

2026 MINUTES

The Regional Synod of Albany

Reformed Church in America

Annual Assembly

Lynnwood Reformed Church

Schenectady, New York

May 3-4, 2026

2026 Albany Synod Rosters

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Regional Synod of Albany

May 2026

Rev. Dirk Gieser	dirk@ercrca.org	President
Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder	immanuelvt@gmail.com	Vice President
Ms. Noreen Fargione	noreenfargione@gmail.com	Past President
Rev. Robert Hoffman	rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com	Stated Clerk
Rev. Rich Dykstra	gouldchurch@catskill.net	Finance Chair
Rev. Chris Vande Bunte	cvandebunte@dechurch.org	Personnel Chair
Rev. Trey Tirpak	treytirpak@gmail.com	OJB Chair
Ms. Noreen Fargione	noreenfargione@gmail.com	SMB Liaison
Mr. Justan Foster	justan.foster@live.com	FBoT Liaison
Rev. Paige Convis	paigeconvis@gmail.com	Albany Classis
Mr. Gary Smith	csmith6366@aol.com	Col-Gr Classis
Rev. Betsy Westman	pastorbetsyw@gmail.com	Montgomery Classis
		Rochester Classis
Rev. Heather Kramer	hjkramer47@gmail.com	Schenectady Classis
Ms. Shirley Ball	sball731@gmail.com	Schoharie Classis
Mr. Pat Kinne	patkinne@campfowler.org	Fowler Director

Albany Synod Staff

Rev. Robert Hoffman	rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com	Administrator
Rev. Dr. Sherri Meyer Veen	renewalminister@albanysynod.org	Minister for Renewal
Rev. Elizabeth Moses	schoolofministry@albanysynod.org	School Administrator
Rev. Lindsey DeKruif	programcoordinator@albanysynod.org	Program Coordinator
Ms. Elif Ipek	rsafinancemanager@gmail.com	Finance Manager

Finance Committee Roster

John Paarlberg	jpaarlberg@gmail.com	Albany Classis
David Snyder	dhsnyd19@gmail.com	Schenectady Classis
Vicki Hayner	vicki.hayner@gmail.com	Schenectady Classis
Rich Dykstra	gouldchurch@catskill.net	Schoharie Classis

Staff

Bob Hoffman	rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com	Synod Administrator
Elif Ipek	rsafinancemanager@gmail.com	Finance Manager

Personnel Committee Roster

Charles Wiessner	cawiessner@gmail.com	Columbia Greene Classis
Randy Karcher	randy.karcher@verizon.net	Montgomery Classis
Ms. Christina Mahoney	ckmahoney53@gmail.com	Albany Classis
Rev. Chris Vande Bunte	cvandebunte@drchurch.org	Albany Classis

Staff

BobHoffman	rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com	Synod Administrator
------------	--	---------------------

OVERTURES AND JUDICIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Rev. Nancy Ryan	revnancyryan@yahoo.com	Schenectady Classis
Rev. Trey Tirpak	treytirpak@gmail.com	Albany Classis
Ms. Erin Parker	erinparker1228@gmail.com	Schenectady Classis
Mr. Randy Karcher	randy.karcher@verizon.net	Montgomery Classis
Rev. Linda Gold	pastorlinda@fondareformedchurch.org	Schoharie

Staff

Bob Hoffman	rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com	Stated Clerk
-------------	--	--------------

Albany Synod Ministries Board

Martha Andrews	macooty@aol.com	Columbia Greene Classis
Jeff Mc Ilrath	jmcilrath@me.com	Montgomery Classis
Kelly Clement	kellyc@ccrc-cpny.org	Schenectady Classis
Steve Mattice	nsmattice@gmail.com	Schoharie Classis
Deb Sanburn	dsanburn@verizon.net	Montgomery Classis
Amy Burdett	acburdett2006@icloud.com	Rochester Classis
Paige Convis	paigeconvis@gmail.com	Albany Classis
Heather Kramer	hjkramer47@gmail.com	Schenectady Classis
Dave Borland	retiredprof913@gmail.com	Rochester Classis

2026 Minutes
REGIONAL SYNOD OF ALBANY

The annual assembly of the Regional Synod of Albany was held on May 4, 2026 at the Lynnwood Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York. Rev. Dirk Gieser, president, presided.

I. GATHERING

President Gieser called the meeting to order at 9:12am. Rev. Garret Szanter, pastor of Lynnwood Reformed Church, welcomed the delegates and guests. President Gieser offered the opening litany from I Corinthians 13 and the opening prayer.

II. FORMATION

Twenty (20) ministers and Nineteen (19) elders, including the President, Vice President and Past President, signed in as delegates making a total of Forty five (45) voting delegates and officers in attendance.

2026 Synod Delegate Roster

ALBANY CLASSIS

Rev. Chris Vande Bunte	Casey Michalski
Rev. Bethany Popkes	Joan Adriance
Rev. Mashona Walston	Kerry Schubert
Rev. Trey Tirpak	Sharon Swan

COLUMBIA GREENE CLASSIS

Rev. Savitri Mark	Gary Smith
Rev. Vanessa Funk	Matt Pirrone
	Patti Varga
	Amy Katt

MONTGOMERY CLASSIS

Rev. Betsy Westman	Randy Karcher
Rev. Jeff Mc Ilrath	Marian Engells
Rev. Brian Engel	Penelope Harrison
Rev. Patricia Simmons	Jackie Levie

ROCHESTER CLASSIS

Rev. Dr. Eric Titus - excused	Eileen King
Rev. Rick Admiraal	Amy Burdett
	Gary McCheyne

Don Montesano

SCHENECTADY CLASSIS

Rev. Jake Marvel
Rev. Jason White
Rev. Katy Kroondyk
Rev. Janet Meyer Vincent

Pieter Lansing
Ken Hayner
David Walsh
Rebecca Draffen-Grande

:

SCHOHARIE CLASSIS

Rev. Rett Zabriskie
Rev. Rich Dykstra
Rev. Linda Gold
Rev. Jeff Kelley

Diana Jager
Steve Mattice
Shirley Ball
Sarah Goodrich

OFFICERS

Dirk Gieser, President
Noreen Fargione, Past President

Immanuel Van Tonder, Vice President
Bob Hoffman, Stated Clerk

Five minister delegates were not present with one excused. Six elder delegates were not present.

The following staff, board or committee members, and guests were welcomed and granted privilege of the floor:

Synod Staff: Sherri Meyer Veen, Lindsey DeKruif, Elizabeth Moses and Robert Hoffman.

Albany Synod Board of Trustees and Executive Committee: Heather Kramer.

Guests: Revs. Greg Town, Becky Town, John Paarlberg, Lucas Grove, Garret Szantner, Elder Jim Pettis, Jr. and Andy Satterlee.

MOTION: To welcome the guests and grant them privilege of the floor. (CARRIED)

III. AGENDA

8:30am	Delegate Sign In (Narthex)	
9:00am	Call to Order	Dirk Gieser
	Gathering Litany	Worship Team
	Delegate Introductions	Robert Hoffman
	Welcome to Guests and Privilege of the Floor	
	Agenda Review and Approval	
	Reading of the Minutes of May 6, 2025 and October 25, 2026 (by title)	
	Summary of Major Actions (Executive Committee/ Boards of Trustees)	

OUR MINISTRY SHARED

Synod Administrator's Report	Robert Hoffman
School of Ministry Report	Elizabeth Moses
Program Coordinator's Report	Lindsey DeKruif
Minister for Renewal's Report	Sherri Meyer-Veen
Synod Ministries Board Report	Noreen Fargione
General Review Committee Report	Amy Burdett
Report from Camp Fowler	Pat Kinne
General Synod Council Report	Randy Karcher
New York State Council of Churches Report	John Paarlberg

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominations Committee	Robert Hoffman
Report on Classis Minutes Review	
RECOMMENDATION: To extend the current terms of the synod officers, committee and board members through the end of the year.	
Overtures/ Judicial Business Committee	Trey Tirpak
Committee on Accounts	David Walsh
Recommendation on Financial Review	
Recommendation on 2027 Middle Assembly Assessments	

11:15am	Worship	Sanctuary
12:00pm	Lunch in Fellowship Center	
1:00pm	Gathering Litany	Worship Team
1:15pm	Transition Team Updates Abiding Middle Assembly Team Northeastern Middle Assembly Team	
2:00pm	President's Report	Dirk Gieser
	General Review Committee Report	Amy Burdett
3:00pm	Resolutions Committee	Mashona Walston and Eric Titus
	Adjournment	

MOTION: To approve the agenda as presented, with flexibility. (CARRIED)

IV. MINUTES

The minutes of the May 4-5, 2025 assembly of the Regional Synod of Albany were reviewed by the synod's officers on May 29, 2025. The minutes of the October 25, 2025 special

meeting of the Regional Synod of Albany were reviewed by the Synod Executive Committee on November 13, 2025. Official copies were signed by the President and Clerk and sent to General Synod. Copies were distributed to the classes of the Regional Synod of Albany and posted on the synod's website. A summary of the minutes was included in the workbook for delegate review before the meeting.

**MOTION: To approve the reading of the minutes of the May 4-5, 2024 assembly and the October 25, 2025 special assembly of the Regional Synod of Albany by title.
(CARRIED)**

The minutes of the May 4-5, 2025 and October 25, 2025 meetings of the Regional Synod of Albany were read by title.

V. STANDING AND REVIEW COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The following standing and review committees were appointed by the Nominations Committee and approved by the Executive Committee.

Committee on Accounts: This committee is made up of five delegates: three elders and two ministers. They review the financial records of the synod, the financial report presented by the accountant and review and recommend the assessment schedule.

Trey Tirpak; Betsy Westman; Eileen King; David Walsh; Linda Gold

General Review Committee: This committee is made up of six delegates: three ministers and three elders. They review the President's Report and the Synod Ministries Board's Report. They advise the synod concerning any recommendations in said reports.

Rebecca Draffen-Grande; Janet Meyer Vincent; Katy Kroondyk; Amy Burdett; Casey Michalski; Rick Admiraal

Resolutions Committee: This committee formulates appropriate resolutions to the regional synod.

Mashona Walston; Eric Titus

Tellers: This committee is made up of four delegates. They distribute any materials necessary for the meeting and tally any votes that are required during the meeting.

Pieter Lansing; Ken Hayner; Chris Vande Bunte

VI. SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIONS

The following summaries are provided for information concerning the work of the synod's Board of Trustees and Executive Committee between sessions of the synod, and of the ongoing work of the Fowler Board of Trustees.

Synod of Albany Executive Committee

The Albany Synod Executive Committee (ASEC) met eight times following the May 5, 2025 annual assembly. Meetings were on: May 29, 2025 (hybrid); July 10, 2025 (zoom); July 25, 2025 (E-mail vote); August 7, 2025 (E-mail Vote); September 25, 2026 (E-mail Vote); October 16, 2025 (zoom); November 13, 2025 (zoom) and March 12, 2026 (zoom).

The following is a summary of the major actions approved in the course of those meetings:

- Approved the individuals assigned as signatories on all Synod bank accounts.
- Approved appointment of individuals to serve on the two transition teams.
- Approved conclusion of staff employment effective December 31, 2025.
- Rescinded action concerning staff employment effective December 31, 2025.
- Approved concluding the Synod Ministries Coordinator's and Minister for Renewal's employment effective December 31, 2025 and continuing the Program Coordinator's, Synod Administrator's and School of Ministry's employment through 2026.
- Approved the classis resignations and appointments to the Synod Ministry Board.
- Approved resignations from the Synod's permanent committees.
- Accepted Sandy Cornwell's resignation as School of Ministry Administrator.
- Appointed Lindsey De Kruif as temporary School of Ministry Administrator.
- Approved Abby Norton Levering's request to reduce her time and salary by half beginning October 1, 2025 through December 31.
- Accepted Abby Norton Levering's resignation effective November 14, 2025.
- Approved extending current positions on the synod's permanent committees and boards through the end of 2026.
- Referred recommendations from the annual assembly to appropriate boards or committees for action.
- Approved the 2026 Authorization Schedule as presented by the Synod Finance Committee.
- Appointed chairpersons of permanent committees of the Regional Synod of Albany: Personnel Committee chairperson, Overtures and Judicial Business Committee chairperson and the Finance Committee.
- Appointed corresponding delegates (youth and woman) to represent Albany Synod at General Synod in 2026.
- Approved salary increases and housing declarations for 2026 as recommended by the Personnel Committee.
- Approved the restructure of Rev. Lindsey DeKruif's position description to include Communications Coordinator as well as Program Coordinator and removing School of Ministry administration.
- Approved hiring Elizabeth Moses as School of Ministry administrator and Preaching Elder Circle coordinator effective January 1, 2026.

