



ACT LWF/ALBIN HILLERT

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and its partners are providing emergency humanitarian aid such as food, shelter, medicine, diapers, and hygiene items to those fleeing violence in Ukraine.

Presbytery Supports Proposal to Increase Education About Eastern Europe

At its meeting on February 19, Presbytery of the James voted to support a request to the 225th General Assembly of PC(USA) for more engagement with and education about Eastern Europe.

“[The Russian government’s actions toward Ukraine] have made learning about this region of the world and the need to support our siblings there more urgent than before,” concluded Rev. Connie Weaver in her remarks to the presbytery.

The request, formally called an overture, was submitted by Presbytery of Utah, with endorsement by several other presbyteries.

When the overture was written in late 2021 by the Utah presbytery, tensions between Russia and Ukraine were high. Now, Russian troops have invaded Ukraine and the two are at war.

The overture asks several agencies in PC(USA) to help Presbyterians understand the complexities within the region, including U.S. engagement there. In particular, the overture outlines opportunities such as study tours, toolkits, and discussions with churches and faith-based organizations in the countries to create a “better-educated constituency [that] advocates for peace and justice.”

Weaver pastors Hebron Church in Goochland, which brought the overture to our presbytery. She also serves on the steering committee of PC(USA)’s Belarus Ukraine Russia Mission (BURM) Network. She has visited Russia three times through a partnership a

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Trustees Pay Off Burdensome Debt for Four Small Churches

What is the right thing to do when a small church is awarded a grant that turns out to be a loan? A loan that, in one case, is now one hundred and twenty years old? The Trustees of Presbytery of the James encountered this question in November 2021 after receiving a report from the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (PILP).

The report included information about four churches in Presbytery of the James that were recipients of more than \$75,000 in “church mortgage grants” issued by PILP between 1900 and 1975.

The funds were given to congregations to help them build or purchase churches. Unlike conventional mortgages, no repayment was required unless the building was sold, the congregation left PC(USA), or the building stopped being used as a PC(USA) church. In those cases, repayment of the grant would include interest accrued since the origination date, possibly a hefty amount considering the age of the loans.

Westminster Church in Petersburg received two grant-loans in 1929 and 1930, totaling \$5,019. Learning about the loans came as a surprise to Wilhelmena Hailes, the church’s clerk of session (and the first woman to serve in that role, she is quick to add).

“We didn’t know anything about it,” she said.

Established in the 1880s by 11 formerly enslaved people, Westminster Church was first called Central Presbyterian. In 1965, the name became Westminster.

The small congregation of 50 has more pressing financial needs, like adding accessibility ramps and repairing the roof of their church,

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Managing the budget can be a challenge for many churches, especially small ones. Recently, the congregation of Petersburg’s Westminster Church faced a big expense to replace the building’s heating system.

CALLED MEETING: January 25, 2022

STATED MEETING: February 19, 2022

Two Meetings in Early 2022 Carry Out Business of the Presbytery

Presbytery of the James met virtually in January for a called meeting and in February for its 110th meeting.

On January 19, Moderator Dan Jordanger (Providence Church, Gum Spring) opened the virtual meeting with prayer at 7:00 p.m.

Rev. Mary Newbern-Williams (First United Church), led worship. Kenna Payne, moderator of the Mission Council, presented the agenda, which was approved.

Three candidates were approved for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament:

- Michelle Abel (Presbytery of the Peaks), interim associate pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg



Rev. Michelle Abel

- Calvin Sydnor IV (Presbytery of Eastern Virginia), co-covenant pastor of Grace Covenant Church



Rev. Calvin Sydnor

- Joanna Sydnor (Presbytery of Eastern Virginia), co-covenant pastor of Grace Covenant Church



Rev. Joanna Sydnor

In addition, the presbytery approved five nominations presented by the Committee on Nominations.

Rev. Susan Steinberg, a minister member-at-large, was elected to the Commission on Ministry.

The remainder of the nominations were for representatives to the 225th General Assembly (2022) of the PC(USA), occurring this summer.

Rev. Jim Moseley, pastor of Campbell Memorial Church, was elected a commissioner. Barry Parks, a ruling elder at Westminster Church (Charlottesville) and Rev. Alex Evans, pastor at Second Church (Richmond), were elected alternate commissioners. Molly Zweckbronner, a

congregation member at Fairfield Church, was elected a young adult advisory delegate.

