

Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
Minutes
Online
December 14, 2024

Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“the Unification Commission”) held their twenty fifth 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 at 3:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, December 14, 2024:

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
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)
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)

Excused:

Frances Lin, Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Riverside; At-Large
José Rosa-Rivera, Ruling Elder, Presbiterio de San Juan; Per Capita and Financial
Sustainability Special Committee

Staff:

Kelly Beeland, consultant to the Unification Commission

Barry Creech, Deputy Executive Director for Administration, Presbyterian Mission Agency
Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation
Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of the
Interim Unified Agency
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 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 3:00 p.m. on November 16, 2024, with an opening prayer.
Agenda	Felipe Martínez noted the agenda was also to include comments related to the 227th General Assembly (2026) and the 228th General Assembly (2028). By common consensus, the agenda was adopted as amended.
Land Acknowledgment	Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, was recognized and led with the land acknowledgement, for the land upon the Presbyterian Center (100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Ky.) and area Presbyterian congregations. The Shawnee, Cherokee, Osage, Seneca Iroquois, and Miami, Hopewell, and Adena land were noted.
Minutes	The Minutes of the November 16, 2024, meeting were adopted without objection by common consent.
Covenant	Felipe Martínez, 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	Felipe Martínez continued by reminding the Unification Commission of their key unifying principles: Relational; Streamlined; Nimble; Justice Focused; and, Vision Driven.
Co-Moderators Report	<p>Felipe Martínez continued by providing the Co-Moderators Report, which included an overview of the weekly meetings with Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of the Interim Unified Agency. The [UC] Co-Moderators have participated in the ongoing interviews for the UMO (Unification Management Office).</p> <p>Felipe Martínez reported the 2025 meeting schedule was determined, to meet six times (approximately every other month) in-person in Louisville, Ky. The proposed meeting dates would be Thursday and Friday (with Wednesday and Saturday serving as travel days). As a reminder, the Unification Commission was also serving as the interim governance for the Interim Unified Agency. <u>Upon motion and second, and after discussion, the Unification Commission adopted the following in-person meeting dates:</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">January 23-24, 2025; March 20-21, 2025; May 22-23, 2025; July 24-25, 2025; September 25-26, 2025; and, December 4-5, 2025.</p>

Felipe Martínez noted the previous work groups would shift to committees, and the committees would have an opportunity to meet in the months when the Unification Commission did not have a scheduled meeting. It was also noted there would be appropriate recognition when birthdays intersected with scheduled meeting dates.

Felipe Martínez also provided an update on the applications for the Unification Management Office. The process was ongoing, and representation in the interview process included Cristi Scott Ligon, Felipe Martínez, and Kris Thompson from the Unification Commission; Ruth Gardner, director of human resources, PC(USA) A Corporation; and Jihyun Oh.

Felipe Martínez reminded the Unification Commission of the processes that individuals could share observations with the Unification Commission via email (and Rick Jones, director of unified communication ministries, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), was thanked for the contributions for this process). Assuming a sensitive nature of some reporting mechanisms, an anonymous mechanism was also created, and staff were to be notified of this anonymous process that operates in parallel to the confidential ethics reporting process. During discussion it was noted though this church worked in a spirit of trust and transparency, and the tension with a need for anonymity.

Report from the
Stated Clerk and
Executive Director

Jihyun Oh provided a brief update from location in Geneva, Switzerland, and the joint meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC; formerly the World Alliance of Reformed Churches) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Jihyun Oh noted there was a first meeting with all the directors of ministry areas within the interim unified agency; and, provided an overview of ongoing activities.

227th GA (2026)
and 228th GA
(2028)

Upon recognition, Dave Davis spoke to the 227th GA (2026) and 228th GA (2028), from the final meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA). [Recorder's Note: the Unification Commission voted to assume the responsibilities of COGA as of December 31, 2024.] The self-determined final goals of COGA were to: assist in the planning of the 227th GA (2026) – to be held in Milwaukee, Wisc. – and the 228th GA (2028); and, to support the newly elected Stated Clerk [Jihyun Oh].

