

New Mailing Address: Synod of the Covenant, P.O. Box 2751, Toledo, OH 43606
email address is ac.covenant@pcusa.org

March 13, 2020

The peace of Jesus Christ be with you all. And may you all be well and safe in this uncertain season of distress over spreading illness. We offer this passage of scripture you surely know well, as a reminder of God's power and desire for us to be reconciled to God and to each other: 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, ^[a] not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." This is our blessed assurance and God's instruction to us.

This message is intended to bring you up to date on the status of the work of the Administrative Commission (AC). Once the Commission assumed Original Jurisdiction of the Synod of the Covenant, it effectively became the Assembly. The exception to this is the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission members who have been previously elected remain in place, and will be called upon as needed, by new Stated Clerk Richard Rojas. The Commission seeks to restore jurisdiction as soon as it observes readiness of the Synod's system to operate and be able to function and be self-managing. Restoration of jurisdiction is likely to involve affirmation of previously elected commissioners from presbyteries or the possibility that some presbyteries may decide to elect others to serve.

Newly elected officers of the Synod of the Covenant are: Stated Clerk, Corporate Secretary and Vice-Treasurer Reverend Richard Rojas; President and Chair of the Board of Trustees Ruling Elder Ben McConaughy; Vice President Ruling Elder Michelle Johnson; Treasurer Reverend Brady Radford; Moderator Ruling Elder Patrice Hatley; Vice Moderator Reverend Adel Malek. Reverend Sue Krummel is serving as moderator of the Personnel Services Committee, with Michelle Johnson and Brady Radford also serving on the committee.

The new Synod Assembly Personnel Services Committee has received applications from persons seeking to serve the Synod of the Covenant as Transitional Synod Executive. The position description is included as an attachment to this message and was advertised in Association of Mid-Council Leaders Matters Google Group. We anticipate a person will be able to start soon. He/she will oversee contracting with a professional mediator to begin the process of reconciliation. It will be very important to invite all within the synod system that may benefit from participating in mediation and reconciliation efforts, so we ask for your help in communication with those who may no longer be engaged in the synod operations. Their voices need to be heard. We need to know how to make contact with them.

Caucuses of Persons of Color and Indigenous Persons are encouraged to continue their ministries, as usual; however gatherings of the Synod Council on Ethnic Church Affairs are temporarily on hold. The AC respects the fact that caucuses received funding approvals at the November 2019 Assembly meeting, and will honor that commitment. The transitional synod executive will establish and communicate a process for access to the approved funding.

The Presbytery minutes reviews with Presbytery Stated Clerks will take place in May as previously planned (unless Covid-19 changes this) More on that will be sent directly by Richard Rojas to Stated Clerks of the Presbyteries.

Synod Assembly November 2019 approval of two overtures to 224th General Assembly OVT-009 and OVT-010, has been reported to PC Biz by the former Synod Stated Clerk, and are in the system. OGA staff is helping the AC determine whether an advocate was also reported.

Most programming is suspended through August 2020 in order to facilitate development of a shared sense of mission and ministry across the Synod and to begin to mediate reconciliation and a new sense of communion within the Synod. Structures, processes, and programs will follow and be in alignment with the new mission of the synod, and the resulting reconciliation.

Presbyteries are encouraged to continue per capita and shared mission contributions to the synod and GA, as they normally would. We acknowledge some of your checks have not yet been deposited, but expect that will happen very soon. The mail and banking and accounting processes had to be worked out. We are thankful that the nearby staff Presbytery of Maumee Valley has agreed to help out while we make staff and process changes in the Synod office.

The Synod retreat scheduled for March 2020 is canceled and the Weber Retreat Center has been notified of the cancellation. The \$150 deposit was not refundable.

Mobile Health Fair is suspended this summer. The inoperable vehicle will be sold or donated. No decision has yet been made regarding the future of the MHF, so donations that have been received and designated to purchase a new vehicle will be retained in restricted account until a decision can be made.

The Mission to the USA minister group travel to the Balkans in September is canceled. The October/November MUSA program of visits to the US is on hold until a decision can be made whether to proceed.

Synod Grants and scholarship applications are temporarily suspended through August. If there are approvals required from Synod leadership in order to apply for non-Synod grants, please do send those to ac.covenant@pcusa.org for now. We have passed a presbytery grant request for 1001 NWC seed grant along to PMA within the established timeframes. When a transitional executive is in place, those requests will go to that person.

The Synod website and other social media are being updated to reflect current actions and bring content up to date. You may notice temporary disruption to the website functions as we work through those details. For now, use the ac.covenant@pcusa.org for emails to the synod while we await resolution to the email system for the synod office. A U.S. Post Office Box address has been opened to receive paper mail. Please use this address for all mail to the synod:
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The Commission will host a webinar for anyone in the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant who has interest in keeping up to date on March 31 from 3-4pm ET. Invitations will be sent out early next week.