

Small Churches, Like Mustard Seeds, Grow Where God Sows Them

The past year has revealed the resilience and determination with which all POJ congregations continued to be in ministry. This has been especially so for smaller congregations with fewer than 100 members. Nearly two-thirds of POJ's 98 congregations fall into this category, ranging in size from four to 98 members.

Kerra English, covenant pastor at Ashland Church, addressed the unique reality of small churches in her sermon to the presbytery at the 108th stated meeting on June 15.

"For our small churches to not just exist but to thrive, we have to quit sending congregations the message that their numbers are what tell the story of their ministry," English said. "That message becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and churches that are told they must be everything for everybody in order to be valued exhaust themselves... If God has planted them where they are, who are we to stop them?"

Lisa Salita also spoke at the meeting on her experience in small churches. She currently serves as the interim pastor at Madison Church.

"It is a joy to see the gratitude that smaller congregations have for their legacy," she

said. "It informs their desire to keep going and to make sure they are there for the next generation."

Both English and Salita have witnessed the pressures on small churches to balance funds, ministries, and services when attendance and resources decrease.



Rev. Kerra English, covenant pastor at Ashland Church, led worship at the 108th presbytery meeting. Read her sermon, which referenced both the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) and the story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:19-37), at presbyteryofthejames.com/they-didnt-know.



"I have seen difficult discussions and decisions over what [larger church] leaders would consider to be tiny amounts of money," shared Salita.

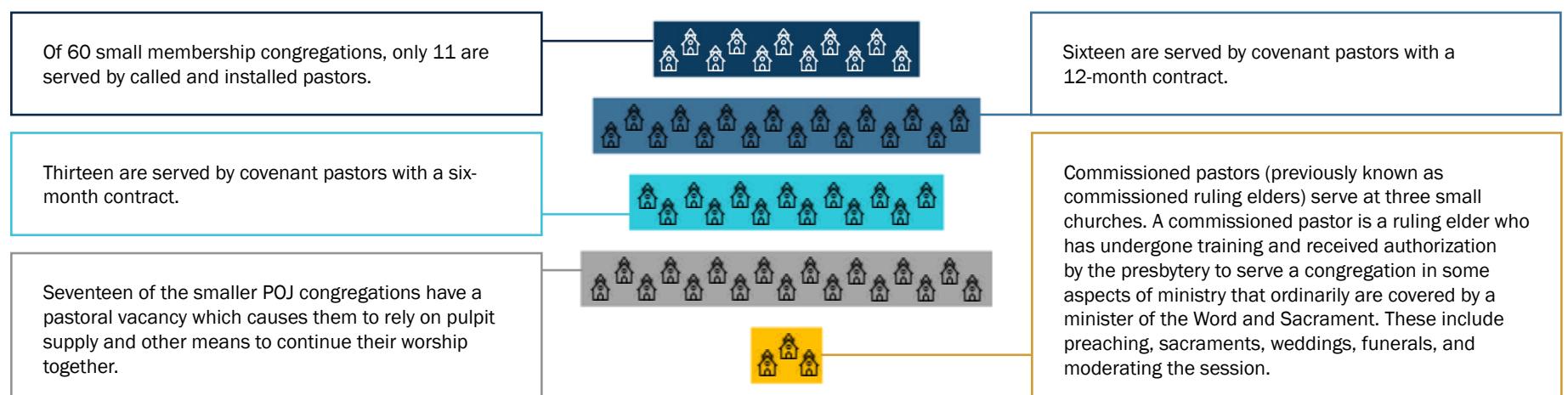
Among the challenges that budget concerns and limited resources create in small churches are the benefits they can afford to offer pastors.

Only 11 of POJ's 60 small membership congregations have pastors who are called and installed, full time and with benefits. The rest have covenant pastors serving under contracts of 12 months or less, specially-trained ruling elders serving as pastors, or no pastor at all.

Because of the unique ministries of our small membership congregations, many of the pastors who serve in these congregations do so because of their deep passion and love for leading the small church in ministry despite the temporary nature of their contracts and lack of benefits.

