

Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business

***Note: As of 6/11/2023, this is an updated version of this report to correct an editorial error in ONB 23-3. The originally published version did not reflect the final language agreed upon by the committee.*

Overtures 2 and 7: Additional Instructions for Restructuring Team Communication ([workbook pp. 99-100](#) and [Regional Synod Overtures supplemental report](#))

In response to Overture 2 from the Classis of Mid-Hudson and Overture 7 from the Regional Synod of New York, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 23-1

To instruct the restructuring team to review their process to ensure there are adequate opportunities for input from all parties, and further,

To continue to strive for open, transparent, and communicative conversation.

Reasons:

1. The overtures make clear that there is a portion of the body that does not feel heard and does not feel there are adequate opportunities to provide input into the process.
2. The restructuring team is striving to listen and communicate well, but there may be an opportunity to improve dialogue.

Overtures 3 and 8: Additional Instructions for Restructuring Team Regarding Structure ([workbook p. 100](#) and [Regional Synod Overtures supplemental report](#))

In response to Overture 3 from the Classis of Mid-Hudson and Overture 8 from the Regional Synod of New York, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 23-2

To deny Overtures 3 and 8.

Reasons:

1. The committee feels that relationship-building is something that the restructuring team is taking seriously.
2. Relationship-building isn't something that the restructuring team alone can affect; this needs to be the work of the whole denomination at all levels.

Overtures 4 and 9: Advice to Restructuring Team Regarding Understanding of Structure ([workbook pp. 100-101](#) and [Regional Synod Overtures supplemental report](#))

In response to Overture 4 from the Classis of Mid-Hudson and Overture 9 from the Regional Synod of New York, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 23-3

To instruct the restructuring team to consult with the Commission on Theology, the Commission on Church Order, and the General Synod professors of theology around the issue of practical theology as the formal expression of our doctrinal convictions.

Reasons:

1. Our structures and polity are not merely a matter of form following function.
2. This is the area of expertise of the Commission on Theology, the Commission on Church Order, and the General Synod professors of theology. It would be good to consult with these entire bodies in addition to the member of the professorate who is a member of the restructuring team and the Commission on Church Order members who are serving as resource people for the team.

Overtures 5 and 10: Evaluate GSC's Use of Policy Governance (the Carver model) ([workbook pp. 101-102](#) and [Regional Synod Overtures supplemental report](#))

In response to Overture 5 from the Classis of Mid-Hudson and Overture 10 from the Regional Synod of New York, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 23-4

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to review the apparent conflict between the two systems of government at work in the RCA, namely the centralized and directed government of the General Synod Council and the widely conversational and bottom-up government of our historic polity, to include:

- **Re-examining the Carver model for policy governance, its principles in comparison and contrast to those of our polity, its costs and benefits after two decades of use, its critique from outside the GSC, with attention to its restrictions on interaction with the staff and on communication in general, and its effect on the organizational health of the RCA;**
- **Consulting the officers and stated clerks of all the classes and regional synods, as well as other General Synod commissions;**

- **Investigating the governance policies of our partner denominations in full communion, such as the more open governance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and further;**

To offer a report and any recommendations to the General Synod of 2025.

Reasons:

1. It has been 20 years since the General Synod Council adopted the Carver model in November of 2003. It is time to review the RCA's experience of its costs and benefits.
2. This would give opportunity to explore what system(s) of governance our full communion partners use.

Overture 6: Clarify the Role of the Regional Synods ([Regional Synod Overtures supplemental report](#))

In response to Overture 6 from the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

**ONB 23-5
To deny Overture 6.**

Reasons:

1. The timing of this request seems premature since the restructuring team is still developing its proposals.
2. If this question is not adequately addressed by the restructuring team's proposals, this committee encourages the regional synod to revisit this request.

**FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION
([Workbook pp. 155-163](#))**

CA 23-1 (Write letter urging fair treatment of employees)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to amend CA 23-1. (The committee's additions are underlined; the committee's deletions are struck.)

**CA 23-1 (amendment)
To instruct the General Synod Council to send a letter through classis clerks, urging our congregations and members ~~business owners~~ to treat those in their employ as employees rather than independent contractors and urging their participation in unemployment insurance (U.S.) or employment insurance (Canada) to benefit employees; and further**

To instruct the General Synod Council to send a similar letter to RCA institutions and affiliated institutions with this same request.

Reasons:

1. All members have the potential to have employees, not just business owners.
2. In the United States, these benefits are referred to as “unemployment insurance”; in Canada, they are known as “employment insurance.” This amendment would ensure that the recommendation covers both U.S. and Canada.

CA 23-2 (Ad Hoc Committee on NDAs and Unemployment Insurance)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to amend CA 23-2. (The committee’s deletions are struck.)

CA 23-2 (amendment)

To form an ad hoc committee, meeting remotely via Zoom or other technology, to seek further transparency and understanding around the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and unemployment insurance for denominational (GSC) staff. This committee will be chaired by the moderator of the Commission on Christian Action, and membership will be made up of at least one person from each of the following groups or GSC staff departments: GSC legal counsel, GSC human resources, GSC financial offices, General Synod Council, and the Commission on Theology, along with others who may be deemed appropriate at the chair’s discretion, in consultation with the committee membership. This committee’s purpose will be to understand the current practices affecting GSC staff and seek to bring a legally, financially, and theologically sound recommendation to the General Synod of 2024 ~~related to ending any unnecessary NDA and unemployment practices.~~

Reason:

1. This amendment does not presuppose an outcome from the ad hoc committee’s recommendations to the General Synod. As the commission indicated in its report, the ad hoc committee needs to do further fact finding.

CA 23-3 (Praying for Peace in the Holy Land at General Synod Meetings)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of CA 23-3.

CA 23-4 (Urge Study of Conflicts in the Holy Land)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of CA 23-4.

CA 23-5 (Express Gratitude for Holy Land Trips)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of CA 23-5.

CA 23-6 (Encourage Purchasing from Indigenous-Owned Businesses)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of CA 23-6.

CA 23-7 (Education around Spiritual Abuse)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of CA 23-7.

FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HISTORY
([Workbook pp. 192-216](#))

H 23-1 (Historic Trust Proposal)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of H 23-1.

H 23-2 (Resolution for Russ Gasero)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of H 23-2.