

# Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency

## Minutes

Louisville, KY and Online

January 23-24, 2025

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

#### Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“the Unification Commission”) held their twenty sixth meeting both in person and online using Zoom, an online audio and web conferencing platform. The public was able to watch in real-time (and view a recording) via Vimeo, a video sharing platform, on the website of the Interim Unified Agency. Materials, including the agenda and minutes, were available to the public via EQUIP, a learning management system administered by the Office of the General Assembly.

#### Roll

The roll was formed at 11:00 a.m. ET on Thursday, January 23, 2025:

Commissioners (as appointed by the Co-Moderators of the 225th General Assembly (2022); criteria and demographics included for the record):

- Felipe N. Martínez, Co-Moderator, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Ohio Valley; Commissioner, 225th General Assembly (2022)
- Cristi Scott Ligon, Co-Moderator, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee; Commissioner, 225th General Assembly (2022)
- Debra Avery, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Great Rivers; Moving Forward Implementation Special Committee
- Carson Brown, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of Peace River; Young Adult Advisory Delegate, 225th General Assembly (2022)
- Dee Cooper, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Denver; Presbyterian Mission Agency Board
- Dave Davis, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of the Coastlands; Committee on the Office of the General Assembly
- Frances Lin, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Riverside; At-Large
- Scott Lumsden, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Seattle; Per Capita and Financial Sustainability Special Committee
- Emily Martin, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of North Central California; Young Adult Advisory Delegate, 225th General Assembly (2022)
- José Rosa-Rivera, Ruling Elder, Presbiterio de San Juan; Per Capita and Financial Sustainability Special Committee
- Bill Teng, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Peace River; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board
- Kris Thompson, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of National Capital; At-Large

Ex-Officio:

- CeCe Armstrong, Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly (2024)
- Tony Larson, Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly (2024)

Staff:

- Kelly Beeland, Consultant to the Unification Commission
- Barry Creech, Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Interim Unified Agency (IUA), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
- Jayne Culp, Manager of Administration, Interim Unified Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Mike Ferguson, Editor, Unified Communication Ministries, Interim Unified Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Debbie Gardiner, Executive Assistant, Interim Unified Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Ian Hall, President, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Operating Officer, A Corporation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),
- Rick Jones, Director of Unified Communication Ministries, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of the Interim Unified Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Guests:

- April Davenport, General Counsel, A Corporation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Laurie Griffith, Associate Director of the Office of the Constitution of the General Assembly, Interim Unified Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Opening Prayer and Devotion**

Felipe Martínez, co-moderator of the Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“Unification Commission”; [UC]), called the meeting to order at 11 a.m. on January 23, 2025, with an opening prayer.

**Land Acknowledgment**

Commissioner Emily Martin was recognized and led with the land acknowledgement for the land upon which the Presbyterian Center sits (100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Ky.), and area Presbyterian congregations. The Shawnee, Cherokee, Osage, Seneca, Iroquois, and Miami, Hopewell, and Adena land were noted.

**Covenant**

Commissioner Bill Teng read the covenant as a reminder of how the Unification Commission had agreed to engage the responsibility of this commission.

**Key Unifying Principles**

Cristi Scott Ligon continued by reminding the UC of their key unifying principles: Relational; Streamlined; Nimble; Justice-Focused; and Vision Driven.

**Choice Points and Equity Primes**

Stated Clerk/Executive Director Jihyun Oh reviewed key points about Choice Points and Equity Primes. Equity primes are tools to help us remember the full breadth of choices and help us not to follow implicit associations and assumptions, but to make choices that align with our values of equity and inclusion.

When these tools were utilized during GA225 and GA226, individual Equity Prime Cards were developed to help committee members understand their rights (e.g. the right not to be interrupted and finish a thought.) In addition, each participant has a choice... to be a voice for equity and inclusion. Participants were encouraged to slow down when making decisions, to pay attention to core values.

Oh suggested that Equity Primes are “reminders of how to be neighbors who love a wider group of people as ourselves” and shared ways that the Commission can incorporate this approach and these primes in its work.

**Agenda** By common consensus, the agenda was adopted as amended.

**Minutes** The UC Minutes of the December 14, 2024 meeting were adopted without objection by common consent.

**Co-Moderators Report** Cristi Scott Ligon welcomed Jayne Culp, Manager of Administration, Interim Unified Agency (IUA), as the new minute taker for the UC.