Synod of Albany Board of Trustees

The Albany Synod Board of Trustees (SBOT) met four times following the May 5, 2025 annual assembly. Zoom meetings were held on May 9, 2025 (E-mail Vote); May 29, 2025 (hybrid); November 13, 2025 (zoom) and March 12, 2026 (zoom).

The following is a summary of the major actions approved in these meetings:

- Approved the individuals named as signatories for the Albany Synod's investments.
- Approved necessary work to repair the flood damage in one of the synod offices.
- Approved the Albany Synod Investment Policy Statement revision.

Fowler Board of Trustees

The Lewis M. Fowler Camp and Retreat Center Board of Trustees (FBoT) held 4 scheduled meetings between May 2025 and April 2026: June 20 and 21, 2025 at Camp Fowler, September 17, 2025 (via Zoom), November 21 and 22, 2025 at Camp Fowler, and February 11, 2026 (via Zoom). In addition, there were four email votes: 6/2/25, 9/28/25, 10/5/25, 10/30/25 and one special Zoom meeting on July 9, 2025.

Financial

To approve 2026 Budget – action 25-08

To approve 2026 Rates – action 25-09

To approve increased compensation for the current contract with ConBrad Media – action 25-10

To approve the Finance Team's recommendation of removing fossil fuels from Fowler's investment portfolio – action 25-15

To approve the removal of Kent Busman as a signatory on accounts – action 25-17

To approve the Finance Team's recommendation of the Program Director's job description with a salary range – action 25-25

To approve the 2025 Health Insurance Opt out reimbursement payment to Kent – action 25-30

Personnel

To approve the Human Resources Team's recommendation of extending the Program Fellow contract for Emily. - action 25-06

To approve the Transition Team's recommendation of hiring Pat Kinne as the new Executive Director – action 25-12

To approve the Intermittent Family Leave for Kent – action 25-18

To approve the extension of the 2025 ConBrad Media contract – action 25-22

To approve the Finance Team's recommendation of the Program Director's job description with a salary range – action 25-25 (also noted above)

To approve the 2026 ConBrad Media contract – action 25-27

To approve the Human Resources Team's recommendation for the Fowler staff's Health Care options. – action 25-28

To approve Kent's 2025 mileage reimbursement payment – action 25-29

To approve the 2025 Health Insurance Opt out reimbursement payment to Kent – action 25-30 (also noted above)

To approve Pat's 2025 mileage reimbursement – action 25-31

Governance

To approve the Governance Team's recommendation of Sarah Palsma as the Vice Chair of the Board – action 25-21

To approve the Governance Team's recommendation of Katy Kroondyk as the Program Committee Board Representative – action 25-23

To approve the Governance Team's recommendation of Mike Katz as an at Large Representative – action 25-26

To approve the Governance Team's recommendation of Beth Luck completing her Board term – action 26-02

To approve the Governance Team's recommendation of Darren Gundrum as the Presbyterian Representative for the Board – action 26-03

To approve the formal release of the Transition Team – action 26-04

Program

To approve 2026 Summer schedule – action 25-16

The summary of major actions was received for information.

VII. REPORTS OF OUR SHARED MINISTRIES

ALBANY SYNOD ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT The Rev. Robert Hoffman

The position of Synod Administrator grew out of the restructuring of Albany Synod in 2012 when the old Synod Executive position was divided into administrative responsibilities and program oversight and planning. I was hired as Synod Administrator in July of 2013 and will be concluding my thirteenth year in that capacity this July. The work of the Synod Administrator is separate from that of the Stated Clerk even though there is some overlap.

My work as Synod Administrator includes several areas of oversight. They include:

- Support of the synod officers in the leadership of the RSA Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees, and in preparation for the annual assembly of the RSA. This is one of the areas of overlap with what the Stated Clerk also does.
- Supervise all synod support staff in cooperation with the Personal Committee and on behalf of the Executive Committee.
- Participate in collaborative endeavors with the Synod Ministries Coordinator, the Synod Program Coordinator, the Minister for Renewal and the School of Ministry Administrator.
- Oversee the work of the Synod Finance Manager.
- Serve as liaison to the Fowler Board of Trustees.
- Work with the Synod Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees, the Finance Committee and the Ministries Coordinator to develop strategies that ensure sufficient funding for the RSA to develop and promote the continuing ministries of the RSA.
- Provide for the maintenance and care of the RSA offices and building.
- Complete other duties as may be assigned by the Executive Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Finance Committee as agreed upon with other staff.

As you can imagine, there is not a lot of change from one year to the next in this Administrative position. But that doesn't mean the years are always exactly the same.

At last year's annual synod meeting, I received notice that the ceiling in one of the rooms at the synod office was leaking. When I got to the office after our Sunday evening session of synod, I found a lot of water damage. Over \$7,000 and several weeks later, the office was back in use. Unfortunately, because there was no structural damage which caused the leak (only a blocked roof drain) there was no insurance coverage to assist with the clean up and mold remediation. Thankfully, our investments could. We are now more diligent in making sure the drains are kept open and free of debris.

I spent a lot of time this past year working with the two transition teams. I celebrate the giftedness and willingness of each person working to plan the best middle assembly they can for our future together. I'm especially thankful for Lindsey De Kruif for her leadership and support in this process.

Part of that process was meeting with an attorney to design a plan of merger for our six classes and the regional synod and then the establishment of the two middle assemblies. I want to thank the classis clerks, Nancy Landrigan, Patti Varga, Betsy Westman, Anita Manuele, Lindsey De Kruif, and Rich Dykstra for their patient cooperation in responding to all the requests I passed on to them from the attorney. Also, a special word of thanks to Trey Tirpak, chair of the OJB Committee, for participating in the conversations with the attorney and helping create a basic template for Bylaws that can be used by the new assemblies.

This year we completed shifting our investment strategy to a Separately Managed Account. This kind of account allows us to eliminate from our portfolio any company that does not line up with our values and ethics. So, in addition to the common "sin companies" (alcohol, tobacco, fire arms, pornography, for profit jails, etc) we have now removed fossil fuel companies from our portfolio. When that was accomplished, I worked with Jesse Koepp, our Fenimore Asset Management representative, on rewriting the synod's Investment Policy Statement. I am confident this will be a helpful resource for the middle assemblies to consider as they develop policy for their own investments.

This past year I continued to attend the stated sessions of our various classes. It is always a joy to represent the synod at these meetings and to learn of the work each of our classes are accomplishing. Even though many of the tasks are the same in each classis, there are quite a few unique and different ministries considered and carried out by them.

One final project I took on for myself was to review the Albany Synod minutes to gain a better understanding of the many ministries that have been shared and the individuals who have participated in them. I read about 95 years of minutes, starting in 1933, and was overwhelmed by a number of things. Two which stand out to me are, (1) the passion and love of people from all across the synod who volunteer their time and gifts to work for the mission and ministry of the synod and its classes. We really didn't have structured staff positions, beyond that of a Field Secretary, until the mid 1970s, so all the ministries of the synod were accomplished by volunteers and that has continued into our current time. We have been richly blessed by all

those individuals, many who have faithfully volunteered over the decades. (2) I am amazed at the volume and reach of the many ministries that Albany Synod has introduced and accomplished over the years. Some ministries have continued for nearly 40 years and others for only a few. Yet, during their time of service to the churches and individuals across the synod the impact still continues. What also stands out is how very much Albany Synod has been a leader for the rest of the denomination through the ministries and programs we have introduced. At a General Synod meeting a few years ago, I was in a small conversation group and described all the ministries we have in Albany Synod. The person sitting next to me asked, "Why doesn't our synod do anything like that?"

I am honored to serve with many gifted people on the various committees and boards of the synod. I am blessed to work with colleagues who are gifted individuals and always eager to envision new ministries we could introduce. As we transition into our new middle assemblies, I pray we will continue to trust God and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring us into that reality with hope and confidence.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Hoffman
rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com

Bob highlighted the following items from his report:

- Overseeing the finances of the synod and making the changes in the Investment Policy Statement.
- The service offered as a resource for the two transition teams.
- Resourcing the OJB Committee in working on new Bylaws.
- Working with Trey Tirpal and Lindsey De Kruif and attorney Michelle Wildegrub in defining the plan of merger for the transition.
- The opportunity to represent Albany Synod at the various classis meetings he is able to attend.
- The review of the Synod Minutes to identify the good ministries done by the synod over the years and the vast numbers of volunteers who have participated in those ministries.

President Gieser thanked Bob for his service to the synod and asked what words of wisdom or insight he would offer the synod as we move forward into transition. Bob responded by quoting Mark 10:35 which shaped his call and ministry throughout the years. "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...." Bob's words of encouragement were to continue finding ways to serve the church and community and world.

**ALBANY SYNOD SCHOOL OF MINISTRY REPORT
AND
PREACHING ELDER CIRCLE REPORT
The Rev. Elizabeth Moses, Administrator**

As of January 1, 2026 I took on the responsibility of being the Administrator for the School of Ministry. Thankful for Sandra Cornwell and Rev. Lindsey de Kruif for administering the program

during 2025.

The School of Ministry (SoM) continues to offer six courses over the span of two years as basic education for those seeking the role of commissioned preaching elder according to the BOC. It has been open to all who wish to deepen their own personal theological experience or those in the discernment process. In all, nineteen students have completed all of their six required courses taught by the SoM. The SoM has met the needs of our synod and our churches by strengthening and empowering lay leadership. With the groundwork provided, several SoM alumni are now pursuing further education as commissioned pastors and clergy.

At the completion of each course, the classis have been notified if the required course work was successfully completed. Before becoming a commissioned preaching elder, it remains the responsibility of each classis to exam their preaching elder candidates and explore their proficiency in the six required areas. It has been highly encouraged that classis examinations be given throughout the study process. It is the responsibility of the classis to recommission their preaching elders biannually.

2025-2026 courses:

April 2025 – Introduction to Preaching and Sermon Preparation, Instructor Rev. Dirk Gieser -11 Students participating

September 2025 – RCA Doctrinal Standards, Instructor Rev. Matthew van Maastricht – 9 Students participating

January 2026 – Systematic Theology Instructor Rev. Matthew van Maastricht - 5 students participating

April 2026 – New Testament and History Instructor Rev. Dr. Lynn Japinga - TBD

As of October 2025 I became the facilitator for the Preaching Elder Circle following in the steps of Rev. David Jones who facilitated the group for a year. Since becoming the facilitator I have led the group four times with approximately ten preaching elders attending each time. The conversation is always insightful and those who attend feel supported and encouraged. A survey of the Preaching Elders serving in Albany Synod was completed to determine if a second “circle” should be formed for those whose schedule does not work to attend when the evening one meets. We are currently determining what will work and hope to have it start in the Spring.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Elizabeth Moses

schoolofministry@albanysynod.org

In addition to her report, Elizabeth shared that 6 commissioned preaching elder candidates have completed the course requirements since January 2026, and that there are 10 individuals who are actively working in the School of Ministry seeking commission as preaching elders. She also reported the Preaching Elder Circle has been expanded to include a daytime option as well as the monthly evening opportunity.

President Gieser thanked Elizabeth for stepping in to the role as the school administrator and for the report she offered.

SYNOD PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR REPORT
The Rev. Lindsey De Kruif, reporting

Grace & Peace to you,

In this past year I have served the Synod in many and varied ways. As the Synod prepares for the transition to Middle Assemblies and changes in staffing were made, I have continued my work as Program Coordinator for the Synod, but have also stepped in to support the Albany Synod School of Ministry on an interim basis, taken the lead on communications for the Synod and served as support staff to the transition teams alongside Bob Hoffman.

