

**Subject: Mid Council Commission 2 Report to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014)**

**Recommendations:**

- 1. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014):**
  - a. Direct that a new configuration of synod boundaries be established through a collaborative process between the synods and presbyteries resulting in no more than eight larger regional synods, each with an emerging sense of purpose, partnership, context and call. The synods shall report to the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016).**
  - b. Inform all synods and presbyteries that designated members of MCC 2 will be available for conversation, clarification, and collaboration during the synods' and presbyteries' two year process of reconfiguring synods.**
  - c. Recommend that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) direct its Moderator, in consultation with the Stated Clerk, to appoint an Administrative Commission for the following purposes:**
    - 1. To assist synods and presbyteries who have been engaged in a substantive plan for reconfiguration but have been unable to resolve particular issues in their process.**
    - 2. To recommend to the 223rd General Assembly (2018) the boundary changes necessary to achieve a total of no more than eight synods, if there remain synods and presbyteries that have been unable or unwilling to engage in a collaborative process of reconfiguration.**
- 2. That the 221st General Assembly (2014), in order to ensure that the responsibilities listed in G-3.0502 are fulfilled, establish a "Committee on Mid Councils" and charge it to engage in a process for the on-going strengthening and nurturing of the mid councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with particular emphasis on collaborating with the synods of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to support clarity as to their ecclesial and missional identity, purpose, structure, and strategies by amending Standing Rule C.1.a. as follows:**
  - a. The Stated Clerk shall propose the number and designation of assembly committees to the General Assembly, which shall include a Committee on Mid Councils. The Stated Clerk shall present the proposed committee structure to the General Assembly for consideration and ratification at the first assembly meeting at which business is transacted. In making these proposals, the Stated Clerk shall consult with the appropriate General Assembly entity or entities, and may consult with other persons.**
- 3. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) continue the Mid Council Commission II through the meeting of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) with the following authority:**

**a. Pursuant to G-3.0502d, to organizing new synods, or dividing, uniting, or otherwise combining previously existing synods or portions of synods; and**

**b. Pursuant to G-3.0502e, approving the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries.**

**4. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) accept this report as the as the Commission's answer to the items referred to it by the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012).**

*Rationale*

*I. Introduction*

We invite the General Assembly to envision:

- A church whose existing mid councils come together at a bigger table or multiple tables to aspire to what God is calling them to do, to aspire to what God is calling us to be.
- A church with mid councils that engage in conversations about collaborating, partnering, and networking, as they define their purpose and the best way to live out a new identity.
- A church whose mid councils may focus on relationships or mission, leadership development, administrative support or essential ecclesiastical functions as the glue that helps presbyteries be in covenantal community with one another.
- A church whose mid councils are prepared to engage in significant structural change for the sake of enabling adaptive and creative change within broader borders.

The Mid Council Commission created by the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) (Mid Council Commission II) was charged to bring to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) recommendations concerning the future of Synods in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After thorough and prayerful study, conversation, and debate, the Mid Council Commission II finds that Synods continue to have a vital role within our life as a denomination. However, the time has come for fewer Synods within a structure of mutual accountability that encourages each Synod to discern God's call to find its unique role in affirming the creativity that already resides in our mid council system.

*II. The Charge to the Commission*

The Commission was charged by the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) with the following responsibilities:

1. Respond to Recommendations 1-4 of the Mid Council Commission I Report to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly by discussing, refining, and bringing to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly recommendations that consider the composition and organization of the Mid Councils in ways

that reinvigorate their capacity to support missional congregations, and advance the ecclesial nature and character of those presbyteries, within the unity of the church.

2. Exercise commission authority regarding organizing, uniting and dividing synods and presbyteries and changing the boundaries of presbyteries through the transference of congregations from one presbytery to another.

3. Review the nature and function of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly with respect to their relationship with and support of mid councils.

*III. Membership, meetings and work of the Commission*

*A. Membership*

The following members of the Commission were appointed by the Moderator of the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly:

Co-Moderators:

Ruling Elder Ariel Mink (Redwoods Presbytery)  
The Reverend Byron Wade (New Hope Presbytery)

Members:

Commissioned Ruling Elder Barbara Gilliland (Pueblo Presbytery)  
Ruling Elder Judi Johnson (San Jose Presbytery)  
The Reverend Jason H. Ko (Los Ranchos Presbytery)  
Ruling Elder Warren B. Cooper (Philadelphia Presbytery)  
The Reverend Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo (Salem Presbytery)  
The Reverend Liza Hendricks (Western Reserve Presbytery)  
Ruling Elder Jane D. Smith (Riverside Presbytery)  
The Reverend Eileen W. Lindner (Palisades Presbytery)  
The Reverend Jerrod B. Lowry (Utah Presbytery)  
The Reverend Marcia Mount Shoop (New Hope Presbytery)  
Ruling Elder James Wilson (Scioto Valley Presbytery)  
The Reverend Landon Whitsitt (Heartland Presbytery)  
Ruling Elder Christopher McCloskey, Young Adult Advisory Delegate (Southern New England Presbytery)

Staff:

The Reverend Jill Hudson, Coordinator of Mid Council Relations, OGA  
The Reverend Joyce Lieberman, Associate for Constitutional Interpretation, OGA  
Ruling Elder Andrew W. Yeager-Buckley, Program Assistant, OGA

*B. Meetings*

The Commission met in person four times in Fort Worth, Texas: November 26-28, 2012, March 14-16, 2013, September 9-11, 2013, and January 13-15, 2014 and via conference calls on February 6, 2013, June 18, 2013, and July 10, 2013. In addition, sub-groups of the Commission met in numerous conference calls between the meetings of the Commission.

*C. Work*

*1. Debate over the Role of Synods Has a Long History*

The role of synods in our denominational structure has long been a source of debate. Looking back at the last two decades, in 1993, an overture from the Presbytery of Southern New England proposed the creation of a special committee, among other things, to create a plan to eliminate synods and to divide synod property between presbyteries and the General Assembly. The overture was not approved by the 205th General Assembly (1993). However, the 208th General Assembly (1996) appointed a nine-member Special Committee on Middle Governing Bodies to

examine the relationships between and among the national offices, synods, and presbyteries; develop and review studies of middle governing bodies for effectiveness; and seek new paradigms for prioritizing, evaluating, visioning, resourcing, and partnering. (Minutes, 1996, Part I, p. 200)

The special committee offered several recommendations to the 211th General Assembly (1999) including that

the PC(USA) move to a three-governing-body system. The committee is convinced that a flexible and simplified three-governing-body system will offer more opportunities and incentives for direct linkage between and among General Assembly, presbyteries, and congregations. (Minutes, 1999, Part I, p. 526)

The 211<sup>th</sup> General Assembly took action on some aspects of the special committee's report, but did not act to move in the direction of eliminating synods, opting instead to receive and commend the report for study.

In 2008, Presbytery of Central Washington overtured the 218th General Assembly to direct the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to conduct an examination of the existing synod structure with the intention to streamline the current synod structure into fewer synods, covering larger geographic areas. While this overture was disapproved, it did not end debate over the existence and role of Synods. In 2010, the General Assembly, faced with a variety of requests for action related to the form and function of Synods in the Mid Council structure of the denomination, created a Commission on Mid Council.

*2. The Work of MCC I*

The work of the first Mid Council Commission was foundational to the work of the current Commission. MCC I listened across the varied voices in the denomination by means of surveys,

conference calls with key constituents, and numerous conversations in every synod, at every major gathering of the church, and with key leaders in every level of the church's life. It took seriously its responsibility to explore deeply theology, history, and sociology of Mid Councils, engaging with experts in each of these areas as well as the most respected leaders across the denomination about the urgency, necessity, and process of deep transformation. Perhaps most importantly, it initiated a transparent and public discourse using social media, blogs, articles, and conversations about its recommendations while they were still in "draft" stages.

Underlying the recommendations of MCC I to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly is an assertion with which this Commission finds itself in deep agreement, and which underpins the recommendations this Commission brings:

We live in a rapidly changing world and the Presbyterian Church (USA) is not the same denomination it was sixty or thirty years ago, when the structural framework of our current version of Presbyterianism was developed and implemented. As we have envisioned what the Presbyterian Church of our post-Christendom world may look like, our Commission has assumed the role of those who prepare the space, invite the artists, and affirm the creativity that already resides in our mid council system.

MCC I brought a number of recommendations to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Of direct concern to this Commission were its Recommendations 1-4, which rested on the premise that the strengthening of presbyteries and the overall denominational structure was best accomplished by "repurposing synods as Multi-Presbytery Missional Partnerships" and eliminating Synods as ecclesial bodies within our constitutional structure. See appendix A.

As noted above, the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly referred these four recommendations to the current Commission, charging it to discuss, refine, and bring to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly recommendations that consider the composition and organization of the Mid Councils in ways that reinvigorate their capacity to support missional congregations, and advance the ecclesial nature and character of those presbyteries, within the unity of the church.

### 3. *The Additional Work of MCCII*

MCC II began its work by focusing on three tasks consistent with its charge: fully developing the recommendations that would have to be adopted to eliminate Synods as ecclesial bodies (see Section VIII and Appendix C below); studying and evaluating various models of mid council structure that might accomplish the desire for a more flexible and creative mid council structure; and designing and implementing a process for studying the nature and function of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly with respect to their relationship with and support of mid councils. In addition, MCC II sought to deepen its understanding of the learnings from MCC I by further conversation within the denomination, primarily through telephone interviews with the leadership of the following Synods:

Synod of South Atlantic (July 24, 2013)

Synod of Southern California and Hawaii (July 30, 2013)

Synod of the Southwest (August 6, 2013)  
Synod of the Sun (August 7, 2013)  
Synod of Lincoln Trails (August 14, 2013)  
Synod of the Pacific (August 16, 2013)  
Synod of the Trinity (August 20, 2013)  
Synod of Mid-America (August 22, 2013)  
Synod of the Mid-Atlantic (August 23, 2013)  
Synod of the Covenant (August 29, 2013)  
Synod of the Northeast (August 30, 2013)  
Synod of Lakes and Prairies (September 5, 2013)  
Synod of the Rocky Mountains (September 6, 2013)

The outline used for these interviews is attached at Appendix B. The Commission also sent representatives to the Synod Executives Forum for face-to-face conversation to better understand the variety of work presently occurring within the Synods. With much discussion and prayer, and with a deep sense of humility, MCC II presents the following recommendations for consideration by the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly.

*IV. Recommendations regarding Reconfiguring Synods and Reinvigorating Presbyteries through a Collaborative Process*

In the midst of the tasks charged to MCC II, the Commission has been deeply shaped by the reality that the issue confronting the denomination is not simply an issue of saving money or downsizing. Rather, the core challenge for the denomination is how to faithfully be Christ's church in our contemporary context. It is God who is making all things new; the Church is called to open our hearts and minds to what that means for us.

It is the context and God's call to us that invite us in to this collaborative process. In order for the process to reflect the Body of Christ in all of its diversity and mission, we are calling for collaboration that includes all who are affected by these decisions. Synods, presbyteries, and local congregations have a stake in this transformative process, with synods and presbyteries having a particular responsibility. The marks of a collaborative process include clear access to participation, consistent methods of sharing power in discourse and decision-making, and transparency.

When synods and presbyteries engage in this collaborative process of transformation we trust that new partnerships will emerge and all levels of the Church will find new sources of vitality. In particular, we expect that clear plans will develop around reinvigorating presbyteries to support and challenge congregations to full participation in God's mission in the world.

Mid Council Commission II has diligently sought to carry out its work of considering the composition and organization of mid councils in ways that reinvigorate their capacity to support missional congregations, and advance the ecclesial nature and character of those presbyteries, within the unity of the church. The following are our conclusions and recommendations:

- A. *The organization of synods in the PCUSA needs to be reconfigured and their functions and role revitalized.*

While the Commission concluded that eliminating synods as ecclesial bodies at this time would not accomplish the goal of simplifying and streamlining the governance structure of the PCUSA, the commission believes that the PCUSA has a denominational structure that no longer fits the church of today. The current synod structure was established when we were a significantly larger church, when denominational loyalty to the mission decisions of higher councils was significantly deeper, and when geographic distance was an obstacle to efficient administration. Today our size, our understanding of denominations, and technology help to create opportunities for new ways of being church. Based on its review of the judicial caseloads of the current synod permanent judicial commissions, it appears entirely feasible for larger synods to carry out that work. Likewise, administrative review and the work of Committees on Representation can be carried out efficiently and effectively by larger synods.

In the view of this commission, it is also feasible for the mission activities of the current synods to be carried out by synods with a larger geographic scope. The Commission heard concerns from Synod leaders about loss of relationships and the challenge of combining or continuing current localized mission endeavors. This proposal, however, enables larger synods to organize in ways to foster relationships and mission in smaller geographic areas or moving certain work to presbyteries within that region. The Commission anticipates that the collaborative process of reconfiguration will result in some new forms of mission and partnership that will truly reflect local contexts and their particular needs.

Accordingly, the Commission recommends that the number of synods be reconfigured with the goal of no more than eight synods. The Commission's choice of eight synods was the result of balancing the current size of the denomination and the ecclesial responsibilities of synods. The number eight is not arbitrary but represents our calculation of the structure that will best serve our missional purpose.

- B. *A system of no more than eight larger synods is best accomplished by collaboration between the existing synods and presbyteries, rather than as a directive from the General Assembly.*

The task of combining sixteen synods into no more than eight will not be without its challenges. Staff and leadership structures will need to be reordered, assets transferred or reallocated, and existing legal obligations reassigned. Moreover, redefining synods will require the integration of councils with different cultures, norms and unwritten assumptions as to how work is done and decisions are made. In order for all affected to have a voice in the decisions made, there must be a collaborative process which includes clear access to participation, consistent methods of sharing power in discourse and decision-making, and transparency. This method of collaboration makes space for a larger conversation than just one about boundaries, but allows for broader and deeper work on priorities, purposes, and possibilities.

Further, such a process will encourage and require presbyteries to examine carefully their own connections with the synod they will be a part of, and the parameters of that synod's role. We

recognize that some presbyteries, faced with questions as to their own future and the up-building of the church within their bounds simply have not had the time or energy to focus on the role of synods. However, the presbyteries have an important interest in engaging in this process. While combining existing synods may be the simplest process legally, a presbytery bordering more than one synod may find that the culture of one of those synods more closely fits its own culture; regional demographic patterns may draw it more naturally in a particular direction; or it may choose to be part of a contiguous synod, if that is the type of council that will best support its response to God's call.

The Commission understands that this process may be complicated. As Reformed Christians we understand that the wisdom of the larger body often serves to give guidance and insight to those in more local bodies. Designated members of the MCC 2 will be available to answer questions about the report, to clarify issues that may emerge in the process, and to interpret the intention of the report. These individuals will neither decide the boundaries of the new synod structure nor adjudicate disputes. Rather, their role is simply to provide a conduit for sharing learnings from the work of MCC I and MCC II.

*C. The process of establishing a system of no more than eight synods needs to move forward promptly with a timeline for approval of new boundaries.*

The Mid Council Commission fully expects synods to embrace this opportunity to reconfigure and revitalize their role in the church. However, there may be roadblocks along the way. Whether arising from a fear of loss or an investment in the system as it currently exists, the temptation to delay can be strong. The need for the church to respond to the changes that both MCC 1 and MCC 2 have identified demands the church's immediate action. The Mid Council Commission's recommendation that the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016) establish an Administrative Commission comes from the denomination's urgent need to resolve this long standing issue. Such a commission will likely find that in many areas agreement has been reached, and it is hoped its work can be limited to resolving a relatively few instances in which agreement as to the boundaries of the realigned synods could not be reached. The Administrative Commission will also have the authority to recommend synod boundaries in those situations where decisions were not made.

The Commission recognizes that the legal and practical steps necessary to complete the reorganization of the synods cannot be completed until the General Assembly approves new boundaries for such synods, and that the process of completing the reorganization of the synods will not be complete by the convening of the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016). The goal of the timeline proposed is to put the synods in the position to take those legal and practical steps soon after the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly adjourns in order that the new structure can move forward in their work as soon as is reasonably possible.

*D. Eliminating synods as ecclesial bodies at the present time would add complexity to the governance structure of the PCUSA, rather than simplify it.*

The Commission's recommendations were deeply impacted by the recognition that it would not be easy to replace the ecclesial functions Synods currently perform with commissions or other



bodies. As noted in the discussion of this Commission's charge, one of the tasks we were assigned to undertake was to refine Recommendations 1-4 from Mid Council Commission I's report. These recommendations would eliminate synods as ecclesial bodies. In undertaking that work, it became clear to this Commission that the "cure" of eliminating synods as ecclesial bodies, at least at this time, would very likely be worse than any potential downfall of keeping and streamlining synods as a council within our polity and system of mutual accountability.

In this regard, the Commission agreed with the rationale offered the 220th General Assembly (2012) by the Presbytery of St. Andrews in support of Item 05-02:

Rather than viewing the practice of the Christian faith as a purely individual matter, Reformed Christians practice their faith together, in community. A significant historic role of church councils in the Reformed tradition is to provide the accountability that is necessary in a large, diverse Christian community like the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

At the same time, as distinct from forms of church government in which authority is exercised downward from the few to the many, the Presbyterian form of government assumes that accountability is exercised with mutuality—government by those who are governed (or their chosen representatives).

Relatedly, we believe that the synods are providing a space for advocacy and development of racial/ethnic constituencies in our denomination that would not easily be filled at either the presbytery or General Assembly levels of the PCUSA.

As the Commission sought to refine Recommendations 1-4 with this premise in mind, it recognized that while the PCUSA is certainly smaller than it once was, it remains too large to simply eliminate any intermediate level of accountability between the General Assembly and the 173 presbyteries of the denomination. The General Assembly and its commissions and committees simply do not have the ability to engage in meaningful oversight over 173 councils. Conversely, we observed, at least on the part of some, a concern that such a reorganization would put too much power in the General Assembly. While the Commission found the first concern significantly more meritorious than the second, it has concluded that a structure recognizing both concerns would have to replace the current ecclesial functions of synods with administrative and judicial commissions made up of members from those regions.

Accordingly, in perfecting Recommendations 1-4, the Commission found that the only means of providing for such oversight was a combination of regional administrative and judicial commissions (together with regional committees on representation) to serve the role of intermediary in the administrative and judicial review of presbyteries. In the Commission's view, such a structure complicates rather than streamlines the governance of the PCUSA. It is difficult to assure that such regional commissions would

- Reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, gender, and theological diversity consistent with our basic principles of governance, and

- reasonably allocate and oversee the expenses incurred in doing their work among the presbyteries within their bounds, and
- diligently carry out the work they have been assigned.

If the PCUSA wishes to move to a three council governance structure, the most practical means for doing so is to increase the size, and decrease the number, of presbyteries so that the General Assembly could engage in a meaningful review of their work. Such an action, however, would have its own costs, and was beyond the charge given this Commission.

V. *Review of the Nature and Function of the PMA and the OGA as they relate to Mid Councils*

As a part of the mandate creating the Mid Council Commission II, the General Assembly directed the Commission "to review the nature and function of the General Assembly Mission Council and the Office of the General Assembly, specifically with respect to their relationship with and support of mid councils as they serve the vitality and mission of congregations in our changing context and to report back to the 221st General Assembly the nature of those relationships." Our findings are best understood in the context of a fabric of relationships that the Commission believes are healthy, and provide the foundation for the recommendations of the Commission for the reconfiguration of the synods.

As the sub-group began its review it recognized that a number of members of the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly concurrently are serving as members of this Commission and as a part of the sub-group whereas no members of the General Assembly Mission Council (later renamed the Presbyterian Mission Agency) were members of either the Commission or its sub-group. In order to maintain mutually respectful relationships between all the entities engaged in this review and gain the needed sensitivity to the issues and priorities of the PMA, a liaison was established with the help of PMA and provided insight and reflection on the work of the subcommittee.

A. *Methodology*

The sub-group initially sought to clarify and focus the mandate given by the GA and concluded that the evidence sought was the nature of the relationship of each of the national entities respectively to the synods and presbyteries rather than the relationship *between* the PMA and the OGA or even a *comparative* study of the relationships of each of these agencies to the midcouncils. With this focus in mind the group considered a number of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Given both the time and financial constraints of the Commission a number of possible methodological approaches lay beyond the scope of the Commission's capabilities. It was recognized that it would not be possible, for example, to inventory the whole universe of synods and presbyteries nor to quantify the data. Neither was it the purpose of this Commission's inquiry to carry out a "performance review" of national entities but rather to seek a better understanding of the ways in which these agencies relate to midcouncils. Moreover this inquiry did not seek to measure attitudes among midcouncils as to the possible redistribution of ecclesial functions in the event of the elimination or reorganization of synods. Rather this inquiry

was intended to gain a sense of the *current* relationships and the ways in which current American religious culture might be influencing those relationships within Presbyterian denominational life and culture.

The plan of inquiry agreed upon called for the identification of “bellwethers” within the staff of midcouncils and formulation of a number of open ended questions that would permit these persons broad freedom to explore and reflect upon their respective midcouncil’s relationship to the PMA and OGA respectively. In both the design of questions to be posed and the sampling methodology the subgroup consulted with the Stated Clerk and the Executive Director of PMA.

Interviews were conducted by various members of the sub-group and reported back in full to the sub-group. Following extensive discussion, the sub-group determined to report its findings; a) in summary fashion without specific and potentially identifiable references to specific programs, staff members, etc., and b) to identify to the themes that emerged from the review without formulating recommendations related to these findings, reasoning that such recommendations might best come from the Commission as a whole. (Appendix C provides an outline of the questions used in interviews with synod and presbytery staff.)

## *B. Findings*

The findings from this review generated both insights common to both agencies in the perceptions of the midcouncils as well as findings unique to each agency. Our findings are best read in the context of the Commission’s conclusion that the fabric of the relationships is intact, and that the learnings herein reflect a healthy tension inherent in the need to reconfigure the structure of the synods.

### *1. Common Findings-*

a) Among synod and presbytery staff both PMA and OGA are often perceived as "distant from" and "out of touch" with the realities on the ground in particular locales. This is most often expressed with a sense of inevitability rather than with an accusation of indifference. As national entities it is assumed that each of these agencies takes a general rather than specific view in counter distinction to the necessity for presbyteries and synods which take a far more local and specific view of issues. Despite some of the on-going tensions within the denomination and frequent references made by some about the existence of widespread resentment of national agencies by midcouncils and congregations, these findings reflect a much more nuanced set of relationships and attitudes. While experiences of individuals with these two agencies understandably vary, there was consistent feedback that presbyteries and synods receive services from both PMA and OGA and are appreciative of them. At the same time there are on-going issues of competition in those instances when PMA is perceived as taking initiative within the presbytery/synod without consultation. Similarly the OGA, especially as represented by the Clerk, can be perceived as failing to take into account the consequence of public pronouncements for the relationships of local Presbyterians to interfaith partners and to neighbors who differ with Presbyterian policies and perspectives.

b) Both agencies are perceived as making substantial efforts to foster a coherent and consistent approach to the mission and ministry of the church. The question is fairly asked whether there is adequate institutional priority and structure sufficient to maintain a coherent "Presbyterian perspective" within the rapidly changing cultural climate of today.

c) Ironically there is simultaneously an expressed yearning for less "territorial tendencies" among the various agencies and levels of the church's institutional life but little focused conception of how that might best be achieved. Such tendencies were not attributed alone to the two national agencies but seen as common among many structures and groups within the church particularly in the context of diminishing resources.

d) A reported "growing sense" that the church at all levels lacks a "clear sense of identity and purpose it once had" continues to be a part of Presbyterian perception despite a widespread claim to "not be nostalgic "for a bygone era.

e) Perceptions of each agency were closely linked to highly specific encounters with national staff and whether or not these staff members were seen as assisting or obstructing the work of the presbytery/synod in question.

f) The perceived importance of effective relationships between national and midcouncil staff can hardly be overstated. It is the quality of those relationships that enables effective partnership or, in their absence, to foster a sense of discouragement about the denomination as a whole.