Scott Ligon continued by providing highlights of their recent efforts. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (PMAB) were sunsetted on December 31, 2024. In 2025, more effort will be put toward providing governance to the Interim Unified Agency (IUA). Gratitude was expressed for the people who served on COGA, PMAB, all staff involved in the creation of a unified budget last fall, and especially the senior staff of OGA, PMA, and ASG.

Diane Moffett, former Executive Director and President of the PMA, was thanked for her leadership and ministry of that organization and her role with the Leadership Table which helped bring the Church to this moment in the journey.

Scott Ligon continued by saying that the commission is deepening its relationship with the IUA and the Stated Clerk/Executive Director Jihyun Oh to support and resource her, including meeting weekly with her. It is expected that soon the Unification Management Office (UMO) will be functional under the leadership of the IUA.

Felipe Martínez lauded the efforts of the staff of the ASG for the role they play in the life of our national offices. Martínez welcomed Ian Hall as ASG President, while he also continues in his roles as Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Finance Officer. The work of outgoing ASG President Kathy Lueckert especially as she resourced this commission was lifted up.

Martínez continued saying that the UC has valued the independent character of the work of ASG and has been grateful for the role of the A Corp Board as well and are seeking to deepen the relationship between them.

The agenda for this meeting is focused on our transition into this role of governing the IUA. This work is difficult and challenges many of us to rethink the way that things have been done in the past.

**Report from  
the Stated  
Clerk and  
Executive  
Director**

Jihyun Oh framed her recent work as that of the Stated Clerk in the transitional space with the addition of Executive Director responsibilities. Oh's current work in both roles has included:

- Attending meetings and/or meeting in-person with people where the Stated Clerk has had ex officio or head of communion role, including ecumenical/conciliar partners
- Connecting with mid councils, especially those who are not as well connected to the denomination or have not had a visit in recent years
- Connecting with other denominational entities, partners, institutions, etc.
- Meeting with staff groups to get to know former PMA staff and organization
- Transitioning to joint leadership meetings

**Update on World Mission**

- Role of A Corp Board – The A Corp Board met on January 7, 2025, and as employer of record, approved a process and rationale for the reduction in force program and the shifts in World Mission. Research and discernment around these shifts in world mission has taken place over the last several years. This information was shared with the World Mission staff on January 16, 2025.
- Role of UC and IUA in this project – This process is still unfolding and the IUA Leadership Team continues to work on it.
- Plan and Timeline for this initiative – Some of the World Mission staff will be offered the chance for re-deployment and other people will be receiving packages. The timeline has been pushed back about a week to give more time to the calibration process. The communications and reductions are now expected to happen in the first week of February 2025.
- Oh shared that there has already been a lot of negative feedback about the expected process and outcome. When this information can be shared, it will be emailed to the world mission staff, other staff, our global mission partners, the UC, the broader church, mid council leaders, and others who will be affected.

**2025-2026 Priorities**

Oh continued by sharing her 2025-26 priorities:

She will continue to:

- Attend meetings and/or meet in-person with people where the SC has had ex officio or head of communion role, including ecumenical/conciliar partners
- Connect with mid councils, especially those who are not as well connected to the denomination or have not had a visit in recent years
- Connect with other denominational entities, partners, institutions, etc.

And add:

- Having designees attend events, representing Oh.

### **Moving Toward a Unified Agency**

SC/ED Jihyun Oh continued her presentation by sharing accomplishments related to moving toward a unified agency:

- Joint IUA staff weekly email was launched on January 10, 2025
- Joint leadership team meetings began in December with deputies and directors
- Finishing up work toward naming interim senior leadership team
- Working on bringing together equity and inclusion strategies
- Having conversations about a new approach for theology resourcing
- Continuing to work on the shifts in world mission area
- Engaging in the process of reviewing and prioritizing organizational processes of unification, the Unified Management Office will aid with some of that but there are some earlier processes that need to be looked at now
- Set accountability and expectations withing the IUA, how we engage one another and the rest of the church, constituents and partners, and clarifying partner commitments and priorities

Oh shared some of the communications that her office has received, including from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (financial and prayer support for hurricane- and wildfire-impacted areas) and the World Council of Churches (calls to be involved in various activities and conferences).

Commissioner Dave Davis asked if the UC members could receive the weekly communications from Jihyun. Oh will have them added them to the email recipient list.

Commissioner Dee Cooper expressed her gratitude and appreciation for Oh's work. Commissioner Frances Lin was humbled by hearing about the communications from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, Lin's home church. In addition, being from Southern California, Lin was especially grateful for the upcoming visit that Oh and Co-Moderator of the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Tony Larson will soon be making; the people of that area are in need of much support and encouragement.

