

Report of the General Synod Council Serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod

The Son of God gathers, protects, and preserves the church by his Spirit and his Word (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 54). The church exists to announce, teach, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church speaks, and it acts. For those of us in the Reformed tradition, the church governs its life, and it determines how best to carry out its mission through its assemblies.

God seeks certain characteristics, and the world also watches to see if those characteristics are evident in our life and work together. Our ability to go forth and preach the gospel is supported by the work of our congregations, classes, and synods. Together we are a body of committed believers in covenant with one another. Christ's mission is enhanced when the Word of God and our love for each other are the foundation for order, discipline, and effectiveness. This Reformed understanding of the church and the manner through which we govern our life together are foundational.

Our prayer throughout the year and as we meet as a General Synod body is that our unity and attention to governance will glorify God.

The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. It shall act as the executive committee of the General Synod and it shall administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It shall implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies. It shall support, strengthen, and coordinate the work of the several commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church (*BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1 [2022 edition, p. 73]).

The General Synod Council serves “as the Executive Committee of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, as the Committee of Reference at meetings of the General Synod, and as the Board of Trustees of the General Synod as may be required by law” (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6a [2022 edition, p. 110]).

For a full listing of the responsibilities of the General Synod Council, refer to the Bylaws of the General Synod (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6 [2022 edition, pp. 110-111]).

The work of the General Synod Council, as directed by previous General Synods, is reported to the General Synod in two areas:

1. Matters of governance—the work the General Synod Council (GSC) has done with respect to a) the meeting of the General Synod; b) matters of its own organization, including its oversight and stewardship of the financial resources

given to it; c) its support and supervision of denominational staff and the general secretary; d) the work of its committees, teams, and racial and ethnic councils; and e) a general overview of the work of the church as reported by the GSC in its role as the General Synod Executive Committee.

2. The work the GSC has done with regard to the oversight of the mission and ministry assigned to it by the General Synod under the rubric of Transformed & Transforming, the General Synod's 15-year ministry goal, and which is reported by the GSC in its role as the General Synod's program agency.

Review of Regional Synod Minutes

The General Synod Office has received and read the 2022 minutes of the regional synods of Albany, Canada, the Far West, the Great Lakes, the Heartland, Mid-America, the Mid-Atlantics, and New York.

GENERAL SYNOD MEETING

Referral of Business

The business of General Synod was assigned to the appropriate committees as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

EC 23-1

To approve the agenda and schedule of the General Synod as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

The Seating of Delegates

The Bylaws of the General Synod require that a classis be current in the payment of its General Synod assessments before its delegates may be seated as members of the General Synod (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 1, Section 1a [2022 edition, p. 107]). The general secretary will report on classes' payments of General Synod assessments and will report whether there are any delegates who cannot be seated because of irregularities.

Amendments to the *Book of Church Order*

The General Synod of 2022 adopted and referred to the classes for approval two amendments to the *Book of Church Order*. The amendments are recorded in the *2022 Minutes of the General Synod* as noted. Forty-five classes were eligible to vote on these amendments (per *BCO*, Rules and Amendments of the Government of the Reformed Church in America and Disciplinary Procedures, Section 2b [2022 edition, p. 77]). As of April 25, 2023, six classes had not reported votes to the Office of the General Synod on the questions of whether to approve the amendments. The votes of the other 39 classes, as reported in writing by the classes' stated clerks, were as follows:

<i>Book of Church Order Amendments</i>	Disapproved	Approved
1. Changing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry Process (MGS 2022, TE 22-2 pp. 262-264)	0	39
2. Changing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry Name (MGS 2022, TE 22-1, pp. 253-256)	0	39

Both amendments received the approval of the required two-thirds of classes, and so they are all presented here for final declarative action.

EC 23-2

To declare Amendment 1 to be approved for incorporation into the 2023 *Book of Church Order*.

EC 23-3

To declare Amendment 2 to be approved for incorporation into the 2023 *Book of Church Order*.

The 2022 General Synod also approved in first reading for recommendation to the next stated session of the General Synod the following amendments to the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod:

Timing for Submission of Overtures—BCO Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 7 (MGS 2022, CO 22-1, p. 204)

Timing for Submission of General Synod Reports—BCO Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 5 (MGS 2022, CO 22-2, p. 205)

EC 23-4

To declare the amendment to the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod specified in CO 22-1, adopted in first reading by the 2022 General Synod, to be approved for incorporation into the 2023 *Book of Church Order*.

EC 23-5

To declare the amendment to the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod specified in CO 22-2, adopted in first reading by the 2022 General Synod, to be approved for incorporation into the 2023 *Book of Church Order*.

