



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Synod of the Covenant Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report May 7, 2024

1. **SEATING OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS: To seat** as corresponding members executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders, stated clerks, and presbytery staff in attendance at this meeting, and to seat as corresponding members and guests teaching elders and ruling elders from congregations within the Synod of the Covenant in attendance at this meeting.
2. **EXCUSE COMMISSIONERS: To excuse** the following commissioners at their request and to add those who will continue to request an excused absence up to the actual meeting.
3. **APPROVAL OF ASSEMBLY MINUTES: To approve** the Synod of the Covenant Minutes of the Assembly of January 30, 2024. (Online only)
4. **AMENDMENT TO THE SYNOD OF THE COVENANT BYLAWS: To approve the following proposed amendment: To add 40:80** In order to fulfill the principles of participation and representation, the Synod shall elect three ruling elders and three teaching elders as at-large members as follows: two people of African descent, two people of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, and 2 people from marginalized communities within the bounds of the Synod (member of another racialized identity, immigrants, those whose first language is not English). Two of those elected will be assigned to serve on the Leadership Committee, and the other four will be assigned, one each, to one of the other standing committees by the Nominating Committee.
 - A. Each at-large member shall be elected to serve terms of three years and may be eligible for election. However, no at-large members shall serve more than six consecutive years, and any at-large member who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election as an at-large member for at least one year.
 - B. At-large members will have voice and vote on the committees to which they are assigned, as well as voice and vote at Synod Assemblies.
 - C. Each at-large member shall be a ruling elder or a teaching elder.
 - D. Each at-large member shall be a member of a presbytery or congregation within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant.
 - E. No more than one (1) at-large member from each presbytery can serve simultaneously.

Rationale: At the Annual Assembly in October 2023, Commissioners approved the following motion: To increase the number of Synod Commissioners by six. The composition of those six will be designated as follows: two Commissioners of African descent, two commissioners of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, and 2 Commissioners from

marginalized communities within the bounds of the Synod (member of another racialized identity, immigrants, those whose first language is not English). Two of these commissioners will serve on the Leadership Committee, and the other four will be assigned, one each, to other standing committees.

Constitutional Support: F-1.0403, G-3.0103, G-3.0401

NOTE: Per PCUSA Constitution, changes in bylaws or policies that alter the composition of synod membership must be approved by presbyteries that comprise the synod. If this amendment to the bylaws is approved, it will be forwarded to presbyteries within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant for ratification. The results of those votes will be provided in the clerk's report at the Synod Assembly in October 2024.

5. **To receive the REPORT OF THE CRE COORDINATOR:** The CRE Coordinator has met with representatives and teams from Eastminster Detroit and Western Reserve Presbytery. The Coordinator has also met with the CRE support program leaders from Union Seminary and the Whitworth Office of Church Engagement, who are developing training modules for CREs. Notes and debriefs from these meetings have been used to develop a draft of best practices. The CRE Coordinator has also received individual contacts from CREs serving within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant.

The CRE Coordinator is scheduling meetings with other Presbytery leaders and will soon launch a webpage on the Synod website to begin sharing findings, best practices, and resources for presbyteries. The main issue that continues to appear from both Presbyteries and CREs is support. CREs that have contacted the CRE Coordinator have expressed a lack of support, lack of respect from colleagues, and feeling isolated from their presbytery. Presbytery leaders find it difficult to provide supervision of CREs by Ministers for Word and Sacrament as required by the Book of Order. The CRE Coordinator will continue to develop and provide support for training; however, the support of CREs will need to be addressed. The CRE Coordinator will begin to schedule monthly virtual gatherings of CREs for support and develop ways the Synod can support Presbyteries in their supervision of CREs. The CRE Coordinator will be contacting Presbyteries for contact information of CREs serving in their bounds.

