GENERAL SYNOD
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

2026 Journal of Actions
Meeting 6
Saturday afternoon - June 13, 2026
Hermitage Ballroom

CALL TO ORDER

The Rev. Sarah Palsma, General Synod president, called to order the sixth meeting of the General Synod at 2:36 p.m. on Saturday, June 13, 2026. Elvis Alvarez, delegate from the Classis of the Palisades, offered prayer.

VIDEO

Delegates viewed a brief video highlighting the "why" behind the work that is done in the RCA. The video featured Rev. Stephen and Rev. Olga Shaffer from Bethel Reformed Church in Ontario, Canada.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED

The president called upon Mario Vargas, member of the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, to the platform to present the report of the Office of Finance (GS Workbook pp. 57-66). Mr. Vargas addressed the Synod.

F 26-1 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt F 26-1 (GS Workbook p. 66)
(yes 155, no 9).

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHURCH ORDER AND GOVERNANCE

The president called upon the Rev. Susan Converse, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, to present its report (Supplemental Workbook, Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance). Rev. Converse addressed the Synod.

In response to Overture 1 from the Classis of New Brunswick, the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance recommends the following:

OG 26-1

To amend the Bylaws of the General Synod (*Book of Church Order* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 2, Section 3b) as follows (deletions are struck, additions are underlined):

b. If there is no election on the nominating ballot, every delegate receiving at least ~~ten~~ five votes shall be in nomination and shall be introduced to the synod. The synod shall then proceed to an electing ballot. If there is no election, the synod shall proceed to a second electing ballot limited to the two persons receiving the largest number of votes on the first electing ballot.

Reasons:

1. Given the changes in the number of delegates due to amendments to the Constitution for calculating delegates, the Synod will be substantially smaller, and receiving ten nominating votes shall be more difficult.
2. If the restructure goes through, some vice presidents will be elected at meetings that will be online and shorter, with fewer opportunities for all delegates to get to know one another.

OG 26-1 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt OG 26-1 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 159, no 7).

In response to Overture 3 from the Classis of Holland, the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance recommends the following:

OG 26-2

To instruct the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board to review the 24-month requirement for supervision of candidates for ministry, giving particular attention to denominational integrity, candidate care, and equitable processes for all candidates, and report back to General Synod in 2027.

Reasons:

1. There is a need to examine the denominational integrity in care of candidates, and the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board has broad representation from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary, and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency to examine the overall impact on the RCA.

2. We want a well-reasoned process for ordination in a rapidly changing educational environment.

OG 26-2 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt OG 26-2 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 156 , no 11).

In response to Overture 4 from the Classis of Delaware-Raritan, the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance recommends the following:

OG 26-3

To deny Overture 4.

Reasons:

1. The Board of Benefits Services (BOBS) does not support this overture.
2. BOBS has policies and assistance plans in place to help ministers in need.
3. There are onerous tax laws regarding early withdrawal that render early withdrawal from 4O3(b) plans disadvantageous to ministers who elect early retirement at age 55.

OG 26-3 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt OG 26-3 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 136, no 28).

A motion was made from the floor in response to the adoption of OG 26-3.

To instruct the General Synod Council (GSC) to form a working group that should include membership from the Board of Benefit Services (BoBS) and the Commission on Church Order (CCO), along with at least two of the retired minister chaplains and such other membership as the GSC shall identify, to engage in a thorough re-examination of the church order and policies surrounding retirement and end of installed service of ministers and other office-bearers, for final report to the Synod of 2028.

Reasons:

1. While there have been piecemeal changes to aspects of our retirement and other end-of-service policies and rules, there has not been a wholesale examination of all of the changing understandings of aging and retirement

in over half a century. Meanwhile, understandings and rules and laws have changed many times.

2. While we do not anticipate requiring changes in the work of the BoBS, which carries out the will of the Synod in accordance with secular laws, input from BoBS will no doubt be helpful.

3. The retired minister chaplains, who work regularly with our retired ministers and are themselves retired, have a unique understanding of the needs of those ministers and of the effect that the Synod's decisions can have on them.

4. Such a group could meet online, minimizing if not eliminating any extra costs.

VOTED: To approve motion (yes 145, no 18).

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OVERTURES AND NEW BUSINESS

The president called upon the Rev. Christopher Poest, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to present its report (Supplemental Workbook, Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business). Rev. Poest addressed the Synod.

