



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

June 15, 2020

The peace of Jesus Christ be with all of God's people. And may all be well and safe in this difficult season of distress over the spreading pandemics of racism and Covid-19.

This message is intended to bring you up to date on the status of the work of the General Assembly Administrative Commission acting as the Synod of the Covenant (the Commission). The Commission assumed original jurisdiction of the Synod of the Covenant on February 13, 2020. Once the Commission assumed original jurisdiction, it effectively stepped into the shoes of and began acting as the Assembly. Acting as the Assembly, the Commission elected new officers and suspended many of the committees of the Synod.¹

The elected officers of the Synod of the Covenant are: Moderator Ruling Elder Patrice Hatley; Vice Moderator Reverend Adel Malek; Stated Clerk, Corporate Secretary and Vice-Treasurer Reverend Richard Rojas; President and Chair of the Board of Trustees Ruling Elder Ben McConaughy; Vice President Ruling Elder Michelle Johnson; and Treasurer Reverend Brady Radford;. Reverend Sue Krummel is serving as moderator of the Personnel Services Committee, with Michelle Johnson and Brady Radford also serving on the committee.

We are pleased that the Reverend Dr. Charles (Chip) Hardwick has agreed to serve as the Transitional Synod Executive. Chip is building relationships across the Synod and with constituent presbyteries, and has done so in this season of social distance.

Since assuming jurisdiction, the Commission has taken control of the Synod's facilities and assets to the extent possible. The banking and accounting transition has been more challenging than had been

¹ The Synod's Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs (CECA) continues its leadership. The previously elected Synod Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) also remains in place.



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anticipated. We have engaged legal counsel to assist with these matters. We seek to provide transparency in the financial records of the Synod and will be contracting with a forensic auditor to sort out the details and provide a starting point for financial accountability and transparent reporting. The Commission has met virtually with Presbytery executives and other interested persons. To the extent practicable, the Commission has worked with certain of the Synod's prior staff.

We know that the present times are challenging at all levels of our lives, including our congregations and presbyteries. One of the affected areas, among others, has been finances and all the adjustments financial constraints entail for our mission. That is why at our last meeting, we approved that the per capita for the year 2021 be the same as for the year 2020 (\$3.25 per member). By doing this, we also stand in solidarity with the recent decisions from the Office of the General Assembly.

Most programming of the Synod has been suspended at least through then end of 2020 in order to facilitate development of a shared sense of mission and ministry across the Synod and to begin to mediate reconciliation and a new sense of communion within the Synod. (The one exception is that we hope to make progress on receiving grants requests and distributing funds before the end of the year. We are in the process of contracting with a professional mediation consultant with experience in complex church systems and multi-cultural concerns to gather information about necessary steps to work toward reconciliation.

The Commission will restore jurisdiction as soon as it observes readiness of the Synod's system to operate and be able to function and be self-managing. That process will include our hopes that commissioners elected by presbyteries will be able to form a newly constituted Synod Assembly, perhaps as early as November 2020.

The Commission has approved the relocation of the Synod office from Toledo to the Detroit area during the fall, and Chip will proceed to recruit an office administrator there. We on the Administrative Commission will begin the search for a part-time Stated Clerk soon.



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Communication improvements lag behind what we had hoped to for, mainly due to significant challenges in gaining access to website, social media and email accounts. We appreciate the assistance of the presbytery leadership in helping us gather email addresses of those with whom we need to be in communication. The Synod website is undergoing some updates now.

The Synod Assembly schedule of gatherings will be posted on the Synod website and opportunity to register to attend them will be included. Email notices will be sent to the presbytery executive staff and stated clerks with requests to forward to those within the presbyteries that may have interest. The near term schedule of Synod Assembly meetings will be monthly, ordinarily on the 4th Friday afternoon, so July 24, August 28, September 25, and October 23 from 1pm-4pm ET. All meetings will be conducted via zoom video conference rather than in person. Dockets will be posted a week prior to the meeting on the Synod website. Our goal is to conduct open and accessible meetings.

God bless you,

The Administrative Commission

Patrice Hatley

Michelle Johnson

Sue Krummel

Adel Malek

Ben McConaughy

Brady Radford

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