See SMALL CHURCHES on page 7

Diversity of Pastoral Relationships within POJ's 60 Small Churches



STATED MEETING: June 15, 2021**108th Presbytery Meeting Highlights
Small Churches and Covenant Pastors**

The 108th stated meeting of the Presbytery of the James was held virtually. Some of the leaders were warmly welcomed to Tuckahoe Church; Ginter Park Church was a second site where leaders hosted portions of the meeting. Teaching Elder Patrick Dennis, moderator, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and led the presbytery in prayer.

The moderator welcomed first-time ruling elder commissioners and guests. Rev. Steve Scott, vice-moderator of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, brought greetings.

Some of the highlights of the meeting included:

Ruling Elder Glenna Finnicum (Ginter Park), vice-moderator of the Committee on Ministry and a member of the subcommittee on Examinations, welcomed new ministers to the presbytery:

- Rev. David Anderson (Presbytery of Great Rivers), honorably retired;
- Rev. Lynn McClintock (Shenandoah Presbytery), continuing as director of pastoral care, Westminster Canterbury, Richmond; and
- Rev. Laura Sugg (Denver Presbytery) to become pastor of South Plains.

Rev. Gordon Lindsey, moderator of the Committee on Ministry, recognized ruling elders and ministers serving in temporary pastoral relations and offered prayer for them.

Rev. Jaechul Pi (Burkeville), Commissioned Pastor Peggy Fox (Woodville, Richmond), Rev. Sarah Nave (Covenant,

Petersburg), and Rev. Kerra English (Ashland) led the presbytery in worship. All serve small membership churches. Rev. Grady Powell (pastor emeritus, Gillfield Baptist Church, Petersburg) also participated.

A celebration of the life and ministry of the Gordonsville Church was led by Ruling Elder Ned Roache. The moderator prayed for this congregation and their faithful service to Christ and others.

Ruling Elder Kenna Payne, moderator of the Mission Council, presented the agenda, which was approved.

The business of the day comprised the following:

- Approved a joint motion from Mission Council and the Trustees: That, in implementing the strategic plan and in answer to the protest filed on February 20, 2021, the presbytery rename the net asset fund formerly called "Church Development Fund" as the "Church and Ministries Development Fund," and that its use be redesignated to provide resources for the presbytery's budget in support of the growth and development of the life of our particular churches and ministries. This designation would be effective December 31, 2020.
- Approved a revision to the 2021 budget. The revision affects only the breakdown of amounts to be allocated as needed from the net asset funds of the presbytery.
- Authorized the Trustees to sign the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program loan for the Meadows Church obligating the presbytery to serve as guarantor for the \$450,000 loan.
- Approved the use of Dismissed Churches funds to cover the \$1,435,000 gift to Camp Hanover as agreed to at the June 18, 2019 presbytery meeting.
- Granted the Trustees commission powers to sell five properties at their respective appraised values or not less than 90 percent of that value unless authorized by the presbytery.
- Elected the search committee for the three presbyters.
- Approved granting member-at-large



Rev. David Anderson



Rev. Lynn McClintock



Rev. Jaechul Pi

**UPCOMING
PRESBYTERY MEETINGS**

October 16, 2021

February 19, 2022

June 21, 2022

October 15, 2022

status to Rev. Susie Atkinson, Rev. Sandy Shaner, Rev. Katherine Todd, Rev. Aaron Houghton, Rev. Shelly Barrick Parsons, Rev. Lindsey Williams, and Rev. Mike Clang.

- Approved the validated ministry of Rev. Ed Kross as chaplain at James River Home Health & Hospice.
- Approved granting honorable retirement status to Rev. Rosalind Banbury effective March 31, 2021.
- Approved constituting the Committee on Ministry as a Commission on Ministry granting specific powers from G-3.0109b.
- Approved a three percent increase in the Minimum Compensation Criteria for 2022.
- Heard a report from the Small Church Ministry Team of the LCT: POJ Associate for Stewardship Deborah Rexrode, Rev. Lisa Salita (Madison), and Rev. Jason Cashing (Gregory Memorial).
- Heard a report from Doug Walters that Camp Hanover summer camps are resuming following the delays caused by COVID.

