



# Vision Report

Reimagining the  
Church in the World

SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST

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# Contents



# Introduction

The Synod of the Northeast stands at a defining moment in its life and witness. Guided by a two-year process of prayer, discernment, and consultation, we are embracing a renewed call to Reimagine the Church in the World. This vision invites us to live faithfully into God's purposes for our time, cultivating communities of courage, compassion, and creativity across the Northeast.

As we enter this new chapter, we give thanks for the leaders and ministries that have carried us thus far, acknowledging both the challenges that have tested us and the faith that has sustained us. Now, with hope and conviction, we turn toward the future — seeking to reorder our common life, strengthen our witness, and shape governance, mission, and formation in ways that reflect the movement of the Holy Spirit among us.

# Our Theological Lens

Our vision and the process to bring it to life are deeply rooted in scripture, particularly the words of 1 Peter 4:8–11: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms... so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To God be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.” These verses remind us that the Body of Christ grows in love and strength when every part is empowered to contribute.

Rooted in the recognition that all blessings come from God, the Synod of the Northeast affirms that blessings are not merely for self-interest but are entrusted to us to share. God’s grace, faithfulness, and providence are the basis of all blessings. These blessings are meant to be shared, lived out, and embodied in relationships of justice, mercy, and love. The Synod seeks to be a blessing to the churches, presbyteries, and communities within our bounds. Blessings manifest in a variety of ways—relationships, financial resources, governance, the gifts and skills of its people. We have a collective responsibility to encourage and spread God’s blessings in the world.

## **We are committed to Social Justice through the Matthew 25 Core Foci**

We strive to live out the church’s mission through bold and compassionate discipleship. Centered in Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 25:31–46, this movement invites us to engage in building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

## **We are committed to Diversity and Inclusion**

A variety of gifts are found within our Synod, just as a body has different parts. We are blessed by the great diversity of gifts and different ways of serving God. Because God works through each person in unique ways, diversity mandates inclusion for all, and inclusion calls for the equal concern and care for one another.

## **We are committed to Leadership Development**

Leadership Development intertwines with our Christian faith and mission. Leaders are agents of transformation, both for their congregations and in society. Leadership development serves not just as personal growth, but as an opportunity to enact God’s will in the world, bringing about justice, peace, and healing.

## **We are committed to Innovation**

The church is “reformed and always reforming.” We simultaneously affirm both the foundations of the Christian faith and the need to discern collaborative and innovative ways of expressing faith in an ever changing world. This is what the church has done throughout history and cultures. Guided by the Spirit, we look for the new things God is doing among us and join in that creative work.

Beholding the breadth and depth of the blessings God has given to the communities in our Synod, we believe that we are called to build the Beloved Community by collaborating with one another and sharing God’s abundant blessings in gratitude to the One from whom all blessings flow.

# Our Discernment Process

To best understand our current realities, we spent two and a half years executing an evaluation process to understand the impact of the current New Way Forward (NWF) Vision in three areas: strengths, connections, and transformation. The theological framework of Psalm 48:12-14 shaped this assessment process. Over time, teams of people across the Synod completed surveys, conducted listening sessions and held in-person site visits.

Hope abounds because positive recurring themes were echoed throughout the listening sessions and pointed to in the surveys: growing transparency in processes and procedures, more diversity and inclusion, open and opening lines of communications: top down and bottom up as well as the reverse, connectional relationships that foster partnerships around common missions and purposes but not transactional in nature, easier and less encumbered access to resources, and the encouraging and support of wider participation from churches and members.

Yet, the insights also showed that to fully manifest our vision, we needed to evolve our ministry model. One of the most significant changes born of this discernment process is the decision to transition from two decision-making bodies — the Synod Mission and Ministries Commission and the Synod Assembly — to an integrated Hybrid-Missional Model.

The choice to move to a hybrid-missional model grows out of the Synod's desire to live faithfully and effectively in today's rapidly changing world. Traditional governance structures provide stability and accountability, yet they can sometimes limit the ability to respond quickly to emerging needs and opportunities. A hybrid-missional approach brings the best of both worlds. It maintains the financial and governance structures necessary for trust, transparency, and sustainability, while at the same time distributing leadership responsibilities in ways that allow ministries to adapt in real time.

This model reflects our theological conviction that the Spirit equips all God's people with gifts for service. It creates space for commissions, committees, task forces, and teams to emerge as needed, with participation shaped by gifts and passions rather than by office or ordination status, unless otherwise required. By calling forth leaders from across the Body of Christ, the Synod embodies shared ministry, values diverse voices, and practices accountability rooted in mutual trust. Flexibility is not only an organizational strength but also a spiritual discipline. By integrating stability with adaptability, the Synod affirms that the Church thrives when it honors the gifts of all, encourages collaborative discernment, and responds faithfully to the movement of the Spirit. In this way, the hybrid-missional model strengthens our witness and equips us to meet the challenges and opportunities of our time.

# Additional Alignments

To fully adopt this model, the way we approach and organize our work must shift. Six ministry pillars provide foundation and direction for this effort: Theology and Spiritual Formation, Governance, Storytelling and Communication, Regional Learning, Grants, and Collaboration. These pillars reflect our deepest commitments: nurturing discipleship, faithful governance, fostering transparent and faithful leadership, amplifying diverse voices and stories, creating opportunities for shared learning, stewarding resources wisely, and cultivating partnerships that extend the reach of our common mission.

In addition, our data collection efforts revealed several other areas of adjustment that aligned to the effectiveness of these ministry pillars:

- Many ministries that received Synod grants demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability despite limited resources. They excelled in community engagement and social justice, using innovative approaches to maximize their impact. However, the site visits also revealed that some programs faced logistical challenges, such as misalignment between operations and initial proposals, and difficulties in coordinating site visits. These learnings informed the Synod's decision to pause some programs, like Come to the Table and the Servant Leadership Program, in favor of more flexible and regionalized learning models.
- The Synod is revising its grants structure, introducing an incentive-based model for Innovation Grants, and focusing on developing long-term sustainability. Additionally, the Synod will implement cohort-based learning opportunities through Ruling Elder Cohort Groups, Regional Learning Tables, and a Community Organizing Cohort for Pastors, all designed to foster collaboration, capacity-building, and leadership development.
- The Synod remains dedicated to helping presbyteries thrive by increasing organizational grants and fostering deeper collaboration with other mid councils. This support strengthens presbytery's infrastructure, enhancing their ability to fulfill their missions while promoting sustainability and long-term vitality. By encouraging partnerships and shared resources, the Synod ensures that smaller presbyteries remain resilient.
- Programs such as Early Ministry Institute and Robert L. Washington Scholars remain critical in shaping future leaders, while the Synod's revised focus on partnership and adaptability ensures that its mission stays relevant in today's dynamic world.

We envision a future where our core values are reflected in every initiative we undertake. We are committed to fostering adaptability and responsiveness to the ever-changing needs of our communities. Through our engagement with those we serve and partner with, we integrate fresh ideas with time-honored practices rooted in our rich heritage, while embracing forward-looking initiatives that balance innovation with tradition. Through our grants and collaborative efforts, the Synod strives to expand the regional witness of Christ, illuminating His message.

Together, scripture and these six pillars call us into a model of leadership that is mission-focused, inclusive, and responsive to the changing needs of the Church and the world. This vision ensures that the Synod of the Northeast is structured for faithful, innovative, and sustainable ministry. This is the Synod reimagined—ready to respond to God's call with clarity, courage, and hope.



A stylized rainbow graphic composed of several concentric, overlapping arches in shades of light blue, grey, and yellow. A central vertical bar, colored in a gradient of pink, red, and orange, runs through the middle of the arches.

# The Pillars

The six pillars not only bring the vision to life, but also provide the structure and stability needed to ensure long-term success. Through focusing on Theology and Spiritual Formation, Governance, Storytelling and Communication, Regional Learning, Grants, and Collaboration, the Synod of the Northeast is positioned to shape what faithful, sustainable ministry can be in the church and the world.

SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



# Theology and Spiritual Formation

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## **Purpose**

The Synod nurtures discipleship and spiritual depth through intentional practices of study, prayer, and discernment. The Theology and Spiritual Formation Pillar invites the church into deeper theological reflection that is both rooted in scripture and responsive to contemporary challenges. By fostering spaces of spiritual growth, leadership development, and faithful imagination, the Synod equips individuals and communities to live out their callings with courage, clarity, and hope.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

Team membership will primarily consist of Synod Commissioners, with additional invitations extended to members-at-large from across the Synod to ensure diverse participation. The group will meet quarterly in preparation for Synod Assembly gatherings. The Stated Clerk and Synod Leader will resource the pillar.

## **Worship Planning Team**

Since worship serves as the foundation of our gatherings, it is crucial to have a group dedicated to providing meaningful worship opportunities for the body. A worship element will be present for each of the Assembly meetings. At the third (Fall) gathering each year, the group will plan a worship service that will have a more prominent role in the structure of that meeting. This could include, but is not limited to, a guest preacher, liturgical art, and special music. The team also aspires to include a teaching moment or other element that is presented in a new way so that the Synod body can use those elements in their own ministry contexts.

## **Spiritual Formation Team**

We affirm that as people of faith, we are continually called to deepen our relationship with God and to discern God's purposes for the church. The Synod's history reflects a legacy of leaders and commissioners who have faithfully guided its mission with prayer and discernment. Building upon this strong foundation, the Synod seeks to bring renewed intentionality to spiritual formation as an integral dimension of Assembly life.

To that end, a Spiritual Formation Team is proposed to support the Assembly's work through prayerful grounding, theological reflection, and opportunities for spiritual growth. This group will assist the Assembly in maintaining a posture of discernment and spiritual attentiveness in its deliberations. As part of its charge, the group will design and lead a spiritual formation component for each Assembly meeting, ensuring that the Synod's governance remains rooted in faith and responsive to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The pillar will assess its impact through ongoing feedback, participation tracking, and reflection. After each Assembly meeting, participants will provide brief feedback on personal growth, engagement, and application to ministry. At the second (Spring) Assembly meeting, a more prominent spiritual formation experience will be offered, with a comprehensive evaluation of offerings, relevance, and effectiveness. The group will adjust topics, formats, and scheduling based on feedback. Biennial reflections will assess cumulative impact and application in ministry contexts.

The timeline for evaluation includes:

- Fall Assembly: Feedback survey; track participation
- Spring Assembly: Major formation experience; comprehensive evaluation
- Ongoing: Qualitative reflections; review and adjust offerings
- Biennial: Review cumulative impact on members and ministry

# Governance

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## **Purpose**

Governance within the Synod of the Northeast serves as more than organizational structure — it enables a spiritual practice of shared leadership and accountability. Rooted in Presbyterian polity yet open to innovation, this pillar ensures that the Synod carries out its work with transparency, integrity, and faithfulness. In the hybrid-missional model, governance balances the fiduciary responsibilities of the Synod Corporation with the missional commitments of the whole body, ensuring that decisions are both responsible and visionary.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

The Governance pillar is composed of the Synod Assembly, the Synod Council, and Ecclesiastical and Administrative structures.

### **SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

The Synod Assembly serves as the central gathering where the Synod's shared work is brought into focus, discerned, and acted upon. It conducts the business of the Synod and advances its six pillars through the work of pillar committees and task groups whose reports, recommendations, and insights shape the Assembly's deliberations. These gatherings are not only spaces for governance but also opportunities for spiritual reflection, storytelling, and collective discernment.

By receiving and discussing pillar committee and task group reports, commissioners engage in prayerful dialogue, weigh diverse perspectives, and discern together the most faithful path forward. Recommendations from these bodies are carefully considered, debated, and ultimately brought to a vote, ensuring that decisions reflect both the mission priorities and the shared wisdom of the Synod.

The Assembly embodies the Synod's hybrid-missional structure: governance and mission intertwined in ways that strengthen accountability, empower broad participation, and decentralize authority. Through this process, the Assembly nurtures a culture of transparency, collaboration, and faithful stewardship, ensuring that the Synod's life and witness remain responsive to God's call in a rapidly changing world.

The Synod Assembly will be composed of one Minister Commissioner, one Elder Commissioner, and one Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD) from each presbytery, one representative from each Caucus, one representative from Presbyterian Women, the Synod Moderator and Vice Moderator, Treasurer, Stated Clerk, and Synod Leader.

Aside from the collaboration between pillars, Synod Assembly may establish relationships with groups from the larger PC(U.S.A.), ecumenical partners, and advocacy organizations whose missions align with the Synod's mission.

The Synod Assembly will meet three times a year and will discuss and/or approve the following:

- Recommendations from the six pillars and their committees/task forces
- Recommendations from Synod Council
- Annual budget
- Changes to by-laws and standing rules

### ***Synod Assembly as the Board of Trustees***

The Synod Assembly will serve as the Board of Trustees, a governing body that provides strategic direction and financial oversight for both the Synod Corporation and the wider Synod body. The Board is composed of members of Synod Assembly who, as required by New York State law, are at least eighteen years of age. The Board safeguards the mission and resources of the Synod by ensuring sound governance, financial accountability, and adherence to the highest legal and ethical standards. The Board of Trustees will oversee any matters concerning legal processes or requirements, including the acquisition, purchase, receipt or disposition of property. The Board also ensures that the Synod adheres to legal and ethical standards.

### **SYNOD COUNCIL**

The Synod Council, which consists of the Pillar Conveners and elected officers of the Synod, serves as the decision-making body between Synod Assemblies. The Council meets monthly to hear reports from the pillars, discuss issues that have arisen, make decisions that enable the pillars to continue their work, and help plan collaborative efforts that require several pillars to accomplish. While the Synod Council is authorized to make decisions, if a decision is major and affects a majority of the Synod and the Synod Assembly, it should wait until the next Synod Assembly, or the Synod Council should call a Special Meeting of the Assembly.

Membership and terms of service for Synod Council include:

- Synod Moderator – one year
- Synod Vice Moderator – one year
- Past Synod Moderator – one year
- Pillar Conveners – one term of three years followed by a second term of three years

The Pillar or Council may determine a shorter term for Pillar Conveners once the Council has begun its work. The Treasurer, Stated Clerk and Synod Leader's terms are set by the Synod Assembly and its Standing Rules.

### **ECCLESIASTICAL**

The Ecclesiastical structure outlines the functions of the Permanent Judicial Commission, Committee on Representation, and the Nominating Committee.

#### ***Permanent Judicial Commission***

The Synod conducts judicial process trials and hearings through the Permanent Judicial Commission. The powers and duties of the commission are set forth in the Church Discipline section of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II Book of Order. The Permanent Judicial Commission is composed of 12 people, including six teaching elders and six ruling elders. They are nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Synod Assembly for a six-year term in accordance with the provisions of Church Discipline.

#### ***Committee on Representation***

The Committee on Representation provides the Synod with information essential to maintaining Constitutional principles of inclusiveness and representation on all Synod committees and commissions. The Committee is composed of a member of the Synod Council and six members elected in three equal classes; they are nominated by the Nominating Committee. The Synod Leader and the Stated Clerk provide staff support.

The Committee on Representation develops procedures and mechanisms for promoting and reviewing the Synod's implementation of the church's commitment to inclusiveness and representation. It advises the Synod Council on the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, and advocates for diversity in leadership. The committee also consults with the Personnel Committee regarding employment of personnel and maintains ongoing records pertaining to individuals serving in the structure of the Synod. The Committee on Representation reports to the Synod Assembly annually, noting areas of underrepresentation along with a report on changes that have been made since the previous report to improve compliance.