The details of Synod programs can be found in the reports of Sherri Meyer-Veen, Elizabeth Moses, and Noreen Fargione (on behalf of the Synod Ministries Board). In my role as program coordinator, I help to get these programs they have shared about off the ground and available to the members of our synod. From setting up registrations for events to sending reminder emails and coordinating with Camp Fowler and other venues where we hold our programs, I provide many of the logistics behind the scenes. I also provide organizational support to the Synod by managing our Breeze Database, providing staff support to the Synod Ministries Board Grant Subcommittee and keeping the staff connected through Google Workspace and by leading monthly staff meetings.

One event that might not be covered in one of the other reports is the annual Retirees' Luncheon. At this gathering, Synod staff along with Camp Fowler Staff, and the RCA Retirees' Chaplains for this region gather with retired ministers and their spouses and surviving spouses of ministers who have died connected to the Synod each fall. This past year we gathered in October at the Niskayuna Reformed Church with about 35 people in attendance. These luncheons are a valuable way for those who have served in ministry in Albany Synod to maintain connection. I am grateful to Noreen Fargione and Rett Zabriskie for their service to our retired ministers and their families.

Upon the resignation of Sandy Cornwell as the School of Ministry administrator, I served on an interim basis from August to December 2025 until Rev. Elizabeth Moses was appointed to that position. During that time, I facilitated the appointment of Rev. Moses as the facilitator of the preaching elder circle and provided administrative support to the fall School of Ministry Course with Rev. Matthew van Maastricht, RCA Standards. Nine people participated in that course to be trained as preaching elders commissioned within Albany Synod classes. In the transition to Rev. Moses' leadership of the School of Ministry, I assisted in preparing for the Winter Course, Old Testament Introduction and History taught by Rev. Dr. Johan Bosman.

Upon the resignation of Rev. Abby Norton-Levering as she began a new ministry with Troy Area United Ministries, I have taken the lead on Synod communications. This role fits well alongside my work as support staff to the middle assembly transition teams. In this role, I manage the Synod website and prepare a monthly newsletter distributed to the Synod with ongoing events. Between the work of the transition teams and events and ministries that continue to be hosted by the Synod, there is a lot going on in Albany Synod. A major part of my work in this way has been to create a landing page for everything related to the restructuring process. Everything you need to know about the transition to middle assemblies can be found at www.albanysynod.org/restructure.

Also with Rev. Norton-Levering's departure for the Synod, I have sat with the Council of Synod Executives to provide updates from this region and hear what is happening in other regions related to restructuring. Related to this role, I have worked alongside the transition teams to provide updates to the General Synod on Albany Synod's process in transitioning to middle assemblies.

In my role as support staff to the transition teams, I have participated in their meetings and have helped to facilitate communication between the transition teams and ministers and churches in the Synod. Alongside Rev. Bob Hoffman and Rev. Trey Tirpak, I am attending to the legal matters of the transition process to provide information to the attorney the Synod has hired to work on the legal process of merging the bodies appropriately.

The work of restructuring is a difficult task, and my prayer for this process is that the assemblies that are forming would be able to form trust among their members and be able to look at ministry in the future in new ways. While there are many things that I hope will continue in each middle assembly honoring the ministry of the Synod and its classes, I also hope that each body will be challenged to consider new approaches and be open to change.

In Christ,
Rev. Lindsey De Kruijff
programcoordinator@albanysynod.org

Lindsey highlighted her behind the scenes work with and for the other staff in coordinating meetings and retreats registrations. She also mentioned one of the most meaningful events she participates in is the annual Retiree's Luncheon held for retired pastors and their spouses. She hopes this event will continue being done by the middle assemblies.

President Gieser thanked Lindsey for those behind the scenes activities which help organize the many events of the synod. Bob Hoffman also expressed his thanks to Lindsey for all the assistance she provides him and the other staff through her organization and planning.

MINISTER FOR RENEWAL REPORT
The Rev. Dr. Sherri Meyer Veen, reporting

It has been my pleasure to serve the Regional Synod for 9 years in an ever-changing position that grew out of the grass roots ministry happening in the synod. Starting as ¼ time Faithwalking Coordinator in 2017 as the Synod became a Faithwalking Circle, I moved to half time Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change Coordinator in 2019, and to ¾ time Minister for Renewal in 2022. The Minister for Renewal position was cut to 1/3 time for 2026 with Mediation Team responsibilities added for an overall less than ½ time position. In addition to coordinating, facilitating, and coaching in the Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change efforts for the Regional Synod and the synod programming that has relied on these two learning communities, I have also served as a mediator, coach, retreat leader, conversation and resource partner for churches and leaders, representative to the Council of Synod Executives and on various denominational committees and task forces, synod staff representative to classis meetings, and on several committees with Schenectady Classis. Since January of 2026, I have additionally served as coordinator for the Mediation Team.

Given the reduction in my position, I am now also serving as half time Director of the STAR (Seminary Through Alternate Route) new program of New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Mediation Team: The mediation team has been meeting regularly and has helped facilitate several interventions this past year, with formal processes in Rochester and Albany classis churches. The team is a resource and receives questions and requests beyond our region. The team brought in Rev. Jill Russell to lead a training for all those interested in “Restorative Circles” that twenty-two people attended. New members have joined the team!

Typically, we have relied on the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center’s Mediation Skills Training Institute as our base training for team members. Given new team members’ need for training, as well as our critical juncture in launching middle assemblies, we are hosting this substantial training event in cooperation with the Synod Ministries Board. This is a fantastic opportunity! These skills are incredibly needed in our society, communities, churches, families, and personal relationships! All are welcome to join in this intensive training. It is expensive, but very valuable and scholarships may be available. There is also a significant discount for those who commit to joining the mediation team. The event will be held from May 18-22 at Delmar Reformed Church. Get more information and register ASAP at <https://www.albanysynod.org/mediation-team>.

Coaching: What is Coaching? In a podcast from The Leader’s Journey entitled “Leader as Coach,” Trisha Taylor and Jim Herrington define coaching as: 1. Helping people

develop clear, focused goals and providing shame-free accountability for staying in action. 2. Deliberately providing a safe and challenging environment where change is Possible.

I have completed three different coach training programs over the years and have continued to coach leaders who have asked for coaching utilizing the Content-Neutral coaching method in addition to the content specific coaching I do through Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change. Last year's report shared several testimonies, which I would be happy to share again if you are interested. Instead, this year, let me share Mine.

I have had a coach for myself for over 14 years. I utilize my monthly coaching calls in my own support and accountability routine to prioritize, process through my greatest challenges including internal and external roadblocks, keep stress low or make my own plan to lower stress when necessary, observe my learnings and identify my growing edges, celebrate progress, and reconnect with the Holy Spirit's discerning voice. I facilitate a monthly coaching support and continuing education group that continues to add members. Several members of this group coach in Faithwalking modules.

Faithwalking: Faithwalking is an international movement intended to deepen discipleship through growing spiritual and emotional maturity! It is a process for personal transformation that has several program/courses to help participants learn and reflect in small groups over time. Faithwalking often impacts all relationships and all areas of life including leadership. Faithwalking content can be delivered in several different forms, including retreats or online learning sessions, but must be accompanied by personal reflection and practice to have an impact. Small groups and coaching are utilized with the intention of creating safe and challenging spaces for participants to share their learning, get clearer in their own work, and learn from listening to others.

Albany Synod invested in becoming a Faithwalking Circle in 2017, which was an involved process and gives us discounted access as well as ability to host our own courses with a certified facilitator. I am certified to lead almost all of the current Faithwalking course offerings. Most Faithwalking currently happens through either a retreat, or ten 60–75-minute small group weekly zoom video conference call sessions. Visit www.faithwalking.com to learn more and contact me for questions, to express interest, or help coordinate an offering in person or through zoom.

Churches Learning Change: Churches Learning Change is a corporate renewal process for church leaders and teams. Team members work on their own transformation (often utilizing Faithwalking) while also seeking to engage their congregation in identifying important mental model shifts and leverage points for important changes within their congregation so that the congregation can more fully live and love like Jesus. The Churches Learning Change learning community has a growing wealth of resources that churches may utilize with a coach to assist congregations to meet their

identified goals.

There are multiple ways of engaging Churches Learning Change, which can be done through utilizing online tools without attending retreats. For more information about that, check out www.churcheslearningchange.com and let me know of your interest.

Our region has a cohort of congregations who continue to do this work through retreats and online gatherings. Six congregations have committed to participating in the retreat cohort for 2026.

This past year, several current and previous participants from our region offered their testimony of the impact from their participation. These short videos can be found with some other great short “why CLC?” and “what is CLC?” videos at www.youtube.com/@churcheslearningchange7708/playlists.

While I do not know what the future holds for any of this work through the transition process to middle assemblies, I still see it as the most important work we can be doing together, regardless of which middle assembly. It takes intentional time and effort. Growing our emotional and spiritual maturity individually and collectively as we seek to live and love more wholeheartedly is what the world needs more of.... In our families, congregations, and communities!

In Christ's Service,
Rev. Sherri Meyer-Veen, D.Min.
renewalminister@albansynod.org

Sherri highlighted a number of important and valuable items from her report. They included the ongoing growing number of churches interested in and joining CLC. Each year there seems to be another new church participating. She stressed the increased work of the mediation team and that they are available to help consistories and congregations in healthy communication around the question of which middle assembly to join as well as in many other areas.

President Gieser thanked Sherri for her ongoing work with and for Albany Synod and how it reaches into many other areas of the church.

SYNOD MINISTRIES BOARD REPORT

Ms. Noreen Fargione, reporting

The SMB empowers classes and congregations for revitalization, discipleship, and mission, through clear communication and relevant resourcing. We are in this together...for good.

The above mission statement was adopted by the Synod Ministries Board in March, 2022. SMB continues to live into this mission statement. The SMB has functioned as a mission-coordination

and support hub for the Regional Synod of Albany. SMB resources are considered significant to the work of our regional churches. These include:

- Retreats and seminars
- Financial grants in areas of revitalization, discipleship, and mission
- Practical Resources for Churches (PRC)
- Synod Mediation Team
- Preaching Elder training and worship planning workshops
- The School of Ministry
- Churches Learning Change
- Christian Educators' Circle

The needs of our congregations can be both similar and unique. Our umbrella of assistance covers challenges we are aware of and is wide enough to cover new challenges when they arise. Our job might be to assist in solving a congregation's challenge, but it also could be to arrange aid for conversations that lead to problem-solving.

This last year the following has occurred:

1. SMB voted to continue the work of the Synod Mediation Team through 2026 by requesting that Sherri Meyer-Veen be appointed as the staff person to lead the team and that she be compensated for this work. We also approved a "Mediation Skills Training Institute" seminar through Lombard Mediation Conflict Resolution of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center for newer members and a refresher for the existing Mediation Team. This approval included financial assistance for this training. This training is scheduled for May 18-22, 2026.
2. Beginnings and Beyond retreat was held in January 2026 with Rev. Brett Vander Berg on transitions in ministry. Unfortunately, there was a smaller attendance and cut short due to a winter storm. Beginnings and Beyond is for clergy new to their ministries in our synod, whether it be their first, second, or fifth call/contract – open to pastors, chaplains, bivocational ministers as long as they are ministers of Word and Sacrament, they are welcome.
3. Pastor's and Families Retreat held during Winter Break had an attendance of 34 which included pastors, spouses, and children (from infants to teens). SMB underwrites this retreat. This event has been described as "life-saving" for pastors, their spouses, and in particular the PKs (pastors' kids) who find great community among themselves at this yearly retreat.
4. Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change – events are planned through 2026. (See the report of Rev. Sherri Meyer-Veen, for a detailed description).
5. Albany Synod School of Ministry offers courses to train preaching elders and commissioned pastors. Lindsey DeKruif oversaw the program after Sandra Cornwell's departure. In late Fall, Rev. Elizabeth Moses was approved as the administrator of the School of Ministry.

6. Preaching Elder Circle has a new facilitator. The Rev. Elizabeth Moses came on board in the Fall.

7. Christian Educators Circle continues under the current volunteer facilitator, Kelly Clement. Zoom meetings continue through 2026.

