CALL TO ORDER
The Rev. Philip Assink, president, called to order the first meeting of the 215th General Synod of the Reformed Church in America at 3:02 p.m. on Thursday, June 9, 2022 at Central College, Pella, Iowa.

WELCOME
The president welcomed those present and those watching the proceedings via livestream.

QUORUM
The general secretary reported that there are no delegates who could not be seated due to irregularities, and that a quorum was present.

PRAYER
The president opened the Synod in prayer.

CENTRAL WELCOME
The president invited Dr. Mark Putnam, president of Central College, to the platform to give a brief welcome. Dr. Putnam addressed the Synod.

MISSIONARY VIDEO
The General Synod viewed a brief video presentation highlighting Rawee Bunupuradah, RCA missionary. Thereafter Janet Van Wyk, regular delegate from Classis of Central Iowa, led the Synod in prayer.

INTRODUCTIONS
The president introduced the following:
- The Rev. Dwayne Jackson, vice president
- The Rev. Eddy Alemán, general secretary and stated clerk of the Synod
- Russell Paarlberg, parliamentarian
- Gael Uwera – meeting recorder, one member of a team of three meeting recorders also including Terri Boven and Angela Worthley

The president explained that the vice president of Synod and the general secretary have privilege of the floor.
The president recognized the staff team at the back table and the following corresponding delegates:

- Members of the General Synod Council who will also serve as the General Synod’s Committee of Reference
- Commission representatives
- Official institutional delegates
- Regional synod executives
- Regional synod women representatives
- Regional synod youth representatives

The president explained that the corresponding delegates have privilege of the floor but do not have voting privileges.

The president also introduced:

- The Rev. Timothy TenClay and the Seminarian Seminar participants
- The Rev. Kathy Jo Blaske, who is serving as the chaplain for the Synod

### TABLE DISCUSSION #1 – CIVIL DISCOURSE/PLENARY ETIQUETTE

The president guided the delegates through 50 minutes of table discussion.

### ORIENTATION

The president invited Russell Paarlberg, parliamentarian, to provide an overview of General Synod, including its purpose and role, and an overview of parliamentary procedure. Mr. Paarlberg addressed the Synod.

### PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

The president invited a motion that privilege of the floor be granted to the parliamentarian and RCA staff who are asked to speak.

A motion was made and supported from the floor:

To grant privilege of the floor to the parliamentarian and RCA staff who are asked to speak.

**VOTED:** To adopt the motion (voice vote).

The president explained how to operate the voting keypads.

### PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The president called upon the general secretary to review certain procedural matters. The general secretary informed the Synod that the journal for each meeting will be uploaded to the website and will be available by 1:00 p.m. the following day. Any questions or corrections are
to be addressed to Paul Karssen at the back table.

A motion was made and supported from the floor:


**VOTED:** To adopt the motion (voice vote).

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The president invited Michelle Chahine, corresponding delegate from the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, to present its report (GS Workbook pp. 37-47).

The president explained how reports are presented to the General Synod, how delegates may access the workbook, and where any new reports will be found. Thereafter, Ms. Chahine addressed the Synod.

EC 22-1 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-1 (GS Workbook p. 38) (yes 169, no 5).

**NEW BUSINESS**

The first opportunity for the presentation of new business was given.

The first item of new business presented was as follows:

“To instruct the general secretary to convene a meeting with other appropriate RCA ecumenical officers and at least two representatives from the Commission on Christian Unity, to craft a resolution to be brought to the World Council of Churches (WCC), calling for the dismissal of the Russian Orthodox Church from WCC membership until it repents of and retracts its support for Russia’s unprovoked, unjustifiable and brutally inhumane war against Ukraine; and further;


to instruct the Commission on Theology and the General Synod Professorate to examine whether the conditions surrounding Russia’s unprovoked war against Ukraine meet the criteria for a declaration of status confessionis, a full break in communion due to the gravity of the breach of faithfulness to the gospel by any Christian communion supporting Russia’s (and Belarus’) war against Ukraine.”

