

Leadership Cabinet
November 11, 2025

Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership Cabinet met via Zoom for its scheduled meeting on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Cabinet members present:

RE Melissa Bell
MWS Ashley Birk
RE Julie Boksich
MWS Karolee Larson
MWS Jamie Schmeling
MWS Dave Thompson, Moderator

Members absent:

None

Others present: General Presbyter Kathy Goodrich, Treasurer Ric Tieman, Stated Clerk Caroline Fleming

- 1. Opening:** Moderator Dave Thompson called the meeting to order with prayer.
- 2. Dwelling in the Word:** Members read a devotional based on Luke 11:9 in which Steve Garnass-Holmes reminds us that God is not a vending machine but does invite us to ask for what we hope for, to search and find God's plan for us, and to knock and God will open the door. In fact, he states that "God is the door." It is good to inquire, better to ask than to be certain, and to continually seek God. What God provides to and for us is always good. Jamie closed our discussion by reading a reflection by Christianne Chase.
- 3. Agenda:** Members reviewed the agenda.
 ***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. The motion passed.
- 4. Joys, Concerns & Spirit Sightings:**
 Members celebrated Ashley Birk and the years she has spent with us. She will be leaving the Bozeman pulpit soon. We are so grateful that she has given her time and talents to our Presbytery. Members thanked her for her leadership, holding our feet to the fire, praying for and with us, her openness to scripture, and her teaching and mentoring abilities. She helped us get to the heart of things with graciousness and love.
 Other joys and concerns: Jamie shared that the day is her one-year anniversary from a very difficult life experience and she and her daughters are doing well. Caroline will have surgery on November 20. Today is Veteran's Day. We celebrate them all including Melissa's sister who recently underwent surgery from lung cancer. Kathy has been diagnosed with parasites. Dave prayed for all our joys and concerns.
- 5. Spirit Sightings:** November 9 was a day filled with the Spirit at the Miles City church when two people joined the membership, their three children were baptized, and full slate of candidates for offices was presented and elected at the congregational meeting that followed the service. It is the 2nd anniversary of Karolee's ordination, an event we

celebrated at Butte in November 2023, and the church is now partnering with a daycare to conduct a food drive. Pastor Laura Wood has started her ministry at Deer Lodge.

6. Vision Statement: Karolee read the presbytery's vision statement.

7. Approval of Minutes:

***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the September 9 stated meeting and the minutes of the October 1 special meeting of the Leadership Cabinet. The motion passed.

8. General Presbyter's Report (Attachment A): Kathy offered insights from her recent trip to Turkey, re-iterated that trust in institutions is low, and many do not understand our denomination's interconnectional polity as seen in some of her recent interactions with churches. She asked for prayers for Dillon and its PNC and addressed Jamie's letter concerning the MWS examination at our recent presbytery meeting. As we think ahead to a possible trip to Zimbabwe next year, Jody McDevitt's name was given as one interested in being part of the organizing team. Please read Kathy's full report.

9. Stated Clerk Report (Attachment B): Caroline reported on the email vote taken September 25-27. Everyone voted in favor of giving Neshangwes a \$2,000 stipend for their work with us at the recent presbytery meeting, of giving the presbytery's meeting offering to Hope's Promise, and to give two churches with the highest number of people and the highest percentage of people attending the October presbytery meeting a small gift and donate \$500 in those church's names to 2 mission program's chosen by Neshangwes. She reported which churches have hosted meetings of the presbytery since 2021. Members discussed where we might hold 2026 meetings. Dave will call Forsyth and ask if they might host a 2026 meeting. Caroline will contact Deer Lodge to ask them the same question.

10. Reflections on October Presbytery Meeting: The evening cornhole tournament and morning mission project were fun. Thanks to Dave for organizing them. The Spirit was felt throughout all our time with Paul and Lydia Neshanwe. Could a short study guide be created to go along with the recordings of their time with us? Perhaps Jody McDevitt and other retired pastors could create this. The proposed mission trip to Zimbabwe was well received. Coleen from Denver works with Hope's Promise to coordinate such trips and is willing to work with us. Sadness was voiced that more people didn't join in singing along and dancing as people from Zimbabwe led us in song. LC received a letter concerning the

presbytery. We had conversation and have made some recommendations to PMT concerning process.