### ***Nominating Committee***

The Nominating Committee nominates members of Pillar Working Groups, Pillar Conveners, Officers, Permanent Judicial Commission members, and any other committees of the Synod, unless specifically assigned to another entity. The Synod Council nominates members of the Nominating Committee, which will include a member of the Synod Council and six members elected in three equal classes. The Synod Leader and the Stated Clerk provide staff support.

The Nominating Committee works with Pillar Working Groups to determine any needs for additional members who are not Synod Assembly Commissioners and identify those whose gifts and talents could be invited in to fill these needs. They are responsible for contacting potential nominees, exploring the potential for their service and ensuring alignment between temperaments and skills and a willingness to serve. They will nominate candidates to fill all vacancies in a slate presented to Synod Assembly.

For the initial organization of the Assembly to be approved at the October 2026 meeting, the current Leadership Team will nominate the members of the Pillar Working Groups, Conveners of the Pillar Working Groups, and the Vice Moderator.

### ***Special Administrative Review Committees/Administrative Commissions/ Investigating Committees***

Special Administrative Review Committees and Administrative Commissions are tools that the Synod can use when requested by presbyteries to provide targeted support at times when their challenges become too great to face alone. If a presbytery is unable to create an Investigating Committee, it can ask the Synod to assume limited jurisdiction.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

The Administrative ministry area outlines the functions of the Personnel Committee and Finance and Fiduciary Management.

### ***Personnel Committee***

The Personnel Committee provides oversight, guidance, and support for the Synod's human resources functions to ensure a healthy, equitable, and effective organizational culture. The committee helps align staffing practices with the Synod's mission, vision, and six pillars while fostering accountability, collaboration, and staff well-being. The committee is composed of at least five members, one of whom will serve as chair. The Synod Council appoints members, giving special attention to representation across presbyteries, diversity, and relevant expertise (e.g., human resources, management, pastoral care). The committee meets at least quarterly and as needed for urgent personnel matters. The Synod Leader serves as staff resource to the committee except when their own performance review is under discussion.

The Personnel Committee develops, recommends, and reviews Synod personnel policies to ensure compliance with PC(U.S.A.) polity, legal requirements, and best practices. They regularly review job descriptions to ensure mission alignment and evaluate compensation structures, benefits, and personnel practices for fairness, equity, and sustainability. The committee supports search and hiring processes for Synod staff, ensuring diverse, inclusive and transparent hiring practices. They partner with the Synod Leader to establish evaluation processes for all Synod staff, and they conduct the annual performance review of the Synod Leader/Executive and Stated Clerk. The committee serves as a resource for conflict resolution and staff support when needed. They report regularly to the Synod Assembly and Council regarding staffing matters, personnel policy updates, and staff well-being.

# Finance and Fiduciary Management

## **Purpose**

The Finance and Fiduciary Management area ensures faithful stewardship, accountability, and transparency in all financial and fiduciary matters. This work supports the Synod's mission and vision by safeguarding resources, aligning financial practices with strategic priorities, and ensuring compliance with Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) polity and best practices in nonprofit management.

## **Structure and Focus**



### ***Financial Review Committee***

The Financial Review Committee serves as the primary oversight board for the Finance and Fiduciary Management ministry area. They develop policy and conduct financial statement reviews. The team is composed of the Treasurer, Manager of Finance, Synod Leader, Moderator, and two other members from the larger Synod community who have finance backgrounds. They will meet monthly to conduct business.

### ***Audit***

The Audit Committee reviews the annual audit with an independent accounting firm and recommends policy changes. The team is composed of the Treasurer, Manager of Finance, Synod Leader, and three others from the larger Synod community who have finance backgrounds. They will meet annually to conduct business.

### ***Budget***

The Budget Committee coordinates budget development and monitors the operating budget. The team is composed of Pillar Conveners, Moderators, and Staff. They will meet annually to conduct business.

### ***Investment Review***

The Investment Review Committee monitors investment portfolio performance, investment advisors, and policies. The team is composed of the Treasurer, Manager of Finance, Synod Leader, and three others from the larger Synod community who have finance backgrounds. They will meet quarterly to conduct business.

### ***Stewardship Planning and Strategy Team***

The Stewardship Planning team is composed of the Finance Manager, Treasurer, Synod Leader, Funds Development Intern, and two at-large commission members. They will meet semi-annually to conduct business.

### ***Missional Strategy Team***

The Missional Strategy Team reviews current missional activities and recommends new initiatives and fundraising strategies. The Finance Manager, Treasurer, Synod Leader, Funds Development Intern, and one at-large member. They will meet semi-annually to conduct business.

# Grants

## **Purpose**

At the heart of the Grants Pillar lies a bold and hopeful vision to build community, embrace diversity, deepen accountability, and cultivate sustainable gospel-rooted ministry. This pillar prioritizes collaboration and a focus on sustainability, along with measured mission impact. The proposed changes aim to reflect spiritual practices around community justice and discernment, around forming people instead of just funding, hearing prophetic witness rather than reviewing paperwork, and becoming connectional partners rather than institutional gatekeepers.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

Our Grants Pillar strongly supports the Synod of the Northeast's vision of being a courageous, Spirit-led, inclusive, and missional community by empowering ministries to explore bold new ways of being Church in today's world. Our budget for grants supports these visions while remaining steadfast in the stewardship of our funds.

Innovation Grant: \$140,000

Emerging Gospel Community Grant: \$100,000

Youth and Young Adult Leadership Development Grant: \$40,000

Campus Ministry Grant: \$30,000

One of the most significant changes to this pillar lies in a shift toward an incentive-based model for Innovation Grants. For these grants, first year funding will be set at \$10,000 with an additional \$15,000 to be awarded in the second year contingent upon demonstrated progress and sustainability.

To support this change, the following will be implemented:

- The development and marketing of Funders of Faith, a digital newsletter that monthly highlights a grant administered and funded by the Synod of the Northeast.
- A new requirement for grantees to receive training for progress reporting for all grants.
- The creation of a mentor program that matches a current or former successful grantee with a new grantee, so that they may advise and walk with the new grantee during the two-year period.

## **Key Changes in Grants Affecting Congregations & Presbyteries**

### *Training for First-Time Applicants*

- Required webinar on grant writing and Synod values.
- Offered twice a year in English, Spanish, and Korean.

### *Annual Progress Report Training*

- Required webinar within 7 months of receiving funds.
- Focus on accountability as covenant, not paperwork.
- Reports must include both data and stories (photos, quotes, testimonies).

### *Mentorship for New Grantees*

- Each new grantee paired with an experienced mentor.
- Quarterly check-ins (Zoom or in-person).

### *Storytelling Initiative*

- Launch of Funders of Faith digital newsletter.
- Grants/ministry stories shared via video, articles, and Synod website.

### *Incentive-Based Funding (starting 2026)*

- Innovation Grants shift to \$10,000 in Year 1.
- Up to \$15,000 in Year 2 if progress/sustainability demonstrated.
- Encourages accountability and long-term ministry health.

### *Equity & Inclusion Focus*

- Trainings, multilingual access, and mentorships level the field.
- Designed to support historically under-resourced congregations.

### *Strengthened Connections*

- Grants become more relational: linking congregations, presbyteries, and leaders across contexts.
- Moves from "funding projects" to "forming people" and communities.

The incentive-based grant funding will undergo re-evaluation in 2028 to determine the effectiveness of the implemented award changes. Upon completion of the review, a formal report will be presented to the Assembly with recommendations regarding whether current award levels should be sustained or adjusted.

A Grants Review Committee will be created to oversee the evaluation of grant applications and to make recommendations for approval. The aim is to strengthen the grant program to better support transformational ministries and faithful leaders who will shape the future of the Church. The Committee is composed of two teaching elders, two ruling elders, and three at-large Synod members. The team reviews grant applications and progress reports for funding purposes. They recommend the award amounts and ensure that grants are processed fairly.

