

**General Synod Council
Reformed Church in America
Minutes of October 13-14, 2023 Meeting
Michigan Regional Center, DeWitt Ministry Center, Grand Rapids, MI
And Zoom Video Conference**

Welcome and Prayer

Kimberly Van Es, moderator of the General Synod Council (GSC), called the GSC's meeting to order on October 13, 2023, at 8:05 a.m. (eastern). The moderator prayed and welcomed members and guests. GSC members, staff, and guests were asked to briefly introduce themselves.

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

Eddy Alemán, ex-officio	Sheila Moses
Calvin Brouwer	Judith Nelson
Vivian Campbell	Eric Nichols
Michelle Chahine	Jonathan Opgenorth
Linda Cline	Carlos Rivera
Devonna Cousins	Neale Roller
Susan Davis	Joshua Scheid
Brian Engel	Jidong Shan
Clair Hoeksema	Kimberly Van Es
Dwayne Jackson	Harris Van Oort
Randy Karcher	Patricia Varga
Bradley Kautz	Hank Vrielink
Yong Bok Kim	Maudelin Willock
Michael Meyer-Veen	

The following member of the GSC was unable to attend the meeting:

Kjersten Sullivan (ELCA)

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*
Lisa Stover, *Interim Chief Financial Officer and Interim Treasurer*
Susan Radwan, *Policy Governance Trainer, Leading Edge Mentoring*
Jeremy Simpson, *Director of Diversity and Belonging*
J.P. Sundararajan, *Director of Global Mission*
Christina Tazelaar, *Chief Operating Officer*
Angela Worthley, *Recorder*

Opening Business

The moderator expressed a desire that the GSC's purpose be stated clearly and read part of the preamble of its current bylaws (2008, p.1), as follows.

This corporation - the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America (GSC) – is established by and responsible to the General Synod. It acts as the executive committee of the General Synod (which is the highest assembly and judicatory in the Reformed Church in America), and it administers the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It implements decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies, and it supports, strengthens, and coordinates 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.

The moderator noted that an additional item was added to the agenda from the Commission on Nominations.

GSC 23-58

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To approve the agenda and schedule as presented.

The moderator reminded the GSC of the new governance monitoring approach where all in attendance, including staff, may speak up if it seems to them that the GSC is not following its own adopted governance policies.

Policy Governance Training

The GSC functions under a system of organizational governance known as Policy Governance that it adopted in 2006. The GSC's current governance policies can be found on the GSC private members page in the resources section, as well as on the public GSC page at www.rca.org/gsc. Policy Governance is a registered trademark of John Carver. The authoritative website can be found at www.carvergovernance.com.

Elizabeth Brand introduced Susan Radwan from Leading Edge Mentoring who returned this year and provided additional Policy Governance training.

Recess

The moderator recessed the morning session of the October 13, 2023 GSC meeting at 12:12 p.m. (eastern) following prayer by Devonna Cousins.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Call to Order

The moderator called the afternoon session of the October 13, 2023 GSC meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. (eastern).

The GSC members gathered in small groups for 15 minutes of discussion and reflection on the morning's policy governance training before returning as a body to debrief.

The GSC was given opportunity to share memories of Carole Barber, a GSC member, who passed away on September 8, 2023. Eddy Alemán, a former pastor of Carole, offered a prayer.

Approval of GSC Minutes

GSC 23-59 A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To approve the minutes of the March 21-22, April 24, May 11, June 8, June 13, August 25, and October 9 GSC meetings.

Annual Committees (GP-12.1 and GP-12.2)

The moderator informed the GSC that Sheila Moses, Eric Nichols and Patti Varga have agreed to serve on the Nominations Committee.

The moderator informed the GSC that Calvin Brouwer, Linda Cline, and Joshua Scheid have agreed to serve on the Policy Exploration and Review Committee. There remains one open committee position after due diligence was made to comply with the composition required by GP 12.2.

GSC 23-60 A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To proceed out of compliance with GSC policy GP-12.2 regarding the composition of the Policy Exploration and Review Committee for the 2023-2024 work cycle.

Ad Interim Appointments

The GSC is empowered to appoint persons *ad interim* on behalf of the General Synod, persons to fill vacancies that occur between sessions of the General Synod. All such appointments are then subject to the approval of the General Synod at its next stated session (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 4, Section 3 [2022 ed., p. 112]; MFCA Bylaws, Article III, Section 2).

