

Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
Minutes
Louisville, Ky. and Online
April 4-5, 2024

Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“the Unification Commission”) held their sixteenth meeting at the Presbyterian Center, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Ky. 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 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) [remote participant on Zoom]

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

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:

Ruth Faith Santana-Grace, Co-Moderator, 225th General Assembly (2022)

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

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

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

Excused:

Emily Martin, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of North Central California; Young Adult Advisory Delegate, 225th General Assembly (2022)

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 9:00 p.m. ET on April 4, 2024, with an opening prayer offered by Bill Teng.

The devotional was the video created by the Vision 2020 Committee, which was broadcast for the 225th General Assembly (2022). It served as an acronym for the PC(USA) to be Prayerful, Courageous, United, Serving, and Alive.

Land
Acknowledgment

Kathy Lueckert, president, PC(USA) A Corporation, led the land acknowledgment, informed by the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky. The former peoples of the Shawnee, Cherokee, Osage, Seneca, Iroquois, Miami, Hopewell, and the Adena land, were recognized, including their descendants still living in Kentucky.

Agenda

By common consent, the Unification Commission adopted the agenda. 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.

Covenant

Cristi Scott Ligon, as co-moderator, read the covenant as a reminder of how the Unification Commission had agreed to engage this responsibility of this commission.

Key Unifying
Principles

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

Minutes

Without objection, the Minutes of the February 17, 2024, meeting were approved. [Recorder’s Note: the scheduled March 21, 2024, was cancelled by the co-moderators of the Unification Commission, given the proximity to this April 4-5, 2024, meeting.]

Co-Moderator
Report

Cristi Scott Ligon provided the Co-Moderators Report. Individually or together the co-moderators participated in various work groups, in addition to participating in an interview with John Bolt for the Presbyterian Outlook.

Communications
Update and
Communications
Unification

Upon recognition, Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corporation, reminded commissioners of the Communications Unification process, as distributed prior to the meeting. The process remained on target, and the early outcomes remained more successful and positive than anticipated. Rick Jones, formerly communications director for the Office of the General Assembly, accepted the appointment to serve as the new director of Communications Ministry.

Upon discussion, it was noted the new PC(USA) website would not be ready in time for the 226th GA (2024), and a further refinement for the new agency (the outcome of the Unification Commission) was anticipated at an appropriate time in the future.

Break and Recess to Committee on the Whole	Felipe Martínez, co-moderator, announced the Unification Commission would take a brief break, then return as a Committee of the Whole. As such, the Committee of the Whole would not be making any decisions, and would be in deep discussions that would not be broadcast.
Executive Session	Felipe Martínez announced the Unification Commission rose from the Committee of the Whole. Upon motion and second, and without discussion, the Unification Commission <u>voted to enter executive session to discuss matters of personnel</u> . Staff were invited to remain.
Rising from Executive Session	Felipe Martínez announced the Unification Commission rose from executive session, and reported during executive session the Unification Commission <u>voted to engage a culture consultant</u> , with details to be announced at the conclusion of the engagement process.
Return to a Committee of the Whole and Recess for the Day	The co-moderators announced the Unification Commission would return to a Committee of the Whole for the balance of the day. As a Committee of the Whole, it was anticipated the Unification Commission would recess for the day, and return Friday, April 5, 2024, to reconvene in the capacity of the Unification Commission, and to resume the livestream.

Friday, April 5, 2024

Amending the Covenant	Upon resuming the meeting as the Unification Commission, including the reactivation of the livestream, the helpfulness of the Covenant was discussed. Upon motion and second, and after discussion, <u>the Unification Commission amended the Covenant</u> to include “to address things authentically transparently, directly with the intention of gaining clarity in discussion”, and “to assume good intentions.”
Finance Work Group	Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator, began the update for the Finance Work Group. This update included the effort and focus required to create a unified budget for 2025-2026, following the budget priorities that were previously identified by the work of the Finance Work Group and executive leadership of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. (The 2025-2026 Unifying Budget Values and Vision Statement developed by the executive team and the Coordinating Table at their January 2024 budget process retreat were addressed previously in the February 2024, minutes.) The areas of effort and focus included the process of creating a zero-based budget for more than 100 (one hundred) ministry offices. The Finance Work Group recognized the challenges of exploring a shared framework of ministry that was still being fully defined, and thanked the executive leadership for demonstrating practices of the Unification Commission, including being nimble and willing to change.

Scott Lumsden noted the Unification Commission should anticipate the request for a called meeting to review and approve the 2025-2026 Budget. [Recorder's Note: this called meeting was duly held on May 9, 2024.]

Beyond the budget, the reserve categories and reserve amounts were briefly addressed, as another area requiring review and approval for the operations of the unified entity. The reserve policies were another topic addressed during the weekly meetings of the Finance Work Group. The Finance Work Group were thanked for their work.

Consultation Work
Group

Upon recognition, Dee Cooper, facilitator, provided an update on the Consultations Work Group. Thanksgivings were offered for the members of the Unification Commission for their contributions to the consultations process, and for all of the individuals and entities that provided their time and insight during the multitude of consultations. Deep appreciation was expressed to staff (specifically Kathy Lueckert and Alexandra Sherman) for coordinating the scheduling of the consultations.

Governance: Work
Group Update

Upon recognition, Debra Avery, facilitator, provided an update for the Governance Work Group, which included a focus on understanding the work of the OGA and PMA, and their respective boards. The Governance Work Group met with the Coordinating Table (the 15-person entity comprised of the leadership of OGA, PMA, and PC(USA) A Corporation, as created by the Moving Forward Implementation Commission at the 224th GA (2020)), which continued the development of the approaches to the new agency and the new governance.

A newer consideration was the possibility of an interim strategy to ensure a stronger start for the new agency and new governance process. The next steps included conversations with the leadership of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (PMAB). From these conversations a proposal for an interim governance process and period may be designed.

The Governance Work Group concluded by sharing some assumed goals. The Governance Work Group was thanked for their ongoing effort.

Comments for the
Good of the Body,
Closing Prayer,
and Adjournment

There were no further comments from commissioners or staff. The Commission was reminded of a called meeting on Zoom for Thursday, May 9, 20204, to approve the budget, and the next stated meeting is Saturday, May 18, 2024, on Zoom. Gratitude was extended to everyone who made this in-person meeting a success. Without objection and by common consent, the meeting was adjourned with a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Raymond Bonwell
Recorder