

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

Minutes

Online

December 16, 2023

Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“the Unification Commission”) held their thirteenth meeting, 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 Office of the General Assembly. Materials, including the agenda and minutes, were available to the public via EQUIP, a learning management system administered by the Officer of the General Assembly.

Roll

The roll was formed:

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 [Ordained Aug. 11, 2023]

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

Staff:

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

Jennifer Clowery, interpreter

Kathleen Henrion, communications specialist

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

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

Opening Prayer
and Devotion

Cristi Scott Ligon, co-moderator of the Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“Unification Commission”), called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. ET, and led the opening prayer.

Land
Acknowledgment

Kris Thompson, representing the Presbytery of National Capital, led the land acknowledgment, informed by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, which

recognized the ancestral lands of the Nacotchtank and the Piscataway People. There was a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement regarding ancestral lands.

Agenda	By common consent, without edits or objections, <u>the Unification Commission adopted the agenda</u> . Some of the 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.
Minutes	By common consent, and without objection, <u>the Minutes of the November 12, 2023, meeting were approved</u> .
Covenant	Felipe Martínez and Cristi Scott Ligon, as co-moderators, read the covenant as a reminder of how the Unification Commission had agreed to engage this responsibility.
Key Unifying Principles	Felipe Martínez recalled the key unifying principles discerned at the Oct. 12-14, 2023, in-person meeting in St. Louis, Mo. A summary of those principles was shared as follows: Relational; Streamlined; Nimble; Justice Focused; and, Vision Driven.
Co-Moderator Report	Felipe Martínez provided the Co-Moderators Report. Their work included a debrief of the November 2023 meeting, and planning meetings for this December 2023 meeting. Individually or together the co-moderators participated in the Consultations Work Group, the Culture Consultants Task Force, and finalized arrangements with Kathleen Henrion for communications contributions.
General Assembly Timeline	<p>Upon recognition, Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, provided an update on the timeline to the 226th General Assembly (2024). The Commission was reminded the 120-day deadline for all business is February 26, 2024, including any report from the Unification Commission. A suggestion was an agenda item for the January 2024 in-person meeting to determine what to include in any potential report, then to empower a writing team to complete a draft for consideration and approval at the February 2024 meeting.</p> <p>The Commission was also reminded the 45-day deadline is in early May, which is the deadline for budgets. It was noted the 45-day deadline was also the deadline for comments on other business coming before the General Assembly. While all material coming before the General Assembly is publicly available, staff noted they would review all General Assembly business that could impact the Unification Commission, and summarize that material for the Commission.</p> <p>Without further questions or comments, the Commission moved to the next agenda items, the Work Group Reports. Cristi Scott Ligon noted these reports were circulated in advance, and available on EQUIP.</p>
Consultation: Work Group	Upon recognition, Dee Cooper, facilitator, provided an update for the Consultation Work Group (also comprised of Cristi Scott Ligon and Emily Martin, now including Felipe Martínez). The Commission was pointed toward the report (Attachment 1), distributed in advance of the meeting. Dee Cooper thanked Kathy Lueckert for coordinating all the consultations, and with joy noted there were only two consultations remaining. Dee

Cooper continued with a summary of the report, noting the ongoing work on a consultant to contribute to defining a new culture in the newly unified agencies.

Governance: Work
Group Update

Upon recognition, José Rosa-Rivera, acting facilitator, provided an update for the Governance Work Group (also comprised of Debra Avery and Carson Brown, and now including Bill Teng), referencing the report ([Attachment 2](#)) circulated in advance in EQUIP. [Recorder's Note: the report was given in Spanish, while a translation in English was provided in the secondary audio channel.]

The work group was asked, given the work ahead for the governance roles, where the governance work was currently being addressed between the Office of the General Assembly ("OGA") and the Presbyterian Mission Agency ("PMA"). The work group clarified this mapping would be part of the report anticipated in January 2024.

