



# The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Retreat of the Commissioners/Administrative Commission Assembly  
And Annual Meeting of the Corporation  
Minutes  
October 7-9, 2021 via**

## **Pre-Synod Devotion and Learning Opportunities**

### **Thursday Evening October 7, 2021**

#### **Orientation to Meeting Protocols and Technology**

The moderator, Elder Patrice Hatley (Tampa Bay) began the informal portion of the meeting at 6:15 p.m. by inviting Elder Heather Johnston, Synod of the Covenant Office Manager/Administrative Assistant, to provide orientation and meeting protocols to those in attendance.

#### **Welcome**

Elder Hatley welcomed guests and visitors, and formally opened the meeting with prayer at 6:30 p.m.

#### **Devotion**

Elder Hatley invited Rev. Deb Uchtman (Cincinnati), Moderator-Elect, to begin the meeting with a time of devotion. Rev. Uchtman focused on Romans 2 urging members of the Synod not to be not conformed, but be transformed by doing faithfully the work God has called us to do together.

#### **Healthy Synod**

After the devotion, Elder Hatley invited Jay Wittmeyer, Executive Director of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, to lead those gathered in a learning opportunity, *Healthy Synod*.

#### **Recess**

Elder Hatley ended this portion of the meeting in prayer at 8:31 p.m.

## **Pre-Synod Devotion and Learning Opportunities (Continued)**

### **Friday October 8, 2021**

Elder Patrice Hatley (Tampa Bay), Moderator, called the meeting in order at 9:02 a.m. in prayer. She welcomed guest and visitors present at the meeting.

Elder Hatley invited Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit), Vice Moderator-Elect, to lead those present in devotion. Elder Adams focused on the ways we need one another to survive and thrive.

Elder Hatley invited Jay Wittmeyer, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, to continue his presentation of *Healthy Synod*.

At 11:00 a.m., Elder Hatley adjourned this portion of the meeting in prayer for a lunch break. Participants were asked to return for the Synod Assembly/Administrative Commission/Annual Meeting of the Corporation at 1:30 p.m.

## **Friday, October 8, 2021 - Convening of the Synod Assembly/Administrative Commission and Annual Meeting of the Corporation**

### **Call to Order**

The Synod Assembly/Administrative Commission and Annual Meeting of the Corporation was called to order by the Moderator, Elder Patrice Hatley (Tampa Bay), at 1:35 p.m. Elder Hatley opened the meeting with prayer and welcomed guests and visitors. At 1:38 p.m., Elder Hatley declared a quorum was present. Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission members present were: Patrice Hatley (Co-Moderator), Brady Radford (Co-Moderator), Sue Krummel (Chicago), Michelle Johnson, Ben McConaughy, Adel Malek, Richard Rojas, Elona Street-Stewart (Lakes and Prairies)

Elder Hatley let the Assembly know that she would be inviting Commissioners and sometimes the presbytery staffs to express their support for motions by responding to a Zoom poll on matters that would then be voted on by the Administrative Commission. In this way, the Commissioners would be advising the Administrative Commission in their work.

**A motion prevailed** to approve the docket.

**A motion prevailed** to approve the Consent Agenda and the Clerk's Report as follows:

**Synod of the Covenant  
Annual Meeting and Retreat  
of the Commissioners/Administrative Commission Assembly  
Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report  
October 7-9, 2021**

1. **To seat** as corresponding members the following executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders and stated clerks as corresponding members if they are in attendance: Elder Lisa Allgood (Cincinnati), Rev. Erwin Goedicke (Cincinnati), Rev. Floretta Barbee-Watkins (Detroit), CRE Charon Barconey (Detroit), Elder Marianne Grano (Detroit), Rev. Cathy Ulrich (Eastminster), Rev. Dan Saperstein (Lake Huron), Rev. Ted McCulloch (Lake Huron), Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan), Rev. Cal Bremer (Lake Michigan), Elder Kay Morrill (Mackinac), Rev. Matt Meinke (Maumee Valley), Rev. Dean McGormley (Maumee Valley), Rev. Terry Kukuk (Miami Valley), Rev. Lynn Bova (Miami Valley), Rev. Matt Skolnik (Muskingum Valley), CRE Tim Pollock (Muskingum Valley), Rev. Jeannie Harsh (Scioto Valley), Rev. Bill Gause (Scioto Valley), Rev. Sharon Core (Western Reserve), Elder Judy Mitchell (Western Reserve).  
**(Attachment 1)**
2. **To seat** as corresponding members guest teaching elders and ruling elders from congregations within the Synod of the Covenant, if they are in attendance at this meeting. **(Attachment 1)**
3. **To excuse** these Synod of the Covenant elder commissioners at their request and to add those who will continue to request and excused absence up to the actual meeting: There we no requests for excused absences.