#### **Executive Session**

#### **ACTION**

Upon motion, second, and after discussion, the UC voted to meet in Executive Session at 1:00 p.m. (following the upcoming lunch) to discuss personnel and property matters. The following people were invited to participate: Jihyun Oh, CeCe Armstrong, Tony Larson, Kelly Beeland, April Davenport, Debbie Gardiner, Barry Creech, and Ian Hall.

#### **Recess Lunch Break**

Commissioner Scott Lumsden gave a prayer in advance of the lunch and the commission recessed at 12 noon.

#### **Rising from Executive Session**

Upon rising from Executive Session at 1:30 p.m., the UC reported that no action had been taken during the closed session.

#### **UC Interim Governance Operating Manual**

Upon recognition, Debra Avery spoke to the UC Governance Operating Manual (GOM) as presented by the Ministry Coordination Committee of which she is part.

**OVERVIEW**

Avery reviewed the history and process of the presented interim document. The committee reviewed numerous documents including The Standing Rules, The Organization for Mission, The Manual of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Manual.

They also met with a variety of individuals and committees including COGA and PMAB leadership, the A Corp Board, members of the senior staff and Nominations Manager Valerie Izumi.

Drafts were produced and Commission members, Consultant Kelly Beeland, and senior staff members had a chance to give feedback along the way.

After the second reading/review of the document and in preparation for the third reading and vote, the following staff reviewed the document:

- Jihyun Oh (IUA/General Assembly) from the stated clerk/executive director perspective
- April Davenport (ASG) from the legal perspective
- Laurie Griffith (IUA) from the constitutional perspective
- Kerry Rice (IUA) from the OGA perspective
- Barry Creech (IUA) from the PMA perspective
- Ian Hall and Kathy Lueckert (ASG) from the fiduciary perspective

Avery continued the overview of the document stating that the purpose of this manual is “To provide governance to the UC and the executive leadership of the IUA in the interim period”. The UC will have the authority to change it and its review will be ongoing. Expect amendments and remember that this is a starting point for the final unified board governance document.

**UC Interim  
Governance  
Operating  
Manual**

**DISCUSSION**

Felipe Martínez asked Debra Avery to continue. Avery shared that Co-Moderators of the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Tony Larson and CeCe Armstrong, raised a concern about one item in the membership section of the proposed operating manual. Their proposal is that the section should include them as full members (with voice and vote) of the Commission instead of corresponding members (with voice but not vote).

Avery proposed the following:

1. Discuss the proposed document except for the membership section
2. When everything but that section is agreed upon, then the Commission will go back to specifically discuss the membership section
3. Once the issue in the membership section has been settled, then the manual as a whole will be voted on

**ACTION BY  
CONSENSUS**

By consensus, the above proposal was agreed to.

Discussion of the Governance Operating Manual, all sections except membership,

ensued. Co-Moderator Felipe Martínez called for questions for Avery and the work group. Co-Moderator of the 226<sup>th</sup> GA Tony Larson drew attention to the Organizing Principles Section, suggesting that lines 12-14 need to be stronger and offered a slight change for lines 18-19.

After hearing Larson’s suggested changes, upon recognition Avery suggested the following revisions to lines 12-14: The first sentence remains the same. The second sentence should read “The principles found in F- 1.0301 of the Book of Order guide all decisions regarding the structure and purpose of the unified organization”.

**ACTION BY  
CONSENSUS**

All commissioners indicated agreement with this proposed change.

Upon recognition, Larson then suggested that lines 18-19 of the GOM would be better as follows: “The new governance structure will enable stakeholder engagement and provide for transparency by following the open meeting policy as indicated. . .”

**ACTION BY  
CONSENSUS**

By consensus, all members of the UC agreed with this proposed change.

Upon recognition, Dave Davis shared that the UC committees, as they seek to do their work, are likely to want to have other people join them in their efforts. The Resource Committee will continue to discuss the issues related to this.

Hearing no other concerns or comments, Martínez ascertained consensus for the document, minus the membership section.

**Membership  
Section  
Discussion**

On behalf of the Ministry Coordination Committee, Debra Avery moved the membership section (IV) of the Governance Operating Manual. [Note: because the motion came from a committee/work group, it doesn’t require a second.]

**MOTION**

**DISCUSSION**

Upon recognition, Avery explained that the work group believes that the Co-Moderators of the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly should maintain the continued status that they were assigned which is having a voice but not a vote in the UC. When working as a member of the UC Ministry Coordination committee (which advises the Commission), however, they would have voice and vote.

