

GENERAL SYNOD
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

2024 Journal of Actions
Meeting 11
Monday afternoon - June 17, 2024
Arizona Ballroom

CALL TO ORDER

The president called to order the eleventh meeting of the General Synod at 1:32 p.m. on Monday, June 17, 2024. The Rev. Katherine Alley, regular delegate from the Classis of Central Iowa, offered prayer.

VIDEO

Delegates viewed a brief video from the Rev. Paige Pugh, regarding recognizing the presence and work of God during times of discernment.

ELECTION OF VICE PRESIDENT OF GENERAL SYNOD, CONTINUED

The president invited the Rev. Dr. Patricia Sealy, corresponding delegate from the Commission of Nominations, and the following vice presidential candidates to the platform:

- Israel Camacho, regular delegate from the Classis of the Southwest
- The Rev. Sarah Palsma, regular delegate from the Classis of Rochester
- The Rev. Grace Jeeyoon Rim, regular delegate from the Regional Synod of New York

Rev. Dr. Sealy introduced each candidate. Each candidate addressed the Synod.

The Revs. Elizabeth (Beth) Carroll and Brian Keepers, although nominated as vice presidential candidates in meeting 9, declined the nomination.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED

The president called upon the Rev. Brian Engel, corresponding delegate from the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, and Tony Schmid, treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, to the platform to present the report of the office of finance (GS Workbook pp. 50-61). Rev. Engel and Mr. Schmid addressed the Synod.

F 24-1 was presented to the house (GS Workbook p. 61).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend F 24-1, as follows (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken):

To approve a General Synod 2025 covenant shares rate of 2.5 percent, of which ~~\$207,500-10 percent~~ would be provided to theological education, and \$30,000 would be reserved for future General Synod special initiatives.

VOTED: To reject the amendment to F 24-1 (yes 58, no 117).

VOTED: To adopt F 24-1 (yes 157, no 19).

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OVERTURES AND NEW BUSINESS,
CONTINUED

The president called upon the Rev. Janelle Lopez-Koolhaas, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to continue its report. The Rev. Lopez-Koolhaas addressed the Synod.

In response to Overtures 1, 2, and 3 (GS Workbook pp. 156-158), ONB 24-1 was presented to the house (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 1, pp. 2-3). It reads as follows:

To direct the Covenant Shares Review Committee to consider the concerns raised in these overtures as it continues its required three-year review of the Covenant Shares model.

Reasons:

1. The mechanism already exists for review of the new model through the review committee created by the General Synod in EC 19-10 (*MGS 2019*, pp. 52-53).
2. A mechanism also already exists for classes to request assessment relief from the GSC on behalf of churches in cases of extreme hardship.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 24-1 (yes 158, no 12).

In response to Overture 4 (GS Workbook p. 159), ONB 24-2 was presented to the house (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 1, p. 3). It reads as follows:

To direct the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the General Synod Council, to propose amendments to the *Book of Church Order* that will permit the General Synod to pay travel expenses for delegates outside the current limitations contained in *BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 3, Section 7, for report to General Synod 2025.

Reasons:

1. The committee strongly encourages a posture of supporting delegates from outside the U.S. and Canada to enjoy the full privilege of attending General Synod for our mutual benefit.
2. There are complex financial and logistical considerations inherent in this proposal, which warrant further consideration in keeping with our global vision for the Reformed Church in America.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 24-2 (yes 162, no 13).

In response to Overture 6 (GS Workbook pp. 159-161), ONB 24-4 was presented to the house (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 1, p. 4). It reads as follows:

To direct the General Synod Council to develop a policy for the denomination's collection and use of personal data, including gender data and honorifics, that could include an option not to disclose this information; and further,

To study the linguistic implications of this policy in a multilingual denomination.

