

To: Teaching Elders, Member Churches of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley,
and Ruling Elder Members of Presbytery

From: Ruling Elder Gidget Collins, Moderator
Ruling Elder Larry Hollar, Stated Clerk

Date: March 16, 2018

CALL OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY

**Tuesday, March 27, 2018
4:00 pm
(registration begins at 3:30 pm)**

**Memorial Presbyterian Church
1541 South Smithville Road
Dayton OH 45410**

In accordance with Section 4.02 of the Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, a special meeting of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley has been called at the request of the Leadership Council for the purposes listed in the docket that follows on page 2. Motions and materials pertaining to this purpose are also attached and are also placed on the presbytery web site, www.miamipresbytery.org.

DOCKET FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Memorial Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio
1541 South Smithville Road, Dayton OH 45410

3:30 pm Registration

4:00 pm CONVENING PRAYER – Ruling Elder Gidget Collins, Moderator

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS - Ruling Elder Larry Hollar, Stated Clerk

- o Statement of Quorum & Formation of the Roll
- o Attestation to call of the meeting
- o Clarification of process for special meetings of Presbytery and the concurrence process for overtures to the General Assembly

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL—Teaching Elder Kelley Shin, Chair

- o Consideration of motions to: 1) concur in Overture No. 052, On Establishing an Administrative Commission to Address Issues in the Synod of the Covenant—From the Presbytery of Cincinnati (**Appendix A**); and 2) authorize appointment of an overture advocate.

CLOSING PRAYER

ADJOURNMENT

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Leadership Council

March 27, 2017

Motions: The Leadership Council moves--

- 1. That the presbytery concur in the following overture to the 223rd General Assembly: Ovt 052, On Establishing an Administrative Commission to Address Issues in the Synod of the Covenant—From the Presbytery of Cincinnati (see *Appendix A*); and**
- 2. Upon approval of Motion 1, that the presbytery authorize the Leadership Council to appoint an overture advocate to assist in presenting the matter to the assembly committee, and provide sufficient funds from presbytery resources to enable the overture advocate’s presence at the General Assembly for that purpose.**

*The text of the overture and its rationale are presented in **Appendix A** below, following the Explanation provided by the Presbytery of the Miami Valley Leadership Council.*

Explanation from Teaching Elder Kelley Shin, chair of the Leadership Council of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley:

Over the past several months, the Leadership Council of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley has become more acutely aware of an on-going and worsening conflict within the leadership of the Synod of the Covenant, a conflict that is deeply affecting the 11 Presbyteries which are part of the Synod of the Covenant, including our own.

The Leadership Council has heard in detail about the dysfunction and conflict at the Synod from the Synod Commissioners from the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, Teaching Elder Ronald Lawrence and Ruling Elder Marvella Lambright, as well as from Ruling Elder José Jones, Moderator of the Hispanic/Latino Caucus of the Synod.

The conflict and disorder at the Synod consists of but is not limited to failures of communication, representation, support, trust, and proper procedure. Specifically the conflict and dysfunction have had the effect of disempowering and marginalizing the racial-ethnic caucuses of the Synod.

The Presbytery of Miami Valley is not alone in experiencing the disorder and disruption at the Synod of the Covenant. Many presbyteries of the Synod have been affected and relationships between presbyteries and the Synod have been broken and some completely destroyed.

The Presbytery of Cincinnati has submitted an overture to the 223rd General Assembly (see the text and rationale below) to form an Administrative Commission to address the disorder in the Synod of the Covenant, and has invited other presbyteries in the Synod to offer a concurrence to this overture. The Presbyteries of Mackinac and Detroit have already concurred in this overture, assuring that the overture will be referred to the General Assembly.

The Leadership Council of the Presbytery of Miami Valley voted unanimously on March 8 to recommend concurrence with the overture and to request that the Moderator of the presbytery call a special meeting of the presbytery under Section 4.02 of the Bylaws for the purpose of voting to concur in this overture from the Presbytery of Cincinnati.