Work under the Grants Pillar will be evaluated through the following:

Quantitative	Qualitative
Participation rates in webinars and trainings	Grantees' surveys after training and mentorship
Number of first-time applicants who successfully complete the application process	Embedded reflection questions in annual progress reports
Number of check-ins with mentors	Mentees' reflections on mentoring relationships and support needs
On time progress submission rates and completion	Storytelling and lived impact
Number of multilingual applications and grantees	
Growth in applications from underrepresented communities	



# Collaboration

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## **Purpose**

The Collaboration Pillar fosters sustainability, innovation, and vitality among presbyteries within the Synod of the Northeast. By encouraging shared resources, nurturing innovative partnerships, and, where appropriate, supporting presbytery mergers, this ministry area seeks to revitalize presbyteries, strengthen bonds across mid councils, and cultivate a thriving, inclusive, mission-oriented church structure. Intentional collaboration provides a pathway for presbyteries to adapt to changing contexts while maintaining faithful witness and mission.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

The Collaboration Pillar is designed to resource presbyteries and mid councils committed to innovation, mission-focused partnerships, and sustainability. It is particularly targeted toward declining or under-resourced presbyteries seeking new pathways to sustainability, mid councils aiming to strengthen connections and collective mission within the Synod, and leadership structures exploring collaboration, mergers, or shared resource models.

This pillar will operate through an independent commission within the Synod's governance framework. This nine-member body will include representatives from the Council, the pillar leadership, the Synod Leader, Assembly members, and at-large teaching or ruling elders. Membership will reflect the Synod's commitments to diversity and inclusion, ensuring a broad perspective in guiding collaborative initiatives.

To realize the vision of vibrant, connected presbyteries, the Collaboration Pillar will focus on six interrelated strategies:

### **Multi-Presbytery Engagement**

Through virtual and in-person gatherings, presbyteries will have opportunities to deepen social, ecclesial, and missional bonds. These gatherings will provide spaces for shared learning, collective reflection, and coordinated action, strengthening the Synod's common witness and fostering a culture of mutual support.

### **Relationship-Building Gatherings**

Investing in gatherings that cultivate trust, shared values, and strong partnerships supports sustained collaboration. These intentionally designed experiences will encourage meaningful participation, mutual accountability, and lasting relationships among presbyteries, laying the foundation for ongoing cooperative work.

### **Shared Leadership and Resources**

Innovative leadership models, including joint staffing and resource-sharing, will be promoted across presbyteries. Strategic support from the Synod—financial, leadership, and advisory—will enable these models to develop sustainably, creating long-term capacity for collaboration and shared mission.



## Storytelling and Shared Learning

The pillar will celebrate and share successes across presbyteries, highlighting collaborative initiatives through Synod communications and events. Presbytery participants will be supported in translating discernment into action, with clear timelines for implementing shared ministries within 9-12 months, reinforcing a culture of learning and practical impact.

## Collaborative Grant Initiatives

The pillar will inspire and support initiatives that advance presbytery collaboration, innovation, and measurable impact. Proposals will be encouraged to clearly articulate goals, anticipated outcomes, and alignment with the Synod's strategic vision. Transparency, shared learning, and accountability will guide the grant process, ensuring that resources are effectively leveraged to strengthen collective ministry.

## Strategic Management Support

Collaboration members will receive training in organizational models, mergers, mediation, and conflict transformation. The Synod Leader and Stated Clerk will provide ongoing guidance, coaching, and transitional support to ensure presbyteries have the tools and confidence to engage in sustainable collaborative work.

Through these strategies, the Collaboration Pillar anticipates transformative outcomes for the Synod and its presbyteries, including stronger bonds across presbyteries, sustainable models of shared leadership and resource management, greater innovation in under-resourced presbyteries, and a more cohesive Synod structure.

### ***Merger and Shared Leadership Grants – \$125,000***

The Synod recognizes that the realities of ministry today often call for bold collaboration and creative realignment among presbyteries. To support these adaptive efforts, the Synod will make available Merger and Shared Leadership Grants totaling \$45,000 per year. Funding may be used to support strategic planning, organizational consultation, staffing needs, or pilot projects that test new approaches to governance and ministry. Presbyteries engaged in formal merger processes are eligible for an additional \$5,000 to assist with legal and administrative costs. This \$125,000 commitment reflects the Synod's vision of collaboration as a pathway to vitality.

### ***Council Gatherings - \$ 10,000***

To strengthen collaboration, the Synod will provide \$3,500 grants to support leadership gatherings that bring councils together for shared discernment, deeper connection, and coordinated planning.

### ***Synod Training Gatherings – \$15,000***

To strengthen leadership across the Synod, \$15,000 will be invested in Synod Training Gatherings. These gatherings will provide intentional spaces for mid council leaders and ruling elders to deepen their knowledge, sharpen skills, and nurture relationships that enhance shared ministry. Training gatherings may take place in the form of regional workshops, Synod-wide symposiums, or retreats led by experienced educators and practitioners.

Success will be measured through both qualitative and quantitative indicators and collaboration support grants will be re-evaluated in 2028. The pillar group will make a report and recommendations to the October 2028 Synod Assembly.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Timelines established for implementing shared ministries following discernment and Synod support	Quarterly check-ins with presbyteries to monitor progress and assess impact.
Post-event evaluations conducted promptly to capture lessons and inform future gatherings	Development and use of criteria for presbytery health, informed by financial and ministry
	Documentation of vitality and integration in merged or newly partnered presbyteries, reported to the Collaboration Commission and Synod leadership.

# Storytelling & Communication

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## **Purpose**

The Storytelling & Communication Pillar emerges from our conviction that faithful storytelling is itself a ministry—one that weaves together identity, mission, and witness so the whole Church may see, hear, and be moved by God’s transforming work. Throughout the discernment process, individuals have engaged in deep listening and heard the call to embody a shared story—clearly communicated through our vision, mission, and proclamation, and boldly expressed in a logo that visually proclaims who God is calling us to be as the Church in the world today.

Missional storytelling is not simply about branding or promotion; it is about discipleship and witness. It is about lifting up stories that reveal God’s justice, Christ’s love, and the Spirit’s renewing power. By doing this work intentionally, the Synod models for presbyteries, congregations, and communities how faithful communication can nurture belonging, inspire action, and call people into deeper participation in God’s mission.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

The Synod Communication Specialist and a committee of five at-large members will guide work for the Storytelling & Communication Pillar, which will focus on two central commitments. First, it will communicate the Synod’s identity—ensuring that we consistently and compellingly share our vision, mission, logo, and proclamation so that all may be aware, inspired, and engaged. Second, it will build vibrant and accessible platforms that embody welcome and connection, including a redesigned website, a more interactive newsletter, digital resource hub, and tangible expressions that reinforce the Synod’s common life.

Six months after launch, the Storytelling Task Force and the Synod Communications Specialist will evaluate effectiveness by progress made on the website redesign and creation of digital platforms, visibility of the new logo and proclamation across Synod materials, and the implementation of a new newsletter template.

Through this work, the Synod will demonstrate what it means to be a community that proclaims its faith not only in words and symbols but also through practices of hospitality, justice, and innovation. In a world saturated with competing voices, our storytelling will center God’s good news and model how faithful communication strengthens connection, nurtures trust, and emboldens mission.

# Synod Proclamation

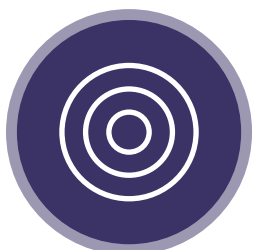
## Spirit-Led. Transformative Faith.

## Boundless Welcome.



### Vision Statement

We are the Body of Christ, Spirit-led and faithful, sharing God's blessings through governance, innovation, and justice as we live out the Gospel in a changing world.



