

Vision Team Bios

Part 1

Sometimes it is easy to think of the presbytery as a bureaucratic juggernaut. However, the presbytery is made up of people. The Vision Team wants to introduce you to some of those people who answered the call to serve as members of the Vision Team. These are just some of the people helping to co-create this new thing we are doing as the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey.

The **Rev. Daniel Martian** (Dan) began his pastorate in 1989. Dan has served four parishes during his 32 years of ministry. He has been the pastor at the Livingston church for over 16 years. In addition to his parish responsibilities, Dan currently serves as the president of the Livingston Interfaith Clergy Association, producer and host of Clergy Corner, a local interfaith TV show, and one of five chaplains for the Livingston Police Department. Dan has been a co-moderator in the former Newark Presbytery, moderator for CoM, and has been certified as a mediator with skills in conflict management. For the past five years, Dan has been enrolled at the Academy of Clinically Applied Psychoanalyst where he is being trained to be a psychotherapist.

In his spare time, Dan enjoys swimming, walking, playing guitar, going to Broadway shows, traveling, and dabbling in photography. He enjoys biking (the pedal kind), in which he finds the bike paths down the shore a joy.

Debbie Murphy is a retired teacher who enjoyed teaching in elementary public schools and in a private company, “The Language Training Institute” for many years. Her faith journey started at a young age with her parents and grandparents who were very active in their Presbyterian church in western PA. She participated in youth groups which involved doing mission projects and attended several Presbyterian summer camps as well.

Debbie attended the University of Vermont and got her degree in education. She went on to get an MBA at Montclair State University. She taught in the elementary schools in Englewood and then went on to work for the Language Training Institute teaching English skills to employees at Sony, Merck, etc. Debbie was a camp counselor for many summers in the Bronx with intercity children from low income neighborhoods. She was challenged and inspired working with these children and felt a need to help those who were disadvantaged.

Highlands Presbyterian Church in Allendale is where Debbie became a member after college and remains a member there today. Her children attended Sunday School at this church and Debbie became very involved in her church community. She taught Sunday School, was a mentor to confirmands, served on the session multiple times, Chair of the Deacons, Bible Study, organized Christmas pageants, etc. All of these activities strengthened and broadened her faith and encouraged different ways of worshiping and serving. She became involved in Paterson Habitat for Humanity through a church volunteer program and

continues to participate in builds and serve on their Board. Debbie enjoyed serving on the COM for 6 years, getting to know other Teaching Elders and church communities.

Debbie has always felt a calling to help others and give back to those less fortunate. Her teaching background has been very useful to that end. She relies on God's direction through prayer and quiet times hiking, kayaking and in nature.

Debbie lives in Mahwah and enjoys sports – especially golf and hiking. She loves to travel and experience different cultures and sights. Debbie has 4 married adult children. Her greatest joy right now are her six grandchildren!!

Gayle W. Griffin is a member of Roseville Presbyterian Church, Newark, New Jersey, and is an Elder there. Prior to moving to New Jersey, she was a member of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, for 19 years. There, she was a Deacon for 7 years, including 5 years as Moderator of the Deacon Board, and 10 years as an Elder. She worked as a Sunday School Teacher, and served as a member of the Planning Team for the Pittsburgh Presbytery to develop its annual budget for the 50 churches and establish budget priorities for the Presbytery. She also served as secretary of the church's non-profit foundation, Schenley Heights Community Development Corporation.

At Roseville, I am an elder, teach the adult women's Sunday School Class, the Youth Confirmation Classes, and chair the Worship and Music Committee. I serve on the Roseville Church non-profit foundation, Roseville Outreach Community Corporation as its grant writer. I have served for 6 years on the Human Resources Committee [Personnel] for the Newark Presbytery. I am also a lay preacher and commissioned to give Communion.

In her professional life, Dr. Griffin is retired and has served as an educator in all levels of school operations: teacher, supervisor, principal, and assistant superintendent. I bring the ability to work with diverse district staff, school leaders, and teachers through my work as a principal and central officer administrator. She has been an Executive School Performance Coach and served as Executive Director of the NJ Department of Education's Regional Achievement Center in Essex and Hudson County where I worked with twelve (12) district superintendents and district staff. I established positive and productive working relationships in each district and enjoyed working with colleagues who welcomed the support they received to turn around school achievement for their most vulnerable students. I am currently on the Seton Hall University, Urban School Transformation faculty serving as an educational consultant in school districts in New Jersey.

