

Unification Commission

February 17, 2024

DRAFT Agenda

3:00 pm	Welcome	
	Prayer/Devotion	
	Land Acknowledgement	Scott Lumsden
	Approve the Agenda	
	Approve January 18-19, 2024, Meeting Minutes	
	Covenant	
	<i>Key Unifying Principles</i> : Relational, Streamlined, Nimble, Justice Focused, Vision Driven.	
	Co-moderators report	Felipe Martinez and Cristi Scott-Ligon
	Communications report	Kathleen Henrion
	Communications Unification	Bronwen Boswell
	Work Group Reports	
	Consultants	Dee Cooper
	Finance	Scott Lumsden
	Governance	Debra Avery
	Action Items	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval of Unification Commission Report to the 226th General Assembly (2024)• Budget Revision	
	Addressing Confidentiality Concerns	
	Closed Session	
5:00 pm	Adjourn	

Next meeting:

Unification Commission – March 21, 2024

Thursday, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
Minutes
Louisville, Ky. and Online
January 18-19, 2024

Gathering

The Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“the Unification Commission”) held their fourteenth meeting in Louisville, Ky. with optional online participation 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
[remote participant on Zoom]

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

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

Guest:

Bronwen Boswell, Acting Stated Clerk, Office of the General Assembly

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Excused:

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

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”), called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. ET on Thursday, January 24, 2024, with a reflection on Epiphany, and an opening prayer.

Land
Acknowledgment

Kerry Rice, Deputy Stated Clerk, Office of the General Assembly, led the land acknowledgment, informed by the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky, which recognized the ancestral lands of the Shawnee, Cherokee, Osage, Seneca, Iroquois, Miami, Hopewell, and Adena peoples. There was a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement regarding previous inhabitants.

Agenda

By common consent, without edits or objections, 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

Felipe Martínez reminded the Unification Commission of their key unifying principles: Relational; Streamlined; Nimble; Justice Focused; and, Vision Driven.

Co-Moderator
Report

Cristi Scott Ligon provided the Co-Moderators Report. Their work included a debrief of the December 2023 meeting, and planning meetings for this January 2024 meeting. Individually or together the co-moderators participated in the Culture Consultants Task Force, and other work groups. The commitments beyond the Unification Commission during the seasons of Christmas were noted.

Communications
Update

Kathleen Henrion, communications specialist, provided an update on the communications of the Unification Commission. The commitments of the end of Advent and Christmas were noted. Kathleen Henrion expressed a willingness to contribute to the preparation of materials for the 226th General Assembly (2024).

There was a general discussion on the awareness of this Church of the work of the Unification Commission, and a better guide or introduction to the work of the Unification Commission on the EQUIP site. [Recorder’s Note: the statistics regarding engagement with news articles and access to the recordings of the meetings were discussed in the final session of the meeting.]

Communications
Unification

Bronwen Boswell, Acting Stated Clerk, Office of the General Assembly, arrived, and upon recognition, 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 1**). Using a consistent framework, conversations have been held with each member of the different communications teams. Processes were described on how to assess the shared communal history of the individual teams, including mapping a timeline of the convergences and divergences of the various teams. Preparation for the upcoming

Unification Commission, Minutes, January 18-19, 2024, Page 3 of 5

General Assembly was identified as an important item to demonstrate a unified approach of communications.

Bronwen Boswell noted the positive spirit that continued through these conversations, including conversations between members of the various teams who also met in small groups. The total number of members in the communications groups was approximately 30 (including writers, videographers, photographers, editors, web developers, and other roles). The timeline for future meetings of all communication team members was discussed, as well as methods to ensure everyone was aware of what was discussed. The perceived historical culture of the individual teams was discussed, and the experience of the culture of the teams meeting together was identified as a different and better culture. It was observed the unification of the communications functions could serve as a pilot for unification of other facets of the Office of the General Assembly (“OGA”) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“PMA”).

Bronwen Boswell was thanked for the report and was excused.

By common consent, there was a brief break.

Minutes

Upon return from the break, by common consent, and without objection, the Minutes of the December 16, 2023, meeting were approved.

Culture Consultant
Update

Upon recognition, Dee Cooper reviewed the draft project description of the culture analysis (**Attachment 2**), which was posted on EQUIP and available for public viewing. The members of the consultant work group were Dee Cooper, Cristi Scott Ligon, Felipe Martínez, and Kris Thompson. It was noted that culture was not monolithic, and was comprised of various perspectives, including: racial, ethnic; community; leadership; and business, among other cultures. A shortlist of four potential candidates to focus on these cultures was being refined, with a potential start date in the first quarter, 2024.

The consultant group were thanked for their contributions.

Finance: Work
Group Update

Upon recognition, Scott Lumsden, facilitator, began the update for the Finance Work Group by reviewing the report (**Attachment 3**), which was posted on EQUIP and available for public viewing. The Finance Work Group has been analyzing and synthesizing the 2024 Budget, and sharing their summaries with Kathy Lueckert, President, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and Ian Hall, Chief Financial Officer / Chief Operating Officer, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation. The Finance Work Group received refinements and clarifications on their summaries.

There was an appreciation of how some of the budget for the Administrative Services Group (“ASG”) was listed directly in the Unified Budget, and how other services provided by ASG to OGA and PMA were reflected in the respective agency budget. There was a recognition to continue to seek understanding of the prior use of available, designated, and restricted funds.

It was noted that until recently, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation (“A Corp”) had minimal reserves; and, reserves were built with the additional cash flow from the COVID-19 Congressional Payroll Protection Plan. The Finance Work Group thanked staff for their patience in explaining the complexities and evolutionary history. Kathy Lueckert provided examples of the complexities of working with reserves and unused funds.

The Finance Work Group decided against recommending changes to the timing of the fiscal year, and to keep a December 31 Fiscal Year End. The rationale for maintaining the current December 31 Fiscal Year End ([Attachment 4](#)), was posted on EQUIP and available for public viewing. A brief update on the Special Offerings was discussed.

The Unification Commission learned of an anticipated request in February 2024, from the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (“PMAB”) for a budget request from reserves for the IT Roadmap Allocation ([Attachment 5](#)), also posted on EQUIP and available for public viewing. The Commission also learned of another anticipated request in February 2024, from ASG to amend the 2024 budget ([Attachment 6](#)), also posted on EQUIP and available for public viewing. The Commission learned these budget amendments were expected, based on a better reflection of the anticipated funds and expenses, and the 2024 budget was developed by staff and approved by the 225th General Assembly (2022). The historical process and rationale for amending the budget, and the process of handling unspent and restricted funds, were discussed. The Commission heard the IT Roadmap Allocation and the Revised 2024 General Assembly Mission Budget were solely items of information, and after PMAB and ASG acted at their respective February 2024 meetings would these items formally come before the Commission for discussion and action.

The Finance Work Group was thanked for their presentation.

Governance: Work
Group Update

Upon recognition, Debra Avery, facilitator, provided an update for the Governance Work Group, referencing the report ([Attachment 7](#)) circulated in advance in EQUIP and available to the public. The new governing and agency structures were highlighted as referenced in the report. There was a discussion on the visioning and strategic planning as referenced in the public-facing portion of the report, including the scope and role of executive leadership especially during the transition period. It was noted there may be new roles to be filled by the General Assembly Nominating Committee for the 228th General Assembly (2026).

The Governance Work Group was thanked for their work.

Recess and
Rationale

Felipe Martínez noted the agenda called for the Unification Commission to reconvene after lunch as a committee of the whole. The Commission has discussed and adopted the practice that committees and task forces solely discuss and do not take action; therefore, committees and task forces were permitted to meet without public streaming and recording.

Following the adopted agenda, without objection and by common consent, the Unification Commission recessed for lunch and to then meet as a committee of the whole, with an anticipated time to reconvene at 10:30 a.m. ET the following morning. [Recorder’s note: the livestream was appropriately paused.]

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Friday, January 25, 2024

Reconvene

At 10:40 a.m. ET, Friday, January 25, 2024, Felipe Martínez reconvened the Unification Commission. [Recorder's Note: the livestream resumed.] Appreciation was shared for the work done as a committee of the whole, and the distinction from a closed session.

Report to General Assembly

Felipe Martínez noted the February 2024 scheduled meeting of the Unification Commission would be prior to the 120-day deadline for reports to the 226th General Assembly (2022). The Commission should expect to approve a Report to General Assembly. The Commission, acting as a committee of the whole, had received an update on the number of times news articles and the video live streams were accessed (**Attachment 8**), which was posted publicly to EQUIP. The Commission learned the news articles from December 2022 to December 2023 were viewed an average of 323 times, and the average number of unique viewers of each recording was 15. [Recorder's Note: this completed the previously tabled discussion on the awareness and interest of the broader Church in the work of the Unification Commission.]

Timing of Future Meetings

Felipe Martínez invited a round-table discussion on the timing of future in-person meetings as impacted by travel plans. It was noted many commissioners arrive the day before a meeting begins, and a 9:00 a.m. call to order was no greater challenge to make than a 12:00 p.m. start. It was also noted the fullness of an agenda may be challenging to participate several months in advance. The Commission reached consensus on the impact of in-person meetings was the conversations; and items for consideration and action can be scheduled for a Zoom meeting. In this spirit, meeting on Saturday morning in-person solely to vote was deemed not helpful for travel plans, and fuller agendas on Thursday and Fridays were suggested. There were expressions of gratitude for the planning process, and this consensus-driven approach to scheduling.

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

There were no further comments from commissioners or staff. The Commission was reminded the next stated meeting is Saturday, February 17, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. ET on Zoom. Without objection and by common consent, Felipe Martínez adjourned the meeting with a closing prayer at 11:00 a.m. ET.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Raymond Bonwell
Recorder

**Commission for the Unification
of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency**

COMMISSION COVENANT

- To pray for one another
- To speak and listen with respect
- To inhale and exhale, to remember to breathe
- To have a posture of open mindedness, ready to listen, not quick to make decisions but seek understanding first
- To offer grace as we share collective witness
- To address things authentically, transparently and directly
- To make tough decisions
- To not be bound by our assumptions
- To be open to the Spirit's new options we haven't even considered
- To stay trusting in God
- To know when to speak and act, and know when to be quiet and wait for decisions to come in their time
- To be sensitive to the mindset of staff from OGA and PMA, to pray for them, to be a calming force
- To be consistent in how we communicate officially and unofficially
- To not take ourselves too seriously
- To support and care for one another

Adopted on December 17, 2022

UniComm Report: Startup more than a Mashup

Rev. Bronwen Boswell and Dr. Corey Schlosser-Hall

We have established a process map for unifying communications (see UniComm RoadMap on page 2). The circled area is where we are in the process by the time of the UC meeting. We are hoping and expecting to celebrate a new, unified communications ministry by the end of April 2024. Right now, we are in Stage Two of the process—Revise and re-Envision.

Stage 1 Reflect & Review (December 11, 2023 – February 5, 2024): To come to terms with our mutual histories and present realities.

We had a wonderful gathering on **February 5** to move toward completion of this phase that was kicked off on December 11, 2023. If you are interested, we can send the agenda, slidedeck, and some work products from that gathering. The Reflect and Review Task Force did a fantastic job of:

- 1) Assembling an overview of the *History of national communications ministry 1990-present*.
- 2) Assembling a full Comms Ministry *2024 Pictorial Directory* for all comms to refer to.
- 3) Capturing in 1 screen view all of the projects both comms teams produce annually. WOW!
- 4) Data set of the competencies, strengths, work histories of those serving comms ministries in OGA and PMA. It's a remarkable team who brings a huge wealth of abilities and experiences together.
- 5) Also, Bronwen and Corey completed our *1:1s with every person*. These elicited really useful insight to the positive, hopeful attitudes of people from both teams and the overwhelming sense that we will be better together than we can be apart. Along with some important concerns that we will be addressing along the way.

As part of this gathering, we identified the strengths and positive attributes we'd like to carry forward "in our backpack" into the new UniComm. We also identified dynamics, stories, past hurts and difficulties that we'd like to leave behind. Bronwen led us to "closed the book" on those ... literally!

Stage 2: Revise & Re-Envision (Feb 5- March 15): To articulate a preferred future including vision, mission and org culture for communications ministry and test it with stakeholders.

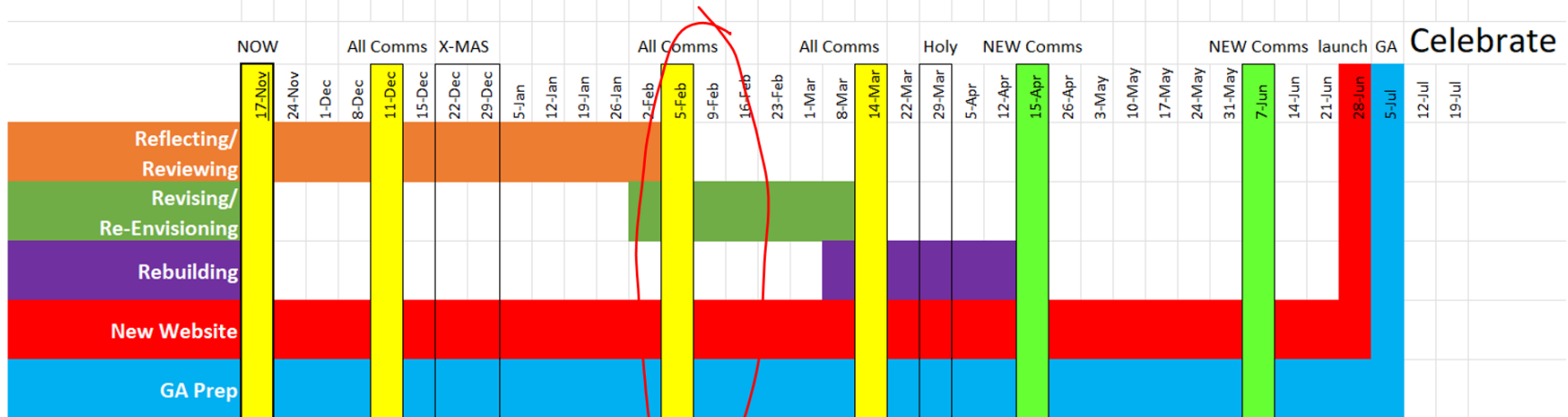
Our Revise and Re-Envision task force is underway with a first task. Each member is doing informational interviews with other communications ministries, departments, or teams in a variety of industries (other denominational and religious communications, and also news, entertainment, academics, sports, non-profits and medical) are doing and how they are doing it to be the best communicators they can be. We want to learn from the best as we revise and re-envision a new unifying communications ministry for OGA and PMA.

Stage 3: Rebuilding a New Ministry (March 15 – end of April): To name the new communications ministry personnel, operations, and game plan for the present and future.

Where are we on the RoadMap?

UniComm Roadmap

Unifying Communications Ministry



Week of

All Team(s) Milestones

17-Nov	Review Process Map & Gather Feedback
11-Dec	Deepen Reflecting and Reviewing: identify & commission 2 teams
5-Feb	Conclude Reflecting/Reviewing and deepen Revising/Re-Envisioning stages
14-Mar	Share Draft Mission, Vision and Values and begin testing with stakeholders
15-Apr	New Comms Ministry inauguration
7-Jun	Reflect & Review: How's it going? Finalize website launch plans & GA communications assignments
28-Jun	Launch New Website!!
5-Jul	General Assembly Full Swing
19-Jul	CELEBRATE!

**Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
Report to the 226th General Assembly (2024)
for Review on February 17, 2024**

In the Name of Jesus Christ, greetings.

We, the twelve members of the Commission to Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (“Unification Commission”), give thanks to God for this opportunity to serve God’s Church, and we are humbled and inspired by the work set before us. The original action by the 225th General Assembly (2022) provided a four-year span for our work to be accomplished, and it included a call for us to provide this Interim Report to the 226th General Assembly (2024).

The 225th General Assembly (2022) empowered the Unification Commission *to oversee and facilitate the unification of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) ... Once unification is finalized, the commission shall determine the structure moving forward and present the new Organization for Mission to the 227th General Assembly (2026).* [<https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000918>] The Commission is on track to accomplish its mandate within its four-year term and is pleased with the progress that has been made to date.

Furthermore, the Unification Commission recognizes the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to operating in a spirit of trust and transparency. Therefore, we are leveraging technology to be as accessible as possible to the larger Church.

- There is a landing page for our work (<https://oga.pcusa.org/section/committees/ga-special-committees-and-task-forces/commission-unification-oga-pma/>; accessed January 4, 2024), which contains a meeting link for the upcoming meeting; a schedule of upcoming meetings; the members; our Commission Covenant (read at the start of every meeting); and, the Assembly Mandate, including the membership composition.
- Every meeting is live streamed, and the recorded videos are available online (via VIMEO; <https://vimeo.com/pcusaoga>, accessed January 4, 2024).
- Meeting materials are available on EQUIP (a learning management system managed by the Office of the General Assembly, which may be accessed as a “guest” without an account, here: <https://equip.pcusa.org/login/index.php>; accessed January 4, 2024).
- The Presbyterian News Service (“PNS”) has consistently published a thoughtful and informative article within days of the conclusion of each meeting. For their ministry we give thanks.

The Unification Commission believes this high degree of transparency has uniquely fostered trust among stakeholders. Appendix 2 details the viewing of the meetings, both live and unique viewers accessing the video. For the 11 meetings with statistics, there is an average of 24 live views and 15 unique viewers of the playback, and the PNS articles have been viewed an average of 327 times (full statistics available in Appendix 2).

The Minutes are attached to this report. The Minutes serve as a definitive record of our work. Appendix 2 details when and how the Commission met. Briefly stated, the Commission’s service (led by its work groups) has included the following actions / progress:

- The Commission has held 21 consultations and listening sessions throughout the wider church.
- Members of the Commission meet regularly with executive staff from both PMA and OGA, and a key fruit of this collaboration is the current process to shape a unified budget for 2025 and 2026.
- The Commission is making progress to define the details of the new governance body and new unified agency it will oversee. The OGA and PMA unification roll out is planned to begin July 1, 2025.

The Commission has been inspired and encouraged by the response of staff, denominational agencies and groups, and mid council leaders to the process of unification thus far. Our desire is to continue being sensitive to the unique opportunities, concerns, and challenges presented by unification, and walking through this work in a spirit of collaboration, openness, and trust. We particularly celebrate the work of the staff at the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, for embracing this unprecedented time of transition with a willingness to engage with the Commission and all the while continuing their excellent work.

We thank the General Assembly for this opportunity to serve Christ. As mentioned in the Minutes, we also thank our staff resources for their steadfast and wise support, including: from the Office of the General Assembly – Kerry Rice, Deputy Stated Clerk; from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation – Kathy Lueckert, President, and Alejandra Sherman, Executive Assistant to the President; and, from the Presbyterian Mission Agency – Barry Creech, Deputy Executive Director for Administration.

