

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 (*Book of Church Order [BCO]*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1 [2025 edition, p. 69]).

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 [2025 edition, p. 106]).

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 [2025 edition, pp. 106-107]).

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.

GENERAL SYNOD MEETING

Approval of Agenda

The business before the 2026 General Synod is presented in the General Synod Workbook, which forms the agenda of synod.

EC 26-1

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 [2025 edition, p. 103]). 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 2025 adopted and referred to the classes for approval five constitutional amendments to the *Book of Church Order*. The amendments are recorded in the *2025 Minutes of the General Synod* as noted. Forty-four 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 [2025 edition, p. 73]). As of April 28, 2026, three classes had not reported votes to the Office of the General Synod on the question of whether or not to approve the amendments. The votes of the other 41 classes, with one abstention on Amendment 5, were reported in writing by the classes’ stated clerks as follows:

<i>Book of Church Order</i> Amendment	Disapproved	Approved
1. Benefits-Related Changes to Formulary 5 (<i>MGS</i> 2025, CO 25-1, pp. 168-170)	0	42

2. Calculation of Size of Middle Assembly Delegations to General Synod (MGS 2025, CO 25-2, pp. 171-172)	9	33
3. Weighting of Votes by Middle Assemblies on Constitutional Amendments (MGS 2025, CO 25-3, p. 175)	16	26
4. Implementation of Electronic Meetings of General Synod (MGS 2025, CO 25-4, pp. 174-175)	11	31
5. Travel Expenses for Delegates Outside the Current Geographical Limits in the BCO (MGS 2025, CO 25-5, p. 176)	2	39

Four amendments received the approval of the required two-thirds of classes, and so they are presented to this General Synod for final declarative action. Amendment 3 did not receive approval from two-thirds of the classes.

EC 26-2
To declare Amendment 1 to be approved for incorporation into the 2026 *Book of Church Order*.

EC 26-3
To declare Amendment 2 to be approved for incorporation into the 2026 *Book of Church Order*.

EC 26-4
To declare Amendment 4 to be approved for incorporation into the 2026 *Book of Church Order*.

EC 26-5
To declare Amendment 5 to be approved for incorporation into the 2026 *Book of Church Order*.

The 2025 General Synod also approved in first reading for recommendation to the next stated session of the General Synod the following amendment to the Bylaws of the General Synod:

Commission Reports to Racial/Ethnic Councils—BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 1d (MGS 2025, CO 25-6, p. 177)

Article 5. Commissions

Sec. 1. General Provisions.

d. Racial/Ethnic Council Reports

As soon as reasonably practicable following the end of the immediately preceding General Synod, each commission shall provide a report to each racial/ethnic council established by the General Synod Council identifying the anticipated business of the commission for the upcoming year. The purpose of the report shall be to allow the racial/ ethnic councils to provide advice and input to the commission's work for the upcoming year.

EC 26-6

To declare the amendment to the Bylaws of the General Synod specified in CO 25-6, adopted in first reading by the 2025 General Synod, to be approved for incorporation into the 2026 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). The General Synod has historically appointed the GSC's chief financial officer (CFO) to serve as the treasurer of the General Synod. The GSC's former CFO and treasurer, Tony Schmid, stepped down effective April 2, 2026, to accept other employment. As of April 30, 2026, the GSC has contracted with an interim chief financial officer, Michael Molling. GSC's hope is to have a new CFO hired by the time of General Synod, in which case the new CFO would be appointed General Synod treasurer. A supplemental report regarding the appointment of the treasurer will be added to the workbook closer to the date of General Synod.

[EC 26-7 held for appointment of treasurer]

General Synod 2027 Meeting Location

The next annual meeting of the General Synod in 2027 will again take place in the Sheraton Music City Nashville Airport in Nashville, Tennessee. The 2027 meeting of the General Synod was originally planned to take place over six days from June 10-15; due to the GSC's decision to shorten in-person General Synods by one day (see page 55 of this report), General Synod 2027 will take place either June 10-14 or June 11-15. 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 development of this acknowledgement.

