



The Synod of the Covenant  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Minutes of the Synod Assembly  
February 1, 2022, at 4:30 p.m.  
Via Zoom**

**MEETING ORIENTATION:** An orientation to meeting technology/protocols was provided by Heather Johnston, Office Manager, just prior to the beginning of the meeting.

**ROLL AND QUORUM:** Moderator, Rev. Deborah Uchtman (Cincinnati), called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. in prayer. A quorum was present. (The roll is attached). Rev. Uchtman welcomed guests, visitors, and corresponding members. (ATTACHMENT A)

**APPROVAL OF THE DOCKET:** A motion prevailed to approve the docket.

**APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA AND CLERK'S REPORT:** A motion prevailed to approve the Consent Agenda and the Clerk's Report, which included the following items:

**Synod of the Covenant  
Assembly Meeting  
Consent Agenda and Clerk's Report  
February 1, 2022**

1. **To seat as corresponding members** the following executive presbyters, general presbyters, presbytery leaders, and stated clerks in attendance at this meeting: Rev. Erwin Goedicke (Cincinnati), Rev. Floretta Barbee-Watkins (Detroit), CRE Charon Barconey (Detroit), Elder Marianne Grano (Detroit), Rev. Cathy Ulrich (Eastminster), Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence (Lake Michigan), Rev. Cal Bremer (Lake Michigan), Elder Kay Morrill (Mackinac), Rev. Lynn Bova (Miami Valley). They were recorded as present on the rolls.
2. **To seat as corresponding members** guest teaching elders and ruling elders from congregations within the Synod of the Covenant in attendance at this meeting. For a list of those seated as corresponding members.
3. **To approve** the Minutes of the Assembly of the Synod of the Covenant of October 7-9, 2021.
4. **To approve** the Minutes of the Special Called Assembly Meeting of the Synod of the Covenant of October 26, 2021.
5. **To approve** the 2022 Housing Allowance for the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, in the amount of \$50,000.

6. **To approve** the Celebration of the Lord's Supper during worship at the gathering of Presbyterian Women on July 29-30, 2022.
7. **To approve** the request from the Presbytery of Detroit to assume original jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Process in response to an allegation filed against a member. Due to possible conflicts of interest, it would not be appropriate for the Presbytery of Detroit to retain jurisdiction in this Disciplinary Process.
8. **To receive** the Report of the Stated Clerk for today as follows:

**Report of the Stated Clerk  
Fran Lane-Lawrence  
February 1, 2022**

1. **REVIEWS OF 2020 PRESBYTERY MINUTES:** Reviews of the 2020 Presbytery Minutes are ongoing and will be completed and reported during 2022.
2. **SYNOD OF THE COVENANT ANNUAL COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION REPORT:** The Synod of the Covenant 2020 Annual Committee on Representation Report was submitted on January 20, 2021. The Synod of the Covenant was under the jurisdiction of a General Assembly Administrative Commission, so there is no statistical information to report for 2020.
3. **LEADERWISE TRAINING for 2022:**
  - *Race, Science and the Church*, February 16 and 23 from 12:00 to 1:30. The deadline for registration is February 16, 2022. The cost of the workshops is fully paid by the Synod of the Covenant.
  - *Journey Groups* meet monthly from March through November – meeting times to be set by each group, designed for Pastors/CREs in any ministry. The deadline for registration is February 15, 2022. The cost per participant is \$100; the remaining costs are paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.
  - *Adaptive Leadership Workshops and Practicum*, August 1, September 1, October 6, and November 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day. The deadline for registration is July 23, 2022. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and the Presbyteries.
  - *Not Just Sundays*, Coming September 2022. Registration deadline to be announced. The cost is fully paid by the Synod.
4. **LEADERWISE BOUNDARY AND ETHICS TRAINING for 2022:**
  - *Introduction to Boundaries*, March 14-15, 2022, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon
  - *Introduction to Boundaries*, November 16-17, 2022, from 6:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Deadline for Registration is March 4, 2022, for March and November 7 for November. Participants must be present for all 5 hours of training to receive credit. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.
  - *Advanced Boundary Training*, May 11-12, 2022, from 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Deadline for Registration is May 2, 2022. Participants must be present for all 5 hours to receive credit. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.

- *Healthy Church Boundaries*, October 4-5, 2022, from 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. For teaching elders, ruling elders, and members of congregations. The deadline to register is September 23, 2022. The cost is fully paid by the Synod and Presbyteries.

