

The Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington met in regular session on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, within Knox Preston Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Crawford led the Presbytery in a service of worship.

The moderator, Rev. Darrell Clarke opened the meeting with prayer and constituted the court.

Attendance

Ministers

Rev. Scott McAndless, Clerk, Rev. Darrell Clarke, Rev. Dr. Peter Bush, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Crawford, Rev. Lisa Dolson, Rev. Dongwon Jung, Rev. Don McCallum, Rev. Reuben St. Louis, Rev. Jennifer Sokolowsky, Rev. Kirk Summers, Rev. Grant Vissers.

Representative Elders

Bob Galbraith, Steven Jones, Peggy Lennox, Doug McCaig, Gib McIlwrath, Vern Platt, Bonnie Street, Rick Thomas, Terri Whiffin, Rhonda Wright. Jo Anne Hall, Sharon Feldmann, Loretta Fox, Pauline Hall

Others: David Church (treasurer), Beth Anne Fisher (student), Carol White, Jane Bennett, Sylvia Brooks, Paul Craig, Pat Craig, Steven Marsh, Ray Czerwonka, Pat Foreman, Catherine Thacker, Matthew Brennan, Donna Mae Fleet.

Regrets: Rev. Dr. Aubrey Botha, Rev Courtney Crawford, Rev. Dr. Rev. Hugh Donnelly, Rev. Dr. Kristine O'Brien, Rev. Dr. Mark Richardson, Rev. Glen Soderholm, Rev. Dr. Frank Szatmari, Debbie Bachura, Janet de Groot, Rev. John Borthwick.

The moderator, Rev. Darrell Clarke welcomed guests from Knox Preston and St. Andrew's Hespeler.

1. It was **moved** by Scott McAndless/Jeffrey Crawford that guests from Westside Presbyterian Church, Knox Preston Presbyterian Church, student Beth Anne Fisher be invited to sit and correspond. **Carried.**
2. It was **moved** by Lisa Dolson/Doug McCaig that the Docket as presented be adopted. **Carried.**

Motions related to the Amalgamation

3. It was **moved** by Steve Jones/Vern Platt, that Knox Preston Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Hespeler Presbyterian Church enter into an amalgamation, effective January 19, 2025.

Representatives of the congregations were invited to address the Presbytery. Steve Jones, Carol White and Catherine Thacker spoke from Preston. Steve Marsh and Scott McAndless spoke from Hespeler.

The motion was **carried**.

4. It was **moved** by Steve Jones/Vern Platt, that Rev. Scott McAndless be welcomed as the ordained minister of the amalgamated congregation. **Carried.**
5. It was **moved** by Steve Jones/Vern Platt, that the amalgamation plan, as attached, be approved. **Carried.**
6. It was **moved** by Steve Jones/Vern Platt, that the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington, in response to the amalgamation,
 - Carry out a formal visitation to the amalgamated congregation between January/February 2026.
 - Carry out a formal visitation to the amalgamated congregation between January/February 2029. **Carried.**

7. It was **moved** by Steve Jones/Vern Platt, that Presbytery plan a worship service be held at Knox Preston on Sunday January 19, 2025 (afternoon or evening time to be determined) to celebrate the ministry of Knox Preston and mark the amalgamation. The arrangements for the service will be left in the hands of the Moderator, Clerk, Interim Moderator and Minister of St. Andrews Hespeler. **Carried.**

Westside Presbyterian Church

8. It was **moved** by Gib McIlwrath/Vern Platt, that the report of the Property and Finance Team be received and considered. **Carried.**

For Information:

The amount of the loan application for Westside has been changed per instructions from Betty at PCBC to be rounded up from \$368,602.92 to \$368,610.00.

9. It was **moved** by Gib McIlwrath/Vern Platt, that Westside Presbyterian Church will provide the Property & Finance Team with a plan by March 1, 2025 that will include the repayment of the \$50,000.00 re Emergency loan from Presbytery, and further, a plan for the repayment of their total debt over a 15 year term. Upon receipt of the debt retirement plan, Property and Finance will decide upon the level of financial involvement required going forward. The plan should also note that starting immediately and continuing until the \$50,000.00 reEmergency loan is repaid, Westside Presbyterian Church is to provide the Property & Finance team with monthly Income & Expense and Balance Sheet statements.

It was clarified that the decision of the level of financial involvement will be brought back as a recommendation to Presbytery (no power to issue being given).

The words “by March 1, 2025” (underlined above) were added by mutual consent.

The motion was **carried.**

10. It was **moved** by Gib McIlwrath/Vern Platt, that the report of the Finance and Property Team be adopted **Carried.**

It was moved by Dongwon Jung, duly seconded, that the court adjourn. Carried.

Amalgamation Information

Available Presbytery Support:

A Presbytery Team of Beth Anne Fisher, Peter Bush and Jeffrey Crawford were previously named to support the Amalgamation. The team remains active.

As of the date of amalgamation, we humbly suggest the following individuals could be a support to the amalgamated congregation at their request.