8. The Regional Synod of Albany is a subscriber to Practical Resources for Churches (PRC). The benefit to ALL churches in Albany Synod include: resources for congregations with small Faith Formation programs; cohorts, curriculum, webinars, and more are included at no additional charge; NYS required Sexual Harassment Prevention Training is available (no additional cost) for all church staff and volunteers in youth ministry; monthly newsletters with upcoming webinars and seasonal resources. Because we have been members for a number of years, there is no charge to RSA congregations for participating in ANY of PRC's programs or groups. This continues through 2026.

9. Albany Synod's Collaborative Ministry Learning Community has created a Collaborative Ministry Handbook. This handbook was presented at The Great Collaborative Brunch Potluck at Lynnwood Reformed Church in June 2025.

10. SMB provided Restorative Circles Facilitator Training with Rev. Jill Russell in October 2025.

11. Care Portal - A national networking opportunity that is administered locally. This is a low commitment, easy way to get involved in child related mission work. Care Portal will train leaders from interested churches. The SMB provides grants for participating churches.

We continue to partner with Camp Fowler in partially funding the various retreats that happen annually. We are very grateful to Camp Fowler for offering Albany Synod a discounted rate for our usage of their facilities.

The SMB offers grants to congregations in the areas of revitalization, discipleship and mission. The grant application is short and fairly straightforward and is available on the Albany Synod website. In 2025 and the first three months in 2026, we have given out the following grants to churches in the RSA:

- o Lisha's Kill Reformed Church, \$1,000, for AED defibrillator
- o Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack, \$1,000, for upgrades to sound system and digital camera to stream weekly worship services.
- o Kinderhook Reformed Church, \$1,000, for Care Portal Ministry, connects church to needs of local families through DSS
- o West Glenville Reformed Church, \$1,000, for 'Baskets of Love' ministry, providing monthly dinner and food items to members and friends of the congregation in need of care.
- o Christ Community Reformed Church, \$1,000, intergenerational mission trip to St. Thomas Reformed Church (Virgin Islands)
- o Ghent Reformed Church, \$1,000, purchase food for community outreach, supplying monthly meals to those in need of care.

- o Sprakers Reformed Church, \$1,000, for ministry transition consultant services as the congregation prepares for their pastor's retirement.
- o Bellevue Reformed Church, \$1,000, for AED defibrillator
- o Niskayuna Reformed Church, \$1,000, for additional camera for live-streaming of weekly worship service.
- o Knox Thompson's Lake Reformed Church, \$1,000, supplement building costs of insurance and utilities for the Gathering Hope Food Pantry.

The grant form can be found at www.albanysynod.org. In order to qualify, grant requests must fall under discipleship, revitalization, and /or mission.

As requested by the General Review Committee at last year's annual RSA meeting, SMB has met and has looked at the programs that have been particularly enriching for the churches in our Synod. SMB has prepared a report to be shared with both transition teams. As Classes combine into Middle Assemblies we will offer support for the transition teams and be available to help the Middle Assemblies discern what ministries should continue, where they should be housed, and how they could be staffed and funded going forward.

SMB has helped make this region unique. How do we build on what is already working, with clear responsibility, clear funding streams, and a sustainable model of coordination? We do not want to lose the regional connection that SMB has built. We do not want to lose the shared ministries that bring people together. We do not want to see the grant support of a new ministry disappear. We cannot go with the assumption that "if it matters, it will happen," without assigning ownership. It is our heartfelt prayer that these programs will continue in NEMA and Abiding Middle Assemblies. SMB is ready and willing to help with this process. This is our mission: to promote healing and nurture in congregations, so that together we are empowered to live out a faithful and fruitful mission in God's world.

A huge thank you to: Jeff McIlrath, Kelly Clement, Martha Andrews, Steve Mattice, Deb Sanborn, Amy Burdett, Paige Convis, Heather Kramer, David Borland, Dirk Gieser, Immanuel van Tonder, Noreen Fargione, Abby Norton-Levering, and Lindsey DeKruif members of the Synod Ministry Board, 2025- 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,
Noreen Fargione, Moderator of Synod Ministries Board

Noreen identified a number of ways the Ministries Board continues to be active in providing ministry services to the synod's classes and congregations even in this transition year. The retreats held this winter was one example, as well as the regular monthly Christian Educators meeting. She also reminded the delegates of the work of the Mediation Team and the upcoming training event that will be led by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. It will be from May 18-22 and will be held at Delmar Reformed Church. Noreen concluded her summary by reminding delegates about the grants that are available. Bob Hoffman encouraged delegates to

ask about the kinds of grants that have been given as they are examples of what churches can do to reach out in new ways.

President Gieser thanked Noreen for stepping in to fill the leadership role as SMB moderator.

REPORT FROM CAMP FOWLER

Patrick Kinne, Executive Director, reporting

Camp Fowler continues to operate as a vital ministry of hospitality, formation, and community within and beyond the Regional Synod of Albany. The past year has been marked by leadership transition, strategic investment, program stability, and continued organizational strengthening.

Key priorities of Camp Fowler included:

- Successful transition to new Executive Director leadership
- Completion of a \$1M capital campaign
- Strengthening governance and board structure
- Investment in facilities and infrastructure
- Expansion of partnerships and program reach

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Executive Leadership Transition

- The Board of Trustees approved the hiring of a new Executive Director, Patrick Kinne, following a formal interview and transition process
- Leadership transition completed in Fall 2025, with continuity planning and stakeholder engagement throughout the process
- Transition Team formally concluded its work following successful onboarding of new Executive Director

Board Development & Structure

- Ongoing review of bylaws and governance model in response to Synod restructuring
- Preparation for transition from Classis-based representation to a broader model aligned with future Middle Assemblies
- Continued inclusion of ecumenical partners (UCC, Presbyterian) in governance

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Future Leaders Campaign (FLC)

- Capital campaign exceeded \$1,000,000 goal
- Strong support from Classes, congregations, and individual donors
- Funds positioned to support long-term sustainability and leadership development

Grant Development

- Actively seeking grant opportunities for relevant funding and ways to expand Fowler's impact and ministry with partner camps and organizations with similar missions.

PROGRAMS AND MINISTRY IMPACT

Summer Program

- Stable camper enrollment with capacity remaining for growth
- Continued emphasis on making camp accessible for all campers/families through tiered pricing
- High camper satisfaction and strong return rates

Staffing

- Fully staffed summer team with a healthy mix of returning and new staff
- Expanded recruitment pipelines through colleges and partner organizations
- Continued development of Program Director role with planned hire timeline for summer 2026

Faith Formation

- Implementation of co-chaplain model to strengthen spiritual leadership
- Invitation to RSA pastors to lead Sunday morning worship services throughout the summer
- 2026 theme: "Lean on Me", focusing on community, belonging, and care of one's neighbor.

FACILITIES AND PROPERTY

Capital Improvements

- Major renovations and upgrades completed or underway:
 - Spencer Lodge structural and system improvements
 - Speculator House purchase, renovation, and occupancy
 - Fenimore Dining Hall upgrade (sand blasting and sealing)
- Strategic decision to keep Spencer Lodge offline temporarily for full rehabilitation over the summers of 2026 and, tentatively, 2027

Environmental Stewardship

- Removal of fossil fuels from camp's investment portfolios
- Exploration of energy-efficient systems (heat pumps, EV infrastructure) as part of FLC initiatives

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Budget & Operations

- Balanced budget approach aligned with nonprofit mission

- Approval of 2026 budget and rates

Investments

- Transition to ethically aligned investment strategies (removal of fossil fuels)
- Establishment of managed accounts for long-term sustainability with Fenimore

PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

Church & Synod Relationships

- Continued engagement with Classes and congregations through:
 - Church visits
 - Retreat partnerships
 - Synod events and gatherings

Ecumenical & Community Partnerships

- Active collaboration with:
 - UCC and Presbyterian partners
 - Colleges and campus ministries
 - Local and regional nonprofits
- Expansion of outreach to new communities, including immigrant-serving organizations

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Human Resources

- Expanded staff benefits, including vision coverage
- Ongoing refinement of staff structure and annual review processes

Operations & Systems

- Exploration of new tools, including:
 - Camp app for communication
 - Year-round online store to be launched on Fowler's website
- Strengthening internal systems for marketing, registration, and communication

LOOKING AHEAD (2026–2027 Priorities)

- Hire and onboard Program Director
- Completion of by-laws updates and implementation of Board member on-boarding process
- Continue growth in camper enrollment and retreat usage
- Complete major facility upgrades (Spencer Lodge and infrastructure)
- Deepen partnerships with Middle Assemblies post-Synod restructuring
- Expand grant funding and donor engagement
- Strengthen year-round programming and retreat offerings

Camp Fowler remains a place where faith, community, and creation intersect in meaningful and

powerful ways. While the organization continues to adapt to changing structures within the Synod and broader church, its mission remains steady: to provide space for young people and communities to experience belonging, growth, and the presence of God.

The Fowler Board and great Fowler community formally wish to thank and acknowledge the 39-year ministry of Rev. Kent Busman upon his retirement at the conclusion of 2025. Well done, good and faithful servant.

We also wish to thank Program Fellow, Emily Smith, as she concludes her position at the end of June 2026 while she prepares to embark upon her next adventure and begin her Master's Degree program.

Finally, we would like to formally and publicly thank the year-round staff of Fowler: Lauren Cleworth, Harv Zegstoo, Pete Cerreta, and Emily Smith for their commitment to the ministry and mission of Fowler this past year. This team of incredible individuals has helped to hold Fowler together so that Kent and Pat were able to take care of their families and health.

We are grateful for the continued support of the Regional Synod of Albany and its congregations as we move forward into this next season of ministry.

Respectfully submitted,
Patrick Kinne, Executive Director
Jenna Cowan White, Fowler Board of Trustees Chair

In the absence of Pat Kinne, Fowler Executive Director, Board of Trustee member, Rev. Heather Kramer, presented the Fowler Report. Heather highlighted items from the report and gave updates on Pat's recovery from his recent surgeries and the process of hiring a Program Coordinator. Heather also shared the following greeting from the Board Chairperson, Jenna Cowan White.

Grace to you and Peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

In this season of restructuring within the Regional Synod of Albany, we extend our heartfelt greetings and our deep appreciation for the long standing relationship we share. As we move together into the emerging middle assembly structure, we remain committed to nurturing and strengthening this valued relationship between the churches within the Regional Synod of Albany and Camp Fowler.

Camp Fowler continues to be a place where lives are shaped by faith, where authentic community is built, and where all are truly welcomed. This shared ministry has always been made possible through the faithful

support, presence, and prayers of the classes within the Regional Synod of Albany, and we are grateful beyond measure. It is our sincerest hope that these ties that bind us will continue.

We invite each Middle Assembly to continue walking alongside Camp Fowler in prayer, participation, and support—Fowler is still your camp and your space for retreat and community. Your engagement sustains and enriches this ministry, ensuring it remains a vibrant and transformative space for all who gather and for future generations.

There is room for all at Camp Fowler, and we are deeply grateful for the continued partnership of the churches within the Regional Synod of Albany. With hope, we look forward to all that God will continue to do through Camp Fowler and through our shared work in the years ahead.

With gratitude and hope,

The Camp Fowler Board of Trustees

President Gieser thanked Heather for sharing the report on behalf of Pat, and invited the synod to pause in the meeting as Heather offered prayer for Pat's continued healing.

GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL REPORT
RSA representative Randy Karcher, Elder-VP, Pitcher Hill Community Church

GSC will meet via Zoom on March 24-25 for six hours each day as it does every spring to finalize the agenda for June's General Synod in Nashville, TN.

In the GSC's annual election, Rev. Joshua Scheid, pastor of Massapequa Reformed Church on Long Island, was elected Moderator, and Elder Cal Brouwer from Minnesota, was elected Vice Moderator.

GSC established a commission in response to RF 25-1 from 2025 to study the Spiritual Abuse Working Group, with Tim TenClay and Lois Wendlandt as the GSC representatives. The representatives from the Commission on Christian Action and the Commission on Theology will be named by those commissions.

