

**General Synod Council
Reformed Church in America
Minutes of November 5, 2021 Meeting
Zoom Videoconference**

Welcome and Prayer

Ned Beadel, moderator of the General Synod Council (GSC), called the November 5, 2021 meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. (eastern) followed by devotions and prayer. Having established a quorum, members, staff, and guests were welcomed and introduced themselves.

Members Present

The following members of the GSC were present for all or part of the meeting:

Pedro Agudelo	Kent McHeard
Eddy Alemán, <i>ex-officio</i>	Michael Meyer-Veen
Philip Assink	Eric Moreno
Carole Barber	Sheila Moses
Ned Beadel	Eric Nichols
Michelle Chahine	Albert Plat
Devonna Cousins	Neale Roller
Susan Davis	Glenn Spyksma
Bruce Deckinga	Lee Vande Voort
EJ de Waard	Kimberly Van Es
Hellen Harvey	Leigh Van Kempen
Dwayne Jackson	Harris Van Oort
Robert Johnson	Patricia Varga
Kathryn Lohre (ELCA)	Imos Wu

Members Absent

The following members of the GSC were unable to attend the meeting:

Jamie Dykstra

Staff and Guests

The following staff members and guests were present for all or part of the meeting:

Terri Boven, *Recorder*
Elizabeth Brand, *Director of General Synod Operations*
Thomas Smith, *Regional Synod Observer from Council of Synod Executives*
Jillisa Teitsma, *Chief Financial Officer*

Jill Ver Steeg, *Associate General Secretary*
Angela Worthley, *Recorder*

Consent Agenda

The moderator reported that the executive session had been removed from the agenda because the Relationship and Review Committee had not yet met with the general secretary. A special meeting will likely be scheduled in December for the executive session.

GSC 21-35

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To adopt the following from the consent agenda:

- Appointment of Robert Johnson and Kent McHeard as governance monitors for the current meeting
- Schedule and revised agenda
- Approval of the 2021 GSC minutes from June 22, August 3, August 13, October 14, and October 19

Racial/Ethnic Councils

The moderator reported that correspondence had been received from the African American Black Council (AABC) regarding their concern for AABC congregations whose classes and regional synod may choose to leave the RCA and a request that a group be formed to explore ways forward for AABC congregations that remain in the RCA.

GSC 21-36

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To form a working group of six people, including representation from GSC, the AABC, and regional synod executives, to examine and address the concerns raised by the AABC, for report back to the GSC at its June 2022 meeting or earlier.

Commission for Women

The moderator reported that correspondence had been received from the Commission for Women regarding the use of gender-neutral language in official documents.

Motion made and supported:

To send a communication to classis and regional synod clerks, encouraging them to examine their assembly's official documents and communications to ensure that gender-neutral rather than all-male language is used, in order to honor the gifts for ministry of both women and men; and further,

To instruct the general secretary to remind GSC staff to use gender-neutral language in denominational materials and communications.

GSC 21-37

Motion made, supported, and carried to amend the motion as follows (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken):

To send a communication to classis and regional synod clerks, encouraging them to examine their assembly's official documents and communications to ensure that gender-~~neutral~~inclusive rather than all-male language is used, in order to honor the gifts for ministry of both women and men; and further,

To instruct the general secretary to remind GSC staff to use gender-~~neutral~~inclusive language in denominational material and communications.

GSC 21-38

The amended motion was adopted. It reads as follows:

To send a communication to classis and regional synod clerks, encouraging them to examine their assembly's official documents and communications to ensure that gender-inclusive rather than all-male language is used, in order to honor the gifts for ministry of both women and men; and further,

To instruct the general secretary to remind GSC staff to use gender-inclusive language in denominational material and communications.

Executive Limitations

Eddy Alemán presented monitoring reports and reported compliance for the following:

- EL-1 Global Executive Constraint
- EL-2 Treatment of Staff
- EL-5 Financial Recording and Reporting
- EL-8 Compensation and Benefits
- EL-12 Ecumenical Responsibilities

Permanent Committees (GP 10.1 and GP 10.2)

Sheila Moses presented the report of the Investment Advisory Committee which included a recommendation to revise investment policies as directed in GSC 21-21.

GSC 21-39 Motion made, supported, and carried:

To approve the following amendments to four GSC investment policies to add companies whose principal business involves either adult entertainment and pornography or firearms and military weapons to the list of restricted investments (additions are underlined and only the portions of the investment policy statements with amendments are presented here): [See Schedule GSC 21-39 for the remainder of this motion.]