- Darrell Clarke - property lease
- Peter Bush - Trustee Board
- David Church - finance and CRA
- Jeffrey Crawford - governance and structure
- Beth Anne Fisher – consulting

Amalgamation Plan for Knox Preston and St. Andrew's Hespeler

December 3, 2024

Background

Like many churches, Knox Preston has been experiencing a decline in membership, financial strain and reduced vitality. Prior to 2020, various stewardship programs, outreach initiatives, Growing Young strategies, etc. were implemented.

In the spring of 2020, Church Helper was hired to assist with looking at options for the future. This included detailed surveys of church groups/members, community research, workshops, presentations, etc. This intensive work resulted in a report with recommendations. Many who were unable to fully participate due to pandemic health restrictions expressed concerns. Disagreement within the congregation prevented Knox Preston from making significant changes at this time.

In 2022, Knox Preston rented space to various groups/faith communities and sold the manse. Cooperative ministry discussions with two other Presbyterian churches also occurred, but did not result in a mutual path forward.

When pandemic restrictions loosened in 2023, Knox Preston did not rebound to pre-pandemic numbers. Session began to look at options (i.e. 2-point charge, amalgamation, part-time minister, etc.). Session requested Presbytery's assistance to get clarity on our options and 3 ministers were assigned. This resulted in the updating our membership list and the recommendation to cut the pastoral tie with our minister of 21 years at the end of January 2024.

Knox Preston's session was informed that the congregation was responsible to decide a path forward. Amidst a significant deficit budget, motions were passed at the May 2024 Session meeting to draft letters exploring shared ministry options with local Presbyterian and Preston Towne Centre churches and to begin lease negotiations to share the building with another church. In late May, the Interim Moderator team called an emergent session meeting and two options were given; amalgamation or dissolution with a decision required by the end of the meeting. The option to amalgamate was chosen.

At the June Waterloo-Wellington Presbytery meeting, the following motion was passed: *"A required joining with another Presbyterian Church before the end of 2024. This is not a traditional amalgamation. It would be Knox Preston joining an established worship community at another presbyterian church location & as part of the process their (Knox) assets (property & \$) would remain as part of the amalgamated church, minus a missional legacy in Preston."*

Given the tight deadline for an amalgamation, Knox Preston formed a Vision Team made up of Board & Session members. What could a non-traditional amalgamation look like with a Preston presence? Bi-weekly consultations and meetings took place determining our vision, values, what Christ is calling us to do, why we want to continue and who God is calling us to reach, etc.

Two members of the Interim Moderator team met with the Vision Team in September 2024 to further explain the June Presbytery decision. At this point, the present Interim Moderator team was dissolved. The General Presbyter remained as Interim Moderator along with a newly created part-time position (Pastoral Care Transition Provider).

Amalgamation Negotiations

Letters to local Presbyterian churches in the vicinity of Cambridge were sent out by the General Presbyter/Interim Moderator seeking churches interested in discussing a "non-traditional" amalgamation with Knox Preston. Six responded positively, but two ended being removed from the list due to changes in their situations.

Knox Preston communicated with the remaining four churches, sending a Knox Preston Amalgamation Profile. Three congregations expressed their interest in setting up in-person meetings. First meetings occurred with leadership from each of the remaining three churches, after which another congregation stepped back from conversations.

The remaining two churches were deemed as potentially suitable partners, and second meetings were booked. More in-depth discussions occurred regarding a “non-traditional amalgamation”, the Preston presence, shared values, sense of co-operation, and openness to looking at new ways of doing things. The Session and Board of Knox Preston all strongly endorsed the recommendation to join with St. Andrew’s Hespeler, feeling that there was a very good alignment between the congregations. The congregation of Knox Preston voted in favour of this amalgamation on November 3, 2024.

St. Andrew’s leadership also strongly endorsed this amalgamation and voted in favour of it at a congregational meeting on November 10, 2024.

During November, the leadership of both congregations worked tirelessly to complete the following amalgamation plan. Their respective Sessions voted in favour of the plan on December 3, 2024, and congregational votes approved the plan on December 8, 2024.

The Plan

Governance & Infrastructure

Pastoral Leadership: Rev. Scott McAndless will be the ordained leader of the amalgamated community.

Staff: All staff at St. Andrew’s Hespeler will continue in their roles in the amalgamated congregation – Family Ministry coordinator, Hope clothing volunteer coordinator, custodian, organist. There is currently a vacancy for an administrative staff person.

Infrastructure: The overall infrastructure of St. Andrew’s Hespeler will be adopted by the amalgamated congregation.

Session: The amalgamated session will be comprised of the full St. Andrew’s session and any current session members from Knox Preston who would like to continue as session members. Elders will serve on session for a six-year term, according to the Book of Forms 108-108.3, with the option to stand for re-election. The first election will take place in Fall 2026, at which time one third of session members from each of the former congregations will conclude their term of service.

Trustees: The amalgamated congregation will have four trustees, two each from St. Andrew’s and Knox Preston.