To establish and commission the RE 25-2 Task Force, with Patrick Beckford, Vivian Campbell, and Sarah Palsma as the GSC representatives. The representatives from the Commission on Nominations, the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, and the

racial and ethnic councils will be named by their respective bodies.

GSC continues to review its policy governance process and the use of Carver governance. GSC's use of Carver has been a point of contention with Regional Synods for several years and was studied by the Advisory Committee on Church Order and presented to General Synod last year. [see pages 178 through 185 of the minutes of General Synod/June 2025.] GSC will continue to review its use of Carver governance through its Policy Exploration and Review Committee.

GSC voted to continue the intentional planning for the first potential virtual meeting of the General Synod to take place in June 2027 if the constitutional changes represented in CO 25-4 are declared effective by General Synod 2026.

GSC voted to recommend changes to reduce several commission makeups in consideration of the denomination's reduced membership in the General Synod 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,
Randy Karcher

In addition to summarizing his report, Randy offered the following addition from the most recent meeting of GSC.

May 2026 RCA/GSC Updates

Tony Schmid has stepped down as the RCA's CFO, Chief Financial Officer, and the General Synod's treasurer, effective April 2, 2026. A talent search is underway to fill this position for approval by the June General Synod in Nashville.

The GSC has decided to list and sell the 32,000 sq. ft. Michigan Regional Center in Grand Rapids at or above its appraised value of \$4,000,000, which housed the Synod of the Great Lakes and our Denominational Headquarters. The search is now on for a 6,000 to 8,000 sq. ft. building in that area to serve as the new Denominational home. Based upon current property values, the remaining \$2,000,000 (plus) will be invested into an endowed fund to provide sustainable ministry income and long-term financial strength.

GSC is investigating a tool called PC-BIZ, which the PCUSA developed and uses to successfully conduct its bi-annual, hybrid-format General Synod. We are in discussions with them regarding its use. One of the Middle Assemblies emerging from the Regional Synod of the Heartland has also expressed interest in software to support virtual Meetings.

If the constitutional amendments represented in CO 25-4 are declared effective by General Synod 2026, then 2027 and 2029 would be in-person, and 2028 and planning

for the first virtual meeting of the General Synod in 2028, in conjunction with the 400th anniversary of the Reformed Church in America, will begin in earnest.

We hope to remove one day from the 2027 General Synod schedule, and to continue that for future in-person General Synods.

The subject of Christian Nationalism is coming up at General Synod this year, which the GSC has spent a lot of time discussing positions proposed by The Professorate. If you're like I was (and would like to be again), unfamiliar with Christian Nationalism asserts that the United States is a country founded by and for Christians. Christian nationalism rejects religious freedom and distorts both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy.

President Gieser thanked Randy for sharing his report and the update. Bob Hoffman noted that Randy will be concluding his term as our regional synod representative on GSC at the General Synod meeting in June. Bob added that he will be nominated as Randy's replacement.

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REPORT

The Rev. John Paarlberg, reporting

The New York State Council of Churches, founded in 1893, represents 7,500 congregations across the State of New York. We are comprised of nine partner denominations including American Baptist Churches USA, Empire Baptist Missionary Convention (National Baptist Convention), The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church USA, The Reformed Church in America, The Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.

Here is a brief review of the past year:

Staffing Changes – The Rev. Peter Cook has concluded his work as the Executive Director and is now the Principal and Consultant, Faith in the Public Square. In the interim, Rashida Tyler is serving as acting executive director. Over the past three years Rashida has served as Deputy Executive Director and Project Manager of the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Advocacy Days – In March, advocates from across New York State met in Albany to worship, learn, and meet with their representatives at the Capitol to advocate for policies to help their communities. A workshop, "What to Do if ICE Comes to Your Church," led by Bryan MacCormack of the Columbia County Sanctuary Movement and Diego Alcalá Laboy of Albany Law School, offered practical, urgently needed guidance for congregations navigating an increasingly complex immigration enforcement landscape. Advocacy Day included briefings on issues and legislation related to immigration, housing, economic justice, criminal justice reform and environmental justice. Participants then met with Senators and Members of the Assembly to discuss these issues.

Chaplaincy – An important part of the State Council’s work is to certify protestant chaplains for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Office of Mental Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, and Office of Children and Family Services. The Council hosts an annual chaplains’ conference for training and networking.

The Rev. Jim Ketcham is Chaplaincy Certification Coordinator. He also works with the NYS Council of Churches Social Justice Commission and the Criminal Justice Reform Task Force in advocating for criminal justice reform. To learn more about chaplaincy, contact jketcham@nyscoc.org.

Affordable Housing and Community Development – We help congregations find creative ways to redevelop the property for the benefit of the community while improving space for fellowship and worship. Many congregations, with professional assistance, can repurpose their property to build affordable housing, create arts and community spaces, plant community gardens, and develop schools and educational programs among other activities. The Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative (IAHC) provides technical assistance and pre-development funding to faith-based institutions that wish to develop affordable housing throughout New York State. To learn more contact Rashida Tyler, Project Manager, rt Tyler@nyscoc.org

Annual Awards Dinner & Fundraising Gala – In November the Council hosted an annual awards dinner in Albany where we celebrated various ministries across the state and honored people who demonstrated leadership in ministry commitments in many areas.

Meeting with the Governor’s Office of Faith-based and Non-profit Development – In December representatives of the NYSCOC Executive Committee, work group members, and others met with the Governor’s Office of Faith-based and Non-profit Development to address a variety of concerns and to discuss legislation coming before the Assembly and Senate.

Environmental Justice Working Group –As the Albany Synod representative on the NY State Council of Churches Executive Committee my involvement has included leading the Environmental Justice Working Group. The Working Group now includes representatives from several denominational, conference and synodical “creation care teams” as well as ecumenical, regional and interfaith groups. We have been able to share information and resources and provide advice and guidance on legislative priorities. We have focused especially on addressing the climate crisis as one of the most urgent and critical issues facing the church and the world. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has determined that we have until 2030 to dramatically reduce fossil fuel consumption if we are to avoid a climate catastrophe. “Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future,” they reported. Many of the other challenges we face — immigration, housing, human health, hunger, regional conflicts— will all be greatly exacerbated by the climate crisis. If we are to take seriously the command to love God and our neighbors, the church must make climate justice a significant part of its witness. As a representative of the State Council I was able to submit written testimony to the NY State Environmental Conservation and Energy Budget Hearing. I also provided resources for the Ecumenical and

Interfaith Advocacy Day, and led a group of people who met with Senators and Assembly Members to talk about environmental justice legislation.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations — I also serve on the Council's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Commission. In that role and as a regional coordinator with Churches for Middle East Peace I have helped to bring together upstate NY representatives from the various denominational Palestine-Israel networks (ELCA, PCUSA, RCA, UCC, Episcopal, and United Methodist) for sharing information and resources. Several people from upstate New York will be attending the Joint Christian Advocacy Summit, Do Right; Seek Justice: Christians Uniting Against Oppression in Palestine /Israel, May 5-7, in Washington, D.C.

The Council is grateful to the Regional Synod of Albany for your support and for the personal involvement and commitment of several people from the Synod. Our offices are at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, 12210. The office email is nyscocalbany@gmail.com The phone number is 518-436-9319. More information about the NY State Council of Churches is available on its website (www.nyscoc.org), newsletters (sign up at www.nyscoc.org/contact) , and on social media (Facebook: @NYSCofChurches; Instagram: @nyscoc; and YouTube: @nyscouncilofchurches).

Respectfully Submitted,
The Reverend John Paarlberg
Albany Synod representative, NYSCOC Executive Committee
jpaarlberg@gmail.com

Staff contacts: Rashida Tyler, Acting Executive Director, NYSCOC and Project Manager, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative tyler@nyscoc.org
The Reverend Jim Ketcham, Chaplaincy Certification Coordinator jketcham@nyscoc.org
Heather Smith, Office & Communications Manager and Community Solar Program Administrator hsmith@nyscoc.org

John thanked the synod for the opportunity to serve as our representative on the NYSCOC Executive Committee and urged each middle assembly to request representation as well. The Synod of Albany has had a vital role to play and an important voice in crucial matters before our state.

John also offered to do presentations for local congregations or classes or other groups on his work with Churches for Middle East Peace and also on Environmental matters.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominations Committee

Robert Hoffman reporting

The Nominations Committee of the Regional Synod of Albany is made up of the stated clerks of each classis. They have the responsibility to review and discuss their Classis Minutes with one another. All the minutes of each classis were found in good order.

The committee also has the responsibility to present nominees for vacancies that appear on the synod's Boards and Permanent Committees, Executive Committee and Synod officers. Given that the regional synod's boards and committees will not continue beyond 2026, the committee recommends:

R: That the current terms of the synod officers, as well as the committee and board member terms, continue through the end of the year.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation that the current terms of the synod officers, as well as the committee and board member terms, continue through the end of the year.
CARRIED

Overtures/ Judicial Business Committee

Trey Tirpak reporting

Rev. Trey Tirpak, chairperson of the OJB Committee, presented the following report. He first noted that there were no Judicial matters that came before the committee in the past year, and that no Overtures have been submitted for the committee to address. The committee has been working with the transition teams on the creation of the Bylaws each middle assembly needs to write. The Abiding team is planning to use the current Bylaws from Montgomery Classis and the OJB Committee is preparing Bylaws for NEMA.

He then carefully walked the delegates through each section and the recommendations included in the following report, also noting that the document has been reviewed by attorney Michelle Wildegrub.

Overview of the merger for Classes and the Reorganization of the Regional Synod of Albany

At the May 2025 Regional Synod Meeting, a plan to create two middle assemblies from the Regional Synod of Albany was approved by the synod and two transition teams were formed to do the necessary work to create these middle assemblies. One of these assemblies represents the original plan of combining all the classes of the Regional Synod to create one middle assembly (originally the Upstate New York Middle Assembly, now the Northeastern Middle Assembly) and the other assembly came at the request of the Montgomery Classis to create a second middle assembly (the Abiding Middle Assembly).

The following are recommendations to formally create the two middle assemblies effective December 31, 2026 through a process of merger and reorganization of the Regional Synod. The Montgomery Classis will remain as is and complete a legal change of name to become the Abiding Middle Assembly.

Recommendation #1

To merge the classes of Albany, Columbia-Greene, Rochester, Schenectady, and Schoharie to form the Northeastern Middle Assembly.

Recommendation #2

To reorganize the Regional Synod of Albany into the Northeastern Middle Assembly and the Abiding Middle Assembly according to the rosters submitted to the Regional Synod of Albany by the classes.

Because the Book of Church Order requires consultation with the classes prior to combining classes, the above recommendations will not be voted for final approval until classis consultations can be completed and the Synod is reconvened in Fall 2026.

To facilitate the merger, the OJB committee recommends the following for approval today:

Recommendation #3

To grant initial approval of the timeline of the merger between the classes of Albany, Columbia-Greene, Rochester, Schenectady, and Schoharie, combining the remaining assets of each classes upon the merger effective December 31, 2026.

Further approvals of the merger may be necessary in the fall including approval of bylaws and officers. These will be presented to the Synod as necessary in the fall.

Recommendation #4

To instruct the representatives of the classes present at this meeting to put forward a recommendation at their upcoming classis Spring Stated Session to authorize and empower the classis president to do any acts necessary to effectuate the merger.

Recommendation #5

To designate members of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee to conduct consultations with each classis regarding the merger and reorganization to fulfill the requirement of the Book of Church Order (III.2.3 & 4) at each classis' Spring Stated Session.

At these meetings, members of the OJB committee will serve as representatives of the Synod to facilitate the merger between the five classes stated above and the plan to reorganize the Synod into two Middle Assemblies, the Abiding Middle Assembly and the Northeastern Middle Assembly. Assemblies will be formed according the rosters submitted by each classis' stated clerk, declaring the choice of middle assembly of each congregation, minister, preaching elder, and commissioned pastor in its bounds.

Recommendation #6

To instruct the classes to submit to the Stated Clerk of the Regional Synod by September 14, 2026, rosters stating the designated middle assembly of each congregation, minister, preaching elder and commissioned pastor in its bounds.

These rosters will be received and voted upon to form the Abiding Middle Assembly and the Northeastern Middle Assembly at the Fall 2026 reconvened session.

