



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI    PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT    PRESBYTERY OF EASTMINSTER

PRESBYTERY OF LAKE HURON    PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN    PRESBYTERY OF MACKINAC    PRESBYTERY OF MAUMEE VALLEY

PRESBYTERY OF MIAMI VALLEY    PRESBYTERY OF MUSKINGUM VALLEY    PRESBYTERY OF SCIOTO VALLEY    PRESBYTERY OF THE WESTERN RESERVE  
June 28, 2018

Open Letter Re: Action of the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly on Establishing an Administrative Commission in the Synod of the Covenant

It is with great disappointment but also with hope and determination that I write this letter addressing the recent action by the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly in addressing Overture 05-03 (<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000315>) by the Presbytery of Cincinnati and the Synod of the Covenant's (SOC) response, Overture 05-06. (<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000423>)

Let me begin with the disappointment. It has always been, and still remains, the position of the SOC that Overture 05-03 contained personal and personnel matters raised by a few individuals and some presbytery leadership. Such allegations were improperly put in the form of a public Overture filed and accepted by the Office of the General Assembly, rather than being handled through the appropriate processes set forth in our *Book of Order*. The mishandling of the matter resulted in the written and oral publication of personnel issues without appropriate due process protections. This method of handling the concerns and complaints from those presbyteries and individuals resulted in the inability of the SOC to fully and fairly respond to the allegations contained in the Overture. It has caused unneeded pain and hurt to staff and members of the SOC. It has also resulted in the diversion of Synod resources away from its mission of promoting a Just Peace Church. My goal was to find a way forward to address those issues and come to truth and resolution within other established procedures that the *Book of Order* provides.

Now I want to share the hope and the path forward. Committee 05 rejected both the Cincinnati Overture and the SOC's responsive Overture, proposing an alternative motion which was passed by the General Assembly. The Committee's discussions and focus were on the desire to help move the SOC and the involved individuals and Presbyteries forward through reconciliation, while assuring that the SOC's policies are in line with the PC(USA) principles of participation and representation as outlined in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103 of the *Book of Order*. An Administrative Commission will be appointed by the new Co-Moderators of the General Assembly. Along with reviewing the policies and practices of the SOC in reference to its compliance with the principles of participation and representation, it will also have the opportunity to review the irregularities in the process leading up to and through the decision on the Overtures. The commission is tasked with assisting the SOC and Presbyteries in fulfilling their mutual obligations to be in communication and partnership and specifically to address conflicts in a pastoral manner that will promote reconciliation, healing, and restoration of unity between the SOC and its presbyteries.

Moving into the future together with determination. The SOC will continue to journey in covenant toward fulfilling our mission: through its August Assembly, wherein since 2012, the focus and purpose has been to provide an opportunity for Presbytery Moderators to gather and share with the SOC and other presbyteries what has been happening in their Presbyteries. We need to celebrate so much that is strong and faithful in the SOC mission: through its remaining mobile health fairs; through the continued organization of the next Mission USA delegates; through its Welcome Refugee initiative; through its covenant agreements with PCUSA related institutions within its bounds and support for campus ministry programs; through maintaining its ecumenical and interfaith relations; through provision of resources to presbyteries as invited; through administration of a multitude of grants and scholarships; through its Annual Assembly in November which will begin with a seminar led by the International Mission partners from the SOC's Mission to the USA program; and through its continued focus on multicultural concerns and diversity.

The SOC remains committed to openness and communication and welcomes working with the body of the General Assembly to facilitate reconciliation with the Presbytery leadership and individuals involved in the drafting and filing of Overture 05-03. We are hopeful that those individuals will likewise work to the same end

Johanna Jozwiak, Moderator, Synod of the Covenant