4. **To approve** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Synod Administrative Commission Assembly of March 11, 2021.
5. **To approve** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Synod Administrative of May 7, 2021.
6. **To approve** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Synod Administrative Commission/ Commissioner Assembly of August 27, 2021.
7. **To grant voice** to Jay Wittmeyer, Executive Director, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center.
8. **To grant** voice to Jen Malohn, Auditor, Demarco and Associates.
9. **To receive** a report of the PILP Loan signed by the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, as a representative of the Synod of the Covenant, and on behalf of the East Side Presbyterian Church, 102 Kennedy Avenue, Fremont, Ohio in the amount of \$41,000 of September 21, 2021. **(Attachment 2)**
10. **To receive** the Report of the Stated Clerk for today as follows:

**Report of the Stated Clerk**

**Fran Lane-Lawrence**

**October 7-9, 2021**

1. **REVIEWS OF 2020 MINUTES:** Reviews of the 2020 Presbytery Minutes are scheduled to take place on Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom.
2. **COM/CPM TRAINING:** COM/CPM Training will be provided by LeaderWise on Wednesday, October 13, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. There is no cost for participants to attend. Registration is required. Please register at the following link: <https://synodofthecovenant.org/leaderwise-registration/>.
3. **BOUNDARY AND ETHICS TRAINING:** Boundary and Ethics Training will be provided by LeaderWise on November 9-10, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. There is no cost for participants to attend. Registration is required. Please register at the following link: <https://synodofthecovenant.org/leaderwise-registration/>
4. **MEETINGS OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY:** The dates for synod assemblies for 2022 are as follows:
  - a. Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
  - b. Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
  - c. Friday – Saturday, October 21-22 Retreat and Annual Meeting

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

**Time of Fellowship**

Elder Hatley invited the Rev. Matt Skolnik (Muskingum Valley) to lead the Assembly in a time of fellowship. Commissioners and all in attendance were provided the opportunity to get to know one another and begin building trust. Rev. Skolnik closed the time of fellowship with prayer.

### **Expression of Gratitude to Sharon Moore, Former Stated Clerk – Synod of the Covenant**

The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Executive Synod of the Covenant, and Elder Heather Johnston, Synod of the Covenant Office Manager/Administrative Assistant, shared words of gratitude for Elder Sharon Moore, Former Stated Clerk for the Synod of the Covenant, for her diligent work and for her faithful spirit. Elder Moore expressed her appreciation to the Rev. Hardwick and Elder Johnston for their collegiality, and to members of the Synod of the Covenant for their prayers and messages of encouragement during her illness. The Rev. Hardwick led the Assembly in prayer and the laying on of hands for Elder Moore.

### **Election of Interim Stated Clerk**

The Rev. Dr. Sue Krummel, Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission, placed in nomination the Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan) as Interim Stated Clerk. The Rev. Lane-Lawrence's biography as well as Terms of Call and the Position Description were provided to commissioners and members of the Administrative Commission prior to the Assembly. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to elect the Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence to the office of Interim Stated Clerk and to approve the Terms of Call. **(Attachment 3)**

### **Election of Treasurer**

The Rev. Sandy Seaton-Todd (Western Reserve), placed in nomination Elder Martha Blenman (Detroit) as Treasurer. Elder Blenman's Vitae and the Position Description were provided to commissioners and members of the Administrative Commission prior to the Assembly. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to elect Elder Blenman to the office of Treasurer.

### **Election of Temporary Associate Stated Clerk**

The Rev. Sue Krummel (Chicago) made the following recommendation: to appoint Wayne Yost, (Synod of the Trinity) to serve as Temporary Associate Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Covenant in the matter Paul-Bonham vs the Presbytery of Lake Michigan in this matter and this matter only for the duration of the judicial process. Rev. Yost will be compensated at the rate of \$30/hr plus any associated costs. **A motion prevailed** to approve the recommendation as presented.

### **Report of the Nominations Committee**

Elder Charon Barconey (CRE – Detroit) presented the report on behalf of the Nominations Committee. The Committee made a recommendation to place the following names in nomination for the positions and classes listed. There were no nominations from the floor. **A motion prevailed** to elect those as presented.