The moderator explained that Devonna Cousins currently serves as the GSC representative on the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA)

board. She needs to step down from the board due to schedule changes that do not permit her to attend MFCA board meetings.

GSC 23-61

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To appoint *ad interim* Jon Opgenorth as the GSC representative to the MFCA Board of Trustees, coterminous with his term on the GSC.

The moderator explained that there is currently a vacancy on the Board of Benefits Services (BOBS). The GSC has received an *ad interim* appointment request from BOBS.

GSC 23-62

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To appoint *ad interim* the Rev. Wayne Otten to the Board of Benefits Service.

Overview of GSC Staff

The general secretary and Christina Tazelaar, Chief Operating Officer, shared the current organizational chart of the GSC staff. This information was presented to the GSC in light of the recent changes in staff.

Dwayne Jackson, vice-moderator, assumed the chair.

Ends Monitoring

The GSC discussed concerns about policy E-3 Church Multiplication and the inclusion of global church multiplication. J.P. Sundararajan, Director of Global Mission, shared how Global Mission has worked and is working with churches outside of North America.

A motion was made and supported:

To invite the General Synod into a full deliberation on our denominational approach to global engagements, guided by materials prepared by the Commissions on Theology, History, and Church Order, as well as General Synod staff, and that this deliberation be given ample time at the General Synod meeting of 2025. We ask the commissions and staff to submit their papers to the office of the General Synod by Jan. 31, 2025, for distribution to classes and regional synods.

The motion was withdrawn with the consensus of the body.

A motion was made and supported:

To ask the General Synod to form a task force to study the implications of having Reformed Church in America assemblies beyond North America. The task force should include members from the Commission on History, the Commission on Church Order, the Commission Theology, General Synod Council staff from Global Mission and church multiplication, and classes in relationship with churches beyond North America. The task force should bring recommendations to General Synod 2025 for church multiplication outside North America in the RCA.

A motion was made, supported, and rejected to amend the motion as follows (deletions are stricken, additions are underlined):

To ask the General Synod to form a task force to ~~study the implications~~ identify the legal, financial, and ecclesial impacts of having Reformed Church in America assemblies beyond North America. The task force should include members from the Commission on History, the Commission on Church Order, the Commission Theology, General Synod Council staff from Global Mission and church multiplication, and classes in relationship with churches beyond North America. The task force should bring recommendations to General Synod 2025 for church multiplication outside North America in the RCA.

The original motion was before the body.

GSC 23-63

The motion was adopted. It read as follows:

To ask the General Synod to form a task force to study the implications of having Reformed Church in America assemblies beyond North America. The task force should include members from the Commission on History, the Commission on Church Order, the Commission Theology, General Synod Council staff from Global Mission and church multiplication, and classes in relationship with churches beyond North America. The task force should bring recommendations to General Synod 2025 for church multiplication outside North America in the RCA.

The moderator resumed the chair.

Executive Limitations

The GSC considered the general secretary's monitoring report on EL-11 Relationship with Subsidiary Organizations, in which he reported compliance.

The vice-moderator assumed the chair.

GSC 23-64

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To ask the general secretary to provide a revision of the monitoring report on EL-11 in two months, to explain how compliance will be shown and provide data in support.

The moderator resumed the chair.

The GSC considered the general secretary's monitoring report on EL-12 Ecumenical Responsibilities, in which he reported compliance.

GSC 23-65

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To accept the general secretary's report on EL-12.

The GSC considered the general secretary's monitoring report on EL-13 Racial Diversity in Staff Team, in which he reported compliance.

GSC 23-66

A motion was made, supported, and adopted:

To accept the general secretary's report on EL-13.

Recess

The moderator recessed the afternoon session of the October 13, 2023 GSC meeting at 5:00 p.m. (eastern) following prayer by Hank Vrielink.

FRIDAY EVENING

Executive Session

The GSC met in executive session.

SATURDAY MORNING

Call to Order

The moderator called the morning session of the October 14, 2023 GSC meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. (eastern), followed by devotions and prayer by Dwayne Jackson.

Executive Limitations, continued

At its March 21-22, 2023 meeting, the GSC adopted GSC 23-28, which read, “To ask the GSC moderator to form a GSC task force to consider the creation of an End and/or Executive Limitation relating to gender diversity.” Subsequently, an ad hoc task force was formed, which proposed an amendment to the existing executive limitations policy EL-13.

GSC 23-67

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To adopt the following changes to executive limitations policy EL-13 (additions are underlined):

POLICY TYPE: EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS EL-13

POLICY TITLE: ~~RACIAL~~ DIVERSITY IN STAFF TEAM

The General Secretary will not plan, implement, or evaluate key projects or strategic priorities without ensuring both that at least 25 percent of those assigned to the ministry staff team are people of color, and also that the ministry staff team reflects the full diversity of the RCA including gender, age, and ability.

Best Practices for Media Contact for GSC

Christina Tazelaar addressed the GSC regarding best practices for the GSC when interacting with the media and how to mitigate risk. She pointed to the following governance polices:

- General Synod Council Members will ... speak honestly and openly on issues before the GSC, and speak with one voice outside of GSC meetings (GP-4).
- The GSC Moderator ... occasionally represents the Council to outside parties (GP-6).

She offered a number of suggestions, which the moderator asked the Policy Exploration and Review Committee to consider incorporating into a GSC policy.

Request from the Commission on Nominations

Dwayne Jackson, member of the Commission on Nominations (CoN), addressed the GSC regarding the openings that the CoN is working to fill for terms beginning July 1, 2024 on commissions, boards, and agencies including the GSC. He encouraged GSC members to have bridge conversations with other RCA members about their skills, gifts, and preferences, which bodies they might be interested in serving on, and ask them to fill out a profile. He referred the GSC to www.rca.org/nominations where the profile is found in addition to descriptions for each body and a GSC membership expectations document. The current GSC membership expectations document is also appended to the end of these minutes.

Update from Restructuring Team

Michelle Chahine, member of the Restructuring Team, summarized the revised draft proposal that was released on October 5 and the second draft of recommendations found therein. A series of seventeen roundtable gatherings is currently underway to gather feedback that will inform a third draft of recommendations that the Restructuring Team will begin working on in January.

Permanent Committees (GP 10)

Randy Karcher and Sheila Moses presented the report of the Investment Advisory Committee.

GSC 23-68

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To maintain the endowment spending rate at 5.5% of a 20-quarter rolling average for fiscal year 2024.

GSC 23-69

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To approve the amendments to the GSC Tier 1 and Tier 2, Endowment Fund, and Planned Giving Fund Investment Policy Statements as proposed by the Investment Advisory Committee.

Brian Engel presented the report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Update on GSC Budget Reduction

Lisa Stover addressed the GSC regarding recent efforts made to reduce the GSC budget.

General Synod 2023 Evaluation and General Synod 2024 Planning

The GSC discussed a June 30, 2023 letter received from the Commission on Race and Ethnicity and the Office of Diversity and Belonging regarding an incident of racism that was directed at a corresponding delegate at the 2023 General Synod. Jeremy Simpson, Director of Diversity and Belonging, addressed the GSC regarding the RCA's antiracism policy and a proposed General Synod antiracism training.

GSC 23-70

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To hold a two-hour antiracism training session during plenary for delegates during General Synod 2024.

The GSC reviewed the results of the General Synod 2023 survey and provided feedback intended to assist the General Synod 2024 planning team.

General Secretary Spousal Travel Policy

The GSC discussed a proposed change to the general secretary's spousal travel policy. The primary reason for the change is to bring the policy into compliance with Internal Revenue Service standards.

GSC 23-71

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To adopt the revised general secretary spousal travel policy to be effective immediately.

Racial and Ethnic Councils

The GSC discussed a report from the African American/Black Council (AABC) regarding ways to make the *Book of Church Order* more antiracist and culturally inviting.

A motion was made and supported as follows:

To express gratitude to the AABC for their report, and to ask the AABC to further develop the ten specific recommendations by drafting the language of the various statements to be proposed.

A motion was made and supported to amend the motion as follows (addition is underlined):

To express gratitude to the AABC for their report, and to ask the AABC to further develop the ten specific recommendations by

drafting the language of the various statements to be proposed, and report back to the GSC by December 31, 2023.

GSC 23-72 The amended motion was adopted.

Recess

The moderator recessed the morning session of the October 14, 2023 GSC meeting at 11:58 a.m. (eastern) following prayer by Yong Bok Kim.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Call to Order

The moderator called the afternoon session of the October 14, 2023 GSC meeting to order at 1:29.m. (eastern).