## ***2. Findings Unique to each Agency***

***Presbyterian Mission Agency:*** Positively, staff members were seen as being in possession of highly developed knowledge and resources for ministry and a readiness to share these with midcouncils. Negatively, PMA was seen as inclined to be competitive (especially with regard to financial and human resources within presbyteries) and, at times, inclined to take initiatives within the bounds of the councils without prior consultation.

***Office of General Assembly:*** Positively, staff members were perceived as offering highly skilled assistance especially in areas related to governance and judicial questions which have a complexity difficult to master at local levels. Negatively, OGA is sometimes seen as the source of tedious institutional maintenance requirements and/or focus on matters of little consequence to struggling congregations. Recent changes in the form of governance were seen as a positive response to these challenges. Moreover, controversial stands and statements of the OGA serve as a source of embarrassment or potential conflict with others. Investment by PMA/OGA in the strengthening of relationships between staff through shared program, consultation and mutual communication pay substantial dividends.

## ***C. Conclusion***

This admittedly limited review of the relationships which characterize the presbyteries and synods with the PMA and OGA respectively offers some insights even though it was neither broad enough nor deep enough to be definitive. Positively, the collected data do not reveal any

acute or critical points of tension. Yet, the review did reflect a rather disquieting and widespread malaise concerning a sense of shared identity of the church as a whole. In the present moment, there was expressed a concern for whether the church can afford, financially and in terms of human resources, the continued existence of what are seen as two large, and expensive national agencies as well as two levels of midcouncil structures. This finding was not, however, accompanied by any assessment that suggested the two agencies are seen as duplicating efforts. Perhaps due to some sampling bias in this review, presbyteries were consistently clearer on both their positive and negative assessments of relationships with the two agencies. Synod responses tended to be less specific and to have their experience mediated by that of their respective presbyteries in their assessments. Presbyteries and Synods seek and often obtain assistance from OGA/PMA on a host of issues and matters of church life. Yet, at both synod and presbytery levels there is a concern that neither agency is equipped to help the midcouncils address their most acute needs and sometimes serve as a distraction from those vital tasks.

*VI. There is a need for deeper, on-going communication between General Assemblies and synods.*

The Commission affirms that the General Assembly has a special responsibility to encourage, support, and challenge synods in their work. The Commission believes that particular and intentional care should be given to the Assembly's relationship to the synods of the church.

Since the General Assembly relates most substantively to the rest of the church through assembly committees, the Commission recommends the creation of a standing GA committee on Mid Councils. This Standing Committee will establish a place where the synods can consistently collaborate with the Assembly, and the Assembly can fulfill its role of encouragement and support. This Committee is a place for mutual accountability.

*VII. Continuation of the Commission to Act for the Assembly with Respect to Boundary Issues between Assemblies*

In addition to the responsibilities for making recommendations regarding the future of synods as ecclesial bodies, Mid Council Commission II, like its predecessor, has also had the more mundane responsibility of acting for the General Assembly between its meetings on recommendations to change the boundaries of presbyteries, and potentially synods, when those councils agree upon and request such a change. This authority allows for actions meeting all *Book of Order* requirements to be taken during the two years between Assemblies, and thus for such boundary changes to be approved and implemented without the delay of waiting for the next meeting of the General Assembly. Continuing this authority avoids the delay of a potentially long delay for approval of movement of one congregation to a different presbytery, or similar actions, in situations in which there is no disagreement as to the propriety of such an action.

*VII Refinement of Recommendations 1-4 of Mid Council Commission I's Report*

As noted above, MCCII was charged to “refine” recommendations 1-4 from the MCCI Report to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, in order to put those recommendations into a format that if adopted by 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (and approved by the majority of presbyteries) would eliminate synods as ecclesial bodies. Attached as Appendix D are the actions that would be necessary to accomplish that purpose. These actions are structured into seven recommendations:

- *Recommendation 1:* Changes to the Book of Order to eliminate synods as ecclesial bodies;
- *Recommendation 2:* Changes to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly to implement elimination of synods as ecclesial bodies;
- *Recommendation 3:* Changes to the Guidelines for Reviewing Synod Records to implement elimination of synods as ecclesial bodies, converting them into Guidelines for Reviewing Presbytery Records;
- *Recommendation 4:* Changes to the Guidelines for Forming Social Policy to implement elimination of synods as ecclesial bodies;
- *Recommendation 5:* Changes to the Organization for Mission to implement elimination of synods as ecclesial bodies;
- *Recommendation 6:* Creation of Administrative Commission to wind up the ecclesial affairs of synods; and
- *Recommendation 7:* Adoption of the boundaries of Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions and request for the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to review those boundaries.

As noted above, MCCII found this exercise valuable in assessing the desirability of taking action consistent with MCCI’s Recommendations 1-4, but concluded based in part on that exercise not to recommend such a course of action. However, if the Assembly desires to recommend such a course, Appendix D sets forth the actions that in the view of MCC II would be required to eliminate Synods as ecclesial bodies.

## Appendix A

Recommendations 1-4 of Mid Council Commission I to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012)

1. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendments to the *Book of Order* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes to take effect at the close of the 222nd General Assembly (2016):

a. Shall G-3.04, The Synod, be deleted, including Sections G-3.0401 through G-3.0406) and Section G-3.05 (including G-3.0501–.0503) be renumbered as G-3.04 (G-3.0401-.0403).

b. Shall G-3.03, The Presbytery, be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

“G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

“The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching elders and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of ruling elders serving as moderators of committees or commissions.

“The minimum composition of a presbytery is ten duly constituted sessions and ten teaching elders.

“The presbytery is responsible for the *life, ministry, and* government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations *throughout its region* become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

“[The remainder of this section to remain the same.]

“G-3.0302 Relations with ~~Synod and General Assembly~~ *the Church*

“The presbytery has a responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship ~~to synod and~~ *with other presbyteries and to the General Assembly* by:

*“a. consulting with other presbyteries in their region about creating regional mission partnerships for racial ethnic advocacy and support, mission, and ministry projects, and other programs of shared life, diversity, and connection to the larger church*

~~“a. b. electing commissioners to synod and General Assembly and receiving their reports;~~

~~“b. c. electing ruling and teaching elders to be readers of standard ordination examinations;~~

~~“c. d. seeing that the guidance and communication of synod and General Assembly are considered and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;~~

~~“d. e. proposing to synod or General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and~~

~~“e. f. sending annually to synod and General Assembly statistical and other information according to the requirements of those bodies. [The remainder of G-3.03, G-3.0303-.0307 to remain the same.]”~~

2. Instruct the synods, in consultation with their constituent presbyteries, to develop and bring to the 221st General Assembly (2014) plans to transfer assets, funds, projects, and programs to the appropriate trusts, foundations, or entities of their choice for implementation by the synods by the close of the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

3. Instruct the Moderator to appoint a committee to work in consultation with the Stated Clerk and to bring to the 221st General Assembly (2014):

a. Recommendations, including any necessary changes in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, for the appointment of five regional administrative commissions to facilitate churches and presbyteries to fulfill their missional objectives when realignment is necessary and also to support the presbyteries and regions in promoting the full expression of rich diversity in membership, participation, and decision-making (*Book of Order*, G-3.0103);

b. Recommendations, including any necessary changes in the *Book of Order* and the *Manual of the General Assembly*, in order to continue to facilitate and support the racial ethnic ministries that have historically been supported by the synods.

c. Any additional editorial changes to the *Book of Order* that will be made necessary by the action of Recommendation 1.

4. Instruct the Moderator to appoint a committee to work in consultation with the Stated Clerk and to bring to the 221st General Assembly (2014) recommendations, including any necessary changes in the *Book of Order* and the *Manual of the General Assembly*, to create the necessary number of regional judicial commissions, rooted in the various regions, to serve as courts of appeal to decisions of presbytery permanent judicial commissions (PJCs) and as courts of original jurisdiction in remedial cases against presbyteries or upon reference from presbytery PJCs.



## **Appendix B**

### **Synod Consultation Questions**

1. Is your Synod (or any of its presbyteries) involved in collaborative work with another Synod (or presbytery within another Synod's bounds)?
  - a. How would you describe the current level of engagement of the presbyteries within your bounds with the work of the synod? Would becoming part of a synod with larger bounds change that level of engagement, and if so, how?
2. If the General Assembly decided to do so, how would you envision your synod being geographically expanded?
  - a. Are there any concerns that should be taken into account, if possible, if the Church moves to reduce the number of synods? For instance, are there natural boundaries within the Synod or affinities that it would be helpful for us to know?
  - b. How large a synod would you see as viable to conduct the administrative functions referred to in the Book of Order?
  - c. Who would you suggest be at the table for the implementation of any Assembly action regarding geographical expansion and at the same time reduction in number of synods.
3. What would you see as the benefits and losses of having fewer but larger synods?
  - a. Are there any current programs of the synod that you believe could not be sustained in a larger synod?
  - b. Would being part of a larger synod geographically increase the breadth of your vision and mission or make decision making more difficult?
  - c. How would you envision your current model of synod decision-making would work if the boundaries of your synod were changed?
4. Is your Synod engaged in any future transition planning? For example, does your synod have a minimalist structure or is there any movement to do so?
  - a. Is there anything we should know about those future directions that might be helpful to us or anything that you are waiting to learn about the commission's work that would affect those decisions?
5. What would be some key metrics of success regarding the vitality and viability of synods?
6. How do you think the presbyteries within your bounds would feel about being part of a larger synod?

a. What is the best way for the commission to garner the input of the presbyteries within your bounds as to the alternatives it is considering?

7. What else do you feel the Commission should know?

## Appendix C

### Report on Presbyterian Mission Agency/Office of the General Assembly Relationships with Synods Assessment

#### FORMAT FOR INTERVIEWS REGARDING PMA AND OGA RELATIONSHIPS WITH SYNODS

##### Introduction:

“I am a member of the Mid Council Commission and one of the issues raised for us to consider is the relationship between mid councils and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA).

- Clarity about what we say regarding confidentiality of comments made to us:

“We will be sharing conversations within our sub-group but when we report to the full Mid Council Commission we will not attach names to particular comments.”

- We will make no promise about whether we will talk with them again or not

##### Questions:

1. How long have you been in this work as a presbytery/synod executive?
2. A. Can you tell me a little about the nature and extent of your relationship with PMA?  
B. Can you tell me a little about the nature and extent of your relationship with OGA?
3. A. What strengths do you see in your (presbytery/synod's) relationship with PMA and how can they be enhanced:  
B. What strengths do you see in your relationship with OGA and how can they be enhanced?
4. A. Thinking again about PMA, are there any other questions that I should be asking?  
B. Thinking about OGA, are there any other questions that I should be asking?

## Appendix D

### Actions Necessary to Accomplish the Objectives of Mid Council Commission I's Recommendations 1-4 to the 200<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012)

1. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendments to the Book of Order to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

a. Shall F-3.0107 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]

F-3.0107 Church Power

That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods<sup>1</sup> and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

<sup>1</sup> Synod is used in this provision not to refer to a particular council of the Church but in its historic meaning of a council of the Church convened to decide a particular issue of doctrine or administration.

b. Shall F-3.0203 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]

F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These councils are sessions, presbyteries, ~~synods~~, and the General Assembly. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller.

c. Shall G-1.0103 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]

G-1.0103 Governed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A "congregation," as used in this Form of Government, refers to a formally organized community chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided in this Constitution. Each congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. The members of a congregation put themselves under the leadership of the session and the higher councils (presbytery, ~~synod~~, and General Assembly). The session is responsible to guide and

govern the life of the congregation. The session leads the congregation in fulfilling its responsibilities for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.

Other forms of corporate witness established by the presbytery shall also be governed by this Constitution and shall be subject to the authority of the presbytery.

**d. Shall G-3.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church

The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church. Congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while possessing all the gifts necessary to be the church, are nonetheless not sufficient in themselves to be the church. Rather, they are called to share with others both within and beyond the congregation the task of bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the world. This call to bear witness is the work of all believers. The particular responsibility of the councils of the church is to nurture, guide, and govern those who witness as part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to the end that such witness strengthens the whole church and gives glory to God.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by councils composed of presbyters elected by the people (F-3.0202). These councils are called the session, the presbytery, ~~the synod~~, and the General Assembly. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with the acts of each subject to review by the next higher council. Powers not mentioned in this Constitution are reserved to the presbyteries.

