

GENERAL SYNOD
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

2024 Journal of Actions
Meeting 10
Monday morning - June 17, 2024
Arizona Ballroom

WORSHIP

The same musicians who led the opening worship service in meeting two led the Synod in worship along with representatives from the Council for Hispanic Ministries – Rev. Jael Serrano Altimirano, Israel Camacho and other members of his family, Carlos Rivera, Gladys Rivera, and Dr. Luz Vera.

The president called to order the tenth meeting of the General Synod at 8:32 a.m. on Monday, June 17, 2024.

REPORT FROM THE NATIVE AMERICAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES COUNCIL

The president called upon the Rev. Brad Kautz, chairperson of the Native American Indigenous Ministries Council, to present the council's report (GS Workbook, p. 91). Rev. Kautz addressed the Synod.

REPORT FROM THE COUNCIL FOR HISPANIC MINISTRIES

The president called upon the Rev. Fabio Sosa, president of the Global Council for Hispanic Ministries, to present the council's report (GS Workbook, pp. 89-90). Rev. Sosa addressed the Synod.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The president called upon the general secretary to review the procedures for electing the president of General Synod (GS Workbook, p. 33). The general secretary addressed the General Synod. The tellers distributed and collected the ballots for the election of the president.

REPORT FROM THE COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

The president called upon Leonardy Poluan, president of the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries, to present the council's report (GS Workbook, pp. 85-88). Mr. Poluan addressed the Synod.

REPORT FROM THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BLACK COUNCIL

The president called upon Tony Davis and the Rev. Dr. Patricia Sealy, members of the African American Black Council, to present the council's report (GS Workbook, pp. 64-84). Mr. Davis and Rev. Dr. Sealy addressed the Synod.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED

The president called upon Kim Van Es, moderator of the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, and the Rev. Stephen Shaffer, moderator of the advisory committee on Church Order and Governance, to continue the General Synod Executive Committee's report.

EC 24-10 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee, which was to vote in favor EC 24-10 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 2).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend EC 24-10 as follows (additions are double-underlined):

“...Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church's mission in the world. Every member, regardless of ability, gender, race, ethnicity, color, or class, receives a ministry in baptism and is called with the whole church to embody Christ's intentions for the world...”

“...By his Holy Spirit he distributes these functions among those whom he calls to serve in his name. Therefore, the church continually seeks to equip, empower, and embrace servant leaders who reflect the full diversity of the body of Christ. The church is called to reform any biases, behaviors, policies, or procedures that diminish the spiritual gifts or contributions of any Christian due to ability, gender, race, ethnicity, or economic class...”

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend EC 24-10. The President ruled it out of order.

VOTED: To amend EC 24-10 (GS Workbook, pp. 79-80)
(yes 168, no 10).

EC 24-10 as amended was before the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend EC 24-10 as follows (additions are double-underlined, deletions stricken):

The Representative Principle. The power which Jesus Christ bestows upon his church is mediated by the Holy Spirit to all the people of every tribe, tongue, and nation every gender, race, ethnicity, color, ability, or class. Since not everyone in the church can hold an office, and since the offices differ among themselves in function, some persons will always be subject, within the proper exercise of authority, to the decisions of others.

VOTED: To reject the amendment to EC 24-10 as amended (GS Workbook, pp.79-80) (yes 25, no 144).

EC 24-10 as amended was again before the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend EC 24-10 as follows (additions are double-underlined):

By his Holy Spirit he distributes these functions among those whom he calls to serve in his name. Therefore, the church continually seeks to equip, empower, and embrace servant leaders who reflect the full diversity of the body of Christ. The church is called to reform any biases, behaviors, policies, or procedures that diminish the spiritual gifts or contributions of any Christian due to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or economic class.

VOTED: To reject the amendment to EC 24-10 as amended (GS Workbook, pp.79-80) (yes 16, no 166).

EC 24-10 as amended was again before the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend EC 24-10 as follows (additions are double-underlined):

“...Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church’s mission in the world. Every member, regardless of ability, gender, race, ethnicity, color, or economic class, receives a ministry in baptism and is called with the whole church to embody Christ’s intentions for the world...”

VOTED: To reject the amendment to EC 24-10 (GS Workbook, pp. 79-80)(yes 19, no 159).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend EC 24-10 as follows (deletions are stricken):

“...By his Holy Spirit he distributes these functions among those whom he calls to serve in his name. Therefore, the church continually seeks to equip, empower, and embrace servant leaders who reflect the full diversity of the body of Christ. The church is called to reform any biases, behaviors, policies, or procedures that diminish the spiritual gifts or contributions of any Christian due to gender, race, ethnicity, or ~~economic~~ class...”

VOTED: To amend EC 24-10 as amended (GS Workbook, pp. 79-80) (yes 134, no 45).

EC-24-10 as twice amended was before the house.

A motion was made and supported to cease debate.

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 153, no 22).

VOTED: To adopt EC 24-10 as twice amended (GS Workbook, pp. 79-80) (yes 169, no 9).

EC 24-10 as amended and adopted reads as follows:

“*The Representative Principle.* The power which Jesus Christ bestows upon his church is mediated by the Holy Spirit to all the people of every tribe, tongue, and nation. Since not everyone in the church can hold an office, and since the offices differ among themselves in function, some persons will always be subject, within the proper exercise of authority, to the decisions of others. ...”

“...Each assembly is charged with determining the nature and extent of its ministry in faithful obedience to Scripture and in responsible concern for the church’s mission in the world. Every member, regardless of ability, gender, race, ethnicity, color, or class, receives a ministry in baptism and is called with the whole church to embody Christ’s intentions for the world...”

“...By his Holy Spirit he distributes these functions among those

whom he calls to serve in his name. Therefore, the church continually seeks to equip, empower, and embrace servant leaders who reflect the full diversity of the body of Christ. The church is called to reform any biases, behaviors, policies, or procedures that diminish the spiritual gifts or contributions of any Christian due to gender, race, ethnicity, or class.”

EC 24-11 was presented to the house.

The president called upon the Rev. Shaffer, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, to provide the advice of the advisory committee, which was to amend EC 24-11 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 3) as follows (additions are underlined):

Article 2. Responsibilities of the Classis

Sec. 1. The classis, in consultation with its congregations and its partners in mission, shall regularly consider the nature and extent of ministry within classis bounds in obedience to Holy Scripture and in response to the needs of the world within which the classis ministers. The classis may form such entities as may be needed for the ministry of the church, provided such bodies do not infringe upon the prerogatives of other classes, consistories, or synods. To the extent possible, the ministries of the classis shall reflect the racial-ethnic and socio-economic diversity found within the classis bounds.

Reasons:

1. The proposed change better reflects the denomination’s vision of a multicultural future free from racism.
2. “To the extent possible” has been used to excuse inaction.
3. While there may be extenuating reasons that a classis’s ministry cannot always fully reflect such diversity, the work of the classis must continually strive to reflect the Holy Spirit’s interest in all populations within their communities.

VOTED: To amend EC 24-11 (GS Workbook, p. 81)
(yes 168, no 8).

EC 24-11 as amended was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 24-11 as amended (GS Workbook, p.81) (yes 173, no 7).

MISSIONARY VIDEO

Missionary video highlighting the work of David Colop, mission personnel, and sharing about discernment in his work.

EC 24-12 was presented to the house.

The president called upon the Rev. Shaffer, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, to provide the advice of the advisory committee, which was to vote to amend EC 24-12 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 3) as follows:

f. The points of doctrine contained in the ~~Heidelberg Catechism~~ ~~Doctrinal Standards~~ Heidelberg Catechism and Belhar Confession shall be explained by the minister at regular services of worship on the Lord's Day, so that the exposition of them is completed within a period of four years.

