



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit Report to the Synod of the Covenant February 4, 2025

Context

This report summarizes major events and activities since the Administrative Commission's report dated October 8, 2024.

AC Personnel Change

The Rev. Calvin Bremer submitted his resignation as of January 7, 2025, due to health reasons. The AC now has only four members. (See recommendation on page 8.)

Overview

The Synod of the Covenant's Presbytery of Detroit Administrative Commission (AC) previously asserted, in its request for Original Jurisdiction approved by the Synod of the Covenant, 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.

We are seeing some tentative improvements in a few limited areas, and we recognize some members are quite anxious that jurisdiction be returned. Still, the embeddedness of the disorder means that the AC needs to not only restructure several leadership areas, but more clearly define their work and relationships with other leadership areas, and populate them. There is still a lot of work to do, and even more when the need to support the healing of past wounds is considered

Activities of the Administrative Commission October – January

Discerning Major Areas to be Addressed

At its November 10-11, 2014 workshop retreat, facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Barbara Wilson (Associate Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery and Professional Certified Coach with CAST: Coach Approach Skill Training)¹, the Synod AC determined that before jurisdiction can be returned to the presbytery, the following must be addressed/resolved.

1. Issues with Trustees/overall financial management
2. Racial justice work
3. Presbytery Structure and Staffing

¹ Note: Barbara Wilson has been working with/coaching Stated Clerk Melissa Alison and TEP Leslie Mott for the last several months.

4. By-Laws, Policies and Procedures

Trustees/Financial Management

After more than a year working with the existing trustee structure for the Presbytery of Detroit, the Administrative Commission determined that a reorganization was necessary to create the space for a structure consistent with the Administrative Commission's goals for returning original jurisdiction to the Presbytery. In early November, the AC dissolved the Board and created four committees to deal with the financial work of the presbyteries:

- Budget and Finance
- Property and Loans
- Investments
- Grants

Each of these committees has been staffed with two people from outside the Presbytery of Detroit but from within the Synod of the Covenant, who will help the committees envision their work differently and more effectively than the POD's entrenched models. Rev. Dr. Chip Hardwick was instrumental in helping to identify these people, who were asked for a six-month commitment to this work. The remainder of the members of each committee are former trustees and others from within the POD, identified through self-nominations and by Leslie Mott in consultation with Melissa Allison.

The first of these committees—Grants—has just begun their work. In the meantime, the AC is functioning as the Board of Trustees for the presbytery.

Racial Justice Work

We are in the process of contracting with the Center for Jubilee Practice, run by Rick Ufford-Chase and Ashley DeTar Birt, to work with the Presbytery of Detroit on the racial aspects of the disorders therein.

Presbytery Structure and Staffing

The Presbytery of Detroit was aware for some time that its structure was not helpful in running the presbytery. Stated Clerk Melissa Allison and TEP Leslie Mott have been working on ideas for a new structure, which they will present to the AC within the next few weeks.

In the meantime, the AC has elected two POD members to serve as 2025 Moderator—Ruling Elder Mary Lloyd—and Vice-Moderator—Ruling Elder Sharon Moore. Both are Black women and were nominated by the presbyter's Anti-Racism Committee. Sharon Mook of that committee included the following in her November 26, 2024 email to the AC supporting these nominations:

I know that there is some precedent for having the Moderator and the Vice-Moderator of differing racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds. However, as we have had two white persons in these positions for nearly two years, two very qualified persons of color serving in these positions would provide some corrective balance and much needed perspective at this time in the life of the presbytery.

I also know that there is some precedent for having these positions occupied by different gender identities. However, the Presbytery of Detroit certainly has had two men, even two white men, in these positions at the same time in the past. We strongly urge that serious consideration be given to these two nominees.

Further, I know that there is some precedent for having one of these positions held by a Minister of Word and Sacrament and the other by a Ruling Elder. In this presbytery, rigidly following this precedent can further disproportionately limit opportunities for persons of color to serve in these important leadership positions. Again, we strongly urge that serious consideration be given to these two nominees.

At the AC's January 16, 2025, meeting with Elder Mary Lloyd and Elder Sharon Moore, members were impressed with their visions for the future of the presbytery, and the AC looks forward to including them in some of our work in the POD over the next months.

By-Laws, Policies and Procedures

The Administrative Commission has approved new by-laws for the Presbytery, which will be shared within the Presbytery for feedback before coming into effect. The drafting of a manual of operations and related policies is underway.

Ongoing Work; Ongoing Issues

TEP Leslie Mott and Stated Clerk Melissa Allison continue to be actively involved with churches, pastors and other leaders, and committees/commissions within the presbytery. They bring listening ears and open hearts to their interactions within the presbytery, not least by putting together opportunities for people within the presbytery to gather in person for worship, education, and fellowship. These gatherings, including the one on Nov. 16, 2024, have been very well received. The next one is scheduled for April 5, 2025.