Moderator Jordanger declared the called meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. and led the presbytery in prayer.

On February 19, the presbytery met again via Zoom. Moderator Dan Jordanger called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Ruling Elder Melissa Phillips (Salisbury Church), moderator of the Examinations Committee, welcomed four new ministers to the presbytery:

- Rev. Dr. Safwat Marzouk (Wabash Valley Presbytery), associate professor of Old Testament at Union Presbyterian Seminary



Rev. Safwat Marzouk

- Rev. Kelly-Ann Rayle (Shenandoah Presbytery), interim associate pastor at River Road Church



Rev. Kelly-Ann Rayle

- Rev. Susan Steinberg (New Hope Presbytery), member-at-large



Rev. Susan Steinberg

- Rev. Alex Creager (Presbytery of Eastern Virginia), pastor of Bon Air Church

Rev. Keli Shipley Cooper (St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond) and Rev. Gary Charles (Cove Church), led the presbytery in worship.

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

Candidate Mary Bielen (Maumee Valley Presbytery) was approved for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. She will serve as a covenant pastor at Southminster Church.



Mary Bielen

Leigh Anne Ring, a ruling elder, certified Christian educator, and past moderator of the presbytery, was welcomed as a candidate for ministry.



Leigh Anne Ring

Rev. Lynne Clements (Westminster Church, Charlottesville) gave the charge to the candidate, and Rev. Jim King (Salisbury Church), offered a prayer.

The business of the day included the following:

- Concurred with Overture #047, "Engagement and Education with Eastern Europe," being brought to the 225th General Assembly by the Presbytery of Utah.
- Adopted a budget for 2022.
- Received news and updates from the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA).
- Approved a recommendation presented by Ruling Elder Steve Hicks, president of the Trustees of POJ, Inc., that undesignated proceeds from the sale of real estate be placed in the Church Ministries and Development Fund.
- Received an update from the Presbyters Search Committee.
- Elected Rev. Nicole Ball, member-at-large, as an alternate commissioner to the 225th General Assembly, and Rev. Patrick Lane (Mitchells Church) to the Leadership Connections Team.
- Amended and approved a coaching policy for ministers, certified Christian educators, and commissioned pastors who are in their initial call or covenant in the presbytery.

Moderator Jordanger announced that the 111th stated meeting of the presbytery will be held one week earlier than usual, on Tuesday, June 14. The date change is to avoid conflict with the 225th General Assembly, which begins June 18.

The moderator declared the 110th stated meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. and closed with prayer.

Blessings to Rexrode on Her Service to Presbytery of the James

Dr. Deborah Rexrode joined the staff of the Presbytery in November 2015 and served faithfully for six years as associate for stewardship. With passion and commitment, she provided consultation to pastors, sessions, and stewardship committees with stewardship campaigns, capital campaigns, and planned giving. In November, Rexrode accepted a new position at Keswick School in Charlottesville. We will miss her generous service to Christ and the Church in the presbytery and beyond. Please be in prayer for Deborah and her family as she makes this exciting step and becomes a blessing to others.



Work of Presbyter Search Committee Continues

A search committee charged with recommending candidates for three new staff positions is making steady progress.

The committee of seven members is co-chaired by Barbara Flynt, a certified Christian educator at Brandermill Church, and Rev. Jess Cook, interim associate for youth ministry for the presbytery.

The committee finalized job descriptions for the positions and received approval by the presbytery's Mission Council.

The full-time position of lead presbyter for vision and collaboration was advertised first, in December. By the application deadline of February 1, the committee had received nearly 40 applications. Interviews are underway with candidates.

Next, the committee advertised the positions of presbyter for relational care and presbyter of congregational care. Both are three-quarter-time positions. The deadline for applications is April 1.

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than paying off loans they didn't know existed.

Of the four churches listed in the PILP report, Thyne Memorial Church in Chase City is the smallest with just 4 members. The others are Zion Hill Church (Amelia) and First United Church (Richmond), 25 and 84 members respectively.

This situation is not unique to our presbytery. PILP representatives have been working with churches, presbyteries, and synods to resolve debt from old church mortgage grants.

When Interim General Presbyter Fred Holbrook contacted PILP about the grants, the agency offered to reduce the loan payoff amount to \$48,835 payable by December 31, 2021.

