



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

**Synod of the Covenant
Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report
January 30, 2024**

1. **SEATING OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS: To seat** as corresponding members executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders, and stated clerks 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 Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant and Annual Meeting of the Corporation of October 27-28, 2023. (Online only)
4. **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE: To receive** the following report of the Synod of the Covenant Finance Committee. The Finance Committee approved a motion to authorize the Treasurer to open FDIC-covered bank accounts for the Lilly Grant, including both checking and/or savings and investment accounts for laddering CDs. In response, a checking account, a savings account, and individual CDs were opened with PNC Bank and PNC Investments into which the \$1.25 million dollars awarded to the Synod of the Covenant by the Lily Foundation was deposited.
5. **TREASURER'S REPORT: To receive** the Treasurer's Report. (Online only)
6. **REPORT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP TEAM: To receive** the annual report of the Scholarship Team. (Online only)
7. **RECOMMENDATION TO COMMISSION THE CREATION OF THE ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE POSITION DESCRIPTION: To approve** the following recommendation of the Leadership Team: that the Steering Committee for the Organizer for Communities of Color, in consultation with the Human Resources Committee and the Stated Clerk, be commissioned to create the position description for the Associate Executive for Racial Justice and that the Steering Committee for the Organizer for Communities of Color and the Leadership Committee, acting together, be commissioned to approve the position description. The Associate Executive for Racial Justice will focus on organizing, equipping Communities of Color, and

leading strategy for anti-racism and anti-oppression work in the Synod.

8. **REPORT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: To receive** the Position Description for the Director of Cultivating the Gift of Preaching Initiative.
9. **RECOMMENDATION THAT THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY FOR 2024 BE RESCHEDULED: To approve** the recommendation from the Leadership Committee that the date for the Annual Assembly be rescheduled to October 31, 2024 – November 2, 2024.
10. **RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR SYNOD ASSEMBLIES IN 2025 AND 2026: To approve** the following dates and locations for Synod Assemblies and the Annual Meeting of the Synod in 2025 and 2026:

Dates and Locations in 2025

- Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- 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

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

11. **FIRST READ OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS: To receive** the following as a first read of a proposed amendment to the Synod of the Covenant Bylaws: 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 appointed to serve on the Leadership Team, and the other four will be appointed 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 appointed, 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. Not more than one (1) at-large member from each presbytery can serve at the same time.

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 Team, and the other four will be appointed to the other standing committees.

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

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

**Report of the Stated Clerk
Fran Lane-Lawrence
January 30, 2024**

1. Former members of the Synod of the Covenant Permanent Judicial Commission for the last six years who may be called upon when necessary to constitute a quorum (D-5.0206b).

Class of 2022: Lori Schmidt, Stefanie Lewis, Sung Yang

Class of 2020: Catherine Borchart, Richard Mickley, Rhonda O'Reilly

Class of 2018: Fred Bohse, Russell Brandt, Norma Carnahan, Greg Gibson

2. **Report of the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit**
Report to Synod of the Covenant Meeting
Synod of the Covenant's Presbytery of Detroit Administrative Commission
January 30, 2024

Context

This report summarizes major events and activities since our last report in October 2023.

Overview

1. Elected the Rev. Dr. Leslie Mott to serve as the Presbytery of Detroit as its Temporary Executive Presbyter. She began her work in early January 2024.
2. Worked extensively on a variety of issues related to the absence of Charon Barconey, Associate General Presbyter for the Presbytery of Detroit. This absence began approximately four months ago. The AC communicated frequently with office staff and with functionaries within the PoD regarding tasks and responsibilities to be fulfilled during this absence. The AC communicated extensively with Commissioned Ruling Elder Barconey regarding applicable provisions of established policies related to leave. It has been sensitive to the changing dynamics for Mx. Barconey during this leave while respecting her desire for appropriate levels of privacy.

3. Consulted with the Synod's law firm when and where appropriate.
4. Worked closely with the Stated Clerk for PoD, Dr. Melissa Allison, who has provided research and documents as well as serving as a vital liaison to many functionaries within the PoD.
5. Following consultation with the PoD's Vision and Planning Committee who recommended a six-month temporary budget, it was decided to extend the 2023 approved PoD budget through June 30, 2024.
6. Nominations and Elections
 - A. Worked with the Nominations Committee in their efforts to identify and recruit nominees to serve in a variety of functions within the PoD. Publicized the names of nominees recruited by the Nominations Committee to the PoD.
 - B. Held a zoom meeting on January 17, 2024, to receive input from members of the PoD to assist the AC in their election of functionaries for the PoD.
 - C. Decided on January 18, 2024, to extend the terms of the 2023 Moderator and Vice-Moderator to provide organizational continuity with the budget and transitional assistance for the Temporary Executive Presbyter.
 - D. Elected the following to serve at General Assembly:
 - Teaching Elder Commissioners**
 - Teresa Peterson (Geneva, Canton)
 - Anders Edstrom (Greenfield, Berkley)
 - Laura Kelsey (Pontiac First)
 - No Teaching Elder Alternate Commissioner**
 - Ruling Elder Commissioners**
 - Joshua Archey (Crossroads, Walled Lake)
 - Richard Nkosu (Park United)
 - Kevin Smith (Warren)
 - Ruling Elder Alternate Commissioner**
 - Elizabeth Ngare (Calvary)
 - Young Adult Advisory Delegate**
 - Devyn Baumgart (St. Thomas, Shelby)

Elections of Richard Nkosu and Elizabeth Ngare are contingent upon receipt of endorsement by their respective Sessions within 30 days.
7. Approved the request to serve communion during the January 27, 2024, worship service.
8. Approved the following Corporate Officers to serve the PoD in 2024:
 - President: Karen Strandholm
 - Vice President: Ben Beale
 - Corporate Secretary: Melissa Allison
 - Treasurer: Michael Gaubatz

Assistant Treasurer: Sarah Leight

9. COM/CPM -

Approved the election and/or reappointment of the following:

Class of 2026

Wendy Beck	RE	Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
Adam Grosch	TE	St. Clair Shores, Lake Shore
Ruth Herrington	TE	Member at Large
Ron Hughes	RE	Livonia, Rosedale Garden
Michelle James	TE	Novi Faith Community
Richard Lapohn	TE	Orchard Lake Community
Tim Marvil	TE	Allen Park Presbyterian

Class of 2025

Phil Reed	TE	Honorably Retired
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Approved

- A. Document entitled “Commission for Examination for Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Examination of Commissioned Pastors.”
- B. Rev. Emma Nickel (1st Royal Oak) and Rev. Ben Larson-Wolbrink (Northbrook Beverly Hills) as CPM Co-chairs.
- C. Rev. Paul Stunkel (HR), Elder Stefanie Lewis (Hope), Elder Joelle Jarrett (1st Royal Oak) and Rev. Anders Edstrom (Greenfield Berkley) as Ordination Exam Readers.

10. Staff Compensation

Approved cost of living increases to Tanya Kudla, Unah Mutio Matu Nygare, and Melissa Allison of 3 % effective January 1, 2024. Tabled consideration of Associate Presbyter compensation until after she returns to work.

11. Continued the work on clarifying roles, responsibilities, procedures, and divergent practices to bring into harmony what has been written, assumed and/or practiced.
12. Worked closely with the Trustees to address issues related to grants, requests for funding, dismissing, or extending the functions of Administrative Commissions previously appointed by the PoD, as well as sales of church property.
13. Approved per Capita amounts for 2024:
General Assembly \$9.80 (\$.05 decrease from 2023)
Synod of the Covenant \$3.25 (remains the same)
Presbytery of Detroit (\$22.85)
Total \$35.90

Observations of the AC

The AC previously asserted that “...the disorder within the Presbytery of Detroit is pervasive, intertwined, and appears to affect virtually every aspect of the PoD. The disorder affects the

body in multiple ways.” This continues to be the case.

The disorder affecting the PoD is exacerbated by the dissemination of information, often on social media, which often presents “some facts” perceived by the author or authors, without providing additional facts or context within which the decisions or actions were made. Assertions that actions were motivated by racism, ageism, or a desire to consolidate power, without full consideration of other possible factors often results in judgmentalism and demonstrates little grace for those who see things differently. The disorder has been present for many years and it will not be eradicated in a few months. By God’s grace we will come together to fulfill the mission to which all in the Presbytery of Detroit have been called.

AC Gratitude and Request:

We thank you for and continue to solicit your prayers for discernment and wisdom,

Jesse MacMillan, Moderator
Alice McCollum
Jeanne Gay
Robert Sullivan
Jim Wilson
Cal Bremer, Clerk

Cal Bremer, Clerk

THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA AND REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

**The Next Synod Assembly is scheduled
For May 7, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom.**