

Presbytery of the Miami Valley
Called Special Meeting Minutes to be approved
Tuesday, March 11, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.
ON ZOOM

The special meeting of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley was convened with prayer on Zoom at 2:00 pm by Vice-Moderator Lawrence Bartel, serving for Moderator Janet Miller who was unable to be present.

The moderator declared a quorum.

The assembly was reminded that today's special meeting was duly called by Moderator Janet Miller at the request of three Ministers of Word and Sacrament and three Ruling Elders from different churches and by action of the Committee on Ministry (COM) at their meeting on February 25, 2025 in compliance with Section 4.02 of the Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley. Pursuant to the presbytery Bylaws, notice was given to all church sessions, Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elder members of the Presbytery by email on February 27, 2025. A second notice was sent out on March 6, 2025. It was also announced at the February stated meeting of the presbytery. The purpose of the meeting was to vote on the Amendments to the Constitution of the PCUSA, approve the ecumenical agreement and to approve the recommendation of the COM to appoint an Administrative Commission to the Corinth Presbyterian Church.

The assembly was also reminded that this is the only business that can be done.

The moderator reviewed the Zoom protocols and basic rules of order and a practice poll was completed to be sure everyone could vote.

The moderator recognized Stated Clerk Lynn Bova for the formation of the roll.

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve minister members who requested to be excused from the meeting.

The stated clerk then reviewed who has voice, voice and vote, and that voting was being done by polls to meet the requirements of Robert's Rules for electronic meetings. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

The assembly was reminded that no changes could be made to the wording of the amendments, the option is to approve or disapprove. The Leadership Council was presenting the amendments as required by the General Assembly. An omnibus motion with amendments 24-A through 24-L would be presented but any of the amendments could be pulled for additional consideration and would then be voted on individually. The Episcopal-PCUSA Agreement 24-M would be voted on after the other amendments.

The Moderator then recognized RE Michael Seewer, chair of the Leadership Council.

He moved the omnibus motion and amendments 24-A, 24-C, 24-F, 24-H, 24-I, and 24-L were pulled for consideration.

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the PCUSA (Book of Order) listed in Appendix B, including 24-B, 24-D, 24-E, 24-G, 24-J, and 24-K. (all approved)

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve 24-A after discussion. (Approved)

A **MOTION DID NOT PREVAIL** to approve 24-C after discussion. (Disapproved)

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve 24-F after discussion. (Approved)

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve 24-H after discussion. (Approved)

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve 24-I after discussion. (Approved)

A **MOTION PREVAILED** to approve 24-L after discussion. (Approved)

A MOTION PREVAILED to approve the Proposed Ecumenical Agreement between the PCUSA and the Episcopal Church on local sharing of ministries listed in Appendix C as 24-M. (approved)

The moderator thanked everyone and offered a prayer.

The moderator then recognized RE Jim Griffin, chair of the Committee on Ministry who offered explanation of the need, purpose and scope of the Administrative Commission. He directed the assembly to the report of the COM that includes the mandate for the Administrative Commission.

+ PC(USA) Book of Order, G-3.0109 b (5), 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:

(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).

Background on Report of Disorder

From COM's perspective, Corinth began 2024 as a healthy church with a positive future. Corinth's Session had approved 2024 goals reflective of healthy congregation: **receive 6-10 members, provide several book/Bible studies, increase youth fellowship, plans for fellowship including Easter Egg Hunt and Soup Sunday gatherings, a strong mission commitment, expand worship opportunities especially with online worshippers, promote accessibility in all ministries, increase plate, pledge and planned giving and, in February, an emphasis on planned giving entitled Loving Corinth into the Future.** Furthermore, Session had also directed their COM liaison, RE Steve Davis, to let COM know that Corinth was ready for Rev. Cynthia Holder Rich to move from Designated to installed pastor for an undesignated term.

COM was surprised when it was notified that a secret meeting took place, without knowledge of the session or moderator of session, with a plan to close the church by December 31, 2024. COM sent a letter to Corinth's Clerk of Session stating that any conversation about closing a congregation cannot be done without the discernment and accompaniment of the COM. The COM determined that there should be a COM presence at all Corinth session meetings to assist with discernment about the future because of the disordered way the advice to close came to the session beginning in March 2024.