Dave Davis reported that COGA voted for the 227th GA (2026) to approve an additional community day of in-person committee breakfasts, to be followed by a communal worship to be held outside, since the plenary hall was not available on this added day. This would be followed by a morning of community action and service. Lunch would then be on one's own, and there would be an opportunity to gather in rooms outside the plenary hall to gather for "Ministry Connections." Regarding COGA's decision about the proposed location and format for the 228th GA (2028), COGA does not anticipate a recommendation, in order to fulfill the support of the newly elected Stated Clerk in Jihyun Oh's conversation with the broader church. Dave Davis expressed that members of COGA would be willing to serve as conversation partners upon request, after the December 31, 2024, formal conclusion of COGA's ministry. The Unification Commission was notified to anticipate recommendations for contracts for format – and location – of the 228th GA (2028).

Ministry
Coordination
Committee

Upon recognition, Debra Avery, facilitator of the Ministry Coordination Committee, noted the focus of the work group was focused on reports: who provides, who actions, and who receives and files.

Relationships
Coordination
Committee

Upon recognition, Cristi Scott Ligon reported the Relationships Work Group was still living into their mandate, and tasks, duties, and responsibilities.

Resources
Coordination
Committee

Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator of the Resources Coordination Committee, provided a brief update on the weekly meetings of this committee. The committee has already begun preliminary work on the 2027-2028 budget [Recorder's Note: to be proposed to the 227th GA (2026)]. A potential joint meeting with PCUSA A Corporation was desired, in addition to a brief reference to the budget for the Unification Commission and the increased costs.

Governance
Presentation

Upon recognition, Debra Avery provided a walkthrough of the Operating Manual of the Interim Governing Board / Unification Commission ([Attachment 1](#)). [Recorder's Note: this attachment was publicly available prior to the meeting on EQUIP, and a slideshow presentation was shared that graphically presented the two pages of text in [Attachment 1](#).] Debra Avery noted this Operating Manual would be carefully reviewed in the near future by staff at the National Center – that is, personnel from PCUSA A Corp, and personnel from the bodies formally known as OGA and PMA.

Full feedback would be solicited and distributed in advance of the anticipated Operating Manual adoption in January 2025.

Debra Avery was thanked for the presentation. Upon recognition, Kelly Beeland, consultant to the Unification Commission, provided an overview of governance practices for an organization similar to the Interim Unified Agency, in contrast to operations. Definitions of Objectives, Roles, and Responsibilities were shared.

A facet of meetings moving forward was to no longer meet as a Committee of the Whole, and the only intended time to step back from public meetings – and the streaming of public meetings – would be reserved for executive session for the purposes of property, personnel, security, or litigation.

Diverse Voices
Table

Upon recognition, Kathy Lueckert provided an update on the Diverse Voices Table, created at the 223rd GA (2018) by the Moving Forward Implementation Commission for the examination of equity and inclusion within the six national agencies of the PCUSA. The Diverse Voices Table requested to be placed on hold, having not met in the previous twelve months in anticipation of unification. The agency executives asked Kathy Lueckert, in the role as President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, to relay this request. The request was received without comment.

Recognition of
Transitions

Felipe Martínez shared with Unification Commission to serve as the interim governance for the Interim Unified Agency effective December 31, 2024, there were to be some staff transitions. Felipe Martínez noted that Kathy Lueckert announced a retirement from the

role as President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, in January 2025. Felipe Martínez expressed deep gratitude for the faithfulness how Kathy Lueckert had supported this church, in addition to the additional and unexpected expectations to support the work of the Unification Commission. Kathy Lueckert expressed gratitude for the recognition, and noted the ongoing support of Alejandra Sherman, Executive Assistant to the President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corporation.

Cristi Scott Ligon expressed gratitude for the work of Raymond Bonwell, recorder, who began taking minutes from the inception of the Unification Commission, and who operated outside of the Zoom meetings to provide feedback and confirmation of the status of the live feeds. The timeliness and precision of the minutes were appreciated.