Leadership Council felt strongly that we must show our support of our Synod Commissioners through this action. Thus far the Synod itself has not been able to take effective steps to address the causes of its dysfunctions. Requesting the assistance of an Administrative Commission of the General Assembly, with appropriate authority to act, is the next logical step to make progress in resolving these issues. The overture does not make final judgments or single out any one person or entity as responsible for these issues at the Synod, but invites a thorough Administrative Review to get to the underlying causes and help address them.

Since the 2012 General Assembly approved the requirement that each overture from a presbytery receive at least one concurrence from another presbytery, the Presbytery of the Miami Valley has not actively considered concurring in overtures proposed by other

presbyteries. It is an indication of the seriousness of the Synod situation that Leadership Council decided to bring this matter before our presbytery for consideration.

The concurrence that Leadership Council requests the presbytery to approve applies to the overture language itself. While our presbytery could submit additional rationale along with our concurrence, Leadership Council determined that the rationale from the Presbytery of Cincinnati provided adequate grounds for the overture.

Presbyteries concurring in overtures may send one overture advocate to assist in presenting the matter to the assembly committee and to seek support for approval of the overture. If Motion 1 is adopted, Motion 2 would authorize the Leadership Council to appoint a person for that role and provide financial resources for transportation, lodging, meals and other essential expenses to enable that person to carry out the overture advocate duties at General Assembly. Leadership Council would oversee those expenses to ensure prudent use of presbytery resources.

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APPENDIX A

Overture 052, On Establishing an Administrative Commission to Address Issues in the Synod of the Covenant—From the Presbytery of Cincinnati

The Presbytery of Cincinnati overtures the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to establish an Administrative Commission to address disorder in the Synod of the Covenant, as provided in G-3.0109b(5) of the Book of Order and Standing Rule K.2. of the Manual of the General Assembly. The Commission, which shall consist of not fewer than seven (7) persons appointed by the Moderator (or Co-Moderators), shall:

1. Conduct Special Administrative Review (G-3.0108b; Standing Rule K.2.) for the purpose of inquiring into and settling the following allegations of disorder:

a. Failure to determine a satisfactory method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103 in proposed amendments to the by-laws of the Synod, or adequately to consult with the presbyteries and racial-ethnic caucuses of the Synod in the preparation of said by-laws;

b. Failure to adequately support the ministry and mission of its presbyteries as they seek to support the witness of congregations (G-3.0401);

c. Failure to adequately facilitate communication with and among its presbyteries (G- 3.0401a);

d. Failure to adequately exercise pastoral care among its presbyteries in order that the synod may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments (G-3.0401b);

e. Conflict between the Synod Executive and the Racial-Ethnic Caucuses of the Synod, and with the Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs of the Synod;

f. Loss of trust and mutuality between the Synod and its constituent presbyteries;

g. Loss of trust and mutuality between the Synod Executive and multiple presbyteries of the Synod;

h. Loss of trust and mutuality between the Synod Executive and the elected and/or administrative leadership of multiple presbyteries of the Synod.

2. In its exercise of Special Administrative Review, and in consultation with the Personnel Services Committee of the Synod, conduct a comprehensive performance review of the Synod Executive, including feedback from Commissioners, Synod Staff, Racial-Ethnic Caucuses, Presbyteries, Presbytery Executives, and others as it may determine helpful to its task; and to direct the Synod regarding the remediation of performance deficiencies, which may include recommendation to terminate employment if it deems the mission of the Synod imperatively demands it.

3. Have full authority to enforce the findings and recommendations of its Special Administrative Review, granting fair notice and an opportunity to be heard to all parties. The process for termination of employment, if recommended, shall conform to the Personnel Policies of the Synod in effect at the time the request for Special Administrative Review was initially filed.

4. Refer to judicial process any irregularities or offenses it may discover in the conduct of its review that cannot be remedied through administrative review.