Moderator Dennis declared the 108th stated meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m. and led the presbytery in prayer.

In Christ's Service,

Fred A. Holbrook
Interim General Presbyter
and Stated Clerk



Summer Camp Returns After 2020 Absence

After a nearly two-year absence due to COVID-19, the sounds of laughter and singing can be heard again at Camp Hanover.

On June 20, Camp Hanover welcomed kids back for the start of summer camp.

Exceeding 2021 goals, nearly 500 campers are registered for overnight camp; 200 are enrolled in on-site day camp. Registration for day camp is double the amount Camp Hanover has ever experienced.

“We have made it to this point and navigated the past 18 months through the grace of God,” shared Executive Director Doug Walters at the presbytery meeting in June.

In recent months, volunteers also have returned to the property, contributing hours of sweat equity to prepare the camp for children and young people.

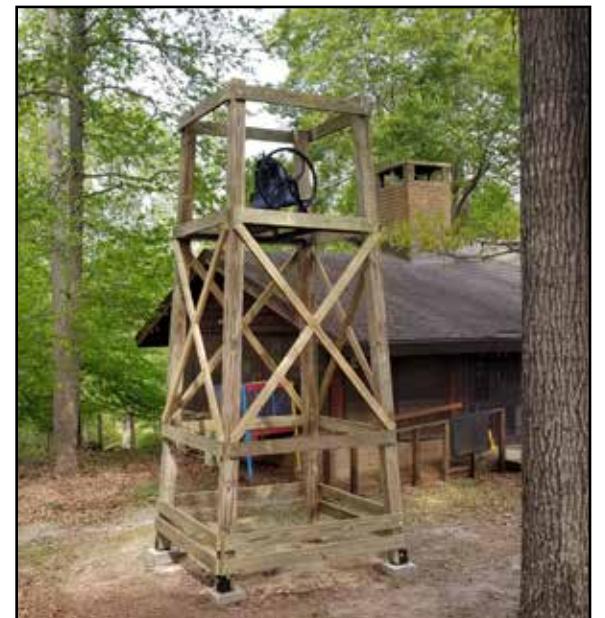


Robert Fidler from the Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg led a group that moved the Celtic cross dock into its final position at the lake.

The POJ Disaster Relief Ministry, spearheaded by Brown Pearson of Southminster Church, made numerous trips to work on needed projects, including construction of a boardwalk, a bridge, and a bell tower.

As COVID arrived, the board of directors had just embarked on a strategic planning process. Despite the disruption caused by social distancing, the board continued its work and is now in the final stages of developing a road map for the next three to five years.

To register for summer camp or find out the many ways you can be involved at camp, visit camphanover.org.



New Covenant Church closed at the end of 2020, but its bell will continue to ring at Camp Hanover. In April, a team of volunteers removed the bell from New Covenant and built a new tower for it outside Wise Lodge at the camp. The members of the church also found a new home, being welcomed to nearby Southminster Church.



Inclusion Workshop

Join PC(USA)'s intercultural justice office for a virtual workshop on gender and inclusion October 19 at 6:00 p.m. Learn basic concepts and terms to become a more inclusive church. Learn more at presbyteryofthejames.com/event/inclusion-workshop.

Small Church Has a Big Heart for Giving

Scottsville Presbyterian is a small church making a big impact on their local community. The church's annual budget devotes 22 percent to mission expenditures.

Some of that is dedicated to two funds created in 2018 to provide grants to people and organizations in Scottsville and the surrounding community.

One fund provides financial assistance to individuals experiencing difficult circumstances, such as illness, death, accident, or natural disaster. Members of the congregation pass along the names of community members who would benefit from the church's help. The session allocates funds for this individual support from its annual operating budget.