### Mission Statement

A grace-filled, connected, and accessible Synod body where presbyteries, congregations, and leaders build trust, share resources, and boldly live Christ's call to justice, equity, and beloved community.



SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### Logo Narrative

The Synod's new logo tells a story of unity, purpose, and Spirit-led movement. Curved lines evoke Creation and covenant, ripples signify our eight states and faith flowing outward, interwoven hands reflect God's embrace and our commitment to radical inclusion, flames symbolize the Spirit's breath animating a responsive Church, and the cross at the center grounds us in Christ, reminding us that leadership, advocacy, and love stand at the heart of our call.

# Regional Learning

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## **Purpose**

Committed to engaging in meaningful dialogue, conversations, and storytelling, the Regional Learning Pillar will develop timely webinars and in-person meetings to address identified Synod needs and requests. The group will partner with Grants management to offer Regional Grant training and the annual Innovation Expo.

## **Pillar Structure and Focus**

The Regional Learning Pillar will house a committee composed of one teaching elder, one ruling elder, and two at-large Synod members. They will be empowered to host regional events in line with the Synod's mission and the approved area budget. As a committee the group will orchestrate events in a timely manner so that webinars, in-person gatherings, Zoom meetings, and other contact mediums will be current, "in the moment", relevant, and meaningful for participants. The Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development and Administration will serve as staff support for the Regional Learning committee. The committee will report to the Synod Leader through the Mid Council Resident.

## **Webinar Planning Team**

This team will consist of three-four members: one teaching elder, one ruling elder, and one or two at-large Synod members. The team will be responsible for developing webinar content, format, speakers/facilitators, and identifying the targeted audience.

## **In-Person Gathering Planning Team**

This team will consist of one ruling elder, one teaching elder, and one or two at-large Synod members. Their responsibilities will include developing topics, themes, identifying and procuring speakers/facilitators, location, along with dates and times.

Both groups will consist of staggered cohorts to ensure continuity. All recommended programs/events will be submitted to the Regional Learning Committee for final approval.

For evaluation of learning events, the committee will issue participant surveys and identify the number of webinar views, the number of in-person gathering attendees, and how often webinars are selected for viewing.

A stylized rainbow graphic composed of several concentric, overlapping arches in shades of light blue, white, and light yellow, centered at the top of the page.

# Programs and Ministries to Presbyteries and Congregations

The work of discerning the vision and understanding our current state revealed that the health of our programs and ministries are vital to our success - and adjustments were needed to allow them to fully support the vision. While many of our programs will remain, new initiatives will also emerge to provide new opportunities for individuals, congregations, presbyteries and the Synod to grow and thrive.

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# Robert L. Washington Scholars Program

## **Purpose**

The revitalized Robert L. Washington Scholars Program will prepare a new generation of leaders for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by grounding them in faith, justice, and leadership practice. Honoring the legacy of Elder Robert L. Washington, the program equips emerging leaders from underrepresented communities for impactful service in both church and society. The Washington Scholars Program emphasizes mentorship, theology, social justice, and servant leadership, which aligns naturally with the broader ecosystem of PC(U.S.A.) leadership formation programs. Together, these initiatives seek to empower faithful, diverse, and engaged leaders at multiple levels of church life and ministry.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

The Robert L. Washington Scholars Program encourages academic excellence, leadership formation, and integration of faith in practice. The program provides mentorship and cultivates skills in theology, social justice advocacy, and servant leadership to foster a deeper sense of call to Christian service. The program is open to undergraduate students, recent college graduates, or seminarians. Members of Presbyterian congregations within the Synod of the Northeast demonstrating a strong commitment to faith, learning, leadership, and community engagement are also encouraged to apply.

Recruitment takes place January through March via promotion and outreach to presbyteries, congregations, colleges, and seminaries. Applications will be received by April 15 and the team will announce the new cohort by June 1.

The one-year program includes an orientation and commissioning retreat, a mentorship program and quarterly leadership and faith formation workshops. Participants will offer a capstone presentation as a final reflection on their program experience.

Synod Leadership reviews applications and makes final candidate selections. They also provide strategic direction and approve the program budget. A program advisory board will be composed of educators, past scholars and mentors, advises on curriculum, recruitment, and partnerships. Program staff include a program coordinator to oversee operations and budget, administrative support to coordinate documentation, reporting, and events. Volunteer roles include a mentorship team and a scholar alumni network, both of which engage participants in mentorship, growth and discernment.

Funding for the program will draw upon the Wurffel-Sills Endowment and be supplemented through additional sources, such as budget allocations, congregational sponsorships and grants from Presbyterian foundations.

The program is designed to increase confidence in faith-based leaders, expand the Synod-wide network of emerging leaders and provide connections for leadership opportunities within PC(U.S.A.). Surveys, mentor feedback forms, service project evaluations, and an annual review will serve as program evaluation tools to ensure these outcomes are being met.

# Small Church Residency

## **Purpose**

Approved by the Synod in 2023, the Small Church Residency Program represents a bold investment in the future of smaller congregations and emerging pastoral leaders. This three-year Designated Pastor initiative is designed to support “hard-to-call” congregations—communities that are ready for transformation but face challenges in securing long-term pastoral leadership. The program provides congregations with sustained pastoral leadership while creating a structured residency experience for new-to-ministry pastors. Residents and congregations participate together in intentional training on change management, discipleship, stewardship, evangelism, and community relations. Grounded in the belief that congregational vitality is possible, the program encourages churches to imagine new ways of embodying faithful, outward-looking ministry in today’s context.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

For pastoral residents, the Small Church Residency offers a rich environment to grow into the role of the public theologian—leading congregations through adaptive change, building ministry teams, fostering community development, and navigating the complexities of 21st-century church dynamics. The residency offers both practical and formative experiences, equipping leaders with essential skills while also helping them discern vocational clarity around small-church ministry.

The initiative requires deep collaboration. Congregations commit to creating space for experimentation and learning, while residents commit to exploring innovative approaches to ministry that are sustainable and contextually grounded. Together, pastors and congregations will engage in new models of ministry, strengthening both the vitality of local churches and the Synod’s witness as a whole.

Although the program’s immediate goal is to provide pastoral leadership to underserved congregations, its broader vision lies in cultivating leaders who are prepared and inspired to serve faithfully in settings where creativity, resilience, and strong pastoral presence are essential. The Small Church Residency Program reflects the Synod’s commitment to reimagining ministry, supporting congregational vitality, and shaping leaders for the church of today and tomorrow.

Congregations participating in the program are eligible to receive a \$20,000 annual grant for a three-year period, providing vital support for pastoral leadership and program development. It will be resourced and overseen by the Synod Leader in partnership with the Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development, and Administration. Each residency will undergo evaluation according to the timeline below. The entire initiative will be reevaluated in 2028 to assess outcomes and determine its continuation.

Timeline	Evaluation Activity	Participants	Focus / Deliverables
<b>Pre-Residency (Before Year 1)</b>	Baseline Assessment	Congregations & Pastors	Congregational Vitality Assessment; ministry plan; leadership team roster; EQi & Conflict Model for pastors; confirm EMI enrollment
<b>Quarterly Check-Ins (Months 3,6,9,12 - Years 1 &amp; 2)</b>	Progress Review	Program Coordinator, Pastors, Congregational Leadership Teams	Track ministry goals, adaptive leadership growth, team dynamics, congregational engagement; self-reflection and feedback reports
<b>Mid-Year Evaluation (End of Month 6 - Years 1 &amp; 2)</b>	Mid-Year Report	Program Coordinator, Pastors, Congregational Leadership Teams	Review ministry plan implementation, leadership application, community impact, spiritual formation; written report with feedback
<b>Annual Summative Evaluation (End of Year 1 &amp; 2)</b>	Program Review	Program Staff, Synod Leadership, Pastors, Congregations	Assess achievement of goals, congregational transformation, vocational clarity for pastors; updated vitality assessment, surveys, interviews; recommendations for improvements.
<b>Post-Residency Follow-Up (6-12 Months After Completion)</b>	Long-Term Outcomes	Pastors & Congregations	Track pastoral placement, sustainability of congregational innovations; follow-up survey, success stories, case studies



# Community Organizing Cohort

## **Purpose**

The Synod will launch a Community Organizing Cohort as part of its emerging vision for leadership development and community transformation. The cohort will offer pastors, mid council leaders, and community advocates a collaborative space to explore the principles and practices of community organizing through a faith-based lens. Participants will be encouraged to integrate spiritual grounding with practical tools, preparing them to lead with confidence and effectiveness in contexts of change and challenge.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

The Community Organizing Cohort will prepare leaders across the region to build resilient communities of faith and action, nurturing a future where justice and hope are made visible in tangible, transformative ways.