A COM team joined Session/Deacons on March 5, 2024, to learn how Corinth moved from a healthy, future-looking church to a church planning to close and to begin helping the Session discern Corinth's future.

As the COM team met with Session each month, they heard of dwindling numbers and tired leadership. Each month reports indicated dwindling funds. However, at the same time, a significant amount of money was being spent on the property (refrigerator (\$1,338), basement floor (\$8,000), pump and installation (\$2,728), organ repair (3,300), roof repair (\$3,600) totaling \$18,966. The COM team also heard a more positive view of Corinth. Visitors were coming to worship, and new members were being added and there was enthusiasm for fellowship and outreach ministries.

Two views of the congregation emerged. On the one hand, scarcity of money, dwindling

number of members, little energy to move forward while on the other hand an acknowledgement that money was tight but new people, including young people, were showing up each Sunday and were excited about the future of Corinth. A revitalization group emerged to consider how to reach out to those hurt by the church, especially those in the LGBTQIA+ community. Also, a group was formed to study the book Trauma-Informed Evangelism.

Session called a congregational meeting on July 14, 2024, for the purpose of voting for Pastor Cynthia Holder-Rich to move from designated to fully installed pastor with an undesignated term. Session, having heard members speak “*we had a good run but it’s time to close*” and others speak “*we can move forward with fresh ideas and new energy*” wisely decided to add a visioning session after the congregational vote to hear from the congregation. Unfortunately, because the vote (16 yes 8 no) surprised Pastor, COM and Session, the visioning session was canceled.

Session, recognizing the need to hear from the people invited the congregation to a Churchwide Conversation on November 10, 2024. Following worship, a summation of the financial reality of Corinth was given which concluded that Corinth could sustain another year of ministry. Those in attendance were divided into two groups to consider what to do with the gift of one more year. The split vision of Corinth’s future emerged again with those who believe Corinth needs to be dissolved and those who want to consider new possibilities for ministry.

The COM has determined that an Administrative Commission is needed to work with the session and congregation.

Purpose:

The Committee on Ministry recommends pursuant to the Book of Order provisions G-3.0109b (4) & (5) that the Presbytery authorize the PMV Moderator to appoint an Administrative Commission (according to our bylaws Article VI, Section 6.02) to work with the Corinth Presbyterian Church. The Commission will consist of at least five (5) presbyters, and at least one of whom shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry, with the remaining members representing an even distribution of teaching and ruling elders from churches in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, for the following purposes, including but not limited to:

- a. Working with the Session, Pastor, and congregation to determine the best option for Corinth including but not limited to:
 - +enter a shared ministry with another congregation,
 - +develop a new worshiping community or fellowship alongside/supported by the current congregation, (see authority of the AC in the event of development of a new worshiping community/fellowship below)
 - + dissolve the current congregation and use the proceeds of the sale of some or all real property to support a new worshiping community/fellowship, (see authority below)
 - +dissolve the current congregation and dispose of some or all property, (see the authority of the AC in the event of closure below)
- b. Providing at least two (2) members of the Administrative Commission to attend all Session meetings with voice (but no vote) and to provide leadership where necessary and appropriate,
- c. Keeping accurate minutes of AC actions for the Presbytery,
- d. Reporting its progress to the Committee on Ministry monthly,
- e. Providing an initial report of its findings and recommendations to the Presbytery of the Miami Valley at the next immediate stated meeting following its appointment, and

- f. Providing regular reports to the Presbytery of the Miami Valley at all stated meetings thereafter until completion.

Scope and Authority

It is further recommended that this Administrative Commission be granted authority and power:

