

Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency  
Minutes  
Online  
April 16, 2023

Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“Unification Commission”) met online on April 16, 2023 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 Office of the General Assembly.

At 3:00 p.m. ET, Felipe Martínez, co-moderator, called the meeting to order.

Roll

The roll was formed (including an audio / video check):

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  
David Davis, Commissioner, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of the Coastlands;  
Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

Frances Lin, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of San Diego; 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:

Shavon Starling-Louis, Co Moderator, 225th General Assembly (2022)

Staff and Support:

Raymond Bonwell, recorder

Barry Creech, Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Presbyterian Mission Agency

Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation

Kerry Rice, Deputy Stated Clerk, Office of the General Assembly

Alejandra Sherman, Executive Assistant to the President, Presbyterian Church  
(U.S.A.), A Corporation

Opening Prayer	Upon recognition, Dave Davis led the meeting in an opening prayer, which included a petition for peace, informed by the shooting at the Old National Bank, three blocks from the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Ky., on April 10, 2023.
Land Acknowledgment	Dee Cooper led the land acknowledgment, which asked each participant to note where they were, and to acknowledge those who were earlier rooted and grounded in their midst.
Agenda	Without objection, <u>the agenda was adopted</u> . The agenda and presentations were distributed to the Unification Commission and publicly posted prior to the meeting.
Minutes	Upon motion and second, and without objection, <u>the Minutes of the March 9-11, 2023 meeting were approved</u> .
Covenant	Felipe Martínez and Cristi Scott Ligon, in their roles as co-moderators, read the covenant as a reminder of how the Unification Commission has agreed to pursue their work.
Open Meeting Policy Clarification Regarding Work Groups	<p>Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, was recognized to provide further detail around the Open Meeting Policy. Felipe Martínez and Cristi Scott Ligon asked Kathy Lueckert to provide guidance around the Open Meeting Policy, particularly around the topics of meeting with staff, and the Work Groups of the Unification Commission.</p> <p>As a matter of background, it was briefly noted a resource informing the work of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is the “Open Meeting Policy” (hereafter “Policy”, available online at <a href="https://www.pcusa.org/openmeeting/">https://www.pcusa.org/openmeeting/</a>; accessed April 16, 2023). The Policy recognizes “the work of the church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust” (Policy, Item 1). The Unification Commission, responsible to the General Assembly, is subject to this Policy, and that “their meetings shall be open to all interested persons” (Policy, Item 2). The Policy also notes that in certain circumstances, including addressing confidential subject matter such as personnel, meetings may be closed and the process is outlined (Policy, Item 3a-e.)</p> <p>Kathy Lueckert shared a summary of a conversation with Laurie Griffith, Associate Director, Constitutional Interpretation, Office of the General Assembly, who confirmed that it is appropriate for the work of the Unification Commission to be in closed session (also called executive session) during conversations with staff or discussing personnel. Further, it was confirmed that the Open Meeting Policy does not apply to the Work Groups, who are meeting solely to make recommendations and have not been delegated any decision-making authority (like staff groups; Policy, Item 4). Finally, it was shared that J. Herbert Nelson II, Stated Clerk, confirmed this application of the Open Meeting Policy (Policy, Item 7).</p>

Demonstration on  
using EQUIP for  
Work Groups

Upon recognition, Alejandra Sherman, Executive Assistant to the President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, provided the Unification Commission with a real-time demonstration of how to support the Work Groups more effectively on EQUIP (the training and support site administered by OGA, accessible at [equip.pcusa.org](http://equip.pcusa.org)).

It was noted EQUIP can handle the standard file formats (including Adobe .pdf and Microsoft Office files), and because it is meant to serve as a record, documents are not able to be edited on EQUIP.

Alejandra Sherman was thanked for these contributions, and the offer to serve as an ongoing resource for members of the Unification Commission.

