



The Synod of the Covenant
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Minutes of the Synod Assembly
May 3, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.
Via Zoom

MEETING ORIENTATION: An orientation to meeting technology/protocols was provided by Heather Johnston, Office Manager, just prior to the meeting.

ROLL AND QUORUM: Moderator, Rev. Deborah Uchtman (Cincinnati), called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m. in prayer. A quorum was present. (The roll is attached). Rev. Uchtman welcomed guests, visitors, and corresponding members.

APPROVAL OF THE DOCKET: A motion prevailed to approve the docket.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA AND CLERK'S REPORT: A motion prevailed to approve the Consent Agenda and the Clerk's Report which included the following items:

Synod of the Covenant
Assembly Meeting
Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report
May 3, 2022

1. **To seat** as corresponding members the following executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders and stated clerks in attendance at this meeting: Rev. Erwin Goedicke (Cincinnati), CRE Charon Barconey (Detroit), Rev. Cathy Ulrich (Eastminster), Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan), Elder Kay Morrill (Mackinac).
2. **To excuse** the following commissioners at their request: Jim Bennett (RE-Eastminster), Jonathan Carlisle (TE-Scioto Valley), and Michael March (TE-Mackinac).
3. **To note as absent** the following commissioners: Tom James (TE-Maumee Valley), Aaron Meadows (TE-Eastminster).
4. **To seat** as corresponding members guest teaching elders and ruling elders from congregations within the Synod of the Covenant in attendance at this meeting.
5. **To approve** the Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant of February 1, 2021.
6. **To receive** the following 2021 Annual Report from the Synod of the Covenant Scholarship and Grants Team.

Annual Report for 2021 Synod of the Covenant Grants Committee

In 2021, the Synod's Grant Committee continued to refine its grant-awarding process for higher education and church/parachurch grants. In alignment with the Synod's mission to reflect the ministry of the Matthew 25 Initiative, each of these award categories focused on

providing grants that helped students, churches or ministries thrive, address structural racism, and/or engage issues of poverty. Awards totaled \$88,250. The Committee also developed and implemented reporting procedures for 2020 grants with the goal of sharing the good news that was generated from these awards in sharing the gospel.

Higher Education for Christian Leaders

For 2021, the Grant Committee approved 56 higher education awards totaling \$38,250. The awardees demonstrated their ability to provide Christian leadership in conjunction with the Matthew 25 aims. Four students received awards toward associate degrees, forty-four for bachelor's degrees, and eight for master of divinity degrees. Students represented ten of the Synod's presbyteries.¹ Twenty-seven students (48%) were BIPOC students. A majority of the students received an award for the first time (n=33/59%), with two students (4%) receiving an award for the fourth year. Videos of a portion of the awardees expressing their gratitude were shown to their home presbyteries.

Church/Parachurch Matthew 25 Grants

During 2021, the Grant Committee approved eleven Matthew 25 awards to eight churches, one camp, one college, and a consortium of Korean churches totaling \$50,000. All awards were first-time recipients, representing five presbyteries.² With the majority of the grants addressing more than one of the identified aims, nine of the grants addressed congregational vitality; six grants included a focus on dismantling structural racism, and seven aimed at eliminating poverty. With twenty-two applications to review, the Synod is blessed with an abundance of creativity, innovation, and ministry potential. In 2022, the Committee hopes to offer video instruction and coaching to help with application completion.

2020 Covenant and Racial Ethnic Grants

Throughout 2021, the Grants Committee communicated with the thirteen 2020 recipients (eight New Covenant Grants and five Racial Ethnic Grants), seeking follow-up at six- and twelve-months post-award reports. With submissions continuing to be received, a portion of the grants were successfully completed, while many sought extensions due to the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic. The goal for 2022 is to share the resulting stories of transformation and revitalization.

