

Frequently Asked Questions About the Presbytery

Building H.O.P.E. Campaign – May 12, 2015

Who is the Presbytery of Western North Carolina?

The Presbytery of Western North Carolina (PWNC) is one of five presbyteries in North Carolina. We are located in the 23 counties that are west of Charlotte with 109 churches and approximately 16,500 members.

We are a presbytery of small membership churches, but we also have strong larger membership churches. We have about eighty churches with under 150 members, about twenty churches between 150 and 500 in membership and ten churches with over 500 in membership. We have clusters of churches concentrated in the Gastonia, Hickory, and Asheville areas.

What is the Mission of the Presbytery?

*SEE, We are the Body of Christ
We covenant together to . . .
Strengthen Congregations
Equip Disciples and Leaders
Engage in Mission*

Our goal is to strengthen congregations to be vital and faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ.

How is the Presbytery organized?

The Presbytery, as a representative body of ruling elders and teaching elders/pastors, meets four times a year. There are on average about 250 people in attendance for worship, welcoming new pastors, approving candidates for ordination, reports, and voting and fellowship. Reports are brought from the Presbytery committees.

The General Council is the chief administrative and decision making committee when the presbytery is not in session. Other committees are accountable to the General Council.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) is also a major committee of the Presbytery. The COM is responsible for approving all teaching elders/pastors that come into the presbytery. They work with churches in transition, in conflict and in need of support and they also serve as a resource to pastors. The COM has various sub-committees, such as the Committee on Preparation for Ministry which works with people who are considering or preparing to become pastors.

The mission is supported by five other committees.

- Congregational Development Committee charged with strengthening congregations.
- Leadership Development Committee charged with equipping disciples and leaders.
- Outreach/Mission Committee charged with engaging in mission.
- Youth Committee charged with support youth in all these areas.
- Administrative Committee deals with personnel, budgeting, finance and property.

Support vital churches is the work of the COM, Congregational Development, Leadership Development, Outreach/Mission and Youth.

What is the Operating Budget of the Presbytery?

The Presbytery's operating budget is almost \$795,955 (see Chart).

Most of our income comes from churches through unified giving, although a few churches give to the work of Presbytery only. A small amount is received from individuals. Designated funds are used for specific purposes. We receive approximately 3 to 5 percent interest on our case reserves which helps with cash flow. Many of our churches give at the end of a quarter or the end of the year and since our bills are paid monthly, thus creating our cash flow problems.

This Presbytery does not collect a per capita, although we pay both the General Assembly and Synod Per Capita out of the unified giving.

How does the Presbytery's Operating Budget compare to the congregations' benevolence given through and supported by the Presbytery?

In 2014, the benevolence given through the Presbytery (\$755,054) to missionary support, Presbyterian offerings, the Guatemala partnership, and our giving to the denomination almost equals our operating budget. Compared to most presbyteries, this is outstanding. This giving is only about \$40,000 less than our operating budget. It does not consider the \$35,000 given through the budget to Camp Grier, which is due to the generosity of the congregations and the work of presbytery. (See the benevolence giving).

How has the Presbytery been involved in the four Ministries of the Building Hope Campaign?

The four ministry areas in the campaign are areas that the Presbytery is already heavily supporting. The campaign builds on these and allows us to do ministry and mission that could not otherwise be supported. It is over and above what we are already doing.

In November of this year we had a celebration in Guatemala to celebrate 20 years of partnership with two presbyteries in Guatemala and PWNC. The partnership focus has been building relationships and joint decision making. We have done some of that through over thirty church to church partnerships. The churches here give \$300 per year to their church. That was to make it an equal amount from both small membership and large membership churches. Children's school scholarships have been one of the main focus of the church to church partnerships with over \$120,000 sent to the churches for an estimated 800 scholarships given last year.

The current focus on higher education, seminary education, and potential school and community libraries came from an education study done by the three presbyteries of the Guatemalan school system and conversations with our partners.

In addition, there have been several health projects and health promoters were trained from each church. We have encouraged clean efficient stoves, water filters, and composting latrines. Projects approved by three presbyteries included digging a few wells, helping build churches, getting land for houses and gardens, getting new stoves, etc.

Recently the Presbyterian Women have started an exciting micro loan projects with over thirty women in the two presbyteries, as a way to combat poverty and support women and their families.

Our Guatemala partner churches are also supporting Dr. Barbara Nagy in Malawi

Our ten year Ministry in Malawi began when Dr. Barbara Nagy began work as a pediatric and internal medicine doctor at the hospital in Nkhoma and our presbytery started

supporting 80% of her salary. About fifty of our churches support or have supported Barbara Nagy and her work at the hospital has made major improvements in people's health. This includes reducing infant mortality by 75% at the hospital. She even presented her work in Paris, France so other hospital could benefit as well. For the last ten years we have sent mission teams to Nkhoma to work with the Hospital and the Ebenezer School.

Our ministry has expanded to be more than a partnership with Dr. Nagy, but to be a partnership with the Hospital, with Dr. Reynier ter Haar, the head of the hospital; and the Ebenezer School, which this presbytery started. Each year one to two mission teams are at Nkhoma working at the rural clinics, the Hospital and the Ebenezer School. Our relationship with the Hospital has grown stronger as Barbara has been in the USA for several years and we have worked directly with them.

