

# CONGREGATIONAL LEARNING DAY



**Saturday, March 1, 2025**

- For New & Experienced Church Leaders & Church Members
- Offering Worship & 7 Courses—all online, via **Zoom**
- Registration deadline: 2/27/25

## SCHEDULE:

8:30 – 8:55 a.m.	Meet and Greet--conversation & time for questions
9 – 10:45 a.m.	Introduction & Workshop Session 1
10:45 – 11	Break
11 – 11:30	Worship
11:30 – 1 p.m.	Workshop Session 2

Worship will be led by Rev. Jim Renfrew with music by Bill Hockey.

**REGISTER:** <https://pbygenval.org/congregational-learning-day/>

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## 9 a.m. Classes

### **CLAIMING THE HIGH CALLING: RULING ELDER TRAINING**

Being Presbyterian elder is a high calling, a unique opportunity to offer servant leadership to the Presbyterian Church, to experience personal spiritual growth, and to nurture the life and faith of a congregation. Explore the biblical foundations, the constitutional requirements and the practical considerations for ministry as a ruling elder.

**PRESENTER: Rev. Dr. John Odom, executive presbyter, Presbytery of Genesee Valley**

In October 2024 Rev. Dr. John Odom assumed service as the executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Genesee Valley. John comes to the role of presbytery leader after 9 years as general presbyter of Mid-Kentucky Presbytery and 25 years as a pastor in a variety of congregational settings in New York and North Carolina. John is energized by the vision of building spiritual leaders, empowering life-giving congregations and transforming the world through the grace and justice of Jesus. He is married to the Rev. Emily Enders Odom, associate director of mission communications for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). They have two adult children—Nathaniel and Elizabeth, and a grandson—Elijah. John enjoys strong coffee, learning American Sign Language, and teaching yoga as a 200-hour certified yoga teacher.

## **PGV RACIAL JUSTICE POLICY OVERVIEW**

The workshop will cover the historical road to the General Assembly Antiracism Policy, the development of the Antiracism Policy of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley as well as next steps for churches when developing their own individual policies. A case study will be presented on the implementation of an antiracism policy and training program at Third Presbyterian Church as well as an overview of the Racial Justice Peace and Advocacy Working Groups' experience administering the Matthew 25 Fund. There will be time for Q & A, conversation and suggestions for our next faith filled steps.

**PRESENTERS: Dr. Janette Henderson, Rev. Dr. William H. Wilkinson, Elder Beth Laidlaw and Elder Ruth Andes**

Dr. Janette Henderson began her career as a speech/language pathologist. She then completed a Masters in Phonetics at Essex University in England and later a Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of Connecticut. She and her husband then moved to Rochester where she worked in speech research at Syracuse University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at RIT. A life-long Presbyterian, she is a member and the clerk of session at First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford. She became interested in social justice and joined the PGV Racial Justice Peace and Advocacy Working Group, which she now chairs. She recently completed a course at Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary and earned a Certificate in Public Theology (Martin Luther King Cohort, 2024).

Rev. Dr. Wilkinson, who serves as Teaching Elder at First Presbyterian Church, Medina, is a sociologist (past acting director of Black Studies, Dartmouth College, 1971), ethicist (S.U.N.Y. Health Science Center, Brooklyn, 1992), an M. Div. graduate of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (2006), who holds a Certificate in Public Theology from the Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary (Martin Luther King Cohort, 2022). A former board member, National Black Presbyterian Caucus, he has served with the Working Group on Race and Reconciliation, Synod of the Northeast. Dr. Wilkinson has been engaged in community ministries of social and racial justice, enhanced by study with the Institute of the Black World (Atlanta, GA), Crossroads Antiracism, Race Forward, and Next Church. He is a Certified Online Educator (School for Global Citizenship).

Beth Laidlaw is an elder at Third Presbytery Church, a mom, grandmother, and Professor of Philosophy Emerita.

Ruth Andes is a member of Third Presbyterian Church and a member of the Racial Justice, Peace and Advocacy Working Group since the beginning. She has worked to facilitate the Matthew 25 Grants, resulting in 11 grants awarded to agencies that work to dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty. She is looking forward to the day when all churches in the Presbytery have a lived Anti-Racism Policy that incorporates the values and beliefs of Matthew 25.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ENNEAGRAM FOR TEACHING ELDERS**

This workshop is open to ministers of Word and Sacrament and commissioned pastors and is an introduction to the Enneagram for those who have heard about it but have not had the chance to take a course or study it. The workshop addresses the concept of the Enneagram, the basics of the nine Enneagram type, ways it can help pastors in their work and self-development, and resources for future additional study.

**PRESENTER: Rev. Michelle Allen**

Michelle was born in Texas and raised outside of Philadelphia and in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. When she started college, she moved to Youngstown, N.Y. with her parents and lived there for more than 20 years.

A lifelong Presbyterian, Michelle was very active in youth groups as a teenager and began volunteering in youth ministry as an undergraduate student at Niagara University. After graduating and getting married, she focused on raising her two sons and volunteering in ministry to children and youth. In 2010, Michelle joined the staff of First Presbyterian Church in Youngstown, NY, running a school-age after school program. A year later, she became the Director of Youth Ministries there, and in 2016, took on all responsibilities for the Youth and Children's programs.

