

The Week of October 19, 2025

THE KISKI WEEKLY



Important Notice from Kiskiminetas Presbytery

We apologize for the late notice, but we need to let you know that Saturday's installation is being postponed.

We look forward to celebrating with our Presbyters, The Rev. Dr. Angela Cowser & The Rev. Erin Kobs at a later date after some of the pieces have come together.

We know that many of you were planning to attend & we will let you know when a new date has been scheduled.

Erin & Angela's service in our presbytery will continue in the meanwhile, & we are blessed to serve alongside one another.

We extend a special thank you to those of you who planned to lead during the worship service, & to all those who were making preparations, including the whole congregation at Ebenezer.

Please share this information with your church families so they are aware of this postponement.

Please direct any questions to the Rev. Emily Koehler, 814-771-4665.

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Kiski Presbytery
Synod of the Trinity

Rev. Erin Kobs: orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org; 717.419.0608 (cell)
Rev. Dr. Angela Cowser: trainingpresbyter@kiskipby.org

From the Desk of Rev. Dr. Angela Cowser, Training Presbyter



Here are things that I am currently engaged with:

1) Congregational Revitalization (also called TC: Thriving Congregations): TC helps congregations explore & understand their rapidly changing social & cultural contexts. Specifically, we help churches gain greater clarity about their mission, vision, & values, & draw on practices from their theological & ecclesial traditions to adapt their ministries to the demands of their changing contexts. The aim of the initiative is to help congregations thrive by strengthening ministries that help people deepen their relationships with God, enhance their connections with each other, & contribute to the flourishing of their communities & the world. As of October 4th, seven Kiski churches have agreed to work on the TC initiative: Shelocta, Crete, Trinity, St. Benedict, St. Paul's, Arcadia, & Boiling Springs.

2) Topical Courses:

- Seven students will have finished a 4-session course on trauma-informed preaching & trauma-informed pastoral care.
- An introduction to the Bible course has begun.
- If you're interested a topic, please let me know & we can create it.

November 1st Stated Presbytery Gathering

The Presbytery of Kiskiminetas will hold a Stated Gathering on Saturday, November 1st at 10:00am at United Presbyterian Church, Blairsville.

This gathering will be conducted in a hybrid manner (in person or Zoom)

- If you choose to attend via Zoom, we are asking that you have your camera turned on, so we can ensure you are participating in the business of the gathering. In addition, please remain on mute unless you are speaking.
- In addition, we cannot fully ensure audio quality, so please take this into consideration when registering to attend via Zoom.

Registration for this gathering will **close on Thursday, October 30th at noon**. This is so the staff have time to prepare the printed materials & will not be able to check the registration form after this point. Thank you for understanding!

The packet for this meeting & Zoom link will be sent out on Thursday, October 30th after 12:00pm via email to all registered commissioners. There is a spot to request a printed copy (available for in person attendees only) & those who request them will receive them at the gathering. We will not be mailing printed copies beforehand or to Zoom attendees.

Register Here: <https://form.forms.app/kiskiminetaspresbytery/november-1-stated-gathering>

At registration, we will have a bucket on the table to contribute an offering for the Hunger Fund. 50% of the collection will be given to the host church for their local food ministry & 50% will be donated to food bank organizations within the bounds of the Presbytery.

Excused absences from attendance at the Presbytery gathering will be granted up to the gathering & for 2 days (48 hours) after the gathering. Requests for excuses after that time will not be granted.

Good News Board

Have some good news to share?

Email us at orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org

- **Shelocta** hosted a Sisterhood event on October 3rd. It was a fun day spending time with “Sisters in Christ” from 8 different churches.
- The Deacons from **Shelocta** collected paper products for their food pantry participants. Also, they are holding a Rwanda Brunch & basket raffle on October 26th to support our Kirwa Church.
- **Atwood** made their annual apple butter on October 11th. It's the best!
- **Crete** is celebrating a new roof on their building & a new pianist.
- **Crooked Creek** is active with their women's meetings, a 3rd grade class, & working with the local Veteran's home.
- **Trinity** is happy to share that they have a new pianist & choir director. Valerie Stipcak has joined them (& Shelocta too). They prayed for this & prayers have been answered.
- **Dayton Glade Run** celebrates that VBS started back up & Pastor Sheila is back from leave.

