



# The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

## Synod of the Covenant Annual Assembly and Meeting of the Corporation Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report October 27, 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 of May 2, 2023. (Synod Papers CA-1 online only)
5. **To approve** the Minutes of the Special Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant of June 15, 2023. (CA-2 online only)
6. **To approve** the Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the Annual Assembly and Meeting of the Corporation.
7. **To approve** the following as a Standing Rule: to limit speeches during debate to three minutes.
8. **To approve** the following dates, times, and places for Assemblies of the Synod of the Covenant in 2024.
  - a. Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
  - b. Tuesday, May 7, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
  - c. Thursday, October 24, 2024 – Saturday, October 26, 2024 – Annual Assembly. Location to be determined.
9. **To receive** the following report regarding actions taken by the Finance Committee since the last Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant:

Finance Committee  
Approved Motions  
04/26/2023 – 09/27/2023

**Note: Motions to approve minutes and motions to adjourn are not included.**

**April 26, 2023**

**1. Investment Subcommittee Investment Policies and Procedures Update:**

The Statement of Investment Objectives, Policies, and Guidelines was provided to the Finance Committee. After discussion on the following motion was made:

That the Finance Committee accept this draft as a working document of the Finance Committee, give it to the consultants for review and input, and this document and any revisions to it prompted by the consultants be used for the basis on which the Investment Subcommittee and consultants develop the request for proposals to be issued to potential investment managers. The motion unanimously prevailed.

**August 30, 2023**

**2. Investment policy – Draft #4 for Fall Assembly:**

After discussion of the Investment policy a motion was made to include three changes under **Article II. Definition of Assets to Invest**, and one change under **Article III. Additional Unrestricted Investment Assets**, the motion was unanimously prevailed. The revisions are as follows:

**Article II. Definition of Assets to Invest**

A. Restricted investments are defined as those funds commonly called:

1. Ohio Campus ministry restricted funds (Donor restricted).
2. Michigan Campus Ministry restricted funds (Board restricted).

Donor-restricted investments are governed by the covenants as originally described by the donors and/or the Finance Committee based on the wishes of said donors. Board-restricted investments are governed by the actions of the trustees of the Synod of the Covenant.

The revisions reflect adding (Donor-restricted and (board-restricted under A, and clarification of C.

**Article III. Additional Unrestricted Investment Assets.**

C. The Investment Sub Committee of the Finance Committee (here forward “Investment SubCommittee”) is also encouraged to invest no more than the higher of \$500,000 or 10% of portfolio value directly into the Presbyterian Investment Loan Program (PILP).

This reflects removing “for the general benefit of the member churches of the Presbyteries within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant” at end of

this policy statement. The Investment Policy will be reviewed for approval by the Leadership Team in September 2023, and reviewed for approval at the Fall Assembly in October 2023.

**3. Insurance recommendations for Fall Assembly:**

After the Finance Committee reviewed the 1/1/2023 to 1/1/2024 General Insurance and Worker’s Compensation policies, the following motion was made and unanimously prevailed:

The Finance Committee has reviewed the 2023 General Insurance policy and the 2023 Worker’s Compensation policy and determined the coverages are adequate.

Because the Finance Committee has the responsibility to review and report annually to the Assembly on the state of Synod coverage and any recommendations, Elder Ted Fines (Mackinac), who has a good understanding of non-profit insurance, volunteered to be the Synod insurance contact for the Finance Committee. Accordingly, Elder Frank Walburg (Scioto) stated he would put Elder Fines in contact with John Bouhall, who is the Synod insurance agent. Elder Fines will review the General Insurance and Workers Compensation policies with Mr. Bouhall.

**September 27, 2023**

**4. Update on Investment Policy for Fall Assembly Presentation:**

The Investment policy had been reviewed by the Leadership Team on 09/14/2023 with no proposed revisions. During the Finance Committee update there were concerns about language and intent under Article VIII: Draws C. Unrestricted Funds. After much discussion on the appropriate use for the funds, and the amount of money the Synod spends, a motion was made “To present this document (the Investment policy) as a first-read in the Consent Agenda, and not send it back to the Investment subcommittee at this time.” The motion unanimously prevailed.

10. **To receive** as a first-read the draft of the Synod of the Covenant Investment Policy. Questions or comments should be directed to Elder Frank Walburg, Moderator of the Finance Committee. (Synod Papers CA-3 online only)

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

**Report of the Stated Clerk  
Fran Lane-Lawrence  
October 27, 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 Investigating Committee reported on October 19, 2023, that they will not file

charges.

2. Members of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission whose terms have expired in the last six years are:

Class of 2014:

Rev. Rebecca Tollefson (Scioto Valley)

Class of 2016:

Rev. Doyll Anderson, Jr. (Detroit)

Rev. Barbara Esterly (Maumee Valley)

Rev. Inkyu Park (Eastminster)

Class of 2022:

Elder Lori Schmidt (Maumee Valley)

Elder Stephanie Lewis (Detroit)

3. Report of the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit

**Synod of the Covenant**  
**Report of the Administrative Commission to the Presbytery of Detroit**  
**October 27, 2023**

**Context**

June 15, 2023, The Synod of the Covenant Assembly meeting on that date approved two recommendations brought by the Administrative Commission. The recommendations were that:

- 1) The Synod of the Covenant grant original jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Detroit to the Synod of the Covenant because it has determined that the Presbytery of Detroit is unwilling or unable to wisely manage its affairs.
- 2) That all costs associated with the AC's work shall be borne by the Presbytery of Detroit.