Appointment of the General Synod Treasurer

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod must annually appoint a treasurer of the General Synod corporation (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article V).

EC 23-6

To appoint Jillisa Teitsma as treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

General Synod Meeting Location

The location for the next annual meeting of the General Synod in 2024 is the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Arizona. The 2024 meeting of the General Synod is planned to take place on June 13-18. The 2025 General Synod is also scheduled to take place at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Arizona, on June 5-10. The General Synod is able to respond to invitations from the assemblies of the church to meet in other locations. Planning for the meeting requires invitations to be submitted at least two years in advance of the proposed meeting.

Land Use Acknowledgement

The 2021 General Synod, in its adoption of CA 21-1, instructed the GSC to “annually state a land acknowledgement for any location in which General Synod meets” (*MGS 2021*, p. 203). The Commission on Christian Action assisted in the preparation of this acknowledgement.

We respectfully acknowledge that the land we gather on this year is part of the traditional land of the Osakiwug and Meskwaki peoples, who were removed from this place, often by government entities, and usually by violent means. We acknowledge the history of their people in this place, and lament any role the Reformed Church in America or her members may have played in their displacement.

OVERVIEW OF THE GSC’S WORK ON MATTERS OF ITS INTERNAL GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The General Synod Council operates internally according to a not-for-profit governance practice known as “policy governance” developed by Dr. John and Miriam Carver. Policy governance allowed the GSC to enhance its ability to monitor the various “ends” and objectives that were established to fulfill the General Synod’s directives regarding Our Call, the General Synod’s ten-year goal for mission and ministry that ended in 2013. In October 2014, the GSC adopted new ends and objectives to fulfill the directives of the new ministry goal adopted at General Synod 2013, *Transformed & Transforming*. Policy governance has also enhanced the GSC’s ability to both support and monitor the work of its general secretary and staff through a series of “limitations” policies. The GSC has established and holds itself accountable for its own work through policies concerning its own internal governance and its relationships with the general secretary and staff.

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency and the Board of Benefits Services also operate in accordance with the principles of policy governance. This work required extensive discussion over a period of two years to clarify the governing relationship of these agencies with the GSC in its capacity as the executive committee of the General Synod.

RCA Salary Structure for Fiscal Year 2022 (October 2022–September 2023)

The GSC policy (EL-8) pertaining to staff compensation states: “With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits and recognition of employees, consultants, contract workers, and volunteers, the General Secretary will not cause or allow jeopardy to fiscal integrity or to public image or decisions that are unrelated to the relevant market.”

The GSC compensation program allows for the evaluation of positions based on the essential requirements and responsibilities of the job as defined in the job description. Job descriptions are created together by the supervisor, employee, and Human Resources. As responsibilities change or when there is an open position, the job description is reviewed, updated as needed, and reevaluated to ensure that it is still classified in the correct range. The program incorporates geographic differentials to recognize variances in distinct regions. This has become more important as we have more and more employees working remotely. Positions are benchmarked against comparable external positions through the use of compensation surveys in the nonprofit and church sectors. The GSC reserves the right to transfer an employee to another position or increase or decrease an employee’s job specifications based on business need.

There are thirteen salary ranges that span between 11 and 23. Grade 11 represents the most entry-level positions and Grade 23 represents the highest level, held by the general secretary. The majority of positions fall within the middle ranges (14 to 17).

Staff are evaluated annually by their supervisors. Any increases or adjustments in wages are approved by the general secretary. The general secretary is evaluated by the General Synod Council. Executive staff who are accountable to the Board of Benefits Services (BOBS), the Church Growth Fund (CGF), and Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) are evaluated by their respective boards.

The following table represents the ranges that were used for fiscal year 2022. The ranges are utilized to establish beginning wages and annual salaries and do not represent the actual compensation of any individual employee. Most employees’ salaries fall in the mid-range of the table. The following table represents Grand Rapids-based staff; this table is adjusted for cost-of-living differences for staff who live and work in other areas.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

2022-2023 ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE					
GRADE	LOW	25%	MID	75%	HIGH
11	\$24,960	\$27,620	\$30,280	\$32,940	\$35,600
12	\$32,240	\$35,880	\$39,520	\$43,160	\$46,800
13	\$35,200	\$38,975	\$42,750	\$46,525	\$50,300
14	\$41,800	\$46,950	\$52,100	\$57,250	\$62,400
15	\$47,000	\$52,800	\$58,600	\$64,400	\$70,200
16	\$56,000	\$62,900	\$69,800	\$76,700	\$83,600
17	\$61,000	\$68,510	\$76,020	\$83,530	\$91,040
18	\$66,500	\$74,688	\$82,875	\$91,063	\$99,250
19	\$79,000	\$89,625	\$100,250	\$110,875	\$121,500
20	\$89,500	\$101,550	\$113,600	\$125,650	\$137,700
21	\$101,376	\$118,257	\$135,138	\$152,019	\$168,900
22	\$115,983	\$135,237	\$154,492	\$173,746	\$193,000
23	\$144,662	\$168,697	\$192,731	\$216,766	\$240,800

