



# The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

## **Synod of the Covenant Assembly Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report January 31, 2022**

1. **To seat** as corresponding members the following 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 and Annual Meeting of the Corporation of October 22, 2022. (Synod Papers CA-4)
5. **To approve** the Minutes of the Called Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant of December 12, 2022, for the purpose of approving the bylaws. (Synod Papers CA-5)
6. **To receive** the following report of the Synod of the Covenant Finance Committee regarding actions taken on behalf of the Synod October 20, 2022 – December 7, 2022. See attached full report of the Finance Committee.

### **October 20, 2022**

#### **Review insurance coverage/policies:**

The Finance Committee reviewed the adequacy of the insurance coverage for the Synod of the Covenant and found it adequate.

### **November 09, 2022**

#### **Synod Office Lease Review:**

The Finance Committee approved the Lease for the Synod of the Covenant.

#### **Engagement Letters as Available:**

The Finance Committee approved the engagement letter for the Skillman Group, PLC., to continue providing bookkeeping services.

**December 07, 2022**

**DeMarco & Associates 2022 Engagement Letter:**

The Finance Committee approved the Engagement Letter for DeMarco & Associates. The Engagement Letter was signed on December 12, 2022.

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

**Report of the Stated Clerk  
Fran Lane-Lawrence  
January 31, 2023**

1. Former members for the last six years of the **Synod of the Covenant Permanent Judicial Commission** who may be called upon when necessary to constitute a quorum (D-5.0206b).

**Class of 2022:** Lori Schmidt, Stefanie Lewis, Sung Yang

**Class of 2020:** Catherine Borchart, Richard Mickley, Rhonda O'Reilly

**Class of 2018:** Fred Bohse, Russell Brandt, Norma Carnahan, Greg Gibson

**Class of 2016:** Doyll H. Andrews, Jr, Beverly Esterly, Inkyu Park (Eastminster)

2. **Appointment/Resignations - Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit:** The following individuals were appointed to serve on the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit: Jessie MacMillan (TE-Western Reserve), Alice McCollum (RE-Miami Valley), Cal Bremer (TE-Lake Michigan), Jim Wilson (RE-Scioto Valley). The following individuals resigned from the Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit: Carmen Cox-Harwell, Andrew Pomerville, and Betsy Rees. Jeanne Gay (TE-Maumee Valley) and Robert Sullivan (RE-Cincinnati) remain on the Commission from a previous appointment.

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

**Report to Synod of the Covenant Meeting  
January 31, 2023  
Administrative Commission for the Presbytery of Detroit**

**Appointment of Administrative Commission**

The Synod of the Covenant, at its February 01, 2022 meeting, responded to reports of disorder in the Presbytery of Detroit by appointment of an Administrative Commission (AC) with a multi-faceted mandate and defined

scope of authority. Those appointed as members were: Carmen Cox-Harwell, Jeanne Gay, Andrew Pomerville, Betsy Rees, and Robert Sullivan.

The AC members met with committee leaders and key functionaries within the Presbytery from February through October 2022.

### **Expansion of Purpose and Scope**

October 22, 2022 - The AC made its report and recommendations to the Synod of the Covenant Assembly meeting that day. Observations of the AC included, “As reported above, the Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission to the Presbytery of Detroit, upon investigation, has discovered that the disorder within the Presbytery is much broader than initially believed. The dynamics of mistrust and animosity include leaders beyond those serving on the Operations Committee and the Coordinating Cabinet. This disorder, which is both systemic and structural, needs to be addressed and resolved.”

The Synod of the Covenant took the following actions.

**A motion prevailed** to approve the following amended recommendation.

The Administrative Commission recommends that the Synod of the Covenant expand the purpose, scope, and authority of the AC to include:

#### **Purpose**

Inquiring into and settling disorder that exists throughout the structure of the Presbytery of Detroit by working across all ministry teams/committees/leaders to:

- Review and clearly define the tasks and authority of each ministry team/committee and how they relate to other ministry teams/committees and the Presbytery as a whole.
- Review position descriptions of each member of staff and revise as needed as soon as possible.
- Review the bylaws, manual of operations, and staff structure, and revise as needed, so the documents are consistent with one another and add further clarity as to roles and authorities of ministry teams/committees, staff, and elected leaders.
- Explore the use of power, processes, and procedures in deliberative and decision-making processes and provide education from outside

trainers and coaches about appropriate uses of the same. Expenses for these services, if needed, are to be paid by the Presbytery of Detroit.

