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MINUTES OF GENERAL SYNOD

MINUTES

OF THE
GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE
ASSOCIATE REFORMED
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(arpchurch.org)

TWO HUNDRED TWENTIETH
STATED MEETING



JUNE 11-13, 2024
BONCLARKEN CONFERENCE CENTER
FLAT ROCK, NC

PROCEEDINGS

The 220th Annual Meeting of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) was held at Bonclarken Conference Center, Flat Rock, NC on June 11-13, 2024.

A Pre-Synod Conference was held Monday afternoon and evening. Various events and gatherings were sponsored by different groups during the week.

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024

Registration and sign-in for the General Synod 2024 was held in the Patrick Room of The Young Lodge from 8 A.M until 12 Noon.

The Moderator's Committee on Memorials met at 10 A.M. Several presbyteries met during the morning hours.

The Opening Worship began at 1:15 P.M. in the Youth Activity Building.

OPENING WORSHIP 220th Annual Meeting General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Prelude Music	Rob Roy McGregor III, Organist
Call to Worship	
Song: <i>The Holiness of God</i> (The ARP Psalter #187)	
The Constituting of the General Synod	Rob Patrick
Welcome	Chip Sherer
Memorial Service Listing of Deceased Ministers, Synod Moderators and Ruling Elders	David Smith
Sermon: <i>The Priority of Eternity</i> <i>Scripture reference: Hebrews 12:18-29</i>	Rob Patrick
Song: <i>I Love the Lord</i> (first two stanzas)	
Administration of the Lord's Supper	Justin Brickey Scott Moore
Song: <i>I Love the Lord</i> (last stanza)	
Benediction	

(See Appendix for the tributes and the list of deceased Elders.)

Following Opening Worship, Synod's Business Meeting began.

Vice-Moderator Elect Bob Elliott presented the proposed program for the 2024 Meeting of the General Synod. The program was approved.

Special acknowledgements were made for Bonclarken hosting Synod 2024, Rob Roy McGregor III as musician for Synod 2024, and Synod Pages (Elijah Hoyer, Rufus Terry, and Scottie Crawford, William Lewis, Ryan Gladden, and Josh Starnes.)

Vice-Moderator Elliott proceeded with introductions. The following were called forward to introduce themselves:

Ministers who have been received and/or ordained since the 2023 General Synod Meeting.

New Missions/Congregations which have joined the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church since the 2023 General Synod Meeting.

Seminary and special students under care of presbytery since Synod 2023.

Honorably Retired ARP Ministers in 2023.

Principal Clerk Kyle Sims constituted the Roll. A quorum was established. *(See Appendix for the Official Roll of Synod)*

Sims called for reports of reference. He pointed out that a discrepancy has been discovered in some of our Synod documents which has existed for many years regarding the amount of time the Synod reports should be in the hands of delegates prior to the meeting. Some documents say 30 days, while another indicates six weeks.

A motion **CARRIED**

that all reports be received by Synod.

Retiring Moderator Rob Patrick gave his Retiring Moderator's Address.

At the conclusion of last year's Synod meeting, I was commending our non-ARP Central Service employees when I suggested that I think they may love the ARP Church more than I do. After the fact I wondered if some might have misunderstood what I meant, and assumed that I was expressing a lack affection or appreciation for our denomination. I do love the ARP Church! I was baptized into the ARP Church as a child and have never been a member of any other denomination.

But sometimes any of us may quite unintentionally take for granted or neglect the very things or people that we should love the most. In that regard, the careful attention and daily faithfulness of our Central Services employees who are not members of the ARP Church may present a stark contrast to the level of attention and devotion some of us give to the church and its work, outside of the priority of gathering for worship on the Lord's Day. It may even be the case that there are ARP Church members for whom gathering for worship does not hold the priority that it should!

As I reflect upon this year of service as Moderator, I hope that our emphasis on the priority of worship has been both encouraging and challenging for our Synod. But as this year ends, I want to emphasize that much ministry and spiritual engagement on the part of church members

throughout every week is required for the faithful maintenance of this great priority. In our local congregations, the continual service both of officers and church members undergirds Lord's Day worship. Beyond the local church, the ongoing work of Presbyteries and our General Synod is vital to the maintenance of faithful worship and witness throughout our denomination.

