

First Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, NC
Stated Meeting
Wednesday, May 28, 2025

SESSION MINUTES

On Wednesday, May 28, 2025, the Session of the First Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, North Carolina was convened at 7:01 p.m. as a hybrid meeting. Moderator, Rev. Dr. Tara W. Bulger, Rev. Laurie Taylor Weicher, Doug Redford, Clerk of Session, Fran Yohman, Deacon, the new members listed below and the following Elders were present.

Class of 2025		Class of 2026		Class of 2027	
Darcy Dye Bowers	P	Rebecca (Becky) M. Brown	Z	David Blake	P
Watson (Boyd) DeVane	Z	Elbert (Gordon) Brown, Jr.	P	Jennifer Brearley	P
Jeffrey P. Gray	P	Anne B. Carter	P	Kathie Cheatham	P
Allison M. Jourdan	Z	Jeffrey B. Cates	P	Cindy Elderkin	P
William (Bill) L. Miller	P	Kenneth (Earl) Enzor	P	Ed Finley	P
Barbara (Babs) V. Nichols	P	David C. Kesterson	P	Mary Jo Littlewood	P
Kenneth R. Russell	P	Kenneth J. Mentzel	Z	Ian McCaslin	P
Matthew L. Tunnell	P	Janice A. Skelly	E	Ray Szafranski	P
Robert D. Walker	Z	Elizabeth P. Sparrow	P	Alison Zielinski	P

Legend: P = Present E= Excused A = Absent Z = Present via Zoom

Call to Order: 7:01 p.m.

Devotional and Opening Prayer: Jeff Cates

Mark 10: 42-45

42 So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This verse from the Bible reminds us of the essence of true leadership – to serve others with humility and love. Instead of seeking power or status, Jesus shows us that a great leader is one who puts the needs of others before their own, embodying selflessness and compassion in all their actions. Jesus sets a powerful example for us to follow in our own lives and interactions with others by emphasizing servant leadership

New Members|

Approved June 25, 2025

Laurie Taylor Weicher introduced Catherine Ahmad and Ike McRee. Catherine is joining by transfer from Woodside Presbyterian Church, Yardley, PA. Ike is joining by transfer from Outer Banks Presbyterian, Kill Devil Hills, NC.

Tara Bulger introduced Brian, Hannon and Ryann Bulger. They are joining by transfer from First Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, AL.

Motion: To accept these new members

Moved and seconded

Motion approved

Approval of the Agenda|

Motion: To approve the agenda as corrected

Moved and seconded

Motion approved

Approval of Minutes| Stated Meeting Minutes, April 23, 2025

Motion: To approve the minutes as corrected

Moved and seconded

Motion approved

Clerk's Report|

Worship Attendance

Sundays:	Apr Sunday 4/06/25 Youtube Live	153	In-Person	353
	Apr Sunday 4/13/25 Youtube Live	112	In-Person	325
	Apr Sunday 4/20/25 Youtube Live	168	In-Person	557
	Apr Sunday 4/27/25 Youtube Live	97	In-Person	245

Church Register

Deaths

Karen White Dunn 4/22/25

New Members

Catherine White Ahmad 5/28/25
 Donald Ikerd "Ike" McRee, Jr. 5/28/25
 Brian Richard Bulger 5/28/25
 Hannon Grace Bulger 5/28/25
 Ryann Katherine Bulger 5/28/25
 Alexander "Xander" James Clarke 5/18/25
 Noah Avery Dunning 5/18/25
 Harrison Yates Mumma 5/18/25
 William "Will" Dickinson Kram 5/18/25
 James "Jay" Henry Preston 5/18/25
 Montgomery "Monty" William Roberts 5/18/25

Approved June 25, 2025

Transfers Ken & Amie Carmack 3/23/25 to West Raleigh Presbyterian Church

Jenny Patchett 4/29/25 to Apex United Methodist

Marriages: Elizabeth Brown and John Caldwell on Saturday, June 7 at 5pm at First Presbyterian Church, Durham.