In 2020, Michelle graduated from seminary and accepted her first call at First Presbyterian Church of East Avon. In addition to building ministries with her congregation there, she also convenes the PGV Youth and Young Adult Ministries Working Group, helping to create opportunities for faith formation and fellowship for adolescent disciples across the region.

## 11 a.m. Worship

LED BY: **Rev Jim Renfrew with music by Bill Hockey**

A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, Rev. Jim Renfrew retired from the Byron Presbyterian Church in 2022. Prior to that he was pastor at Stone Church Presbyterian Church in Bergen, and Christ and Grace Churches in Rochester. He continues to serve as a guest preacher for many of our congregations.

## 11:30 a.m. Classes

### **EQUIPPED TO CARE: FOR DEACONS AND ANYONE CHARGED WITH CARING FOR OTHERS**

This workshop is designed as training for deacons and all other lay pastoral caregivers. If you are on your church's pastoral care team, or member care committee that your Session has appointed to be in charge of congregational care, then this is for you. Learn about practical tools and concepts to hone your skills for ministering to those experiencing grief, loss, illness, caretaking responsibilities, and much more. Both new and returning participants to the course will leave feeling equipped to minister to those who are in the valleys of their lives.

PRESENTER: **Rev. Erin Jacobson**

Rev. Erin Schubmehl Jacobson is associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford, N.Y. Erin is passionate about training and equipping all church members (not just deacons and elders) to be confident in offering pastoral care. In addition to a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, Erin holds a Master of Science in Early Childhood Education and Development from the Margaret Warner School at the University of Rochester, and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Ithaca College. In addition to ministry, Erin's professional experience has also included time teaching in public schools in both New York and Louisiana.

### **ENLIVENED WORSHIP LEADERSHIP: THE ENGAGED AND AUTHENTIC LITURGIST**

Learn and practice a few new tools to put in your worship leadership tool kit. Whether you have served as a liturgist many times or you are preparing for your first worship leadership experience, this workshop welcomes you.

PRESENTER: **Rev. Susan Thaine**

Rev. Susan Thaine has lived most of her life in the Albion community and is a 1986 graduate of Charles D'Amico High School in Albion NY. Susan holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Roberts Wesleyan College/University (1990), a Certificate in Volunteer Administration from The United Way of Rochester & St. John Fisher College/University, completed a C.P.E. internship at University of Rochester/Strong Memorial Hospital (Summer 2009), received a Master of Divinity from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (2010), completed the Synod of the Northeast's Early Ministry Institute and is a trained Faith and Grief facilitator. Ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in 2010, Susan's first call was to Penfield Presbyterian Church in November 2010 and she has served Albion First Presbyterian initially as stated supply (beginning in July 2018) and now as the installed pastor since 2023. Susan is married to Mike Thaine (also a 1986 Albion alumnus) since 1992. They have two adult children, Abigail and Kyle, one dog (Maxwell) and 3 cats (Migo, Girlfriend and Ruby).

### **NOT SAFE FOR WORSHIP, PART II: MODERN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE BURNED OVER DISTRICT**

A roundtable discussion group for Christian educators, preachers, commissioned ruling elders, and evangelists who want to increase their ability to share modern biblical scholarship with church members, both to enhance scriptural literacy and to help believers address critics, and their own questions.

The transmission and reception of the Good News in the Burned Over District presents some foreseeable patterns, problems, and barriers for biblical interpretation. The Confession of '67 states, "The Scriptures ... reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding." Many preachers report being wary of sharing this knowledge with congregants who may be disturbed when their long-held assumptions are challenged. What challenges to modern New Testament interpretation arise for you? How have you been transformed by your intentional engagement of it?

We hope to create a collegial discussion for those who both proclaim and listen for the good news in our local context. You are invited to light a fire for discovery of how we may together meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities we face in this endeavor. Come to the table and share your experiences regarding questions and concerns from preachers and congregants.

This class is a standalone class. You needn't have taken the Part 1 class.

FACILITATORS:

**Rev. HoDong Hwang**, pastor, Western Presbyterian Church, Palmyra; member Vitality Committee of the Presbytery of Geneva

**Frank Stroock**, lay member, Brick Presbyterian Church, NYC; member Tools and Training Team, Presbytery of Genesee Valley

**Elder Stephen Little**, Ulysses Presbyterian Church, Trumansburg; member of Satellite Course Creators

**Rev. David Stanton**, retired, Parson-on-the-Loose; member Vitality Committee of the Presbytery of Geneva

**Rev. Dan Russell**, Hector, Presbyterian Church and member of the Vitality Committee of the Presbytery of Geneva

**TWO-WAY Q and A**

Do you have questions for our newly installed Executive Presbyter and PGV Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley? This class is designed just for this! But wait, there's more. There will also be time for Bethany and John to ask questions of you. Questions like: How can we better serve you? What do you need from us?

FACILITATORS: **Rev. Bethany Benz-Whittington**, stated clerk and **Rev. Dr. John Odom**, executive presbyter, Presbytery of Genesee Valley