RATIONALE

The Synod of the Covenant is experiencing serious conflict and dysfunction. At its August 2017 Synod Assembly, amendments to the Synod By-Laws were introduced which would have the effect of disempowering and marginalizing the racial-ethnic caucuses of the Synod from the decision-making processes of the Synod. These by-laws were constructed and presented with little, if any, consultation with the persons directly affected, and with no consultation with the presbyteries of the Synod. The given rationale was that "When a synod meets, it shall be composed of commissioners elected by the presbyteries" (G-3.0401), disregarding the Synod's obligation stated in the very same paragraph, "[to] 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" (emphasis added). The proposed by-laws have never been distributed to the presbyteries, nor are they available on the Synod website.

The process seems set up to exclude the very voices synods are charged to protect. The proposed by-laws remove racial-ethnic voices from the council commissioned to make decisions for the body between Assemblies, on which persons elected by the Synod (as opposed to the presbyteries) may legally serve (see Request 90-1, Minutes, 1990, Part I, p. 254).

The process for the proposed amendments to the by-laws reinforces perceptions that they are a response to ongoing conflict between the Synod Executive and the racial-ethnic caucuses of the Synod which comprise the Cabinet for Ethnic Church Affairs (CECA). In defending the proposed by-laws at the August 2017 meeting, the Synod Executive allegedly accused those registering objections as being "greedy for power."

In addition, the qualities of trust and mutuality in the relationships between the presbyteries and the Synod, and presbytery leaders and the Synod Executive, have strained to the point of breaking. The Presbytery of Mackinac was recently blindsided by a request for a called meeting of the Synod to appoint an administrative commission to take original jurisdiction of the presbytery without any prior consultation or inquiry. Only threatened ecclesiastical suits alleging a violation of due process prompted the presentation of a substitute motion limiting the Commission's powers to inquiry only. No rationale, other than the receipt of four anonymous letters - the contents of which were withheld - were presented for the motion in the call.

Several presbyteries, including Maumee Valley, Scioto Valley, and Detroit have withdrawn some or all of their participation in the life of the Synod. Serious conflicts exist between several presbytery executives and the Synod Executive. Recently all five female presbytery executives refused to participate in an executive forum because of conflicts or concerns involving the synod executive.

There are serious, chronic problems in the dissemination of information from the synod to presbyteries and their leaders. Some presbytery executives have been told directly that they are not permitted at Synod Assemblies. Information regarding the timing and location of upcoming Assemblies, as well as agendas and supporting documents, are neither sent to the executives nor posted on the synod website.

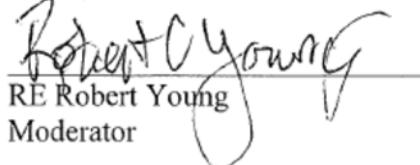
At the November 2017 meeting of the Synod, the Personnel Services Committee indicated they had conducted a job performance review of the Synod Executive and a pay raise was being recommended to the Synod on the basis of that review. Email correspondence documentation indicates that the Personnel Services Committee did not meet in 2017, in direct contrast to their report filed in November 2017.

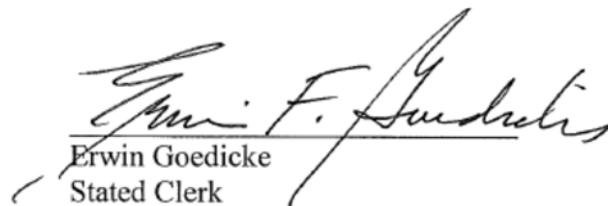
In November 2017, a question was publicly posed to the Chair of the Personnel Services Committee during a Synod meeting, inquiring if that committee would be willing to meet with the presbytery executives of the Synod of the Covenant. A direct response was deferred. The question was presented on additional occasions in email communication subsequent to the November 2017 Synod meeting, and the response from a Synod officer indicated it was inappropriate to make such a request. In addition, in December 2017, a Presbytery Executive requested a meeting between Presbytery Executives and the Synod Executive, and that direct invitation was refused by the Synod Executive.

Due to the severity of the issues involved, we believe time is of the essence in conducting this review.

Adopted by the Presbytery of Cincinnati at its stated meeting held in at Madeira-Silverwood Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, on Saturday, February 24, 2018.

Attest:


RE Robert Young
Moderator


Erwin Goedicke
Stated Clerk