The second fund makes donations to area charitable organizations. Members of the session review each nominated organization's mission, leadership, community impact, and financial condition prior to giving funds. Funding for organization support comes from the church's endowment, based on a fixed percentage of the asset value.



One of the organizations Scottsville Church has supported is African American Teaching Fellows (AATF). AATF works to recruit and support African American educators to serve the public schools of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Their goals are to decrease racial disparity and give African American students more mentors who share their roots. Other community grants have gone to groups including Fluvanna Habitat for Humanity, James River Boys & Girls Club, and Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Money not spent on aid to individuals in a given year is rolled into the organization fund the following year, increasing the capacity of the church to make larger donations to worthy organizations.

In the first year of the new funds, the church distributed \$11,450. The total has grown each year since, as the allocation from the budget has remained steady at \$5,000 per annum and the endowment spending

portion has grown with a healthy increase in the portfolio.

"We are thankfully blessed by God and humbled to be able to devote these funds to mission work," shared Tom Thompson, treasurer.

With only 14 member families, Scottsville Presbyterian punches well above its weight in its financial contribution to the needy in its community.

Scottsville Presbyterian, founded in 1827, was the first church built within the town of Scottsville. Rev. Dr. E. Richard Knox is the pastor. Visit online at scottvillepcusa.com.

Committee Approved to Begin Search for New Presbyters

The presbytery approved at the 107th meeting a strategic plan incorporating three presbyters. These presbyters—a full-time lead presbyter and two three-quarter-time positions focusing on relational care and congregational life—will provide more support for congregations and ministries by focusing on specific challenges and opportunities.

A search committee for the three presbyters was approved at the 108th meeting last month. We thank the search committee members and the members of the Committee on Nominations for their service in this important task.

Learn about the strategic plan at presbyteryofthejames.com/strategic-plan.



Rev. Beverly Bullock
Member at Large



Rev. Jess Cook
More Light Presbyterians



Barbara Flynt
Brandermill Church, Midlothian



Peggy Fox
Woodville Church, Richmond



Rev. Ken Henry
Westminster Church, Charlottesville



Noah Morgan
Westminster Church, Richmond



Jen Rowe
The Presbyterian Church, Fredericksburg

Blessings to Youth Ministry Leader Earp on Her Next Chapter

Colleen Earp, who has been the presbytery's associate for youth ministry since the fall of 2014, concluded her service on June 30.



Colleen Earp

During her time in Presbytery of the James, Earp also served as an associate director at Camp Hanover.

With the two positions, Earp ran youth programming, managed service projects, and created environmental programs. During summer camp, Earp focused on nature education and raising and caring for Camp Hanover's chickens, ducks, and goats.

"She strove to empower kids of all ages and make us feel capable and valued and worthy," commented Youth Council member Virginia Adams.

"Colleen has left an indelible mark on Camp Hanover," shared Doug Walters, executive director. "We are forever changed and improved by her service."

Through the pandemic, Earp organized and connected friends and staff of Camp Hanover by leading weekly virtual Vespers. She also read bedtime stories to the camp's chickens and children at home, watching via Facebook.

In 2019, Earp earned a Master of Divinity at Union Presbyterian Seminary and recently completed a yearlong chaplain residency at UVA Medical Center.

In September, Earp will begin work as director of programs at Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center in Harrisonburg.



Youth Find Connection and Grow in Community Through Virtual Year

Youth Ministry has concluded for 2020-2021 after an entire program season on Zoom.

Despite the unusual circumstances, Youth Council members developed and demonstrated leadership in new and wonderful ways this year. These include leading the worship service for the presbytery's 106th stated meeting in October and giving a presentation to the Presbyterian Women this spring.

While our youth hope to gather in person again this fall, they are proud of all they could accomplish together this year.

With approval of the presbytery's strategic plan, Youth Ministry programming is undergoing some transition. While Youth Ministry remains a committee

of the Presbytery of the James under the Leadership Connections Team, it will be staffed by the new presbyter for congregational life.