Commission Review Process

The GSC moderator and General Synod president met with two commission moderators in February 2017 to begin drafting a specific process the GSC will use in fulfilling its BCO-assigned responsibilities of both providing support for the work of the General Synod commissions and reviewing them once every five years. As BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6g (2019 edition, p. 109) says, one of the GSC's responsibilities is:

To review all General Synod commissions at least once during each five-year period and to recommend to General Synod a continuation of, a reconstitution of, or a discontinuation of such commissions, with the understanding that the necessity of continuation shall not be assumed.

GSC adopted a new commission review process in March 2017, and completed several annual cycles of review under the new process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the process was put on hold while in-person meetings were paused. In the past year, GSC has reviewed and updated its commission review process to take into account the fact that a larger percentage of RCA meetings will be held electronically going forward, and there will no longer be a joint in-person meeting of the GSC and commissions every fall. The GSC approved the updated process at its October 2022 stated meeting. The updated process can be found as an appendix to the GSC's October 2022 meeting minutes, which are posted at www.rca.org/gsc.

Two commissions were scheduled for review during the 2022-2023 review cycle (Year A, according to the GSC's review process): the Commission on Christian Worship and the Commission on Race and Ethnicity. Due to a resignation on GSC of one of the two members of GSC assigned to the review team for the Commission on

Race and Ethnicity, that review was not able to be completed in time to bring to this General Synod. Instead, GSC plans to bring a review of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity to the 2024 General Synod along with the next two commissions up for review (the Commission on Christian Action and the Commission on Christian Unity).

Review of the Commission on Christian Worship

The Commission on Christian Worship has accomplished quite a bit during the past few years. In the future, there is a long list of things the commission plans to accomplish that will keep them very busy. The GSC members conducting the review thought that the commission would be blessed if they were aided by a member(s) of the Commissions on Race and Ethnicity and Theology. Multilingual versions of the Bible, hymnals, liturgies and litanies, and RCA website could benefit from the coexistence of the Commissions on Christian Worship, Race and Ethnicity, and Theology.

The Commission on Christian Worship will be important for the RCA going forward as the denomination continues to become more diverse in ethnicity and in the languages used in worship. Worship is essential for congregations of the RCA and it is necessary that the General Synod continues to have a Commission on Christian Worship. GSC hopes that the General Synod and the denomination at large will continue to support the commission by recommending and recruiting members for the commission who have the gifts and passion for worship.

EC 23-7

To approve the continuation of the Commission on Christian Worship.

Transfers of Congregations across Regional Synod Lines

According to *BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 2, Section 3 (2022 edition, p. 69), General Synod approval is required when a church is transferred between two classes that are in different regional synods. The most efficient way for this transfer request to come to the General Synod is through the GSC. (Depending upon the timing of the request, such transfer requests could also potentially be brought to the General Synod by means of an overture or new business.)

The GSC has been asked to bring two such transfers to the 2023 General Synod. In both cases, the consistories and leadership of the congregations have expressed that their reasons for requesting transfer are for ministry context and connection, to the long-term benefit of the congregation.

One request is for City Church Denver in Denver, Colorado, which wishes to transfer from City Classis in the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantic to the Classis of Rocky Mountain in the Regional Synod of the Far West. The Office of the General Synod has received signatures from the consistory of City Church Denver, representatives of both City and Rocky Mountain Classes, and representatives of both the Regional

Synod of the Mid-Atlantics and the Regional Synod of the Far West that all are amenable to the transfer.

EC 23-8

To transfer City Church Denver in Denver, Colorado, from City Classis in the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics to Rocky Mountain Classis in the Regional Synod of the Far West.

The second request is from Renacer Church in Doral, Florida, which wishes to transfer from the Classis de las Naciones in the Regional Synod of Mid-America to the Classis of the Americas in the Regional Synod of the Far West. The Office of the General Synod has received signatures from the consistory of Renacer Church, both the Classis de las Naciones and the Classis of the Americas, and both the Regional Synod of Mid-America and the Regional Synod of the Far West, confirming that all are amenable to the transfer.

EC 23-9

To transfer Renacer Church in Doral, Florida, from the Classis de las Naciones in the Regional Synod of Mid-America to the Classis of the Americas in the Regional Synod of the Far West.