Hannah Gray and Alex Greer on Saturday June 7 at 5 pm at Caledonia Golf and Fish Club Pawleys Island, SC

Elder Volunteer Reminders – June 2025

1. **Worship Service Greeters:** 10:00 a.m. | Alison Zielinski and Ed Finley
2. **Elder Representative to Diaconate:** Jeff Gray, June 18, 2025
3. **Session Stated Meeting Devotion:** Anne Carter, June 25, 2025

Next Stated Session Meeting:

Stated Session Meeting: June 25, 2025

Committee Reports Due Date: June 18, 2025

Items for Information:

Deacon Report: Diaconate Rep to Session| Fran Yohman

- Kathy Johnson presented ways we can help the less fortunate.
 - A copy of her presentation was distributed to the Session on May 30th
- **Visitor & New Member**
 - Hot dog Sunday scheduled for June 1.
 - Sides will be solicited from Sunday School classes.
 - Volunteers may be needed at event.
- **Congregational Life**
 - Volunteers needed for blood drive on June 11.
 - Working to fill up calendar for Summer Series events.
 - Sign up link for hosting Summer Series events will be sent to Diaconate.
- **Congregational Care & Support**
 - 46 participants at Cinco de Mayo Bingo event.
 - Deacons are encouraged to sign up to do birthday visits with At Home members.
 - Adult Fellowship Lunch at the Farmer's Market is scheduled for June 18.
 - The Committee would like to provide additional support to members who need rides to Sunday services.

The Deacons would like the congregation to be reminded to pass the plate across the row during worship service.

FPC Foundation Jennifer Ingram|

Approved June 25, 2025

Our meeting occurred on 5-12-25 via Zoom.

- Gail Barrett provided a Treasurer's report which was reviewed during the meeting. The report included year-to-date investment performance and funds available for 2025 grants.
- Sub-committee reports were presented:
 - o Marketing – The FPC Foundation hosted a table during the recent FPC Mission Fair. The Board discussed strategies for updating the Foundation pages on the FPC website, increasing awareness within the congregation through a Moment for Mission and First Press articles.
 - o Gifts – The FPC Foundation has been receiving impact statements from mission partners reflecting the 2024 gifts. The statements were distributed to Board members. The next round of applications for funding are due May 31, 2025.
 - o Investments – Overall, the Foundation investments portfolio is looking good, and the investments managers are monitoring the funds as the market has high volatility with various tariffs and executive order announcements.
- Minutes from the February 2025 FPC Foundation Board meeting were reviewed and approved.
- The FPC Foundation Board approved a motion to co-sponsor the January 2026 FPC Birthday congregational meal and provide a birthday cake for the meal.

Budget and Finance Committee Elizabeth Sparrow|

March 2025 Financial Report (see attached). Overall, we are slightly ahead for revenues relative to expenses.

- March YTD Revenues were \$588,368.34 (compared to \$562,818.57 in 2024). Budgeted YTD revenues were \$433,488.99. *About \$120,000 of the \$154,879.35 excess revenues is due to January receipts of \$160,752 in prepaid pledges. Although Unpledged Gift and Plate Collection receipts are lower than expected thus far, Pledge Payments are up. Some Facilities Rental contracts have been prepaid for the full year which positively impacts revenues. One commercial contract for Parking Lot Revenue is behind by one quarter (6 spots).*
- March YTD Expenses were \$429,507.71 (compared to \$437,886.77 in 2024). We have spent \$25,845.16 less than the \$455,352.87 budgeted expenses. *Note that May 2025 will be our first month with full personnel expenses. We have paid out about 24% of pledged Mission & Outreach payments.*
- The Session-approved 2025 budget included the option to draw from Devereux Fund (up to \$47,797) and Operating Reserve (up to \$39,659). The March YTD Net Operating Total is \$158,860.63 (compared to \$124,931.80 in 2024), reflecting that we are currently bringing in enough revenues to cover anticipated expenses without drawing on these reserves.

Highlights from the May 07, 2025 meeting of Budget & Finance

- **Quarterly Reviews.** Investment accounts reflect a 1-1.5% loss in Q1. FPC cash accounts that have been transferred to Pinnacle Financial Partners were initially earning 1% interest (as compared to no interest in 2024). Following this review, Gail negotiated a higher interest rate of 2% for our cash accounts and moved a portion of our General Fund to a Money Market account that opened at 2.78% APY. Preliminary review of CDC Q1 financials identified questions that the CDC Board is discussing with the FPC Financial Staff.
- **Publication/Communication.** We discussed general practices, including a desire to improve distribution of information to Diaconate and all Session/Diaconate committees. We are exploring logistics for sharing financial information with congregational members. We will present a summary of these practices to Session once we reach consensus.

