

The Week of October 5, 2025

THE KISKI WEEKLY



From the Desk of Rev. Erin Kobs, Organizational Presbyter & Stated Clerk

It's a busy time of the year, isn't it? Every time I look at my calendar, I simply cannot believe we are already into the second week of October. Churches are busy with stewardship & budget season, preparations for the upcoming Advent & Christmas season, & of course, regular life & ministry continues on.

So, as the air cools & the trees begin their annual symphony of color, I find myself pausing more often not just to admire the beauty of creation, but to give thanks. The season of fall invites us to slow down, to notice, & to remember. It's a season that calls us back to gratitude not as a fleeting feeling, but as a spiritual practice that roots us in God's abundance.

Gratitude does not deny the challenges before us. Many of our congregations are navigating transitions, discerning next steps, & seeking renewed energy for ministry. But in every conversation I've had across the presbytery in sanctuaries, session meetings, calls & emails, I hear stories of faithfulness that make me profoundly thankful.

I'm grateful for pastors & pulpit supply folks who show up week after week, offering words of comfort & courage. For elders and deacons who lead with compassion and integrity. For musicians, Sunday School teachers, Bible study leaders, & volunteers who pour their gifts into the life of the church. And for every member who continues to pray, give, & serve in ways that sustain our shared witness.

This is the beautiful truth of being the Church together: gratitude multiplies. When we name our blessings, we begin to see more of them. When we thank one another, our connections deepen. When we thank God, our hearts open to the quiet joy that sustains us even in uncertain times. I invite you to join me in a simple daily practice: pause for a moment each day to name one thing or one person for whom you are grateful. You might be surprised how that small act shifts your perspective & renews your spirit.

In this season of reflection & harvest, may gratitude become both our prayer & our proclamation. For the grace of community, the hope of Christ, & the steady work of the Spirit among us - thanks be to God.

Blessings,

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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, six Kiski churches have agreed to work on the TC initiative: Shelocta, Crete, St. Benedict, St. Paul's, Arcadia, & Boiling Springs. Trinity is pending a decision next week.

2) Topical Courses:

- This Wednesday, seven students will have finished a 4-session course on trauma-informed preaching & trauma-informed pastoral care.
- Next Monday, an introduction to the Bible course will begin.
- 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.

Presbytery Upcoming Events

October 11th: 9:00am-2:00pm Workshop with Graham Standish at Dayton Glade Run - [Register Here](#)

October 12th: Erin preaching at First, Clarion

October 13th: 1:00pm-3:00pm Intro to Bible Class for Pulpit Supply with Angela - [Register Here](#)

October 15th: 6:30pm Mandated Reporter Training at Union First, Cowansville - [Register Here](#)

October 19th: Erin preaching at New Rehoboth Greenville & Pisgah

October 21st: Formation Commission & Organization Commission meeting at Presbytery office

October 23rd: 12:00pm Women's Clergy Lunch at office

October 25th: 11:00am Installation Service for Rev. Erin Kobs & Rev. Dr. Angela Cowser at Ebenezer Church

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

October 29th: 1:00pm or 6:00pm Audit Training with Kimberly Warner, bookkeeper - [Register Here](#)

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](#)

AED Station at Wilcox Church

Our Wilcox Church installed a public access AED station outside of their church. The Session noticed there was a need, as the only other AED in the community was inside the Senior Center, which was not always open. They applied for a grant & received the funds to purchase an AED station. It is on Google Maps, so passersby on Routes 321 & 219 are aware of its location.




Listening to God, Even When We Don't Wanna



This Saturday, October 11th, we are hosting a workshop with Rev. Dr. Graham Standish on discerning & listening to God's call for our lives & for our churches. This is a great opportunity to learn some vital skills & perspective! The workshop is from 9:00am-2:00pm at Dayton Glade Run Presbyterian Church. There will be a catered lunch provided & the whole day is being offered to anyone in the Presbytery free of charge. On the last page of this issue is a flyer with more information. [Register here.](#)

Installation of Presbyters



INSTALLATION OF
The Reverend
Erin Kobs
to the office of Organizational Presbyter &
Stated Clerk
&
The Reverend Doctor
Angela Cowser
to the office of Training Presbyter
of the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas

Saturday, October 25th 11:00am
Ebenezer Presbyterian Church
Catered lunch to follow worship service

Please RSVP by October 14th
at programmanager@kiskipby.org

Good News Board

Have some good news to share?

Email us at orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org

- **NuValley** is hosting a weekly bible study for the West Shamokin Football Team. Two of their coaches (one is a member of NuValley) are heading it up. Over half of the team is showing up each week. They share a meal together & have discussions on connecting scripture to their sport & daily life. NuValley & other local churches, through donations, provide the meal.
- **Shelocta** just completed 150 hygiene kits for 2 local elementary schools. They are also having a Rwanda Basket event to raise funds for our Kirwa Church in Rwanda.
- **Shelocta, Crete, & Trinity Churches** recently had "Penny Wars" to collect money for missions. The contest for 6 weeks. The winner was awarded all the money collected for the mission of their choosing. Trinity was the winner & received \$789.37 for Operation Christmas Child.

Rwanda Partnership News

Our Rwanda Partnership will be celebrating its 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](#).
- New Rehoboth Greenville is holding **Three Evenings of Miracles with Randy Stear** on October 14th - 16th at 6:30pm. Discussion, food, fun & fellowship. Invite your neighbors & friends!
- The Indiana County DAR will hold a **remembrance service** to commemorate Revolutionary War soldiers at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church on October 18th at 11:30am. There are 16 Revolutionary soldiers buried at Ebenezer including John Montgomery, a member of George Washington's Lifeguard.
- Sligo is having a **Fall Celebration of Praise** on October 18th at 2:00pm on the church lawn. Keystone State Quartet will lead in praising the Lord. Refreshments will be served.
- 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!



**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**.

Upcoming trainings:

- Wednesday, October 15th at 6:30pm, Union First Presbyterian, Cowansville. [Register here.](#)

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

Wee Kirk Conference

The annual Wee Kirk, a small church conference, will be held on October 13th-15th at Laurelville Retreat Center in Mount Pleasant. The purpose is to inspire, equip, motivate & encourage small churches of any denomination & to provide rest & refreshment for the clergy & lay leaders like you! There will be a variety of workshops, opportunities for networking & conversations, & a chance to peruse the Hearts & Minds Bookstore. Registration for churches with up to 150 members is \$200.00 per person. If you register before August, it is \$175.00! There are brochures at the Presbytery office or you can go [online](#) for more information & to register.

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.

Birthdays



Pastors with October birthdays:

- October 6th: Rebecca Mihm (First, Clarion)
- October 8th: Jim Arter (Cross Roads Community)
- October 16th: Marty Neal (Appleby Manor & Crooked Creek)
- October 21st: Lisa Lyon (Retired)
- 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.

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.



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 available on the Kiski website as fillable PDFs or can be printed out. An email with the form along with a letter will be coming 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.