We continue to invite you, the Church, to pray for the Commission and to watch and follow our work.

Unanimously adopted and submitted by your Unification Commission; February 17, 2024

Appendix 1

Commissioners as appointed by the Co-Moderators of the 225th General Assembly (2022)
Ruth Santana-Grace and Shavon Starling-Louis
(who also serve *ex officio* with voice and without vote)

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

(*n.b.* A keen reader of the Minutes will notice Frances Lin started service as a Ruling Elder. We give thanks for her ordination to the office of Teaching Elder on August 11, 2023.)

Appendix 2

List of Meetings, Format, and Metrics (Live Views; Plays, Unique Viewers; and # of Finishes)

Meeting #	Video Name	Format	Live Views	Plays	Unique Viewers	# of Finishes	Article Views
	Average		24.3	37.5	15.2	5.9	326.9
1	December 17, 2022, Meeting	Zoom	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	31
2	January 21, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	37	80	28	14	
3	February 18, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	14	46	23	1	
4a	March 9, 2023, Meeting	In-Person	63	136	47	15	
4b	March 10, 2023, (Part 1) Meeting	In-Person	34	49	22	6	
4c	March 10, 2023, (Part 2) Meeting	In-Person	29	41	18	3	
4d	March 11, 2023, 9:00 a.m. (Part 1)	In-Person	11	12	5	5	
4e	March 11, 2023, 9:00 a.m. (Part 2)	In-Person	9	20	13	4	23
5	April 16, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	8	23	13	5	18
6a	May 20, 2023, Meeting (Part 1)	Zoom	12	20	10	7	
6b	May 20, 2023, Meeting (Part 2)	Zoom	7	11	7	8	350
7a	June 22, 2023, Meeting	In-Person	38	44	18	11	
7b	June 23, 2023, (Part 1) Meeting	In-Person	29	48	24	11	
7c	June 23, 2023, (Part 2) Meeting	In-Person	17	28	18	9	
7d	June 24, 2023, Meeting	In-Person	9	29	16	3	328
8	July 22, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	N/A*	7	5	0	
9	August 20, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	N/A*	8	3	0	760
10a	September 17, 2023, (Part 1) Meeting	Zoom	14	24	13	3	
10b	September 17, 2023, (Part 2) Meeting	Zoom	2	11	7	5	522
11a	October 12, 2023, Meeting	In-Person	24	37	10	7	
11b	October 14, 2023, Meeting	In-Person	89	97	12	4	522
12	November 12, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	15	17	7	2	
13	December 16, 2023, Meeting	Zoom	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	388
*Live stats no longer available due to video edits made to protect confidential information. Certain views are unavailable; Dec. 2022 is too distant; and Dec. 2023 is too recent							

APPENDIX 2

**Unification Commission Meeting Minutes
December 2022 – February 2024**

Finance Workgroup Report // Feb 2024

Unification Commission Meeting, Zoom

The Finance Workgroup in consultation with the Executive Team recommends that the Unification Commission affirm and approve the actions below:

1). The Finance Work Group recommends that the Unification Commission affirm the 2025-2026 Unifying Budget Values and Vision Statement developed by the Executives and the Coordinating Table at their January 2024 Budget Process Retreat (*Please note: This budget values and vision statement is intended for the 2025-2026 Budget Process only.)

2025-2026 Unifying Budget Values

Led by the Spirit, we will be ...

- *Open to discerning and embracing new ways of embodying our work*
- *Courageous, willing to risk failure as we pursue new possibilities*
- *Centered in equity and justice, and*
- *Trustworthy colleagues and partners in ministry*

As we are sent outward in service to church and world

2025-2026 Unifying Budget Vision Statement

We envision that this budget will enable us to be...

A partner in mission and ministry,

complementing and strengthening congregations, mid councils and other faith communities, and stewarding faithfully all of our resources.

This budget equips the PC(USA) to be...

formed and re-formed as a covenant community of vibrant and growing disciples

who embody a fresh expression of a Reformed witness to Christ's love and justice in the world,

present and responsive to the challenges of this time.

2). The FWG recommends the UC approve that all actions of the 226th GA that have financial implications outside of the presented 2025-2026 budgets be charged to per capita funds.

Rationale: The ongoing transformational work of the 2025-2026 budget process and budget project necessitates prior clarification of where in the budget to prepare for these financial implications. A common item in this category is the establishment of special committees. This action would NOT include financial implications or actions being recommended by one of the agencies.

3). The FWG recommends that the UC approve the Revised 2024 GA Mission Budget Mission and the funding of Phase III of the IT Roadmap presented at the Commission's in-person meeting in January 2024. (See separate document from January that has been resent.)

For Information: The Funding Work Group received and supports the IT Roadmap team's report that phase IV is anticipated to cost an additional \$2 million in 2025 and 2026. Like Phase III, the cost will be funded from unrestricted reserves.

**ITEM A.102
FOR ACTION**

FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY					
X	A. Administrative		B. Matthew 25		C. Vision Implementation
	D. Coordinating		P. Plenary		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS – TO BE COMPLETED BY SUBMITTING OFFICE					
COST (<i>explain in the Rationale section</i>):					
Within Per Capita Budget _____			Within Mission Budget _____		New Funds _____

Subject: Revised 2024 General Assembly Mission Budget - REVISED 1/24/2024

Recommendation:

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve, and forward to the Unification Commission for their concurrence, the proposed Revised 2024 General Assembly Mission Budget of \$76,530,292.

Rationale:

The Organization for Mission describes the process for approving the Unified General Assembly Budget:

The appropriate assembly committee of the General Assembly will recommend a balanced budget for each year in the budget cycle, incorporating work from the proposed budget and overtures, commissioners' resolutions, and other actions of the General Assembly, for approval as the outline of work for the budget cycle. The General Assembly may take actions to add or subtract any element to or from proposed budgets. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board, and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will then make appropriate adjustments after the Assembly within the approved budget constraints. (Appendix A, Section IV, Paragraph B).

In addition, the 224th General Assembly (2020), "authorize(d) the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board to spend amounts in excess of, or less than, amounts budgeted for a specific line item as a result of emerging situations," provided that the variance from the approved budget is reported to the next General Assembly.