Local organizers with deep expertise in grassroots leadership and commitment to social justice will guide this initiative. Through shared learning and practice, participants will strengthen their capacity for community leadership and advocacy, connect theological convictions with concrete action, and form a supportive network of peers committed to long-term impact in their communities.

The Synod has allocated \$12,000 in the 2026 budget to make this ministry possible. This investment equips leaders to integrate faith with action, ensuring that communities of faith are not only resilient but also bold in confronting injustice.

The Community Organizing Cohort will be guided by the Synod Leader and the Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development and Administration, providing strategic oversight and support throughout the program. A five-member planning team will collaborate closely with staff and the cohort leader to monitor progress, assess outcomes, and provide regular reports to the Assembly on benchmarks, achievements, and recommendations for future initiatives.

The first evaluation will take place in 2028 and will use the following metrics to determine success:

Evaluation Area	Criteria for Success	Indicators / Measures
Leadership Growth	Participants demonstrate stronger faith-based leadership and advocacy skills	Pre- and post- cohort self-assessments; successful planning and implementation of a community initiative
Community Impact	Participants lead projects that address local needs effectively	Number of initiatives launched; people served; partnerships formed; measurable improvements in targeted issues
Network Building	Participants form supportive relationships and collaborate with peers	Peer feedback; sustained engagement and collaboration post-cohort
Integration of Faith and Action	Participants connect spiritual values with practical organizing strategies	Evidence of faith-informed decision-making; adoption of ethical, inclusive practices in initiatives
Participant Reflection & Learning	Participants reflect on growth and articulate lessons learned	Journals, reflection exercises, presentations; qualitative feedback
Sustainability & Long-Term Impact	Participants continue to apply skills and maintain initiatives beyond the cohort	Follow-up surveys 6-12 months post-cohort; continued projects partnerships, or community impact

# Synod-Wide Commission Pastor Training Program

## **Purpose**

The Synod of the Northeast seeks to strengthen and standardize the preparation of Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs) for service across its presbyteries. The Synod-wide Commission Pastor Training Program will provide accessible, high-quality, and contextually grounded education for CRE candidates. This initiative ensures that leaders serving in congregations are equipped with the theological, pastoral, and practical skills necessary for faithful and effective ministry.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

The Commission Pastor Training program aims to generate a cohesive Synod-wide model for preparing CREs. The program not only will increase equity and access to theological and pastoral training and provide a deeper sense of unity across presbyteries, but also strengthen leadership pipelines to serve small, rural, immigrant and under-resourced congregations. The program directly supports ruling elders discerning a call to commissioned pastoral service as well as mid councils seeking consistent, high-quality preparation for CREs and congregations served by CREs in under-resourced, rural, or transitional contexts.

In 2025, the Synod established a Commission Pastor Planning Team to design a Synod-wide training program for CREs. The team brings together diverse voices from across the Synod:

Rev. Kathy Dain – Presbytery for Southern New Jersey  
Rev. Kate Jones Calone – Long Island Presbytery  
Rev. Steve Shussett – Highlands of New Jersey Presbytery  
Elder Yvette Swavy Lipton – Hudson River Presbytery  
Dr. Nicole Wilkinson – Presbytery for Southern New Jersey

To properly launch this program, the team will undertake the following:

### ***Standardized Curriculum***

The team will establish a core curriculum covering theology, Reformed polity, preaching and worship, pastoral care, and mission, and develop electives responsive to presbytery and congregational needs. The responses from a 2025 Synod-wide survey will guide the development of this curriculum.

### ***Synod-Based Faculty***

The team will recruit instructors from within the Synod, ensuring teaching reflects regional diversity, gifts, and contexts.

### ***Accessible Learning Models***

The team will incorporate hybrid instruction (in-person intensives, online modules, and peer learning cohorts) and prioritize affordability and accessibility for smaller or under-resourced presbyteries.

### ***Partnerships and Endorsements***

Dubuque Theological Seminary serves as the partner institution for the Synod's CRE Training Program. Students who successfully complete all program and certification requirements will receive a Certificate in Christian Leadership from the seminary.

Ruling elders enrolled in the program are eligible for scholarships through the Wurffel-Sills Endowment. The annual gathering of the Commission Pastor's Retreat will be funded in part through the Mid Council Support budget.

The program will be evaluated through feedback from presbyteries on curriculum effectiveness and alignment with local needs, regular surveys of CRE candidates and their supervising pastors, and post-course evaluations to ensure continuous improvement. The team will report annually to the Synod Assembly on participation, outcomes, and ministry impact.

The program will be reevaluated in 2028.

# Early Ministry Institute (EMI)

## **Purpose**

The Early Ministry Institute (EMI) embodies the Synod's commitment to equipping and sustaining the next generation of leaders. Designed for early-career pastors, Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs), and Chaplains, EMI responds to the unique opportunities and challenges of the first years of ministry with a holistic approach that blends professional development, spiritual formation, and community support. As the Synod enters this new vision, EMI will continue as a staple of leadership development.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

At its core, EMI is more than a training program—it is a covenant of accompaniment. Through workshops, seminars, and interactive learning experiences, new leaders gain both the practical skills and adaptive capacities required for faithful ministry in today's complex contexts. Topics span pastoral care, theological reflection, church administration, leadership development, and innovative practices for navigating change. Each learning space balances the practical with the reflective, ensuring participants are prepared not only for the day-to-day work of ministry but also for its long-term demands.

Equally central is the emphasis on spiritual grounding. EMI intentionally weaves prayer, worship, and spiritual practices into every gathering, reminding leaders that ministry is sustained not by skill alone but by a deep and abiding connection to God's presence. This rhythm of nurture and reflection strengthens participants' sense of call and equips them to serve with resilience, humility, and hope.

The impact of EMI reaches well beyond its participants. As new ministers grow in wisdom, resilience, and spiritual depth, the congregations and communities they serve are strengthened in turn. This ripple effect extends vitality and sustainability throughout the Synod, ensuring that God's mission flourishes for generations to come.

Funding for EMI combines substantial Synod support with investment from presbyteries, participants and the Wurffel-Sills Endowment.

EMI is resourced by the Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development and Administration and the Synod Leader. The seven-member planning team provides support to the cohorts, leadership, and guest facilitators. The program undergoes annual evaluation.



**EARLY MINISTRY**  
——— **INSTITUTE** ———  
**SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST**

# Pathways to Mid Council Leadership: Foundations for Emerging Leaders

## **Purpose**

In 2025, the Synod introduced Pathways to Mid Council Leadership: Foundations for Emerging Leaders, a four-day training that prepares and inspires individuals discerning a call to serve in presbytery and synod leadership. This initiative responds to the increasing complexity of mid council ministry and the need to equip leaders with the knowledge, skills, and perspective required to navigate these systems faithfully and effectively. The program not only provides practical preparation but also cultivates imaginative, collaborative, and resilient leaders who guide the church through change and toward vitality.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

Pathways to Mid Council Leadership: Foundations for Emerging Leaders is held once a year at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. Led by the Synod Leader and invited faculty, the program immerses participants in the realities of mid council service.