Our partnership with the School has increased as this presbytery and people in this presbytery have served at the school as a principal and teachers, been instrumental in building additional classrooms, a library and teacher housing, worked to provide scholarships, and do teacher training. Each year, educators in the mission team serve as instructors and mentors to the teachers at the school, providing vitally needed training.

Camp Grier is located in the bounds of our presbytery. It was originally supported by Salem, Charlotte and our presbytery. Several years ago both Salem and Charlotte had major financial challenges and Salem stopped their financial support of the Camp. Charlotte cut its funding from \$90,000 to \$15,000 in 2014. This Presbytery has supported the camp with approximately \$40,000 over the last five years. In 2015, we will give the camp \$35,000.

In 2015, the Camp received a 501c3 designation and a new director was called, who has been learning from the for profit camps in our area. Because of his new vision of being a Christian Camp with a focus on adventure learning and age appropriate activities, we feel that the camp has a great future. We are trying to help jump start the camp by getting the equipment and support needed to continue to increase the camper enrollment and support the goal of being known as an outstanding Adventure Camp with a Reformed Christian focus. Last year the enrollment increased by 17%. We expect the trend to continue.

Supporting, nurturing, equipping, and strengthening vital churches is the most important focus of the presbytery and where most of our time is spent. Today's environment is different from the one in the 1950's and even the 2000's. The culture is different. The priorities of the generations are different. The ways people communicate has drastically changed. We are like the apostle Paul in Rome needing to learn how to powerfully communicate the gospel to people who live in today's world. Sharing the gospel, preaching the gospel, inviting people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and nurturing people in their faith is still our calling. We are still also called to demonstrate God's love to a hurting world. Sometimes, we may need to do it differently. This is different for each church depending on their gifts and situation. The campaign is about supporting churches and pastors in this time.

Also the Pastor's job is harder today, often demanding skills that were not taught in seminary. Support and a place to share and grow are important. Learning new things that will be helpful is vitally important. Equipping pastors and churches to use new technology to get out the message of the gospel and communicate with their members, visitors, and the stranger is critical. The Campaign is about providing support in this area.

Who are our staff and what do they do?

The staff support the Presbytery's work and ministry. Some are paid and others are volunteers.

The Stated Clerk, Bert Sigmon, and after July, Cam Murchison, is an elected official of the Presbytery. Other elected people include the Moderator, Rev. Michael Bailey, and vice-moderator, Elder Barbara McLean. As Stated Clerk, Bert supports our churches and pastors in many ways.

The General Presbyter, Bobbi White, is responsible for carrying out the ministry/mission of the presbytery and supporting pastors and churches. Anita Bernhardt is the Associate Presbyter for Mission, Witness, and Church Support and coordinator for the Building H.O.P.E. campaign. Barbara Ross, a volunteer, is the Associate Presbyter working with leadership development, churches calling a pastor, the Church Leadership School, and church support. In addition, Charles Davenport works part time with churches in the Gastonia area and Bob Ayala, as a volunteer, works with churches in the Mayland Fellowship and other places.

Beth Gunn is nationally known for her work with youth. She works part time as an Associate Presbyter for Youth. (See description of an outstanding Youth Program)

Marie Connelly de Palacios, serves as the part-time Guatemala Coordinator. The Partnership also has two part-time coordinators in Guatemala, one in each presbytery.

We have three administrative/program support staff, who each have more than 20-years' experience: Robbin Buchanan (Assistant to the Stated Clerk, Coordinator for General Council and Presbytery Meetings, support for Church Leadership School and various committees); Marcia Puckett (Coordinator for Committee on Ministry and Committee on Preparation for Ministry), and Tonya Williams (staff for Christian Education, support for Small Membership Church Committee and many various committees) . Lisa Pressley serves as Comptroller and also works with technology and mission support.

The Presbytery has a wonderful Youth Ministry. We have one of the denominational leaders in youth ministry, Beth Gunn, who works part-time for PWNC. Each year they have a three day retreat for middle school students at Camp Grier. This not only supports our larger membership churches youth groups, but makes available opportunities for youth that are in smaller membership churches that might only have one or two youth. In addition, there is a presbytery wide senior high overnight mission experience, a senior high and middle school free afternoon rally. On a three year rotation they have about 50 youth attending Triennium, national gathering of over 5,000 youth; have a local mission trip experience, and have a mission trip with the youth in Guatemala for a joint planned youth retreat.

The Presbytery Youth Council is one of the most important leadership opportunities for high school students. Each year students apply, they grow in faith and in leadership. They lead the music, the worship, the fellowship and fun, and small groups at events for other senior high and middle school participants. This is phenomenal opportunity.

The Church Leadership School, which Barbara Ross supports, has a two year, six quarter program for in-depth learning and faith growth. This curriculum covers Bible, theology, worship, ministry, church history and more. It is a leadership and faith development opportunity to develop strong leaders in our churches. Each year from 20 to 30 elders and church members participate in this life changing experience. These graduates provide leadership in their churches, in the presbytery, and in some cases as Commissioned Lay Pastors to specific churches.