

Report to Synod of the Covenant Meeting October 26-28, 2023
from
Synod of the Covenant's Presbytery of Detroit Administrative Commission

Context

June 15, 2023, The Synod of the Covenant Assembly meeting on that date approved two recommendations brought by the Administrative Commission. The recommendations were that:

- 1) The Synod of the Covenant grant original jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Detroit to the Synod of the Covenant because it has determined that the Presbytery of Detroit is unwilling or unable to wisely manage its affairs.
- 2) That all costs associated with the AC's work shall be borne by the Presbytery of Detroit.

June 16, 2023, The AC sent a letter to the Presbytery of Detroit (PoD) for distribution to all members of the presbytery, staff members, all clerks of session, and anyone on the presbytery's distribution list. The communication informed recipients of the decision of the Synod, provided additional rationale for the decision, and indicated that the AC would assume sole jurisdiction in some areas while handing back responsibilities to some areas in the presbytery that are functioning well.

Activity Overview

What appears below is not necessarily chronological but rather a condensation of major events and information related to the work of the AC.

Since June 16, 2023, the AC has

- 1) Authorized Chip Hardwick to secure all the files and documents (electronic and paper) of the PoD.
- 2) Authorized the PoD COM to meet and report its actions to the AC.
- 3) Consulted with the Synod's law firm.
- 4) Requested reports from various entities as to current status and plans for the entity.
- 5) Authorized search process for three year position as Stated Clerk for PoD. Interviewed two candidates for the position. Elected the Rev. Dr. Melissa Allison to this position. She began her work on September 01, 2023.
- 6) Approved a position description for Acting Executive Presbyter (AEP) for the PoD. Contacted then currently serving PoD employees to inform them of this initiative and to offer to answer any questions that might arise.

- 7) Advertised for the AEP position and engaged in discussion with seven responders. The AC interviewed four candidates. The AC is currently in negotiation with one of the candidates to fill this position.
- 8) Received the resignation of Sarah Leight as PoD Business Manager effective August 3, 2023. The AC worked closely with the PoD Trustees to reconfigure this position by outsourcing some of the work and reassigning some duties to others. Authorized the Trustees to hire Dawn Eiben for up to 19 hours per week.
- 9) Requested the Nomination Committee to continue its work in finding suitable nominees to serve as PoD Moderator and Vice- Moderator for 2024.
- 10) Authorized the PoD Response Team to act when called upon under its current mandate and to report any actions to the AC within 30 days.
- 11) Actions Related to Committee on Ministry and/or Committee on Preparation
 - a. The AC approved the installation of the Rev. Louis Nyiri as Pastor/Head of Staff at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham.
 - b. The AC approved the request regarding Tommy Langejans, who has been examined but who wishes to be ordained in his home church within the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. Tommy is to participate in the Resident Ministry Program at the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor. The Moderator will communicate this request Lake Michigan to ordain on behalf of the PoD.
 - c. Authorized the COM to examine Allison Muenzer
 - d. Authorized the COM to conduct various installations.
 - e. Approved documents changing the Committee on Ministry to the Commission on Ministry with delineation of functions and authority.
 - f. Approved the proposed PoD "Family Medical Leave Policy" for the Presbytery subject to editorial revisions noted by the AC.
 - g. Approved 2024 Terms of Call
 - 1) To increase the 2024 Minimum Terms of Call Effective Salary by 3%.
 - 2) Professional Expense (\$1,550), Study Allowance (\$1,050) to remain the same.
 - 3) To change the Medical Reimbursement formula by removing 1% of Effective Salary and establishing a flat rate of \$525.
- 12) Adopted a motion to set aside any provisions in the PoD bylaws regarding provision of notice to the extent that these are in conflict with the AC's exercise of original jurisdiction.
- 13) Elected Corporate Officers to serve the PoD. Those elected were Alice McCollum, President of the Corporation; Mike Gaubatz, Treasurer of the Corporation; Melissa Lynn Allison, Secretary of the Corporation.
- 14) Approved an MOU titled "Updated MOU for GARISSA NENDENI AREA MADOGO CHURCH BOREHOLE 7-6-23.

- 15) Received final report of the Administrative Commission for the Milford Presbyterian Church and approved its dissolution.
- 16) Worked extensively with the PoD Trustees and the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Detroit in addressing Westminster's request for a loan from the Presbytery of Detroit.
- 17) Report from the Committee on Nominations. Motion approved to elect the following:
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
 Class 23- Co-Chair Elder Wendy Beck Kirk in the Hills Church

MISSION INTERPRETATION
 Class-23 Chair Elder Susan Dystra Fort Gratiot, Lakeshore Church

 Information to the Administrative Commission regarding resignations:

Julie Delezenne	TE	Planning & Vision
Julie Delezenne	TE	Presbytery Response Team
Melissa Allison	TE	Committee on Ministry
Jim Hooper	RE	Committee on Nominating
- 18) Westminster AC
 - a. Received communications from multiple individuals regarding the actions of the Westminster AC in relation to actions taken with respect to Camp Director
 - b. The SoC AC instructed the Westminster AC to take no additional action until after it had consulted with the SoC AC.
 - c. The SoC AC received a complete report from the Westminster AC along with appendices.
- 19) Initiated process to identify outside consultant(s) to assist with reviewing the PoD's anti-racism work.
- 20) The PoD Associate Presbyter, Charon Barconey, has been temporarily out of the office. The AC is working with her pursuant to PoD policy.

Observations of the AC

The AC previously asserted that "...the disorder within the Presbytery of Detroit is pervasive, intertwined, and appears to affect virtually every aspect of the PoD. The disorder affects the body in multiple ways". This continues to be the case.

The lack of operational consistency, the practice of blind copying of communications to those who are not directly involved, the use of various forms of social media to disseminate both real and perceived slights or biases in attempts to gain sympathy and/or support continue to plague the Presbytery. Appeals to past hurts or perceived

injustices are sometimes provided as justification for continued contentiousness rather than as incentive for resolution.

AC Gratitude and Request:

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

Jesse MacMillan, Moderator

Alice McCollum

Jeanne Gay

Robert Sullivan

Jim Wilson

Cal Bremer, Clerk