5. **MEETINGS OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY:** The dates for Synod Assemblies in 2022 are as follows:

- Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Friday – Saturday, October 21-22 Retreat and Annual Meeting

Executive and General Presbyters, Stated Clerks, and any other interested parties are welcome to attend.

**THIS ENDS THE CONSENT AGENDA/CLERK'S REPORT**

**WORSHIP:** The Rev. Deborah Uchtman (Cincinnati) recognized the Rev. Dr. Andrew Pomerville (Lake Huron) to lead the Assembly in a time of worship. Rev. Dr. Pomerville's sermon was based on Nehemiah 8:1-12 and focused on the desire to return to the past and what we know. He recognized ways we sometimes romanticize the past. As the Synod works for God's kingdom, he urged us to look forward to the things to which God is calling rather than looking to the past. Commissioners were placed in small groups to consider the sermon. Members were gathered for the closing prayer.

**REPORT OF THE SYNOD EXECUTIVE:** The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, presented his report, *A Year in Review For 2021*. He shared that there were fifty-six educational scholarship recipients. The synod distributed \$40,000 to recipients in ten presbyteries (twenty-nine different congregations), and approximately fifty (50%) percent of the recipients were Black, Indigenous, People of Color. Educational Grant Scholarship Applications for 2022 will be due mid-May.

The Synod also distributed \$50,000 to Matthew 25 Grant Recipients in five presbyteries for eleven ministries. Educational Scholarships and Matthew 25 Grants are funded through per capita and synod endowment funds.

There were a number of workshops offered throughout the year, and several digital worship services were also made available. The Synod distributed \$50,000 to Campus Ministries. In 2022, the Synod begins working on Back Office and Structure items.

**INNOVATIVE MINISTRY:** The Rev. Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley) led members as they went into breakout rooms to consider the following questions:

1. When you read the ministry focus about innovative ministry and its supporting paragraph, what does that mean to you?
2. What kinds of innovative ministry do you see in your presbytery and/or its churches?
3. How do you think the synod could support and encourage such ministries?

Members returned and shared discussions from the small groups. The information will be saved for future discussions.

**NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE:** Elder Lora Manon (Maumee Valley) presented the report of the Nominations Committee. The following individuals were placed in nomination to the respective position and class. **A motion prevailed** to close nominations from the floor. **A motion prevailed** to elect the following members to the respective positions and classes:

**Permanent Judicial Commission**

Juliann Joy, TE (Eastminster) –Class of 2026  
Carmen Cox-Harwell, TE (Western Reserve) –Class of 2026  
Brian Maguire, TE (Miami Valley) –Class of 2026  
Tim Dyck, TE (Muskingum Valley) –Class of 2024

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:** Elder Andy Thorburn (Lake Michigan) presented the following recommendations for items to be included in the Synod of the Covenant Bylaws. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the following items:

**Permanent Judicial Commission as required [G-3.0109a, D-5.0101]**

The Synod shall elect a Permanent Judicial Commission of eleven members to thirteen members, composed of at least one from each of the Synod's eleven presbyteries as much as possible. Each commission shall be composed of teaching and ruling elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. The term for each member of a permanent judicial commission shall be six (6) years. [D-5.0101]. No one shall serve as a member of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission who is a member of a Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission or the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission. The Commission shall meet in February of each year to elect its own officers: Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, and Associate Clerk [D-5.0201]. All other guidelines and responsibilities are according to the PCUSA Book of Order, D-5.000.

**Investigating Committee.**

When an accusation against an individual under the authority of the Synod of Covenant is received by the Stated Clerk, the Stated Clerk shall notify the Synod Moderator, who, in consultation with the Stated Clerk and the Synod Executive, shall appoint an Investigating Committee. If the Moderator is unable or unwilling to make the appointment, the Vice-Moderator shall designate the committee. [D-10.0201.] Names of the Investigating Committee shall be given at the next meeting of the Synod. Committee of Counsel. When the Stated Clerk is notified a complaint or allegation has been filed against the Synod, the Stated Clerk shall notify the Synod Moderator, who, in consultation with the Stated Clerk and the Synod Executive, shall appoint three members to serve as Committee of Counsel. If the Moderator is unable or unwilling to make the appointment, the Vice-Moderator shall appoint the committee. [D-6.0302a.]

