

Special Meeting of Yellowstone Presbytery

August 28, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom*

25-034. Special Meeting Purpose: Yellowstone Presbytery met at a Special Presbytery Meeting via Zoom on August 28, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. to act on the following matters:

1. To examine Rev. Laura Wood and to act on PMT's recommendation that Laura Wood serve as a stated supply pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Deer Lodge, for a term no longer than 3 years and be received as a member of Yellowstone Presbytery. (See Attachment A: statement of faith and short, personal profile)
2. To approve the Stated Pastoral Supply Covenant between Rev Laura Wood and First Presbyterian Church, Deer Lodge, Montana, including the terms of call. (See Attachment B)
3. To elect Rev. Jamie Schmeling, an RE yet to be named, and an alternate person yet to be named, as ordination exam readers.

25-035. Attendance:

Ruling Elders in Attendance: RE Cal Boyle, St. Timothy's Chapel, RE Cheryl Banks, LC member, RE James Tarr, St. Andrew commissioner, RE Julie Boksich, Church of the Big Hole Commissioner, RE Debbie Ernst, Bozeman 1st commissioner, RE Lisa Cole, Deer Lodge 1st commissioner, RE Marilyn___, Deer Lodge guest, RE Tom Cotton, Deer Lodge guest and chairperson of the Deer Lodge PNC, RE Melissa Bell, Presbytery Moderator, RE Stephanie Bergstrom, Manhattan commissioner; RE Debbie Blackburn, Co-Moderator of the Pastoral Ministry Team, RE Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk, RE Nancy Pehl, Terry commissioner.

Minister Members in Attendance:

Ashley Birk, David Bierschwale, Kimberly Briggs, Warren (Rusty) Craig, Dick Davis, Mary Davis, Debbie Funke, George Goodrich, Kathy Goodrich, Karolee Larson, Jody McDevitt, Neva Rathbun and Dave Thompson.

Guest: Rev. Laura Wood, Candidate for Stated Supply at Deer Lodge 1st Presbyterian Church

Absences are not noted for special meetings of Yellowstone Presbytery.

25-036. Meeting Opening: Moderator Melissa Bell called the meeting to order and reviewed the call for this special meeting. Melissa asked Rev. George Goodrich to lead Presbyters in prayer. A quorum was declared present and the Stated Clerk asked everyone present to send her an email stating presence at the meeting and the capacity in which they are attending. The Stated Clerk announced that Charles Brown will fill the open slot for the nominated ordination exam reader and Carol Brown

25-037. Introduction and examination of Rev. Laura Wood: Rev. Laura Wood was introduced as the candidate for Stated Supply Pastor at 1st Presbyterian Church of Deer Lodge. She shared her faith journey and discernment process that has led to her accepting the position. Tom Cotton, chairperson of the Deer Lodge PNC, reviewed the PNC's search process that led them to unanimously selecting Laura as their candidate. The floor was opened to questions

Presbyters had for Laura concerning how Presbyterian polity fits with her personal theology, how much she would be involved in the process of what happens next at Deer Lodge, how much she feels aligned with the beliefs of the congregation, what she has found to be most challenging in her ministry, and her learning curve as she begins service in a town where the largest employer is the state prison. Laura also shared what she does for fun, how her gifts might be used in Yellowstone Presbytery.

***Action:** A motion was made and seconded to suspend the examination. The motion passed.

Laura was excused to a waiting room while Presbyters discussed the interview. Debbie Blackburn presented the PMT motion:

***Action:** PMT recommends Laura Wood serve as a Stated Supply Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Deer Lodge, for a term no longer than 3 years and be received as a member of Yellowstone Presbytery. The motion passed unanimously.

Laura was invited back into the meeting and welcomed into Yellowstone Presbytery. The terms of call for the position were presented and reviewed with Laura. It was noted that the housing allowance may be lowered if necessary. The second PMT motion was presented:

***Action:** To approve the Stated Pastoral Supply Covenant between Rev Laura Wood and First Presbyterian Church, Deer Lodge, Montana, including the terms of call. The motion passed unanimously.

Rev. Laura Wood will begin her work at Deer Lodge 1st Presbyterian Church on October 9.

25-037. Election of Ordination Exam Readers: The following people were nominated to serve as Ordination Exam readers for 2025: MWS Jamie Schmeling, RE Charles Brown, and RE Carol Brown was nominated as the alternate reader. The PMT recommendation was read:

***Action:** To elect Rev. Jamie Schmeling, and RE Charles Brown as ordination exam readers and to elect Carol Brown as the alternate ordination exam reader. The motion passed.

25-038. Announcements and Closing: Attendees were reminded to send an email to caroline@yellowstonepcusa.org reporting their attendance. The next Presbytery meeting is October 3 & 4 at Billings 1st Presbyterian Church. Synod Assembly meets September 28 & 29 in Denver.

With no further business, Laura Wood closed the meeting with prayer at the request of Moderator Melissa Bell.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk

**Covenant for Stated Pastoral Supply Between Rev Laura Wood
and First Presbyterian Church, Deer Lodge, Montana
Service from: October 9, 2025 to October 10, 2027**

Pastoral Responsibilities:

- Plan, prepare, and lead the worship services
- Administer the sacraments and officiate at weddings, baptisms, and funerals
- Be a teacher of the Word by providing spiritual and administrative leadership to the congregation, including its Christian Education ministries
- Moderate Session and Congregational meetings, train newly elected officers
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the Deacons
- Engage in pastoral care, such as hospital visitations when allowed, be aware of and provide support for those with special concerns and struggles
- Disciple, equip, empower and challenge members and friends of the congregation to grow deeper in faith, discover and identify their individual gifts, and participate in ministry and mission; enabling them to know they are valued and needed in this body of Christ and sent into the world as Christ's ambassadors
- Be an active member of Yellowstone Presbytery
- Lead and equip the church in understanding, engagement with, and mission in the wider community
- Nurture one's own physical and spiritual life and love for God, engaging in regular spiritual practices, including Sabbath keeping, and praying for the congregation and community.

Congregational Responsibilities:

- partner with the pastor in the shared work of ministry
- pursue an active faith life, seeking to continually grow in faith and respond to God's callings
- support the pastor in her ministry
- provide regular financial compensation according to the terms outlined below
- provide a performance review to the pastor at least annually
- pray for the pastor during this contract period
- participate in the wider ministry and mission of Yellowstone Presbytery, when needed/as appropriate

This agreement may be terminated by either party (session or pastor) upon 45 days written notice.

TERMS:

The pastor is employed on a two thirds basis serving approximately 26 hours per week, and will be compensated as follows:

Effective Salary split between Cash salary \$13,000 and Housing Allowance \$32,000

Board of Pensions fees Health (16%) \$7200

Reimbursable Medical flexible Spending account \$2000

SECA - \$3000

Professional Expense (mileage Books) Allowance \$1000 reimbursable

Study allowance (can be carried over up to 3 years) \$600

Total Package \$58,800

Other benefits:

4 weeks of vacation including 4 Sundays

2 weeks of study leave including 2 Sundays

Follow the Yellowstone Presbytery Family Leave Policy as attached.

One time Moving costs - Negotiated.

APPROVALS:

The session approved this contract and its conditions on _____

Signed: (clerk of session) _____ Date: _____

I agree to accept the terms of this contract.

Signed: (pastor) _____ Date: _____

The presbytery approved this contract and its conditions on _____

Signed: (Stated Clerk) _____ Date: _____