Recommendation #7

To reconvene the Synod on Saturday, September 26, 2026 for the purpose of approving a plan of merger and reorganizing the Regional Synod into two middle assemblies and approve any other business related to these processes.

Setting the date for September will allow for all classes to be consulted regarding these processes. This meeting will be set prior to the fall classis meetings, so all classes have the same information at the time of the meeting. Reorganization and merger will be effective December 31, 2026. Other business that may need to be approved by the Synod includes bylaws and officers of the merged assembly. Additional business will be brought as advised by legal counsel overseeing the merger.

Recommendation #8

To instruct classes dividing assets between assemblies (by their approved method) to distribute funds prior to October 1, 2026 if the congregation is going to an assembly other than the classis. Funds for the Abiding Middle Assembly will be held by Montgomery Classis. Funds for the Northeastern Middle Assembly will be held by Schenectady Classis. For congregations in Albany, Columbia-Greene, Rochester, Schenectady, and Schoharie going to NEMA funds may be retained by the original classis. Remaining funds of these classes will be combined upon the merger of the classes. Montgomery Classis will retain any other fund for the Abiding Assembly.

Reasons:

1. Distributing funds prior to a merger will make for a cleaner plan and will not require classes to declare their plans for assets within the plan.
2. This will also allow middle assemblies to have a clearer picture of their future funds for budget and assessment planning for 2027.

This committee recognizes that many classes have already determined that their assets will be divided proportionally among congregations of the classes to be distributed to the middle assembly the congregation is joining. This recommendation honors these decisions, but also allows for a plan or merger to be submitted to the state without requiring these declarations to be included. The date of October 1, 2026 will allow classes to anticipate their expenses for the final quarter of the year and distribute funds as required. As funds will not be merged for those classes merging until after December 31, 2026, classes shall have sufficient funds to pay any remaining expenses for 2026.

The synod participated in helpful conversation with questions and comments shared to create a fuller understanding of the blending of NYS Religious Corporation and Not For Profit Laws and what is required in the Book of Church Order. They noted that it is important to understand and follow the designated timelines so the proposed plan can be accomplished to meet both NYS and denominational deadlines.

The synod recessed for worship and lunch and delegates were informed that we would revisit the report in plenary session. Delegates were also encouraged to talk among themselves about the report and further discern the best way forward.

IX. WORSHIP

The worship service was led by Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder, vice president of the synod. His meditation theme was, "The Same Mind of Christ in Us" with scripture lessons from Philippians 2:1-11 and John 17:20-23. Musical accompaniment was provided by the music team of Lynnwood Reformed Church.

X. LUNCH

Lunch was served by the members of Lynnwood Reformed Church. Pastor Garret Szantner offered the prayer for the meal and fellowship.

XI. GATHERING LITANY

President Gieser called the meeting back to order following lunch and extended the synod's gratitude to the members of Lynnwood Reformed Church for the lunch and their wonderful hospitality. President Gieser offered a prayer to reconvene the synod.

In calling the synod back into session, President Gieser informed us we will begin with the Committee on Accounts report.

Committee on Accounts

David Walsh

The Committee on Accounts, consisting of Rev. Trey Tirpak, Rev. Betsy Westman, Rev. Linda Gold, David Walsh and Eileen King met by zoom with the members of the Albany Synod Finance Committee, Mr. Phil Beckett, CPA, P.C., and Albany Synod staff Robert Hoffman on March 26, 2026.

David summarized that there were no substantial matters mentioned in the report that needed to be addressed by the synod. Mr. Beckett reported that the books are in good order and appreciated the Finance Committee's work in following the Financial Handbook.

The Committee presents the following recommendations to the Regional Synod:

Financial Review

R-1: That the review of the financial reports of the Regional Synod of Albany for the year ending December 31, 2025, as presented by the accounting firm of Phil Beckett CPA, P.C., be approved.

[A copy of the complete review done by Mr. Beckett can be found on this link.](#)

MOTION: To approve the recommendation.

CARRIED

Bob Hoffman noted that the main reason why the synod receives the clean reports they do from Mr. Beckett is because of the good work done by our Finance Manager, Ms. Elif Ipek. He also informed the synod that Elif's family home was destroyed by fire on April 28. He noted that there is a GoFundMe account set up for Elif and her family but that if anyone wanted to make a contribution through the synod they may do so by sending it to the synod office.

David introduced the second recommendation coming from the Committee on Accounts. It concerns the approval of an assessment schedule for 2027.

2027 Proposed Assessment Schedule

Following consultation with the Synod Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Rev. Rich Dykstra, chairperson of the Finance Committee and Rev. Bob Hoffman, Synod Administrator, presented the following assessment schedule as a way for the Abiding and Northeastern Middle Assemblies to have financial resources available to help them begin their work of ministry for the churches under their care. The schedule continues the current assessments for the classis and the regional synod and has churches pay that amount to the middle assembly they join. The leadership of the Abiding and Northeastern Middle Assemblies will determine due dates.

2027 Assessment Schedule for Middle Assemblies

Congregation	2026 Classis	2026 Albany Synod	Total to MA
First Church	1,312.00	2,693.70	4,005.70
Bethany	741.00	2,073.50	2,814.50
Castleton	2,033.00	4,258.80	6,291.80
Clarksville	629.00	1,622.70	2,251.70
Colonie	1,899.00	4,286.70	6,185.70
Coxsackie	475.00	1,331.10	1,806.10
Delmar	4,299.00	10,568.64	14,867.64
Unionville	806.00	1,625.40	2,431.40
Greenbush	2,494.00	5,510.70	8,004.70
Onesquethaw	823.00	1,570.22	2,393.22
Jerusalem	313.00	876.60	1,189.60
Glenmont	147.00	334.80	481.80
Knox/TL	617.00	1,622.70	2,239.70
New Baltimore	600.00	1,507.00	2,107.00
Blooming Grove	684.00	1,585.80	2,269.80
Selkirk	1,228.00	2,855.60	4,083.60
Westerlo	520.00	1,200.60	1,720.60
Wynantskill	1,694.00	3,596.96	5,290.96
18			
Athens	457.44	1,008.90	1,466.34
Catskill	343.08	548.84	891.92

Kiskatom	381.20	964.46	1,345.66
Chatham	419.32	869.40	1,288.72
Claverack	1,162.30	3,345.10	4,507.40
Coxsackie	495.56	1,101.60	1,597.16
Germantown	400.26	861.30	1,261.56
Linlithgo	381.20	528.30	909.50
Ghent	667.10	1,409.40	2,076.50
Hudson	95.30	288.00	383.30
Mont Pleasant	247.78	669.90	917.68
Kinderhook	972.06	2,531.10	3,503.16
Livingston	247.78	757.80	1,005.58
Nassau	381.20	792.90	1,174.10
Philmont	228.72	360.00	588.72
Pine Plains	38.12	107.80	145.92
Schodack	819.58	1,441.80	2,261.38
17			
Thousand Isles	2,653.25	6,615.62	9,268.87
Canajoharie	1,801.84	3,208.50	5,010.34
Herkimer	277.21	704.70	981.91
Ephratha	99.00	180.90	279.90
Mohawk	1,524.63	2,917.80	4,442.43
Owasco	1,148.42	3,015.10	4,163.52
Currytown	178.20	441.00	619.42
St. Johns	316.81	917.30	1,234.11
Syracuse	831.62	2,228.60	3,060.22
Pitcher Hill	732.61	1,441.80	2,174.41
West Leyden	257.41	468.90	726.31
11			
Clymer Hill	497.20	1,330.18	1,827.38
Interlaken	944.36	2,292.30	3,236.66
Woodlane	400.40	1,346.40	1,746.80
Pultneyville	1,410.20	3,877.20	5,287.40
Lakeview	1,190.20	3,482.42	4,672.62
Trinity	989.01	2,703.60	3,692.61
Sodus	224.32	612.90	837.22
Tyre	211.50	612.90	824.40
New Hope	9,392.90	27,598.40	36,991.30
9			
Altamont	1,651.96	3,965.40	5,617.36
West Glenville	1,313.80	3,732.30	5,046.10
Clifton Park	5,316.06	8,883.60	14,199.66
Fort Miller	668.33	1,023.00	1,691.33
Fort Plain	1,045.12	2,340.40	3,385.52
Helderberg	1,460.49	2,466.00	3,926.49
Amity	1,158.48	2,298.24	3,456.72
Woestina	848.84	2,009.58	2,858.42
Bellevue	1,357.56	3,212.00	4,569.56
First, Schenectady	3,652.46	11,858.40	15,510.86

Lisha Kill	1,911.90	3,089.94	5,001.84
Lynnwood	2,420.49	5,334.90	7,755.39
Niskayuna	3,946.31	7,028.10	10,974.41
Bacon Hill	2,324.22	3,029.18	5,353.40
Old Saratoga	751.01	1,435.50	2,186.51
First, Scotia	2,709.68	6,163.20	8,872.88
Sprakers	366.38	660.60	1,026.98
17			
Cranesville	142.42	684.90	827.32
Florida	124.49	648.90	773.39
First, Berne	721.17	1,992.10	2,713.27
Lawyersville	409.26	1,454.40	1,863.66
Fonda	803.52	2,883.60	3,687.12
Glen	292.65	1,081.80	1,374.45
Hagaman	151.60	684.90	836.50
Johnstown	401.91	1,478.70	1,880.61
Middleburgh	962.80	2,046.00	3,008.80
Prattsville	226.86	648.18	875.04
Roxbury	657.49	1,981.80	2,639.29
Schoharie	1,004.12	1,454.20	2,458.32
12			

R-2 That the proposed 2027 Assessment Schedule be recommended to the Abiding and Northeastern Middle Assemblies for their consideration.

Bob explained that the schedule keeps the classis and regional synod assessment at the current level (no changes). He also pointed out that this schedule would help congregations as they begin their budget process this fall. It will give them a baseline for what the assessments might be. He also summarized the questions asked by the Committee on Accounts and the Finance Committee as they came to agree that this was important to do.

MOTION: To approve the proposed 2027 Assessment Schedule recommendation to the Abiding and Northeastern Middle Assemblies for their consideration.
CARRIED

Dirk thanked David and the Committee on Accounts for the review work they have done with the Finance Committee.

Bob also reported that the Finance Committee is presenting two recommendations concerning the distribution of the assets of the Regional Synod of Albany.

One recommendation concerns the financial assets held by the synod.

R-3 That the financial assets of the Regional Synod of Albany be allocated to the middle assemblies formed within the current bounds of Albany Synod, at the end of 2026, according to an equal share based on the number of congregations joining that middle assembly.

Bob explained that this recommendation only allows funds to be sent to either the Abiding or the Northeastern Middle Assemblies. Should a church move to another middle assembly, funds would not be sent. He noted that the current balance in the Investment Fund as of the end of April 2026 was \$749,921.86.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation. CARRIED

The second recommendation addresses the property asset of the 1790 Grand Blvd facility. This facility was purchased by the General Program Council in the 1970s and used by Albany Synod until 1982 when they purchased it from the General Program council for about \$35,000.00.

R-4 That the ownership of the 1790 Grand Blvd facility be transferred to the Northeastern Middle Assembly with the understanding that should they sell the building the income from the sale would be allocated to both middle assemblies, formed from the current Albany Synod, based on an equal share for the number of congregations joining the assemblies.

Bob informed that the Board of Trustees empowered him to investigate the possibility of selling the facility and in meeting with real estate individuals it was discovered that a possible sale would require more time than we have to meet the restructure deadline of the end of 2026. He noted the property is zoned residential and that the current assessed value is \$340,000.00.

In discussion, delegates inquired about how a sale would impact Fowler which also has offices in the building. Bob noted that while Fowler is aware that something might be done with the building there hasn't been conversation about their interest in it. Additional conversation included questions about whether the equitable distribution of funds would change as NEMA will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the facility. No decision was made about that matter.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation. CARFRIED

Overtures and Judicial Business Report, continued

They reminded the delegates that our overall goal is to wed what is required legally according to New York State with what is outlined in the Book of Church Order. We all are seeking the best and most efficient way forward.

To that end, he and Rev. Linda Gold presented the following three recommendations which address the process of achieving the overall goal in bringing together our classes and organizing into two middle assemblies.