Reasons:

1. The committee finds compelling pastoral reason to consider the needs reflected in the overture.
2. As a denomination, we should strive to carry out our work in ways that do not cause harm.
3. An option not to disclose gender information is important both for those who are questioning their identity as well as for those who do not feel safe sharing their identity.
4. Translating English communications into other languages, particularly traditionally gendered languages such as Spanish, has additional considerations for implied meaning.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 24-4 (yes 143, no 33).

In response to Overture 7 (GS Workbook p. 161), ONB 24-5 was presented to the house (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 1, p. 4). It reads as follows:

ONB 24-5
To deny Overture 7.

Reasons:

1. The committee believes that maintaining the consistency of timelines with restructuring and plans to move forward is in the best interest of the whole denomination.

2. Because there are two years left to file a petition before the rules and regulations expire, there is still an opportunity to review the possibility of an extension in the future.

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

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 149, no 28).

VOTED: To adopt ONB 24-5 (yes 97, no 79).

VIDEO

Delegates viewed a brief video from the Rev. Kate Meyer, regarding seeking God's direction when discerning a path.

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OVERTURES AND NEW BUSINESS, CONTINUED

The president called upon the Rev. Janelle Lopez-Koolhaas, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to continue its report. The Rev. Lopez-Koolhaas addressed the Synod.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to reconsider the previous vote.

VOTED: To reconsider the vote on ONB 24-5 (yes 136, no 38)

ONB 24-5 was again before the house.

The parliamentarian offered clarification regarding the parliamentary effect of a "yes" or "no" vote on ONB 24-5.

VOTED: To reject ONB 24-5 (yes 67, no 106).

A motion was made and supported from the floor, which reads as follows:

To extend the Mutually Generous Separation regulation (RF 21-3) adopted at General Synod 2021 from its current deadline June 1, 2026 to June 1, 2031.

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

To extend the Mutually Generous Separation regulation (RF 21-3) adopted at General Synod 2021 from its current deadline June 1, 2026 to June 1, ~~2031~~ 2028.

VOTED: To adopt the amendment to the motion (yes 160, no 17).

The amended motion was before the house.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to cease debate, which was ruled out of order by the chair.

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

VOTED: To cease debate (yes 155, no 16).

VOTED: To adopt the amended motion (yes 152, no 24).
The motion as amended and adopted reads as follows:

To extend the Mutually Generous Separation regulation (RF 21-3) adopted at General Synod 2021 from its current deadline June 1, 2026 to June 1, 2028.

In response to Overture 8 (Regional Synod Overtures, supplemental report), ONB 24-6 was presented to the house (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 2, p. 1). It reads as follows:

ONB 24-6

To encourage the Regional Synod of Canada (RSC) to give voice to their needs as participants in the restructuring process to see whether the restructured model and definition of the middle assembly could accomplish their goals; and at the same time,

To encourage the RSC to begin exploring an outline of the structure and polity of their proposed new denomination as it relates to the *RCA Book of Church Order*; and further,

To direct the General Synod president, the general secretary, and their designees to engage in meaningful conversations with the RSC and its classes and congregations as the RSC engages the above processes, both to hear the needs of the Canadian churches and to encourage continued collaboration.

(ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The original overture does not provide sufficient detail to know whether the proposed new denomination would be compatible with current RCA polity such that the RCA could enter into the requested agreements with the proposed new denomination.
2. The examples given in the reasons for Overture 8 regarding the change to affiliate status by the colleges and a seminary is not comparable to a change to covenantal relationships between a denomination and one of its constituent assemblies.
3. However, the committee feels hopeful that there could be an opportunity to remain in communion with the RSC in the developing context of the restructure and to learn from their experiences while offering them the self-definition the Canadian churches desire. The committee further wants to underscore the value of having the Canadian churches as part of the whole body and wants to facilitate further conversation.

VOTED: To adopt ONB 24-6 (yes 158, no 10).

RECESS

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 4:47 p.m., following a closing prayer by the Rev. Olga Shaffer, additional corresponding delegate from the Commission for Women.