As the world continues to return to some sense of normal, youth retreats at Camp Hanover as well as other fellowship and service events should return in the 2021-2022 school year.

Additionally, 2022 is a Presbyterian Youth Triennium year, when youth from across the U.S. and the world gather together for worship, workshops, and fellowship.

For more information on Youth Ministry, contact George Whipple (gandjwhipple@aol.com), moderator of Leadership Connections.

Fund Your Church Project with a Synod Grant

Synod of the Mid-Atlantic includes 14 presbyteries covering Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, D.C., and a portion of West Virginia. It offers a number of grant programs for congregations in this area. Among them:

- The Jubilee Fund, which supports projects of African-American congregations that address clergy recruitment, Christian education, leadership development, youth ministry, and ongoing daycare.

- The New and Small Church Grant Fund, which awards up to \$5,000 to qualifying churches for home mission projects.

Projects are considered for funding twice each year, with applications due August 1 and February 1.

To learn about the grant programs available and find application information, visit synatlantic.org/grants.

Presbytery Hunger Grant Aids in Guatemalan Crisis

An ongoing grant from POJ's Hunger Ministry is helping mission partner CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Education) address hunger needs in Guatemala that have deepened due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19. With the grant funds, CEDEPCA purchases high-quality, non-genetically-modified seeds for crops such as tomatoes, spinach, and other greens.

The seeds are provided to nearly 200 families in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, where women are among the most vulnerable and marginalized in Guatemalan society. With the seeds, recipients plant family gardens and grow their own food.

"[Home gardens provide] immediate access to food that is fresh, rich in nutrients, and free from chemicals," explained Luis Sarpec, who leads this program for CEDEPCA.

The family garden project also is supported by New Castle Presbytery, which represents churches in Delaware and eastern Maryland. New Castle funds an agronomist who provides training and technical support to the gardeners.

Some of the family gardens are so successful that the women sell excess to neighbors. They use the income to buy other foods like rice and beans or more seeds to expand their small businesses.

Your financial support of our Hunger Fund through the five cents a meal offering or by a designated contribution to Presbytery of the James sustains this vital mission. Together, we can address hunger and make a better world for all, especially the "least of these" of whom Jesus spoke.

Learn about POJ's Hunger Ministry and how you can help at presbyteryofthejames.com/hunger. For more photos and information about Guatemalan family gardens, visit ncpguatemala.com/projects/family-gardens.



Women plant seeds in soil-filled eggshells, then place the shells into egg cartons. This keeps the seeds secure during transport and aids in transplanting the seedlings.



New Initiative Helps Christian Educators Reach Out

A six-month pilot of an initiative to support Christian educators has not only received rave reviews from its beta group participants—it has also been a lifesaver for them during the pandemic.

The project is titled Presbyterians Supporting Christian Education (PSCE), its initials honoring the legacy of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. Its purpose: "...to support and encourage educators' ministries through engagement in critical and theological thinking... to enhance the teaching of Christian education."

It is the brainchild of a planning team convened by H. Carson Rhyne, Jr. that met at Union Presbyterian Seminary's Charlotte campus in March 2019.

Rhyne retired as general presbyter and stated clerk of Presbytery of the James in December 2018 and has served on the adjunct faculty of Union, teaching polity and practical theology, since 2005. Upon his retirement, his colleagues established the Carson Rhyne Fund for Christian Education, which supports the new PSCE initiative.

"Christian education needs a higher profile in the church, and we need a support group for Christian educators," shared Rhyne.



Rev. Carson Rhyne Jr.

Participants in the project's three beta groups experienced immediate benefits and saw significant advantages for Christian educators and for the church as a whole.

"The cohort group has provided a place for me to listen and to learn," noted Mary Todd Peters, director of Christian education at New Hope Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She and others have been forced to think outside of the box in the time of COVID-19, learning from colleagues what tactics they are employing to "bring educational ministry into the home."