Recommendation:

The Regional Synod of Albany empowers ASEC to act on its behalf to complete the plan of merger and any other legal requirements to create the Abiding Middle Assembly and the Northeastern Middle Assembly, once the classes approve the plan of merger and any other legal requirements to create the Abiding Middle Assembly and the Northeastern Middle Assembly.

This recommendation would empower ASEC to finalize all the merger requirements between now and the fulfillment of the plan if allowed by the State Not for Profit and Corporate Laws.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation.

In discussion, it was deemed helpful to hear all three recommendations and discuss them all together. So the motion was withdrawn.

Recommendation:

The Regional Synod of Albany approves recommendations #3-7 of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee. If ASEC is able to take these legal actions, then the recommended meeting to reconvene the Regional Synod of Albany will not take place.

Recommendations 3-6 (found on pages 31-32 of these minutes) outline all the steps and actions necessary for the merger plan to be completed. This includes work done by the OJB Committee and the classes.

Recommendation:

The Regional Synod of Albany approves recommendation #8 of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee report.

This recommendation (#8 found on page 32 of these minutes) outlines the distribution of assets and the timeline by which the distribution should be made. Helpful information was shared about the difference between Donor restrictions on assets like endowments and Board restrictions on classis accounts. Donor restrictions must be carried over into the middle assemblies, board restrictions can be removed by action of the board.

In discussion, each recommendation was reviewed and explained for clarity and to see how they all work together as pieces of the whole merger and middle assembly organization plan.

MOTION: To consider all three recommendations in one vote. CARRIED.

MOTION: To approve the three recommendations as presented by the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee. CARRIED

President Gieser thanked Trey and the OJB Committee for their diligent work on this matter.

XII. TRANSITION TEAM UPDATES

Northeastern Middle Assembly (NEMA) Transition Team Report

Identity Statement

By God's Grace, we are Reformed Disciples all gathered and connected at Christ's Table to minister to the total life of all people.

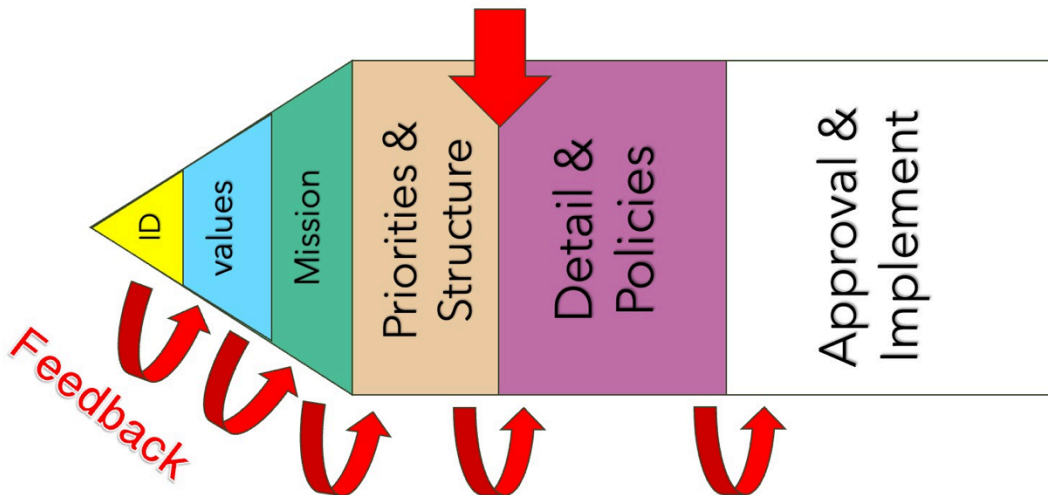
NEMA Transition Team:

<p><u>Albany Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Nancy Landrigan • Rev. Trey Tirpak <p><u>Schenectady Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder David Walsh • Elder David VanderWal <p><u>Columbia-Greene Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Patti Varga • Elder Amy Katt <p><u>Rochester Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Amy Burdette • Rev. Steve Meyer 	<p><u>Schoharie Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder David Patterson • Rev. Rich Dykstra <p><u>Montgomery Classis:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Randy Karcher <p><u>Staff:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev. Lindsey DeKruif • Rev. Bob Hoffman <p><u>ASEC</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Noreen Fargione • Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder
--	--

Planning Process:

We approached our work as a process of discernment. The Transition Team has met for two full-day sessions, held five Zoom meetings, and conducted four presentations on NEMA. Our process, as illustrated in the diagram, moves from left to right—from Identity to Implementation. At each stage, we pause to integrate feedback and reflect on the questions raised before moving forward.

We are now entering the phase where our focus shifts to developing the necessary details and policies.



Reflection on the process

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the NEMA Transition Team, who have invested many hours with remarkable commitment to this process. The support from staff has been outstanding, providing essential structure, guidance, and continuity throughout our work.

The team itself has functioned exceptionally well. There has been strong and thoughtful input from all participating classes, and the diversity within the group has been a real strength. It has been a joy to witness how members approached this work—not as competition between middle assemblies, but as a shared process of discernment. Together, we have sought to define a space that can serve as a nurturing ground where congregations may flourish.

One of the primary challenges has been maintaining focus amid the many priorities that require attention. At each meeting, we have worked intentionally to discern what is most important and to give our energy to those key areas. This has meant that some details remain unresolved at this stage. For some congregations, this has created uncertainty, as not everything has been fully developed. However, certain aspects can only be finalized once we know which churches will ultimately join the new middle assembly. In this sense, the process has felt like walking a tightrope—moving forward while also waiting to see who will join us on the NEMA journey.

We have been encouraged by the positive reception of the NEMA presentations. I was personally struck by the openness, thoughtful engagement, and insightful questions we received. Looking ahead, one of the most important issues we will need to address is how to support smaller congregations in thriving and how to effectively allocate staff and leadership roles to carry out responsibilities previously held at the classis level.

A significant component of this process has been the development of a timeline to ensure readiness. Some aspects, such as the legal transition, needed to begin early and are already well underway. Other elements will be addressed once participation decisions are finalized. In the meantime, task teams will work on details and policies.

We have experienced a positive and constructive relationship with the Abiding Middle Assembly. We hope to continue nurturing this relationship, recognizing that we remain one in Christ and part of the same denomination. We look forward to exploring opportunities for shared ministry and mission in the future.

Throughout this journey, we were held in grace by Christ, the head of the Church. We were privileged and grateful to be welcomed at Christ's table of grace.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev Immanuel van Tonder (Co-Facilitator – NEMA)

Immanuel summarized the work the NEMA team has planned moving forward. They have created six subcommittees which will work on the structure and ministry details of the middle assembly. He thanked the team for their good work thus far and the wisdom and guidance they have shared with one another..

Abiding Middle Assembly Transition Team Report to the Regional Synod of Albany

www.AbidingAssemblyNY.org

Since the Regional Synod Meeting of 2025, when it was voted that two middle assemblies would be formed out of the Regional Synod of Albany (RSA), much work has been accomplished building relationships, determining vision, and finding what will define and bind together the “alternative” middle assembly.

The first online meeting of the appointed transition team of Brian Engel, Jeff McIlrath, Jeff Kelley, Marian Engells, Matt Draffen, and Dirk Gieser was held on July 29. After this, great progress was made with multiple in-person working sessions, online meetings, and direct phone calls.

Overarching principles that capture the vision and direction of the middle assembly were quickly identified: Confessional, Missional, and Relational. In the beginning of September, as the transition team knew each other better and had a clearer sense of what the middle assembly would become, a name was agreed upon: Abiding Middle Assembly.

The transition team for the Abiding Middle Assembly is working to do things differently and develop something different from what has been. As such, after almost a year of operations, there is no chair or president; it has been a collaborative work. While officers and structure will be absolutely necessary as the Abiding Assembly begins to function as a governing assembly, the initial focus has been the vision and values which flow from a Reformed biblical understanding of Church out of trusting relationships between those called by God.

Over the winter there have been multiple opportunities for consistory members to hear directly from the transition team about the Abiding Assembly. These have been filled with opportunities to reflect on Scripture, think about what congregations want from assemblies, how joining with people with similar priorities can release and further ministry, what it means to be Welcoming and Discipling, and questions about what is and isn't true about the Abiding Assembly.

The questions allowed the transition team to clearly affirm women in ministry, the role of elders to determine membership in congregations, and congregations to determine their elders and deacons. It has been important to say that there are no plans to require Ministers of Word and Sacrament to sign any statements of theology or practice beyond the affirmation given and signed when entering a classis. Yet, with the understanding that there is a weight and accountability to declaring that, “I accept the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and life. I accept the Standards as historic and faithful witnesses to the Word of God.” Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Pastors, and Preaching Elders are accountable to the Middle Assembly in all matters of practice pertaining to their call. With this unity, clarity and connection, we believe more fruitful and dynamic ministry can happen.

The Abiding Transition Team has thought about what the Assembly might look like structurally and how it might function, but it has not defined these items and will not until it is clearer which congregations God is calling to be part of this Assembly. We look

forward with anticipation to see which consistories decide to have their congregations be part of the Abiding Assembly.

In the Fall we will schedule a gathering to start to get to know each other and together develop the structure that will allow the Assembly to carry out the responsibilities laid out in the BCO, support each congregation with helpful trainings, coordinate cooperative ministry, and superintend Ministers, Commissioned Pastors, and Preaching Elders well. It has been a good year, and we look forward to what is ahead.

The Abiding Assembly Transition Team
Matt Draffen mattdraffen@outlook.com
Brian Engel engelnation@verizon.net
Marian Engells mjengells@hotmail.com
Dirk Gieser dirk@encounterERC.com
Jeff Kelley jeffa.kelley@gmail.com
Jeff McIlrath jmcilrath@me.com

Jeff Mc Ilrath and Brian Engel shared the report summarizing the strong and ongoing support which the Abiding Middle Assembly will continue to have for women in ministry. They stated they strive to maintain an attitude of graciousness as they work on defining their middle assembly structure and program.

A question was asked concerning how the Abiding Middle Assembly will work with elders that are currently in the School of Ministry but who have not yet completed it. Dirk stated that they would continue supporting those in the process and guide them to their conclusion.

XIII. PRESIDENT'S REPORT **The Rev. Dirk Gieser, reporting**

Vice President, Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder assumed the chair while President Gieser gave the following report.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We gather today for the last time as the Regional Synod of Albany. In eight months, the six Classes we have known—Albany, Columbia-Greene, Montgomery, Rochester, Schenectady, and Schoharie—will no longer exist. This is profound. The Regional Synod of Albany will be no more. It is hard to wrap our heads around this. The structure that has housed our common life since 1800 is coming to an end. We are wise to hear again the words of God through the prophet Isaiah, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (43:18-19) This is not a moment for nostalgia, nor is it a moment for despair; it is a Gen-X moment.

The Synod as we know it was built by the Greatest Generation—those who returned from war, bought land, raised steeples, and established Camp Fowler in 1954. Our Synod was shaped by the Boomers who dreamed big: started new congregations, launched campus ministries, fought racism, and expanded Christian education. From this we have decades of trainings, grants, retreats, and programs that turned vision into action. Soon, the work will be passing on to Millennials and Gen-Z. And in between, almost forgotten, stands Gen-X—the bridge. We (my

generation) are the ones who learned to figure it out when the adults were at work, who started school with an electronic typewriter and ended college with the internet. The ones who watched institutions crack and kept going anyway. This transition is the moment to bring Gen-X lessons to the current reality.

Reading the Classis presidents' reports from the past year paints a picture of now. Schenectady reported worship attendance up 2 %, with significantly more infant and adult baptisms. (In fact, between 2023 and 2024, four out of six classes had an overall increase in worship attendance.) Rochester reminds us that even in the challenges we face, we must "refuse to let ourselves be discouraged" (Karl Barth), grounding hope in the twin gifts of Word and Spirit. Schoharie names the weariness we all feel—budget anxiety, volunteer fatigue, the ache of wondering about the next generation—yet ends with the challenge to look forward with a five-year vision while finding the rest that only Christ can give. Columbia-Greene welcomed a new minister, opened free community dinners and a warming center, and calls us to the patience of Joshua crossing the Jordan: the Lord who fed Israel with manna will feed us in this new land too. Montgomery causes us to face the hard numbers of the past 20 years—a loss of people of around 50%, and the corresponding cuts to budgets and staff—and yet points to a newfound clarity, and in that clarity hope, as they look forward; embracing change. Albany Classis recognizes all the people who have worked hard to get to this point, celebrates the good that has been done, and reminds us that "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." The reports do not point to the end but rather show a people who have already begun to adapt.