- Address issues of mistrust, lack of transparency, and conflicts of interest between leaders and members of the presbytery.

### **Scope and Authority**

Affirming the Administrative Commission's authority as follows:

- That the Administrative Commission has the full authority of the Synod of the Covenant, except where limited by provisions of the PC(USA) Book of Order, only in matters pertaining to the Presbytery of Detroit to address personnel matters, boundaries, authority, process, mistrust issues, misuse of power, systemic and structural disorder that exists in the Presbytery of Detroit and among presbytery leaders and some members.
- If it is determined by the Administrative Commission that the Presbytery of Detroit is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, the Administrative Commission may, after a thorough investigation and full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the presbytery, recommend to the Synod that it assume original jurisdiction of the presbytery, which shall cease to act until such time the Synod shall otherwise direct (G-3.0303e)

### **Reconstitution of the Commission**

November 22, 2022 - Synod of the Covenant Moderator Deb Uchtman noted that three members resigned from the Commission; she thanked Carmen Cox-Harwell, Andrew Pomerville, and Betsy Rees for their service on the Commission. Moderator Uchtman noted that Teaching Elder Jeanne Gay (Maumee Valley) and Ruling Elder Robert Sullivan (Cincinnati) were continuing their service on the Commission. She appointed Ruling Elder Alice McCollum (Miami Valley); Teaching Elder Jessie MacMillan (Western Reserve); Teaching Elder Jeannie Harsh (Scioto Valley); and Teaching Elder Cal Bremer (Lake Michigan) to the Commission.

December 08, 2022, the reconstituted Commission met for introduction to each other, orientation, and to review of what the Commission had done in the past. It also established a regular meeting time on the first and third Thursdays of each month, with additional meeting times to be scheduled as appropriate.

January 05, 2023, the AC met and reviewed documents that had been distributed on December 05, 2022, asking questions for clarification and making comments regarding certain inconsistencies among the policies, procedures, and bylaws.

The AC agreed on the overall direction for moving forward. It elected Jessie MacMillan as Moderator and Cal Bremer as Clerk. It also established a list of individuals/functionaries with whom it wished to speak.

January 19, 2023, the AC met and acknowledged that Jeannie Harsh had resigned from the Commission AC due to unexpected challenges as she transitioned into retirement. Ruling Elder Jim Wilson had been appointed to fill this vacancy and was present for the meeting. The AC reviewed and analyzed the conversations that it had with Synod of the Covenant Stated Clerk Fran Lane-Lawrence; Presbytery of Detroit functionaries: COM chair Melissa Allison; Suzanne Lewand, chair of Operations/Personnel; Jasmine Smart, Chair of Coordinating Cabinet; Planning and Vision Team Moderator Stephanie Lewis; and with Kara Hildebrandt, Chair of Strategic Planning Committee. The AC is grateful for the reports of specific actions that are in process, and it recognizes concerns expressed regarding the pervasive nature of the disorder within the Presbytery. The AC did not perceive coherent coordination between various groups or entities to address inconsistencies between practices, policies, procedures, and Bylaws. Many of those the AC spoke to expressed anxiety and voiced concern regarding the impending vacancy when the current Presbytery Stated Clerk completes her term on March 31, 2023, and the uncertainty surrounding a position description for the person to fill that vacancy.

The AC has scheduled meetings for February 02, 2023, and looks forward to meeting with the Presbytery of Detroit Stated Clerk at that time. The AC continues to obtain and review pertinent information and documents regarding the functioning of the Presbytery of Detroit.

We solicit your prayers for discernment and wisdom,

Jessie 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 is scheduled  
For May 2, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom**