



**Minutes of the Synod Assembly
May 2, 2023 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. Adrienne Adams (Detroit), called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. in prayer. A quorum was present. (The roll is attached). Elder Adams 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 2, 2023**

1. **To seat** as corresponding members executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders, and stated clerks in attendance at this meeting:
2. **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. **To seat** as corresponding members guest teaching elders and ruling elders from congregations within the Synod of the Covenant in attendance at this meeting.
4. **To approve** the Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant and Annual Meeting of the Corporation of January 31, 2023. (Synod Papers CA1)
5. **To approve** the Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the annual gathering of the Synod of the Covenant Presbyterian Women.
6. **To receive** the following Report of the Governance Committee:

**Synod of the Covenant
Governance Committee
Report May 2, 2023**

The Governance Committee continues to meet regularly to work on items for the Manual of

Operation for the Synod of the Covenant. The Committee is working specifically on committee descriptions for Human Resources Committee and the Leadership Committee. There are no actions to report to the Synod at this time.

Respectfully Submitted, Andy Thorburn

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

**Report of the Stated Clerk
Fran Lane-Lawrence
May 2, 2023**

1. As regards the judicial process of the Presbytery of Detroit for which the Synod of the Covenant assumed original jurisdiction on January 31, 2023, the following have been appointed as members of the Investigating Committee: Elder Keith Williams (Miami Valley), Elder Dru Wrasse (Lake Michigan), and Rev. Joe Svancara (Muskingum Valley).
2. Report of the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit

**Synod of the Covenant
Report of the Administrative Commission to the Presbytery of Detroit May 2, 2023**

Activity Overview

Since its last report to the Synod of the Covenant on January 31, 2023, the AC has:

- 1) Interviewed Marianne Grano – Presbytery Stated Clerk whose term ended on March 31, 2023.
- 2) Observed and listened to the Coordinating Cabinet meeting of February 13, 2023, and members participated in Cabinet Meeting on March 27, 2023.
- 3) Met with Kevin Smith – Moderator of the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 4) Met with Sarah Leight, Business Manager and Tanya Rowland Kudla, Office Administrator, Executive Assistant.
- 5) Met with Associate Presbyter Charon Barconey.
- 6) Invited Michael Barconey to meet with the AC. Following his initial reticence to do so, he has recently agreed in a communication with the moderator of the AC to schedule a meeting with the AC.
- 7) Met with Bob Agnew and Neeta Nichols who served as leaders after Al Timm’s departure and prior to Flo Barbee Watkins tenure as Transitional General Presbyter.
- 8) Interviewed Unah Mutio Matu-Ngare, Hunger Action Coordinator
- 9) Received correspondence from a long-time member of the PoD Trustees expressing concerns regarding the environment in which staff members are functioning.
- 10) Responded to numerous inquiries from a variety of functionaries regarding process and best practice.
- 11) Worked arduously to find a person or persons who could serve the Presbytery as Stated Clerk following the completion of Marianne Grano’s term on March 31, 2023.

- 12) Met with representatives of the Anti-Racism Team on March 23, 2023.
- 13) Developed a job description for temporary stated clerks.
- 14) Recruited Sue Krummel, recently retired Executive Presbyter, and the Rev. Joyce Lieberman recently retired “Director of Constitutional Interpretation” and Associate Stated Clerk of the PCUSA to jointly share the role of Stated Clerk for the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 15) Provided input on the need for and desirable characteristics of a Transitional Executive Presbyter/head of staff position to serve the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 16) Consulted with the Synod Stated Clerk, the Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence, regarding a number of matters.

Observations of the AC

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.

The absence of a Head of Staff to whom staff members report, who functions as a liaison between groups/committees, and who is responsible for the consistent application of human resources policies has contributed to fragmentation and silos within the PoD.

There is both a history of racism in the PoD and a fear that any comment or action can be misunderstood or misconstrued as racist. Everyone we spoke with indicated that language about race or comments regarding statements made about racial justice or injustice have caused pain, fear, or misunderstanding.

Lack of consistency between the Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures continues to contribute to uncertainty and mistrust. This lack of consistency creates the perception that persons or groups sometimes attempt to bypass requirements or manipulate the system. The AC perceives that a lack of coordination in a collaborative or comprehensive way between various groups or entities creates inconsistencies between practices, policies, procedures, and Bylaws.