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the 2026 General Synod of the Reformed Church in America meets is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples, who were removed from their ancestral lands, often by governmental entities, and usually by violent means. Tennessee was once the homeland of the Cherokee and Chickasaw people, among others. We acknowledge their history 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 (GSC) 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” (goals) that have been established by the General Synod. Initially, those goals were related to Our Call, the General Synod’s ten-year goal for mission and ministry that ended in 2013. Policy governance also supports the GSC’s ability to both support and monitor the work of its general secretary and staff through a series of “executive 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. All GSC members receive training in policy governance. The Board of Benefits Services also operates in accordance with the principles of policy governance.

Improving the GSC’s Use of Policy Governance

Following a recommendation adopted by General Synod in 2023 (*MGS 2023*, ONB 23-4, pp. 103-104), the Commission on Church Order (CCO) conducted an extensive review of the policy governance model and its use within

Ongoing Training and Review of the GSC’s Policies

For the past four years, the GSC has gone through several hours of training as a board with an expert in policy governance as an integral part of its fall meeting, the first stated meeting of the annual cycle. The GSC has been working with the same consultant each year, Susan Radwan of Leading Edge Mentoring. This has provided continuity and the ability to build upon previous learning while also onboarding new members to the governance model. One of the CCO’s recommendations in its 2025 report on policy governance was to ensure board members were required to engage in training on the model (Point B), and the GSC agrees with the CCO that such training is very important to aid new members in understanding the system as well as to keep the principles fresh in the minds of continuing members.

The consultant also conducted an audit of the GSC’s entire policy manual in the summer of 2025, offering notes and suggestions on potential changes and adjustments to better align the GSC’s policies with best practices in policy governance. The GSC considered the consultant’s review along with the best practice suggestions from the CCO at its fall meeting and discussed which suggestions and

best practices would assist the GSC in good use of policy governance. It then asked its policy exploration and review committee to work toward implementation of those items, beginning with bringing the Ends policies into alignment.

To instruct the policy exploration and review committee to review the recommendations from our consultant and make recommendations back to GSC with the following priorities: 1) addressing the global end with language that reflects the preamble of the *BCO* and considers the input of the consultant, 2) simplifying the overall detail of our policy governance manual to the highest level while enabling effective oversight (GSC 25-69).

The board's policy exploration and review committee worked on this assignment in the time between the September 2025 and March 2026 meetings of the GSC. While the scope of reviewing and revising the entire policy manual was too broad to complete in five months, the committee brought a new, consolidated Global Ends policy for the GSC's consideration in March 2026. The committee's report to the board noted, "The current Ends policies are found to be out of compliance with the GSC authority delineated in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* and they conflate the enduring purpose of the GSC with temporary initiatives such as 'Transformed and Transforming.' This revision aims to provide clarity and focus, ensuring that our policies align with the foundational mission and governance structure of the church."

The GSC adopted the revised and consolidated Global Ends policy, which replaces the five former Ends policies (GSC 26-27). The new Ends policy is:

- 1.0 Led by the Holy Spirit, the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, serving as the Committee of Reference, Executive Committee, and Board of Trustees of the General Synod, stewards and safeguards the assets of the General Synod; empowers, resources, and serves the assemblies, office bearers, and congregations of the Reformed Church in America; in order to faithfully fulfill our God-given mission to minister to the total life of all people through the preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as well as through all Christian good works.
 - 1.1 To increase the effectiveness of the mission and ministry of the Reformed Church in America, the General Synod Council, through the General Synod staff and within the financial capacity of the congregations and donors of the RCA, will empower servant leaders, assist middle assemblies in the multiplication and revitalization of congregations, grow the global church in mission, and nurture a culture that embodies the vision of the church revealed in Revelation 7:9, "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language," so that all God's people experience belonging, equity, and justice.

The committee also asked the GSC to charge it with conducting a full review of the GSC policy manual by spring 2027, bringing proposed changes to the GSC at its

March stated meeting in 2027. The committee noted that the language in many existing policies is not in line with policy governance, the BCO, RCA polity, or the GSC bylaws and/or is redundant or confusing. The GSC adopted this motion (GSC 26-28).

Engagement with Commission on Church Order's 2025 Report on Policy Governance

The Commission on Church Order's report to the 2025 General Synod included a "Review of Policy Governance" with a list of nine best practices to consider. In response, the General Synod adopted CO 25-7:

To refer the Commission on Church Order's report on policy governance to the GSC for discussion and potential implementation of the suggestions in Part 5 of the report, for report back to General Synod in 2026 (*MGS 2025*, p. 185).

At its September 26-27 meeting, the GSC adopted GSC 25-71:

To refer items D, E, and F in the Commission on Church Order's report on terms of service to the General Synod and GSC officers for report and recommendation back to the spring 2026 GSC meeting.

The General Synod and GSC officers reported to the March 2026 meeting of the GSC, addressing points C, D, E, and F. (Several other points in the CCO's report were considered in other ways.)

Point C: Governance Mentors

New members of the GSC need additional support in understanding the way the GSC makes use of policy governance. The commission suggests that each new member of the GSC be assigned a mentor to help them become comfortable with policy governance (*MGS 2025*, p. 184).

The GSC's discussion during orientation and training at its fall 2025 meeting reflected this sentiment, as well. It would be a great idea. It seems it would be a relatively low burden to add, as an annual collaborative responsibility of the outgoing and newly elected moderators, to identify and appoint such mentors for incoming GSC members. The GSC officers are working to identify an implementation plan.

Point D: Terms of Service

As with service on any new board, serving on the GSC has a learning curve, and it may be that a single, four-year term is not a sufficient length of time for the greatest effectiveness of the council. General Synod commission members serve a term of three years, which can be renewed once for a total of six years of service. Adopting this term structure for the GSC would help the institutional memory of the body, while also giving an opportunity for a member to be replaced after three years as needed. There is also no current provision for the removal of a member for lack of participation or dereliction

of duty. The GSC bylaws could be amended to allow for the removal of a member if the member does not uphold the responsibilities and standards of serving on the GSC (*MGS 2025*, p. 184).

This “best practice” was considered through two lenses: (1) term of service and (2) provision for removal.

First, regarding term of service. While the CCO’s suggestion of a potential six years of service on the GSC, rather than the current four, could be a helpful approach toward increasing the “effectiveness of the council” by enabling GSC members to become more proficient in fulfilling the responsibilities of the council, this recommendation is also impacted by the restructuring amendments that will become effective on December 30, 2026, establishing an “equitable rotation” from among the middle assemblies for GSC and Commission on Nominations (CoN) members as well as women and youth corresponding delegates to General Synod. In order to best accomplish the goal of equitable rotation, the GSC, with support from the Commissions on Nominations and Church Order, suggests that it will be best to maintain the current single, four-year, non-renewable term of service for GSC members and is proposing to align the CoN term of service with that (see EC 26-11 on page 52).

Second, regarding a provision for removal. Certainly it is true for the effectiveness of every board, commission, and agency that members must be fully engaged. From time to time discussion arises about adopting a provision allowing for the removal of a member who “does not uphold the responsibilities and standards” of serving. For that reason, the GSC brings the following recommendation to the 2026 General Synod:

EC 26-8

To instruct the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the Commission on Nominations and the General Synod Council’s Policy Exploration and Review Committee, to prepare amendments to the *Book of Church Order* that provide a fair process of due diligence that could result in the removal of a member from a commission or the GSC, for report to General Synod 2027.

Point E: Terms of Service for General Synod Officers

The current term of service on GSC for a General Synod officer is three years (vice president, president, and immediate past president). The commission suggests that terms for all GSC members should be equal. Currently, that would mean adding a fourth year of service on the GSC for General Synod officers. This is to help ensure continuity in the leadership of the GSC (*MGS 2025*, p. 184).

No such change is recommended at this time. There is practical and spiritual wisdom in the stewardship of service to the offices of General Synod president and vice president, and the role as immediate past president for a three-year cycle. The president and vice president exercise a certain kind of “leadership of the GSC” by virtue of the office; however, while traditionally it has often been the case that the immediate past president is elected by the GSC to serve as its moderator, this is not always the case—and it is not a requirement.

Point F: Term of Service for GSC Moderator

The moderator of the GSC plays a crucial role in policy governance as the primary connection point to the general secretary between meetings of the GSC. The moderator has responsibility to execute the will of the GSC as it pertains to oversight of the general secretary. In other boards that utilize policy governance, the moderator serves in this capacity for multiple years. To strengthen the effectiveness of the use of policy governance by the GSC, the commission recommends increasing the term of the moderator to at least two years (*MGS 2025*, p. 184).