In thanksgiving for the churches' ministry, the Trustees voted unanimously to cover the payoff as a gift to the congregations.

"It was in the best interests of the churches involved, as well as the POJ, to pay off these loans and not be subject to accrued, compounded interest on loans dating back over 120 years," shared Steve Hicks, president of the Trustees.

"We are very appreciative for the many years of service to Christ and others provided by our churches."



Steve Hicks



Members of the congregation of Zion Hill Church mingle outside after worship. The church is in Amelia County, about one hour southwest of Richmond.

Upcoming Presbytery Meetings

June 14, 2022

October 15, 2022

No More Shall There Be an Infant That Lives But a Few Days

Since 2009, Westminster Church in Charlottesville has dedicated nearly \$100,000 from its benevolence fund to saving the lives of women and babies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The relationship began when congregation member David Strider, a nurse practitioner with UVA Health, applied to the church's grants committee on behalf of a program to train Congolese nurses as advanced nurse-midwives.

At that time, the maternal mortality rate in DRC was 0.56 percent (555 deaths per 100,000 live births), double the estimated global figure (0.26 percent). The infant mortality rate (probability of death in the first year of life) was 8.6 percent, also twice the worldwide estimate of 3.8 percent.

The program was the vision of Strider's colleague, registered nurse Agnes Kanyanya, who was personally invested in improving maternal and infant health in her home country after the death of her mother during the birth of a child.

Kanyanya asked Strider to serve as president of the nonprofit she founded to put her plan into action. She named the organization PROSAMI, an acronym derived from "promotion of maternal and infant health" in French, one of the country's official languages.

In 2015, PROSAMI welcomed its first class of midwife students. They spent eight months training in Virginia before heading back to DRC for 10 months of supervised on-site work at PROSAMI's facility in Mbuji-Mayi, DRC. The inaugural class of four became team leaders for subsequent classes, with staff and students in DRC connecting via videoconference to educators in Virginia and South Africa.

Westminster Church's support of PROSAMI has deepened over the years. In addition to the benevolence grants, Westminster also hosts an annual yard sale and educational dinner with proceeds going to



David Strider



The Democratic Republic of the Congo, indicated in red, is the second largest country by area in Africa and about a quarter the size of the United States. Its population in 2020 was 89.56 million.

PROSAMI. These financial contributions, as well as donations from other organizations and individuals, have helped PROSAMI grow in DRC.

Renovations to PROSAMI's training facility created rooms for offices and patient care. It now provides laboratory services and dispenses basic medications for peripartum mothers. For emergency c-sections, the facility is equipped with an operating table. It also has an incubator for two infants.

Nearly 60 nurses have graduated from the program or are current students. They have helped 744 mothers deliver children, tackling issues like shoulder dystocia, breech presentation, and postpartum hemorrhage. In a significant improvement over national statistics, the center has experienced no maternal deaths and only two infant deaths.

PROSAMI works with the DRC Ministry of Health to seek support and funding to spread the midwife training program throughout DRC. Expansion plans include constructing a larger training and care facility with a well to supply water to the center and its neighbors.

Learn more about PROSAMI and see additional photos at prosami.ngo.



(LEFT) PROSAMI founder Agnes Kanyanya (third from right) poses with some of the nurse midwives her program has trained to improve healthcare in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (RIGHT) PROSAMI provides healthcare for women and infants during pregnancy and until the babies reach one year.

CAMP HANOVER

New After-School Program Gives Kids a Summer Camp Experience All Year Long

The inaugural season of Camp Hanover After School Explorers (CHASE) is in full swing. The program launched in early January with the goal of getting kids outside to learn, play, and build relationships during the school year.

Four days a week, CHASE students spend their afternoons outside leaving no stone unturned. While caring for chickens, skipping rocks on the lake, and traversing the forests of Camp Hanover's 600 acres, students have a wide variety of opportunities to ask questions about nature, learn about themselves, and discover the wonders of God's creation.

The enthusiasm of parents and students for this program has been thrilling.

"I have never seen my daughter so eager to go to school. It's because she knows she gets to go to CHASE," said one parent.

"Frequently, the students don't want to leave [CHASE] at the end of the day," shared Laura Haney, associate director of environmental ministry. "They love having time to just be outside and just be kids!"