June 16, 2023, The AC sent a letter to the Presbytery of Detroit (PoD) for distribution to all members of the presbytery, staff members, all clerks of session, and anyone on the presbytery's distribution list. The communication informed recipients of the decision of the Synod, provided additional rationale for the decision, and indicated that the AC would assume sole jurisdiction in some areas while handing back responsibilities to some areas in the presbytery that are functioning well.

**Activity Overview**

What appears below is not necessarily chronological but rather a condensation of major events and information related to the work of the AC.

Since June 16, 2023, the AC has

- 1) Authorized Chip Hardwick to secure all the files and documents (electronic and paper) of the PoD.
- 2) Authorized the PoD COM to meet and report its actions to the AC.
- 3) Consulted with the Synod's law firm.
- 4) Requested reports from various entities as to current status and plans for the entity.
- 5) Authorized search process for three year position as Stated Clerk for PoD. Interviewed two candidates for the position. Elected the Rev. Dr. Melissa Allison to this position. She began her work on September 01,2023.
- 6) Approved a position description for Acting Executive Presbyterian (AEP) for the PoD. Contacted then currently serving PoD employees to inform them of this initiative and to offer to answer any questions that might arise.
- 7) Advertised for the AEP position and engaged in discussion with seven responders. The AC interviewed four candidates. The AC is currently in negotiation with one of the candidates to fill this position.
- 8) Received the resignation of Sarah Leight as PoD Business Manager effective August 3, 2023. The AC worked closely with the PoD Trustees to reconfigure this position by outsourcing some of the work and reassigning some duties to others. Authorized the Trustees to hire Dawn Eiben for up to 19 hours per week.
- 9) Requested the Nomination Committee to continue its work in finding suitable nominees to serve as PoD Moderator and Vice- Moderator for 2024.
- 10) Authorized the PoD Response Team to act when called upon under its current mandate and to report any actions to the AC within 30 days.
- 11) Actions Related to Committee on Ministry and/or Committee on Preparation
  - a. The AC approved the installation of the Rev. Louis Nyiri as Pastor/Head of Staff at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham.
  - b. The AC approved the request regarding Tommy Langejans, who has been examined but who wishes to be ordained in his home church within the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. Tommy is to participate in the Resident Ministry Program at the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor. The Moderator will communicate this request Lake Michigan to ordain on behalf of the PoD.

- c. Authorized the COM to examine Allison Muenzer
  - d. Authorized the COM to conduct various installations.
  - e. Approved documents changing the Committee on Ministry to the Commission on Ministry with delineation of functions and authority.
  - f. Approved the proposed PoD “Family Medical Leave Policy” for the Presbytery subject to editorial revisions noted by the AC.
  - g. Approved 2024 Terms of Call
    - i. To increase the 2024 Minimum Terms of Call Effective Salary by 3%.
    - ii. Professional Expense (\$1,550), Study Allowance (\$1,050) to remain the same.
    - iii. To change the Medical Reimbursement formula by removing 1% of Effective Salary and establishing a flat rate of \$525.
- 12) Adopted a motion to set aside any provisions in the PoD bylaws regarding the provision of notice to the extent that these are in conflict with the AC’s exercise of original jurisdiction.
- 13) Elected Corporate Officers to serve the PoD. Those elected were Alice McCollum, President of the Corporation; Mike Gaubatz, Treasurer of the Corporation; Melissa Lynn Allison, Secretary of the Corporation.
- 14) Approved a Memo of Understanding (MOU) entitled “Updated MOU for GARISSA NENDENI AREA MADOGO CHURCH BOREHOLE 7-6-23.
- 15) Received a final report of the Administrative Commission for the Milford Presbyterian Church and approved its dissolution.
- 16) Worked extensively with the PoD Trustees and the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Detroit in addressing Westminster’s request for a loan from the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 17) Report from the Committee on Nominations. Motion approved to elect the following:

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Class 23- Co-Chair            Elder Wendy Beck    Kirk in the Hills Church

MISSION INTERPRETATION

Class-23 Chair    Elder Susan Dystra    Fort Gratiot, Lakeshore Church

Information to the Administrative Commission regarding resignations:

Julie Delezenne	TE	Planning & Vision
Julie Delezenne	TE	Presbytery Response Team
Melissa Allison	TE	Committee on Ministry
Jim Hooper	RE	Committee on Nominating

18) Westminster AC

- a. Received communications from multiple individuals regarding the actions of the Westminster AC in relation to actions taken with respect to Camp Director
- b. The SoC AC instructed the Westminster AC to take no additional action until after it had consulted with the SoC AC.
- c. The SoC AC received a complete report from the Westminster AC along with appendices.

19) Initiated process to identify outside consultant(s) to assist with reviewing the PoD's anti-racism work.

20) The PoD Associate Presbyterian, Charon Barconey, has been temporarily out of the office. The AC is working with her pursuant to PoD policy.

**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 lack of operational consistency, the practice of blind copying of communications to those who are not directly involved, and the use of various forms of social media to disseminate both real and perceived slights or biases in attempts to gain sympathy and/or support continue to plague the Presbytery. Appeals to past hurts or perceived injustices are sometimes provided as justification for continued contentiousness rather than as an incentive for resolution.

**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

***THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA AND REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK***

**The next Synod Assembly will be on January 30, 2024 at 4:40 p.m. via Zoom**