational nature of our polity are fundamental to Presbyterianism and to a gracious witness to Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

A presbytery, being composed of the teaching elders and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community. Presbyteries may designate by their own rule such committees and commissions as they deem necessary and helpful for the accomplishment of the mission of the church. To this end, a presbytery has the authority to assume original jurisdiction, or full power and responsibility, over a session. In applicable cases and to accomplish its responsibility towards the session, a presbytery may assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.

It is understood that an administrative commission (AC) may be given authority to assume original jurisdiction of the session (G-3.0109b, G-3.0301, G-3.0303e). A commission of a presbytery shall be comprised of "ruling elders and teaching elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible and sufficient to accomplish their work". A quorum of any commission shall be no less than a majority of its members. The AC is guided by the Presbytery-approved commission charge which outlines specific duties and authorities for this particular situation. The AC shall keep the Presbytery informed of actions taken and shall make recommendations directly to Presbytery for any actions that require Presbytery approval.

With love and encouragement for the people of the Brockport First Presbyterian Church, and appreciation for its faithfulness and commitment to the mission of God, the Presbytery of Genesee Valley offers the following:

Charge to the Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church, Brockport NY

1. Govern the congregation and guide its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. (G-3.0201)
2. Inquire into and settle the difficulties within the Session and the congregation of First Presbyterian Church, Brockport NY (G3.0109b(5), including:
 - a. Inquire into the sources of congregational discord (G-3.0301c)
 - b. Afford to all persons affected by decisions of the Administrative Commission fair notice and an opportunity to be heard on matters at issue (G-3.0109b)
 - c. Request records of the Session (G-3.0202f) (G-3.0108b) and other relevant documents (i.e. title to property, insurance documents, mortgages or other loan documents, corporate officers, corporate articles, bylaws, charters)
 - d. Determine, after reviewing the proceedings of the Session or from any other information as may come to its attention, whether,
 - i. the proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church [G-3.0108a];
 - ii. the lawful injunctions of a higher council have been obeyed [G-3.0108a)];

- e. Review financial practices, the most recent audit and all financial information;
 - f. Obtain an accurate membership list with contact information;
 - g. Communicate with members of the congregation in whatever fashion that the Commission deems appropriate;
 - h. Call and conduct town hall meetings to receive comments and feedback from current members, and former members;
 - i. Exercise pastoral care for the congregation;
3. Assume original jurisdiction because the Session is not duly constituted or able to manage wisely its affairs per G-3.0303e. Original Jurisdiction will include but not be limited to the powers:
 - a. To arrange for Pulpit Supply;
 - b. To call for congregational meetings as needed;
 - c. To assume oversight of the Treasurer and all financial matters including all assets;
 - d. To assume the duties of the Personnel committee including oversight of all staff;
 - e. To secure the building, grounds and other property of the church for the use and benefit of the church;
 - f. To assume the duties of the trustees in all items related to the corporate entity;
 - g. To arrange for the pastoral care of all members;
 - h. All other duties of the Session under G-3.02
 4. Ensure that the current ecclesiastical and corporate by-laws are in order and are being followed.
 5. Train, ordain and install ruling elders and deacons, receive and dismiss members, and visit organizations within the congregation to settle differences therein.
 6. Keep a full record of the proceedings and submit that record to the Presbytery for incorporation into its records upon dissolution of the Administrative Commission.

Responsibilities:

1. Five members of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley shall be appointed by the Presbytery Moderator in consultation with the Leadership Team of the Committee on Ministry and the Stated Clerk and shall be composed of ruling elders and ministers of word and sacrament in numbers as nearly equal as possible.
2. The Administrative Commission will be composed of the five appointed PGV members and the five elders currently serving on Session at the Church.
3. The quorum for the Administrative Commission is five persons including no less than three PGV members.
4. The Administrative Commission shall appoint a Moderator and a Clerk, and shall keep records of all proceedings, in accordance with G-3.0109b of the Book of Order.
5. The Administrative Commission shall confirm to the Presbytery through the Stated Clerk, the appointment of a Moderator and a Clerk of the Commission.
 - a. The Moderator shall convene meetings of the Administrative Commission, lead the meetings of the Commission, serve as the primary contact for persons who wish to communicate with the Commission, and ensure the Commission's support of the Session of the Church.
 - b. The Clerk shall keep the minutes of the Commission and a record of the Commission's activities. The Clerk shall complete all correspondence, as directed by the Commission; and report to the Commission any correspondence received.
6. The Administrative Commission shall approve the minutes prepared by the Clerk.
7. At the conclusion of its work, the Administrative Commission, through the Clerk of the Commission, shall provide to the Stated Clerk all Commission minutes.
8. The Presbytery's Stated Clerk shall serve as the primary staff resource to the Administrative Commission.