**e. Shall G-3.0104 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0104 Officers

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Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance including the rolls of all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and all Ruling Elders commissioned to particular pastoral service, preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church. The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk of a presbytery, ~~a synod~~, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the council for a definite term as it may determine, and must be a ruling elder or teaching elder. A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-3.0110.

- f. Shall G-3.0106 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0106 Administration of Mission

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Each council above the session shall prepare a budget for its operating expenses, including administrative personnel, and may fund it with a per capita apportionment among the particular congregations within its bounds. Presbyteries are responsible for raising their own funds and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to ~~their respective synods~~ and the General Assembly. Presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to sessions within their bounds, but in no case shall the authority of the session to direct its benevolences be compromised.

- g. Shall G-3.0109b be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0109b

a. Judicial Commissions

Judicial commissions shall consider and decide cases of process for the council according to the Rules of Discipline. Sessions shall perform the function of a judicial commission for the congregation; each council higher than the session shall elect a permanent judicial commission (see D-5.0000). ~~Cooperating synods may elect a joint permanent judicial commission pursuant to G-3.0404 and D-5.0101.~~ Presbyteries shall elect regional permanent judicial commissions pursuant to G-3.0204 and D-5.0101.

b. Administrative Commissions

Administrative commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.

Functions that may be entrusted to administrative commissions include, but are not limited to:

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(5) (by presbyteries, ~~synods~~, and the General Assembly) visiting particular councils, congregations, or agencies over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein, except that no commission of a presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body (G-2.0901);

(6) (by General Assembly) reviewing the work of presbyteries; approving the division, union, or combination of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries; creating non-geographic presbyteries; developing joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, providing encouragement and guidance to its presbyteries and overseeing their work; electing regional committees on

representation to review the work of presbyteries regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, advocate for diversity in leadership, and review the decisions of presbyteries as to the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403; and developing and providing resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries (G-3.0501c and G-3.0502);

(67) (by all councils) making pastoral inquiry into persons accused of sexual abuse of another person (D-10.0401c) when jurisdiction in a judicial proceeding against such persons has ended due to death or renunciation of the accused; such inquiries shall not be understood as judicial proceedings but shall seek to reach a determination of truth related to the accusation and to make appropriate recommendations to the designating council.

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A commission of presbytery, ~~synod~~, or General Assembly shall be composed of ruling elders and teaching elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible and sufficient to accomplish their work. A quorum of any commission shall be established by the designating council or councils but in no case shall be less than a majority of its members (except as limited by D-5.0204).

A commission of a session shall be composed of at least two ruling elders, and a teaching elder in an installed or temporary relationship with the congregation governed by that session or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service.

A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings and shall submit that record to the council or councils for incorporation into its records. Actions of a commission shall be regarded as actions of the council or councils that created it. A commission may be assigned additional duties as a committee, which duties shall be reported and handled as the report of a committee.

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**h. Shall G-3.0202 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

**G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils**

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports;

b. nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to ~~synod~~ and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);

c. see that the guidance and communication of presbytery, ~~synod~~, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;

- d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- e. propose to the presbytery, or through it to ~~the synod and~~ General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- f. send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

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- i. Shall G-3.0301 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching elders and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of ruling elders serving as moderators of committees or commissions.

The minimum composition of a presbytery is ten duly constituted sessions and ten teaching elders.

The presbytery is responsible for the life, ministry and government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations throughout its district become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

[remainder of G-3.0301 unchanged]

- j. Shall G-3.0302 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0302 Relations with ~~Synod and~~ other presbyteries and the General Assembly

The presbytery has a responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship ~~to synod and~~ with other presbyteries and the General Assembly by:



a. consulting with other presbyteries in their region about creating regional mission partnerships for Racial Ethnic Advocacy and Support, mission and ministry projects, and other programs of shared life, diversity and connection to the larger church;

~~ab. electing commissioners to synod and~~ General Assembly and receiving their reports;

~~bc. electing ruling and teaching elders to be readers of standard ordination examinations;~~

~~ed. seeing that the guidance and communication of synod and~~ General Assembly are considered and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;

~~de. proposing to synod or~~ General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; ~~and~~

~~ef. sending annually to synod and~~ General Assembly statistical and other information according to the requirements of those bodies; and

g. electing members of regional permanent judicial commissions as requested by such commissions.

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**k. Shall G-3.0304 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.0304 Meetings and Quorum

The presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice each year, shall meet at the direction of ~~synod~~ General Assembly, and may call special meetings in accordance with its own rules.

**l. Shall G-3.04 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-3.04 THE SYNOD

G-3.0401 Composition and Responsibilities

~~The synod is the intermediate council serving as a corporate expression of the church throughout its region. It shall consist of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specific geographic region.~~

~~When a synod meets, it shall be composed of commissioners elected by the presbyteries. Each presbytery shall elect at least one ruling elder and one teaching elder to serve as commissioners to synod. A synod shall determine a plan for the election of commissioners to the synod, as well as the method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103; both plans shall be subject to approval by a majority of the presbyteries in the synod. The commissioners from each presbytery shall be divided equally between ruling elders and teaching elders. Each person elected moderator or other officer shall be enrolled as a member of the synod until a successor is elected and installed.~~

Synod is responsible for the life and mission of the church throughout its region and for supporting the ministry and mission of its presbyteries as they seek to support the witness of congregations, to the end that the church throughout its region becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the church throughout its region, it shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F 1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F 1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F 1.0304).

In light of this charge, the synod has responsibility and power to:

a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. This responsibility may include developing, in conjunction with its presbyteries, a broad strategy for the mission of the church within its bounds and in accord with the larger strategy of the General Assembly; assisting its member presbyteries when requested in matters related to the calling, ordaining, and placement of teaching elders; establishing and maintaining, in conjunction with its presbyteries, those ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its region; facilitating joint action in mission with other denominations and agencies in its region; facilitating communication among its presbyteries and between its presbyteries and the General Assembly; providing services for presbyteries within its area that can be performed more effectively from a broad regional base.

b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. This responsibility may include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at its meetings and at other events and gatherings under its jurisdiction; and exercising pastoral care among its presbyteries; in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the synod may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. This responsibility shall include providing such services of education and nurture as its presbyteries may require; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to presbyteries in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration; reviewing the work of its presbyteries; warning or bearing witness against error in doctrine or immorality in practice within its bounds; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

#### G-3.0402 Relations with General Assembly

The synod has responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship with the General Assembly by seeing that the guidance and communication of the General Assembly are considered and that any binding actions are observed and carried out, and by proposing to the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church.

#### G-3.0403 Relations with Presbyteries

~~Each presbytery shall participate in the synod's responsibility and service through its elected commissioners to the synod. The synod has responsibility for supporting the work of the presbyteries within its bounds and as such is charged with:~~

~~a. developing, in conjunction with its presbyteries, joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, providing encouragement and guidance to its presbyteries and overseeing their work;~~

~~b. developing and providing, when requested, resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries;~~

~~c. organizing new presbyteries, dividing, uniting, or otherwise combining presbyteries or portions of presbyteries previously existing, and, with the concurrence of existing presbyteries, creating non-geographic presbyteries, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, or taking other such actions as may be deemed necessary in order to meet the mission needs of racial ethnic or immigrant congregations. Such presbyteries shall be formed in compliance with the requirements of G-3.0301 and be accountable to the synod within which they were created.~~

#### G-3.0404 Reduced Function

~~A synod may decide, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of its presbyteries, to reduce its function. In no case shall synod function be less than the provision of judicial process and administrative review of the work of the presbyteries (G-3.0401e). Such a synod shall meet at least every two years for the purposes of setting budget, electing members to its permanent judicial commission, and admitting to record the actions of its permanent judicial and administrative commissions. Presbyteries of such a synod shall assume for themselves, by mutual agreement, such other synod functions as may be deemed necessary by the presbyteries and the synod. Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services.~~

#### G-3.0405 Meetings and Quorum

~~The synod shall hold stated meetings at least biennially, shall meet at the direction of the General Assembly, and may call special meetings in accordance with its own rules. A synod may set its own quorum, but it shall include an equal number of ruling elders and teaching elders representing at least three presbyteries or one-third of its presbyteries, whichever is larger.~~

#### G-3.0406 Minutes and Records

~~The synod shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings that shall be submitted to the next succeeding meeting of the General Assembly for its general review and control. It shall report to the General Assembly the number of its presbyteries and, in general, all important changes that have occurred within its bounds.~~

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- m. Shall G-3.0501 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

~~G-3.0501~~ G-3.0401 Composition and Responsibilities

The General Assembly is the council of the whole church and it is representative of the unity of the ~~synods~~, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). ...

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c. nurture the covenant community of disciples. This responsibility shall include providing those services, resources, and programs performed most effectively at a national level; communicating with the whole church on matters of common concern; warning and bearing witness against errors in doctrine or immorality in the church and in the world; reviewing the work of presbyteries; providing such services of education and nurture as its presbyteries may require; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to presbyteries in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration; discerning and presenting with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, matters of truth and vision that may inspire, challenge, and educate both church and world; serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline; deciding controversies brought before it and advising and instructing in cases submitted to it, in conformity with this Constitution; authoritatively interpreting the most recent edition of the Book of Order in a manner binding on the whole church, in accordance with the provisions of G-6.02 or through a decision of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in a remedial or disciplinary case, with the most recent interpretation of the Book of Order being binding; and establishing and maintaining an office of the Stated Clerk.

**n. Shall G-3.0502 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

~~G-3.0502~~ G-3.0402 Relations with ~~Other Councils~~Presbyteries

The General Assembly has responsibility to maintain relationships with presbyteries ~~and synods~~ by:

a. consulting with and providing resources for presbyteries ~~and synods~~ as they execute their constitutional responsibilities;

~~b. overseeing the work of synods;~~

~~c. reviewing the records of synods, taking care to ensure that they conform to this Constitution;~~

~~d. organizing new synods, or dividing, uniting, or otherwise combining previously existing synods or portions of synods;~~

~~eb. approving the acts of synods to organize organization, divide division, unite union, or combine combination of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries;~~

c. with the concurrence of existing presbyteries, creating non-geographic presbyteries, or taking other such actions as may be deemed necessary in order to meet the mission needs of racial ethnic or immigrant congregations. Such presbyteries shall be formed in compliance with the requirements of G-3.0301 and be accountable to the General Assembly;

d. developing, in conjunction with presbyteries, joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, providing encouragement and guidance to its presbyteries and overseeing their work; and

e. developing and providing, when requested, resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries.

**o. Shall G-3.0503 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

~~G-3.0503~~ G-3.0403 Meetings and Quorum

The General Assembly shall hold a stated meeting at least biennially. The Moderator, or in the event of the incapacity of the Moderator, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of at least one fourth of the ruling elder commissioners and one fourth of the teaching elder commissioners to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly representing at least fifteen presbyteries, ~~under the jurisdiction of at least five synods~~. Commissioners to the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly or their alternates. Notice of special meetings shall be sent no fewer than sixty days prior to convening and shall set out the purpose of the meeting. No other business than that listed in the notice shall be transacted.

A quorum of the General Assembly shall be one hundred commissioners, fifty of whom shall be ruling elders and fifty teaching elders, representing at least one-fourth of its presbyteries ~~of at least one-fourth of its synods~~.

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**p. Shall G-4.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-4.0101 Incorporation and Power

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Where permitted by civil law, each presbytery, ~~synod~~, and the General Assembly shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained and shall determine a method to constitute the board of trustees by its own rule. The corporation so formed, or individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for and at the direction of the council.

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- q. Shall G-4.0102 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-4.0102 Members of the Corporation

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees. The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees. Presbyteries, ~~synods~~, and the General Assembly shall provide by rule for the election of trustees from among persons eligible for membership in the council.