Rwanda Partnership News

Our Rwanda Partnership will be celebrating it's 20th year in 2026. In honor of that, two things will be happening.

- In June 2026, we will be hosting a trip to Rwanda for interested folks. The trip will be June 1st -11th, with an opportunity to visit parishes that are sponsored by our congregations. The trip is limited to 8 folks. If you are interested, there is an [application](#). Applications are due to Mark Phoebus by November 30, 2025.
- A fundraiser contest to purchase 10 motorcycles for pastors in Rwanda in order for them to get to their churches or visiting parishioners. Each motorcycle is \$2,000. The church who raises the most money per member (according to their 2024 statistical report) will win the Philippian Prize (a gift from Rwanda). Raising only \$10 per member could just do it! Funds must be submitted to the Presbytery Office by June 1, 2026.

Upcoming Events Around Kiski



- Rev. David J. Hanna & Rev. Dr. Donald R. Wilson (Lt. Col., USAF Retired) will co-facilitate a **six-week study of Amanda Tyler's How to End Christian Nationalism**. The study begins Wednesday, September 24 at 6:30 p.m. in Calvary's Dining Room. All are welcome. No book is required for the first meeting. More information and links to sellers carrying the book may be found on Calvary's [website](#).
- St. Benedict's Ladies Association is hosting a **Bazaar** on November 1st from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the local community center with homemade soups, luncheon, homemade goodies, & a basket auction. All are welcome!

Presbytery Upcoming Events

October 26th - 28th: Angela & Erin at Synod Assembly

October 30th: Registration for November 1st Stated Gathering closes at noon

November 1st: 10:00am Stated Gathering at United Presbyterian, Blairsville - [Register Here](#)

November 2nd: Erin preaching at Srader Grove & UP Freeport

November 12th: 10:00am or 6:00pm Treasurer Training with Kimberly Warner, bookkeeper - [Register Here](#)



**2025 Stated Presbytery
Gatherings**

Saturday, November 1st, 10:00am, United Presbyterian, Blairsville

Mandated Reporter Trainings

A reminder that the Book of Order does require that elders, ministers, & volunteers (Sunday school teachers, VBS workers, anyone who is working directly with children) every **36 months** (G-3.0106). This is a change from the past, when it was every 5 years, which is still the requirement for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Mandated Reporter training takes about an hour & a half. There is the option to do Zoom for these. The Zoom link will be emailed to all registered participants on **the day of the training**.

If your church is interested in hosting a Mandated Reporter Training, please contact Erin Kobs, Organizational Presbyter & Stated Clerk (orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org)

Clearances

- **Mandated Reporter Training** (Child Abuse Prevention) - all ministers, elders, deacons & volunteers who work with children. Certificates are good for 36 months.
- **Boundary Training** - all ministers & elders. Must be done every 36 months (according to the Book of Order)
- **FBI Fingerprint Clearance** - all ministers. Certificates are good for five years (in accordance with PA state law & Presbytery policy)
- **PA State Police Clearance** - all ministers & those who work directly with children. Clearance is good for five years (PA state law), but are highly recommended to be done every 3 years for protection of our churches.

Birthdays



Pastors with October birthdays:

- October 2nd: Lisa Lyon (Retired)
- October 6th: Rebecca Mihm (First, Clarion)
- October 8th: Jim Arter (Cross Roads Community)
- October 16th: Marty Neal (Appleby Manor & Crooked Creek)
- October 25th: Dave Koehler (Beechwoods & Sugar Hill)

Presbyterian Women Upcoming Events

- Presbyterian Women's Fall Gathering will be Wednesday, October 22 (10:00 am) at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, 5720 Newport Road, Clarksburg, PA 15725. Our theme for the day will be from Deuteronomy 14:2 "...for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession." If you have never been to a Gathering, it is filled with love, worship, music, & more SISTERSHIP! Light morning refreshments & lunch will be served. A \$5 cost will be collected at the door.
- Synod of the Trinity PW Gathering is from July 16-18, 2026. The theme is Find Joy in the Journey! Join us! All sisters welcomed!

Need Something? Call Us!

Have a question? Need some information about an upcoming event? Looking for a particular resource?

If you are in the need of something, please call us here at the Presbytery Office. We will make sure that you are put in touch with the correct person to answer your questions whether it is the Formation Commission, the Organization Commission, or our two Presbyters (Training Presbyter or Organizational Presbyter/Stated Clerk). We are here to help & want to make sure that you are getting the correct information.