#### **Finance Committee**

Elder Frank Walburg (Muskingum Valley), Class of 2022

Elder Susan Vitek (Western Reserve), Class of 2022

Elder Joseph Salvato (Cincinnati), Class of 2023

Elder Ted Fines (Mackinac), Class of 2024

Rev. Andrew Pomerville (Lake Huron), Class of 2024

#### **Governance Committee**

Rev. Tom James (Maumee Valley), Class of 2022

Elder Mark Johnson (Scioto Valley), Class of 2022

Rev. Diane Ziegler (Miami Valley), Class of 2022

Elder Andy Thorburn (Lake Michigan), Class of 2023

#### **Human Resources**

Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley), 2022

Elder Mary Jean Blackmon (Miami Valley), Class of 2023

Rev. Michael March (Mackinac), Class of 2023

Elder Charon Barconey (CRE -Detroit), n/a

### **Financial Matters**

Jen Malohn, Auditor, DeMarco and Associates presented the draft Review of the Synod of the Covenant Finances. **A motion prevailed** to receive the Review report. **(Attachment 4)**

### **Break**

The moderator, Elder Patrice Hatley recessed the Assembly in prayer for a 13-minute break at 2:57 p.m. The moderator, the Elder Patrice Hatley reconvened the Assembly at 3:10 p.m. in prayer.

### **Discussion of the Why of Synod**

The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Executive – Synod of the Covenant, presented information entitled the *Why of Synod*. The Rev. Terry Kukuk (Miami Valley), presented the Overarching Theme and Foci. Rev. Kukuk asked commissioners and guests to engage in discussion relative to the big picture first. She explained that there would be discussion of the details within each Foci at the Assembly the next day. Commissions were divided into small groups to consider the *Why of Synod* in the context of the following questions: What excites you? What opportunities and challenges exist? What is missing? And What might you substitute? After a time of small group, each group reported back to the whole for time of discussion and revision of original materials.

The moderator, Elder Patrice Hatley, recessed the Assembly for the evening with prayer at 4:33 p.m. The meeting is scheduled to continue at the next morning, Saturday, October 9, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

## **Saturday October 9, 2021**

### **Call to Order**

Elder Patrice Hatley (Tampa Bay), moderator of the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission, called the Assembly to order with prayer at 9:03 a.m.

### **The Why of the Synod**

The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick and the Rev. Terry Kukuk (Miami Valley) provided a summary and overview of discussions of the *Why of the Synod* that occurred the previous evening. The Foci are aspirational guidelines designed to assist the Synod discover who we are and what we do. Information from previous small groups was also shared. Elder Lisa Allgood (Cincinnati) led discussion of the materials with Synod Commissioners.

### **Business Plenary II**

#### **Declaration of Quorum**

The moderator, Elder Patrice Hatley, declared a quorum was present.

Elder Patrice Hatley, Co-Moderator of the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission, took a poll of present Synod of the Covenant Commissioners for advice on approving the Synod of the Covenant Overarching Theme for 2022 and Foci. The poll indicated 100 percent support for approval.

**A motion prevailed** to adopt the *Synod of the Covenant Overarching Theme for 2022 and Foci* as follows:

In our Synod, we'll try anything to equip and support leaders who are attending to God's creative, emerging future.

1. Encouraging and Supporting Faith Communities to be Vital

Vital faith communities – communities that are growing ministry relevant to their communities and context – are critical joining God’s mission to love and transform the world. Using Synod resources and expertise, providing training and financial/expert resources and sharing best practices allow our communities to be connected and to flourish.

2. Eradicating Structural Racism and Modeling Inclusion

As a Matthew 25 Synod, providing resources, best practices and opportunities to connect across congregations remains a critical focus for our Synod and Presbyteries to support all our churches. We commit to modeling inclusion and focus on learning from and supporting marginalized communities as a key focus for the Synod.

3. Experimenting with New Ways to Be Church and to Live Out Our Faith

Innovative ministry, ministry that embraces the future while acknowledging our Reformed heritage, and ministry that draws on the future of the Presbyterian Church (USA) are the lifeblood of our legacy and our Kingdom-building mission. The Synod will work with both current congregations and New Worshiping Communities to develop and encourage different approaches to ministry and vibrancy.

4. Connecting Presbyteries, Congregations and Leaders to Reach Foci 1-3 above

We are a connectional church. The role of the Synod is to create connections across Presbyteries, passions and ministries that maximize knowledge and resources, while amplifying our impact in the congregations and communities we serve.

### **Presentation/Adoption of 2022 Budget**

The Rev. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Executive, presented the proposed 2022 Budget of the Synod of the Covenant. After a time of discussion **a motion prevailed** to approve the 2022 Budget of the Synod of the Covenant.

**(Attachment 5)**

**The Assembly by consensus decided not to take a break.**

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

Elder Charon Barconey (CRE, Detroit) placed the following in Nomination for election the following:

Rev. Deb Uchtman (Cincinnati) as Moderator of the Synod of the Covenant, 2022

Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit) as Vice-Moderator of the Synod of the Covenant, 2022

After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to elect Rev. Deb Uchtman (Cincinnati) to the office of Moderator and to elect Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit) to the office of Vice-Moderator.

### **Matters of the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission**

Elder Patrice Hatley, Co-Moderator of the Administrative Commission recognized Brady Radford, Co-Moderator of the Administrative Commission to read the following motion:

Motion to the GA Administrative Commission Synod of the Covenant

October 9, 2021

**Action:** The General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of the Covenant moves to return full jurisdiction to the Synod of the Covenant to govern itself in accordance with the *PC(USA) Book of Order* effective October 9, 2021; while retaining jurisdiction only for currently ongoing legal process purposes.

The General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of the Covenant began its work on March 25, 2019, as authorized by the PCUSA 223rd General Assembly, to address disorder in the Synod of the Covenant, and assumed Original Jurisdiction on February 12, 2020. Given the work that has been done to date, which is summarized below in the rationale, and with the understandings also listed in the rationale regarding continued support of the Synod until the Administrative Commission has been dismissed, the Administrative Commission moves to restore jurisdiction.

**A motion prevailed** by unanimous roll-call vote of the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission.

Rationale:

1. Having found significant systemic dysfunction with no apparent ability to resolve or mediate conflicts within the system, The Administrative Commission assumed Original Jurisdiction of the Synod of the Covenant on February 12, 2020, and set in motion several other actions to restore order and seek reconciliation. The Administrative Commission effectively replaced the Assembly of Synod Commissioners and Officers.
2. The Administrative Commission replaced Synod staff and engaged consulting services of a professional mediation consultant, law firm, and an auditing firm. The Administrative Commission suspended the Synod Bylaws, with the exception of those related to Judicial Process.
3. The Administrative Commission elected several representatives from Presbyteries to support resuming the Synod Grant and Scholarship Program which had been suspended for a short time.
4. The Administrative Commission approved relocation of the Synod office, established all new communications processes and systems, bookkeeping and accounting, and banking, with the leadership of the Synod Interim Executive.
5. The Administrative Commission approved recruitment of Community Organizers to support and focus on the Synod's racial and ethnic diversity communities.
6. Presbytery Executive Staff and Stated clerks have re-engaged and generously contribute to the ministry life of the Synod.
7. Commissioner positions have been elected by their Presbyteries and are being continuously trained to serve in this capacity and are now serving Synod committees which both leverage their gifts and build their skills. Many have attended and participated as guests at Administrative Commission/Synod meetings.
8. The Synod of the Covenant has a renewed sense of purpose and shared vision.
9. The continuing actions to rebuild its ability to manage with full accountability, engage with presbytery leaders, communicate clearly and frequently, and manage wisely its affairs leads the Administrative Commission to conclude that it is time to return jurisdiction to the Synod.
10. The Administrative Commission acknowledges its responsibility to continue in service to the Synod of the Covenant in an advisory capacity until it is dismissed by the General Assembly.

Synod of the Covenant: Administrative Commission Roll-Call Vote results and verbatim comments for the record of the proceedings.

**Rev. Brady Radford**, Co-Moderator of the General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of the Covenant: Good morning, I graciously support this motion to return jurisdiction to the Synod of the covenant. I am grateful for God's guidance as we have watched healing happen here. God indeed has led the Synod through our interim executive Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick and countless others to transform what once were swords into plowshares. The work the Synod continues to do by way of building new leaders and inviting more voices to the table is beyond commendable. I'm excited to see what God is doing in the life and ministry of the Synod.

**Rev. Sue Krummel** (Chicago): I vote yes. Friends in the Synod of the Covenant, what a difference we have seen in the way you make decisions, in the way you support one another, and in the way you are working to seek a new vision for a new time moving forward. It is my hope for you that you will be brave in asking questions and in being persistent until you have answers; that you will continue to look for new voices to bring into your deliberations; and that you will listen deeply for the ways in which God is calling you to bring hope in the name of Jesus.

**Michelle Johnson**: Yes, I approve. Praise God. It has been an honor to serve all of you. This is a momentous occasion.

**Elder Ben McConaughy**: I support the return of original jurisdiction to the Synod of the Covenant. Over the last eighteen months, I have seen dramatic improvement in several areas of the Synod's operation.