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- r. Shall G-4.0203 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-4.0203 Church Property Held in Trust

All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, ~~a synod~~, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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- s. Shall G-5.04 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-5.04 UNION PRESBYTERIES

A presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may unite to form a union presbytery with one or more comparable councils or governing bodies, each of which is a member of another Reformed body, with the approval of the ~~synod~~ General Assembly or comparable council or governing body of which each is a part.

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- t. Shall G-5.0402 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-5.0402 Plan of Union

A union presbytery shall be created by the adoption of a plan of union by two-thirds vote of each presbytery or governing body that is party to the union. The ~~synod~~ General Assembly and/or governing body having jurisdiction over each of the uniting bodies shall approve the plan of union.

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- u. Shall G-6.03 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

G-6.03 AMENDING THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

Amendments to the confessional documents of this church may be made only if all the following steps are completed:

- a. The proposal to amend The Book of Confessions is approved by the General Assembly for study in the church.
- b. The General Assembly appoints a committee of ruling elders and teaching elders, numbering not fewer than fifteen, of whom not more than ~~two~~ one shall be from any ~~one synod~~ presbytery, to consider the proposal. This committee shall consult with the committee or council from which the proposal originated. It shall report its findings to the next General Assembly.

- v. Shall W-4.3002 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

W-4.3002

Discipleship may be expressed

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- c. in the larger church as people serve in the ministries of presbytery, ~~synod~~, and the General Assembly, and of ecumenical agencies and councils;

- w. Shall D-2.0102 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-2.0102 Councils of the Church

The councils of the church for judicial process are the session, the presbytery, ~~the synod~~, and the General Assembly. The session itself conducts trials. The presbytery, ~~the synod~~, and the General Assembly conduct trials and hearings through permanent judicial commissions.

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- x. Shall D-3.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-3.0101 Jurisdiction

In judicial process, each of the councils has jurisdiction as follows:

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c. The presbyteries, ~~the synod~~, and the General Assembly have jurisdiction in remedial cases (D-6.0000) and in appeals (D-8.0000 and D-13.0000). The General Assembly shall determine the presbyteries that shall constitute each Regional Permanent Judicial Commission.

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y. **Shall D-4.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-4.0101 Definition

1. Reference

A reference is a written request, made by a session or a permanent judicial commission of a presbytery ~~or synod~~ to the permanent judicial commission of the next higher council, for trial and decision or a hearing on appeal in a remedial or disciplinary case not yet decided.

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z. **Shall D-5.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-5.0101 Election

1. Service on Permanent Judicial Commissions

The General Assembly, ~~each synod~~, and each presbytery shall elect a permanent judicial commission from the teaching elders and ruling elders subject to its jurisdiction. The presbyteries within the bounds of each Regional Permanent Judicial Commission shall elect members of such commissions in rotation, as determined a system of rotating representation established by each such Regional Permanent Judicial Commission, taking appropriate steps to assure the full representation of the diversity of the membership of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Each commission shall be composed of teaching elders and ruling elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a teaching elder or a ruling elder. The General Assembly commission shall be composed of one member from each of ~~its constituent synods~~ [insert number] regions established by the General Assembly. ~~The synod commission~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions shall be composed of no fewer than eleven members distributed equally, insofar as possible, among the ~~constituent~~ presbyteries subject to the jurisdiction of that commission. ~~In those synods with fewer than eleven presbyteries, each presbytery shall have at least one member.~~ The presbytery commission shall be composed of no fewer than seven members, with no more than one of its ruling elder members from any one of its constituent churches. Two of the members of the presbytery commission shall be designated to review any petition for review of the procedures of the investigating committee while the investigation in a disciplinary case is in process (D-10.0204) and to review any petition for review of the decision not to file charges (D-10.0303). These two members shall not take part in any subsequent trial. A session shall refer either form of petition to the presbytery commission.



**aa. Shall D-5.0102 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-5.0102 Term

The term of each member of a permanent judicial commission shall be six years, with the exception that membership on the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly shall end when that member transfers membership to a church or presbytery outside the ~~synod~~ region from which nominated. In each even-numbered year, the General Assembly shall elect members for a term of six years to fill the vacancies then occurring. Their terms of office will begin with the dissolution of the General Assembly at which they are elected.

**bb. Shall D-5.0103 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-5.0103 Classes

In ~~synods~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions and presbyteries, commissioners shall be elected in three classes, with no more than one half of the members to be in one class. When established for the first time, one class shall serve for two years, the second class for four years, and the third class for six years.

**cc. Shall D-5.0106 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-5.0106 Expenses

All necessary expenses of a permanent judicial commission shall be paid by the electing council or councils. ~~Cooperating synods~~ The presbyteries within its jurisdiction shall pay the necessary expenses of a Regional Permanent Judicial Commission equally. ~~a shared permanent judicial commission equally; however, each synod shall pay the necessary expenses for processing a particular judicial case arising within its bounds.~~

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**dd. Shall D-6.0202 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-6.0202 Who May File Complaint

A complaint of an irregularity or a complaint of a delinquency may be filed by one or more persons or councils subject to and submitting to the jurisdiction of a council.

a. In the instance of a complaint against a presbytery, ~~a synod~~, or by a council against another council at the same level, a complaint of an irregularity shall be filed within ninety days after the alleged irregularity has occurred; and a complaint of a delinquency shall be filed within ninety days after failure or refusal of respondent to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, provided that a written request to do so has been made prior to said meeting. Those eligible to file such a complaint are

(1) a teaching elder or a ruling elder enrolled as a member of a presbytery concerning an irregularity or a delinquency during that period of enrollment, against the presbytery, with the ~~synod~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over that presbytery;

~~(2) a commissioner to a synod, concerning an irregularity or a delinquency during that commissioner's period of enrollment, against the synod, with the General Assembly;~~

~~(3) a session against the presbytery, with the synod~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over that presbytery;

~~(4) a presbytery against the synod, with the General Assembly;~~

~~(5) any council session against any other council of the same level another session, with the council immediately higher than the council complained against and to which the latter council is subject presbytery having jurisdiction over the session that is the subject of the complaint;~~

~~(4) a presbytery against another presbytery, with the synod~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over the presbytery that is the subject of the complaint;

~~(6) a person who is an employee of a presbytery, a synod, or an entity of a presbytery or synod, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the council or entity, against the presbytery, with the synod~~ Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over the presbytery, or against the synod, with the General Assembly.

b. In the instance of a complaint against a session, the General Assembly Mission Council, or an entity of the General Assembly, a complaint of an irregularity shall be filed within ninety days after the alleged irregularity has occurred; and a complaint of a delinquency shall be filed within ninety days after failure or refusal of respondent to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, provided that a written request to do so has been made prior to said meeting. Those eligible to file such a complaint are

(1) a member of a particular church against the session of that church, with the presbytery;

(2) a session, or a presbytery, ~~or a synod~~ against the General Assembly Mission Council or an entity of the General Assembly, with the General Assembly;

(3) a person who is an employee of the General Assembly Mission Council or an entity of the General Assembly, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the General Assembly Mission Council or an entity of the General Assembly, with the General Assembly;

(4) a person who is an employee of a particular church claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the session or an entity of the session against the session of the church, with the presbytery.

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**ee. Shall D-6.0302 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-6.0302

When a council, the General Assembly Mission Council, or an entity of the General Assembly becomes either a complainant or a respondent, it shall designate no more than three persons to be a committee of counsel. This committee shall represent that complainant or respondent in the case until final decision is reached in the highest council to which the case is appealed.

a. A council, the General Assembly Mission Council, or an entity of the General Assembly may provide by rule for the appointment of a committee of counsel.

b. The clerk of session, the stated clerk, or executive of presbytery ~~or synod~~ shall not serve on a committee of counsel of the council served.

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**ff. Shall D-8.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-8.0101

An appeal of a remedial case is the transfer to the next higher council of a case in which a decision has been rendered in a lower council, for the purpose of obtaining a review of the proceedings and decision to correct, modify, set aside, or reverse the decision. An appeal from a presbytery permanent judicial commission shall be made to the Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over the presbytery. An appeal from a the Regional Permanent Judicial Commission shall be made to the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly.

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**gg. Shall D-13.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

D-13.0101

An appeal of a disciplinary case is the transfer to the next higher council of a case in which a decision has been rendered in a lower council, for the purpose of obtaining a review of the proceedings and decision to correct, modify, set aside, or reverse the decision. An appeal from a presbytery permanent judicial commission shall be made to the Regional Permanent Judicial Commission having jurisdiction over the presbytery. An appeal from a the Regional Permanent Judicial Commission shall be made to the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly.

**2. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1, approve the following amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly:**

- a. **Shall Standing Rule A.3 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

A.3. Overtures

a. Overtures are items of business that must have been approved by a presbytery ~~or a synod~~ and shall request the General Assembly to take a particular action, or approve or endorse a particular statement or resolution. (See *Book of Order*, G-3.0302d.)

b. The stated clerk of a presbytery ~~or synod~~ considering an overture to the General Assembly shall:

(1) Examine the most recently published *Minutes of the General Assembly* to determine if a similar overture has already been passed.

(2) Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to determine whether the desired action has been voted by any previous General Assembly.

(3) Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to determine whether a similar overture has already been proposed in order that the presbytery ~~or synod~~ may concur with the existing overture.

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c. Submitting Overtures

(1) Overtures proposing an amendment to the Constitution or requiring an interpretation by the General Assembly of the *Book of Order* (see *Book of Order*, G-6.04a and G-6.02) must be delivered in writing to the Stated Clerk postmarked no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, and shall be promptly referred to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (see *Book of Order*, G-6.02 and G-6.04).

(2) All overtures that have financial implications for current or future years' budgets must be delivered in writing to the Stated Clerk postmarked no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the General Assembly. Overtures with financial implications not received within the designated time limit shall not be considered, but shall be returned to the originating council.

(3) All other overtures intended for consideration by the General Assembly shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk, postmarked no later than forty-five days before the convening of the General Assembly.

(4) Overtures not received within the designated time limits shall not be considered, but shall be returned to the originating council for reconsideration.

(5) Presbyteries ~~or synods~~ submitting overtures with a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies) shall submit evidence that the affected entity(ies) has (have) been consulted. If such evidence is not submitted, the Stated Clerk shall recommend that the overture be received and referred to a future session of the General Assembly so that consultation may take place.

(6) In the event that the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly receives an overture similar to one already proposed (excluding the rationale), she or he shall inquire of the presbytery ~~or synod~~ in question whether it would be willing to concur with that existing overture or desires to withdraw the overture. A presbytery ~~or synod~~ concurring with an overture may submit additional rationale for its action, provided that it does not duplicate the rationale provided by the overturing body. The concurrence and any additional rationale will be printed with the original overture in the Reports to the General Assembly. Concurrences to any overture shall be received up to 45 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General

Assembly. Concurrences to any overture with constitutional implications shall be received up to 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.

d. Overtures that do not propose constitutional amendment or interpretation, and that are postmarked at least sixty days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, shall be published (print or electronic) in the reports distributed by the Stated Clerk. Overtures received in the same manner, postmarked no later than forty-five days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, shall be distributed to the commissioners before the convening of the General Assembly.

e. Overture Advocate

(1) Each presbytery ~~or synod~~ that submits an overture shall notify the Stated Clerk of the name of a commissioner or some other person in attendance at the General Assembly who has been designated as the advocate for the overture. The overture advocate shall be available to provide information on the background and intent of the overture to any assembly committee to which the overture may be referred. (See Standing Rule E.2.)

(2) In the event that the assembly refers an overture to a General Assembly entity for further consideration (and not simply for implementation), the presbytery ~~or synod~~ submitting the overture shall be invited by the Stated Clerk to designate an overture advocate for the assembly meeting at which the entity's response to the overture is presented. The overture advocate shall be available to provide information on the background and intent of the overture to any assembly committee to which the overture may be referred. (See Standing Rule E.2.)

