

Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit
Report to the Synod of the Covenant
May 07, 2024

(This report is included as part of the Consent Agenda)

Context

This report summarizes major events and activities since the AC's report of January 30, 2024.

Overview

The Synod of the Covenant's Presbytery of Detroit Administrative Commission (AC) previously asserted that "...the disorder within the Presbytery of Detroit (PoD) is pervasive, intertwined, and appears to affect virtually every aspect of the PoD. The disorder affects the body in multiple ways". The AC also noted that evidence of disorder has been present for many years within the PoD. Some of the actions since January 30, 2024, to address this complex and entrenched disorder include:

1) The Synod's Administrative Commission (AC) recognizes the importance of diverse representation in the functions and discussions within the Presbytery of Detroit.

A. Contract with Rev. Dr. Barbara Wilson

The Synod Administrative Commission has hired the Rev. Dr. Barbara Wilson, Associate Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery and Professional Certified Coach with CAST (Coach Approach Skill Training) to work with the Rev. Leslie Mott, Temporary Executive Presbyter, and the Rev. Dr. Melissa Allison, Stated Clerk to help identify members of the Presbytery who will work together to engage in the beginning steps of building trust, transparency and accountability in the work of the churches and the Presbytery.

B. Sacred Pause

To assist the Presbytery of Detroit to more fully live into its mission to listen "to the voices of peoples long silenced ... and to confront structural racism," The AC initiated and publicized a "sacred pause" in presbytery work from March 1, 2024 through May 31, 2024. This is to reallocate time and energy as a presbytery toward the intrapersonal and collegial work of restorative justice, truth-telling and reparation in the systemic racism inherent in the history of the Presbytery of Detroit.

During this time of "sacred pause" we are reminded by the *Book of Order* "the presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love and witness" (G-3.0301). To fulfill this responsibility some committees, commissions, and workgroups need to continue their work during this time. As a reference, these are the groups who continue their work:

- Commission on Ministry

- Commission on Preparation for Ministry
- Board of Trustees
- Permanent Judicial Commission
- Commissioners (and Advisory Delegate) to General Assembly
- Commissioners to Synod Assembly
- Michigan Black Presbyterian Caucus
- Anti-Racism Team
- Presbytery Response Team
- Hunger Work Group (including Everyone Eats)
- Thika Partnership Work Group
- Administrative Commissions for Camp Westminster (Detroit), St. John's (Detroit), Joslyn Avenue (Pontiac) and Starr (Royal Oak)

All other committees, teams, and work groups for the Presbytery of Detroit were to suspend their meetings and work from March 1 through May 31, 2024.

This “sacred pause” will also give time for the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit time to assess the structure of the Presbytery and adjust the responsibilities of the various committees and task forces.

In all things, we remember that “The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church” (F-1.01). We rely on and trust that God is inviting us in this season of transformation for the Presbytery of Detroit.

C. Devotional and Reflection Guide

The AC endorsed the use of “No Longer Silent—Reflections on White Supremacy” by congregations, committees, commissions, and individuals within the Presbytery of Detroit in their anti-racism work.

2) Consulted with Synod of the Covenant Commissioners

The AC invited the SoC Commissioners to a Zoom meeting on February 22, 2024, to discuss in executive session certain Presbytery of Detroit personnel matters.

3) Charon Barconey

- A. The AC communicated extensively with Charon Barconey regarding applicable provisions of established policies related to her leave that began on September 19, 2023. The AC communicated frequently with office staff and with functionaries within the PoD regarding tasks and responsibilities to be fulfilled during this absence.
- B. The AC, in working with its legal counsel, continued to grant Elder Barconey several additional leaves of absence pursuant to her requests. The AC continued to request supporting documentation to support the extended leaves, which Elder Barconey did not provide. The AC provided numerous opportunities for Elder Barconey to provide

this information to support the leaves of absence retroactively and clearly communicated with Elder Barconey on what was required.

- C. By unanimous action of the AC, on March 15, 2024, the AC let Elder Barconey know that it considered her to have voluntarily resigned after she still had not provided the supporting documentation. In conjunction with this notice, the AC offered Elder Barconey a generous separation package and offered to have a discussion in response.
- D. On March 26, 2024, The AC extended Elder Barconey's benefits and insurance coverage through April and continued to welcome a discussion about the separation package offer.

Continuing Developments:

On April 19, 2024, Jessie MacMillan, moderator of the AC, and member, Jim Wilson, met with Elder Barconey and her son, Michael Barconey. Elder Barconey did not offer a counter-proposal to the separation package offered. Following the meeting, the AC communicated to Elder Barconey again that the separation package is open for her consideration and that the AC is open for a counter-proposal.