Sacred Pause

The "Sacred Pause," instituted by the AC in March of 2024, continues. Those groups meeting regularly are as follows:

- Commission on Ministry
- Commission on Preparation for Ministry
- Presbytery of Detroit Administrative Commission for Examination for Ordination and Installation of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Examination of Commissioned Pastors
- Anti-Racism Committee
- Michigan Black Presbyterian Caucus
- A number of Administrative Commissions (out of the Commission on Ministry) working directly in POD churches.

Nominating

Because there is no Presbytery Nominating Committee at present, the AC has tasked the Commission on Ministry and Commission on Preparation for Ministry with finding nominees for their commissions, who are then approved by the AC. This admittedly puts more pressure on these commissions, but they have done well in finding appropriately diverse slates of people to serve.

Personnel

The Synod AC received the resignation of Unah Matu-Ngare, the presbytery's Hunger Action Enabler, at the end of October 2024. For now, TEP Leslie Mott is facilitating that group.

EEOC Charge of Discrimination

On January 13, 2025, the Synod AC received notice of an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Charge of Discrimination filed by Charon Barconey. The AC is working closely with our attorney, Faith Whitaker of Dinsmore Shohl, to respond to this claim. Note that there is some confusion as to whether this charge is against the presbytery or the synod, or both.

The AC has agreed to propose mediation by the EEOC as a first step in resolving this dispute.

Actions Passed by the Administrative Commission

October 3, 2024

The following motion was approved: Having original jurisdiction, the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit is removing the current Board of Trustees for the Presbytery of Detroit effective Tuesday, October 8, 2024. The tasks of the Trustees will be assigned to a restructure of four subcommittees: Budget and Finance, Property and Loans, Investments, and Grants. The AC, acting as the Trustees, will make decisions based upon the recommendations of the subcommittees.

Motions Approved:

- to remove Elder Karen Strandholm as President of the Presbytery of Detroit Inc. and upon her removal, elect Rev. Jeanne Gay as Corporate President
- to remove Elder Ben Beale as Vice- President of the Presbyter of Detroit Inc. and upon his removal, elect Elder Jim Wilson as Corporate Vice- President

Motion Approved: to accept the Report to the Synod of the Covenant

October 17, 2024

Motion Approved: Ratification of the changes made to AC's Report to the Synod of the Covenant.

Motion Approved: Following the October 4, 2024 opportunity for all members who would be affected by the decision fair notice and an opportunity to be heard, the Administrative Commission for St. James Presbyterian Church of Redford, Michigan at their meeting on October 11, 2024 determined the session is not able to wisely conduct its affairs and recommend the administrative commission have original jurisdiction. The motion to grant original jurisdiction was approved.

Motion to authorize Stated Clerk Melissa Allison to provide the names of potential members of a to serve on an Investigation Committee in the event that allegations are filed, so that the IC can be properly trained to conduct their work. The motion was approved.

November 7, 2024

Motion Approved: to maintain per capita for the Presbytery of Detroit at \$22.85

Motion Approved: Loan request from Orchard Lake Presbyterian Church to Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program for the amount of \$100,000

Motion Approved: to adopt the Administrative Leave Policy "if the way be clear" with an affirmative vote on the Commission on Ministry.

Motion Approved (from CPM): The list of potential ordination exam readers was submitted. Motion for CPM to confer with the Michigan Presbyterian Black Caucus and Anti-Racism to prepare a final list prior to confirmation.

Motion Approved: Accept the "Anti-Harassment Policy" with the proposed changes to "Appendix A".

November 21, 2024

Motions Approved (from TEP):

- Vacation: 11/25-11/29 (Thanksgiving week) 12/23- 27 (Christmas Week).

- Study leave: 12/30-1/3/25 (between Christmas and New Year's).
- Requesting to carry over one week of study leave into 2025.

Motion to permit Northminster Presbyterian Church of Troy to enter into a lease agreement effective December 1, 2024 for a two-year period, with option for renewal, with the Congregational Church of Birmingham (UCC) to include use of the sanctuary was approved.

Motion to permit Hope Presbyterian Church of Detroit to engage in the process of the sale of their building was approved.

Milford Presbyterian Church called a special congregational meeting on November 17, 2024 to request permission to sell a portion of their property (restaurant and parking lot) was approved.

December 5, 2024

From Administrative Commission for St. James Redford 11.22.24. The following items were moved for action by the Administrative Commission for St. James Redford:

1. To Request from the Presbytery of Detroit financial support to secure property and contents insurance for the St. James Church was approved. In speaking with the principals in this matter, The St. James AC understands the building, grounds, and contents are uninsured. According to their review of the present finances of the church, there is insufficient money available from the Church to provide insurance. Hence, the St. James AC requests that the POD provide insurance coverage as soon as possible.
2. To Request funding from the Presbytery of Detroit to change the locks on the St. James Church was approved. By changing the locks, the AC for St. James will be certain that unwanted entry is not gained by any person under investigation. A key to the changed lock will be issued to the POD, the Session, and the Rainbow Daycare Director.
3. To Request that Pastor Paul Bousquette, Treasurer Kathy Anderson, and Clerk of Session Marilyn Compton meet with the AC at the Church's local bank to install the AC as signatories on the St. James Church bank account, while removing their names from the church accounts.
4. To Request that the Synod AC place Pastor Paul Bousquette on Administrative Leave. Process has been initiated.