I am grateful for the dedication of the committee members who worked diligently and prayerfully, participating in fulfilling the mission of the Synod through this generous budget. Committee members included Teaching Elders Amy Duikers, Skip Jackson, and Fran Lane Lawrence; Ruling Elders Lisa Allgood, Jackie Humphreys, and Georgia McCall. Teaching Elder Chip Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, served ex-officio and provided thoughtful leadership. This group represented leadership at the church, presbytery, and synod levels.

Respectfully submitted, Betty Angelini, Teaching Elder, Chairperson

7. **To receive** the following information item: the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, on behalf of the Synod of the Covenant Board of Trustees, will be working with presbytery leaders to identify ruling elders and teaching elders from member presbyteries that can serve on a Synod Investment Task Force and on a Synod

Audit/Review Task Force. The term is one year, or until the Synod has adopted by-laws with respect to these responsibilities, whichever comes first. (Members are eligible to continue to serve.) Both task forces will be under the leadership of the Synod of the Covenant Board of Trustees, and include the Interim Synod Executive as an ex officio member with voice but no vote.

8. **To receive** the following Report of the Governance Committee:

**Synod of the Covenant
Governance Committee Report
May 3, 2022**

The Governance Committee continues to meet regularly to work on Bylaws and Policies for the Synod of the Covenant. There are no actions to report to the Synod at this time.

Respectfully Submitted, Andy Thorburn

9. **To receive** the following Report of the Budget and Finance Committee/Trustees regarding actions taken on behalf of the Synod (CA-3 fuller report in the Assembly Papers):

1. A motion prevailed to approve the following people as signatories for the PILP Money Market Account: Frank L. Walburg, President (Muskingum Valley) and Martha R. Blenman, Treasurer (Detroit), until policy is made by the SOC
2. A motion prevailed to give authority to the Treasurer, Martha R. Blenman (Detroit) to maintain the Chase accounts at or below \$250,000, transferring (or restoring to that limit) the balances through the PILP Money Market Mission Account.
3. A motion prevailed to approve the Treasurer, Martha R. Blenman (Detroit) and Corporate President, Frank Walburg (Muskingum Valley) as points of contact to engage DeMarco & Associates (our CPA firm) to sort out federal, state, and local tax withholding issues, credit card distribution and accounting issues, bank reconciliations for Chase Bank, and underlying deficient issues discovered during this process.
4. A motion prevailed to authorize the Treasurer to give DeMarco & Associates access to the Synod's Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS) online account to review federal tax withholding payments.
5. A motion prevailed to authorize the Corporate President, Frank Walburg (Muskingum Valley), to give DeMarco & Associates Powers of Attorney to review Synod's tax withholding payments to the federal government, and others as may be necessary.
6. Approvals related to engagement letter with Skillman Group PLC. The approved engagement letter is provided in the Assembly Papers and Frank Walburg, President, will provide verbal report about this item of business.
7. A motion prevailed to designate the Treasurer, currently Martha Blenman (Detroit), the Trustee President, currently Frank Walburg (Muskingum Valley), Trustee Vice-Chair, currently Ted Fines (Mackinac), and Trustee Clerk, currently Joe Salvato (Cincinnati), as signers on the Synod of the Covenant Accounts with the

- Presbyterian Foundation (New Covenant Funds and New Covenant Trust Fund), and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, with two signers required.
8. A motion prevailed to authorize Marth Blenman (Detroit), Treasurer, to complete and sign the attached “Certification Regarding Beneficial Owners of Legal Entity Customers” for as the Control Person. (This action is required by the Patriot Act).

9. **To receive** the Report of the Stated Clerk for today as follows:

**Report of the Stated Clerk
Fran Lane-Lawrence
February 1, 2022**

1. **REVIEWS OF 2020 AND 2021 PRESBYTERY MINUTES:** Reviews of the 2020 and 2021 Presbytery Minutes are ongoing. A report will be presented at the October Synod Assembly.