Commission Review Process

The *Book of Church Order* gives the GSC responsibility for reviewing each of the General Synod's commissions once every five years and recommending continuation, reconstitution, or discontinuation of that commission to the General Synod (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6g [2023 ed. p. 111]).

The GSC heard the report of the review team tasked with performing a five-year review of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity.

GSC 23-73 A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To recommend to the General Synod 2024 a continuation of the Commission on Race and Ethnicity.

The moderator asked for volunteers to perform the annual commission connections as described in the GSC's annual review process, as well as to perform the five-year reviews of the Commission on Christian Action and the Commission on Christian Unity.

Racial/Ethnic Councils, continued

The GSC discussed the request from the African American/Black Council to approve its revised bylaws.

GSC 23-74 A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To approve the revised bylaws of the African American Black Council (dated September 17, 2023) as presented [see Schedule GSC 23-74].

The GSC discussed the request from the Council for Hispanic Ministries to approve its revised bylaws.

GSC 23-75

A motion was made, supported, and adopted as follows:

To approve the revised bylaws of the Council for Hispanic Ministries (dated August 2023), with the understanding that in Article III, Section 2, in the English version, the words “in conjunction with” will be adjusted to “in consultation with” [see Schedule GSC 23-75].

Classis Meeting Visits

GSC members reported orally on visits made to classis meetings.

Ends Monitoring, continued

The vice moderator assumed the chair.

GSC 23-76

A motion was made, supported, and adopted to amend the previously-adopted GSC 23-63 as follows (addition is underlined):

To ask the General Synod to form a task force to study the opportunities and implications of having Reformed Church in America assemblies beyond North America. The task force should include members from the Commission on History, the Commission on Church Order, the Commission on Theology, General Synod Council staff from Global Mission and church multiplication, and classes in relationship with churches beyond North America. The task force should bring recommendations to General Synod 2025 for church multiplication outside North America in the RCA.

The moderator resumed the chair.

Leadership Reports

The following GSC members addressed the GSC:

- Judy Nelson, General Synod president
- Joshua Scheid, General Synod vice president
- Kim Van Es, GSC moderator

Future Dates and Locations

- March 19-20, 2024, Spring stated meeting via Zoom
- June 13-18, 2024, General Synod at Westin La Paloma, Tucson, Arizona
- June 13, 2024, 12:00-1:30 p.m., pre-General Synod lunch meeting of Committee of Reference (time subject to adjustment) at Westin La Paloma, Tucson, Arizona
- June 18, 2024, 12:00-1:30 p.m., post-General Synod GSC meeting (time subject to adjustment) at Westin La Paloma, Tucson, Arizona

Adjournment

GSC 23-77

A motion was made, supported, and adopted to adjourn the October 13-14, 2023 meeting of the GSC following communion and prayer led by Brad Kautz. The GSC adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

Terri Boven, Recorder
Angela Worthley, Recorder

Appendix re: Request from the Commission on Nominations
General Synod Council Membership Expectations (v.2023.07.10)

Thank you for expressing an interest in serving on the General Synod Council (GSC). If elected, you will be working with 29 other individuals from across the denomination to accomplish the work of the General Synod when it is not in session. Membership on GSC is generally a single, non-renewable, four-year term, unless you are filling a mid-term vacancy.

GSC holds stated meetings three times per year as follows:

- Sometime in October (usually Friday and Saturday, and often in the latter half of the month) – this will likely be an in person meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Sometime in March (usually Tuesday through Thursday) – this will likely be an electronic meeting, via Zoom video conference.
- During General Synod in June (GSC members are corresponding delegates to the General Synod and comprise the Committee of Reference. GSC also meets twice over lunch immediately preceding the start of General Synod and immediately following its conclusion) – these meetings occur in person.

In addition, several shorter meetings may be scheduled by Zoom video conference throughout the year if things arise between stated meetings that require more timely action or follow-up.

The bylaws of the General Synod, found in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*, lay out the responsibilities of the GSC in Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, which are summarized as follows:

As the executive committee, board of directors, and program agenda of the General Synod, as well as the Committee of Reference during the annual convening of the General Synod, the GSC seeks to enable participation in God’s work in the world and to equip congregations and assemblies for mission and ministry. It establishes policies for programs to fulfill these purposes. It oversees and evaluates the performance of the general secretary, who is ultimately responsible for staffing and program implementation. It supports, strengthens, and coordinates the commissions, boards, and institutions of the RCA, prepares a budget to sustain established priorities, and otherwise administers the affairs of the RCA between sessions of the General Synod.