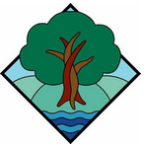
Presbytery Directory

Need to access the Directory? [Click here](#)

The directory is under password. If you need the password, call Cheryl at the office

Clerk of Session Corner

Here is important information for clerks of session of our congregations



2026 Terms of Call & Contracts

The 2026 Terms of Call & Contract forms are now in fillable PDFs on the [Kiski website](#). All forms are due by January 30, 2026. The original form must be mailed to the office - no scanned copies via email or photos will be accepted. After they are signed off by the Organization Commission, the original forms will be sent back to the church for your records.

2026 Minimum Terms of Call (as set at September 13th Stated Gathering)

- Without a manse - \$55,550
- With a manse - \$55,500 (\$42,692 salary & \$12,808 manse value)

2026 Per Capita Rates

Presbytery: \$27.00

Synod of the Trinity: \$2.40

General Assembly: \$11.26

Total: \$40.66

Remittance forms will be arriving via email along with a letter shortly.

2025-2027 Book of Order & Presbyterian Planning Calendars

The new Book of Order (Effective July 4, 2025) & Presbyterian Planning Calendars are now available.

Cost: \$10.00 each for Book of Order & \$12.00 each for calendars.

If you are interested in ordering multiple copies, please contact the office. We can lower the shipping cost this way.

If you would like a PDF copy of the Book of Order, [click here](#).

2026 Board of Pensions Rates

Congregational Pastor Package

- Pastor only (required for installed pastors) - 17.5% of effective salary
- Additional optional coverage:
 - Pastor & spouse - 17.5% + \$12,250
 - Pastor & child(ren) - 17.5% + \$9,950
 - Pastor & family - 17.5% + \$22,200

Transitional Pastor Package

This is only available to those who were in the package in 2025 & this package will go away in 2028

- Pastor & family - 37% of effective salary

Information about Records

If you need record keeping supplies, check out [Cokesbury](#). They carry the archival paper & additional covers for your church register & session minute books.

The [Presbyterian Historical Society](#) in Philadelphia is where you can send your church records to be stored in their archival vault. This is important to do with your older records. In compliance with the Book of Order (G.3.0107), official records of active congregations and other records of permanent value, including registers; minutes of session, trustees, and other church groups; charters and property records; publications; and photographs. You can contact them at (215) 627-1852 or email refdesk@history.pcusa.org.

Insurance Reimbursement Fund

Does your church have Guide One Insurance?

The Presbytery has a fund to help reimburse your deductible when you have an insurance claim. This is not just claims from storm damage. If you have a claim, you can send in your information regarding your claim for the Presbytery to review. The reimbursement will be for \$500.00.

For more information, please contact the Presbytery office.

Update from Syria & Lebanon Partnership Network



In mid-September the Syria Lebanon Partnership Network gathered in Cheyenne, Wyoming and received a gracious and hospitable welcome from members who have been part of the Network since the early days.

After spending time reflecting on Paul's letter to the Philippians, a thorough briefing followed from the General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) The Rev. Joseph Kassab reiterated the importance of the church being a bridge between the groups vying for power in Syria. Under the Assad regime, there was little trust between groups and the hope that came last December for trust to be built has yet to be realized. From the standpoint of many, trust has not been nurtured in that the new government to date has been composed almost entirely of Islamist Muslims (the one Christian who has been appointed to the parliament is the Minister of Social Affairs, a woman from our Damascus church!).

Rev. Joseph shared how he believes the role of the church in Syria and Lebanon is to be a bridge between the sectarian groups competing for power in the region during this time of change and uncertainty. He spoke of how there are currently about 4,000 students in the Synod schools, the majority not Christian. This has been a strong component in our church's role as salt and light in a tasteless and dark world. The economic collapse in both countries has hit education in a severe way and, with the end of UN funding scheduled to take place in 2026 due largely to lack of support from western nations, things will take another drastic hit. With NESSL doing all it can do, they need outside help to keep their programs running.

He shared the feeling of being "exiles in their own land," and therefore in a "stage of survival," nevertheless claiming the promise from Isaiah's prophecy..., "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isa. 43:18-19).