Approved June 25, 2025

- **Uniform Gift Policy.** The Foundation has shared their draft policy, and B&F has provided input for their consideration. We are discussing ways that a Uniform Gift Policy for FPC might differ from Foundation needs. When we have a draft policy, it will be presented to Session.

Nominating Committee: Anne Carter |

Committee met on Wednesday, May 14th at 6:30 via TEAMS (all committee members were present and in person) at FPC – Ed Greer/Session room. Tara Bulger joined remotely

Committee members began review and assembling the list of potential officer candidates

Mission Committee: Janice Skelly|

CLI Prison Alliance grant request was received late by the Mission Committee and approved for \$1,000.

Family Promise Hosting Account line item of \$19.82 moved to Outreach Ministry Account.

Generosity Committee: Gordon Brown |

The Generosity committee will be picking a theme and outlining our late summer/early fall plans at our next meeting.

Personnel Ministry Team (PMT): Jeff Cates |

PMT will host an ice cream social for the church staff on June 2.

Property and Insurance: Ken Mentzel |

- Elizabeth Sparrow met with P&I to review the history of using the parking lot for fundraising events and the supporting documentation. All committee members agreed that this practice should be reinstated (see motion below). Russell Clark will coordinate the use of the parking lot, working with P & I and Gail Barrett.

- The team agreed to proceed with purchasing planters and plants as shown in the layout provided by Daniel Whatley (see attached rendering)

- Two Stock Building HVAC compressors need to be replaced. Russell Clark obtained an estimate from Piedmont Service to replace both compressors for \$10,300.00 and he will schedule the repair.

We will have a workday on Saturday, June 21 to spread mulch in the Salisbury St. and Morgan St. planting areas and replace several plants.

Items for Approval:

Budget and Finance Committee: Elizabeth Sparrow|

Special & Seasonal Collections. It is an FPC tradition to donate offering plate collections to certain funds in conjunction with certain dates/events. These special and seasonal collections are listed below for Session's convenience. When donors clearly designate their intentions by specifying "pledge," "General Fund," or the name of a special/seasonal offering on the check's memo line or offering envelope, it is clear how to handle their gifts. Online gifts require the donor to designate the intended fund, so that is clear as well. However, there is not a clear/consistent policy regarding how undesignated offerings are to be treated on these days. As a result, there is an administrative burden of researching each undesignated check to determine whether it was intended to be part of the donor's General Fund Pledge before assigning it to a fund. With the goal

of reducing confusion and reducing administrative burden on our Financial Staff, the Budget & Finance committee recommends the following policy be considered for 2025 and future years. If this policy is instituted, we recommend coordination with the Worship & Music committee to clearly indicate where funds will go (i.e., minister announcement just prior to Offering, note in bulletin "Offering: All loose cash today will be donated to ____; checks should designate intended fund on the Memo line"). We are glad to collaborate with the Communications sub-committee regarding announcements in First Press. We are also glad to collaborate with Administration and Generosity regarding ways to present clear options on the pew offering envelopes.

Special Collection Events

Friendship Fund	Any time Communion is served including Maundy Thurs.
Friendship Fund	Christmas Eve, 7:00 & 11:00 PM
Pennies for Hunger "Centsability"	2nd Sunday of the month
Children's Hope Alliance	3rd Sunday of September
Miriam's Basket	Christmas Eve, 4:00 PM

Seasonal Collections

Souper Bowl of Caring*	Super Bowl Sunday (February)*
One Great Hour of Sharing	Presbytery collection during Lent
Mother's/Father's Day Offering**	Glenaire collection in May & June through 2022 Milner Commons & Kings Ridge through 2024 **
Bolivian Mission***	Bolivia collection in November***
Joy Gift	Presbytery collection in December

* The B&F-recommended policy only applies to funds received in the offering plate. Checks and cash received in the soup pots and lunch tables at Souper Bowl of Caring event will continue to be applied to the cost of the meal and then the designated charity.

**With the change in management companies at Glenaire, the Glenaire offering was no longer collected after 2022. An offering to support low-income housing development was taken for two years, but Kathy Johnson indicated that this seasonal collection has been discontinued as of May 2025.

***Last collection for the Bolivian Mission was in 2024; this mission has been discontinued.

Discussion: We need to explore the possibility of using separate containers for special/seasonal collections. We need to communicate better as to how offering plate collections will be used.