The current structure lacks clarity and precision regarding responsibility and authority.

Specific AC Initiatives:

The AC introduced the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center to facilitate a discussion regarding race involving Coordinating Cabinet members. It also solicited a proposal from Lombard Mennonite Peace Center to interview/listen to 12- 15 members of the PoD and present the AC with an actionable plan for moving forward.

The AC has worked with Coordinating Cabinet to develop position descriptions for a temporary stated clerk and Transitional Executive Presbyter for the PoD. A member of the AC has been appointed as liaison to the search committee for the TEP.

The AC has repeatedly discussed whether it is necessary, and/or wise and prudent to move to assume original jurisdiction. It has identified certain actions which would trigger such action. The current approach is to recommend or strongly recommend certain actions to responsible entities within the Presbytery of Detroit. If a time comes when its recommendations are no longer heeded by the PoD or the AC perceives that the level of disorder is rising or the effects of the disorder are becoming more deleterious, such that the AC concludes that the PoD can no longer wisely manage its affairs, the AC may choose to move toward assuming original jurisdiction.

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

THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA AND REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

WORSHIP:

Rev. Sandy Seaton-Todd (Western Reserve), Vice Moderator, led the Assembly in a time of worship. Rev. Jin-Seung Kim (Eastminster) delivered the sermon. Others participating in worship leadership were Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley), Jim Bennett (Eastminster), Valerie Lyons (Western Reserve), and Sandy Seaton-Todd (Western Reserve).

REPORT OF THE SYNOD EXECUTIVE: The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, presented his report, which included information about LeaderWise training, including training focused on boundaries, Overcoming Clergy Loneliness, child sexual misconduct, and anti-racism that will be offered during 2024; information about Higher Education Scholarships; a workshop offered by Science and the Church, Hardwick shared information about a Compelling Preaching Grant the Synod is submitting to the Lily Foundation entitled, Cultivating the Gift of Preaching. The grant would enable the presbytery to train 150 preachers around the Synod with monthly cohort meetings, spiritual direction, and training videos to support their training.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE: Rev. Deb Uchtman (Cincinnati) presented the report on behalf of the Leadership Committee.

EQUIPPING AND EXPLORING: Lindsey Anderson

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT: Rev. Jessie MacMillan (Western Reserve) directed commissioners to the written report of the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit that was provided as part of the consent agenda. There were no questions or comments.

HUMAN RESOURCES: Rev. Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley) directed commissioners to the proposed Personnel Manual for the Synod of the Covenant that was presented as a first-read in the Assembly papers. The Human Resources Committee will receive comments and questions. The proposed Personnel Manual will be presented for approval at the October Assembly.

FINANCIAL COMMITTEE AND TREASURER'S REPORT

Elder Martha Blenman (Detroit), Treasurer, and Elder Frank Walburg (Scioto Valley) presented the reviewed Year-End Financial Statements for December 2021 and December 2022.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley) presented the following report on behalf of the Nominations Committee. With the following report, all commissioner appointments have been completed. The committee does not have any recommendations for action at this time.

The Committee on Nominations met electronically and by Zoom on multiple occasions, including on March 16, 2023. Commissioned Ruling Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley) served as Moderator of the Committee on Nominations.

The Committee worked to identify individuals to recommend for appointment for service on the various committees of the Synod. To that end, the Nominations Committee respectfully reports the following appointments:

Finance Committee

Valerie Lyons (RE, Western Reserve, Class of 2025)

Governance Committee

Garrett Mostowski (TE, Detroit, Class of 2024)

Nominations Committee

Mike Wakeland (TE, Miami Valley, Class of 2025)

Financial Advisory Committee (Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee)

Bruce Blonder of Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Mike Beels of Canton, Ohio

Grants and Scholarship Committee

Erin Guzman (Maumee Valley)

ADJOURNMENT AND CLOSING PRAYER: A motion prevailed to adjourn at 7:00 p.m. Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence
Stated Clerk

THIS ENDS THE MINUTES OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY OF MAY 2, 2023

**The Next Synod Assembly Retreat and Annual Meeting is on
October 26-28, 2023
At Maumee Bay Lodge in Oregon, Ohio**