Appendix B

Background Information re: Brockport Presbyterian Church

In May 2022, the Committee on Ministry was informed by Commissioned Pastor (CP) Mark Ross of difficulties at First Presbyterian Church of Brockport. The issues raised were systemic in nature and have been part of their historic practices for years. Such concerns noted were around unrealistic expectations of work/life balance of the Pastor, communication issues, struggles with authority of power and a lack of individuals willing to serve on Session for the congregation. In June 2022, the COM acted to end the pastoral contract between CP Ross and First Presbyterian upon the request of the pastor.

The congregation has had a number of previous short-term pastorates around these same issues, and COM has been working with the Session and congregation since CP Ross' departure to address them. The Church has been slow to move around many of these concerns. In addition, the Session believes that full-time ministry is not a viable option due to financial constraints, and the Session decided and informed the congregation that it would seek a 50%-time pastor. This new pastoral direction impeded clear movement forward during the summer of 2022 as the church focused on a position description for a part-time pastor.

The Committee on Ministry appointed the Rev Charles Roberts as Moderator of the First Presbyterian Church Session upon the departure of the CP effective June 2022. The congregation's by-laws require 6-9 people serve on Session. The Committee on Ministry was informed at that time that one currently serving Elder was also the elected Treasurer of the Congregation. COM informed the Session that this is not permissible, so the individual chose to resign from Session and remain as Treasurer. This placed the Session in a position of only having five active Elders versus six as stated in their By-Laws. Whereas the COM wished to assist the church forward, it granted a one-year exception permitting five elders to serve as Session, but indicated the Session would need to be legally constituted by the June 2023 congregational meeting for the election of officers. With the guidance of their Moderator, Session began to take small steps in addressing issues, especially around communication and the lack of available leadership, and trying to get Session records in order after the unexpected death of the Clerk of Session. A new Clerk was elected and was very productive in getting things in order quickly. The Nominating Committee of the church was also not fully constituted per the By-Laws and was not able to be formed. Session as a whole took on the responsibility of finding people to serve, inviting many to various positions. Session was able to secure deacons without too much difficulty. However, finding persons to fill the two vacancies on Session still presented a major challenge.

In June 2023, Session leadership considered recommending a by-law revision to the congregation to define Session as "3-5 Elders". Session ultimately determined not to make this recommendation believing that six elders at minimum are necessary to cover the areas of ministries of the Church, and to avoid additional burnout of the present elders. The Session was able to secure one person who was presented and elected at the June 2023 congregational meeting. But there remained one Elder vacancy. There was a nomination from the floor but after much debate, the individual was not duly elected by the congregation. No others came forward to serve. Session then requested a waiver from COM of the requirement for term limits to permit an Elder to continue to serve. At the July 2023 meeting, COM acted to deny the request. COM leadership visited the Session at its next stated meeting to convey its decision, discuss a path forward, the overall viability and health of the congregation as well as its leadership needs.

Since the departure of the commissioned pastor, COM has taken a more proactive role in urging the Session and congregation to deal with the issues that have been raised before another pastor would be approved to serve them. COM urged the Session to obtain coaching and after a slow going and the resignation of a very effective Clerk of Session, the Session finally completed the application from the Synod of the Northeast for Coaching in February 2023. After meeting with the Session, the potential coach felt that the Session was not in

a place where coaching would be helpful as they were unable to articulate a reason for entering into the relationship beyond the requirement by COM. The coach suggested that it would be better for COM to address the systemic issues through other means at this time.

Not knowing how to proceed, the Session invited representatives from COM to attend their July 2023 meeting to advise them on a path forward. COM re-presented the options---secure another elder to constitute a Session; change the By-Laws, or request assistance from the Presbytery in the form of an Administrative Commission (AC) to come alongside the present Session members to assist in the leadership of the congregation. The Session decided to request that an AC with original jurisdiction be formed. COM approved this request at its August 2023 meeting and requested the Big Picture Team call a Special Presbytery Meeting for September 19, 2023 to form an AC for First Presbyterian Church of Brockport, NY. At the September 2023 COM meeting, COM approved the Charge and Responsibilities of the Administrative Commission being presented at the Special Presbytery Meeting.