Common Mission:  
Work Group  
Update

Upon recognition, Bill Teng, facilitator, provided an update for the Common Mission work group (also comprised of Felipe Martínez and Frances Lin, with staff support from Kerry Rice). It was shared this work group focused on common mission objectives outlined in Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20) and the Book of Order (F-1.01), and the task of who the Church is called to do and be.

Upon discussion, it was noted additional resources may be consulted, including the work of the 2020 Vision Team (as reported to the 225th General Assembly (2022)), and confessional resources, including the Brief Statement of Faith and the Belhar Confession.

Consultation:  
Work Group  
Update

Upon recognition, Dee Cooper, facilitator, provided an update for the Consultation work group (also comprised of Cristi Scott Ligon and Emily Martin). Topics addressed by the work group included the format for the consultations, including the shared framework, roles, and covenant. It was hoped there would be three Unification Commission representatives at each consultation serving the following roles: primary facilitator, second facilitator, and scribe. A framework for tentative dates and entities was shared, and the Commission agreed that assignments would be chosen offline (declared by common consent by Felipe Martínez).

It was noted to create a welcoming space, language would be circulated for the following, including: to keep the meeting on agenda; the Unification Commission's role to listen; and, comments are to be kept confidential in the closed sessions to avoid the creation of methods for anonymous submissions. Finally, Kathy Lueckert was thanked for her contributions to coordinate the people, date, and time of the various consultations.

Finance: Work  
Group Update

Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator, provided an update for the Finance work group (also comprised of David Davis and Kris Thompson). The scheduled meetings were in the process of being set, including with the Presbyterian Foundation (for an understanding of designated vs. undesignated giving), and with Ian Hall, Chief Financial Officer / Chief Operating Officer of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Governance: Work  
Group Update

Upon recognition, Debra Avery, facilitator, provided an update for the Governance work group (also comprised of Carson Brown and José Rosa-Rivera). It was shared after two meetings, there were intersections observed with Common Mission and Finance. Common

Consultation with  
COGA and PMAB

emerging questions included “where is the Spirit leading us” and “what is needed to be known, next.”

The Unification Commission was reminded the in-person meeting on October 12-14, 2023, would be in St. Louis, Mo., with an opportunity to consult with mid-council leaders on October 11, 2023 (who will be gathered for the Polity, Benefits, and Mission Conference, held concurrently).

A joint meeting of the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (PMAB) is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2023, with an order of the day at 4:00 p.m. ET for a consultation with the Unification Commission. It was shared that COGA has created a work group on unification, primarily to support employees and to support inquiries from the Unification Commission. It was shared that PMAB is structured differently, and the Unification Commission did not have any recommendations for PMAB how they might address unification.

The discussion addressed whether the COGA / PMAB joint consultation should be in a closed session. Informed by earlier discussion of the Open Meeting Policy, and to maintain the format and confidentiality of consultations with staff (see Minutes, March 9-11, 2023), by common consent, Felipe Martínez declared the Unification Commission Consultation work group with COGA / PMAB would be in closed session. There would be a separate Consultation work group meeting to be scheduled to debrief the COGA / PMAB meeting.

Staff Roundtable

Cristi Scott Ligon called on staff to share any further topics not yet addressed, or questions remaining open. Staff had nothing to report, and had no questions. Staff, in turn, were thanked for their contributions.

Executive Session  
(Declined)

Cristi Scott Ligon noted the next agenda item was reserved for an executive session, and asked if a commissioner wanted to make a motion to enter executive session (and to explain the rationale). No commissioners sought to be addressed; and Cristi Scott Ligon reminded the commissioners this item would be on the next (and every) agenda.

Preparing for the  
Next Meeting  
(Remote)

Cristi Scott Ligon noted the next meeting is scheduled online on Saturday, May 20, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. ET. Thanks were given for the ministry of the Unification Commission to meet today, which was a Sunday.

Closing Prayer  
and Adjournment

Cristi Scott Ligon noted the practice to also close each meeting with prayer. There were no items of new business, and after a motion and second and without objection, with a closing prayer from Cristi Scott Ligon, the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Raymond Bonwell  
Recorder