**b. Shall Standing Rule A.6. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

A.6. Entity ~~and Synod~~ Minutes

a. Entities ~~and synods~~ required to submit minutes for review by the General Assembly shall submit such minutes on a calendar year basis so as to present minutes of all meetings for the calendar year (from January 1 through December 31) preceding the year in which is held the session of the General Assembly to which such minutes are submitted. The minutes shall contain the attestation that they have been approved by the entity ~~or synod~~ submitting them in the manner regularly in use within that body.

b. Presbyteries shall submit their minutes of all meetings for the calendar year (from January 1 through December 31) preceding the year at the time and place requested by the Stated Clerk. The minutes shall contain the attestation that they have been approved by the presbytery in the manner regularly in use within that presbytery.

bc. Minutes of General Assembly entities will be reviewed in accordance with the "Guidelines for Preparation of Minutes of Agencies" as printed in the *Manual of the General Assembly*.

d. Minutes of presbyteries will be reviewed in accordance with "Guidelines for Reviewing Presbytery Records" as printed in the *Manual of the General Assembly*.

- c. Shall Standing Rule B.3. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

B.3. Corresponding Members

a. The following persons shall be corresponding members: Moderators of earlier General Assemblies; the Stated Clerk, Associate and Assistant Stated Clerks, and other members of the staff of the Office of the General Assembly as designated by the Stated Clerk; the members of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; the members of the GAMC Executive Committee and staff of the General Assembly Mission Council, and of the divisions and related entities designated by the council; all members of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution; ~~the executives of synods~~; one person designated by each entity reporting directly to the General Assembly, including permanent, special, and advisory committees (additional persons may be designated by such bodies if authorized by the Moderator of the preceding General Assembly in consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly); and the presidents (or their designee) of the theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and seminaries related by covenant agreement.

- d. Shall Standing Rule C.1. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

C.1. Assembly Committee Structure

a. The Stated Clerk shall propose the number and designation of assembly committees to the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall present the proposed committee structure to the General Assembly for consideration and ratification at the first assembly meeting at which business is transacted. In making these proposals, the Stated Clerk shall consult with the appropriate General Assembly entity or entities, and may consult with other persons.

b. The Stated Clerk shall propose to the General Assembly for appointment the names of persons to serve as committee assistants for the duration of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall consult with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly before recommending persons to serve as committee assistants. Persons proposed shall not be commissioners to the General Assembly or staff members of entities of the General Assembly or any person who is a member of the General Assembly Mission Council or any person who is a member of any other entity of the General Assembly. A committee assistant shall be appointed to provide staff services to each assembly committee. The appointments shall be made in accordance with *Book of Order*, F-1.0401.

c. The Moderator of the preceding General Assembly shall appoint a commissioner to be moderator and a second to be vice moderator of each committee. Final appointment shall be made only after consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and then also with representatives of the General Assembly Committee on Representation regarding the inclusivity mandated in the *Book of Order*, F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. The moderators of at least one-half of the assembly committees, including any committees dealing with finance and budgets, shall be ruling elders. The moderators of at least one-half of the assembly committees should be women. No more than one person from any one presbytery may be appointed to serve as a moderator or vice moderator. All ~~synods~~ geographic regions shall be equitably represented.

- e. **Shall Standing Rule C.3. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

C.3. Referring Business

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e. The Stated Clerk shall present such items of business to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral, along with a recommendation for their referral. In the event that the presbytery ~~or synod~~ disagrees with the referral recommendation, this procedure shall be followed: The presbytery ~~or synod~~ shall be entitled to submit a written statement regarding the background and intent of the overture at the time the overture is initially being considered for referral by the Assembly Committee on Business Referral. If, after that committee makes its recommendation, the presbytery ~~or synod~~ still disagrees with the referral recommendation, the presbytery ~~or synod~~ shall notify the Stated Clerk, in writing, of its disagreement. The overture advocate will then be entitled to speak to the background and intent of the overture at a special meeting of the Assembly Committee on Business Referral that shall be held no more than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the convening of the assembly.

- f. **Shall Standing Rule C.4. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

C.4. Tentative Docket

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b. The reports and recommendations of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly regarding the initial docket of the General Assembly and referrals of business shall be referred to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral, along with any items of business not included in them (see Standing Rules I.4.b.(3) and I.4.b.(4)). Review of the minutes of the ~~synod~~ presbyteries pursuant to ~~G-3.0502e~~ G-3.0402e and of statement(s) of compliance with decisions of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission by councils, reported by the Stated Clerk pursuant to IV.B.2.d. of the *Organization for Mission*, shall be assigned to the same assembly committee. Following the convening of the assembly, such matters shall be directed to the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures.

- g. **Shall Standing Rule E.2. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

E.2. Procedures for Assembly Committee Meetings

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g. Overture advocates who have been designated by their presbytery ~~or synod~~ to speak to the response from a General Assembly entity to a referral of an overture shall be responsible for being available at the time selected by the assembly committee considering the response. The

overture advocate shall be entitled to speak to the background and intent of the overture” or as asked for clarification by the committee concerning the original intent of the overture.

**h. Shall Standing Rule I.1. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

I.1. Date and Place of Meeting

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d. In order to distribute the benefits experienced from hosting a General Assembly meeting throughout the church, the place of meeting shall be rotated among the following four areas (unless prevented by financial or other practical considerations):

• Area A: Presbyteries of de Cristo, Grand Canyon, Santa Fe, Sierra Blanca, Hanmi, Los Ranchos, The Pacific, Riverside, San Diego, San Fernando, San Gabriel, Santa Barbara, Boise, Cascades, Eastern Oregon, Kendall, Nevada, Redwoods, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Jose, Stockton, Alaska, Central Washington, Inland Northwest, North Puget Sound, Olympia, Seattle, Yukon, Denver, Glacier, Plains and Peaks, Pueblo, Utah, Western Colorado, Wyoming, Yellowstone;

• Area B: Presbyteries of Giddings-Lovejoy, Heartland, John Calvin, Missouri Union, Northern Kansas, Southern Kansas, Arkansas, Cimarron, Eastern Oklahoma, Grace, Indian Nations, Mission, New Covenant, Palo Duro, Pines, South Louisiana, Tres Rios, Central Nebraska, Dakota, Des Moines, East Iowa, Homestead, John Knox, Milwaukee, Minnesota Valleys, Missouri River Valley, North Central Iowa, Northern Plains, Northern Waters, Prospect Hill, South Dakota, Twin Cities Area, Winnebago;

• Area C: Presbyteries of Cincinnati, Detroit, Eastminster, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Mackinac, Maumee Valley, Miami Valley, Muskingum Valley, Scioto Valley, Western Reserve, Blackhawk, Chicago, Great Rivers, Midwest Hanmi, Ohio Valley, Southeastern Illinois, Wabash Valley, Whitewater Valley, East Tennessee, Holston, Mid-Kentucky, Mid-South, Middle Tennessee, Mississippi, North Alabama, St. Andrew, Sheppards and Lapsley, South Alabama, Transylvania, Western Kentucky; and

• Area D: Presbyteries of Albany, Boston, Cayuga-Syracuse, Eastern Korean, Elizabeth, Genesee Valley, Geneva, Hudson River, Long Island, Monmouth, New Brunswick, New York City, Newark, Newton, Northern New England, Northern New York, The Palisades, Southern New England, Susquehanna Valley, Utica, West Jersey, Western New York, Northwest/Noroeste, San Juan, Southwest/Suroeste, Beaver-Butler, Carlisle, Donegal, Huntingdon, Kiskiminetas, Lackawanna, Lake Erie, Lehigh, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Redstone, Shenango, Upper Ohio Valley, Washington, West Virginia, Abingdon, Atlantic Korean-American, Baltimore, Charlotte, Coastal Carolina, Eastern Virginia, The James, National Capital, New Castle, New Hope, The Peaks, Salem, Shenandoah, Western North Carolina, Central Florida, Charleston Atlantic, Cherokee, Flint River, Florida, Foothills, Greater Atlanta, New Harmony, Northeast Georgia, Peace River, Providence, St. Augustine, Savannah, Tampa Bay, Trinity, Tropical Florida.

**i. Shall Standing Rule K.1. be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**



K.1. Commissions and Special Committees

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g. Any such commission or committee shall consult with and advise the General Assembly Mission Council on the progress of its work in order to assist the council in its responsibility for coordinating the work of the entities of the General Assembly and the work of presbyteries and synods.

**j. Shall a new Standing Rule K.2 be added as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

K.2. Regional Administrative Commissions

a. In order to exercise its responsibilities to review the work of presbyteries; approve the division, union, or combination of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries; create non-geographic presbyteries; develop joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, provide encouragement and guidance to presbyteries and overseeing their work; elect regional committees on representation to review the work of presbyteries regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, advocate for diversity in leadership, and review the decisions of presbyteries as to the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403; and develop and provide resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries (G-3.0501c and G-3.0502), the General Assembly shall create eight regional administrative commissions, for each of the following regions:

Region 1: The Presbyteries of Albany, Boston, Cayuga-Syracuse, Eastern Korean, Elizabeth, Genesee Valley, Geneva, Hudson River, Long Island, Monmouth, New Brunswick, New York City, Newark, Newton, Northern New England, Northern New York, The Palisades, Southern New England, Susquehanna Valley, Utica, West Jersey, Western New York, Northwest/Noroeste, San Juan, and Southwest/Suroeste.

Region 2: The Presbyteries of Beaver-Butler, Carlisle, Donegal, Huntingdon, Kiskiminetas, Lackawanna, Lake Erie, Lehigh, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Redstone, Shenango, Upper Ohio Valley, Washington, West Virginia, Abingdon, Atlantic Korean-American, Baltimore, Charlotte, Coastal Carolina, Eastern Virginia, The James, National Capital, New Castle, New Hope, The Peaks, Salem, Shenandoah, and Western North Carolina.

Region 3: The Presbyteries of East Tennessee, Holston, Mid-Kentucky, Mid-South, Middle Tennessee, Mississippi, North Alabama, St. Andrew, Sheppards and Lapsley, South Alabama, Transylvania, Western Kentuck, Central Florida, Charleston Atlantic, Cherokee, Flint River, Florida, Foothills, Greater Atlanta, New Harmony, Northeast Georgia, Peace River, Providence, St. Augustine, Savannah, Tampa Bay, Trinity, and Tropical Florida,

Region 4: The Presbyteries of Cincinnati, Detroit, Eastminster, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Mackinac, Maumee Valley, Miami Valley, Muskingum Valley, Scioto Valley, Western Reserve, Blackhawk, Chicago, Great Rivers, Midwest Hanmi, Ohio Valley, Southeastern Illinois, Wabash Valley, and Whitewater Valley.

Region 5: The Presbyteries of Denver, Glacier, Plains and Peaks, Pueblo, Utah, Western Colorado, Wyoming, Yellowstone, Central Nebraska, Dakota, Des Moines, East Iowa, Homestead, John Knox, Milwaukee, Minnesota Valleys, Missouri River Valley, North Central Iowa, Northern Plains, Northern Waters, Prospect Hill, South Dakota, Twin Cities Area, and Winnebago.

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD

February 5-7, 2014

Joint PMABX/COGA Meeting

Item 10.c

Region 6: The Presbyteries of Giddings-Lovejoy, Heartland, John Calvin, Missouri Union, Northern Kansas, Southern Kansas, Arkansas, Cimarron, Eastern Oklahoma, Grace, Indian Nations, Mission, New Covenant, Palo Duro, Pines, South Louisiana, and Tres Rios.

Region 7: The Presbyteries of de Cristo, Grand Canyon, Santa Fe, Sierra Blanca, Hanmi, Los Ranchos, The Pacific, Riverside, San Diego, San Fernando, San Gabriel, and Santa Barbara.