Communication, and an attitude of openness and transparency, has been significantly enhanced. It is apparent that there is renewed enthusiasm to engage with the Synod by the bodies and people that it serves. The diversity and number of people involved with the Synod have increased. The Synod has gotten back on track on focusing on its ministry and mission. The Synod offices and recordkeeping are greatly improved.

Strong servant-based leadership is currently in place. The new commissioners have been well trained in their roles.

My charge is for the incoming commissioners to take their roles seriously, and to exercise their power in love. I want to read from 1 Corinthians 13 – often read at weddings – and pray that it might be reflected in your work here: “<sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” May it be so as you move forward.

**Rev. Adel Malek**: I vote yes. Friends at the Synod of the Covenant, I have a challenge for you: please continue to remember your history, even if it doesn't look nice to you. John Dalberg-Acton said, “History is not a burden on the memory, but an illumination of the soul.” I think to avoid the past mistakes, we have to remember our history. To be honest with you, as we studied a lot of your history, and heard from many people, I had my own doubts that this Synod would come back together again. And you proved I was wrong. Now, I have a complete trust in your leadership and in your own ability to be the Synod of Matthew 25. Keep up the good work!

**Rev. Richard Rojas**: I support this motion to return jurisdiction to the Synod of the covenant with gratitude. When being invited to walk along this journey with the Synod, I have witnessed courage, discipline, a profound sense of belonging and a transparent love that transcends boundaries. Your desire to embrace a common hope in Christ --founded in a shared vision, reflects the result of a body who are searching for ways of being a blessing to the world. Gloria a Dios, al Hijo y al Espíritu Santo, amén.

**Elder Patrice Hatley**, Co-Moderator Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission: I vote Yes. A key ingredient in helping the Synod move toward healing and reconciliation is your emerging capacity to step back from your position on content issues being faced and instead focus on your primary role of being stewards of health within the system. That's a key ingredient in helping the Synod move toward healing and reconciliation.



With that focus, Synod leaders now avoid getting caught up in the anxiety of a particular situation. I observe you really leaning toward longer term and sustained healthy functioning, methodical, orderly, and thoughtful engagement with each other in faithful service to your communities and neighbors. Keep attentive to well-functioning systems and processes that help you establish wise and clear boundaries, and internal financial controls and excellent personnel practices, too. I leave you with a charge to stay connected and involved. Be interactive and relational in all things. Keep inviting those who have stepped away back to the table, and extend generous welcome to them. This is a work in progress. Always. So, cut yourselves some slack, too.

**Elder Elona Street-Stewart** (not present at the time of the vote, nonetheless provided a message of encouragement): I do believe that we all are ready to transition. The Administrative Commission is endowing the transition as an encouraging companion, sharing ownership without possession. The synod is living into the transition, cultivating a purpose, motivated by their own contributions. The ministries are embracing the transition to self-sufficiency, setting their sight on their strengths rather than fears. What was broken is in repair and what was lost is being reconciled. Leadership is excited and hopeful, the community has claimed the challenges, sacrifices and celebrations that churches experienced and now they recommit to collaborating on a better future. The restoration of jurisdiction is strategic, constructive, and blessed. I am glad to extend my support for the recommendation and look forward to meeting with you all again.

### **Closing Worship**

Elder Patrice Hatley, Co-Moderator of the General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of Covenant, opened the time of worship with prayer. The Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence, Interim Stated Clerk – Synod of the Covenant led the installation of Moderator 2022, the Rev. Deb Uchtman (Cincinnati) and Vice Moderator 2022, Elder Adrienne Adams (Detroit). Elder Patrice Hatley shared a passage from Isaiah 37:1-14 and led a reflection based on dry bones. The Rev. Dr. Charles B Hardwick, Interim Executive Synod of the Covenant led the Assembly in the Litany of Thanksgiving and Hope

### **Adjournment and Closing Prayer**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m. in prayer by the Moderator, Rev. Deb Uchtman.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fran Lane-Lawrence, Interim Stated Clerk

Attachment 1 – Synod Rolls; Attachment 2 – Signed PILP Loan Papers; Attachment 3 – Terms of Call – Interim Stated Clerk; Attachment 4 – Draft Review of the Synod of the Covenant Finances; Attachment 5 – 2022 Synod of the Covenant Budget

Respectfully Submitted

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Fran Lane-Lawrence, Interim Stated Clerk

**The Next Synod of the Covenant Assembly is scheduled for**

**February 1, 2022 via Zoom at 4:30 p.m.**