Board/Operations: The amalgamated congregation will have an Operations Committee comprised of St. Andrew’s current committee members and any current board members at Knox Preston who would like to continue to serve in the amalgamated congregation.

Missions/Outreach: All members of Knox Preston’s “Vision Team” (Session and Board members) are invited to join the amalgamated congregation’s Missions/Outreach Committee.

Name of the Amalgamated Congregation: The amalgamated congregation will remain St. Andrew’s Hespeler and will begin a congregational conversation regarding potential names for a regional/re-envisioned ministry.

Non-traditional Amalgamation: The amalgamated congregation is committed to innovation, missional action, and reimagining collaboration in ministry.

Assets

Knox Preston Finances: After fulfilling their remaining financial obligations, the assets of Knox Preston will be disbursed accordingly: 15% to community organizations, 10% to PCC ministries, 50% to the amalgamated congregation's general funds/discretionary use, and 25% to the amalgamated congregation with a designation to be used in support of the Preston Presence missional plan. The amalgamated congregation's Missions and Outreach Committee will draft the terms of this fund, including time frame for use and contingency for unused funds, before the 2026 AGM.

Knox Preston Building: The building belonging to St. Andrew's Hespeler will remain the primary location for the amalgamated congregation, with weekly Sunday worship at this location. For 2025, a portion of the Knox Preston building will remain in the care/for the use of the amalgamated congregation as they discern next steps for the Preston Presence missional plan. The remainder of the Knox Preston building will be leased to another church for a one year term (currently in negotiations, with an expected occupancy date of March 1, 2025).

Decisions regarding the longterm use, rental, redevelopment, or sale of the Knox Preston building will be made by the amalgamated congregation. A committee will be struck by May 2025 with the mandate of establishing a 5-year vision for the property. This committee will be comprised of equal numbers from (the former) Knox Preston and St. Andrew's Hespeler and will bring a first report to Session in September of 2025.

Archives & Worship Items

Knox Preston is currently undertaking a full inventory of their belongings, including worship paraphernalia, archival & historical artifacts, and other sundry items. Once this inventory is complete, they will prepare and propose the following:

1. Items to incorporate into the amalgamated congregation's worship life.
2. Items to be kept for use within the Preston Presence.
3. Items to be brought to the St. Andrew's Hespeler building for archival keeping.
4. Items to be used by the Knox Preston building tenant.
5. Items to be sold/disposed of elsewhere.

Report of the Property and Finance Team Regarding Westside Presbyterian Church

At the November Presbytery meeting, the Presbytery transacted the following business:

It was **moved** Gib McIlwrath/Vern Platt that the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington approve the application by Westside Presbyterian Church to the PCBC for a loan of up to \$368,602.92.

It was **moved** Scott McAndless/Peter Bush that the motion be referred to Property and Finance with power to Issue. **Carried.**

At a subsequent meeting, the Property and Finance Team met and approved the following motion:

Resolved that: Given that the Finance and Property has been given power to issue, the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington approves the loan request from Westside Presbyterian Church, Cambridge to the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation for a loan of \$368,602.92. The amount stipulated is to pay the contractor in full, thereby removing the lien.

This decision was communicated to PCBC by the Clerk of Presbytery.

Recommendation 8

That the report of the Property and Finance Team be received and considered

The P&F team met by zoom on November 27. The information that was available to date was discussed. The P&F team acknowledged receipt of an email from Westside Presbyterian Church requesting that our recommendation to assign a manager for the financial affairs of Westside be withdrawn. The motion is the answer to the request at this time. The emergency loan agreement requires a financial plan be in place and the following recommendation which was **Moved by D. McCaig/B. Street that by January 1, 2025 and carried**, is to be presented to Presbytery.

Recommendation 9

Westside Presbyterian Church will provide the Property & Finance Team with a plan that will include the repayment of the \$50,000.00 re Emergency loan from Presbytery, and further, a plan for the repayment of their total debt over a 15 year term. Upon receipt of the debt retirement plan, Property and Finance will decide upon the level of financial involvement required going forward. The plan should also note that starting immediately and continuing until the \$50,000.00 reEmergency loan is repaid, Westside Presbyterian Church is to provide the Property & Finance team with monthly Income & Expense and Balance Sheet statements.

Three members of the F&P team attended a lunch meeting after the service on Nov.10. It was a kick of lunch for a fund raiser called “Westside Grows Commitment”. The commitment forms are to be returned by Dec. 15

The team was advised that Westside has applied to PCBC for a loan and a meeting was to occur with PCBC and Westside soon. The P&F team has not yet received a copy of Westside’s loan application to the PCBC.

Westside has a congregational meeting called for Sunday December 8, 2024 following the service. They will be updating the loan request to PCBC amount to \$368,602 . 92. (The previous amount was \$300,000. and the increase is an amount suggested by PCBC so a lean can be removed easier by their lawyers). The presentation to the congregation is to include up to date financial reports and include the up to date total indebtedness.

The Presbytery treasurers Westside reports provide the total indebtedness. (separate document).

Recommendation 10

That the report of the Finance and Property Team be adopted