The GSC functions according to the principles of policy governance originated by John Carver (sometimes called “Carver governance”). It is important that GSC members understand this model and how the GSC operates in order to serve effectively on GSC.

The GSC’s policy governance policies can be found [here](#). In particular, please review the sections titled GP-4 Expectations For Serving on GSC and GP-8 GSC Members’ Code of Conduct.

In addition, a brief training on policy governance is held either before or as a part of the GSC’s fall meeting each year. New members will be asked to attend.

The GSC hopes that its members exhibit the following characteristics:

- Willing to give high priority to attendance at GSC meetings
- Courage in speaking up during discussion
- Open-minded with good listening skills
- Prayerful regard for the ministries of GSC, denominational staff, and the RCA as a whole
- Not driven by personal agenda
- Passionate about the RCA
- Appreciative of the larger picture
- Sense of humor
- Willing to communicate GSC concerns back to your sending body

Finally, members are also expected to be supportive of denominational ministry efforts, including discipleship, leadership, mission, and a multicultural and multiracial future freed from racism.

Schedule GSC 23-74

AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK COUNCIL BYLAWS

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

September 17, 2023

I. Name

The name of this organization is: **The African American/Black Council** of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), hereafter referred to as “the AABC”.

II. Status

The AABC is a racial/ethnic council of the General Synod Council (GSC) of the RCA. Together with the other racial/ethnic councils, the AABC is a standing committee of the GSC of the RCA. (See *RCA Book of Church Order (BCO)* Chapter 3, Part 1, Article 3, section 2(b).)

III. Purposes/Responsibilities

The denominational and societal contexts within which the AABC, its constituents and the congregations that serve them are and have been undergoing deep structural and cultural transformations. These transformations require fresh expressions and approaches to the AABC and how it lives out its mission.

The purposes and responsibilities of the AABC include the following:

- A. To connect and serve the RCA people of African descent and the congregations that serve them.
- B. To express the collective vision and voice of racial/ethnic congregants and congregations as they develop ministries and advocate for policies of racial/ethnic inclusion and economic, social, and racial justice, both within the RCA and ecumenically. (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part 1, Section 2b)
- C. To act in accordance with the following mission statement: “The AABC celebrates God’s love by empowering, educating, and encouraging its members to partner with their communities and the RCA to develop ministries and policies for church growth, leadership development, social and racial justice, and economic development.”

IV. Membership

The membership of the AABC includes RCA participants of African descent and the churches that serve them.

V. Governance; Officers

The AABC shall have an executive committee consisting of three elected officers and four appointed officers. The three elected officers are Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. The four appointed officers each champion and catalyze one goal of the AABC's mission statement: church growth, leadership development, social and racial justice, and economic development.

All efforts will be made to ensure equitable representation on the executive committee in gender, generation and geography.

A. The Chairperson:

- i. Leads the external work of the AABC and its executive committee.
- ii. Works closely with the AABC staff coordinator to recruit new pastors and congregations to the AABC.
- iii. Appoints members to special committees in consultation with other officers.
- iv. Serves as chair of the AABC's nominating committee for positions to serve on the executive committee.
- v. Represents the AABC to other bodies inside and outside the RCA.
- vi. Serves as a prayer leader for the AABC.

B. The Vice-Chairperson:

- i. Leads the internal, day-to-day work of the AABC and its executive committee.
- ii. Ensures proper rotation of officers as defined by the bylaws.
- iii. Prepares in consultation with the Chairperson and other officers an agenda for all meetings.
- iv. Leads regular and special executive committee meetings ensuring the Chairperson is fully informed of discussions, decisions and actions.
- v. Leads the executive committee's administrative team comprised of the Vice-Chairperson and the Secretary. The team ensures the work of the executive committee flows and, in cooperation with the staff Coordinator and Administrative Assistant, is communicated with the AABC's constituents.
- vi. Performs other duties as requested by the Chairperson.

C. The Secretary:

- i. Makes meeting minutes and other records of the AABC and its executive committee, for communications and correspondence by the AABC and its executive committee.