In response to Overture 2 from the Classis of New Brunswick, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 26-1

To instruct the General Synod Council to give a brief update at this General Synod on the progress toward reexamining the scope of work of the General Synod and share an anticipated timeline for that work.

Reasons:

1. Regular communication is important for all of General Synod, and this is one way in which that can happen.
2. While a lot of attention has been paid to the restructure at the middle assembly level, the committee would like to hear more about how the work of the synod and its boards, agents, and commissions might be changing.
3. The committee recognizes that this is a work in progress, and thus there will be a need for further updates.

ONB 26-1 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 26-1 (Supplemental Workbook)

(yes 153, no 10).

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

ONB 26-2

To transfer the Reformed Church of Newtown in Elmhurst, New York, from the Classis of Queens in the Regional Synod of New York to the Classis de las Naciones in the Regional Synod of Mid-America.

Reasons:

1. The request has been made by the Reformed Church of Newtown in Elmhurst.
2. All parties are in agreement with the transfer.
3. The transfer is consistent with the restructuring plans of all parties involved.
4. The *Book of Church Order* places the authority to transfer congregations across regional synod lines with the General Synod

ONB 26-2 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 26-2 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 163, no 3).

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

The president called upon Patricia Johnson, moderator from the Commission for Women, to present its report (GS Workbook, pp. 209-214), and Rev. Christopher Poest, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to present the advice of the committee regarding recommendations in the report. Ms. Johnson addressed the Synod.

The advice of the advisory committee was to vote in favor of W 26-1

W 26-1 was presented to the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to cease debate.

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 152; no 12).

VOTED: To adopt W 26-1 (GS workbook p. 213) (yes 157, no 10).

W 26-2 was presented to the house.

The advice of the advisory committee was to vote in favor of W 26-2.

VOTED: To adopt W 26-2 (GS workbook p. 213) (yes 149, no 10).

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE ON NEW BUSINESS

The president called upon the Rev. Joshua Scheid, moderator of the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, to give the report from the Committee of Reference on New Business (Supplemental Workbook, Committee of Reference on New Business). Rev. Scheid addressed the Synod.

In response to the second item of new business proposed during the Synod's third meeting, the Committee of Reference recommends:

EC 26-15
To not accept Item #1 as new business.

Reasons:

1. The Committee of Reference recognizes the importance of the issue, but it does not meet the requirement for new business because it is not a new topic for the General Synod's consideration.

2. While we understand the concern for timeliness, that does not prevent the issue from being brought as ordinary business to General Synod in the future. New middle assemblies may overture the General Synod with a proposal of this nature.

3. The classes that voted on the underlying constitutional amendment will no longer be assemblies after December 30, 2026. Members of a committee composed of representatives from classes may not accurately reflect representation of the new middle assemblies.

EC 26-15 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 26-15 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 124, no 40).

In response to the first item of new business proposed during the Synod's third meeting, the Committee of Reference recommends:

EC 26-16

To not accept Item #2 as new business.

Reasons:
1. This item is out of order because real estate matters are subject to the oversight of the classis (middle assembly) and consistory.
2. Local civil authorities have their own regulatory and legal environments (for instance, some have strong squatter's laws) that necessitate careful consideration with appropriate legal and fiduciary counsel.

EC 26-16 was presented to the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to cease debate.

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 159, no 6).

VOTED: To adopt EC 26-16 (Supplemental Workbook) (yes 149, no 8).

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HISTORY

The president called upon Rev. Dr. Katelyn DeVries, moderator of Commission on History, to present its report, and Rev. Susan Converse, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, to present the advice of the advisory committee regarding recommendations in the report (GS Workbook, p. 178-182). Rev. Dr. DeVries addressed the Synod.

H 26-1 was presented to the house.

The advice of the advisory committee was to vote in favor of H 26-1.

VOTED: To adopt H 26-1 (GS Workbook p. 182) (yes 159, no 4).

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHURCH ORDER

The president called upon Rev. Chris Jacobsen, moderator of Commission on Church Order, to present its report, and Rev. Susan Converse, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, to present the advice of the advisory committee regarding recommendations in the report (GS Workbook, p. 173-177). Rev. Jacobsen addressed the Synod.

CO 26-1 was presented to the house.

The advice of the advisory committee was to vote in favor of CO 26-1.

VOTED: To adopt CO 26-1 (GS Workbook p. 176) (yes 160, no 4).

RECESS

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 5:06 p.m. following a closing prayer by Rev. Kim Pavlovich, corresponding delegate from the Classis of Passaic Valley.