GSC 21-40 Motion made, supported, and carried:

To increase the endowment spending rate for 2022 to 5.5% of a 20-quarter rolling average beginning with the December 31, 2021, distribution.

Robert Johnson presented the report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Property Transfer

Jillisa Teitsma presented a brief history of property in Kentucky that is owned by the GSC and occupied and operated by Annville Institute/Grace Covenant Ministries (GCM). Currently maintenance, upkeep, oversight, and control of the property is handled by GCM, while GSC involvement usually consists of signing documents in its capacity as owner. Disadvantages exist for both parties in this agreement including difficulty in pursuing grant opportunities and possible future fines related to the wastewater plant.

Motion made and supported:

To consent to the transfer to Annville Institute/Grace Covenant Ministries (GCM) of property in Annville, Kentucky, that is owned by the GSC and occupied and operated by GCM; and further,

To authorize the general secretary or treasurer, either acting alone, to execute and deliver all documents that may be necessary or appropriate to implement the transfer.

GSC 21-41 Motion made, supported, and carried to amend the motion (additions are underlined):

To consent to the transfer or sale for \$1, whichever is the most prudent way to remove liability, to Annville Institute/Grace Covenant Ministries (GCM) of property in Annville, Kentucky, that

is owned by the GSC and occupied and operated by GCM; and further,

To authorize the general secretary or treasurer, either acting alone, to execute and deliver all documents that may be necessary or appropriate to implement the transfer or sale.

GSC 21-42

The amended motion was adopted. It reads as follows:

To consent to the transfer or sale for \$1, whichever is the most prudent way to remove liability, to Annville Institute/Grace Covenant Ministries (GCM) of property in Annville, Kentucky, that is owned by the GSC and occupied and operated by GCM; and further,

To authorize the general secretary or treasurer, either acting alone, to execute and deliver all documents that may be necessary or appropriate to implement the transfer or sale.

Charitable Gift Annuity Program

Jillisa Teitsma addressed the GSC regarding the GSC's charitable gift annuity program. The GSC currently holds a New York Charitable Annuity Permit in the State of New York that it no longer needs due to the value of the plan assets. Staff requested that GSC authorize the surrender of the permit in order to reduce costs.

GSC 21-43

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To approve the surrender of the GSC's New York Charitable Annuity Permit.

Litigation

At its June 22, 2021 meeting, the GSC heard brief reports in accordance with executive limitations policy EL-9 (Communication and Support to the Board) regarding two pending actions against entities at the denomination level. Jillisa Teitsma provided updates as follows:

(1) Little has changed in the lawsuit that names "Reformed Church in America" and others as defendants. The plaintiff's counsel continues to await the conclusion of the Boy Scout bankruptcy litigation before proceeding.

(2) Efforts are being made to obtain the release of the Church Growth Fund (CGF) from the lawsuit that names it and a local RCA church as defendants because the CGF has no connection to the local church or its property.

Ms. Teitsma provided information on a third matter of which the general counsel has recently become aware.

(3) A summons and complaint was received in August that names “Reformed Church in America”, a local RCA church, and a RCA minister of Word and sacrament as defendants. The plaintiff alleges that he was assaulted by the minister and is making a claim for damages. Counsel has been sought and retained. The GSC’s insurance broker and carrier have been notified. The GSC has not yet filed a response and is waiting until the complaint is also served on the local church and more is known about such things as the local church’s response, whether the local church has insurance coverage for such claims, and if so, the coverage limits.

General Synod

GSC members provided feedback about the recently concluded General Synod, what to continue in 2022, and what to consider doing differently.

GSC discussed the formation of the team mandated by General Synod in EC 21-23, which reads as follows:

To instruct the General Synod Council (GSC) to form a working group of 12 members, plus a facilitator, to seek clarity and resolution around the concerns that have been expressed to the GSC by the Commission on History, particularly with relation to oversight of the archives. This group would include three members of the Commission on History, three members of the General Synod Council, three members of the Commission on Church Order, and the denominational legal counsel, the current archivist, and the archivist emeritus, and would plan to meet via electronic means. The first meeting of this working group should take place before December 31, 2021.

The moderator reported that efforts have been undertaken to identify a facilitator and that any GSC members who wish to be a part of the EC 21-23 team should contact him, keeping in mind that the first meeting will occur before the end of the year.

GSC discussed the formation of the team mandated by General Synod in RF 21-1.