Region 8: The Presbyteries of Boise, Cascades, Eastern Oregon, Kendall, Nevada, Redwoods, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Jose, Stockton, Alaska, Central Washington, Inland Northwest, North Puget Sound, Olympia, Seattle, and Yukon.

b. The initial members of each Administrative Commission shall be appointed by the Moderator the 221st General Assembly in consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation from a nominee made by each presbytery within the bounds of the region. In order to insure appropriate diversity within each commission, the Stated Clerk shall designate whether the nominee from each presbytery shall be a Ruling Elder or a Teaching Elder and whether he or she shall be male or female. Each presbytery shall seek to insure that the full diversity of the membership of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is reflected in its nominee. If the Moderator determines that an Administrative Commission lacks sufficient racial-ethnic, gender, geographic and theological diversity, he or she may ask one or more presbyteries to provide alternative nominees. The initial appointees to each Administrative Commission has be divided at appointment into three classes. Thereinafter, the moderator of each General Assembly shall appoint one third of the members of each commission, in accordance with the classes initially appointed, as well as fill any vacancies in the commission, using the same process as for the initial appointment to the Administrative Commission.

c. Each Administrative Commission shall have the following powers within its boundariers:

i. to review the work of presbyteries;

ii. approve the division, union, or combination of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries, and create non-geographic presbyteries;

iii. develop joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, provide encouragement and guidance to presbyteries and overseeing their work;

iv. elect regional committees on representation (consisting of members representing the full racial-ethnic, gender, geographic and theological diversity of the membership of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to review the work of presbyteries within its bounds regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, advocate for diversity in leadership, and review the decisions of presbyteries as to the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403; and

v. develop and provide resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries.

d. The expenses of each Commission shall be paid by the presbyteries within the bounds of the region assigned the Commission in proportion to membership of each presbytery.

**k. Shall current Standing Rule K.2. be renumbered as Standing Rule K.3. and amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as underscored.]**

**K.3. Special Administrative Review of ~~Synods~~Presbyteries**

a. The General Assembly has authority to undertake special administrative review of ~~synods~~ presbyteries (*Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0502e~~G-3.0402c). There are ~~three~~ four ways the General Assembly could be requested to consider such review:

(1) by an overture from a presbytery ~~or synod~~ (G-3.0302d; ~~G-3.0402~~; Standing Rule A.3.;

(2) by request from one of the General Assembly entities (Standing Rule A.2.); ~~or~~

(3) By a commissioners' resolution (Standing Rule A.8.). If such overture, request, or resolution is acted on favorably by the General Assembly, the General Assembly could undertake Special Administrative Review (G-3.0108b) through commission or special committee as provided for in Standing Rule K.5. and G-3.0109; or

(4) by request from the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly based upon any concerns arising in the review of the records of such presbytery.

b. Special administrative review of an alleged ~~synod~~ presbytery irregularity or delinquency may occur when a written request for such review is received by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly from another ~~synod or a presbytery within the synod of the alleged irregularity or delinquency~~. If the request relates to an alleged delinquency, the request can only be filed with the Stated Clerk after the failure or refusal of the ~~synod~~ presbytery to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, having been requested to do so in writing prior to the meeting. When the request for special administrative review is received, the Stated Clerk shall convene a meeting of the Moderator of the General Assembly, the moderator of the General Assembly Mission Council, and the moderator of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. If the request is in order and all the moderators agree that for the good of the church the special administrative review needs to be undertaken before the next meeting of the General Assembly (when the request could be considered by the whole General Assembly), the Moderator of the General Assembly shall appoint a special committee (Standing Rule K.5.) to conduct a special administrative review in accordance with G-3.0108b and report its findings and recommendations to the next General Assembly.

**3. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1, approve the following amendments to the Guidelines for Reviewing Synod Records:**

#### **GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING ~~SYNOD~~ PRESBYTERY RECORDS**

Compiled by the Department of Constitutional Services  
and the ~~OGA/GAMC Mid-Council Relations Office~~

#### **Content of the Minutes**

The following matters shall be included in the minutes, as applicable:

~~1. The minutes shall contain an index.~~

2. The date, time, and place of the council meeting; the name of the moderator presiding; and whether it is a “stated,” “adjourned,” or “special” council meeting (*Robert’s Rules*, Chapter XV, Section 48).

3. The call of the special meeting and the name of requester(s) and/or the caller in accordance with ~~Synod~~ presbytery’s own rules (see *Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0405~~ G-3.0304 and Robert’s Rules, Chapter IV, Section 9)

4. The opening of each meeting with prayer (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0105).

5. The closing of each meeting with prayer (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0105).

6. The roll of commissioners and attendance and their ~~presbyteries~~ congregations (See *Book of Order* G-3.0104).

7. The names of absentees and their ~~presbyteries~~congregations.

8. A statement that a quorum was present, including an indication of the number specified as a quorum in the synod bylaws or standing rules (see *Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0405~~ G-3.0304).

9. A record of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (see *Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0401b~~ G-3.0301b).

10. The report of the Committee on Representation (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0103 and ~~G-3.0401~~ G-3.0301) showing implementation of the principles of participation and inclusiveness in order to assure fair representation in decision making (see *Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0401~~ G-3.0301).

11. The names of members of commissions, committees, and similar groups, including those groups that exist only during a ~~synod~~ presbytery meeting.

12. Action taken on reports and recommendations and all reports with clear indication of amendments.

13. The decisions of the Permanent Judicial Commission and other commissions should be reported. A report should be made that lawful injunctions to the ~~presbyteries~~ sessions or congregations have been obeyed.

14. Actions concerning the organization of new ~~presbyteries~~ congregations or the division, uniting, or otherwise combining of ~~presbyteries~~ congregations ~~or portions of presbyteries~~ ~~previously existing, subject to the approval of the General Assembly~~ (see *Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0403e~~ G-3.0303b).

15. The review of the records of ~~presbyteries~~ congregations, including any exceptions taken (see *Book of Order*, ~~3-0403~~ G-3.0303 and G-3.0108a).

16. The report of the ~~synod~~ presbytery’s entities, if any, and action on its recommendations (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0108a).

17. The approved ~~synod~~ presbytery's budget (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0113).
18. The complete report of the full financial review from a public accountant or a public accounting firm. (G-3.0113).
19. ~~A record of the consultations with presbyteries and with the General Assembly Mission Council (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0402, G-3.0403).~~
20. Report of its ecumenical relationship, if any (see *Book of Order*, G-5.01 and 5.04).
21. Indication that the minutes have been read and approved by the ~~synod~~ presbytery or by its authorized committee prior to presentation of the peer review.
22. A record of the ~~synod~~ presbytery having considered "programmatic" matters referred to it by the General Assembly.
23. An alphabetical roster of former members for the last six years of the Permanent Judicial Commission who may be called upon when necessary to constitute a quorum (see *Book of Order*, D-5.0206b).
24. Actions on exceptions from the preceding General Assembly.
25. A report of property and liability insurance carried by the ~~Synod~~ presbytery. (G-3.0112).
26. Actions taken by synod entities/commissions held between ~~synod~~ presbytery meetings.

### General Provisions

1. Each ~~synod~~ presbytery shall deliver to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, during the ~~spring~~ regional meeting to peer review minutes, one copy of the minutes of all sessions of the ~~synod~~ presbytery that have occurred since the last review by the General Assembly, provided that such minutes have been approved by the ~~synod~~ presbytery or its authorized committee, and have been printed or duplicated for distribution.
2. The minutes shall be bound in a manner that is consistent with the needs of both protection and accessibility.
3. The title page shall show attestation that the minutes of meetings of the most recent previous session or sessions have been reviewed by the General Assembly and shall give page references to action on exceptions, if there be such.
4. Minutes shall be signed and attested by either the moderator or stated clerk of the ~~synod~~ presbytery; such signature should appear at the end of the journal before any appendix or supplement.
5. The bylaws and standing rules of the ~~synod~~ presbytery shall be either bound in the volume of the minutes or submitted for review with the minutes.

6. The review of the minutes of each synod presbytery shall ordinarily occur as peer reviews by a gathering of all synod presbytery stated clerks within a designate geographic regions. Such geographic regions shall be recommended by the Stated Clerk and approved by the General Assembly. Their written review of each synod presbytery's minutes shall be submitted to the General Assembly Committee assigned the review of the minutes, who shall attest that the minutes of each synod presbytery have been reviewed. If peer review is not completed, the synod presbytery shall submit its minutes for review by the General Assembly Committee charged with overseeing this review.

7. The Stated Clerk shall deposit with the Presbyterian Historical Society a certified copy of the synod presbytery minutes after they have been approved by the General Assembly.

### **Report of the Assembly Committee**

1. The assembly committee reviewing synod presbytery minutes shall report to the General Assembly whether the

- a. proceedings have been correctly recorded;
- b. proceedings have been regular and in concurrence with the Constitution;
- c. proceedings have been prudent and equitable;
- d. proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church, and
- e. lawful injunctions of the General Assembly have been obeyed.

2. The assembly committee shall recommend appropriate action to the General Assembly, and if it believed the General Assembly should take exception to something in a synod presbytery's minutes, that exception shall be listed in the committee's report.

**4. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1, approve the following amendments to the "Guidelines for Forming Social Policy":**

3. Policy Statements Requirements

In addition to section 2. on p. 67, "policy statements" must meet the following requirements:

- a. A prospectus defining the social issue(s) to be addressed by a policy statement shall be developed, adopted, and published by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy or other entity. This prospectus shall be distributed to the Presbyterian News Office, *Monday Morning*, and other appropriate media. A brief (one-page) summary of the prospectus describing the problem to be addressed, information on where to obtain a full prospectus, and an invitation to respond with comments and suggestions, shall be sent to all ~~synods and~~ presbyteries. This prospectus shall be distributed to all presbyteries with sufficient copies for all congregations, encouraging input from the presbytery and the congregations and indicating how input can be made.

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- i. The policy statement shall be distributed with an official cover letter from the Stated Clerk that says, in part:

In exercise of its responsibility to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life, the (number) General Assembly (year) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved this policy statement. It is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which it ministers. It will determine procedures and program for the units and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by other ~~governing bodies~~ councils (sessions; and presbyteries; ~~and synods~~). It is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

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#### 4. Resolution Requirements

In addition to section 2. on p. 67, “resolutions” must meet the following requirements:

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- b. A resolution shall be distributed with an official cover letter from the Stated Clerk that says, in part:

In exercise of its responsibility to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life, the (number) General Assembly (year) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved this resolution. It is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which it ministers. It will determine procedures and program for the entities and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by other ~~governing bodies~~ councils (sessions; and presbyteries; ~~and synods~~). It is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

5. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1, approve the following amendments to the Organization for Mission:

**I. History of the Structure for Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

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The self-assessment revealed the need for GAC to be closer to congregations, presbyteries and synods<sup>1</sup> and to find ways to better communicate with them. The self-assessment also indicated the large size of GAC was a concern and that GAC needed to look at its size and the relationship between GAC-elected and GAC-staff roles and relationships.

\*\*\*

The church's mission finds its center in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in witnessing to that gospel. Beneath the variety and complexity of its forms of witness, the church's mission is one—from the congregation to the General Assembly. To share fully in that mission is the task of every Presbyterian and every council. As the most inclusive council, the General Assembly represents the unity of the ~~synods,~~ presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Among its other responsibilities, the General Assembly has the power to set policies, objectives, and priorities for mission, to provide the agencies appropriate for that mission, and to superintend their work (*Book of Order*, ~~G-3.0501~~ G-3.0401).

The Presbyterian Mission Agency, as agent of the General Assembly, implements policies established by the General Assembly; coordinates the work of the divisions and other General Assembly agencies in light of General Assembly mission directions, goals, objectives, and priorities; works in partnership with ~~synods and~~ presbyteries; and develops and proposes a comprehensive budget to the General Assembly. Members of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board are elected by the General Assembly and are representative of ~~synods,~~ presbyteries, and the church at large.

The General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, ~~the synods,~~ the presbyteries, and the sessions work together in partnership on behalf of the mission of the church. The *Organization for Mission* places emphasis on the congregation as an instrument of mission and on the mid councils working together to provide resources and services to the congregations.

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F. *Personnel and Compensation*

The General Assembly has approved a personnel, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, and compensation system that is used by the Presbyterian Mission Agency. This system provides guidance regarding overseas personnel, and for General Assembly level

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<sup>1</sup> Synods are no longer councils within the structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but were at the time of this study.



entities, ~~synods~~, presbyteries, sessions, congregations, and church-related institutions in their employment practices. In order to develop consistency and equity across the whole church, these mid councils and institutions are urged to approve and implement these policies with such adaptations as may be necessary.