11. Representation/Nominations: There is confusion about the team not having asked Sarah to serve as Camping & Youth Ministry Team moderator for next year. Her letter to LC, which was received in August only stated that she would no longer serve as Camp Director. She heard via email that Nancy Pehl had been asked to serve as the team's Moderator in 2026. Sarah deserves an apology from both Leadership Cabinet and

Rep/Nom. We may need to converse with Sarah and Nancy together about the position, but first Dave will call and talk with Sarah. LC may need to have a special meeting about this situation. After reviewing the Standing rules concerning team moderators, it is clear the Standing Rules need some revision. Caroline will work on this. Meanwhile the issue of the team's 2026 moderator needs to be addressed very soon. Sarah's term as moderator doesn't expire until the end of the year. The proposal from Rep/Nom to set aside the Standing Rules to allow Nancy Pehl a 3rd term will require a 4/5th vote of presbytery attendees. Dave will talk more with Sandy Welch and get back to LC on next steps.

LC will continue discussions about revamping the Camp committee, possibly creating a "board of operations" to run and care for the camp itself. The ministry piece might still fall under the Camping & Youth Ministry Committee.

12. Personnel Report: The transition Team is having exploratory conversations with people in and outside of presbytery. They hope to have a report to LC in February that will go before presbytery at the March meeting.

13. PMT Update: Many churches are in the search process, so PMT is very busy. They are considering creating a standard list of questions to be asked of each candidate that comes before presbytery for examination. There is discussion about whether a candidate should be examined before or after a church has elected to call the pastors at a congregational meeting. LC members were split on which process works better.

14. Camping & Youth Update: A ski retreat is planned for the last weekend in February with the Bozeman church hosting the group.

15. Treasurer Report: All received the September financial reports. Four churches have not yet paid 2025 per capita, but 98% of expected per capita has been received. FPC Bozeman plans to apply for a PILP loan to help with the cost of a new roof. The church has almost reached its goal for the \$50,000 match required to receive the loan. Approval to apply for the loan will come before the presbytery in the future.

16. New Business: The Stanford church asked how to bring forward a change in how per capita is assessed. Melissa will have Stanford write a letter to LC about this issue.

17. Closing:

***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed.

Jamie closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk

Approved 12-9-2025

| Leadership Cabinet Action Items | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Responsible Person(s) | Action Item | Due Date |
| Ongoing Action Items | | |
| Personnel committee | Update Presbytery's Personnel Policy | Ongoing |
| Jamie, Dave, Caroline | Create a monthly presbytery newsletter to communicate regularly with our churches and pastors. | No date set |
| LC members | Seek people with a passion for earth care who would work with St. Andrew in bringing concerns/ideas to LC and presbytery | Ongoing |
| Caroline | Create and send information on mission pledges and where the money goes to churches | No timeline |
| New Action Items | | |
| Dave | Contact Forsyth church and ask if they will host a 2026 presbytery meeting. | Dec.9 |
| Caroline | Contact Deel Lodge church and ask if they will host a 2026 presbytery meeting | Dec. 9 |
| Dave | Talk with Sarah Tunall about service on camp team | ASAP |
| Caroline | Work on possible revisions to Standing Rules concerning team moderators | ASAP |
| Dave | Talk with Sandy Welch concerning Rep/Nom issues | ASAP |
| LC members | Think of name to nominate as MWS member of Rep/Nom and a name as moderator of Rep/Nom | Dec. 9 |

Attachment A

General Presbyter Report to Leadership Cabinet November 11, 2025 Rev. Kathy Goodrich

Reflections on the baptistries of ancient churches in Turkey – our Call to the baptized for cruciform, surrendered life. *I have been crucified with Christ ... It is no long I but Christ who lives...*

LC –Preparation and follow up from presbytery on wide range of things. Prep for LC meeting and docket. Transition Team - I Been in Communication with Janet and we found a mutual time to meet later this week as the team does research and listening. I am working on compiling input from other presbyteries regarding transitions. Communicate periodically with Ric. Among a range of things.

Calls, searches, roles of PNC's, PMT, presbytery, what is spiritual discernment and corporate discernment A learning opportunity for Yellowstone and the Range of concerns, questions. See PMT.

PMT – Very active 2 months in MANY PMT areas including church transitions and searches, pastoral needs transitions (references of various sorts) , oversight of various categories of pastors, officer training, CRE's, officer/session trainings,

I attended Bozeman's service and congregational meeting calling Nicole and have spoken privately with Nicole several times.

Calls, searches, roles of PNC's, PMT, presbytery, what is spiritual discernment and corporate discernment A learning opportunity for Yellowstone and the Range of concerns, questions

A crisis = danger and opportunity in discipleship and leadership training needs, and spiritual need in churches and presbytery

Challenging time as institutional trust is low, and as fewer and fewer sessions, PNC's, elders/officers have much understanding of basic core reformed theology of the PCUSA or of the why's and functioning of our connectional Presbyterian polity operates or that we are connectional, or that ALL calls or commissions are a 3-way partnership. "The Presbytery" and "the PMT" are often seen in as intruders into what is their exclusive role and 'rights,' especially in the process of calling a pastor or contracting with a CRE.