Finance: Work
Group Update

Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator, began the update for the Finance Work Group (also comprised of Dave Davis and Kris Thompson; the addition of Frances Lin was noted). Dave Davis addressed the report ([Attachment 3](#)), distributed in advance of the meeting. The final two paragraphs of the report were noted for the current and future steps of the Finance Work Group, and emphasized the collaborative nature of this work with leadership of OGA and PMA (an "executive team" – it was referenced in error as the "executive commission" in the report). As an example of the collaboration was provided regarding the charts of accounts, that the executive team will continue to take the lead in the chart of accounts, with the Finance Work Group providing oversight.

Establishment of
Polity, Process,
and Procedure
Task Force

The discussion addressed preparation of reports by the Unification Commission for the 225th General Assembly (2024), including the proposed motion (as included with the advance materials distributed in advance of the meeting). Upon motion from the Finance Work Group, and after discussion, the Unification Commission established a small task force from its members to work with staff to review its charter and all polity, process, and procedural issues related to its upcoming report to the General Assembly and make recommendations to the Unification Commission at its January meeting.

Following the establishment of this task force, Carson Brown, Dave Davis, and Scott Lumsden volunteered to serve, and were appointed by the co-moderators. It was noted the co-moderators would also resource the task force.

Communications
Unification

The Finance Work Group was thanked for their work and update.

Upon recognition, Kathy Lueckert provided an update on the process to unify the communications. The report ("UniComm Report") was circulated with the advance materials prior to the meeting ([Attachment 4](#)).

Kathy Lueckert was asked to provide thanks to the staff supporting the communications unification.

Communications Proposal	Kathleen Henrion, communications specialist, provided an overview of a proposal for the communications of the Unification Commission (Attachment 5), circulated with the advance materials prior to the meeting. The discussion focused on who was authorized to speak on behalf of the Unification Commission. Kathleen Henrion clarified the role would be to prepare a summary of talking points, and the proposal would not include direct communication – which remains the responsibility of the co-moderators. The approval process would include review by the Unification Commission, and to ensure timelines are updated and remain relevant. It was noted the interest in the work of the Unification Commission might broaden as the General Assembly approaches; and, Kathleen Henrion noted the primary audiences remained General Assembly staff, and mid-council leaders.
General Comments	Cristi Scott Ligon welcomed general comments, prior to the anticipated entry into executive session. It was noted the 100% attendance was another indication of the level of commitment and dedication from the members of the Commission. Further, staff were congratulated both for their attentive participation, and their helpful support of the work of the Commission.
Executive Session	Felipe Martínez began to moderate the meeting. Upon motion, second, and an opportunity for discussion, <u>the Unification Commission entered executive session</u> to address personnel and property matters. Staff were invited to participate in the executive session. [Recorder's Note: the livestream was paused, and then restarted upon rising from executive session.]
Rising from Executive Session	<u>The Unification Commission voted to rise from executive session.</u> Felipe Martínez reported that during executive session the Unification Commission took no further actions.
Closing Prayer	Felipe Martínez noted the next meeting was scheduled for January 18-19, 2024, as an in-person meeting in Louisville, Ky., and the Unification Commission would adjourn with a closing prayer. After motion, second, and discussion, and <u>with a closing prayer from Felipe Martínez, the meeting was adjourned</u> just before 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Raymond Bonwell
Recorder

CONSULTATIONS WORK GROUP REPORT

When we meet again, we will have completed the following consultations:

Oct 17	1:00 PM	GACEIR	Bill T	Kathy	Jose
Nov 2	4:00	1st Caucus	Dee	Kathy	Jose
Nov 3	3:00	PILP	Frances	Kathy	Carson
Nov 6	7:00 PM	2nd Caucus	Cristi	Kathy	Jose

This leaves 2 more on our list of the initial and required ones from the GA directive.

Below is our work plan, and we have been trying to find a time to meet ... The outlined work pieces ahead are these:

We left St Louis with the following items of business for us to cover:

1. Meeting with ASG staff- Kathy is already on this and scheduled time.
2. Meeting with the ecumenical partners- Kerry is asking Diana to take the lead on this and set up a time for us to meet with them.
3. Provide directions to Susan Barnett to synthesize the newer consultations into the one she created a few months ago - Kathy has already initiated this.
4. Discuss with Susan about creating a report from the Mid Council listening sessions around the table, the input that they handed to Felipe and Cristi, and the survey they completed.
5. Sharing this with the Mid Council Leaders.
6. Creating a report to be shared with all who participated in our listening sessions (and also the larger denomination).
7. Creating a feedback loop (like a test market not starting over) with OGA/PMA staff Mid council leaders and integrating the executives.