Currently, the GSC can elect a moderator to serve for two, or even three, consecutive years at its discretion; however, no change is recommended because that decision should continue to be an annual decision of the council.

RCA Salary Structure for Fiscal Year 2026 (October 2025–September 2026)

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 approach 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 12 salary ranges that span between 12 and 23. Grade 12 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 and/or the CFO. 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 the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) are evaluated by their respective boards.

The following table represents the ranges that were used for fiscal year 2026. The ranges are utilized to establish beginning wages and annual salaries and do not represent the actual compensation of any individual employee. 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					
2025-2026					
ANNUALIZED SALARY RATE					
GRADE	LOW	25%	MID	75%	HIGH
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 for the GSC to 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. According to BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6g (2025 edition, p. 107), 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.

The 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.

Coming out of the pandemic, the GSC reviewed and updated its commission review process to account for the fact that a larger percentage of RCA meetings are now held electronically, and there is longer 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 2025-2026 review cycle (Year D, according to the GSC's review process): the Commission on Church Order and the Commission on Christian Discipleship and Education. At its March 2026 meeting, the GSC decided to postpone the review of the Commission on Christian Discipleship and Education in order to give the review team more time. The GSC brings its review and recommendation regarding the Commission on Church Order to this General Synod.

Review of the Commission on Church Order

Over the past five years the CCO has faithfully fulfilled its *BCO* obligations by working through the denomination's organizational changes, maintaining an orderly structure that enables the RCA to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The commission ensured that processes were handled properly, making spiritual transformation, leadership development, and faithful discernment more possible during a tumultuous time. Their assistance included offering key guidance to staff, assemblies, and the restructuring team.

CCO members feel a calling to do their work. Our denomination depends on the full diversity of gifts from everyone within the church, and serving on this commission has allowed its members to use their strengths in detail and communication to support ministry. Working alongside dedicated commission members who deeply care about the church's health and success has been both inspiring and formative as they collaborate with other gifted leaders on the commission and leaders on the RCA staff and the GSC. Members of the CCO consider service to the RCA an integral part of their faith and view it as a privilege to serve on the commission.

The commission has a healthy working relationship with RCA staff. Paul Karsen is the commission's staff support and is efficient, organized, and is always providing resources, which helps the commission accomplish its work. Between Paul and Elizabeth Brand's help, there are no recommended areas for improvement. The commission finds significant value in having at least one in-person meeting to carry out its work, given the complexity of its responsibilities. While Zoom can be effective for some commissions, the CCO requested that the GSC prioritize funding at least one in-person meeting for this commission and other commissions that request it, as well as explore options for additional meetings if necessary. The commission also sees a benefit in sending two CCO members to serve as resources at each General Synod, especially during times of significant change.

The commission will continue to support the RCA Constitution and serve the church faithfully throughout the ongoing restructuring process. They will ensure that

changes that will involve adjustments to the *Book of Church Order* are carried out in an orderly way as the middle assemblies are formed by December 2026. Further amendments may be necessary, particularly if the number of assemblies differs from initial expectations, as well as in areas with significant changes, such as the disciplinary and judicial procedures. The commission continues its work reviewing and responding to questions and requests from RCA members and institutions, a responsibility that will remain important in the years ahead.

EC 26-9

To continue the Commission on Church Order; its work is important to keep our denomination in order, in compliance, and able to adapt as we work through restructuring, especially as we move to middle assemblies by December 2026.

Classis Transfer Across Regional Synod Lines

According to *BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 2, Section 3 (2025 edition, p. 65), General Synod approval is required when a church or classis is transferred from one regional synod to another. 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 one such transfer to the 2026 General Synod. The Office of the General Synod received signatures of affirmation from both regional synods, the classis, and all four consistories within the Classis of Cascades indicating that they are all in agreement with the transfer, and so the GSC agreed to bring this request to the General Synod.

EC 26-10

To transfer the Classis of Cascades, together with all of its organized churches, from the Regional Synod of the Far West to the Regional Synod of the Heartland.