CHASE instructors lead classic camp activities such as archery, campfire cooking, and hiking with added elements to help the children directly engage with their natural surroundings. Recently participants foraged for pine needles to make tea, created art from the leaves found on a hike, and learned the names of some evergreen trees.

Embedded in every lesson are themes of caring for creation and each other. Each day begins with a Bible study or devotion and wraps up with children doing their homework around a campfire, sometimes with the special treat of a s'more.

CHASE students are looking forward to planting seeds in the camp garden in the coming months, hatching chicks, and exploring the flowers of the pollinator meadow throughout the spring.



CHASE has a few spots still available for Spring 2022. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade are invited to attend. Learn more at camphanover.org/after-school.



Camp Hanover Welcomes Operations Director

A new staff member has joined the Camp Hanover team. Jeff Arnott began January 31 as the associate director of operations.

In this new, full-time position, Arnott is responsible for the day-to-day, onsite management of the facilities and grounds which make up Camp Hanover's 621-acres. He also oversees the dining, housekeeping, and hospitality experiences and services Camp Hanover provides to campers and guests.

Arnott moved to Virginia five years ago from Wyoming, where he owned a property management company.

"I've always enjoyed maintaining buildings and property, which there is obviously a lot of that to do here," he shared. "I also love nature and kids and



I look forward to the challenge of making camp a better place."

Arnott is the person to contact if your congregation is interested in volunteering at Camp Hanover.

"We welcome groups to help us refurbish and improve facilities or spruce up the grounds prior to summer camp season," he added.

Volunteer projects at camp provide your congregation an opportunity to serve together outdoors. If you're interested in giving your time and talent to a needed project, contact the camp office at (804) 779-2811 or email jeff@camphanover.org.



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previous congregation she served has with an orthodox community outside of Moscow.

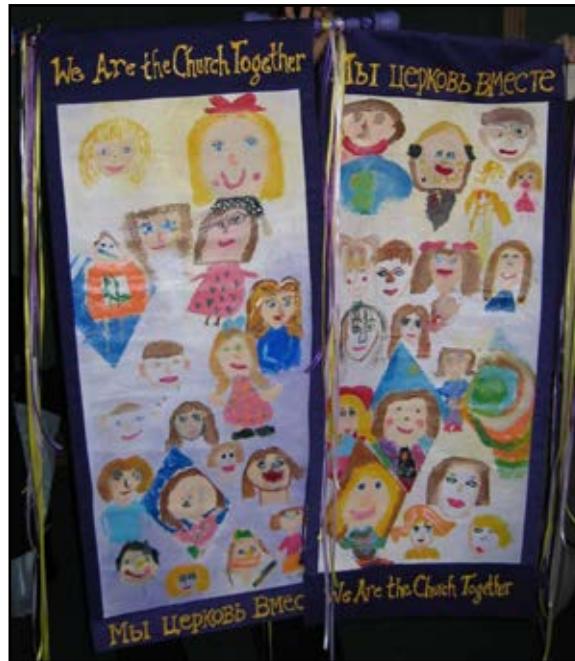
“I grew up during the Cold War, which shaped my opinion about Russia and the Soviet Union,” Weaver shared during the presbytery meeting. “[Traveling to the country as an adult] helped me learn that people in Russia have similar goals and lives to ours in the United States. We share so much in our faith in Jesus Christ.”



Rev. Connie Weaver

Kathy Harris, a member of First Church in Richmond, also spoke in support of the overture. First Church has a relationship with Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minsk, Belarus. Through her church, Harris has traveled to the area twice.

The greatest gift she has gained from the experience is “forming bonds with Christians who are struggling, in a country very different from ours where religious freedom seems tenuous.”



This pair of banners was a cooperative art project between the children of First Church (Richmond) and Bethlehem Baptist Church in Belarus in 2004. Children at First Church drew themselves in parts of both banners, which were then taken on a visit to Belarus. After the Bethlehem Church children completed the banners with drawings of themselves, one banner was left for their congregation and the other was returned to Richmond.

Supporting Our Ukrainian Siblings

According to reports from Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, as a result of Russia’s invasion, Ukrainians are facing reduced or disrupted services in water, heating, electricity, transportation and telecommunications. Health services have deteriorated rapidly due to shortages of medical supplies and personnel.