Motion Approved (from CPM): request the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission approve an alternate assessment of the ordination exams for Minister of Word and Sacrament to evaluate Dwight Walker's understanding of Worship, Polity and Reformed Theology that has been prepared for Commission Ruling Elders by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry in the Presbytery of Detroit

Motion Approved (from CPM): To elect the following persons:

- Class of 2027—Rev. Anders Edstrom (White, Male, Greenfield), requesting renewal for another term); Rev. Darin Nettleton (White, Male, Milford); Rev. Bre Ryan (White, Female, First Congregational UCC, New Baltimore); Elder Lynne Lande (White, Female, Ann Arbor First)
- Class of 2025—Rev. Tom James (White, Male, FPC Dearborn)

Election of the slate was approved.

Motion Approved (from Presbyterian Youth Triennium): To disperse \$15,000 for the purpose of youth to attend Triennium in the Presbytery of Detroit

Temporary Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk Position descriptions were adopted.

December 19, 2024

Motion Approved: to receive the Management Representation Letter for the 2023 audit submitted by Elder Ben Beale

Motion Approved: Invoices submitted by Barbara Wilson (Wilson Coaching LLC) dated December 15,

2024 for \$5,770

Motion Approved (from COM): To carry over the remainder of the 2024 Commission on Ministry budget to be allocated toward Health Care Grants for clergy

Motion Approved (from CPM): Confirm email vote taken on December 5 approving Ordination Exam Readers for February 2025 Exam Reading

Motions Approved:

- Request for the Stated Clerk to carry over two weeks unused Study Leave to 2025.
- Request for Stated Clerk to utilize remaining Professional and Study Leave reimbursed expenses on a new laptop computer
- Request permission to retain ownership of the laptop post employment

Review and approve following insurance documents:

- Approved: 2024/25 Renewal Comparison Notice of Conditional Renewal - contains changes to policy after the Howell Nature Center tragedy
- Approved: 2025 Renewal MOI (policy)

Motion Approved: Following review of a draft Management Representation Letter sent by the Temporary Executive Presbytery on December 15 email

January 2, 2025

Motion Approved: for Stated Clerk to engage in conversation with Hope Presbyterian Church and the Hope Administrative commission regarding Hope Presbyterian Church holding a congregational meeting to vote on the intention of selling the property and then provide minutes from that meeting, then the Synod AC will proceed with approvals

Commission on Ministry nominations were approved.

- Rev. John Bak (Assoc. Pastor Korean Presbyterian Church of Metro Detroit)
- Rev. Charles Sadler (Interim Pastor, People's Church, Milan)
- Rev. Beth Delaney (Interim Pastor Southminster Presbyterian Taylor)
- Rev. Esther Lee (Associate Pastor, Korean Presbyterian Church of Metro Detroit)
- Elder Gary Gallo (Kirk in the Hills)
- Elder Sean Eaton (Westminster Ann Arbor)
- Renewal to Serve another 3- year term
- Rev. Ashley Ashley (Associate Pastor Plymouth)
- Rev. Teresa Peterson (Interim Pastor Cherry Hill Dearborn)

January 16, 2025

Motion Approved: to nominate Ruling Elder Sharon Moore as Moderator and Ruling Elder Mary Lloyd as Vice-Moderator

Motion Approved: to sell the property known as Hope Presbyterian Church, the land situated at 15340 Meyers Road in the City of Detroit in the County of Wayne in the State of Michigan ... for the amount of \$350,000 to Marcellis Smith, Lead Pastor of Detroit Church

Motion Approved: to nominate the following persons to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry for the Class of 2027: Commissioned Ruling Elder Elizabeth Ngare, Rev. Hannah Lundberg.

Motion Approved: for the expenditure of 2025 routine bills for the Presbytery of Detroit.

Motion Approved: to add a line item to the 2025 budget for Permanent Judicial Commission Expenses

Recommendation

Cal Bremer's resignation left the Administrative Commission with only four members. We are currently waiting for the Synod moderator to appoint an additional member, so we will be back at full capacity.

The Synod stated clerk has advised the Administrative Commission that we are able to request the Synod Assembly approve the appointment of additional members.

Recommendation: The Synod Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit recommends that the Synod Assembly approve two additional members be appointed to the Administrative Commission. This brings the Administrative Commission to 5-7 members.

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

Jeanne Gay, Moderator

Alice McCollum

Robert Sullivan

Jim Wilson