

GENERAL SYNOD  
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

2024 Journal of Actions  
**Meeting 7**  
**Saturday afternoon - June 15, 2024**  
**Arizona Ballroom**

CALL TO ORDER

The Rev. Judith Nelson, General Synod president, called to order the seventh meeting of the General Synod at 1:31 p.m. on Saturday, June 15, 2024. Ellen Awad, regular delegate from Classis of Holland, offered prayer.

VIDEO

Delegates viewed a brief video by Chaplain Shelly-Ann Richmond about not growing weary in the process of discernment.

TABLE DISCUSSION

The president invited the delegates to share at their table about how each would explain why a stranger should affiliate with the RCA.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHURCH ORDER

The president called upon the Rev. Christopher Jacobsen, moderator of the Commission on Church Order, and the Rev. Stephen Shaffer, moderator of the advisory committee on Church Order and Governance, to present the commission's report (GS Workbook pp. 236-281) and the advisory committee's advice. Rev. Jacobsen addressed the Synod.

CO 24-1 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to vote in favor of CO 24-1 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 1).

**VOTED:** To adopt CO 24-1 (GS Workbook p. 240) (yes 172;  
no 3).

CO 24-2 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to vote in favor of CO 24-2 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 1).

**VOTED:** To adopt CO 24-2 (GS Workbook pp. 241-242)  
(yes 172; no 3).

CO 24-3 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. Shaffer to provide the advice of the advisory committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to vote in favor of CO 24-3 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance, p. 2).

**VOTED:** To adopt CO 24-3 (GS Workbook pp. 242-246)  
(yes 176; no 3).

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND EDUCATION

The president called upon the Rev. Bradley VanderWaal, corresponding delegate from the Commission on Christian Discipleship and Education, to present its report (GS Workbook pp. 207-210). Rev. VanderWaal addressed the Synod.

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HISTORY

The president called upon the Rev. Katlyn DeVries, moderator of the Commission on History to present its report (GS Workbook pp. 282-291). Rev. DeVries addressed the Synod.

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The president called upon the Rev. Cory Grimm, corresponding delegate from the Commission on Christian Worship, to present its report (GS Workbook pp. 231-235). Rev. Grimm addressed the Synod.

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY

The president called upon the Rev. James Brumm, corresponding delegate from the Commission of Theology, and the Rev. Janelle López-Koolhaas, moderator of the advisory committee on Overtures and New Business, to present the commission's report (GS Workbook pp. 301-315) and the advisory committee's advice. Rev. Brumm addressed the Synod.

TH 24-1 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. López-Koolhaas to provide the advice of the Advisory Committee. The advice of the advisory committee was to vote in favor of TH 24-1 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business - Part 1, p. 3).

**VOTED:** To adopt TH 24-1 (GS Workbook p. 303) (yes 167;  
no 9).

TH 24-2 was presented to the house.

The president called upon Rev. López-Koolhaas to provide the advice of the advisory committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to vote in favor of TH 24-2 (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business - Part 1, p. 3).

**VOTED:** To adopt TH 24-2 (GS Workbook p. 314) (yes 156; no 18).

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION

The president called upon Cameron Van Kooten Laughead, moderator of the Commission on Christian Action, and the Rev. Janelle López-Koolhaas, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to present the commission's report (GS Workbook, pp. 200-206) and advisory committee's advice. Mr. Van Kooten Laughead addressed the Synod.

CA 24-1 was presented to the house (GS Workbook, p. 202).

The president called upon Rev. López-Koolhaas to provide the advice of the Advisory Committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to amend CA 24-1 as follows (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business – Part 1, p. 1) (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken).

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, and the United States ambassador to the United Nations ~~advocating for a~~ commending the work toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as a letter to the prime minister of Canada commending his call for the same; and further,

To direct the general secretary to send a communication to the churches and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to write to their representatives, senators, or members of Parliament to advocate for a ceasefire and recommitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine, as well as sharing with them the resources listed in this report.

Reasons:

1. This is an ongoing situation that has changed since the report was originally written, and we feel that this best reflects the current circumstances and encourages ongoing attention.

2. The committee also felt that the resources shared in this report are important to be shared with the entire denomination to equip congregations for meaningful dialogue and advocacy.

**VOTED:** To adopt the amendment to CA 24-1 (yes 166; no 12).

CA 24-1 as amended was before the house. It reads as follows:

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, and the United States ambassador to the United Nations commending the work toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as a letter to the prime minister of Canada commending his call for the same; and further,

To direct the general secretary to send a communication to the churches and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to write to their representatives, senators, or members of Parliament to advocate for a ceasefire and recommitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine, as well as sharing with them the resources listed in this report.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to further amend CA 24-1 (additions are underlined):

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, and the United States ambassador to the United Nations commending the work toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as a letter to the prime minister of Canada commending his call for the same; and further,

To direct the general secretary to send a communication to the churches and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to write to their representatives, senators, or members of Parliament to advocate for both sides to agree to a ceasefire and recommitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine, as well as sharing with them the resources listed in this report.