These authorizations allow the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (PMAB) (as well as the other entities) to make revisions to their working budgets to take new circumstances into account, provided that reporting to the next General Assembly is based on the originally approved budget.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) seeks such approval from the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board on a regular basis, so that management may provide clear expectations for staff regarding authorized spending levels, as budgets provide both the authorization for expenditures and the associated source of funds. PMAB approved similar revisions at these recent meetings:

UNIFICATION COMMISSION
February 17, 2024

- September 2022
- April 2023, and
- October 2023.

The revisions typically fall into one of the following categories:

- 1) Work funded by restricted dollars that could not be completed in one year, and is now planned for completion in the next year
For example: Grants to partner institutions that planned for implementation in 2023, but not completed. These grants will be fulfilled in 2024, using the available funding from 2023.
- 2) Work mandated by GA, planned and funded with restricted or designated dollars for one year, but not completed in that year. The budget revisions would move those unused restricted or designated funds from year one to year two, so that the work could be completed. *For example: GA 2022 directed PMA to produce five online studies regarding gun violence and to institute a grant program that would provide grants ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 each. The financial implication for these recommendations totaled \$25,000, roughly divided between 2023 and 2024, and sourced from designated funds. The full scope of work assigned to 2023 was not accomplished in 2023, but the overall mandate remains. This request will allow for unused funding for portions of this project not completed in 2023 to be transferred to 2024, so that the GA mandate may be fulfilled.*
- 3) Over-performance of projected income resulting in changes to projected expenses.
For example: Gifts to Ukraine relief have outpaced the level of disaster relief revenue and expense that was anticipated in the 2023 and 2024 budgets. Since more revenue than anticipated was received in 2023, more expenditures than anticipated can be made in 2024.

This request increases the most recently approved budget (October 2023) by \$2,482,874 (from \$74,047,418 to \$76,530,292), detailed as follows:

	Proposed Revised Budget	Approved Budget	Increase (Decrease)
<i>Funding Sources:</i>			
Current Year - Revenue, Gains, and Other Support	55,393,283	55,015,558	377,725
Prior Year - Use of Available Designated and Restricted Funds	21,137,009	19,031,860	2,105,149
Total Funding Sources	76,530,292	74,047,418	2,482,874
<i>Expense:</i>			
Total Expenses	76,530,292	74,047,418	2,482,874

Components of the net increase include:

1) Revenue, Gains and Other Support revenue increased in the area of Program Services due to an increase in the registration income for the following special events:

- Matthew 25 Summit,
- Rome Consultation,
- Mosaic of Peace Conference,
- US South Travel Study,
- Discerning Missional Leadership (DML) Assessments (five Special Events) and
- YAV Site Coordinator support.

2) Compassion, Peace and Justice (CPJ) expenses increased due to

- Presbyterian Peacemaking Program special events,
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) program work,
- increased grant expense (funding was received after the initial budget process),
- salary adjustments, and
- completion of General Assembly (GA) program work.

3) Executive Director expenditures increased due to increased expenses related to the 2024 Matthew 25 Summit.

4) Theology, Formation and Evangelism (TFE) expenses increased due to:

- program work funded by a Lilly Endowment grant,
- planning for the 2025 Youth Triennium, and
- five Discerning Missional Leadership (DML) assessment events.

5) World Mission expenditures increased due to:

- the carryover of unspent 2023 funds (primarily endowments),
- the addition of the YAV Tucson Site Coordinator position, and
- the Rome special event.

6) Prior Year - Use of Available Designated and Restricted Funds – The use of available designated and restricted funds increased by \$2,105,149 with the proposed adjustments. These funds will be spent in the following areas:

- Compassion, Peace & Justice: net adjustment of +\$1,371,331, with \$1,105,866 additional in the area of disaster relief.
- Executive Director's Office: net adjustment of -\$2,963 (cost recovery funds that will flow to the Administrative Services Group)
- Theology, Formation & Evangelism: net adjustment of +\$444,078, with \$318,019 coming from outside foundations for new work
- World Mission: net adjustment of \$292,703, with \$130,703 coming from restricted endowment funds and \$120,000 coming from temporarily restricted unused cost recovery funds.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation
General Assembly Mission Budget
2024

	Proposed Revised Budget	Approved Budget	Increase (Decrease)	
Revenue, Gains and Other Support				
Contributions				
Congregations	\$ 8,100,619	\$ 8,100,619	\$ -	
Gifts, bequests and grants	3,041,325	3,041,325	-	
Special offering				
Christmas Joy	2,200,000	2,200,000	-	
One Great Hour of Sharing	6,300,000	6,300,000	-	
Peace and Global Witness	805,000	805,000	-	
Pentecost	700,000	700,000	-	
Presbyterian Giving Catalog	1,500,000	1,500,000	-	
Special giving				
Extra Commitment Opportunity	4,391,000	4,391,000	-	
Hunger	295,000	295,000	-	
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance	2,850,000	2,850,000	-	
Special Missionary Support	150,000	150,000	-	
Total Contributions	30,332,944	30,332,944	-	
Investment Return				
Income from endowment funds held by the Foundation	1,803,500	1,803,500	-	
Income from other investments	2,638,600	2,638,600	-	
Realized gain (loss) on investments, net	13,612,782	13,612,782	-	
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments, net	-	-	-	
Total Investment Return	18,054,882	18,054,882	-	
Other Income				
Interest income from loans	-	-	-	
Hubbard Press	-	-	-	
Stony Point	1,628,150	1,628,150	-	
Sales of resources	407,122	407,122	-	
Program Services	4,959,185	4,581,460	377,725	(1)
Other	11,000	11,000	-	
Total Other Income	7,005,457	6,627,732	377,725	
Total Revenue, Gains, and Other Support	\$ 55,393,283	\$ 55,015,558	\$ 377,725	
Expenses				
Communications	3,366,433	3,366,433	-	
Compassion, Peace and Justice	16,317,612	14,657,681	1,659,931	(2)
Executive Director	4,847,636	4,833,174	14,462	(3)
Racial Equity and Women's Intercultural Ministries	5,774,046	5,774,046	-	
Shared Expense	1,402,657	1,402,657	-	
Stony Point	1,948,930	1,948,930	-	
Theology, Formation and Evangelism	9,147,451	8,673,673	473,778	(4)
World Mission	15,014,249	14,679,546	334,703	(5)
Administrative Services Group	17,961,278	17,961,278	-	
Office of the General Assembly	750,000	750,000	-	
Total Expenses	\$ 76,530,292	\$ 74,047,418	\$ 2,482,874	
Current Year Change in Net Assets	\$ (21,137,009)	\$ (19,031,860)	(2,105,149)	
Prior Year - Use of Available Designated and Restricted Funds	\$ 21,137,009	\$ 19,031,860	2,105,149	(6)
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

**ITEM A.105
FOR ACTION**

FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY					
X	A. Administrative		B. Matthew 25		C. Vision Implementation
	D. Coordinating		P. Plenary		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS – TO BE COMPLETED BY SUBMITTING OFFICE					
COST (explain in the Rationale section):					
Within Per Capita Budget _____			Within Mission Budget _____		New Funds _____

Subject: Request for funding to implement Phase III of the IT Roadmap

Recommendation:

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board request approval from the Unification Commission to allocate up to \$1,000,000 from the Unrestricted Reserve Fund to fund Phase III of the IT Roadmap.

