

The Week of July 20, 2025

# THE KISKI WEEKLY



## From the Desk of Rev. Erin Kobs, Transitional General Presbyter

Friends,

It was a monumental weekend for us here in Kiskiminetas Presbytery! On Saturday, we gathered at First Presbyterian, Clarion to get to know our two candidates, Angela Cowser & myself. Thank you for all who came during the meet & greet time - it was so wonderful to chat with many of you & I know that Angela really enjoyed talking with folks as well. These kinds of conversations with us as your presbyters are so important, especially now as we embark on this next phase of our journey together. The hope is to be able to come & visit with your churches & sessions to get a sense of who you are as a community of faith & how the presbytery can serve you best. We are looking forward to these continued conversations.

Thank you for your thoughtful questions on the floor during the examination of us. I do hope that you were able to get a sense of who we are as leaders & our visions for the church. I know there are some concerns out there, but I do hope that you know we are both open to having more conversations around the table about these topics. As Angel De La Cruz said, we are a big tent & there is always a spot for everyone at the table!

What's next? Well, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, Angela will officially begin her service as our Training Presbyter & my title will switch over to Organizational Presbyter & Stated Clerk. Angela will be



starting off remote from TN, as she works on moving up here. She will be available via Zoom for meetings & her email will be active at that point to reach her.

([trainingpresbyter@kiskipby.org](mailto:trainingpresbyter@kiskipby.org)).

Of course, I will be around as well. My email will change to [orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org](mailto:orgpresbyter@kiskipby.org).

We are excited! God is doing something new here in Kiski!

Blessings,  
*Erin*



**Kiski Presbytery**  
**Synod of the Trinity**

# Clerk of Session Corner

Here is important information for clerks of session of our congregations



## 2025-2027 Book of Order & Presbyterian Planning Calendars

The new Book of Order (goes into effect on July 2, 2025) & Presbyterian Planning Calendars are now available.

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

If you did not participate in the pre-order, you can still purchase them through the PCUSA Store.

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

## PA Annual Report

Beginning in 2025, churches will need to complete an Annual Report with the state of Pennsylvania in order to maintain their non-profit status & tax-exempt status. **Filing after June 30<sup>th</sup>, there will be a fee.** Continued non-compliance could result in your church falling out of "good standing" or even administrative dissolution by the state.

- Churches need to update their contact information & report on who their corporate officers are for their "Corporation" (i.e. president, secretary & treasurer)
- The corporate officers must be properly elected by the session (unicameral board) or Trustees (bicameral board) & documented in your minutes. If your church has not elected officers recently, you need to begin the process & duly elect them before filing the Annual Report.

How do you update your information?

- Log into the website [Business Services | An Official Pennsylvania Government Website](#)
- Fill out the necessary information. [A step by step guide for filing the report](#)

## 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.

## Session Record Review

If you have not had your records reviewed, please contact Erin to schedule a date to have them reviewed.

## 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](mailto:refdesk@history.pcusa.org).

## PA Sales Tax Exception Certificates

By now, you should have received your church's new sales tax exception certificate, please contact the Presbytery office. We will make sure to get it to you.



## Upcoming Events Around Kiski

- Arcadia will be holding a **Bazaar & Bake Sale** on July 26th from 9:00am to noon. There is something for everyone. Hot dogs, chips, and beverages will be available for purchase as well. Physical Address: 248 Arcadia Road, Arcadia PA.
- Pisgah is holding it's annual **Clothing Give Away** on Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. Last year, over 600 people were served. Donations & help are accepted.
- CrossRoads Community is holding their **18th annual Golf "FORE" Mission** on August 17<sup>th</sup> at the Links at Spring Church, beginning at 12:30pm. The cost is \$100/person & includes 18 holes of golf, cart rental, free driving range balls, a full dinner buffet catered by Garda's, & prizes. The Golf Outing raises money for mission projects & trips. The registration deadline is August 6. Participants can [register online](#).
- Trinity is in the planning stages of a **two day trip to the Ark Encounter & Creation Museum** in Kentucky. They want to open it to anyone in the Presbytery who are interested. Please talk with Bonnie Davis for more information or email Trinity Church (clarksburgtrinitypres.org)
- New Rehoboth is having an **outdoor service & picnic** on Sunday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am. All are invited to attend!