At its core, Pathways emphasizes vocational discernment. Through leadership assessments, participants gain deeper insight into their strengths, growth areas, and leadership style. Guided reflection on pastoral identity, adaptive leadership, and missional narrative helps participants consider whether mid council service is part of their call.

The program operates as largely self-funded, with participants covering most of the costs. To ensure accessibility, individuals from within the Synod of the Northeast receive a \$100 registration subsidy, with the Synod allocating \$3,000 in its budget to support this initiative. The Synod of the Northeast is the second site in the denomination to offer structured mid council leadership training, underscoring its commitment to innovation, collaboration, and leadership development across the wider church.

The program will be reevaluated for continuation in 2028.

# Advocacy and Immigration Task Force

## **Purpose**

Formed in February 2025, the Advocacy and Immigration Task Force serves as a ministry of advocacy, education, and support within the Synod of the Northeast. Rooted in the Gospel call to justice and compassion, the Task Force will focus on ministry with and for vulnerable populations—especially immigrants, refugees, and those impacted by inequitable policies and social systems.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

Composed of seven to nine members — including mid council and church leaders with demonstrated experience in immigration and advocacy — the Task Force will work collaboratively to advance just policies, provide resources for congregations, and strengthen partnerships with interfaith and community organizations. The work of the Task Force will be supported by the Synod Leader and Stated Clerk.

The Task Force's work will focus on four key areas:

### ***Advocacy and Policy Influence***

The team will amplify faith-based voices in public policy, monitoring legislation, and supporting reforms that protect and uphold the dignity of all people.

### ***Education and Awareness***

The team will offer workshops, storytelling initiatives, and worship resources to build understanding and equip leaders.

### ***Coalition Building***

The team will partner with interfaith networks, community organizations, and presbyteries to coordinate collective action.

### ***Spiritual and Emotional Support***

The team will assist congregations in becoming welcoming and inclusive communities for immigrants and others at risk.

Initial funding for the task force will be drawn from the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice budget line. As part of the Synod's new vision, this task force will continue to be developed and its implementation will serve as a next phase of the Synod's ongoing commitment to advocacy, justice, and ministry among vulnerable communities.

# Continuing Networks: Coaching and Mediation

## **Purpose**

As part of the Synod's continuing commitment to nurture healthy, resilient, and effective leadership, two existing networks—the Coaching Network and the Mediation Network will continue as vital expressions of the Synod's mission to equip and sustain leaders across the region.

## **Program Structure and Focus**

### ***The Coaching Network***

The Coaching Network serves as an intentional ministry designed to nurture, equip, and sustain leaders serving in congregations, presbyteries, and community ministries. Rooted in the conviction that healthy leaders build thriving churches, the network provides individualized support through one-on-one coaching, group sessions, and continuing education.

By cultivating safe spaces for reflection, accountability, and growth, the Coaching Network strengthens leaders who, in turn, strengthen the body of Christ. Through training, participant subsidies, coordination, and community gatherings, this ministry ensures that every leader—regardless of financial means or ministry context—has access to skilled coaching and ongoing formation.

### ***The Mediation Network and Peacemaking Ministry***

The Mediation Network provides a pool of trained mediators trained through the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center—who serve when congregations or presbyteries face conflict requiring guided reconciliation. Supported by Peacemaking funds, this ministry offers refresher workshops for mediators and sponsors events that foster understanding and healing, including anti-racism training and gatherings focused on immigration and justice. By equipping leaders to engage in conflict faithfully and constructively, the Mediation and Peacemaking ministries reflect the Synod's commitment to unity, compassion, and transformative leadership.

Together, these networks embody the Synod's new vision for cultivating resilient leaders and fostering communities grounded in trust, reconciliation, and hope.

A large, stylized rainbow graphic with multiple bands of color (blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple) arching across the top of the page. The colors are muted and the lines are thick and hand-drawn in style.

# Next Steps: Implementation and Evaluation Plan

We believe that the only way to ensure the success of this vision is to prioritize evaluation and continuous improvement. Our accomplishment lies not only in creating and implementing, but also ensuring we have processes to faithfully and mindfully assess our work and evolve our approaches to meet the needs of today.

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# Implementation and Evaluation Team



The Implementation and Evaluation Team will guide the Synod of the Northeast in faithfully realizing the 2025 Reimagining the Church and the World vision report. The team will oversee implementation while safeguarding the vision's theological integrity and the process that shaped it.

The team will be composed of nine members from across the Synod (council, commissioners, members-at-large). Nominations for team memberships will be received from April through June 30, 2026.



Candidates for this team will have:

- Deep grounding in Reformed theology and PC(U.S.A.) polity
- Experience in adaptive leadership, strategic planning, and organizational change
- Commitment to justice, equity, inclusion, and innovative approaches
- Strong facilitation, communication, and engagement skills
- Capacity for both strategic vision and detail management
- Active involvement in presbytery/Synod life
- Availability for required travel and meetings
- A spirit of collaboration, willingness to learn, and ability to serve as storytellers and advocates for the Synod

The Synod Leader will recommend the selected team at the October 2026 Assembly. Team members will serve two-year terms beginning November 1, 2026. They will meet quarterly and attend a two-day gathering annually. The team will also deliver an annual report to the Synod Assembly.

### **The Implementation team will undertake the following:**

#### ***Evaluate the Vision and Process***

The team will preserve the theological commitments, values, and principles of the Vision Report. They will assess the Visioning Process (Phases I–III), capturing learnings and practices to inform ongoing work.

#### ***Design and Oversee Implementation***

The team will develop an actionable framework grounded in the report's principles, including the identification of priorities, timelines, partnerships, and structures to support implementation. They will translate vision statements into measurable initiatives aligned with Synod values: innovation, justice, welcome, and Spirit-led leadership.

#### ***Organizational Alignment***

The team will recommend updates to governance (Standing Rules, Bylaws) to reflect the vision. They will ensure policies, staffing, and funding align with the reimagined commitments, and collaborate with Synod staff, commissions, and partners for alignment.

#### ***Engagement and Capacity Building***

The team will communicate transparently across presbyteries, congregations, and networks.

#### ***Monitoring and Adaptation***

The team will establish benchmarks and feedback loops for evaluating progress and recommend adjustments based on regular reviews. They will share findings and success stories through reports, newsletters, and town halls.

To measure success of the items detailed in this report, this team will use the vision and the six pillars to evaluate faithful embodiment of the report's values and commitments, alignments with governance, staffing and funding practices, engagement across presbyteries and partners, and documented progress toward vision goals.

# Acknowledgements

**We express deep gratitude for all the individuals who gave of their time and talents to contribute to the creation of our vision to Reimagine the Church in the World.**

## **THE DISCERNMENT TEAM**

Rev. Joe Chu  
Rev. Jyungin Lee  
Elder Magalene McClarrin  
Rev. Sabrina Slater  
Rev. Dr. Holly Haile Thompson  
Rev. Dr. SanDawna Gaulman Ashley  
Rev. Dr. Okokon Udo

## **FORMER TEAM MEMBERS**

Rev. Dr. Heather Kirk-Davidoff  
Rev. Leslie Latham  
Rev. Dr. Eric Thomas  
Rev. Dakota Whittaker

## **VISION PARTNERS**

Rev. Nancy Talbot, Stated Clerk  
Rev. Stephen Park Choi, Mission and Ministry Moderator  
Elder Lisa Baker, Synod Assembly Moderator  
Rev. Sue Smith, Synod Assembly Moderator Elect  
Mr. Mark Bennett, Communication Specialist  
Elder Michael Yeoman, Grants Coordinator  
Ms. Frances Klaiber, Finance Manager  
Rev. Dr. Nichol Burris, Administrative Coordinator  
Rev. Dr. Gregory Simpson, Treasurer  
Elder Lisa Gray, Administrative Working Group Convener  
Rev. Brandi Wooten, Connectional Ministries Working Group Convener  
Rev. Aaron Frank, Ministry and Mission Working Group Convener  
Ms. Stacy Galloway, Office Administrative Clerk