Then, the discussions moved to the awareness and process of molding two cultures together. This became a theme echoed by each of the other workgroups. As we progress into shaping, we have to understand the cultures and then understand or support how to bring them together into one new culture.

Debra shared the Way Forward cultural analysis- this might be a template to do an update. Kerry shared that OGA has done some informal analysis

Berry shared that PMA has been doing extensive analysis as well as developed a process of a culture code

Felipe, Cristi, Kris, and I had met to discuss consultants- and had begun early conversations that this might be an area which we would benefit greatly from a skilled consultant.

GOVERNANCE WORKGROUP REPORT

As we continue to work on the development of NewAg Roles these things are providing focus for us: evangelism, our connectional nature, and our unique theology.

We continue working on the development of the NewAg roles:

- 1) Strategic-Analytic (inward facing, support to PCUSA as a denomination)
 - a. Leadership development
 - b. Mid Council and Congregational Relations, Development and Support
 - c. General Assembly
- 2) External-Ambassadorial (outward facing, how PCUSA shows up in the world)
 - a. Ecumenical, Interfaith and International Partnerships
 - b. Justice and Advocacy
- 3) Visioning/Fiduciary-Operational/Board structural/Technical
 - a. Board support and operational coordination
 - b. Strategic Planning/Vision/ Evaluation
 - c. Communication

Next Steps:

- 1) Determine the role of executive leadership of NewGov and NewAg, including the role of the Stated Clerk.
- 2) Determine the status of the NewGov: Board? Commission? Council? Committee?

FINANCE WORKGROUP

The Finance Workgroup continues to meet every Thursday at 2:00 ET. As a follow up to the commission's meeting in St Louis, we continue to work with the executive team on the FY25 unified budget process. With this report, we hope to offer some clarity for the commission and staff about our workgroup's efforts related to the establishment of Unifying Budget Priorities and our role going forward related to FY25 preparation.

The request for the establishment of FY25 budget priorities came to the commission from the coordinating table established by PMA/OGA. At the June 2023 meeting of the commission in Louisville the commission approved the request of the finance workgroup to amend the suggested process in two ways. The term "budget priorities" was changed to "unifying budget priorities" and the staff working with the finance workgroup was reduced from the larger coordination table to the three executives and their "plus one". We now refer to that group of staff as "the executive team".

The timeline for the budget process suggested by the coordinating table requested that the commission identify/confirm/approve FY25 budget priorities at the October 2023 meeting held in St. Louis. In late August, the finance workgroup sent instructions on form and content to the executive team asking for each agency to prepare their own set of two to four unifying priorities. The finance workgroup prepared our own set as well. A day-long meeting was set for September 7th and the members of the finance workgroup traveled to Louisville. Each team worked very hard and quickly and the four sets of unifying priorities were distributed ahead of time for everyone to read. The workgroup also requested a sample of a program/ministry/expense that the teams could envision sunsetting over the next two to four years. Because of concerns related to confidentiality not everyone was comfortable putting those in writing. Thus, the finance workgroup's commitment to the executive team related to confidentiality regarding the paperwork and the conversation of September 7th.

After a very productive, helpful, and transparent day-long discussion, the finance workgroup met on a few subsequent Thursday to debrief and plan next steps. Our October written and oral report to the commission shared in our workshop time on the agenda reflects the results of that effort. In addition to sharing the financial workgroup's report as a sample of the form and content of the work all four did, we named four unifying budget priorities all of which appeared on more than one of the four lists and reflected the consensus of overlap during the day long meeting. Those unifying priorities were:

- completing IT roadmap
- unifying communications
- mid-council support in their support of congregations
- leadership development in all levels of the church (especially among young leaders and members of the BIPOC community).

We also named the two other unifying priorities that were presented at the September meeting:

- ASG's intention to maintain services across all their lines of business
- PMA's commitment to restorative ministries

The commission received and supported the recommendation of the finance workgroup to affirm the four unifying budget priorities. To avoid unnecessary anxiety among PMA/OGA staff, there was no official action by the commission to approve these unifying budget priorities.