Motion: On designated special collection or seasonal collection events: 1) all loose cash shall be donated to the identified fund, and 2) all undesignated checks shall be deposited in the General Fund.

Motion approved

Christian Education Committee: Becky Brown |

Approved June 25, 2025

Motion: The Christian Education committee submits the following motion to approve the book, A Most Beautiful Thing, by Arshay Cooper, to be used in an “All Church Read” on July 27, 2025 during the community building time. The book was recommended by Tara, and approved by the CE committee. Here is a link to the book description for more information: [Amazon](#)

Motion approved

Mission Committee: Ed Finley|

The Mission Committee unanimously approved the request for **Designed for Joy**, a local non-profit which provides transitional competitive employment for women emerging from crisis, to be an FPC mission partner. Here is a link to their website.

https://www.designedforjoy.com/?srsltid=AfmBOopvpDoO-LckoeTgHwGz6M3DP6A6U06vP7YHh_LCwbuEhXcmDIj

Motion: to approve Designed for Joy to be an FPC Mission Partner

Motion approved

Personnel Ministry Team (PMT): Jeff Cates |

Background information on the Assistant to the Director - Community Outreach position

1. This position is an outgrowth of the NCCIW (NC Correctional Institution for Women) Intern job that was established ~25 years ago, funded by a grant from the Temple Sloan Family Foundation. The NCCIW Intern role is filled by someone who is currently incarcerated and satisfies the Work Release requirements of the NC Department of Corrections.
2. Several individuals have worked in the Intern position with some success, but often that person would no longer show up for work. This would be due to some change in their status at the prison, and we would receive no notification from the state that the Work Release had been terminated.
3. With no Intern in place and seeking some stability in the role, Kathy spoke with Temple about changing the funding grant. Temple agreed to change the terms of the grant such that an individual with responsibility to provide assistance to the Director – Community Outreach could be a formerly incarcerated person.
4. In November 2024, Kathy and Gail hired Rita Harris (formerly incarcerated) to fill the Assistant to Director – Community Outreach position.
5. When PMT met with Rev. Bulger, her recommendation was to bring this position to be under PMT guidance and norms like all other staff of the church.
6. The church staffing organization chart now shows "Assistant to Director - Community Outreach", reporting to the "Director - Community Outreach". Kathy and the PMT have prepared a Job Description for the role. Funding for the position remains with the Temple Sloan Family Foundation.
7. The church staffing organization chart continues to show the "NCCIW Intern" position, but the Intern position is not part of this discussion and there is no plan to employ an Intern as long as the Assistant position is filled.

Motion: PMT requests Session to approve the establishment of Assistant to Director – Community Outreach as a regular church staff position under the purview of the PMT, reporting to the Director – Community Outreach.

Motion approved

Approved June 25, 2025

Property and Insurance: Ken Mentzel |

Background

Prior to the pandemic, the parking lot was used to raise funds by renting spots for \$10 each. Procedures were established and documented by Edward Bruce, Kathie Cheatham and Elizabeth Sparrow.

Motion: To reinstate the practice of using the FPC parking lot(s) for fund raising events. We will use the existing procedures and documentation that were established prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Motion approved

PW FPC Women's Retreat Committee: Elizabeth Sparrow|

Background & Updates: The PW Executive Committee presented information to Session at the April 23, 2025 meeting regarding fundraising for the PW FPC Women's Retreats. Since 2018, PW FPC Women's Retreats have been self-supporting using fundraisers to supplement participant fees. The retreats have not been funded through the FPC Operating Budget. Fundraisers are necessary for us to continue this practice. We will use \$2,000 to subsidize the 2025 Women's Retreat. We anticipate future retreats may have higher costs.

We are grateful for Session's approval of flower bouquet sales between April and June 30, 2025. We raised approximately \$500 from the Mother's Day flower fundraiser.

If approved, the PW FPC Women's Retreat Committee will meet with FPC Church staff to discuss scheduling and financial aspects of both fundraisers.

Motion: Presbyterian Women requests Session approval for the PW FPC Women's Retreat Committee to host several parking lot fundraisers between now and July 31, 2025. Weather and volunteer numbers permitting, we would like to consider scheduling up to three of the following dates in 2025: June 6, June 13, June 27, and July 25.

