

Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership Cabinet
June 2, 2026

Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership Cabinet met via Zoom for its scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Cabinet members present:

RE Julie Boksich, Moderator

RE Russ Kline

MWS Karolee Larson

RE Danny Pratt

MWS Dave Thompson

Members excused:

RE Melissa Bell

MWS Jamie Schmeling

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

1. Opening: Moderator Julie Boksich opened the meeting with prayer.

2. Dwelling in the Word & Prayer: Members read I Cor. 12: 1-31, I Cor. 13: 13 and I Cor. 14: 12 and discussed having been given gifts of the Spirit for the common good, not just for ourselves. We are poorer when we don't have others with us. The hand can't work when the elbow doesn't show up. We also need to be humble enough to know our gifts are only part of the process, but proud enough to know the Spirit has given us gifts. Our worship and praise flows out of the fact that all comes from God. Evangelism is how we use our gifts. Some work up front and are very visible. Some work behind the scenes with less visibility. But all are valuable to the work of the kingdom. Kathy requested each one to state the prayer request that is on their heart. She then lifted those concerns in prayer to end the discussion.

3. Declaration of a Quorum: A quorum was declared present.

4. Transition plans (Attachments A& B; also see Attachment C in the May 21 minutes): Members reviewed two possible ways we might evaluate our root needs, one working together "from the inside," and one bringing in outside consultants to assist in the evaluation process. "Yellowstone Presbytery Relationship Planning" may be a good way for us to begin the evaluation process. We might use leaders and liaisons to visit each church and let people talk about their needs and hopes. If we feel that we need to do more, we could possibly hire a consultant firm. Jamie offered the team a position description for a "Relationship Officer." If we decide to hire a person for that position, he or she could help us in assessing presbytery needs and how we can meet them. After discussion, it was decided that LC needs to meet with the PMT to discuss needs and processes.

***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to charge the moderators of Leadership Cabinet and the Pastoral Ministry Team to find the best means of meeting together to discuss Yellowstone Presbytery's root needs and how we can meet them in this transition period. The motion passed.

5. Agenda: Since we started with discussion about the transition due to people's schedules, the team amended the agenda to state that the transition discussion came immediately after Dwelling in the Word.

***Action:** A motion was made to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed.

6. Approval of minutes from May 21, 2026: Karolee noted that Jamie, not her, noted the duplicated item in the table of actions.

***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2026 meeting as corrected. The motion passed.

7. General Presbyter's Report: Kathy praised the team's ability and willingness to slow down and review all options, seeking God's will before making any decisions concerning the transition process. She noted that the more prayer and listening we can do, the more trust we can build with each other and all churches in the presbytery.

8. Treasurer's Report (Attachment C & D): Ric commented on the Partnership Funds line item established in 2001 to help small churches with needed projects. There is \$44,000 in the principle and \$4370 spendable. Members decided it would be best to ask PMT to recommend how these funds get used. Ric will create a synopsis about the Partnership Funds for the PMT explaining how the fund was established and how it is meant to be used. He will also look into placing funds into a higher-yield investment fund.

Concerning the payout that will be made to Kathy upon her retirement, she will be owed 2 weeks' vacation, some study leave days (she has 11 days left), and the balance of the funds she raised for her salary this year in excess of the budget deficit for account 4001, Admin support for one half year.

9. Personnel Sub-committee: The team has received one application for the treasurer position thus far. Applications are due on Friday. After reviewing the applications, personnel will interview applicants and bring a recommendation to LC on June 9th (the next meeting).

10. June 12-13 Presbytery Meeting: Kathy shared that she chose the Intermountain Children's Home and Services in Helena to receive the presbytery meeting offering. It has been a long-time favorite mission program for her and George that offers excellent programs for helping children restore their lives.

11. Pastoral Ministry Team (Attachment E): The team continues to work with a way to offer churches pastoral leadership through a process of hiring a person not from the PC(USA).

12. Camping & Youth: Russ will take some youth to the camp this weekend to continue painting. The stove needs fixed or replaced.

13. Closing: By consensus, the team agreed to meet on June 9 at 1:p.m. to discuss remaining items on the agenda and to receive the report from personnel. Dave closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk

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
Dave, Julie, Kathy & Caroline	Serve as planning team for June Presbytery meeting	June 12
New Action Items		
Ric & Kathy	create a synopsis about the Partnership Funds for the PMT explaining how the fund was established and how it is meant to be used.	By June 30

ATTACHMENT A

Please note: The document below is in keeping with Scripture, Reformed theology, and Reformed Polity. It engages the “Body of Christ” within Yellowstone Presbytery working together in the relational culture that we all embrace. This document is fluid in that some minor changes may take place as we move through the Mission study process, but the main focus of building relationships through visioning and strategic planning will remain the same.