Restructuring Implementation

Equitable Rotation in Middle Assembly Representation

In the restructuring amendments to the *Book of Church Order* that have been declared effective as of December 30, 2026, the change from classes and regional synods to middle assemblies significantly affects the provision for representation on the General Synod Council (GSC) and the Commission on Nominations (CoN), both of which currently have eight seats dedicated to regional synod representation (one seat per regional synod). The amendments call for an “equitable rotation” of middle assembly representation in determining which assembly nominates someone to these seats, since there will likely be a much greater number of middle assemblies than there are regional synods.

The Commission on Nominations developed a proposal for a process of equitable rotation over this past year. The commission shared its proposal with the Commission on Church Order (CCO) for feedback, then sent its proposal along with the CCO's feedback to the March 2026 meeting of the General Synod Council. The GSC, with appreciation for the work of the two commissions, now brings this proposal to the General Synod.

What is an "Equitable Rotation"?

Acknowledging there may be room for interpretation, for our initial purpose of smoothing the transition into a restructured denomination, this proposal assumes a basic sequential list of middle assemblies, randomly sorted, either using technology or by drawing lots, that is then published for complete transparency.

Changes to Representation on GSC and CoN

For the GSC, instead of each regional synod recommending one of its "regular classical delegates to the immediately preceding General Synod" for nomination by the Commission on Nominations and election by the General Synod to membership on GSC, the new bylaw provision is:

- b. Eight members recommended by the middle assemblies from among their regular delegates to the immediately preceding General Synod, and elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations using an equitable rotation of the middle assemblies as determined by the General Synod (*BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 1b; MGS 2024, p. 279*).

The term of office provision remains essentially the same.

The term of office for the elected member shall be four years. Members shall be ineligible for two years after they have served their term. Members who have served a partial term of less than two years shall be eligible for an additional full four-year term... (*BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 3; MGS 2024, p. 280*).

Representation on CoN will now also follow an equitable rotation:

The commission shall have thirteen members, eight representing the middle assemblies, one representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans, respectively, and one being the immediate past president of General Synod. Each middle assembly shall nominate a layperson or a member of a middle assembly who is either a minister or commissioned pastor in alternating periods of equitable rotation in order to ensure that the commission will have within its membership at least three laypersons and at least three members of a middle assembly... (*BCO Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 8a; MGS 2024, p. 281*).

CoN members are currently subject to the umbrella term of office provision that covers all General Synod agencies and commissions, which provides for a three-year term that can be renewed once for a total of six years of service (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 4, Section 1; 2025 edition, pp. 107-108).

The Challenge with Different Term Limits and Staggered Terms

Currently, staggered terms and two different term limits (GSC: four-year nonrenewable; CoN: three-year renewable for six-year total) makes any equitable rotation that attempts to balance middle assembly representation on both bodies extremely messy.

For simplicity of example, if there were to be exactly 24 middle assemblies on December 31, 2026, a middle assembly would go 3 to 7 years without a representative on either body, and there could be a year with as few as 10 of the 24 middle assemblies represented between both bodies. It gets messy—and inequitable—rather quickly.

Looking only at the CoN, if there are 24 middle assemblies, and eight of them are represented on the CoN in any given year by members who potentially serve two consecutive three-year terms, then a full decade would pass between a middle assembly's turn in the rotation to be represented on the commission. If there are fewer middle assemblies, the gaps decrease; however, if there are a greater number of middle assemblies, the gaps will increase.

Amending CoN Term of Office and Removing Partial Term Provision for GSC

What if the CoN term of office was amended to be consistent with the GSC term of office (i.e. a four-year non-renewable term)? The two equitable rotations could then run congruent to each other, and the gap years for any particular middle assembly would be considerably reduced. In the 24-middle-assembly example, there would only be an eight-year period without representation from the middle assembly on CoN (instead of twelve), and the same for the GSC. Still lengthy periods, but more palatable, and if the equitable rotations for the GSC and the CoN are offset from each other, this could ensure regular representation for middle assemblies on at least one of these two important denominational bodies for eight out of every twelve years.