Rationale:

This request will fund two components of Phase III of the IT Roadmap: initial investigations into a Constituency Relationship Management (CRM) system and the implementation of a centralized Grant Management system. Approval is worded as it is (referencing the Unification Commission) because of an October 2023 action from the Unification Commission, stating:

“The Unification Commission empowers its Finance Work Group to provide regular updates to the full commission and to bring any requests which may come from executive leadership for expenditures outside the current 2024 fiscal year budget for commission approval.”

Subsequent conversation with the Financial Work Group revealed that the intent was for PMA to follow its normal processes with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and then bring these requests to the Commission for final approval.

Centralized Grant Management system

In 2021, the Vision Implementation Report [“Reflecting, Reimagining, and Making Space for Rebuilding.”](#) produced by CounterStories Consulting, asked PMA to reimagine its grant-making process. PMA has over 100 grant programs, administered by more than thirty individual offices, which in 2022 disbursed more than \$15,000,000. Each grant program operates a little differently than the other.

In 2022, a Grants Centralization Project team was formed with three primary emphases:

- creating broader awareness of funding opportunities
- providing grant requesters with a consistent experience, and
- creating a mechanism to improve the tracking and impact of gifts.

As the project team began its work, it became apparent that meeting the project goals would require a centralized database for grant administration. One of our dreams is the idea of a single application for all PMA-related grants. In that scenario, applicants would not have to know the particular processes for each

grant program, but rather could apply once, and then become eligible for any of the grant programs for which the applicant met the restrictions. It may not be possible to fully meet that dream, but it is a vision that is driving the project forward.

Conversations with the Information Technology section of the Administrative Services Group resulted in a referral to outside consultants who would be able to help us develop database and process requirements that could then be used to create a request for proposal for software developers. (A similar process was undertaken with the same consultants for the website re-design.) Project team leaders have been in conversation with the consultants and now have a proposal for consideration. The proposal envisions three phases:

- *Assessment* – an eight-week process of preparation and discovery, focused on the eight largest grantmaking processes. The result of this step will be a clear statement of work to present to prospective vendors.
- *Selection* – an eight-week process of documenting requirements, vendor engagement, and implementation planning. The result of this step will be the selection of a vendor and readiness for implementation.
- *Implementation* – a six-month process of creating the system and processes that will provide centralized grant administration.

Project costs are in three categories:

- Process consultants and vendor relations – \$150,000
- Software licensing – (estimated \$30,000 to \$100,000)
- Software implementation (estimated \$90,000 to \$500,000)

For a maximum total of \$750,000 and a minimum cost of \$270,000. Any unused funds would be returned to the unrestricted reserve. Software licensing costs would recur annually and become a part of the unified budget.

The centralized Grant Management System proposal has the support of PMA's Executive Leadership Team and the Information Technology Steering Team (composed of representatives from ASG, OGA and PMA), a team which established IT priorities for the three entities. While PMA is currently the only one of the three entities with grant-making programs, the OGA representative said that the system might also have applications in work currently administered by OGA.

IT Roadmap

In 2023, the Information Technology section of the Administrative Services Group, working in partnership with leadership of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency developed an IT Roadmap.

The IT Roadmap is laid out in phases:

- I. Strengthen Technology Services Function
- II. Strengthen Core Technology Services
- III. Migrate to Shared Core Business Applications
- IV. Leverage Data and Analytics
- V. Exercise Technology Change Management Muscle

Phases I and II are well underway and have been supported with existing budgets. Phase III includes:

- build and relaunch the website (a major project that is already underway and already funded)
- begin mapping constituent data and optimize existing Constituency Relationship Management (CRM) systems
- bring long-term approach to CRM and digital engagement and
- other efforts as prioritized.

The IT Steering Team has prioritized the centralized Grant Management System as an IT Roadmap Phase III project.

This funding request, in addition to providing support for the centralized Grant Management System development, would provide up to \$250,000 to begin the work of developing the CRM system. Later this year, we expect to bring another funding request for the full development and 2025 implementation of a CRM system.

Having the centralized Grant Management System in development as we begin to think about a CRM solution will allow us to ensure that the two systems can interact and share data...a necessary step for the development of a successful CRM.

The Unrestricted Reserve Fund

The [PMA Reserve Policy](#), approved by the General Assembly in 2016, created the Unrestricted Reserve Fund, which is “composed of all unrestricted receipts and prior year net assets intended for the support of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.” The source of funds in Unrestricted Reserve Fund include:

- income including receipts from congregations, presbyteries, or individuals;
- unrestricted gifts, legacies, bequests;
- unrestricted investment income;
- gift annuity excess reserves;
- such nonrecurring income as the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall direct by general or specific policy statement; and
- under expenditure portion of the Presbyterian Mission Agency annual operating budget.

The policy stipulates several conditions for the use of these funds:

- “The unrestricted reserve fund will not be used to manage projected operating budget shortfalls;”
- “(The fund) may be accessed with the approval of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board;”
- “Use of the unrestricted reserve fund shall be limited to
 - revenue shortfalls and expense overruns in the current budget cycle,
 - emergency purposes, and
 - new mission opportunities;”
- “The unrestricted fund reserve balance will be approved by the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency with concurrence of the Chief Financial Officer.”

