

Report of Annual Meeting of the Synod of Living Waters, PCUSA Franklin, TN January 27, 2025

Our meeting was opened with worship, led by Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, President of Columbia Seminary, and business of the synod was moderated by Rev. Dr. Ann Laird Jones.

Two excellent workshops were offered:

“Budget and Stewardship as Mission” – Rev. Dana Waters, Presbyterian Foundation

A surprisingly engaging presentation! Some highlights:

- Statistics of PCUSA demographics (Unsurprising decrease!)
- Many suggestions for growth
- Website: stewardshipnavigator.com offers ideas and resources for congregations
- Website: assessment.presbyterianfoundation.org offers measure of financial health
- Website: churchfla.com (code PCUSA) offers financial tools for churches
- Improve congregational awareness of bequests/legacy funds

”Disaster Preparedness” – Nell Herring and Jim Kirk, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

A timely reminder of our *unpreparedness* and resources to improve

- Dramatic increase in “billion dollar” disasters from 1970 to present
- “disaster” is an emergency (natural or man-made) that cannot be handled locally
- Churches and presbyteries should have a “Disaster Response” plan and group
- Website ready.gov offers guidance on making a plan and gathering supplies

Greetings were received from:

General Assembly entities:

- Board of Pensions – Keenan Rodgers and Clark Simmons
- PCUSA – Lauren Rogers
 - Change in Special Offerings (from 4 to 3) in 2026
 - Severe cuts in World Mission (soon!)
 - Presbyterians have a presence at the U.N. (who knew?)
- Montreat – (?) Pickett – all programming has returned; hosting flood relief teams
- Covenant Partners reports:
 - Columbia Seminary – Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo
 - Presbyterian Home for Children – Doug Marshall
 - Rhodes College – Rev. Beatrix Weil
 - Univ. of Pikeville – Dr. Burton Webb: *huge* growth in programming!
 - Maryville College – Kathleen Farnham: received Lilly grant for artistic studies
 - Stillman College – Dr. Mark McCormick: will host a Congo delegation this year

Reports of Officers and Entities of the Synod:

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Ann Laird Jones – requests stories for inclusion in the virtual “Voice”

Stated Clerk: Rev. Dr. Gregory Goodwiller

Treasurer: Rev. Sally Hughes

Presbyterian Women: Rev. Kirsten King – PW Triennial Gathering Oct. 17-19, St. Simons

Living Waters for the World: Steve Young – Legacy Fund established; 5 year partnership with PCUSA for work in Haiti

Administrative Board: Susan Summral – percapita remains unchanged for 2025; budget for 2025 was adopted; Greg Goodwiller remains Stated Clerk

Moderator for 2026 Carol Copeland was installed

Next meeting of the body scheduled for January 26, 2026 (zoom)

All present agreed that the meeting was spirited, well prepared, and uplifting!

Respectfully submitted,

Joanie Lukins, Ruling Elder Commissioner

**Another Report of the Annual Meeting of the Synod of Living Waters, PCUSA Franklin, TN
January 27, 2025**

I let my fellow commissioner, Joanie Lukins, give you the basic meeting facts. Let me give you my narrative view of the gathering.

This was my second Synod meeting and my first to attend in person at the beautiful campus of First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee. The Synod of Living Waters is currently voting to meet every alternate year in person and the off year via Zoom online. There is something to be said for in person fellowship and business as most of us know. Presbyterians love to be with each other, for the most part.

We began with wonderful spirit-filled worship in the FPC sanctuary with their talented organist, Michael Snoddy and the leadership of our moderator, Rev. Dr. Ann Laird Jones and preacher, Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, Columbia Seminary President.

The meeting in their Wilson Hall began with two excellent powerpoint enhanced workshops. "Budgeting and Stewardship as Mission" by Rev. Dana Waters of the Presbyterian Foundation. Every congregation could gain from Dana's suggestions. What is it you do well? Tell your story. As for offerings and stewardship, "Make it easy!" Consider online bill pay mechanisms. The Foundation can help you. After pledges are received, have all the officers write individual handwritten Thank You notes to each pledger. Thank you goes a long way! Diversify your congregations income streams with rent of property, investment income and planned giving. Such gifts can be "transformative." We are the generation that knows the importance of giving to keep the future church alive. The Foundation can help.

Second workshop: "Disaster Preparedness" Transylvania does not need to be told this. Rev. Nell Herring and Jim Kirk again have excellent ideas from our Presbyterian Disaster Assistance folks. Call them. Schedule a workshop with their help. Start now, because emergencies and disasters are coming. We have Rev. Kathy Riley. But are we calling upon her for her assistance?

We heard from a number of our Covenant Partners, school, colleges, other centers. I want to highlight Montreat Conference Center near Black Mountain, NC. Montreat survived the 2024 hurricane with damage but determination and all programming is ON for the Spring, Summer and Fall. Tanner Pickett pumped up the Montreaters. And I took time to share with him the tragic loss of my church's youth leader this winter and how our Senior Highs were left helpless. He jumped right on the need and sent me helpful texts even before the meeting was over. That is the kind of devoted servanthood our Presbyterian partners have. Rejoice. Give thanks and send them our support.

University of Pikeville under Dr. Burton Webb is having huge growth. Maybe a new dental school, much needed for eastern Kentucky and east. Go Pike!

And at the Synod level, our own favorite, Living Waters for the World, Steve Young. Has a full church curriculum to learn about the value of clean water as ministry and mission. Three full fine print pages of partnerships between small water systems all over the world and individual congregations and presbyteries with 5-15 year continuous system anniversaries. Yes, we have a 15 year water system in the Yucatan. Thank our Joanie Lukins and so many others for their devotion to clean water. And Jesus Christ. The world needs our ministries more than ever.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Steven T. Pace, Teaching Elder (Ret.) Commissioner