## Good News Board

- **Ridgway** is currently planning for their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- **Cross Roads** distributed 100 free lunches to folks in Leechburg on July 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Have some good news to share?**  
Email us at [statedclerk@kiskipby.org](mailto:statedclerk@kiskipby.org)

## Being Neighbors

**This is a new column to offer resources to other congregations or to ask for needs for your congregation!**

- Are you in need of a **Music Box** to provide music for your worship services? This product was talked about at our November Presbyter Gathering by Joel Kinnard, member of the Congregation & Pastor Formation Commission. We have donations to purchase music boxes for congregations in need. Please contact Joel for more information (jrkinnard57@icloud.com).
- **Wilcox** is looking for a set of paraments for their communion table. If you have a set that you wish to donate, please contact Rachel Kreig, clerk of session (rachelkreig@hotmail.com)
- **St. Benedict** has a communion table that is free to anyone who needs it. The dimensions are 22x45x30 & it is in good conditions. Call Allan Hicks at 814-418-1966.



## Presbytery Wide Mission Project

This summer, we are going to be collecting supplies for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in the Presbytery. We are encouraging as many churches who want to participate to do so. Supplies can be dropped off at to the Presbytery Office or you can bring them to the July 19<sup>th</sup> Called Presbytery Gathering. The collection will continue until August 7<sup>th</sup>. If your church wishes to make a monetary gift, Concord Presbyterian, Dayton will purchase supplies & pack the kits. You can make the check out to the Presbytery & we will ensure the funds are used for this. Contact Joel Kinnard for more information.

### Supply needs for 1 kit:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 12 ct. colored pencils   | 6 unsharpened pencils (rubber banded together) |
| two pocket folder  | inexpensive corded earbuds                     |
| glue stick   | 70 page wide ruled spiral bound notebook       |
| blunt tip scissors (unpackaged)  | handheld pencil sharpener (unpackaged)         |
| large eraser   | 24 ct. crayons                                 |
| 12x14 or 14x17 lightweight canvas or cloth bag with handles (solid color or kid-friendly fabric, no logos) |  |
| Optional: handmade or store bought pencil pouch  |  |



**2025 Stated Presbytery Gatherings**

Saturday, September 13th, 10:00am, Slate Lick Presbyterian  
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, Transitional General Presbyter & Stated Clerk

## Wee Kirk Conference

The annual Wee Kirk, a small church conference, will be held on October 13th-15<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Birthdays

Pastors with July birthdays:

- July 2<sup>nd</sup>: Ed Rudiger (Sligo); Bobbi Torrance (At Large)
- July 5<sup>th</sup>: Dick Cassel (retired)
- July 6<sup>th</sup>: Dan Little (retired)
- July 25<sup>th</sup>: Emily Koehler (Beechwoods & Sugar Hill)

## QuickBooks

Your church use QuickBooks? Are you concerned with the rate increase? Feel free to contact Kimberly Warner, bookkeeper, at the Presbytery Office to talk about your options!

## Presbyterian Women Upcoming Events

July 23rd, 10:00 am - All Women's Picnic at Sharp's Campground, North Ridge Road, Shelocta, PA. Bring a dish to share & enjoy fun, music, laughs & sistership with women throughout the Presbytery. Beverages & table service provided.

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.

## Mark Your Calendars!

### Listening to God, Especially When We Don't Wanna

Workshop with Rev. Dr. Graham Standish  
Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am to 2:00pm  
Dayton Glade Run Presbyterian Church

We live in a world of too much information, conflicting beliefs, and changing values. Meanwhile the very places that ground us, our churches, are declining. How do we discover and do what God wants, especially if it may not be what we want? This retreat will give us the spiritual skills and perspectives to help us:

- Pay attention to God's presence so we experience God in our churches and life
- Listen for God's clear voice in a noisy culture, especially with out church's future
- Let go of what we want to follow what God wants for our churches and our lives
- Let go of fears, guilt, shame, doubts, control, and more so that we can do God's will above all in our lives and 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

## 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.

## Update from Syria & Lebanon Partnership

While we all hope and pray for a more just and peaceful Syria going forward, news from our sources tell us that fear and uncertainty seem to be on the rise under the new government known as the Syrian Arab Republic, whose dominant authority is the interim-president Ahmed al-Sharaa. With the new interim constitution in place, the interim president appears to carry full authority and there have been significant reactions continuing to come to the surface across the country.