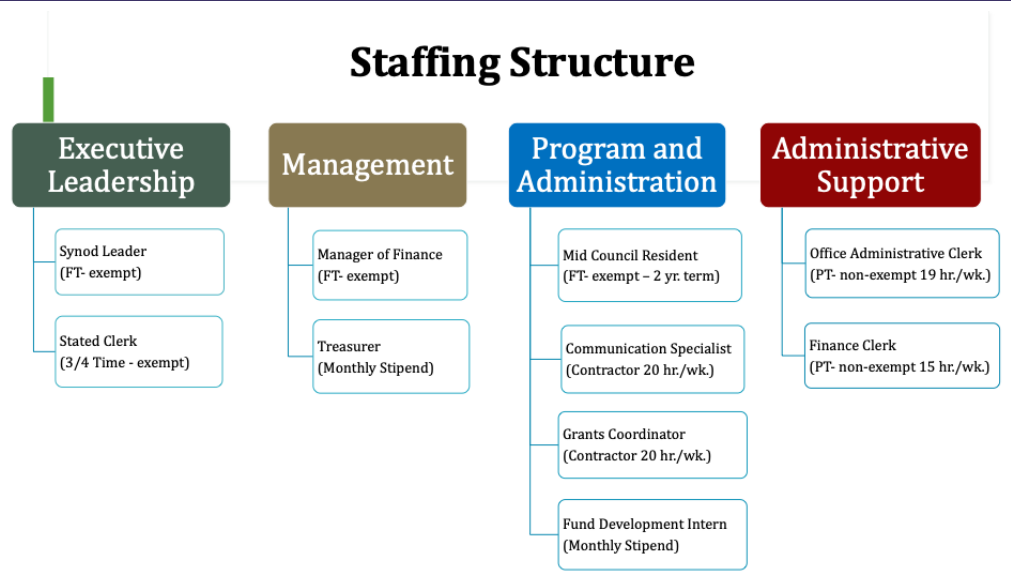
A stylized rainbow logo composed of several concentric, semi-circular bands in shades of light blue, grey, and yellow. In the center, there is a vertical bar with a pinkish-red top and a yellow bottom. The logo is positioned behind a dark blue horizontal band.

# Appendix

A smaller version of the stylized rainbow logo, featuring concentric semi-circular bands in light blue, grey, and yellow, with a central vertical bar in pinkish-red and yellow.

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# Staffing Structure



## Synod Leader

The Synod Leader serves as the Chief Executive Officer and Head of Staff for the Synod of the Northeast, providing strategic leadership, spiritual guidance, and administrative oversight. This role is responsible for advancing the Synod's vision, resourcing mid councils, stewarding financial and human resources, maintaining ecumenical partnerships, and representing the Synod at all levels of the denomination. The Synod Leader plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable ministry practices and deepening collaboration across the region. The Synod Leader will resource all missional pillars.

## Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk serves as the Synod's ecclesiastical officer, parliamentarian, and a resource to the Governance Pillar to expedite the ecclesiastical business of the Synod in a manner that enhances the overall ministry and mission. The Clerk performs the duties of the Stated Clerk in adherence to the responsibilities prescribed in the most recent editions of the Book of Order, Robert's Rules of Order, and the By-laws and Standing Rules of the Synod. The Stated Clerk will resource the Governance, Collaboration, and Grants Missional Pillars.

## Finance Manager

The Finance Manager ensures that the Synod's fiscal practices reflect integrity, transparency, and faithful stewardship. Responsibilities include oversight of budgeting, cash flow, investments, loans, employee benefits, fiscal policies, and accounting processes, as well as supervision of the Finance Clerk and management of building operations. Serving as a key resource within the Governance Pillar under Finance and Fiduciary Management, the Finance Manager supports the committees and teams charged with fiduciary oversight and long-term financial sustainability. In alignment with the Synod's emerging vision, this role also resources all missional pillars on matters of finance and administration, offering guidance in areas of Finance and Fiduciary Management to strengthen the Synod's capacity for faithful and responsible ministry.

## Treasurer

The Treasurer holds fiduciary responsibility for all funds and securities of the Synod, ensuring the integrity and accountability of its financial life. In fulfilling this role, the Treasurer upholds the highest standards of fiduciary care appropriate to a religious organization, reviewing monthly bank reconciliations, authorizing transfers between accounts (including investments), and ensuring compliance with established fiscal policies. The Treasurer serves as a key resource to the Finance and Fiduciary Management areas and supports the work of the Governance Pillar under Finance and Fiduciary Management, helping to strengthen transparency, accountability, and alignment between governance and financial stewardship.

### **Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development and Administration**

The Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development, and Administration is a two-year, full-time residency that offers an immersive introduction to mid council ministry. This formative experience engages the Resident in a wide range of responsibilities, including governance, administration, program coordination, contract management, and relational systems within the life of the Synod. This position provides direct involvement in the Synod's signature initiatives, including the Robert L. Washington Scholars Program, the Early Ministry Institute, and the Community Organizing Cohort—while contributing to new programs and partnerships that reflect the Synod's emerging vision. As part of the Synod's leadership pipeline, the residency equips an emerging leader with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual grounding needed for future service in presbytery and synod leadership. The Mid Council Resident will support the Regional Learning Pillar and programs that strengthen pastors and congregations across the Synod.

### **Communication Specialist**

The Communication Specialist is a storyteller responsible for developing and executing the Synod's communication strategy, including media outreach, and social media content. This role manages both internal and external communications, producing and curating content for the website, blogs, reports, and newsletters. The specialist promotes a positive public image, ensures consistent messaging, and supports the Storytelling and Communication Pillar in sharing the Synod's work and impact.

### **Grants Coordinator**

The Grants Coordinator supports the Grants Mission Pillar by overseeing the Synod's portfolio of funding initiatives, including Innovation, Campus Ministries, Emerging Gospel Communities, and other key grant programs. The coordinator guides applicants through the grants process, manages the Foundant system, prepares materials for review, resources the various grant review teams, and coordinates communications and reporting. The role supports the Grants Missional Pillar and collaborates with other pillars as appropriate, helping advance the Synod's commitment to innovation, equity, and faithful stewardship of shared resources.

### **Funds Development Intern**

This internship provides hands-on experience in nonprofit fundraising, donor engagement, and financial stewardship within a faith-based organization. The intern will collaborate with Synod staff and leadership to research and strengthen resource development strategies that advance the Synod's mission. Responsibilities include researching sustainable funding models and best practices, assisting with donor engagement through communications, appeals, stewardship materials, supporting grant-seeking efforts by identifying funding sources, and preparing background research. The intern will help design systems for tracking and reporting development activities, prepare presentations and reports, and contribute to special projects related to long-term stewardship and mission funding.

### **Office Administrative Clerk**

This role provides administrative support to ensure the efficient operation of the office, responds to questions raised by phone and email regarding dates, services, Synod programs, policies, and other calendar items. The Office Administrative Clerk also organizes and schedules appointments and meetings, participates in the production and distribution of communications, writes and edits documents and reports, creates and maintains filing systems both electronic and physical, maintains the mailing database, and provides administrative support to the Synod Leader and Stated Clerk.

### **Finance Clerk**

The Finance Clerk supports the Manager of Finance and the Synod Leader by managing payments and repayments for the Wurffel-Sills Scholarship and Interest-Free Student Loan Program, maintaining accurate records, and corresponding with recipients. The Finance Clerk assists with finance-related documents, letters and memos, and serves as backup Synod Receptionist responding to inquiries regarding programs, policies, and schedules while directing questions to the appropriate staff. Additional responsibilities include supporting office needs for mail, special projects and tasks as assigned by the Manager of Finance or Synod Leader, ensuring smooth administrative and financial operations.



SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)