6. **To receive the REPORT OF THE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS TEAM:**

**Report of the Grants and Scholarships Team
To the Synod Assembly
May 7, 2023**

Since the beginning of 2024, the Synod Grants and Scholarships Committee has set a goal to evaluate our current Scholarships process and learn about the history of how scholarships have been given in the synod over the past several decades. We began by inviting Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence to share with us the history of the synod's scholarships. Since the early 2000s, we have seen a shift from higher education scholarships administered by CECA (Committee on Ethnic Church Affairs) and directed toward students from our BIPOC churches, to the addition

of a small scholarship ministry for higher education in general, and then finally to one higher education scholarship program. This single scholarship is now administered by MWSs and Ruling Elders of varying races from across the synod and offered to students committed to the principles of Matthew 25, prioritizing those from the BIPOC community and those with financial need. While much of this major transition happened during the synod's work with an Administrative Commission and the subsequent changes in leadership, it became clear to the current committee members that there was need of and possibility for some repair, particularly in our synod's goal to be actively anti-racist in its practice. We followed up our conversation with Fran with a conversation with Adrienne Adams, gaining more knowledge of CECA's scholarship process, and discussing what best practices to benefit our BIPOC students might look like now. Finally, we received a report from Heather Johnston that included a breakdown of both the history of scholarship changes and how much money has been spent on scholarships each year categorized by race and ethnicity for the sake of comparison. Again, while a significant portion of the money synod gives toward higher education scholarships is given each year to BIPOC students, the committee agrees that the goal should be to return to having scholarships administered by members of our BIPOC community for our BIPOC students.

As our committee came to that conclusion, we also knew we did not want to hand over the responsibility for scholarships this year with no one and no plan in place to take the reins. To that end, we have made some changes for our process this year as a step toward our end goal. Upon the recommendation of Adrienne Adams, we are pushing the deadline for applications until September 1, with the goal of benefiting those who apply to school later for different reasons. Students may apply now until that date. Decisions on awards will be made by September 30 and announced soon after. We will contact the racial ethnic churches and affiliated campus ministries in each presbytery, ensuring that they are aware of the scholarship and encouraging them to help their eligible students apply. We have expanded our eligibility beyond membership in one of the churches in our synod to include engagement in the ministry of those churches or one of the affiliated campus ministries within our bounds. This year, we will continue our combined focus on Matthew 25 principles while prioritizing BIPOC students and those with financial need.

Our hope is that as the synod works to hire a community organizer for our BIPOC community and to pursue other ways to work toward racial equity in our churches and in the communities of our synod, that the wider synod will work with our committee to transition toward a more just and equitable scholarship process in the coming year. We look forward to doing that good work together.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Amy Duiker, Moderator

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

**Report of the Stated Clerk
Fran Lane-Lawrence
May 7, 2024**

1. CORRESPONDENCE:

- a. Hope Presbyterian Church of Detroit MI (POD) on April 23, 2024.
- b. Crossroads Presbyterian Church of Commerce Twp MI on April 25, 2024.
- c. Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Detroit, Michigan on April 28, 2024.

2. DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR SYNOD ASSEMBLIES IN 2025 AND 2026:

The following are the dates and locations for Synod Assemblies for 2025 and 2026 approved by the Leadership Committee:

Dates and Locations in 2025

- ï Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- ï Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- ï Thursday, October 23 through Saturday, October 25, 2025, Annual Assembly at Maumee Bay Lodge and Conference Center in Oregon, Ohio

Dates and Locations in 2026

- ï Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- ï Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- ï Thursday, October 22 through Saturday, October 24, 2026, Annual Assembly at Maumee Bay Lodge and Conference Center in Oregon, Ohio

3. LEADERWISE BOUNDARY TRAINING DATES FOR 2024: The following are the dates and times boundary training will be offered in 2024. Each training session has a limit of 40 participants. Due to the generosity of the Synod of the Covenant in partnership with each of the presbyteries, boundary training is offered at no cost to the participant.

1. Saturday, September 28, 2024, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm
2. Tuesday and Wednesday, October 15 and 16, 2024, from 6:00 to 9:00 pm
3. Thursday, November 7, 2024, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA AND REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

**The Next Synod Assembly and Commissioners' Retreat
is scheduled For October 31, 2024, through November 2, 2024
at Maumee Bay Lodge and Retreat Center
1750 State Park Road #2
Oregon, OH 43616**