Cristi Scott Ligon continued to give thanks for Alejandra Sherman. Gratitude was expressed for the many facets how Alejandra Sherman supported the Commission.

Kathy Lueckert and Alejandra Sherman expressed their gratitude. Kathy Lueckert read an expression of gratitude from Raymond Bonwell. The members of the Unification Commission applauded this work of staff.

Executive Session

Upon motion, second, and after discussion, the Unification Commission voted to meet in Executive Session to discuss personnel and property matters, and for a portion of the discussion invited Staff and Guests to participate.

Rising from
Executive Session

Upon rising from Executive Session, the Unification Commission reported the following two actions: to formalize the title of Jihyun Oh as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of the Interim Unified Agency; and, to extend the contract of Kelly Beeland through 2025.

Adjournment with
Prayer

Without objection the Unification Commission adjourned with the concluding prayer provided by Deborah Avery at 5:08 p.m. ET.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Raymond Bonwell
Recorder

Report of the Governance Workgroup
12/11/2024

Overview of UC/Interim Governing Board Operating Manual

1. Organizing Principles

- Mission and Ministry
- Participation and Accountability
- Unity and Diversity
- Faithful Stewardship

2. Unification Commission Emphasis

- Respect for the History and Identity
- Inclusivity in Decision-Making
- Streamlining Operations for Greater Mission Impact

3. Membership

4. Interim Governance Roles & Responsibilities

- Interim Governing Board Overview
- Interim Governance Roles
 - Mission Priority and Strategic Planning.
 - Financial & Resource Oversight
 - General Assembly Planning
 - Leadership Support and Evaluations
 - General Assembly Committee Support
 - Stakeholder Engagement

5. Committees

- Committee Structure
- Planning Committee

6. Relationships Coordination Committee

- Understanding, navigating, and making recommendations to the UC regarding mid-council relationships and support
- Identifying and making recommendations regarding existing and future linkages with other boards, committees, or entities.
- Receiving reports from, and providing any necessary linkage to the General Assembly for the Advisory and Advocacy committees or other groups/entities that currently report through or work directly with COGA and PMAB.
- Receiving reports from appointed/assigned representatives to other boards, advisory or advocacy committees, and/or other entities/committees.

7. Ministry Coordination Committee

- Ensuring that mission critical work and/or oversight responsibilities formerly carried by COGA/PMAB is managed and/or reassigned in the interim period.
- Coordinating with and providing oversight for SC/ED.
- Coordinating with and providing oversight for the Unification Management Office (UMO)
- Receive critical reports as requested by senior staff.

8. Resource Coordination Committee:

- Coordinating with the A Corp board, where necessary and appropriate, for the overall stewardship of the resources of the PCUSA.
- Coordinating with ASG regarding critical issues that emerge related to financial resources, stewardship of property, technological resourcing, and human resources.
- Receiving regular reports from the CFO/CTO of A Corp and any other PCUSA executives as requested in order to recommend any necessary actions to the UC.
- Providing oversight for ongoing unification of agency communication

9. Meetings

- Agendas created by the Planning Committee and made public.
- Meeting schedules will be set on an annual basis.
- All meetings will abide by the denomination's open meeting policy.
- Meetings will be live streamed and a publicly archived recording will be available.
- Minutes will be taken and available to the public after approval by the UC.
- All minutes, including committee minutes, will be archived on Equip.

10. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly & Executive Director

- Overarching roles & responsibilities
- Reporting responsibilities
- Participation in UC/IG Meetings.

11. Communications

- Communication with Staff (including ASG)
- Communication with Stakeholders
- Public Statements

12. Transition to Permanent Board

- Design the permanent governing structure of the New Agency;
- Coordinate with the GA Nominating Committee and the Committee on Representation regarding nominations for the permanent board
- Forward to General Assembly for approval:
 - A final governance document (organization for mission);
 - Any amendments to existing standing rules, manuals, and/or other governing documents;
 - Any additional recommendations related to New Agency structure.