**VOTED:** To adopt the amendment to CA 24-1 (yes 132; no 38).

CA 24-1 as twice amended was before the house. It reads as follows:

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, and the United States ambassador to the United Nations commending the work toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as a letter to the prime minister of Canada commending his call for the same; and further,

To direct the general secretary to send a communication to the churches and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to write to their representatives, senators, or members of Parliament to advocate for both sides to agree to a ceasefire and recommitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine, as well as sharing with them the resources listed in this report.

**VOTED:** To adopt the twice amended CA 24-1 (yes 141; no 32).

CA 24-2 was presented to the house (GS Workbook, p. 206).

The president called upon Rev. Lopez-Koolhaus to provide the advice of the Advisory Committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to amend CA 24-2 as follows (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business – Part 1, pp. 1-2) (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken):

To direct the General Synod Council to undertake study on spiritual abuse, utilizing resources from CBE International, Tears of Eden, and others listed in the Commission on Christian Action’s report to the 2024 General Synod, as well as opening communication with My Sanctuary Healing and other RCA connected spiritual abuse professionals to explore resources that may be shared and/or developed for use in RCA congregations, assemblies, and affiliated institutions; and further,

To provide an initial report to the 2025 General Synod and a second report to the 2026 General Synod reporting back to the 2025 General Synod.

Reasons:

1. The committee acknowledges that this needs to be both an immediate and ongoing priority, given the weight and impact of this topic.
2. The additional year will give the GSC more time, since a report in 2025 would give them less than a year to do the work.

3. The language of “second report” rather than “complete” or “final” was intentional, recognizing that this will be long-term, ongoing reflection and action.

**VOTED:** To adopt the amendment to CA 24-2 (yes 165; no 12)

CA 24-2 as amended was before the house. It reads as follows:

To direct the General Synod Council to undertake study on spiritual abuse, utilizing resources from CBE International, Tears of Eden, and others listed in the Commission on Christian Action’s report to the 2024 General Synod, as well as opening communication with My Sanctuary Healing and other RCA connected spiritual abuse professionals to explore resources that may be shared and/or developed for use in RCA congregations, assemblies, and affiliated institutions; and further,

To provide an initial report to the 2025 General Synod and a second report to the 2026 General Synod.

**VOTED:** To adopt CA 24-2 as amended (yes 159; no 15).

## VIDEO

Delegates viewed a brief video by Chaplain Andrew Bossardet about using the values one lives by in the process of discernment.

## REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

The president called upon the Rev. Kelvin Spooner, corresponding delegate from the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, and the Rev. Janelle López-Koolhaas, moderator of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, to present the commission’s report (GS Workbook, pp. 293-300) and the advisory committee’s advice. Rev. Spooner addressed the Synod.

RE 24-1 was presented to the house (GS Workbook, p. 296).

The president called upon Rev. López-Koolhaas to provide the advice of the Advisory Committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to refer RE 24-1 to the Commission on Church Order (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business – Part 1, p. 2).

To refer RE 24-1 to the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, to incorporate the ideas contained in RE 24-1 into the Bylaws of the General Synod.

Reason:

1. The committee affirms the need for the original recommendation, and would encourage commissions to begin the requested consultation with racial and ethnic councils, but acknowledges that the mechanism for implementation has not yet been developed because GSC does not have authority to direct the commissions.

**VOTED:** To refer RE 24-1 to the Commission on Church Order (yes 163; no 10).

RE 24-2 was presented to the house (GS Workbook p. 296).

The president called upon Rev. López-Koolhaas to provide the advice of the Advisory Committee. The advice of the Advisory Committee was to vote in favor of RE 24-2 to the Commission on Church Order (Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business – Part 1, p. 2).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend RE 24-2 as follows (additions are underlined):

To direct each General Synod commission to participate in an antiracism training that clearly states that racism affects people of all colors at least once every two years. The training is to include discussion of how the RCA's antiracism policy affects the commission's work. This training can coincide with opportunities offered through or approved by the RCA Office of Diversity and Belonging; working through the staff office will enable commissions to find trainings that are both meaningful and do not have additional budgetary impact.

**VOTED:** To not adopt the amendment to RE 24-2 (yes 60; no 115).

RE 24-2 in its original form was again before the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt RE 24-2 (yes 161; no 16).

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON NOMINATIONS

The president called upon the Rev. Dr. Patricia Sealy, moderator of the Commission on Nominations, to present its report. Rev. Dr. Sealy addressed the Synod.

N 24-1 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt N 24-1 (Supplemental Report of the Commission on Nominations, pp. 4-5) (yes 170; no

2).

N 24-2 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt N 24-2 (Supplemental Report of the Commission on Nominations, p. 5) (yes 167; no 2).

## RECESS

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 4:54 p.m., following a closing prayer by Janet Paduano Cardillo, regular delegate from the Classis of Queens.