I have served on a number of boards in Pittsburgh including the UNITED WAY Agency Review Committee, Field of Service V, 1994 – 2000; annually reviewing member agencies operations and budget allocations. In Newark, I served on the Newark Public Library Board of Trustees leading its Personnel committee for 14 years 2000-2014. I served as a member of the Council of Great City Schools Review and Evaluation Committee to review operations and instructional

practices in Cleveland, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Minnesota. I am currently serving on the board of La Casa de Don Pedro for the past 5 years.

I have received many professional honors and awards, The accomplishment of which I am most proud is that I was co-founder of the I HAVE A DREAM® Foundation of Pittsburgh, PA – we worked in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University and corporate leaders, from 1993-2002 to adopt a class of 95 students at the school where I was principal with promised college scholarships and support through high school graduation; 90% of the students graduated high school [the graduation rate for that community was 65%] and we provided over one million dollars of scholarships and support through college graduation for 45 of them.

I am a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who at the age of seventeen moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to attend college. She graduated from Chatham College where she received her B.A. degree and the University of Pittsburgh where she received her M.Ed. and Ph.D. She met and married her husband who was a native of western Pennsylvania. She is a widow and the mother of one daughter, Dr. FloJaune Griffin-Cofer, an epidemiologist, who lives in Sacramento, CA. Dr. Griffin-Cofer has been on the battlefield of the COVID fight in the state of California.

More importantly, though, she is a born again Christian. Mrs. Griffin believes, “A woman makes her plans, but the Lord orders her steps.” Through prayer, this proverb has guided her daily actions throughout her life.

Kirk Woodward, CLP, is pastor of Fewsmith Memorial Presbyterian Church in Belleville, NJ, and co-pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church in East Orange, NJ. He is currently vice moderator of the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey and serves on the Vision Team and the Commission on Ministry as well. He will be co-moderator in 2022-2023. He was ordained a Ruling Elder at the Presbyterian Church of Upper Montclair, serving three terms on its session, and is now a member of Central Presbyterian Church in Montclair. He earned a Certificate in Pastoral Administration from the School of Theology of the University of Dubuque, and has preached throughout the Presbytery of Newark for the past thirty years.

He was born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, where he and his family attended Highland Presbyterian Church. He majored in English at Washington and Lee University and served in the United States Army before moving to New York City to work in theater and music. He worked for Time Warner Inc. and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, earning along the way an MBA degree from the University of Phoenix. He and his late wife Pat are the parents of three children, Erin, Heather, and Craig. In theater he has directed, acted, and taught, and is the author of over thirty produced plays. He is a pianist and songwriter and musical director for both the Foggy Minded Boys and the Foggettes, whose mission is to bring free entertainment to not for profit organizations. He is learning to play the trombone.

Skip Winter, born and bred in New Jersey within the Presbyterian tradition, is a Ruling Elder, baptized at the former Third Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth, guided in faith and mission under the tutelage of the late Rev. Elmer Talcott at the Community Presbyterian Church in

Mountainside, educated at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pa., majoring in history, currently a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Cranford, and at the same time having served in many different capacities within the Presbytery of Elizabeth and now on the Vision Team of the Presbytery of Northeast NJ.

Switching to a first-person dialogue, faith, service, and spiritual growth have always been important aspects of my life. At First Presbyterian in Cranford, I have been afforded the opportunity to grow my own personal faith, serve others in mission and develop skills that I never knew existed within me.

Serving as President of the Board of Deacons for a year, three terms on Session, and as Clerk of Session for eight years, provided me with the spiritual, administrative, and personal growth to do and learn more and continue to grow in the faith. My journey at Cranford led me to become involved with the Presbytery of Elizabeth, also serving as an Elder Commissioner to the General Assembly in 2010, 2018 and 2020.

Yet the light truly went off in 2006 when I made my first mission trip to Brazil, followed by a trip to Haiti in 2010 after the earthquake, and mission trips to Nicaragua over the past ten years. Mission and social justice work has become the focus of my church life and personal life, serving on the Service and Mission Team at First Presbyterian, being a co-coordinator of the Cranford Elmora Soup Kitchen, leading the FISH homeless program @FPC, assisting with Operation Warmheart, a program of the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless and numerous other community activities. Working with the Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council has provided me with the opportunity to learn and work with leaders of the interfaith community in Union County and throughout the state.

I have been honored to call Cranford my home for the past 44 years and have shared the experience with my wife Judy, a retired public-school educator who volunteers for Literacy Volunteers of America. We are proud parents of two sons, along with their spouses and our two grandsons.