



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit June 6, 2023

The Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit requests the moderator of the Synod of the Covenant call a special meeting of the Assembly on June 15, 2023, beginning at 6:00 PM via Zoom.

The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

- 1) To consider a recommendation from the Administrative Commission that the Synod of the Covenant grant them original jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 2) To afford to all persons who may be affected by this decision fair notice and opportunity to be heard on the matters at issue in accordance with the PCUSA *Book of Order*, G-3.0109.

Recommendation to Synod of the Covenant Assembly June 15, 2023 from

Synod of the Covenant's Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit

Introduction:

The Synod of the Covenant's Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit (AC) noted in its May 02, 2023, Report to the Synod that its approach to the disorder within the Presbytery of Detroit was to recommend certain actions to the entities within the Presbytery of Detroit (PoD). It also asserted, "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."

The AC has discerned that moment has come.

Recommendations 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.

Rationale:

- A. The disorder within the Presbytery of Detroit is pervasive and intertwined, and it appears to affect virtually every aspect of the PoD. There has been no discernable progress within the PoD to address the root causes of the disorder.
- B. The PoD itself has recognized its limitations in addressing the disorder. The Presbytery of Detroit meeting on May 23, 2023, by a vote of 75 “yes” and 4 “no” approved the following motion:

The Presbytery of Detroit requests that the synod administrative commission take original jurisdiction to resolve the disorder between staff and the operations committee”.
- C. The current structure within the PoD lacks clarity and precision regarding responsibility and authority. The lack of consistency between by-laws, policies, procedures, and practices continues to contribute to the disorder, misunderstanding, and mistrust.
- D. 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. Language about race or comments regarding statements made about racial justice or injustice have caused pain, fear, and misunderstanding. This phenomenon continues unabated and may even be accelerating and spreading.
- E. The practice of “blind copying” and the use of Facebook or other media platforms to distribute statements that lack context continues to lead to mistrust and misunderstanding. To date, the PoD has been unable to end this practice despite the injuries being caused.
- F. The absence of a recognized Head of Staff to whom staff members report, who functions as a liaison between groups/committees, and who is responsible for consistent application of human resources policies contributes to fragmentation and silos within the PoD. Some within the PoD point to historical factors which contributed to a delay in effectuating this appointment. While the AC previously mentioned this as a critical need, the mechanism within the PoD continues to move slowly to fill this function.
- G. During the period from May 02, 2023 until June 07, 2023, the date of this communication:
 - A. Various members of the AC have observed Coordinating Council meetings, PoD assembly meetings, and participated in Transitional Executive Presbyter search meetings.
 - B. Members met with a representative of the Operations Committee, communicated with the moderator of the Coordinating Council, and received communications from PoD staff members and from the Associate Presbyter.

- C. The AC was unable to schedule a time to meet with Michael Barconey as referenced in the May 02, 2023, Report.
- D. The AC carefully considered potential legal and/or ecclesiastical challenges that might arise from action or inaction.
- E. The AC received and acted on 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.

Previous Activity Overview

On May 02, 2023, the AC reported that it had:

- 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 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.

Process:

If the Synod grants original jurisdiction:

The AC intends to request many of the committees, commissions, and functionaries to continue their work.

The AC will suspend the work of the Operations Committee and the Coordinating Council and will fulfill their functions as an AC until such time as the AC returns jurisdiction to the Presbytery.

The AC will monitor the work of all those functioning on behalf of the Presbytery.

The AC will work to bring consistency to by-laws and policies within the PoD.

The AC will distribute communications to each of the congregations and all the functionaries within the Presbytery explaining their expectations no later than June 20, 2023.

Prayer:

Please join us in prayer that the God of all grace and wisdom would give all an abundance of each.

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