Yellowstone Presbytery Relationship Building Visioning & Strategic Planning

At the May 12, 2026, Leadership Cabinet  meeting, Dave and Caroline reported that they had spent time researching the hiring of a company/consultant to help with visioning & planning. After evaluating what they learned and the present and future needs of the Presbytery they agreed that the Presbytery, should not spend out of our small reserves thousands of dollars on a process and internal conversations that leaders in the presbytery have experience with and could help facilitate. They also recognized that an interim person would be helpful in maintaining contacts in the Presbytery. To proceed with looking for a General Presbyter and/or an Interim General Presbyter, they suggested that following the pattern of a Mission Study (such as churches do when they are seeking a pastor) would bring people together across the presbytery, strengthen relationships and give everyone input into our contexts and congregations, better understanding of who we are as Yellowstone Presbytery and what God may be calling us to be and do in our future.

This study process would:

- Provide each church, pastors/CRE's and Presbytery volunteers to study and participate, be known and valued as they are listened to, prayed with, and prayed for.
- Provide opportunities to increase trust as the Presbytery ‘family’ gathers, listens, prays, dreams, works together, led by peers.
- Provide every church's leaders and congregation members to express ways Yellowstone Presbytery might be more helpful in the future in connecting, equipping and encouraging them to discern and fulfill God's hopes and dreams for the future of their church.
- Invite every church's leaders and congregation members to express ways they are now willing to participate in and contribute to the life and mission of the Presbytery as it is only TOGETHER that the body of Christ is able to embody Christ and fulfill its calling and mission.

- Provide insight as to the needs, hopes, and opportunities to partner and collaborate in Yellowstone Presbytery, and beyond for the future
- Provide deeper relationships and clarity to each church as to God's call and opportunities for them and their participation and role in the Presbytery, recognizing that **there is no presbytery apart from our congregations and members.** "Presbytery is Us," together the body of Christ, not "them." ("Them" applies to corporate or government entities not the body of Christ and our Presbyterian polity and connectional ways of being.)

Mission Study Process:

Key leaders from Leadership Cabinet, Pastoral Ministry Team & others with experience in visioning and experience and gifts for such a participatory process would:

- Place emphasis on Prayer and Discerning God's Will asking:
 - Who are we as Yellowstone Presbytery consisting of 22 churches, including gifts, passions, experiences, assets, / buildings/camps/, our contexts and the natural world in Montana, assets of ALL kind (Asset mapping) ?
 - What are the reality, needs, trends, of our many communities and our region in Montana?
 - Who is God calling Yellowstone Presbytery to be?
 - Where is God calling Yellowstone Presbytery to go?
- Engage in a mission study that involves dwelling in Bible passages and stories, prayer, and honest & thoughtful listening, observing & researching *in each congregation* of the 22 churches (internal, both members and friends) and *in each church's mission field* (external – neighborhoods, county, organizations, schools, social services, medical entities, etc.) as an important way to discern the ministry direction in which God is leading each church, and then the Presbytery as a whole.

Draw on expertise of Rev. Laura Wood in Appreciative Inquiry, valuable with churches and non-profits.

Have an interactive retreat time together which includes but is not limited to Asset Mapping.(Such as *The Power of Asset Mapping: How your Congregation Can Act on It's Gifts*, Luther Snow)

- With input from PMT liaisons (past and present), the team would develop questions for a listening study (tailored to individual churches and contexts, i.e. Jordan would be different from Bozeman)
- PMT liaisons (present and past), with assistance as needed from leaders in Yellowstone Presbytery, would conduct interviews and have conversations with session members and congregations from each church.

- Synthesize gathered information, gather in groups to discuss, explore, pray and dream with the Holy Spirit, adapt further and eventually make final report.

ATTACHMENT B

RELATIONSHIP OFFICER (???)

POSITION DESCRIPTION

PRESBYTERY OF YELLOWSTONE

ACCOUNTABILITY: The Relationship Officer is accountable to the Presbytery through the Head of Staff to the Leadership Cabinet and its Personnel Subgroup. In the absence of a General Presbyter, the Corporate President will serve as Head of Staff.

PURPOSE: The Relationship Officer is to help assess and maintain existing relationships and connections within the network of 22 rural churches in the Presbytery of Yellowstone during this time of transition of the retiring General Presbyter and the next Presbyter is appointed – or as deemed appropriate by the Leadership Cabinet. The Relationship Officer is also responsible for helping build new relationships and connections within the Presbytery.