2. **REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSIONS**

**Synod of the Covenant
Report of the Administrative Commission to the Presbytery of Detroit
May 3, 2022**

The Synod of the Covenant’s Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit (SOC Detroit AC) has been meeting since mid-February, 2022.

Members are Carmen Cox Harwell (TE, Western Reserve), Chair; Jeanne Gay (TE, Maumee Valley), Clerk; Andrew Pomerville (TE, Lake Huron); Betsy Rees (RE, Mackinac); and Robert Sullivan (RE, Cincinnati).

The Commission has been gathering and studying documentation and looks forward to interviewing presbytery members and staff in the next few weeks.

Respectfully submitted, Jeanne Gay

3. **APPEAL PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN (PLM) V NORTH KENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (NKPC):** The Complaint and Request for Stay of Enforcement were filed by North Kent Presbyterian Church, Rockford, MI, with the Synod of the Covenant Permanent Judicial Commission (SPJC) on October 12, 2020. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan provided an answer to the Session filings on November 11, 2020. On December 22, 2020, six members of the SPJC granted a stay of enforcement of the PLM’s September action to create the AC. The SPJC rendered a Decision on October 30, 2021. The Presbytery of Lake Michigan filed an Appeal and a Request for a Stay of Enforcement with the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) on November 24, 2021. The GAPJC granted a Stay of Enforcement to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan on November

30, 2021. The Hearing on the Appeal before the GAPJC was held on April 1, 2022. The GAPJC rendered its Decision in writing on April 3, 2022. A copy of the complete Decision of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission can be found in the Synod Papers for the Assembly Meeting of May 3, 2022. The complete Decision of the GAPJC will be entered into the Minutes of May 3, 2022. A summary of the Decision is as follows:

Order

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Covenant is reversed, and this matter is concluded.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Clerk of the Session of North Kent Presbyterian Church report this Decision to the Session at the first meeting after receipt, that the Session enter the full Decision upon its minute, and that an excerpt from those minutes showing entry of the Decision be sent to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan report this Decision to the Presbytery at the first meeting after receipt, that the Presbytery of Lake Michigan enter the full Decision upon its minutes, and that an excerpt from those minutes showing entry of the Decision be sent to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Covenant report this Decision to the Synod of the Covenant at the first meeting after receipt, that the Synod of the Covenant enter the full Decision upon its minutes, and that an excerpt from those minutes showing entry of the Decision be sent to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

4. LEADERWISE TRAINING for 2022:

- *Journey Groups*, meet monthly March through November – meeting times to be set by each group, designed for Pastors/CREs in any ministry. The deadline for registration is February 15, 2022. The cost per participant is \$100; the remaining costs are paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.
- *Adaptive Leadership Workshops and Practicum*, August 1, September 1, October 6, November 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day. The deadline for registration is July 23, 2022. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and the Presbyteries.
- *Not Just Sundays*, Coming September 2022. Registration deadline to be announced. The cost is fully paid by the Synod.

5. LEADERWISE BOUNDARY AND ETHICS TRAINING for 2022:

- *Introduction to Boundaries*, November 16-17, 2022, from 6:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

The deadline for Registration is November 7 for November. Participants must be present for all 5 hours of training to receive credit. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.

- *Healthy Church Boundaries*, October 4-5, 2022, from 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

For teaching elders, ruling elders, and members of congregations. The deadline to register is September 23, 2022. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.

6. **MEETINGS OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY:** The dates for Synod Assemblies in 2022 and 2023 are as follows:

1. Friday-Saturday, October 21-22 Retreat and Annual Meeting – Maumee Bay Lodge
2. Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
3. Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
4. Friday – Saturday, October 20-21, 2023 Retreat and Annual Meeting - TBD

Executive and General Presbyters, Stated Clerks and any other interested parties are welcome to attend.

THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA AND REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

WORSHIP:

Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit), Vice Moderator led the Assembly in a time of worship. Elder Jim Bennett (Eastminster) read Isaiah 43:14-21. Reflections on the Scripture passage were offered by Bryce Wiebe (Eastminster), Associate for Vital Congregations, Rev. Charlotte Ellison (Lake Michigan), and Elder Ted Fines (Mackinac). Rev. Sandy Seaton Todd (Western Reserve) led the closing prayer.

INNOVATIVE MINISTRY:

Assembly members heard about three innovative ministries happening within the Synod of the Covenant and had an opportunity to engage in panel discussions with presenters, Li Dolly Dong (Muskingum Valley) – New Worshiping Community Leader for Chinese Immigrant Community in Mansfield, OH, Paula Larson (Mackinac) – Boyne City First Presbyterian Community Sunday’s Outreach to Community, and Bethany Peerbolte (Detroit) - TicToc Pastor.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD EXECUTIVE: The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, presented his report which included information about various LeaderWise Boundary Training that will be offered in the near future; Higher Education Scholarships applications due May 15, 2022; Matthew 25 Grant applications will be available, applications are due in October; Compass Coaching available to presbyteries; upcoming Synod Preaching Seminars, and LeaderWise Adaptive Leadership Cohort. Rev. Hardwick directed members to the Report of the General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of the Covenant.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley) presented the following report on behalf of the Nominations Committee.

The Committee on Nominations met on March 7, 2022, and on April 14, 2022. Commissioned Ruling Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley) served as Moderator of the Committee on Nominations. The Committee worked to identify individuals to nominate for the following committees: Finance, Governance, Nominations, and the Permanent Judicial Committee. Candidates were contacted for consideration. Each is an excellent candidate and fully qualified. The Committee has also identified an individual to serve as State Clerk of the Synod for a three-year term beginning in January 2023. The Committee on Nominations recommends to the Synod of the Covenant Assembly that the following persons be placed in nomination as candidates for election to the named positions and committees:

The following individuals were placed in nomination to the respective position and class. **A motion prevailed** to close nominations from the floor. **A motion prevailed** to elect the following members to the respective positions and classes:

Stated Clerk of the Synod three-year term beginning January 1, 2023
Fran Lane-Lawrence

Synod Permanent Judicial Committee
Elder Dale Riley (Eastminster), Class of 2024

Synod Commissioner (Class of 2024) --Finance Committee
Elder Garrett Mostowski (Detroit)

Synod Commissioner (Class of 2024) --Governance Committee
Elder Jon Carlisle (Scioto Valley)

Synod Commissioner (Class of 2024) --Nominating Committee
Elder Aaron Meadows (Eastminster)

A motion prevailed to elect Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan) as stated clerk for the Synod of the Covenant (as opposed to interim stated clerk) for the remainder of 2022 effective May 3, 2022.

The Committee also reports that Executive Presbyter Matt Meinke of Maumee Valley Presbytery will serve on the Synod's Grants Team, that General Presbyter Matt Skolnik of Muskingum Valley Presbytery will serve ex officio on the Synod's Nominations Committee, and that Ruling Elder Adrienne Adams, Teaching Elder Joon Lee, and Teaching Elder Charles Tinsley will serve as the Steering Committee for the proposed Organizer of Synod Communities of Color position.

PCUSA BOARD OF PENSIONS: The Rev. Luke Choi, Church Consultant for the Synod of the Covenant, provided information about changes in benefits offered by the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) related to Pastor's Choice, Pastor's Participation, CREDO, and Employee Assistant Programs.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Elder Martha Blenman (Detroit) provided the following report:

Synod of the Covenant
Treasurer's Report
May 3, 2022

The following summarizes the activities of the Treasurer through March 31, 2022. This report's goal is to inform transparently the financial activities of the Synod. Additionally, it seeks to explain the sources and uses of the Synod's income.

Please note this is an operational summary of activities rather than a traditional financial statement presentation. There is much transition occurring in the accounting processes of the Synod. These changes when complete will allow for a more clear and timely explanation of the financial operations and facilitate more understanding. See #6 below for a discussion of current income and expense estimates.