This source of funds was last used in February of 2022, when PMAB approved allocating \$9,000,000 from the unrestricted reserve as follows:

- \$6.5 million to a Board Designated Fund for creation of an Office of Innovation, Discernment and Visioning, a Center for the Repair of Historical Harms, and the start-up costs of the Vision Implementation Plan over a five-year period (2022-2026).
- \$1.5 million to the Office of the General Assembly to assist with its 2023-2024 budget
- \$1 million to the Administrative Services Group to assist with the completion of conference center renovations at 100 Witherspoon, and to supplement the development of PCUSA, A Corporation’s unrestricted reserve fund.

At present the Unrestricted Reserve Fund is required to maintain a balance equal to one year’s PMA unrestricted expense budget, that is, \$12M. The current balance of the fund is \$21.8M, which means that \$9.8M is available in this fund, sufficient to fund this request and the anticipated expense later this year for the Constituency Relationship Management system, both of which would qualify as new mission opportunities.

LISTENING SESSIONS

April - November 2023

Susan Barnett, PhD



RESEARCH
SERVICES

Table of Contents

3	Purpose
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Listening Sessions

Beginning in April 2023, the Unification Commission initiated a series of listening sessions to learn from the many voices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) what their hopes, dreams, concerns, and expectations would be of a new PCUSA national agency that will replace the current Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency as they are now known. “Unification” is the term given to this process. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “unify” means “to bring together”¹.

The listening sessions included staff and leadership from:

- Office of the General Assembly
- Presbyterian Mission Agency
- Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program
- Presbyterian Foundation
- Board of Pensions
- Presbyterian Publishing Corporation
- Committee on the Office of the General Assembly
- Presbyterian Mission Agency Board
- Presbyterian Historical Society Board
- A-Corporation Board
- Mid Council Leadership (in a separate report)
- Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy
- Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice
- General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations
- General Assembly Committee on Representation
- Committee on Theological Education
- National Asian Caucus
- National Black Caucus
- National Hispanic Caucus
- Mission Co-workers
- Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee
- Racial Equity Advisory Committee
- Stated Clerk Nomination Committee

1.://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/unify

Silos

April through August 2023

Structure

Listening Sessions

The following assessment is based on the content of the listening sessions* conducted between April 19 and August 28, 2023, by members of the Unification Commission as part of their fact-finding efforts as they move toward the unification of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency in 2026.

SILOS

Each listening session was conducted with a siloed group. Staff from Office the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency participated in these sessions. The individuals who participated shared from a position, the perspective of their silo. What they shared is:

- the value of their silo,
- what they want for their silo in the new organization, and
- how important, expanded, prominent their silo should be in the new agency.

AGENCIES

A second observation is these individuals came into the sessions as members of an agency: the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency **AND** they left as members of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Nothing in the comments suggested that they saw themselves as part of something different and new.

In less than three years unification is to occur. As each siloed staff left the consultation, they went back to *their agency*. They had not begun their process of unification. The question is when does it begin? Naming the new agency is one way to begin unification. It will assist in pointing staff toward the same goal.

*Presbyterian Foundation and Presbyterian Publishing Company staff participated but are not included in the comments on this page.

Themes

**Combined listening
sessions April - November**

Themes

Emerging Themes

The Unification Commission members scheduled a series of listening sessions with representatives of PCUSA agencies and asked the following three questions:

1. What do you want the Unification Commission to know?
2. What are your hopes for unification?
3. What are your concerns for unification?
4. What should the Unification Commission ask?

From these questions, common themes emerged, themes that were echoed in most of the listening sessions. Here are the themes:

1. Structure
2. Governance
3. Finances
4. Culture
5. Polity

The analysis is based on notes from each listening session rather than recordings of the actual sessions. On the following pages, paraphrased statements are listed rather than quotes.

On the following pages, notes from the **April through August listening sessions are in brown** while the notes from **September through November are in blue**. The notes from the earlier listening sessions were shared with the Commission in 2023.

Structure

Flexible

Participants expressed their hopes and concerns for the new structure. They would like an agency that is flexible to meet the needs of PCUSA as it moves forward. That is, an agency capable of changing as it responds to new environments, ameboid.

Streamline

The new agency is to be streamlined. Celebrate the work whose time has passed and bring those programs and activities to an end. A streamlined agency will eliminate **redundancies** and the associated confusion that they foster. Keep only those functions that are essential to the new agency's purpose and mandated functions. Create a defined space for committees and the Caucuses.

Language Support

Language support is needed beyond English, Spanish, and Korean. Build into the structure offices that recognize and respond to the many languages that are spoken within PCUSA congregations and New Worshiping Communities.

Staff

There are requests for additional staff to support suggested new works such as an office for Asian congregations and one FTE staff for each committee. Develop a structure that promotes increased access to the staff by committee members and staff to the committees. Create a system where it is easy to identify staff who are responsible for a particular work.

Growth

Design for growing the Church with new growth strategies including evangelism.

Create something new

The new agency is to be new with its ideas, leadership, and purpose.

New Agency Name

Unification Commission
February 17, 2024

From the participants*

Structure

- Flexible, yet strategic
 - Do not simply mesh the two agencies, make thoughtful innovative change.
 - Create thematic work groups.
 - Eliminate redundancies.
 - Eliminate ministries/programs that are no longer relevant.
 - Do not keep functions that do not support the new agency's purpose.
 - Create clearly identifiable work groups, easy to navigate for those in &/or outside of the agency.
 - Avoid (unspecified) pitfalls of previous unified agency.
 - Determine the balance of domestic and international work.
-
- Increase accessibility staff to committees and committees to staff to advance their mutual work.
 - Identified staff/offices for minority congregations. For example, an office that is the primary contact point for Asian congregations. Current organizational structure cannot manage language barriers. Mediator office, services.
 - Have dedicated staff to support the work of a single committee.
 - Simplify structure and make staff information readily available to answer the questions of congregations and NWC
 - Simplify processes such as transferring ordination.
 - Clarity about who does what work (beyond the NewAg).
 - Hopefully, the new agency structure will promote better cooperation and create more opportunities across the national agencies.
 - What is the commitment to evangelism? Strategies are needed for evangelism and growth. Evangelism is not a bad word.
 - Break down silos.
 - Create something new.

*Listening sessions: April – August (brown); September – November (blue),

Culture

Staff

Several voiced their concern for the staff as the unification process is discussed and implemented. Change is associated with stress and anxiety, the unknown. It is asked that the Unification Commission and existing agency leaders be aware of the needs of the staff during this process by keeping staff informed to reduce stress and anxiety.