"I couldn't have imagined 20 years ago what we are doing now," said Peters.

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A Faithful Response to Gun Violence

As a Matthew 25 church, Second Church in Richmond is called to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, and care for the sick. They are also called to build a more just society, seeking to eliminate the root causes of violence, racism, poverty, and inequality.

For the past 10 years, the Mission and Advocacy Council has identified three issues each year that they advocate for as a congregation. One long-standing issue is reducing gun violence in Richmond and across Virginia.

Advocacy strategies include education for the congregation, such as a four-week church school series on gun violence. They also take action by attending the annual gun violence rally at the Capitol on Martin Luther King (MLK) Day and advocate for reducing gun violence at the General Assembly.

Public witness and prayer are other components of their attention to gun violence. Each Monday at noon, they toll

the church's steeple bells to remember gun violence victims in the city of Richmond. Various church members take turns ringing the bells each week.

They also remember victims and their families through prayers in their bulletin, on social media, and during worship services.

In January of 2020, Second Church dedicated their MLK Day worship service to remembering the 52 victims of gun violence in 2019.

The arts committee of the church prepared a visual display of orange ribbons at the front entrance of the church. At the end of worship, the congregation moved outside where the names of victims were read aloud. The display remained in place for several weeks.



Bryan Tims rings the steeple bells at Richmond's Second Church on a recent Monday.

The Matthew 25 initiative of PC(USA) encourages churches and presbyteries to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned, or poor. Learn more at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25.

Small Churches Continued from page 1

"Small church pastors aren't often recognized for their courage to take on giants [like David did]," English emphasized, "but I can tell you, they've been tending the sheep like nobody's business."

They wear multiple hats, including IT department, human resources representative, and cook, in serving the various needs in their congregations.

This, she concluded, helps the congregation see "what lengths you will go to stave off bears and lions or direct them to living water."

In the coming year, the Small Church Ministry will celebrate pastors and congregations who have fewer than 100 members. They invite you to share your congregation and its unique identity with the presbytery. What are some of the joys you cherish about your church and your ministry?

Send a written testimonial, a recorded message (audio or video), and/or pictures to Deborah Rexrode, associate for Stewardship, deborah@presbyteryofthejames.org.

Look for features on small churches in future issues of the Vine; in the Current,

POJ's email newsletter for church leaders; on Facebook ([@presofthejames](https://www.facebook.com/presofthejames)); and online (presbyteryofthejames.com).

What are some of the joys you cherish about your small church and its ministry?



Lisa Salita, interim pastor at Madison Church, admires the resourcefulness of small church congregations: "The work of painting, landscaping, and plumbing is taken on by church members themselves because it needs to be done."



Join AFREIM For Tea

The Women's Committee of African Evangelical International Ministries (AFREIM) invites women to a tea on August 14. The agenda includes devotion, conversations, and guest speaker Pastor Shirl Love of Prevailing Word Ministries. The event starts at 11 a.m. and will be held at Westminster Church (4103 Monument Ave) in Richmond. A \$5 donation is requested. For information, contact Shaunta'h Powell at 804-484-2325.



A mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs

Mark 4:31-32

Send submissions, corrections, or requests for additional copies to office@presbyteryofthejames.org.



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Zoom meetings, care bags, and “takeout church” in a pizza box have become a part of Christian education. Educators are working hard to find ways to reach out.

“This initiative was extraordinary because of the time in which we did this—the pandemic, the protests,” says Sue Harris, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Howard County in Columbia, Maryland. “It ended up as the frame for the whole experience.”

The first full-year session of the Christian education cohort initiative began in May 2021. Each group is made up of eight certified educators, volunteer educators, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

More information about PSCE can be found at upsem.edu/psce. To participate in the next group of cohorts, look for application details in early 2022.



Hebron Church in Manakin-Sabot celebrated Pentecost Sunday by inviting worshippers to wear colors of flame, and by enjoying a picnic on the grounds after worship, with hymn-singing. It was the first time members of the congregation had sung together since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.