A single four-year term of office could also be a benefit to the CoN. Due to the complexity of the commission's work, it can be challenging to onboard and get up to speed as a new member. A four-year term provides a good opportunity to learn the work of the commission and serve well as a fully engaged member, but is not as daunting as a potential six-year commitment.

An additional clarifying amendment should accompany this change. The current provision for GSC membership allows a member who has served less than half of a term (because they were elected to fill the partial term of someone who needed to

step down) to be re-elected for an additional four-year term. This would create a problem with the equitable rotation. For example, by letter of the order, if a middle assembly needed to fill a partial term on the GSC of less than two years, it could then insist that member be re-elected for another four years, extending the middle assembly's turn. For the good of the order, and to make the GSC and the CoN terms consistent, this loophole should be removed.

EC 26-11

To adopt the following amendments to the Bylaws of the General Synod (*Book of Church Order, Chapter 3*) for final approval by the 2027 General Synod (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken):

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5 (2025 edition, pp. 113-114)

Sec. 8. Commission on Nominations

b. Term of Office

- 1. The term of office for members shall be four years.**
- 2. Members may not serve consecutive terms.**
- 3. A partial term of any length shall be considered a full term.**

[subsequent sub-sections re-lettered]

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 3 (2025 edition, p. 105)

The term of office for the elected member shall be four years. Members shall be ineligible for two years after they have served their term. ~~Members who have served a partial term of less than two years shall be eligible for an additional full four-year term.~~

Establishing the "Equitable Rotation"

The equitable rotation will need to be established as of December 30, 2026, with the transition to middle assemblies because the Commission on Nominations will need to use it for its 2026-2027 nominations.

The GSC thus proposes that General Synod approve the parameters by which the initial rotation will be established.

EC 26-12

To instruct the General Synod Council and the general secretary to establish an initial equitable rotation of middle assemblies according to the following parameters:

- 1. The complete list of middle assemblies formed as of December 31, 2026, shall be randomly sorted, using either an independent technological tool or a transparent process of drawing lots.**
- 2. The resulting ordered list shall be published and communicated to all middle assemblies, and reported to the 2027 General Synod.**

And further, to instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with the general secretary, the Commission on Church Order, and the Commission on Nominations, to develop a clear policy for the implementation and maintenance of the equitable rotation of middle assemblies, guided by the following principles:

- 3. Any newly formed middle assembly created on or after January 1, 2027, shall be added to the end of the list.**
- 4. The rotation shall be maintained and published annually in the Minutes of General Synod and regularly on the stated clerks resource page.**
- 5. The actual number of middle assemblies will affect turnover through the rotation, both for determining representative members on the General Synod Council and Commission on Nominations as well as corresponding women and youth delegates to General Synod, but generally the goal shall be to (a) minimize the number of years between a middle assembly's opportunity to nominate or appoint a member or delegate, and (b) to maximize the number of middle assemblies that are represented across the council, the commission, and the corresponding delegates in any given year.**

Future Considerations

As the new middle assembly structure solidifies and the RCA begins to live into it, the General Synod may wish to look at other ways to increase middle assembly representation on these two bodies, particularly if there are more middle assemblies than anticipated. One possibility that was initially discussed was repurposing some of the ten at-large regular delegate spots on the GSC (*BCO* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 1c [2025 edition, p. 104]) as additional middle assembly members allocated

by the equitable rotation. However, the GSC is not recommending any changes apart from those in EC 26-11 at this time.

Virtual Meetings of the General Synod

Following General Synod's adoption of CO 25-4 (*MGS 2025*, pp. 174-175), a constitutional amendment to the *Book of Church Order* that would permit the General Synod to hold its annual meeting in a virtual format up to two out of every three years, the GSC staff and the GSC began initial exploration of systems and best practices to support large-scale virtual meetings.

While this constitutional amendment is not yet final (it went through the approval process of the classes this fall and spring, and is now before this General Synod for a final declarative vote), waiting until that decision is final to begin planning and developing the systems to support a virtual synod meeting would significantly extend the timeline for when it would be possible to hold the first virtual General Synod meeting. Holding General Synod virtually will require the development of new systems to uphold the requirements of the *BCO* and Robert's Rules of Order—we can't simply send out a Zoom link for a meeting as complex as General Synod. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that we cannot duplicate the in-person General Synod experience in a virtual General Synod. The virtual synod experience should be re-built from the ground up, identifying the important and essential business that needs to be addressed virtually, while being attentive to its unique opportunities for meaningful discernment and equipping.