G. *Additional Factors*

Additional factors to guide the structure and style of mission are:

- the need to affirm the centrality of the mission of congregations, and their need and desire for resources from General Assembly entities, as well as from presbyteries ~~and synods~~;

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- the need for an evolutionary design that can be responsive to unfolding changes in the structure and work of the General Assembly, ~~synods~~ and presbyteries.

\*\*\*

**III. Mission of the General Assembly**

*(Book of Order, G-3.0501)*

The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and ~~mid~~-councils. It therefore has the responsibility and power

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k. ~~to oversee the work of the synods and to facilitate their participation of~~ presbyteries in the mission of the church;

l. to review the records of the ~~synods~~ presbyteries and to take care that they observe the Constitution of the church;

m. to organize new ~~synods~~ presbyteries and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine ~~synods or portions of synods previously existing~~ presbyteries;

n. ~~to approve the organization, division, uniting, or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods;~~

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v. ~~to authorize synods to exercise similar power in receiving ecclesiastical bodies suited to become constituents of those mid-councils and lying within their geographic bounds;~~

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**IV. General Assembly Officers and Committees and the Office of the General Assembly**

A. *Moderator of the General Assembly*

\*\*\*

3. *Enabling the Moderator and Vice Moderator to Serve*

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b. The Moderator, the Vice Moderator, and the Office of the General Assembly shall jointly develop a comprehensive plan for their travel based upon the mission of the church and the needs of agencies, mid councils, institutions, ecumenical partners, and other constituencies.

~~Each synod regional group of presbyteries (as determine by the Stated Clerk and approved by the General Assembly), in consultation with its presbyteries,~~ will be invited to develop a plan for itineration of the Moderator or Vice Moderator. Ordinarily, a single invitation for a visit within a presbytery will be accepted during each term.

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B. *Stated Clerk of the General Assembly*

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2. *Functions of the Stated Clerk* [For functions related to General Assembly meetings, see Standing Rule H.2.)

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n. The Stated Clerk shall promote the harmony and efficiency of the General Assembly and its agencies in cooperation with the Presbyterian Mission Agency and its Executive Director, with special attention to relationships between General Assembly entities, and with ~~synods,~~ presbyteries, and sessions. The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees, commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time.

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C. *Committees of the General Assembly*

1. *Serving on Assembly Entities*

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g. If a teaching elder serving as a member of a General Assembly entity representing a ~~synod or~~ presbytery shall transfer his or her presbytery membership and thereby cease to be under the jurisdiction of the presbytery ~~or synod~~ that nominated her or him to serve on the assembly entity, the position shall be declared vacant by the Stated Clerk. If a member of a particular church serving as a member of a General Assembly entity representing a presbytery ~~or~~

~~synod~~ shall transfer her or his membership to a particular church that is not under jurisdiction of the presbytery ~~or synod~~ that nominated him or her, the position shall be declared vacant by the Stated Clerk.

h. The Stated Clerk shall also notify appropriate entities and ~~mid~~ councils upon being advised of the death of any person holding membership on an assembly entity or who is unable to serve for any other reason. The Stated Clerk shall also declare vacant a position on any such entity held by a teaching elder who ceases to be a teaching elder member of a presbytery of this denomination, or a position held by a member of a particular church who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this denomination.

All such vacancies shall be filled by the same process under which the former incumbent was elected. If a vacancy shall occur during the first term of service of an incumbent, then the original source of the nomination shall propose a nominee for election to complete the unexpired term, and such nominee shall be eligible for renomination and election to an additional full term. If a vacancy shall occur during the second term of service of an incumbent, and the position vacated is one designated for a representative of a presbytery ~~or synod~~, then the privilege of proposing a nominee for the unexpired term shall pass to the next appropriate presbytery ~~or synod~~ under any rotation system that may be in use, and the nominee so proposed shall be eligible for nomination and reelection to an additional full term. Any vacancy in a position for which the General Assembly Nominating Committee makes nominations may be filled until the next succeeding General Assembly by appointment of the Moderator of the General Assembly upon advice by the nominating committee that the committee has decided to present the name of the appointee to the next session of the General Assembly as its nominee for the position.

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### 3. *Advisory Committee on the Constitution*

a. The *Book of Order*, G-6.02, provides for the establishment of an Advisory Committee on the Constitution. The committee is composed of nine (9) voting members who shall be stated clerks or former stated clerks of ~~synods or~~ presbyteries, former members of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly, polity professors, or other qualified persons with knowledge of and experience with the Constitution and polity of the church.

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## V. The Presbyterian Mission Agency

The Presbyterian Mission Agency is the body of the General Assembly in which are lodged the following responsibilities:

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c. to develop and propose, for General Assembly approval, the mission directions, goals, objectives, and priorities of the Presbyterian Mission Agency; doing so by taking into

account the mission work being done by sessions, and presbyteries, ~~and synods~~, and to propose for General Assembly approval an accompanying budget that will implement the mission work plan of the Presbyterian Mission Agency;

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## **VI. Presbyterian Mission Agency Relationships**

The Presbyterian Mission Agency works in partnership with ~~synods~~, presbyteries, and sessions to enable the various councils to join together in churchwide expression of the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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## **VII. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, (previously the Central Treasury Corporation—CTC) is a corporate entity of the General Assembly and, as the principal church corporation, will hold title to property in accordance with the 1986 Deliverance, and provide accounting, reporting, and financial services for the General Assembly and its entities. All voting members of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (previously the General Assembly Mission Council—GAMC) are members of the board of directors.

The officers of the corporation include a president, an executive vice-president and a chief financial officer (“treasurer”), one or more vice-presidents, a secretary, a controller, and an associate treasurer. The president shall be elected by the board of directors for a term of four years subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. Ordinarily, the offices of the president and the treasurer are held by the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Deputy Executive Director for Shared Services, respectively.

Responsibility for managing the activities of this corporation is assigned to the Deputy Executive Director for Shared Services and other Shared Services staff who have been elected officers of the corporation under the direction of the president.

The treasurer shall prepare an annual report, audited by a certified public accountant, of the financial position and operations of the General Assembly activities for the General Assembly.

## **VIII. Other General Assembly Related Corporations**

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D. *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.*

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The Board of Directors consist of fifteen (15) members. All members are elected by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board elects two members from among its membership. The General Assembly Nominating Committee nominates six at-large members, ~~one member from among the synods~~, and ~~one~~ two members from among the presbyteries. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation nominates two members and the Corporation's Personnel/Nominating Committee nominates three at-large members. The Program reports to the General Assembly through the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.

The Chair of the Program's Board of Directors and its President and Chief Executive Officer have privilege of the floor without vote at Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meetings. They are corresponding members of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. In addition, the President participates in the Expanded Staff Leadership Team ~~plus Synod Executives Forum~~.

**6. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1, instructs the Moderator the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly to appoint Administrative Commissions for each of the current Synods to develop, in consultation with the presbyteries currently within the bounds of that Synod, plans to transfer assets, funds, projects and programs of the Synods of that region with to the appropriate trusts, foundations or entities, then to implement such plans as soon as practical, but in no event later than the opening of the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (2018).**

The members of each Administrative Commission shall be appointed by the Moderator the 221st General Assembly from a nominee made by each presbyteries within the bounds of the Synods whose assets, funds, projects and programs it is charged with transferring. In order to insure appropriate diversity within each commission, the Stated Clerk shall designate whether the nominee from each presbytery shall be a Ruling Elder or a Teaching Elder and whether he or she shall be male or female. If the Moderate determines that an Administrative Commission lacks sufficient racial-ethnic, gender, geographic and theological diversity, he or she may ask one or more presbyteries to provide alternative nominees.

In order to carry out its charge, each such Administrative Commission is empowered to:

- a. Hold the assets of each Synod within its region in trust pending completion of its charge;
- b. Retain legal, accounting and other profession services and/or hire temporary staff to assist in completing its charge, and to pay the reasonable expenses for such services from the funds held in trust from the Synod in question;
- c. To confer with the presbyteries within the bounds of that Synod as to the appropriate use of the assets and funds of the Synod, and as to the benefits of transferring the projects and programs of that Synod to other entities, including to those presbyteries;
- d. To open and close bank and investment accounts as necessary to transfer the existing assets, funds, projects and programs of the Synod;
- e. To create new legal entities to which the assets, funds, projects and programs of the Synod may be transferred, provided that any such entity shall hold all asserts in trust

- for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and shall be controlled by the election of directors or otherwise by presbyteries within the bounds of that Synod;
- f. To consult periodically with the other Administrative Commissions and with resource personnel provided by the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Presbyterian Foundation concerning the most effective means of accomplishing their charge;
  - g. To wind up the legal affairs of the Synod and to dissolve it as a corporation;
  - h. To take all other steps reasonably necessary to accomplish its charge; and
  - i. To provide an interim report of its actions to the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016); and
  - j. To complete its work as soon as prudently possible, but in no event later than the opening of the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (2018).

**7. That the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), contingent upon approval by the presbyteries of the proposed amendments to the Book of Order set forth in Recommendation 1:**

**a. approve the following boundaries for Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions, effective Jun 21, 2015:**

Region 1: The Presbyteries of Albany, Boston, Cayuga-Syracuse, Eastern Korean, Elizabeth, Genesee Valley, Geneva, Hudson River, Long Island, Monmouth, New Brunswick, New York City, Newark, Newton, Northern New England, Northern New York, The Palisades, Southern New England, Susquehanna Valley, Utica, West Jersey, Western New York, Northwest/Noroeste, San Juan, and Southwest/Suroeste.

Region 2: The Presbyteries of Beaver-Butler, Carlisle, Donegal, Huntingdon, Kiskiminetas, Lackawanna, Lake Erie, Lehigh, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Redstone, Shenango, Upper Ohio Valley, Washington, West Virginia, Abingdon, Atlantic Korean-American, Baltimore, Charlotte, Coastal Carolina, Eastern Virginia, The James, National Capital, New Castle, New Hope, The Peaks, Salem, Shenandoah, and Western North Carolina.

Region 3: The Presbyteries of East Tennessee, Holston, Mid-Kentucky, Mid-South, Middle Tennessee, Mississippi, North Alabama, St. Andrew, Sheppards and Lapsley, South Alabama, Transylvania, Western Kentuck, Central Florida, Charleston Atlantic, Cherokee, Flint River, Florida, Foothills, Greater Atlanta, New Harmony, Northeast Georgia, Peace River, Providence, St. Augustine, Savannah, Tampa Bay, Trinity, and Tropical Florida,

Region 4: The Presbyteries of Cincinnati, Detroit, Eastminster, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Mackinac, Maumee Valley, Miami Valley, Muskingum Valley, Scioto Valley, Western Reserve, Blackhawk, Chicago, Great Rivers, Midwest Hanmi, Ohio Valley, Southeastern Illinois, Wabash Valley, and Whitewater Valley.

Region 5: The Presbyteries of Denver, Glacier, Plains and Peaks, Pueblo, Utah, Western Colorado, Wyoming, Yellowstone, Central Nebraska, Dakota, Des Moines, East Iowa, Homestead, John Knox, Milwaukee, Minnesota Valleys, Missouri

River Valley, North Central Iowa, Northern Plains, Northern Waters, Prospect Hill, South Dakota, Twin Cities Area, and Winnebago.

Region 6: The Presbyteries of Giddings-Lovejoy, Heartland, John Calvin, Missouri Union, Northern Kansas, Southern Kansas, Arkansas, Cimarron, Eastern Oklahoma, Grace, Indian Nations, Mission, New Covenant, Palo Duro, Pines, South Louisiana, and Tres Rios.

Region 7: The Presbyteries of de Cristo, Grand Canyon, Santa Fe, Sierra Blanca, Hanmi, Los Ranchos, The Pacific, Riverside, San Diego, San Fernando, San Gabriel, and Santa Barbara.

Region 8: The Presbyteries of Boise, Cascades, Eastern Oregon, Kendall, Nevada, Redwoods, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Jose, Stockton, Alaska, Central Washington, Inland Northwest, North Puget Sound, Olympia, Seattle, and Yukon.

- b. request that the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2020) review the boundaries for Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions to insure that a balance of workloads has been maintained by these boundaries.**