- ii. Provides meeting notices.
 - iii. Forwards summaries of meetings to the AABC constituents.
 - iv. Serves with the Vice-Chairperson on the executive committee's administrative team.
 - v. Coordinates this work with the staff Coordinator.
- D. The four appointed officers:
- i. Champion and catalyze the Council's missional work of church growth, leadership development, social and racial justice, and economic development, with one officer assigned to each missional goal.
 - ii. Shall have successful experiences in the missional area she or he leads.
 - iii. Gather and share regularly with AABC constituents and the churches that serve them stories pertinent to her or his missional area from within and outside the AABC and the RCA.
 - iv. Coordinate with staff Coordinator to facilitate the sharing of stories.
 - v. Assist the staff Coordinator on any equipping and training opportunities in her or his respective missional area being offered to AABC constituents.
- E. The executive committee is empowered to lead the AABC. The staff assigned by the RCA provides support to the committee. The staff has speaking rights, but no right to vote.
- i. The elected and appointed officers selection processes:
 - a. The Chairperson appoints a nominating committee.
 - b. Interested candidates complete an application.
 - c. The committee develops and presents a slate of candidates and presents the slate to the full executive committee.
 - d. Elected officer candidates:
 - 1. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor of the annual meeting.
 - 2. Elected at the annual meeting.
 - e. Appointed officers:
 - 1. Appointed by the full executive committee.
 - ii. The terms of officers shall commence on January 1 and terminate on December 31. No individual may hold a particular office for more than two terms, consecutive or otherwise. Terms are to be staggered so that the entire executive committee does not turn over in one year.
 - a. Elected officer terms are for two years.
 - b. Appointed officer terms are for three years.
 - c. In case of a vacancy in any office established in these bylaws, such a vacancy is to be filled by the executive committee in accordance with these bylaws.
 - d. In the event that an officer fulfills at least 50% of an unexpired term, she or he is considered to have served the full term. If a person fulfills less than 50% of an unexpired term, she or he is

considered not to have served a full term, when determining eligibility for continued service as an officer.

- e. In an unexpected emergency situation, a former AABC officer can be appointed by the executive committee to serve the unexpired term.
- F. In case of any vacancy in any office established, such vacancy may be filled by the executive committee.
- G. Executive committee members shall not be compensated for their time or efforts, but may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses reasonably incurred.

VI. Meetings

A. Annual Meetings of Constituents.

An annual meeting of the constituency shall be held at a time and location established by the executive committee. The agenda and schedule for such annual gatherings shall be established by these bylaws. Notice of such annual meeting shall be sent to AABC constituents at least four months prior to a scheduled commencement date. Annual meetings are to normally occur each October. The purpose of such annual meetings shall be to:

- i. Connect, serve and enhance rapport among the AABC's constituents.
- ii. Facilitate equipping of constituents in church growth, leadership development, social and racial justice, and/or economic development.
- iii. Develop plans of action for integration in support of all racial/ethnic congregants and ministries.
- iv. Share news and updates on critical and strategic developments within the RCA.
- v. Review reports and recommendations from commission members who represent the AABC on RCA commissions.
- vi. Received reports from assigned Staff.
- vii. Solicit names for recommendation to the RCA commission on nominations to represent the AABC.
- viii. Nominate from the floor candidates for elected officer positions.
- ix. Elect persons to the elected officer positions.

B. Executive committee meetings

- i. Regular meetings are to occur every January, April and October.
- ii. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.
- iii. A quorum is two-thirds of the officers expected to participate in a meeting. A quorum is required for official decisions and actions to be taken.
- iv. Appointed officers may attend two regular meetings annually (they are expected to focus on implementing their missional focuses)

- v. The AABC-recommended members serving on the GSC, and the Commissions on Nominations and on Race and Ethnicity are to be invited to at least one meeting annually to give reports and have strategic conversations with the executive committee relative to GSC and those commissions with the AABC.

C. Notices; Agendas.

A written notice of each annual, regular and special meeting, together with an agenda, background information, and proposed actions shall be sent to each executive committee member at least ten days prior to each regular meeting and at least five days prior to each special meeting. The location of each annual, regular and special meeting shall be specified by the Secretary in the notice of the meeting.

D. Electronic Participation.

Any one or more members of the executive committee or any other committee may participate virtually in a meeting providing all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time.

E. Action without Meeting.

Where regular and special meetings are not feasible, then the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson may authorize that an action may be taken without meeting. Notification is to include a clear statement of the action to be voted on. The results of that action will be documented as an official action of the executive committee.