1. Payroll function: Transferred as of January 2022 to new service (DCS, Inc).
2. Monthly bookkeeping function: Transfer to external service(Skillman, PLC) in process, see Trustee Report.
3. Completion of 2021 trial balance transferred to external accountant for resolution of multiple challenges.
4. 2021 Annual Review by DeMarco & Associates, CPA is not started. Pending resolution of #3 above.
5. Investment accounts signers updated.
 - a. New Covenant balance (Synod Funds): \$3,812,590.
 - b. New Covenant balance: Campus Ministry (restricted funds) \$1,410,288.
 - c. New Covenant Trust balance (Synod Funds): \$384,339.
 - d. PILP balances (Synod funds): Mission Money Market \$1,073,599. There are two time deposits:\$366,290.

6a. Adjusted SOC income budget: \$115,436. Adjusted actual SOC income: \$111,013. See table below:

\$132,602 per 2022 budget
(\$17,166) restricted pass-through funds: campus ministry
\$115,436 adjusted 2022 budget total as of 3.31.22

\$188,411 unadjusted SOC income
(\$17,166) restricted pass-through funds
\$171,245
(\$60,232) estimated income for 2021 received in 2022*
\$111,013 estimated income through 3.31.2022

*Pending any adjustments from the 2021 Review by DeMarco & Associates, see #3 above.

b.\$34,192 included in total income was drawn from New Covenant Funds to support Synod operations.\$5,166 also was drawn from New Covenant Trust for Synod operations. These draws are done quarterly. Both draws reflect current budget items. Cash flow is adequate to support Synod operations.

c. Expenses are in line with budget.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Elder Frank Walburg (Detroit), presented the following report on behalf of the Finance Committee. The engagement letter for the bookkeeping firm, Skillman, was provided as information to the Synod Assembly. The approximate annual cost of Skillman's services will be \$6700, significantly less than the \$30,000 approved for this expenditure. Appropriate financial records are in the process of being shared with Skillman.

The Finance Committee will be distributing information to committee moderators in preparation for the Proposed 2023 Budget for the Synod of the Covenant. The Finance Committee will present the proposed budget for 2023 at the Synod Assembly in October 2022.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: Rev. Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley), on behalf of the Human Resources Committee, recommended that the Synod approve the Position Description for the *Synod of the Covenant Organizer of Synod Communities of Color*. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the position description.

Rev. Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley), on behalf of the Human Resources Committee, recommended that the Synod approve the Position Description for Executive for the Synod of the Covenant. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the position description.

The Committee performed the annual review for the Interim Executive of the Synod, Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick. There were many positive comments received, but no negative feedback. The Committee recommends to the Synod of the Covenant that Rev. Hardwick be called as the permanent Synod Executive. Rev. Hardwick left the room during the discussion and vote. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the recommendation. The Assembly welcomed the newly elected Synod Executive, Rev. Hardwick as he returned to the room.

The position description for the *Synod of the Covenant Stated Clerk* was revised and approved by the Human Resources Committee. The only change made was to remove the word *interim*. **A motion prevailed** to elect Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan) as stated clerk for the Synod of the Covenant (as opposed to interim stated clerk) for the remainder of 2022.

STATED CLERK ANNOUNCEMENT: The Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence read the Decision and Order of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in Remedial Case #225-07, Presbytery of Lake Michigan v. North Kent Presbyterian Church, dated April 3, 2022. The full text of the Decision and Order will be attached to the minutes of the Synod Assembly of May 3, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT AND PRAYER: Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit) led the Assembly in a time of prayer. **A motion prevailed** to adjourn at 6:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence
Interim Stated Clerk

THIS ENDS THE MINUTES OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY OF MAY 3, 2022

**The Next Synod Assembly Retreat and Annual Meeting is on
October 21-22, 2022
At Maumee Bay Lodge in Oregon, Ohio**



The Synod of the Covenant
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)