



## How Many Trees in the Forest?

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Calling all historians! In the process of shipping records for archiving at the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS), I came across a set of Ladies Guild organizational records from 1889. Delightful! Handwritten minutes in beautiful script. Here's my curiosity. The records relate to All Saints Chapel, with the Ladies Guild organized "in aid of the Rector." I asked PHS if we had a Presbyterian congregation with that name in the late 1880's, but they couldn't find one. Let me know if you can help unravel this mystery!

In these minutes, we see carefully documented intentions. Membership, dues, and officers were all discussed. Then, so there would be no confusion, this motion was made and carried: "that the bill of fare for each and every tea be restricted to bread, butter, meat, relishes, tea, coffee, cream, sugar, and cake; and that any deviation from this rule be visited with a fine of \$1.00 from the chairman of the committee giving the tea at which the rule is broken." At the next meeting, the rule was amended to substitute "pickles" in place of "relishes." We could, uncharitably, assume this was a rule created by a hostess who had very definite opinions about what made for a good tea. I suspect, however, that this rule was needed to ensure one group of ladies didn't go overboard, putting others to shame for a less extravagant fare. Whatever the motivation, the Ladies Guild certainly paid attention to the details.

Here's where my reference to forests and trees comes in. In some spaces, we long for the vista – the vantage point that lets us see for miles across the forest. The vision can take our breath away as we experience the grandeur of what lies before us.

Other times, we want to wander through the trees, smelling the aroma and picking pinecones from the forest floor. We listen as the needles crunch under our feet. Sometimes we just pause, trying to take in the myriad sensations.

The forest and the trees. Both have something to offer. Both are needed.

In the work of your Merger Coordination Task Group, we are imagining our combined Kendall-Boise future. It requires us both to look at the forest and to wander through the trees. On the one hand, we are starting the process of discerning our vision for this new presbytery. What vision will take our breath away as we contemplate the opportunity the Spirit has set in front of us? We imagine our work in four areas: relational, ecclesiastical, financial, and legal. We set high-level deadlines to complete these aspects of our merger by January 1, 2026.

On the other hand, we also began making a checklist of the detailed tasks needed to accomplish these goals. Pages and pages of to-do lists that consider bank accounts and mailing addresses and bylaws. We plan to touch, test, and walk through the trees of a merger, knowing that we will need to take unplanned paths from time to time. (Put differently, we might need to substitute "pickles" for "relishes".)

Cathy Chisholm (Kendall's Transitional Presbyter/Stated Clerk) is a wonderful visionary, who keeps her eye on the forest. I'm eager to collect pinecones. Both are gifts and both are needed. Your other Merger Coordination Task Group members bring other gifts and experiences. We are excited to imagine where God might be calling us collectively, knowing that together we are better. Have a blessed Thanksgiving!