VII. Staff

The AABC shall have staff (“Coordinator”) assigned to it by the General Secretary. The Coordinator will be supported by a staff assigned administrative assistant. The assigned staff shall be responsible for supporting the work of the AABC, participate with the executive committee, and shall be employed and supervised in accordance with standard personnel policies and practices of the GSC. The assigned staff person is not a member of the executive committee. However, at executive committee meetings, staff has the right to speak, but not the right to vote.

VIII. Committees

- A. Standing committees. The executive committee is the only standing committee of the AABC.
- B. Special committees. The Chairperson shall appoint such special committees as considered appropriate.
 - i. Each special committee shall have at least three members, one of whom shall be an executive committee member.
 - ii. Every effort shall be made to ensure each committee includes gender and generational representation.

- iii. Each special committee shall be constituted as follows:
 - a. Naming of its members
 - b. Naming of its moderator
 - c. Stating its mission
 - d. Stating its duration

- iv. Committee actions, authority and vacancies.
 - a. Bylaws that apply to the executive committee also apply to special committees.
 - b. No special committee shall have authority to take any action that is binding on the executive committee or the AABC.
 - c. All special committees shall report to the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson for quality and completion of their work.

IX. Reports to GSC

- A. Annual reports. The executive committee shall provide an AABC annual report to the GSC, which shall be incorporated into the GSC's annual report to General Synod. The executive committee should complete the report by mid-February and forward it to the GSC.

- B. Other requested reports. The executive committee shall report to GSC at additional times as requested by the GSC.

- C. Special requests and information to GSC. Consistent with *BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, section 2(b), the executive committee may inform the GSC in writing at any time of the year and make requests of the GSC on behalf of the AABC constituents.

- D. The executive committee may request meetings with GSC members as appropriate.

X. Amendments

- A. These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the executive committee with two-thirds of the full committee supporting the proposed amendment. Proposed amendments must be presented in writing with the meeting notice.

- B. Amendments supported by the executive committee only take effect if approved by GSC at one of its regularly constituted meetings.

These bylaws were approved by the General Synod Council at its October 13-14, 2023, stated meeting (GSC 23-74).

Schedule GSC 23-75

**BYLAWS OF THE COUNCIL FOR HISPANIC
MINISTRIES OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN
AMERICA**

Reviewed in August 2023

PREAMBLE

We, the Council for Hispanic Ministries of the Reformed Church in America, affirm our past, present and future, convinced that we have been called to live and work here as servants of the kingdom of God.

We rejoice, enjoy and love our ethnic heritage as a gift from God.

We celebrate our Hispanic identity with all its manifestations and diversity, because God's purpose is inherent in it.

We faithfully strive to serve our Lord Jesus Christ so that the whole world knows God's purpose in creating different ethnic groups; together we minister to each other and to the entire world through the love of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We serve together to make the message of our Lord Jesus Christ known in our daily lives so that others can see Christ in us.

I. Name

- 1.) The name of this racial/ethnic council is the Global Council for Hispanic Ministries of the Reformed Church in America.

II. Composition under the General Synod Council (GSC)

- 1.) The Council for Hispanic Ministries is a recognized body of the Reformed Church in America. See the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* of the RCA, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2b.
- 2.) The purposes and responsibilities of the Council will include the following:
 - (a) Express the collective vision and voice of Hispanic congregants and congregations as they develop ministries and advocate for policies of racial and ethnic inclusion, and economic, social, and racial justice, both within the RCA and ecumenically (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 2b).

- (b) Direct requests to the GSC for Hispanic participation in other agencies and commissions of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 4, Section 4).
- (c) Recommend to the General Synod Commission on Race and Ethnicity Hispanic persons to serve on the Commission (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 7a).
- (d) Help the General Synod Commission on Nominations to find Hispanic people to serve on different RCA commissions (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 8c).
- (e) Work together with regional synods and classes to establish and strengthen congregations, pointing out possible ministry opportunities among Hispanics.
- (f) Advocate for theological and ministerial education for Hispanic leaders.
- (g) Participate in activities and companies to develop ministries among Hispanics.