Upon recognition, Larson spoke about the tension he and co-moderator CeCe Armstrong perceive between the rules governing the body as a Commission, as determined by the 225<sup>th</sup> GA commissioners (ex officio) and the new standing rules approved by the 226<sup>th</sup> GA commissioners (members).

UC Co-Moderator Cristi Logon-Scott clarified why they are not able to change their mandate. Upon recognition, Commissioner Dee Cooper expressed support for what the GA co-moderators are suggesting. Other commissioners spoke in favor of the membership section as presented by the work group.

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Upon recognition, Larson shared thoughts about the difference between when the UC is acting as a commission or as a governing body. Discussion continued with various viewpoints.

Dave Davis, upon recognition, requested that a representative from Constitutional Services weigh in on these issues in a public meeting before voting. Conversation ensued about previous discussions and decisions regarding possible combinations of GA Co-Moderators from GA225 and GA226 as well as how the standing rules do/do not change things.

Upon motion, second, and opportunity for discussion, it was decided to postpone the vote on the motion until Friday, January 24 when Laurie Griffith from Constitutional Services can speak to the UC in a public meeting.

**VOTE  
POSTPONED**

Martínez praised the group for navigating a difficult conversation and modeling good practices for discussion and making decisions. He then offered a prayer before a 15-minute break followed by committee work scheduled to begin at 3:40 p.m.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025, 11:07 a.m. ET**

**Reconvening  
and  
Opening  
Prayer**

The UC reconvened at 11:07 a.m. with invited guest Associate Director for Constitutional Interpretation Laurie Griffith. Felipe Martínez provided the opening prayer.

**Membership  
Section  
Discussion**

Martínez welcomed Laurie Griffith and asked her to resource us regarding how to determine the proposed operating manual. Griffith explained that the proposed language is constitutional. The Book of Order (BOO) has been interpreted over and over again that the council appointing the commission has to be very clear about all the powers that they plan to give that group. The 225<sup>th</sup> GA that convened in 2022, gave the UC its powers and it has the power to align the mission and priorities and with that, has the powers to amend the second portion of Organization for Mission to align its ministries and missions.

Even though the GA226 commissioners passed revisions to the standing rules that say very clearly that the moderators will serve as members by virtue of office of bodies that provide leadership for governance and mission of the PC(USA). It is qualified, in accordance with the rules of governance of the Organization for Mission.

Martínez reminded the group that the motion on the floor from yesterday was to approve the membership section (4) of the governance manual. He then asked for discussion.

Upon recognition, Dee Cooper moved the following amendment:

53 IV. Membership

54 In addition to the Commission charter responsibilities, the twelve members of the UC will  
55 take on the additional responsibility of governing the IUA. **In accordance with the Standing  
56 Rules of the General Assembly approved by GA226 (2024) the Co-Moderators of the General  
57 Assembly will join the work of the Commission as full members as it now the body providing  
58 leadership for the governance and mission of the PC(USA).** In this interim period, staffing and  
59 the participation of the Co-Moderators of the General Assembly will follow the original  
60 commission as approved by the 226th General Assembly (2022). Additionally, one of the  
61 Co-Moderators of the 226th General Assembly (2024) shall have voice and vote on the  
62 Ministry Coordination Committee to ensure coordination in areas of their responsibility  
63 relevant to the planning and procedures of the General Assembly. **Both Co-Moderators of  
64 the General Assembly will have voice but not vote when the commission acts as a whole  
65 body.** In addition, the SC/ED of the IUA will serve as corresponding member with voice but  
66 not vote.  
67 In this interim period, the UC member appointed as a representative from the Board of the A  
68 Corporation shall serve as a representative of the UC to the A Corporation Board.

There was no second. The amendment did not proceed.

**ACTION**

Following a word of prayer, the vote to approve the membership section (IV) of the Governance Operating Manual as proposed by the Governance Workgroup commenced.

**MOTION AND ACTION**

The motion passed with all but one in favor.

Upon recognition, Debra Avery moved the interim Governance Operating Manual as proposed by the Governance Work Group [Note: again, a second was not necessary as the proposal came from a work group.] The motion was approved unanimously.

Co-Moderator Felipe Martínez shared with the GA226 Co-Moderators that he looks forward to a fruitful and faithful partnership together with them. In addition, Martínez thanked Laurie Griffith for her efforts and time.