**Administrative Commission**

If a committee or commission of the Synod deems it wise for an Administrative Commission to be appointed, they shall, after consultation with the Moderator, Stated Clerk, and Synod Executive, recommend such a commission for the Synod's approval. The purpose and powers of such a commission shall also be recommended. Between Synod Assemblies, the Moderator, in consultation with the Stated Clerk and the Synod Executive, may appoint an Administrative Commission. The Synod Assembly shall affirm the appointment of the Administrative Commission at the next Synod Assembly immediately following the appointment. The Administrative Commission shall provide an update/report to the Synod Assembly at each meeting of the Synod. [G-3.0109b].

Elder Andy Thorburn (Lake Michigan) presented the following recommendation for Trustees for 2022. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the following items:

## **Resolution on the Trustees for 2022**

1. Membership
  - a. The Board of Trustees of the Corporation shall be composed of six (6) people, three (3) teaching elders, and three (3) ruling elders, who shall be elected by the Corporation of the Synod. They shall be elected in three (3) classes of two (2) members each for a 3-year term and serve no more than six (6) consecutive years. (G-4.0102).
  - b. Members of the Board of Trustees for 2022 were elected by the Synod Assembly in October 2021.
  - c. The Board of Trustees shall serve as the Budget and Finance Committee.
  - d. The Trustees of the Corporation shall be of legal age in the State of Ohio, whether or not they are residents of the State of Ohio.
  - e. The Synod Treasurer shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees with voice but no vote and Treasurer of the Corporation.
  - f. The Synod Executive shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees with voice but no vote.
  - g. The Stated Clerk shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees with voice but no vote.
2. Term
  - a. Three-year terms in three classes.
  - b. May serve a total of six consecutive years.
3. Officer
  - a. The Budget and Finance Committee, at its February meeting, shall elect the person to serve as the President of the Trustees. The President shall be elected for a one-year term, but there is no limit to the number of terms.
  - b. The Synod shall ratify the President elected by the Budget and Finance Committee.
4. Meetings
  - a. Meetings shall be called by the President of the Trustees when directed by the Synod Assembly.
  - b. The quorum is a majority of members currently serving.
5. Responsibilities of the Trustees
  - a. The Board of Trustees shall receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property and facilitate the management of the Synod's civil affairs in such manner as may be directed by the Synod and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church(U.S.A.).
  - b. The Trustees shall secure a full financial review of all books and records of the Presbytery by an independent accountant annually and report the results to the Synod Assembly.[G-3.0113].
  - c. The Trustees shall be responsible for overseeing and maintaining the lease agreements that exist between the synod and the owner of the Synod's leased office facilities and between the Synod and the owner of any other property in such a manner as may be directed by the Synod according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
  - d. The Trustees shall hold, reinvest, and keep funds belonging to the Synod, including funds held in trust for the Synod, in such a manner as may be directed by the Synod and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
  - e. The Trustees shall execute contracts in the states within the bounds of the Synod in such a manner as may be directed by the Synod according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
  - f. The Trustees shall review the insurance coverage/policies of the Synod at least annually and report annually to the Synod Assembly the state of the Synod's insurance coverage.

- g. The Trustees shall review the Policies of the Board of Trustees regularly and make recommendations to the Synod Assembly for changes.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Elder Martha Blenman (Detroit), Treasurer, offered words of introduction and invited the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, who presented a preliminary draft Income Statement. 2021 Income was approximately \$630,000, and 2021 Expenses were approximately \$460,000. (ATTACHMENT B)

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Elder Frank Walburg (Muskingum, on behalf of the Finance Committee, provided information relative to the Synod's need for a bookkeeper or bookkeeping services to record and maintain the Synod's financial information. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve up to \$30,000 for a bookkeeper or bookkeeping service.

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:** Rev. Mary Jane Knapp (Muskingum Valley), on behalf of the Human Resources Committee, recommended that the Synod approve the Bookkeeping Position Description provided in the Assembly Papers. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the position description. (ATTACHMENT C)

Elder Knapp, on behalf of the Human Resources Committee, recommended to the Synod that the contract of the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, be extended through May 3, 2022. After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to extend the contract through May 3, 2022.

**REQUEST FOR AN ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION:** The Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence, Interim Stated Clerk, informed the Assembly that the Synod had received a report of disorder affecting the Presbytery of Detroit, specifically the disorder was affecting the Coordinating Cabinet, the Operations Committee, and certain members of staff. She provided polity information from the PC(U.S.A.) *Book of Order* and explained terms and processes provided therein. The Rev. Dr. Charles B. Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive, provided some of the background information on the disorder that has been reported.