Over the past year, staff examined financial and logistical considerations, explored what technology is needed to accomplish various aspects of General Synod virtually, and consulted with planning staff from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who graciously shared their experiences and learnings. The general secretary provided a report to the GSC at its September 2025 meeting.

The GSC responded by adopting a motion to “continue intentional planning” for the first potential virtual General Synod meeting to be in June 2028 (providing the constitutional changes that would permit such a meeting are declared effective). It also appointed a small working group of GSC members to do further work on what business would or should be handled at a virtual meeting and also to bring a proposal to the GSC's March meeting regarding a virtual/in-person meeting rhythm (GSC 25-72).

In March, the GSC received an updated report from synod staff on technology to support a virtual meeting, as well as an implementation timeline if the first virtual synod was to take place in 2028. The board also received a report and recommendations from its working group regarding the length and content of a virtual General Synod. The GSC made several decisions at its March meeting:

- First, to hold the first virtual General Synod in 2028 (providing the *BCO* amendment becomes effective) (GSC 26-28). The GSC working group noted that holding the first virtual General Synod in conjunction with the RCA's

400th anniversary is reflective of the denomination “leaning into the future of ministry and mission in fresh and faithful ways.”

- Second, to shorten the schedule of in-person General Synods by one day beginning in 2027 (GSC 26-29). The working group noted that a shorter General Synod schedule will be necessary for meetings held virtually, and it would also increase accessibility at in-person General Synod for a wider range of delegates, many of whom need to use paid time off in order to participate.
- Third, to plan for General Synod to be in-person in 2027 and 2029 and virtual in 2028 and 2030 (biennial), with the intent of revisiting this meeting rhythm in 2029 to possibly shift to holding in-person General Synod every third year (GSC 26-30). The working group highlighted the need to balance preserving the relational strength of meeting in person, especially in a new structure, while also stewarding well the financial resources of the denomination.

Planned Sale of the Michigan Regional Center

After significant discernment, the GSC voted at its March meeting to authorize the general secretary to list and sell the Michigan Regional Center (MRC) and purchase a smaller office space in Grand Rapids that is right-sized for long-term ministry needs.

The GSC is grateful for the many years of ministry supported at the MRC and for the many donors who made the building possible; it also recognizes that the building “far exceeds the staffing footprint and needs” of the denomination, as stated in the general secretary’s proposal to the board. This move will free up more resources for ministry and mission, rather than maintaining a building that is significantly larger than what is needed.

A portion of the funds from the sale of the MRC building will be used to purchase a right-sized facility, which has not yet been identified but will be in the West Michigan area. Purchasing office space preserves equity and avoids perpetual rent escalation, while significantly lowering annual operating costs compared to the current facility; there is a possibility of needing to temporarily lease office space depending on the timing of the sale of the MRC and the purchase of a new building. The GSC has asked the general secretary to bring a proposal to the board regarding the remaining proceeds once the sale of the building is closed.

The timing of the sale of the building and the purchase of a new one will depend on market conditions. Throughout that time, the GSC has committed to a season of daily prayer for God’s leading and provision. Two GSC members developed a shared prayer that the GSC will be using; members of the GSC invite the wider RCA to join in this same prayer.

O Lord, our faithful Provider and Protector, you alone are our dwelling place. We thank you for your faithful guiding presence throughout the history of the Reformed Church in America. In this season of seeking, Savior, like a shepherd, lead us and keep us steady when the ground feels uncertain. We entrust the sale of our Michigan Regional Center to your hands. Teach us to trust you rather than ourselves.

By your Spirit, lead us into your provision with calm confidence. You are the God who leads us into green pastures for your name's sake; so, make our hearts quick to follow and our steps sure. Grant us the right buyer in your time and prepare the right new space for the work of your mission.

With thanksgiving, we pray your blessing on those whose generosity made our current ministry center a reality. Lead us from this place to the one you have already prepared, we pray, until our new mission outpost becomes a place of encounter and equipping that the world might know your saving love; in and through Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.