Reasons:

1. The original AABC recommendation better captures the need for our churches to be disciplined into the principles of the Belhar Confession.
2. The committee agrees with the rationale from the AABC's original recommendation that "the Belhar Confession is the backbone confession supporting antiracism. It is the RCA's only Standard of Unity that clearly and directly guides us toward a future freed from racism and culturalism."
3. The Belhar Confession speaks to our current historical and denominational context and our commitment to a multiracial future free from racism.
4. The Belhar Confession is less well known than the other doctrinal standards. It was only adopted at General Synod 2009.

VOTED: To amend EC 24-12 (GS Workbook, p. 81-82)
(yes 137, no 41).

EC 24-12 as amended was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 24-12 as amended (GS Workbook, pp. 81-82) (yes 164, no 14).

EC 24-13 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee, which was to vote in favor EC 24-13 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 4).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend EC 24-13 as follows (additions are double-underlined):

“a. The classis shall work with the candidate to designate a minister to serve as a mentor to guide, counsel, and model the learning and developmental processes of each newly-ordained minister or, where deemed appropriate by classis, a minister received from another denomination.”

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

Sec. 5.

a. The classis shall work with the minister ~~candidate~~ to designate a minister to serve as a mentor to guide, counsel, and model the learning and developmental processes of each newly-ordained minister or, where deemed appropriate by classis, a minister received from another denomination.

VOTED: To amend the amendment (yes 142, no 35).

The amended amendment was before the house.

VOTED: To adopt the amended amendment (yes 123, no 46).

EC 24-13 as amended was presented to the house.

A motion was made and supported to cease debate.

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 161, no 19).

VOTED: To adopt the amended EC 24-13 (GS Workbook, pp. 82-83) (yes 140, no 39).

EC 24-13 as amended and adopted reads as follows:

a. The classis shall work with the minister to designate a minister to serve as a mentor to guide, counsel, and model the learning and developmental processes of each newly-ordained minister or, where deemed appropriate by classis, a minister received from

another denomination.”

b. The classis shall ensure that all enrolled ministers actively serving under its jurisdiction are adequately trained to serve fruitfully in the urban, suburban, rural, and/or tribal areas to which they are assigned.

EC 24-14 was presented to the house.

The president called upon the Rev. Stephen Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee, which was to vote in favor EC 24-14 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 4).

VOTED: To adopt EC 24-14 (GS Workbook, pp. 83-84)
(yes 171, no 8).

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT, CONTINUED

As a result of the electing ballot cast for president, the president declared Rev. Joshua Scheid president-elect of the General Synod. All past General Synod presidents were invited to the front platform. The president offered prayer and Rev. Scheid addressed the Synod.

REPORT OF NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The president called upon the Rev. Dr. Micah McCreary, corresponding delegate from and president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and the Rev. Abigail Norton-Levering, corresponding delegate from the New Brunswick Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, to present the seminary’s report (GS Workbook, pp 329-334). Rev. Dr. McCreary and Rev. Norton-Levering addressed the Synod.

REPORT OF WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The president called upon the Rev. Dr. Felix Theonugraha, corresponding delegate from and president of Western Theological Seminary, and Rev. Dr. Andrea Godwin-Stremmler and Rev. Cora Taitt, corresponding delegates from and members of the Western Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, to present the seminary’s report (GS Workbook, pp. 335-344). Rev. Dr. Theonugraha, Rev. Dr. Godwin-Stremmler, and Rev. Taitt, each addressed the Synod.

REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL FORMATION CERTIFICATION AGENCY

The president called upon the Rev. David Schutt, executive director of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency, and Rev. Jon Opgenorth, corresponding delegate from and member of the Ministerial Formation

Certification Agency board of trustees to present its report (GS Workbook pp. 325-328). Rev. Schutt and Rev. Opgenorth addressed the Synod.

RECESS

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 12:00 p.m., following a closing prayer by Rev. Doug Smith, minister delegate from the Classis of Canadian Prairies.