The Rev. Deborah Uchtman, Moderator, read the following recommendation from the Synod Temporary Leadership Team, which was provided to members in the Assembly Papers.

The Temporary Leadership Team of the Synod of the Covenant recommends that the Synod of the Covenant appoint an Administrative Commission (AC) for the Presbytery of Detroit per the report of disorder.

**PC(U.S.A.) Book of Order, G-3.0109 b (5) – Administrative Commissions**

Administrative commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities, they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.

Functions that may be entrusted to administrative commissions include, but are not limited to:

(5) (by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly) visiting particular councils, congregations, or agencies over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein, except that no commission of a presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body (G-2.0901);

### **Report of Disorder:**

The moderator of the Coordinating Cabinet reported to the Synod that disorder exists in the Presbytery of Detroit between the Coordinating Cabinet, the Operations Committee, and two key upper-level members of staff. The Coordinating Cabinet requested that the Synod of the Covenant appoint an Administrative Commission to take jurisdiction of this matter and to inquire into and settle difficulties therein.

### **Specific Disorder into which the AC would inquire and settle.**

- Lack of clarity surrounding appropriate processes, authority, and interactions between the Operations Committee, the Coordinating Cabinet, and members of staff.
- The inability of the Operations Committee and the Coordinating Cabinet to effectively address ongoing personnel difficulties.
- Confusion around staff position descriptions and appropriate entity and process to be used to address issues of poor performance of senior staff.
- Distrust and animosity between the Operations Committee, the Coordinating Cabinet, and senior members of staff.
- Senior staff not adhering to appropriate Presbytery processes.

### **Recommendation to the Synod of the Covenant and Scope of Authority for AC**

Therefore, the Temporary Leadership Team recommends to the Synod of the Covenant, pursuant to Book of Order provision G-3.0109 b (5), that an Administrative Commission of three to five members be appointed by the Moderator of the Synod, in consultation with the Interim Synod Executive and Interim Stated Clerk, for the following purposes, including but not limited to:

1. To inquire into and settle the current personnel issues related to job performance and relationships between senior members of the staff by taking jurisdiction of this matter.
2. To work with the Coordinating Cabinet, the Operations Committee, and the Presbytery Stated Clerk to clarify and resolve processes and boundaries of their work together, especially as they relate to personnel issues and processes by which relationships with personnel are resolved.
3. To clarify to members of senior staff appropriate communication processes as relates to the content and distribution of grievances to appropriate presbytery entities and members.
4. To address issues of mistrust, lack of transparency, and conflicts of interest between the Operations Committee, the Coordination Cabinet, and members of staff.

It is further recommended that the Administrative Commission have the full authority of the Synod of the Covenant, except where limited by provisions of the PC(U.S.A.) Book of Order, to address personnel matters, boundary, authority, process, and mistrust issues between the Operations Committee and Coordinating Cabinet, including assuming original jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Detroit for the specific purpose of correcting the disorder specified above if it is determined that either the Operations Committee or Coordinating Cabinet is unable or unwilling to successfully resolve irregularities in a timely manner. The Administrative Commission also has full authority to dissolve the relationship between the Presbytery and senior members of staff if they are unwilling to successfully resolve

irregularities in a timely manner. The Synod of the Covenant Administrative Commission must give a fair hearing to all involved before assuming original jurisdiction or before dissolving the relationships of any members of staff.

It is further recommended that the following members be appointed to the Administrative Commission: Carmen Cox Harwell (Western Reserve), Jeanne Gay (Maumee Valley), Andrew Pomerville (Lake Huron), Betsy Rees (Mackinac), Robert Sullivan (Cincinnati)

**A motion prevailed** by more than the 2/3 required to limit debate to two and ½ minutes per person.

After a time of discussion, **a motion prevailed** to approve the appointment of an Administrative Commission to address the disorder affecting Detroit as presented.

**ADJOURNMENT AND PRAYER:** Elder Adrienne Adams led the Assembly in a time of prayer. **A motion prevailed** to adjourn at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence  
Interim Stated Clerk

**THIS ENDS THE MINUTES OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY OF FEBRUARY 2, 2022**

**The Next Synod Assembly is scheduled  
For May 3, 2022, at 4:30 p.m.  
Via Zoom**



**The Synod of the Covenant**  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)