- a. To investigate and determine if the reported disorder/divide is present and recommend ways to work together.
- b. To work with the Session, Pastor, and congregation - to determine the best option for Corinth including but not limited to:
 - +enter a shared ministry with another congregation,
 - +develop a new worshipping community or fellowship alongside/supported by the current congregation, (see authority of the AC in the event of development of a new worshipping community/fellowship below)
 - +dissolving the current congregation and using the proceeds of the sale of some or all real property to support a new worshipping community/fellowship, or (see authority granted to the AC below)
 - +dissolve the current congregation and dispose of some or all property. (see the authority of the AC in the event of closure below)
- c. To call meetings with the Session, Pastor, committees, or congregation as needed.
- d. To cite members of the Session, Pastor, and congregation to participate in listening sessions.
- e. To attend all Session and Congregational meetings (with voice).
- f. To advise on ways to resolve any disorder that is discovered and work to bring about reconciliation.
- g. To provide leadership as necessary and appropriate.
- h. To report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.
- i. To make recommendations to the presbytery through the COM concerning the pastoral relationship.
- j. If it is determined by the Administrative Commission that the Session of Corinth Presbyterian Church in Dayton, Ohio cannot exercise its authority, or is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, the Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, after a thorough investigation and a full opportunity to be heard is given to all parties involved, has the authority to assume original jurisdiction with full powers of the Session, in which case the Session of the Corinth Presbyterian Church will cease to act until such time as the Presbytery shall otherwise direct (G-3.0303e).
- k. Adopt the following specific authorities and responsibilities for the Administrative Commission to carry out its mandate if developing a new worshipping community or fellowship (supported by the congregation or independently) is the best option: G-3.0109b (4)
 - The Administrative Commission (AC) of the Corinth Presbyterian Church, Dayton, OH in consultation with the church’s session and congregation, shall:
 - i. Plan listening sessions with the congregation to determine the support
 - ii. Help determine who will lead the New Worshipping Community/Fellowship

- iii. Develop an overview of the new worshipping community/fellowship
 - iv. Develop a budget for the new worshipping community/fellowship
 - v. Assist in grant writing as needed
 - vi. Determine who will attend the accelerator program with the PCUSA
 - vii. Write a proposal to be approved by the presbytery.
- l. adopt the following specific authorities and responsibilities for the Administrative Commission to carry out its mandate if dissolution is the final decision:
- The Administrative Commission (AC) of the Corinth Presbyterian Church, Dayton, OH in consultation with the church’s session and congregation, shall:
- viii. Arrange for all liabilities of the church to be paid in full.
 - ix. Determine the care and distribution of the real property and contents of the church, with the authority to dispose of such property granted to the Trustees of the Presbytery of Miami Valley. The Administrative Commission shall determine the amount of reserve funds to be retained to offset anticipated presbytery expenses for the continued maintenance of the vacant building. Once the congregation is dissolved, the presbytery may direct, limit, and appoint, or such property may be sold or disposed of as the presbytery may direct. (BoO G-4.0205). The AC may work with Trustees of the Congregation to transfer property to the Presbytery and/or consult with attorney at law for the most appropriate means to transfer the property to the Presbytery. This may need to be accomplished prior to formal dissolution of the congregation.
 - x. Consult with an Attorney at law for any associated licenses or certifications for ongoing ministries and missions controlled by the congregation.
 - xi. Determine the use of undesignated mission funds.
 - xii. Arrange for ways to address the pastoral care of the congregation and transfer of membership upon dissolution of the congregation.
 - xiii. Arrange for transfer of session and financial records to the presbytery.
 - xiv. Determine an appropriate schedule for the congregation’s last worship service and celebration.
 - xv. Dissolve the congregation’s corporation under state law.
 - xvi. Dissolve the congregation after the last worship service.
 - xvii. Prepare minutes of its proceedings and a final report upon completion of its actions that will be reported at stated meetings of the presbytery.
- m. Should additional authority not specified above be necessary to implement the AC’s mandate, the AC, in consultation with the congregation, may request the presbytery’s Leadership Council to approve and grant the AC additional or clarifying authority. The Leadership Council shall report on any such authority granted to the AC to the next stated presbytery meeting

A MOTION PREVAILED to approve the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley that the Moderator of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley

appoint an Administrative Commission for Corinth Presbyterian Church as described above. The Moderator of the Presbytery is to appoint the members according to our bylaws Article VI, Section 6.02.

The moderator offered prayer following the motion. The Moderator announced that the following had agreed to serve (if the way be clear) on the administrative commission.

MWS Annie Melick, Eaton – COM representative

MWS Jody Noble – Springfield Covenant

RE Greg Eyster – Hamilton

RE Nora O'Toole – Sugar Creek

RE Sue Seiler – Bellbrook

It was then announced that this was the only business to be transacted and adjourned the meeting with prayer at 3:40 pm. It was announced that the next stated meeting of the Presbytery will be held on Tuesday, May 13 at 2 pm at Oxford Presbyterian Church, 101 North Main Street, Oxford, OH 45056.