Refugees, mostly women, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly, have left their homes and spent days traveling to neighboring countries for safety, leaving many of their possessions behind.

Learn how Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is providing emergency relief for those fleeing violence in Ukraine. Read updates and find ways to help, including sharing your financial blessings with those in need, at pcusa.org/pda/ukraine and on Facebook at facebook.com/pdacares.



Registration Open for Scholarship Golf Tournament to Benefit Seminary Students

Salisbury Church invites you to participate in a golf tournament that funds scholarships for ministry students to attend Union Presbyterian Seminary. The event has raised more than \$175,000 over the years to help train and develop future leaders of the church. The 2022 tournament takes place April 22 at Providence Golf Club in Midlothian. Space is available for golfers, team captains, sponsors, and volunteers. Learn more at thesalisburychurch.org/golf.



Summer Days Are Not Too Far Away

Members of two congregations in Powhatan took a break from the summer heat last year for an “Old-time Gospel Sing-along” beneath the shade of heritage white oaks. Hosted by Providence Church, the event featured Charlottesville-area folk musicians Tom Proutt and Mitch Russell. With members of nearby Genito Church, including Pastor William Seay, joining the event, “we had a large enough group to do some robust singing,” shared Providence Pastor Albert Connette. In addition, “we had a wonderful fellowship experience between two PC(USA) congregations.”

Your Support of Hunger Programs Provides Valuable Aid at Home and Abroad During Difficult Circumstances

Dear Presbytery of the James members and congregations,

We have seen two entire years pass in a global pandemic as the Presbyterian Hunger Program continues to partner with you and partners around the country and world to “alleviate hunger and eliminate its root causes.” Sadly, we know that poverty and hunger have risen globally as a result of the pandemic—as well as from ongoing wars and violent conflicts, climate change, and other root causes of hunger.

We are grateful for the way communities are stepping up to counter the impact of the pandemic and increased hunger and poverty. We have been thankful for partners who are advocating for vaccine equity, for communities who are finding ways to achieve food sovereignty, and for congregations willing to provide food as they also advocate for better public policy on issues such as affordable housing.

And we are thankful for you and the way that your financial support helps to provide support around the world for these vital efforts to create places of safety, peace, healing, and livelihood in the midst of difficult circumstances. God is present in all places and with all people, and we witness and give praise for the ways God has moved in our world to continue to bring “life abundant.”

In 2021, Presbyterian Hunger Program supported the work of 79 partners in 23 countries with nearly \$1 million in grant support. We continue to work so that people have more and better food, communities who are standing for justice know they are not alone, and people around the world are allowed to enjoy the healthiness of creation as it was meant to be.

Bless you for joining in this mission with us.

Rev. Rebecca Barnes

Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program



A teacher in Nicaragua gives a hygiene lesson to her students. The lesson is coordinated through Asociación Fénix, a Presbyterian Hunger Program grant partner that assists rural communities with improving living conditions and advancing food security.

The Hunger Ministry of Presbytery of the James continues its work assisting organizations within our boundaries as well as around the world who are addressing food issues. Sadly, a reduction in contributions to the POJ’s hunger fund has resulted in a decrease in the grants we are able to make. Over several years, contributions are down \$30,000. Learn more about this ministry’s work at presbyteryofthejames.com/hunger and ways you can help.

One Great Hour of Sharing is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for **JUSTICE, RESILIENCE, and SUSTAINABILITY.**



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The Vine March 2022

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For I am about to create new heavens
 and a new earth
Be glad and rejoice forever
 in what I am creating

Isaiah 65:17-18

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



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The 225th General Assembly of
 the Presbyterian Church (USA)
 will occur June 18 - July 9, 2022.
 Worship and plenary sessions
 will be available online. View the
 livestream at ga-pcusa.org.

**Massanetta
 Springs
 Celebrates
 100 Years of
 Ministry**

Join the centennial celebration for Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center July 27 during the Bible and church music conferences. The conferences, July 24-30, feature something for everyone. Enjoy great worship and Bible study with leaders from across the PC(USA). Choir members, handbell ringers, harpists, organists, and others will hone their craft and connect with others who love sacred music. Children and youth have their own opportunities for singing, ringing, and more through the Camp Connections program. Register by May 31 and save \$40 per registration. Learn more at massanettasprings.org/all-programs.