III. Composition of the Council for Hispanic Ministries

- 1.) Membership: in the structure of the Reformed Church in America, racial ethnic councils are not governing bodies or judiciaries, participation in the Council for Hispanic Ministries is optional. We highly motivate all Hispanic Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Pastors, elders, and deacons to participate fully in the life and ministry of the Council for Hispanic Ministries.
- 2.) The Hispanic Ministries executive committee will consist of: the RCA coordinator of Hispanic Ministries and four Hispanic strategic leaders (*the executive committee*). The committee will support and oversee church planting work to reach Spanish-dominant Hispanics, bilinguals, and English-dominant Hispanics in the United States, Canada, and around the world in consultation with Global Mission of the Reformed Church in America. This committee will also work with established congregations on the three strategic priorities of Transformed & Transforming (discipleship, leadership and mission) and the strategic vision that comes from the office of the General Secretary.
- 3.) The executive committee will assist the coordinator of Hispanic Ministries in coordinating the work of the Council in the different regions throughout the United States, Canada, and the world that have been established by the Council and Global Mission of the RCA. The executive committee will serve forever and as long as the Hispanic Ministries executive committee believes they are called by God and are serving faithfully. The executive committee will be selected by the coordinator of Hispanic Ministries and approved by the executive committee as necessary.
- 4.) In the event of a vacancy, the current members of the Executive Committee of the Council for Hispanic Ministries will call an ordained Hispanic minister of Word and Sacrament,

commissioned pastor, elder or deacon of a Hispanic church in the Reformed Church in America, who will assume the position until the serving term is completed.

IV. Government and officials

- 1.) One of the members of the executive committee will serve as president for two years, and one of them will serve as vice president of the Council for Hispanic Ministries. The president and vice president will be elected by the executive committee of Hispanic Ministries.
- 2.) The president will preside at all meetings of the executive committee of Hispanic Ministries, at the annual International Ministerial Meeting of the Hispanic Council and at other meetings of Hispanic leaders. The president will work with the coordinator of Hispanic Ministries to prepare the agenda for those meetings.
- 3.) The vice president will perform the functions and assume the responsibilities of the president in the event that the president is absent.

V. Meetings

- 1.) Annual International Ministerial Meeting of the Hispanic Council
 - (a) The annual International Ministerial Meeting of the Hispanic Council will have the following three main focuses:
 - i. Communion
 - ii. Equipment
 - iii. Vision Realignment (living in the vision of Transformed & Transforming)
 - (b) The Hispanic Council's annual International Ministerial Meeting will include a next generation event during one of the nights.
 - (c) All meetings and other activities will be bilingual (English and Spanish).
 - (d) The following people will be invited to participate in the annual International Ministerial Meeting of the Hispanic Council of the Reformed Church in America:
 - i. The Hispanic Ministries coordinator and (if applicable) your spouse.
 - ii. RCA Hispanic church and church planting pastors and (if applicable) their spouses.
 - iii. One elder and one deacon or ministry leader from each Hispanic church or church plant in the RCA.
 - iv. Non-commissioned ordained Hispanic ministers, Hispanic chaplains, Hispanic specialized ministers, and RCA Hispanic pastors serving in other denominations.
- 2.) Executive committee meetings:
 - (a) Two in-person meetings a year.
 - (b) Video or telephone meetings as needed.

(c) The president of the Council for Hispanic Ministries will schedule and coordinate the meetings of the executive committee. The president will prepare the agenda for these meetings in collaboration with the coordinator of Hispanic Ministries.

- 3.) Special Meetings: Special meetings may be called by the president and coordinator of Hispanic Ministries as necessary.
- 4.) Notice of Meetings: Notice of each meeting will be sent to each member prior to the meeting.
- 5.) Quorum. Members present at a duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- 6.) Voting. All matters on which a vote must be taken, other than amendments to the bylaws, will be decided by a simple majority of those present at the meeting at which the vote takes place.
- 7.) Documentation: The Hispanic Ministries coordinator's office will be responsible for maintaining documentation, including overseeing the taking of minutes at all meetings, sending out meeting announcements, distributing copies of the minutes to each member of the executive committee of Hispanic Ministries, and ensuring that documents are preserved.

VI. Reports to GSC/General Synod

1.) The Council for Hispanic Ministries will submit an annual report to the General Synod Council.

VII. Review and amendments

- 1.) These bylaws will be reviewed at least every two years and may be amended at any time by the executive committee of the Council for Hispanic Ministries. The amendments will come into effect once approved by the GSC.