Communication

Communicate often with regularity. Keep staff and leaders informed of the Commission's progress and decisions. Model the communication patterns that the Commission wants replicated in the new agency. This can assist in eliminating silos.

Loss

There will be a loss of staff. Some will not have the flexibility to adapt to change. The current work of some staff will not move forward into the new agency. Celebrate those that do not continue into the new agency. Provide opportunities for staff to grieve the loss of colleagues while celebrating them.

Thematic Work

Silos and siloed thinking can be counterproductive to moving forward. Designing a structure that is streamlined and flexible will promote a new work environment that will deter silos. Specialized work will continue. Create the expectation that staff will move to do different assignments as their skill set is needed.

New Agency Name

Unification Commission
February 17, 2024

From the participants*

Culture

- Diverse, vibrant.
 - Create something new, do not maintain the status quo.
 - Be supportive of People of Color.
 - Increase communication among staff, between agencies, and aligned entities.
 - Promote purposeful, bidirectional communication.
 - Be supportive of staff as some are fearful of this change.
 - Accept that some staff will not be retained.
-
- Advocacy representation in leadership and program planning.
 - Break down silos so that those who are working on theme can work together in coordination.
 - demonstrate concern for staff during this process.
 - What new "thing" /system can be created to promote conversation and work product amongst those with shared goals, interests, and assignments.
 - Celebrate the work that will not continue. Honor it and those who served.
 - Feedback loop from staff who perform committee related work to report to the committees about their activities and accomplishments.

*Listening sessions: April – August (brown); September – November (blue),

Governance

Governing body

As the new agency is created, a new board is needed. The new board will need time to form and understand its role in promoting the success of the new agency. The new board is to be diverse, including People of Color and those whose first language is something other than English. Translation services should be provided at the board and committee meetings.

Leadership

Begin with new leaders that can promote the new agency and its work. Thereby reducing the temptation to revert to the previous thoughts and practices found in OGA or PMA.

Decision authority

Under the current structure, PILP reports to the General Assembly through the Mission Agency. Separate this requirement for PILP.

Authorize the new governing body to make decisions as needed rather than having to wait for the General Assembly to meet and take action.



New Agency Name

Unification Commission
February 17, 2024

From the participants*

Governance

- Seek new leadership models.
- Reduce bureaucracy.
- Begin with new leaders.
- What happens to designated committee representation on boards?
- Invite/increase non-English speakers to serve on committees and provide them with translators.
- The current governance structure has committees and boards meeting during the workweek which is difficult for those who have full time positions. Propose a new meeting arrangement that will promote greater opportunity for those who work to be involved in committees and on boards.
- PILP currently reports to the GA through PMA according to PILP's bylaws. The bylaws can be changed but between GAs PMA can approve PILP changes. How can General Assembly-required decisions/approvals happen outside of the current two-year General Assembly cycle?

*Listening sessions: April – August (brown); September – November (blue),

Finances & Polity

Finances

Financing the new agency is complicated by the numerous funding streams that currently feed into the two existing agencies. While participants did not offer new funding models, they emphasized that the creation of the new agency should not add burden to the local congregation.

Cost savings

With a reduction in staff by eliminating redundancies, cost savings will be realized. However, those savings could be lost by the increased salaries of newly hired qualified staff. One outcome of COVID is the increased salary expectations of new hires. If new salaries disadvantage the remaining employees, the salaries of the retained staff should be addressed or face the possibility of their leaving. In the end, unification may not result in cost savings.

Fund new work

Sufficient funding should be in place for all new work.

Polity

Simplify the process for appointments.



New Agency Name

Unification Commission
February 17, 2024

From the participants*

Finances

- Do not increase the costs for congregations rather create savings for them.
- Be efficient, reduce duplication.
- Plan for funding that is adequate to accomplish the objectives of the new agency's & the GA's goals.
- Competitive salaries to attract skilled staff and retain qualified staff.
- Sufficient funds to support the work of the new agency and that will allow work/committees to thrive.

Polity

- Reduce bureaucracy for appointments.

Basics

- Be responsive to the needs of congregations and partnering agencies.

*Listening sessions: April – August (brown); September – November (blue),

Repeated Themes

The following requests, comments, or questions were stated in all or most of the listening sessions. Several of these are mentioned on earlier pages.

- Communicate frequently about changes, decisions, and include memos directly to the agencies' presidents, caucuses, and congregations.
- All work is important and should be retained and elevated.
- What are the core, essential functions of the national agencies as defined in various governing documents? These are the essential tasks of the new agency.
- Where will staff who support national or GA committees be located?
- National agencies and programs are not relevant to the local congregation. How does the national church better connect with the local congregation?
- Can the new agency succeed with existing leadership relocated to new positions?
- There are differing viewpoints on the current Matthew 25 emphasis.
- Address the bitterness between the two agencies, remove embattled staff, and add new senior leadership.
- Staff and agency representatives repeated the need for more staff in their areas and that their work needs to be expanded in the new agency.
- Misperception exists as to why unification is happening. Some see it as way to settle disagreements/poor working relationships with PMA. Others see it as a cost-reduction plan. Some see it as solving problems that arose in the 1983 unification. Some see it as reflecting denominational decline.

What we are learning

Participants expressed that this is a time for something new, a new vision and opportunity. At the same time, they offered caution to care for staff during this time of transition and to not lose sight of the mandated functions and offices.

Frequent communication from the Commission will assist staff and leaders to move through this process with greater success. It also models what will be expected in the new agency, in communicating the changes to the congregations and other agencies.

It would be helpful if all communications included a why statement. Why is unification is occurring as many participants commented that they do not understand why it is happening. They postulated is it to save funds and reduce spending on national offices or is there a different reason and purpose? Will the unification process increase the relevance of the national offices to the local congregation?

There are many questions as to the final structure and governance. How will this impact the to be hired Stated Clerk? Will there be a defined location for committees and their support staff? Will there be offices and staff to support the caucuses and other language groups? Will there be sufficient funds to support the work?

The participants were asked four questions, and they asked many more in return.



Research Services helps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) make data-informed decisions using surveys, focus groups and interviews, demographic analysis, and program evaluations.

We are social scientists with backgrounds in sociology, public policy, and economics. We serve congregations, presbyteries and synods, PC(USA) national agencies, and other PC(USA)-related organizations. Research Services is a ministry of the Administrative Services Group.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of this report, contact us at 502-569-5077 or research@pcusa.org.



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