HOURS: This is a TEMPORARY, part-time position with flexible hours.

PAY: This position receives a monthly stipend of _____ and _____ for approved job specific travel to the churches or regions for meeting with the churches across the Presbytery.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To assess and evaluate the current connections of all 22 churches of the Presbytery making use of use interviews, surveys, listening sessions, focus groups, site visits, document review, or other appropriate methods in order to pay particular attention to:
 - a. Participation in Presbytery meetings, events, committees, training, and shared ministries.
 - b. Satisfaction with Presbytery communication, responsiveness, and support.
 - c. Perceived value of Presbytery membership and connection.
 - d. Barriers to participation, including distance, time, technology, staffing, trust, relevance, or cost.
 - e. Congregational awareness of Presbytery resources, mission, and leadership.
 - f. Opportunities for stronger relationships, collaboration, and mutual support.
2. To make new contacts with all the 22 churches of the Presbytery.
3. To keep accurate summaries of conversations, including insights, needs, challenges of the churches, and the community context of the churches.
4. To identify barriers and bridges that are present in the connections between the churches and the Presbytery which affect participation, trust, collaboration and commitment to the shared ministry of Jesus Christ.
5. To gather in put from all types of persons (pastors, church officers, lay leaders, church members, etc.) where possible for building connections.
6. To develop a clear action plan in consultation with the Moderator of Leadership Cabinet (LC) and the Co-Moderators of the Pastoral Ministries Team (PMT) to strengthen and increase connections across the Presbytery.

7. To analyze findings of all collected information to make practical recommendations to the LC for intentional relationship building across the Presbytery for the immediate 12 – 36 months.
8. To present progress reports to the Leadership Cabinet, potentially attending meetings as requested by the Moderator of LC.

EVALUATION: The Personnel Committee of the Leadership Cabinet will conduct a six-month probationary review, and at least annual reviews thereafter, and evaluation of the incumbent. The focus of these reviews/evaluations will be on the accomplishment of the position's principal responsibilities and the quality of the incumbent's performance.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. The person shall be a member of and regularly active in one of the churches of the Presbytery of Yellowstone.
2. The person shall be guided by and supportive of the vision of the Presbytery of Yellowstone.
3. The person shall already possess knowledge of how a presbytery operates, the administration, operations, and programs. Knowledge of the mission, connectional nature and relational culture is preferred.
4. The person shall be an excellent listener, keep good records, and ask quality questions. Persons with previous experience of these skills is preferred.
5. Basic computer skills are required, such as email, report writing (i.e. Microsoft Word use) and pdf documentation.
6. Access to the internet and ability to work remotely is required.
7. The ability to travel to the churches in person and or potentially on zoom if necessary is required.
8. The ideal candidate shall possess experience with maintaining confidentiality, professional boundaries, and appropriate interpersonal skills to work with diverse persons across the Presbytery and the committees within the Presbytery.

MODE OF HIRING AND TERMS: This is a temporary position hired by the Leadership Cabinet. The Personnel Subcommittee will be responsible for reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and making a recommendation to the LC.

The Relationship Officer is a temporary, non-elected position of the Presbytery of Yellowstone; therefore, once the work is completed during this time of transition, the position will no longer cease to exist. The hired Relationship Officer is expected to complete the work in the requested time.

TO APPLY: Submit your resume, including relevant experience, Presbytery involvement history, and references with a cover letter to _____.

**Paths & Processes for calling pastors & lay pastors
from outside the PCUSA in our ongoing, deepening pastor shortage –**

QUESTION: What are the challenges, & what may be *God's opportunities and invitations* here to the presbytery & PMT, to churches/sessions/PNC's/members?

Some Background, Trends and Realities churches seeking pastors/lay pastors face are:

1. There is an ongoing and deepening national pastor shortage in the PCUSA and denominations with which we are in *full communion* – UCC, RCA and ELCA, as well as a wide range of mainline, semi-mainline denominations as well as the Catholic church.
2. #1 is compounded by the reality that it is increasingly difficult for small churches in rural and/or what may be considered by some as 'remote' locations to find pastors, and now even lay pastors, who are a good fit for the church and the congregation's theology, mission and needs.
3. There are many demographic, cultural, generational, institutional, spiritual, economic factors involved. At Yellowstone Presbytery, our General Presbyter has never had as many networking requests and contacts, even pleas, from other presbyteries, search committees and headhunters/consultants as we have the last few months. The shortage and desperation are increasing. (This is true for other presbyteries and denominations throughout the Rocky Mountain west as well.)
4. Some churches and denominations are continuing to try to "Canoe the Mountains*" with predictable results and sometimes have some who feel anxious or frustrated resort to blame both within the church or at the presbytery. More flexible, adaptive churches often are gaining. (See excellent book, *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger. This metaphor identifies the reality, choices, and the need to adapt to God's realities and opportunities in the next season faced by existing churches/leaders in these rapidly shifting times.) The rigidity of some denominations (i.e., the Episcopal church) is resulting in "mostly qualified" pastors becoming discouraged or prevented from serving in many pastoral aspects of smaller churches in towns and rural areas.
5. While searching outside the denomination's CLC system does not guarantee a church will secure pastoral leadership, a simultaneous search through CLC and beyond, can for some churches, sometimes yield possible candidates. It also yields a majority who are not familiar with Reformed theology or our denomination and unlikely to "fit" in a variety of ways.
6. Of the 22 churches in Yellowstone Presbytery, only eight will have a pastor or CRE/lay pastor as of July 1: Anaconda (CRE), Billings 1st, Bozeman, Butte, Deer Lodge (Interim), Lewistown (CRE), Miles City, and Philipsburg.

QUESTION: Through all this, what may the Holy Spirit be saying and inviting us to? Prayer, continued LIVING our vision and equipping, empowering and encouraging?

In light of the difficult picture all this paints, we, in Yellowstone Presbytery and, indeed, across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *must*, in addition to our ongoing networking and collaboration with other denominations with whom we are in Full Communion or officially in correspondence with, *be open to* prayerfully seek new and creative ways to identify pastoral leaders who may come from another background than what we are used to who can serve our churches with "energy, intelligence, imagination, and love." What this might look like will require all of us working within the spirit and provisions of our reformed polity, keeping our Reformed theology, mission, and ecumenical traditions in our sights as we explore and craft processes and paths which can offer those from another background who DO want to join us, a way to do so. This can happen even if the person's background has not followed the traditional routes to pastoral leadership that "we have always done in the PCUSA, or which we have been used to in a world which no longer exists.

There are ways to work with and educate those who have a desire to learn about and understand the Reformed theology, connectional ecclesiology, polity, missiology and culture and sense a call to become part of the Presbyterian Church. Yellowstone Presbytery's PMT is not only willing, but also excited, to work with churches to develop ways to smooth the path to pastoral leadership for people who have this sense of call and desire.

Thus, should someone qualify in all of the above, there is a path, processes and requirements which can be put in place that should satisfy both a congregation's needs and the denomination's requirements and Yellowstone Presbytery's needs. The process includes but is not limited to:

- Feeling a sincere call to the PCUSA and a desire to join the PCUSA
- Sensing a call to a church and its ministry, including attendance and participation in the life and work of Yellowstone Presbytery
- Is willing to work with the PMT to fulfill a range of requirements.

General Presbyter Kathy Goodrich has been researching this possibility since last summer and found a presbytery who had a person with ministry gifts, a sense of call, and had some history of ministry. The person was also working informally with a particular church/fresh expression/church plant.

The path/process that presbytery followed to train this person well in pastoral leadership was:

1. Pastorally gifted person joined the PCUSA church as a member (in which they were already involved);
2. Person studied, accepted a call from congregation to become an Elder, then was ordained as an elder;
3. Person entered the presbytery's CRE process & completed it;
4. Person was commissioned as a CRE/Lay pastor to the ministry the Spirit had called them to and continued a fruitful ministry with the church - win/win/win.

Below is the outline for Yellowstone Kathy shared with the PMT team, and Stated Clerk Caroline for prayer, discussion, exploration and discernment and which is affirmed by them:

1. A person presents who has researched and read our *PCUSA Constitution (parts 1 and 2)*, sees themselves as being able to affirm our Ordination vows, and is willing to submit to and work with our PMT and its processes

NOTE: PMT is working on what other agreements and conditions need to be expanded here

2. The person would need to join the PCUSA through a local congregation (likely the one to which they are sensing a call and to which the PNC/session and PMT are in full agreement this can go forward)
3. Person will be elected as a Ruling Elder
4. Person will go through the CRE process to become eligible to become a CRE for the congregation
5. Person will commit to attending and taking an active part in the life and min. of the presbytery. There are still questions, possible steps, and details to be explored and crafted together, but PMT is committed to collaborating with each congregation in their particular circumstance as together we seek *God's* will for *God's* future and mission of a congregation.

Draft May 29, 2026