A sampling of comments PMT or I have heard.

"Why do we need to attend or send anyone to presbytery meetings?"

"Why do you have a say about what or who we want or what we want to do?" "Why does presbytery have anything to say or do when we know who we want to be our pastor?"

"Why do people ask all these complicated, picky questions about technical things like theology?"

"Why does all this about Reformed theology matter? No one understands all that. What does it matter? No one ever uses or preaches on any of that."

PMT has met, worked, prayed and wrestled harder than I have ever witness in almost 20 years.

Many felt and expressed deep concerns, hurt, confusion, frustration, and much more. Many did not feel there was adequate theological examination nor the true freedom to express or vote conscience captive to the Word of God under the circumstances.

I was approached by multiple people Friday and Saturday. For follow up several conversations with Debbie B as PMT co moderator & with PMT members & Caroline in the day & a half before I left for vacation and Study leave. All agree there were many factors on many levels

And PMT confidentiality issues have made this more complex.

PMT worked so hard & wrestled with one of the most complex situations I have seen in 22 years. I lost many days of vacation over this summer & even more sleep. As did others.

This is a major topic in pmt's agenda this Thursday, they started into it last month, and are evaluating & working on many factors to address, timing of and process for PMT & presbytery examinations, processes & theological questions. I have been asking PMT to consider some major revisions to our examinations based on learning from polity and EP resources. Question ALL candidates are asked regardless.

What is communal spiritual discernment and how can we improve this?

This crisis is an opportunity to prayerfully and thoughtfully to address deep underlying issues as well such as elder / officer training, training and ?Written materials presented to sessions and congregations as well as PNC's; what is spiritual & communal discernment.

How we need the Spirit's protection, and guidance & the mind of Christ .

I and others are praying for God to take what could be used for ill and division and do needed(my opinion) transformative redemptive good.

CRE's- exciting & working on updating our handbook (in consultation with our Synod presbyteries) and work with many at once. We will likely be having several come before presbytery early in 2026 as most will have completed classes. I continue to learn from and share with PMT a variety of ways other presbyteries are adapting/updating CRE ministry and commissions.

RepNom – Hard at work, prayerful, and making some progress. I met with team many times in September and in November, and again this Friday. Multiple consults with team moderator. They discussed root and systemic needs, trends and changing realities as well as specific people.

Camping and Youth – Winter Ski retreat will be February 27 – March 1 in Bozeman. See email. Save the date and share the information sent out with parent and teens. Camp's 90th in 2026, & I have had beginning conversations regarding that celebration, looking to the future and starting a camp endowment for our old facilities. LC received a letter Monday.

Global Church, Mutuality in Mission – Several have expressed interest in perhaps going on a trip /pilgrimage, Jody McDevitt is interested in serving on a Task force for a trip to Zimbabwe. Praise God!

Synod – Sad death of dear Candice Sweet, our Stated Clerk. EP's are learning about what is and isn't being done and stepping up in some areas.

Attachment B

Stated Clerk Report November 11, 2025

All members of the Leadership Cabinet voted in favor of the following email vote taken between September 25 and 27:

“That the Leadership Cabinet approve the following:

- That we offer Paul and Lydia Neshwange a \$2,000.00 stipend for their work with us at the October meeting of Yellowstone Presbytery
- That the offering taken at the October presbytery meeting be given to Hope's Promise, a program Neshangwes are deeply involved with.
- That two gifts in the amount of \$ 500.00 each be given to _____ & _____ (2 programs of Neshangwe's choosing) in honor of the two churches in Yellowstone Presbytery that send the greatest number of people and the greatest percentage of the church congregation to the meeting.

Places where we have held presbytery meetings since 2002:

2022: Billings 1st (Feb), Bozeman (May), Miles City (Nov)

2023: Bozeman (Mar), Lewistown (May), Butte (Nov)

2024: Billings 1st (Mar), Dillon (May), Billings 1st (Nov)

2025: Butte (Mar), Bozeman (May), Billings 1st (Nov)

I have worked with Ric concerning posting on the website and plan to get more items posted in the repository in the next weeks.

I have emailed all churches, pastors, and treasurers notice of their per capita assessment for 2026. I will be sending them a letter about the annual reporting of statistics by December 1 and will include the per capita letter a second time. They will receive both an email and a hard copy so, hopefully, it will not get lost in the shuffle and busyness of the holidays.

I will complete the Dubuque/Rocky Mountain CRE classes December 9.

I will have surgery on November 20 but will be available to respond to emails and phone after a few days. Total recovery time is unknown, but many say within 2 weeks I will be in pretty good shape. We'll see.

Caroline Fleming
Stated Clerk