RF 21-1 reads as follows:

To direct the General Synod Council to appoint a team of at least 10 but no more than 15 people tasked with the specific work of developing a restructuring plan for the denomination with a view to optimizing the RCA's sustained spiritual and organizational health, in consultation with the Commission on Church Order and any other bodies it finds necessary. This team should be composed of several executive RCA staff members, and of representatives from around the RCA drawn from regional or local assemblies that have expressed an intention to remain in the Reformed Church in America, and should be representative of the racial, ethnic, gender, age, socioeconomic, geographic, and other forms of diversity present in the RCA. This team should consider the four principles stated above as it does its work and should bring any recommendations for restructuring that require General Synod approval, including any proposed changes to the *Book of Church Order*, to General Synod 2024; and further,

To approve the \$0.29 per member assessment to fund the work of this team.

Eddy Alemán, general secretary reported that he is working to identify proposed members of the RF 21-1 team and will bring a recommendation to GSC concerning the proposed membership of the team, likely at a special meeting in January, so that the team can begin working in March. GSC members were asked to provide suggested names of team members to the general secretary.

The GSC briefly discussed the referral of TE 21-4 that was not included on the agenda. TE 21-4 was a request by the Board of Trustees of Western Theological Seminary for Western Theological Seminary (WTS) to become an affiliated institution of the Reformed Church in America by approving the amendments to the Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation of Western Theological Seminary. General Synod voted to refer it as follows:

To refer TE 21-4 to the General Synod Council in consultation with the Commission on Church Order to work out details regarding:

- whether or not there should be a clause preventing the dilution and removal of the three General Synod appointed trustees
- whether WTS will be affiliated or officially related to the Reformed Church in America
- whether future amendments to the articles and bylaws should require approval of the General Synod, per *Book of Church Order* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 3 [2019 edition, p. 71]

- Put in a binding agreement with General Synod that RCA-affiliated students will receive a 25% tuition discount, and that students currently in ministry or with significant ministry experience can receive additional scholarships up to 40 percent off tuition.

The moderator reported that he would contact the Commission on Church Order about the referral.

GSC Membership

The moderator invited the GSC to openly discuss how GSC membership could be addressed in situations where a GSC member and/or his or her church has officially begun the process of leaving the RCA, anticipating that this situation could arise in the next few years. Several GSC members provided their personal perspectives.

Adjournment

GSC 21-44

Motion made, supported, and carried to adjourn the November 5, 2021 meeting of the GSC at 1:13 p.m. (eastern) following closing prayer by Sheila Moses.

Terri Boven, Recorder
Angela Worthley, Recorder

Schedule GSC 21-39

GSC Endowment Fund IPS

Restricted Investments

The investment alternatives chosen in the Endowment Fund must seek to avoid investments in the securities of companies whose principal business involves the production or distribution of the following:

- tobacco or alcohol
- the business of gambling
- the business of for-profit prisons
- adult entertainment and pornography
- firearms and military weapons

The socially responsible investment guidelines are not intended to be a “zero tolerance” policy and the determination, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of these guidelines shall be the sole responsibility of the Investment Manager hired to oversee these investments.

Fixed Income Fund Tier 1 IPS

Social Screening Constraints

The investment alternatives chosen in the Portfolio must seek to avoid investments in the securities of companies whose principal business involves the production or distribution of the following:

- tobacco or alcohol
- the business of gambling
- the business of for-profit prisons
- adult entertainment and pornography
- firearms and military weapons

The socially responsible investment guidelines are not intended to be a “zero tolerance” policy and the determination, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of these guidelines shall be the sole responsibility of the Investment Manager hired to oversee these investments.

Charitable Gift Annuity Portfolio IPS

Restricted Investments

The investment alternatives chosen in the Portfolio must seek to avoid investments in the securities of companies whose principal business involves the production or distribution of the following:

- tobacco or alcohol
- the business of gambling
- the business of for-profit prisons
- adult entertainment and pornography
- firearms and military weapons

The socially responsible investment guidelines are not intended to be a “zero tolerance” policy and the determination, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of these guidelines shall be the sole responsibility of the Investment Manager hired to oversee these investments.

GSC Tier 2 IPS

Social Screening Constraints

The investment alternatives chosen in the Portfolio must seek to avoid investments in the securities of companies whose principal business involves the production or distribution of the following:

- tobacco or alcohol
- the business of gambling
- the business of for-profit prisons
- adult entertainment and pornography
- firearms and military weapons

The socially responsible investment guidelines are not intended to be a “zero tolerance” policy and the determination, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of these guidelines shall be the sole responsibility of the Investment Manager hired to oversee these investments.