Reasons:
1. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine violates both international agreements and moral standards.
a. Russia had pledged in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum not to threaten or use military might or economic coercion against Ukraine, except in self-defense or in accord with the UN Charter.
b. In return for Russia’s pledge of non-aggression, Ukraine gave Russia all of its nuclear arsenal as a good faith pledge of its own commitment to Russia’s security.
c. The level of violence ordered by Russia’s president and carried out by Russia’s armed forces defies imagination.

2. Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has repeatedly given full moral endorsement to this use of violence against the Ukrainian people.

3. The United Nations, a secular agency, has removed Russia from its Human Rights Commission, the UN’s voice of moral conscience when it comes to treatment of other people. Several world governments have extended sanctions to include Patriarch Kirill. The Church of Christ dare not exercise moral hesitation when the governments of the world exercise moral courage.

4. This action recognizes Patriarch Kirill’s resistance to the call of global church leaders to advocate for peace, including General Secretary Alemán and General Secretary emeritus Granberg-Michaelson as co-signers of a letter which stated: “Before God, we bear witness that there is no religious justification from any side for the destruction and terror the world is witnessing daily.”

5. While some voices call for continued conversation rather than removal, the current reported levels of violence, murder, rape, and other signs of disregard for human life and dignity demand an immediate response. Conversation can indeed continue, but every lever of influence to bring an end to this unjustified and intensely brutal aggression needs to be brought to bear.

6. Status Confessionis has been invoked twice: in response to Nazi Germany and in response to apartheid South Africa, recognizing times of profound loss of life and wanton disregard for human dignity. The conditions reported out of Ukraine merit consideration as potentially parallel and equally deserving of this firm public stand of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Reasons for it being New Business:
1. This item is related to the war in Ukraine; the conditions of which have been rapidly changing, with losses from it greatly expanding in scope and cruelty beyond imagination in ways that precluded meeting the deadlines for submission of this item through regular channels of the church.

2. The General Synod workbook contains only two other cursory references to the war in Ukraine; but as a matter of recent yet global significance, in response to this war the Church of Christ must offer its voice of advocacy for the victims of this aggression and offer its call of peace for the healing of the nations. We cannot be complicit by silence
on this matter.

A second item of new business was presented as follows:

“To instruct the General Synod Council, the Board of Benefit Services, the Church Growth Fund and any other appropriate agent of the General Synod, in consultation with the Commission on Christian Action to introduce shareholder resolutions for any investments owned by said agents in gas and oil companies, for those companies to lower their profit share by 50% to help reduce the price of gas and ease the economic burden particularly for low-income wage earners; and further, to encourage RCA regional synods, classes, congregations, officially related institutions and other appropriate parties to do the same.”

Reasons:
1. Lower-income wage earners are disproportionately affected by the rise in gas prices, and are needing to decide what to sacrifice in order to make ends meet: purchase fuel to get to work, or give up groceries, medicine, utilities, mortgage or rent payments, etc.
2. It is morally unjust, ethically inappropriate and economically unsustainable for oil companies to continue to rake in billions of dollars of profit while many consumers are needing to make difficult decisions about daily necessities.
3. Several states have implemented or are considering “gas tax holidays,” eliminating all or a portion of state gas taxes to help alleviate the burden on consumers. This is a good example of care for neighbors, even while it will have some cost to the states.
4. The profit margin of oil companies is an as-yet untapped reserve which could also alleviate the burden on consumers and ease the hardship for those most economically impacted.

Reasons for it being New Business:
The recent spike in prices of gasoline have occurred after the deadlines for submission of this concern through the regular channels of the church.

The items of new business were referred to the Committee of Reference for further referral or disposition as appropriate.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED
The general secretary explained the process for amendments to the RCA Constitution and the Bylaws of the General Synod.

EC 22-2 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 22-2 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 171, no 0).
EC 22-3 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-3 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 171, no 1).

EC 22-4 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-4 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 171, no 0).

EC 22-5 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-5 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 167, no 3).

EC 22-6 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-6 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 165, no 5).

EC 22-7 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-7 (GS Workbook p. 39) (yes 166, no 5).

EC 22-8 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-8 (GS Workbook p. 40) (yes 168, no 3).

EC 22-10 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 22-10 (GS Workbook p. 41) (yes 172, no 0).

**RECESS**

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 5:07 p.m., following a closing prayer by the Rev. Nancy Boote, regular delegate from North Grand Rapids Classis.