The Greatest Generation
1901 – 1927
The Silent Generation
1928 – 1945
Baby Boomers
1946 – 1964
Gen X
1965 – 1980
Millennials
1981 – 1996
Gen Z
1997 – 2012
Gen Alpha
2013 – 2025

The adaptive spirit of Gen-X is what we need right now.

We Gen-Xers grew up skeptical of institutions yet worked within them as best we could—albeit without the loyalty once expected of members. We pioneered work-life balance, refused to "live to work," and insisted that ministry must be sustainable for pastors and their families. We became the bridge from analog to digital—comfortable with rotary phones and Zoom, paper maps and online giving platforms. Gen-X quietly watched when corporate loyalty evaporated, and just as quietly we started our own paths. Resourcefulness grew as a survival instinct out of the childhood we navigated. We MacGyver solutions with whatever is at hand—older buildings, overworked volunteers, collaborative ministries of necessity, mixed with the latest technology and biblical truth. Pragmatic realists, we ask the bottom-line questions that are easy to ignore, like, "Who would actually want to go to this?" Gen-X has been forced to keep learning and adapting because we know the Church must keep changing because we are not of the world, but we are most certainly in it.

Some of the identified characteristics of Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980, are: Quiet Independence, Healthy Skepticism, Adaptability, Entrepreneurial Spirit, Pragmatism, Resourcefulness, and an Informal Style. These characteristics of the classic Gen-Xer are needed right now.

- Quiet independence from the world will serve us well when it is coupled with a full dependence on God as consistories prayerfully choose and build their Middle Assembly homes, not swayed by others but led by God.

- Healthy skepticism will keep us from romanticizing the past as perfect or idealizing the new structure as a save-all solution. Nothing is, was, or will be as good as it seems—except God.
- Adaptability is essential right now and will help us create bylaws that work for today, navigate Zoom meetings when we would rather be in-person, and help us give up how “it has always been done,” so we can figure out something new.
- Entrepreneurial spirit must birth new ministries in the spaces the old could not.
- Pragmatism will focus on the real objective so endowments fund mission, not just survival, and with clear eyes we consider what will work to reach a new generation.
- Resourcefulness will remember that “God’s work, done in God’s way, never lacks for God’s supply.” (Hudson Taylor)
- Informal style will break down stiff boardroom etiquette with honest conversations between brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Synod’s history is coming to an end after 226 years, yet the work of the Reformed Church in America is not. Bob Hoffman took the time to go through the records of the Regional Synod for the past 100 years. Committees have come and gone, labels have changed from Permanent Committees to Program Units to Councils to Commissions to Ministry Boards, but the overall structure has remained more-or-less the same. What will our change into Middle Assemblies hold? Is it just a more extensive rearranging than before, or will the laid-back energy demonstrated by Gen-X be used by God to birth something new in this region? I pray it does.

Here is the charge I have for you as we go from what has been created by generations before, release it from what it is, and hand the work forward to new generations: Do not mourn the end of the Regional Synod as a tragic loss. It is not the end of the story—it is an opportunity.

Roll up your sleeves with renewed vigor. Keep the Word and Spirit as your lifeline. Have hard conversations. Choose your Middle Assembly with clarity and purpose. Celebrate every baptism. Respond with gratitude to every donation. Raise up new leaders. Welcome the stranger. Worship with all your heart. Evangelize your neighbor. Feed the hungry. Disciple the nations. Work with what God gives you. Refuse discouragement. Be the Church. Keep your eyes on Christ.

Christ is our only hope. There is no generation which will save the day or “save” the church. I have been talking a lot about Gen-X. You can forget about us (we are used to it), but there is an X that is much more important. Technically, it is a chi, not an X. The X for Cristos—Christ in Greek. When you see the X, remember Christ our Messiah. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:2-3) Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, Cristos.

With this central truth (and using some lessons from Gen-X) do all in your call to ensure the next generation inherits not just structures but a church that is authentic, resourceful, vibrant, and relentlessly hopeful. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,

so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

Gen-X has demonstrated what it means to be a bridge, between how it was and what is next. The same resourcefulness, adaptability, and pragmatism that got the latch-key kids through their childhood and adolescence can guide us as we navigate this profound change. May the God who used post-war determination and Boomer vision for the purposes of His Church, preserve it using Gen-X realism and resilience, revitalize it in this region with the passion of Millennials and Gen-Z, and bless it greatly for the glory of Christ to all generations. Praise be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Amen.

In Christ,
Dirk Gieser

**Now to Him, who by the Power at work within us,
is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,
to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Ephesians 3:20-21

Immanuel thanked Dirk for his insightful report and commented that the report had been sent to the General Review Committee for their consideration and response.

XIV. GENERAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

Amy Burdett, reporting

Chairperson, Amy Burdett presented the following report from the General Review Committee.

Committee Members: Rev. Rick Admiral, Amy Burdett, Rev. Katy Kroondy Rev. Janet Meyer Vincent.

The General Review committee was created to gracefully reflect on the reports submitted by President, Rev. Dirk Gieser and the Synod Ministries Board (SMB) moderator, Noreen Fargione to present to the May 4, 2026 Regional Synod of Albany Meeting.

The committee met via email and online to discuss reflections.

On behalf of the collective members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to submit to you this report outlining these responses on the two reports submitted to the committee.

Our committee could not have completed this task without the technological assistance and support of Synod Administrator, Rev. Bob Hoffman, and the committee thanks him for his dedication.

The President’s report submitted by Rev. Dirk Gieser reflected on generational change and to refuse discouragement in these times. Chi or Christ is our hope and strength. We thank President Gieser for his insightful report and reflections as well as his good work that he completes in the final year of the Regional Synod.

The SMB report highlighted its Mission. Reported work of the board for 2026 was:

- Continuing Synod Mediation Team through 2026
- Beginnings and Beyond retreat, January 2026
- Pastors and Families Retreat at Camp Fowler
- Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change
- Synod School of Ministry Courses
- Preaching Elder Circle New Facilitator
- Christian Educators Circle
- Practical Resources for Churches
- Albany Synod Collaborative Ministries
- Restorative Circles Facilitator training
- Care Portal
- Camp Fowler partnerships
- Numerous congregational grants.

The opportunities created for members of the Regional Synod of Albany are many by the SMB and there is hope that by God's grace this nurturing will continue.

The General Review committee individually considered each of these reports in sequence, attending to any formal recommendations made in the reports and discerning whether or not to offer recommendations of our own for the greater Synod to consider. We today, present to the Synod recommendations from both the President's and SMB Reports:

- Hope in Christ as we transition moving forward into Middle Assemblies.
- And a recommendation of the General Review Committee is to encourage both Middle Assemblies to continue a dedicated Ministries board that will foster fruitful relationships, desired programs and grants to these Assemblies.

Please accept my reflections and recommendations with grace on behalf of the General Review Committee for the May 4, 2026 Regional Synod of Albany Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Burdett,
Elder- Pultneyville Reformed Church

The synod received the committee's report with applause for the leadership of the Rev. Dirk Gieser throughout his presidency, and to pass on to the middle assembly transition teams the committee's encouragement about the dedicated ministries of the SMB.

XV. RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Rev. Mashona Walston, reporting

Mashona Walston voiced appreciation to Elizabeth Moses, Noreen Fargione, and Betsy Westman for helping her with the task of preparing the following resolutions.

Opening Resolution of Gratitude

WHEREAS, we have had the opportunity to fellowship, celebrate, and reflect on the meaningful work of various ministries throughout the years, and to give thanks for the work of God within the bounds of the Regional Synod of Albany; and

WHEREAS, we have been blessed by the gracious hospitality and the delicious meals served by the people of Heldeberg Reformed Church and Lynnwood Reformed Church; and

WHEREAS, we have been blessed by the worship leadership of past President Noreen Fargione, Rev. Kent Busman, Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder, Garrett Szantner, and the Lynnwood Reformed Worship Team; and

WHEREAS, we have been nourished, encouraged, and inspired by the preaching of God's Word by Rev. Immanuel Van Tonder, who called us to pursue the same mind of Christ in us, as we transition into two middle assemblies as one body;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 4th day of May 2026, that the Regional Synod of Albany offers its thanks and praise to all who demonstrated hospitality, leadership, and care, contributing to our spiritual and physical nourishment.

Synod Staff Resolution

WHEREAS, the Synod has been richly blessed by the ministry of The Rev. Robert Hoffman, recognizing his more than 40 years of service within the Synod of Albany and his 27 years as Stated Clerk; and

WHEREAS, the Synod is grateful for the faithful service of Elif Ipek, Finance Manager, and Rev. Rich Dykstra for his work with the Synod Finance Committee; and

WHEREAS, the Synod gives thanks for the leadership of The Rev. Elizabeth Moses as the new School of Ministry Coordinator, equipping and supporting lay leaders through the Preaching Elder program; and

WHEREAS, the Synod has been blessed by the faithful service of Rev. Lindsey DeKruif as Program Coordinator, including her support of the School of Ministry and transition teams; and

WHEREAS, the Synod has been blessed by the ministry of Rev. Dr. Sherri Meyer-Veen as Minister for Renewal, including her leadership in Faithwalking and Churches Learning Change, and her contributions to the General Synod Restructuring Team;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 4th day of May 2026, that the Regional Synod of Albany offers its sincere and heartfelt thanks for the faithful and dedicated service of the Synod staff who have also agreed to continue their work with the Synod of Albany until December 31, 2026.

Ministry Partners Resolution

WHEREAS, the Synod received a report from the New York State Council of Churches, highlighting their work in chaplaincy certification, care for creation, leadership development, and ecumenical and interfaith collaboration;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Regional Synod of Albany expresses its gratitude to the NYS Council of Churches and its affiliated partners as we continue to learn, discern, and advocate faithfully in our communities.

Camp Fowler Resolution

WHEREAS, the Synod celebrates the leadership of Executive Director Patrick Kinne and the completion of a \$1 million capital campaign, along with expanded programs and partnerships;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Regional Synod of Albany gives thanks for the ministry of Camp Fowler and encourages congregations to support and participate in its life and mission, trusting God's continued guidance.

Leadership and Service Resolutions

WHEREAS, the Synod has been strengthened by the leadership of President Dirk Geiser, whose thoughtful and hopeful vision has guided the body through a time of transition;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Regional Synod of Albany expresses deep gratitude for his faithful and visionary leadership.

WHEREAS, the Synod has received the report of Elder Randy Karcher, representative to the General Synod Council;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Synod gives thanks for his service and prays for the continued work of the General Synod Council.

WHEREAS, the Synod has received reports from various committees, councils, and boards concerning the life and ministry of the Albany Synod;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Synod expresses its gratitude for their careful, prayerful, and faithful work.

Resolution of Gratitude – President Dirk Geiser

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Regional Synod of Albany expresses deep gratitude to Dirk Geiser for his faithful leadership, sincerity, humor, and passion for ministry during this season of discernment and restructuring, and preaching where he encouraged all to continue to work using the resilience and creativity of Generation X as we follow the Spirit of Christ into two middle assemblies.

General Review Resolution

WHEREAS, the General Review Committee recommends continued hope and the development of a dedicated Synod Ministries Board;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Synod moves forward in grace and gratitude, trusting in God for the health of the church and the integrity of its witness.

Resolution on Adjournment

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Regional Synod of Albany adjourns its 2026 annual meeting with deep gratitude for the Spirit’s presence and renewed hope for the future God is preparing—moving forward with the same mind of Christ as one body in two middle assemblies.

MOTION: To approve all the resolutions. CARRIED

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting with prayer. CARRIED

Rev. Robert Hoffman offered the closing prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Robert Hoffman, Stated Clerk

Rev. Dirk Gieser, President