At the request of the commission at the November virtual meeting and with the approval of the executive team, all four unifying budget priority documents are now available on EQUIP.

UNIFICATION COMMISSION
December 16, 2023 - Attachment 3

As reported at the November meeting, the Finance Workgroup met with the executive team for a follow up to our correspondence with them following the St. Louis meeting. The correspondence reported the commission's support of the four identified unifying priorities, suggested next steps in the process, and the workgroup's sense of its role moving forward vis a vis FY25. That correspondence was shared with commission members at the November meeting and is available in EQUIP.

The workgroup also reported in November that we had a good follow-up meeting with the executive team in light of that correspondence. There were good questions raised, clarifications offered, and roles and relationships affirmed. The finance workgroup intends to step back from the details of FY25 unified budget process while getting regular updates. Our focus will be supporting the development of a unified chart of accounts and the establishment of a new fiscal year, nurturing the work to simplify the budgeting of restricted and unrestricted funds, and continuing conversations that point to greater unification in the financial operations of General Assembly.

In summary, the finance workgroup would like to reiterate that the identified unifying budget priorities are not coming from the commission alone and being imposed by the commission on the FY25 budget process. These four unifying priorities are the product of a collaborative process between the finance workgroup and the executive commission. In this iterative process between the finance workgroup and the executive team, the team is now taking the lead on the details of preparation and process with the workgroup getting regular updates and focusing on the aspects mentioned above.

UNI COMM REPORT

Rev. Bronwen Boswell and Dr. Corey Schlosser-Hall

We have established a process map for unifying communications (attached). It is labelled a DRAFT because we know it may shift. We are hoping to celebrate a new, unified communications ministry by the end of April 2024.

“Startup more than a Mashup” is a slogan we are using to help saturate awareness of this becoming a *new* ministry that serves the greater church of today and tomorrow in fresh and focused ways.

November 17, 2024: Shared the 3 stages of the process and the process map with all OGA and PMA Communications staff!

Stage 1: Reflect & Review

Stage 2: Revise & Re-Envision

Stage 3: Rebuilding a New Ministry

December 11, 2023: Held first hybrid event for all OGA and PMA communications staff to kick-off the “Reflect & Review” stage of the unifying process.

On December 11 we also named and commissioned the following OGA and PMA staff people to 2 Task Forces to help guide Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process.

Stage 1: Reflect & Review Task Force: December 11, 2023 – February 5, 2024

- Mark Thomson, PMA
- Kristen Gaydos, OGA
- Darla Carter, PMA
- Mari Evans, OGA
- Layton Berkes-Williams, PMA

Purpose of Reflect & Review Stage: **To come to terms with our mutual histories and present realities.**

- Reflective conversations with those impacted to assess hopes, expectations, concerns.
- Identify and work through current or past hurts/tensions toward healing if applicable.
- Review and document people, gifts and assets of each area along with hallmarks of the organizational cultures of each area.
- Develop a comprehensive snapshot of the present.