With the five-year constitution in place, it is reported that the president, Al-Sharaa, has sole authority. In the rule of the country. There is neither a prime minister, nor any political parties. Al-Sharaa has appointed one-third of the parliament, while the remaining two-thirds have been appointed by a committee, subject to the approval of the president. Supreme court positions are all appointed also only with Al-Sharaa's consent. The interim constitution bears little resemblance to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2017) which calls for a "credible, inclusive, and non-sectarian government" in Syria.

Many have told us that all the security forces are "dyed in the wool jihadists" which does not bode well for the minorities in the country. Christians seem to be in a better position than other religious minorities, as they are seen as "People of the Book" (a term which refers to other religions viewed by Islamic tradition as having received divine scriptures).

## 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.

We have seen many reports of Alawites and Druze, whom the group which overthrew the Assad regime (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham or HTS) sees as "heretics," being persecuted and even executed at random throughout their communities. The government has denied any responsibility for these killings and has pledged to investigate, but any genuine follow-up seems to be lacking. The demand for justice for all Syrians has gone unanswered and the report of the investigative committee, promised by July 7, has yet to be published.

In many quarters, the input we have received is that this government is seen as quite similar to the Assad regime, moving from one political extreme to another. The exception being that this system emerging has all the hallmarks of a theocratic state, with the jihadists in power. What is being presented to the world at-large is a façade that would allow the country to project a more respectable political image for the international community in the hope of having economic sanctions removed and attracting investment necessary to rebuild the country.

The feeling among most minorities is that there is no justice in the land with no courts in session and that vigilantism is on the rise. The Christian population has decreased from 10-15% before the war to somewhere between 2-5% currently. While approximately 100,000 Syrians have returned from Lebanon, the same number have fled to northern Lebanon to escape the threat of atrocities in Syria. We have been told that Islamic dress codes are being enforced in many parts, which require women to wear "burkinis" (nearly full-body coverage) at the beaches with men allowed swimwear while in the water but to

## Update from Syria & Lebanon Partnership - continued



“cover up” when they emerge. It seems widely known across social media (controlled by the Sunni majority that any group who is not Muslim is being referred to as “pigs.” It also seems that as much as 70% of Muslims in Syria are pro-Al-Sharaa and see his rule as good for the country.

The Alawite massacre, reported as 1,500 deaths in the coastal region back in March-April, is now being challenged by locals who are saying the number killed is closer to 5,000. The atrocities still have not been satisfactorily investigated by the government. We are being told the report of the committee looking into the attack of the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus on June 23 has yet to publish a satisfactory report.

Nonetheless, our partners tell us it is still safe for churches to meet for worship and other activities. We have also learned of the government appointment of several experienced Christian men to fill high-level, significant roles in local government and business positions in Hama and Palmyra and that overall that these appointees are being treated with respect.

The situation in Suwayda, a mostly Druze community in the southern part of Syria, has deteriorated with the people there refusing to accept the interim constitution. After a series of deadly clashes between Druze fighters and Bedouin tribes killed dozens there since last Friday, the government has announced that a ceasefire has been agreed to after they deployed forces to stop the violence. Israeli Defense Forces subsequently bombed parts of Suwayda in support of the Druze, a community they consider allies.

Of late, we are told that banks in America are preparing for the expected loosening of sanctions by considering the reinstatement of the “swift code” which will enable US organizations, churches and NGOs to send funds and support into Syria without the restrictions that have been in place over the past decade. The United States government recently took the group which toppled the Assad regime (HTS) off the list of terrorist organizations. While our denomination believes broad sanctions cause widespread suffering and we have called for their lifting as a matter of humanitarian urgency, the United States government does not appear to be pressing for adherence to Security Council Resolution 2254 in return for lifting sanctions, thus defeating the justification of sanctions as bargaining chips.

We are asking you to read this update, not as “news” in the formal sense, but as a summation of what we are hearing from our partners on the ground in Syria and others we know to be credible and reliable sources for what is transpiring in the country currently. While there is a sense of foreboding about the direction the new government is taking, the bright spot is the hope of sanctions being lifted and for the possibility of funds flowing into Syria for reconstruction and basic life necessities. Please continue your prayers and advocacy for our brothers and sisters living in this very dangerous situation.