Motion approved

Worship, Music and Communion: Ken Russell |

The Worship, Music and Communion Committee recommends renting rehearsal space to the Raleigh Youth Choir (RYC) based on the terms below plus comments from Property & Insurance.

Rent: \$1,000/month.

1. Regular Rehearsals: Monday nights, 4-8:30ish, Labor Day to Memorial Day-generally
2. Rehearsal spaces (6), FPC 5 pianos, RYC 1 piano
 - a. Sanctuary/Choir Room
 - b. Vanguard Room (chapel)
 - c. Memorial Hall (Memorial Hall/Cafeteria room)
 - d. Three Sunday School Classrooms on the Third Floor
 - e. Parents can absolutely hang around at the tables and couches.

Approved June 25, 2025

- f. Pick Up and Drop off at the parking lot lobby doors.
- 3. RYC Choir Library and Office Space (throughout the week)
 - a. Shared Choir office: downstairs next to choir room
 - b. Room for filing cabinets, printer, table and some shelves.
- 4. Free Concert space here at FPC!!
- 5. RYC sings in a service or two at FPC throughout the year.
- 6. Additional spaces at variable times (as a part of the overall agreement)
 - a. Tuesday auditions
 - b. Summer rehearsals before a tour
- 7. Specific room set up
 - a. FPC move tables and RYC set up and put away the chairs

The Property and Insurance team supports the proposal to allow RYC to use FPC facilities subject to the following:

Russell emailed the draft agreement and we have raised a few questions/concerns.

- How is parking being handled? Families will be using the municipal parking deck.
- Someone should be onsite representing the church. Alan Jessup has volunteered to cover a couple nights and we should be able to get others as needed. Assume that some of the parents will be onsite to help as well.
- Paul Hoover pointed out a few insurance items we should confirm with RYC.
- The performance schedule at FPC (Sunday services and general concerts) should be documented and we should explore possible First Friday performances.

Motion: FPC should enter into a rental agreement with the Raleigh Youth Choir according to the terms noted above.

Motion approved

Pastor's Report: Rev. Laurie Taylor Weicher|

No pastoral concerns

Pastor's Report: Rev. Dr. Tara Bulger | (attached)

Tara presented a draft set of financial reports with the goal of more clearly presenting the financial status of the Church. These statements would be sent by Gail to all elected officers on the fifth of the month. In the future, a condensed report will be shared with the congregation to keep them informed.

The reports include a report showing giving by source so that the Session can monitor giving trends. The expense reports contain three columns that compare YTD Actual to Annual Budget to % of Annual Budget used. (For example, April is 33% of the year—if a line item is more than that annual percentage, then they are over budget.)

For the Good of the Church: Rev. Dr. Tara Bulger | (attached)

Tara presented her initial thoughts and recommendations after meeting extensively with various groups in the congregation. The report identified both perceived strengths and areas of concern raised by the congregation, but also by her observations during her first months with FPC.

Approved June 25, 2025

In addition to four actions Tara implemented with Church staff in the area of collaboration, review of programs stopped during COVID, simplified financial reports (as presented above) and a new database she makes the following recommendations for Session consideration and action.

Recommendations

1. Form a special committee to work with the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor to study and generate ideas and create a new vision for engaging the community around us.
2. Authorize the Communications Team and the Communications Director to solicit bids and hire a firm for a new website.
3. In conjunction with the Facilities Director and Audio-Visual Lead Technician, authorize the Property and Insurance Committee to research and procure what is needed for the sanctuary to enhance the live stream.
4. Form a short-term subcommittee of Property and Insurance that includes key church members who can study and make recommendations on how to make the front-facing part of our church more welcoming.
5. Through the work of the Worship Committee and Senior Pastor, consider changes to the bulletin that might make our worship more accessible to new people.
6. Lastly, facilitate the Church Administrator to develop a manual of operations that includes all the church's descriptions, policies, and procedures. Each committee will be encouraged to share important foundational documents with the Church Administrator.

Adjournment/Prayer

Motion: To adjourn the meeting with prayer.

Moved and seconded

Motion Approved.

Rev. Dr. Tara W. Bulger adjourned the meeting with prayer at 8:51 p.m.

Rev. Dr. Tara W. Bulger
Moderator

Douglas S. Redford
Clerk of Session

Approved June 25, 2025