- 4) The AC consulted with the Synod's law firm when and where appropriate.
- 5) The AC worked closely with the Stated Clerk for PoD, Rev. Dr. Melissa Allison, who has provided research and documents as well as serving as a vital liaison to many functionalities within the PoD.
- 6) The AC worked closely with the TEP Rev. Leslie Mott, who began her work in January 2024. Rev. Mott held seven "Meet and Greet" at announced times and locations. She also initiated separate meetings with many of the PoD stakeholders. She has helped to develop regular patterns of communication within the office and the presbytery. She has reported regularly to the AC regarding her actions and suggested priorities and initiatives for the next steps. Leslie has also worked on PoD staff development.
- 7) The AC engaged the PoD's Strategic Planning Team (a sub-committee of Vision and Planning Committee) in discussion regarding their work developing a proposed structure for the PoD. The AC made observations and asked questions. The discussion will continue after reflection by both bodies.
- 8) The AC took the following actions related to COM and CPM:
 - Approved a recommendation from the Commission on Ministry to the Synod Administrative Commission that the Rev. Sung Joon Moon be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry of the Word and Sacrament (at the request of Sung Joon Moon).
 - Approved a recommendation from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry become the Commission on Preparation for Ministry, along with delineation of powers, accountability, and authority to act.
- 9) The AC approved the election and/or reappointment of the following:

- A. Rev. Jim Russel (Retired) class of 2025 Commission on Ministry.
 - B. Elder Gregory Berry from Broadstreet Presbyterian Church to serve on the Commission on Ministry, class of 2026.
 - C. Elder Suzanne Lewand of Royal Oak First Presbyterian for Permanent Judicial Commission class of 2027.
 - D. Commissioned Ruling Elder Josh Archey to serve on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry class of 2026.
 - E. Rev. Dr. Loren Scribner (Retired) class of 2026 to serve on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry
 - F. Ruling Elder Church Sadler (St. Thomas) class of 2026 to serve on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry
- 10) The AC 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.
- 11) Continued the work on clarifying roles, responsibilities, procedures, and divergent practices to bring into harmony what has been written, assumed and/or practiced.

Observations of the AC

As previously noted, the disorder affecting the PoD is exacerbated by the dissemination of information, often on social media, which often presents “some facts” as perceived by the author or authors, without providing additional facts or context within which the decisions or actions were made. This presentation of “facts” also takes place in conversations, both private and public. Assertions that actions were motivated by racism, ageism, or a desire to consolidate power, without full consideration of other possible factors, often result in judgmentalism and demonstrate 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. But we started on the journey to address the disorder. 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,

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

ADDENDUM TO THE AC REPORT

PRESBYTERY of DETROIT

**COMMITTEES/MINISTRY TEAMS
APPROVED BY THE SYNOD ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION**

Officers of the Presbytery (First Six Months of 2024)

Moderator	Class-24	Kevin Smith (W/M)	RE	Warren, First
Vice-Moderator	Class-24	Teresa Peterson (W/F)	TE	Geneva, Canton

Committee on Ministry (COM)

Chair-24	Tim Marvil (W/M)	TE	Allen Park
Co-Chair-24	Wendy Beck (W/ F)	RE	Kirk in the Hills
Class-25	James Russell (W/M)	TE	HR
Class-26	Phil Reed (W/M)	TE	HR
Class-26	Wendy Beck (W/F)	RE	Kirk in the Hills
Class-26	Ron Hughes (W/ F)	RE	Rosedale Garden, Livonia
Class-26	Ruthanne Herrington (W/M)	TE	Member at Large
Class-26	Michelle James (W/F)	TE	Faith Community, Novi
Class-26	Tim Marvil (W/M)	TE	Allen Park
Class- 26	Adam Grosch (W/M)	TE	St. Claire Shores
Class- 26	Richard Lapehn (W/M)	TE	Orchard Lake
Class-26	Gregory Berry (B/M)	RE	Broadstreet

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

Chair-24	Emma Nickel (W/F)	TE	Royal Oak First
Co-Chair 24	Ben Larson Wolbrink (W/M)	TE	Northbrook, Beverly Hills
Class-26	Emma Nickel (W/F)	TE	Royal Oak First
Class-26	Ben Larson Wolbrink (W/M)	TE	Northbrook, Beverly Hills
Class-26	Joshua Archey (W/M)	RE	Crossroads, Walled Lake
Class-26	Chuck Sadler (W/M)	RE	St Thomas, Shelby
Class-26	Loren Scribner (W/M)	TE	HR

Class- 26 Stefanie Lewis (B/F) RE Hope, Detroit

Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC)

Class-29 Bob Beck (W/M) RE Kirk in the Hills

Class-29 Lawrence Glenn (B/M) RE Broadstreet, Detroit

Class-27 Suzanne Lewand (W/F) RE Royal Oak First

Trustees

Class-26 Dana Wilmont (W/M) TE Waterford Community

Class-26 Bernard Oglesby (B/M) RE Broadstreet

GA-2024 COMMISSIONERS

CLERGY COMMISSIONERS

Teresa Peterson TE (W/F) Geneva, Canton

Andres Edstrom TE (W/M) Greenfield, Berkley

Laura Kelsey TE (W/F) Pontiac First

ELDER COMMISSIONERS

Joshua Archey CRE (W/M) Crossroads

Richard Nkosu RE (B/M) Park United

Kevin Smith RE (W/M) Warren

RULING ELDER ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER

Elizabeth Ngare RE (B/F) Calvary

YAAD COMMISSIONER

Devyn Baumgart RE (W/M) St. Thomas, Shelby

Synod of the Covenant Commissioners

Class-26 Adrienne Adams RE (B/F) Calvary, Detroit