Rev. Joseph reported that NESSL is supporting 1,400 families with help from SLPN and several NGOs from international partners. That support is aiding ministries of healthcare in Syria and other relief work in southern and northern Lebanon, affected by Israeli assaults. The displaced congregations there have returned and are engaged in rebuilding efforts. Many churches have returned to regular worship services. In Syria, the work of the medical clinic in Aleppo has grown amid the suffering, and the needs are great. The construction of their new Christian Center has begun and hopes are it will be completed in the next two years.

Through our conversations with our partners, pastors Firas and Mathilde, we learned much more about the situation in the northeast of Syria where the demands of the Kurdish nationalists are impacting the schools run by our churches in Qamishli and Hasekeh. The problem stems from the local educational authorities' demands that all schools use a Kurdish curriculum, which lacks the rigor needed and prohibits any Christian teaching. The pastors have reached out to General Mazloum Adbi, the General of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and Administrator of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria has said that he has no problem with teaching the Syrian National Curriculum. Our pastors hope the general can convince the local education to change their policy and allow the traditional curriculum to be reinstated.

Schools were scheduled to open on Monday, September 22, but to date have remained closed. This has left 18,000 employees of public and private schools unemployed and 90% of the students out of school. Only schools that teach the Kurdish curriculum are open. Many Christian families are leaving for areas where their children can receive an adequate education.

Prayers are needed as our partners are concerned about how the schools might be affected by refusing to accede to the demands of the Kurdish education authorities. May the Lord be with them all, provide them with discernment and with faith to believe that God is at work and that we share their concern for the future of education for the children of the area. Pray as well for the health and well being of our pastors, as these stressful circumstances are taking their toll.

Dr. Martin Accad, the new President of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) and our partner in Beirut gave us encouraging news about their survival of these times and their new initiatives. This includes a new Christian Resource Center under the leadership of our friend, Hala Bitar. President Accad also shared of how the school is facing the need for the Christian spiritual

Update from Syria & Lebanon Partnership Network



formation of leaders who are emerging from the Islamic faith and the Muslim communities in Egypt, where many are coming to faith in Christ and finding a home in the Presbyterian church there. NEST has also invested in the solarization of their facilities, which includes power-sharing with the community around the school.

Rev. Ibrahim, pastor of the Aleppo church gave us news about the ministry in the northwest of Syria in this transitional time. “Deep wounds and a stubborn faith” is how he described the church in Syria. He was cautiously optimistic as he told of hospitals and schools opening along with shops and cafes. In his parish there is a surge of Muslims coming to faith in Christ, with 5-6 attending worship every Sunday. He shared how these glimmers of recovery beg for prayers for justice and humility in the government leadership. For this he remains hopeful and fearful at the same time.

Rev. Ibrahim reminded us that the Christian population of Syria not long ago was 10% but today stands at 2%. Nonetheless, referring to Paul’s encouraging words in Romans 5:3-5 Ibrahim brought it forward saying, “We are still here!... we are living examples of praise.” Each time the church bell rings out the people pray for each other. He went on to speak of meeting with the new Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, saying he is a good listener, seeming to be wise, and careful in selecting his words. However, he went on to say that the courts are now in the hands of the Sunnis and that the real test is behavior and al-Sharaa’s actual support of minority rights and the need for a new constitution recognizing the equal citizenship of all the people of Syria. This would be their only assurance and would go a long way in establishing the trust of the citizens of the country.

As we left our gathering in Cheyenne, we expressed our special concern about education of the youth in the coming years, especially in light of the radical groups hoping to usher in a whole new radicalized culture.

Please take these words seriously and allow them to inform your prayers in specific ways. Understand that this is not meant to be an official news report, but information we have gleaned from our partners “on the ground” in both countries as we advocate for and support them during this time. We want to remain steadfast in loving support and encouragement for our sisters and brothers in Syria and Lebanon.



TREASURER TRAINING

Some topics we will cover

- Safe handling of funds & records
- Audit recommendations
- Accounting systems
- Presbytery payments & reports
- Financial reporting & budgeting
- Payroll
- Q & A time

**Wednesday,
November 12th**

**10:00am or 6:00pm at
Presbytery office or Zoom**



[Register Here](#)

If you have specific questions, you can email Kimberly Warner at bookkeeper@kiskipby.org