**Ministry Coordination Committee**

Upon recognition, Debra Avery, facilitator of the Ministry Coordination Committee, reported that:

- C. Brown will serve as the committee secretary
- D. Davis will continue to work with Kate Duffert around GA planning and issues
- B. Teng will work on the role of the section of the Organization for Mission that deals with the A Corp board
- Rhyne will review and work on all other parts of the Organization for Mission
- Avery will be coordinating all of this and its implications to other documents

**PILP NOMINATION**

Formerly a function of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the UC is being asked to approve Presbyterian Investment and Loan (PILP) Board members.

The Ministry Coordination Committee recommended approval of Linda Jacobsen to the PILP, class of 2028, specifically:

**Recommendation:**

That the Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“**Unification Commission**”) created by the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2022), sitting as successor to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, successor to the General Assembly Council, and pursuant to the Deliverance from the General Assembly to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc., which was most recently amended by the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008), **ELECT** and **FORWARD** for confirmation by the 227<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2026), the following nominee to the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.

**Class of 2028**

Linda Jacobsen. White Female Ruling Elder, Presbytery of Philadelphia, Synod of the Northeast, Foundation Board position, new nomination

**ACTION  
PILP  
Nomination**

The nomination was unanimously approved by the Commission.

**ACTION  
COGA  
MINUTES –  
December 19,  
2024**

The Ministry Coordination Committee recommended approval of the minutes from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly’s meeting held December 19, 2024.

This motion was **unanimously approved** by the Commission.

**ACTION  
PMAB  
MINUTES  
October 29-30,  
2024**

The Ministry Coordination Committee recommended approval of the minutes from the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meeting held October 29-30, 2024.

This motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

**PMAB Minutes Discussion**

Item 10-10.24 includes recommendations to the UC. The commission will review, discuss and report back about these recommendations as appropriate.

**Relationships  
Coordination  
Committee**

Upon recognition, Cristi Scott Ligon, as facilitator of the Relationships Coordination Committee, reported about the work of their group. Scott Ligon expressed appreciation to Barry Creech for providing key information about the various committees and entities within the PCUSA. The work group will work with Susan Barnett and others from Research Services on relational mapping with the various committees.

This committee will be reaching out to various other committees as well. To communicate with this committee, emails can be sent to [unification.commission@pcusa.org](mailto:unification.commission@pcusa.org).

Their next meeting is scheduled for January 30, 5:00 p.m. CT.

**Resources  
Coordination  
Committee**

Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator of the Resources Coordination Committee, provided a brief update on the weekly meetings of this committee. They see their upcoming responsibilities as including the following:

- Coordinating with ASG on budget and finance resource development
- Using the standing meeting and assigning some of them for particular conversations (e.g. quarterly report on financials)
- Coordinating with the A Corp Board
- Coordinating with ASG regarding critical issues that emerge as they relate to resources and stewardship of property
- Receiving regular reports from the Stated Clerk/Executive Director and the A Corp President

Avery, upon recognition, suggested that an overarching timeline with deadlines for each of the three committees would be helpful. Kelly Beeland will track this information.

D. Davis offered a prayer of thanks and blessings to include the upcoming meal. The commission recessed at 11:50am

**Recess  
Lunch Break**

**Ethics Training** Co-Moderator Felipe Martínez reconvened the UC at 1:03 p.m. He welcomed Vice President and General Counsel April Davenport who led the group through an approximately 45-minute training session entitled “Ethics Policy for Interim Unified Agency Board members”. Ethics Policy forms were distributed, and commissioners were asked to complete and return them to Dave Davis.

Discussion ensued about some of the responsibilities likely to fall to this group during GA227 and what to expect regarding roles and time commitment. GA227 Plenary is scheduled for June 28-July 2, 2026 with GA committees meeting online prior to these dates. The UC was advised to clear their calendars now for those dates.

**Executive  
Session**

Upon motion, second, and after discussion, the UC voted to meet in Executive Session to discuss personnel and property matters. The following people were invited to be part of this session: Jihyun Oh, CeCe Armstrong, Tony Larson, Kelly Beeland, April Davenport, Debbie Gardiner, Barry Creech, and Ian Hall.

**Rising from  
Executive  
Session**

Upon rising from Executive Session at 2:58 p.m., the UC reported that no action had been taken during the closed session.

**Recap and  
Reminders**

The next meeting of this group will be March 20-21, 2025 in Louisville, KY. Information will be forthcoming.

**Adjournment  
with Prayer**

Without objection the UC adjourned with the concluding prayer provided by Deborah Avery at 3:05 p.m. ET.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jayne Culp  
Recorder