Stage 2: Revise and Re-Envision Task Force: January 26 – March 10

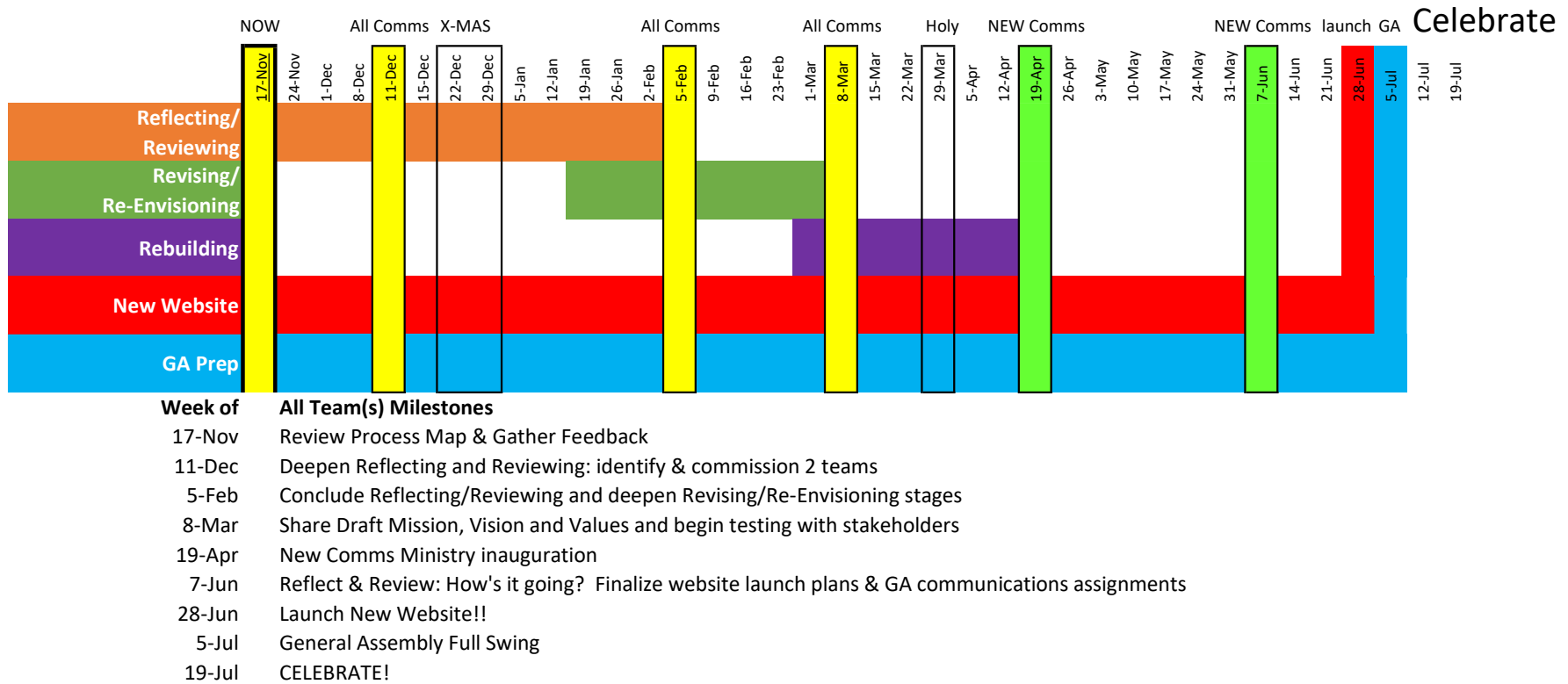
- Randy Hobson, OGA
- Beth Waltemath, PMA
- Fred Tangement, OGA
- Richard Copley, PMA
- Angie Stevens, OGA
- Emily Odom, PMA

Purpose of Revise and Re-Envision Stage: **To articulate a preferred future including vision, mission and org culture for communications ministry and test it with stakeholders.**

- Narrative of a preferred future
- Vision, mission and culture statements
- Develop and implement a methodology for testing vision, with stakeholders.

DRAFT 1 UniComm Roadmap

Unifying Communications Ministry





COMMUNICATIONS PROPOSAL

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



Lead: Rev. Kathleen Henrion

Project End Date: Summer 2026

Strategy for Communications

Strategy	Metrics
Foster collective understanding within the greater PCUSA about the transformative possibilities of unification and the future it affords the denomination for thriving ministry and service, utilizing the gifts and resources of our partners.	Informed stakeholders across audiences sent within two days of meetings.
	Transparency of process, including translation/guide of materials on Unification Commission's Equip page.
	Generate timeline/graphics to describe big-picture processes.

Routine Communications

Audience	Objective
Unification Commission	Talking points to be able to reflect the work of the group to any who might inquire.
GA Staff	Emphasize their partnership with the commission in their work. Contribute to a positive culture shift, amplifying the work already taking place towards the goal of unification. Provide reasoning for decisions taking place.
Mid-Council Leaders	Share information from meetings as relevant to their ministries. Acknowledge the efforts of the midcouncils to be more congruent with resources and capacity.
Executive Staff	Provide consultation to Unification Commission Co-chairs, as they create relational/pastoral communications from the commission. This communication follows up on interactions and experiences in meetings.