So what happens if there is a lack of love for the church? In any local congregation, if no one is engaged in its ministry week by week; if Elders and Deacons expect the minister to attend to the needs of a congregation all by himself; if there is no congregational involvement in gatherings for prayer and Bible Study; if there is no initiative among church members to engage others with the gospel and to invite others to church; it is inevitable that worship will suffer from neglect! When we gather together for public worship on the first day of the week, all that we do in offering ourselves to the LORD is undergirded and informed by our public and private worship and our service rendered to Him through all the days of the preceding week. If Christians are disengaged from the Lord of the church and the life of the church throughout the week, our worship, and the spiritual life of the church, will be deleteriously affected.

It's not just the local church that is affected when there is a lack of engagement or investment in the life of the church. Local churches supply those who serve the larger church. Presbyteries and Synod need those who represent our local churches as officers in their courts, and in service to committees and agencies. When there are not enough willing, equipped, and spiritually engaged representatives, our committees and agencies suffer! As a result, the ARP denomination is weakened.

I'm old enough to remember the debate several decades ago when Synod created the position of Coordinator. I clearly recall the strong warning voiced on the floor of Synod by the Reverend Jamie Hunt, who raised concern for a "creeping federalism" in the ARP Church. Whenever the courts of the church move to hire or appoint individuals to assist in the work of the courts, it becomes all too easy for presbyters to sit back and just assume everything will be taken care of. The more capable those appointed are, the more likely others will sit on their hands, expecting them to do all the work! Without casting any aspersions upon the fine men who filled the position of Synod's Coordinator before it was eliminated by Synod, I can say that Jamie's concerns were proven valid. When Elders and church members sit back, a void of activity in engagement and service is created. Capable people hired or appointed to positions of leadership will fill that void. That's what capable people do! But this can become a trap. When individuals are left to do the work of the courts of the church, they are put in the tenuous position of acting in behalf of the church.

This danger does not exist only when there is a Coordinator of Synod. It is ever present when we who ought to love and serve the church of Jesus Christ are content with disengagement, expecting others to "pick up the slack." As a result, officers of Synod and Presbyteries, out of necessity, can feel the need to "step up" and "fill in the gap" when things need to get done, and there is not a supply of engaged officers ready to do the work of the church. As with past Synod Coordinators, I have no intention of casting aspersions at any present or past officers of Presbyteries or Synod! But the reality is that when members of our churches are not fully engaged in the life of the church, there is a negative impact on Presbyteries and Synod. The work required is not reduced, but the number of those sharing the load may be. As a consequence, responsibility, and even authority, can be exercised outside of the principles of our biblical Presbyterian system of government. The intent of those at work may not be at all malicious. They are stepping up to fill the void of those who are not engaged! But filling the gap can become habitual, enjoyable, or even

intoxicating. One can feel very useful and productive in offering needed service to the church, all the while one is doing work that is properly done through the ministry of the Eldership.

At issue is the priority of the life of the church in which we are called to worship our risen Savior. We exist for His glory! But the glory we offer Him in worship requires a prioritization of the life of the church in our daily service. In an age where regard for long-standing institutions is falling rapidly, from our civil government and political parties to revered educational institutions, the church is not unscathed. More and more, there are those who claim they want to serve God, but prefer to do it outside of the church. There is nothing biblical about this impulse! By its very nature, the church is a called out and gathered people. We belong to the Lord Jesus by right of purchase and the work of the Spirit of adoption. Because we have been united to Jesus Christ, we are joined together in His body. We cannot afford to neglect the body!

The priority of the life of the church requires that church members be engaged and involved both locally in congregations, and in the larger church. Elders who serve as delegates to Presbytery and Synod, along with ministers, need to beat the drum in our local congregations regarding opportunities for service on committees. None should be content to simply “fill a slot,” but all should be eager to serve in the overflow of spiritual growth and love for Christ and His church that is fostered by faithful gospel ministry in our local congregations. All Christians are blessed by the Lord with spiritual gifts for service to Christ’s church. Larger churches may have a greater assortment of gifts, but in our denomination, we need willing, eager representatives from all of our churches who will commit themselves to the service to the larger church. Our committees and agencies need the input that comes from churches that are at the heart of who we historically have been- predominantly small town and rural congregations of Christ’s people.

During my year of service as Moderator I have seen many people eagerly serving the ARP Church. But some are doing too much. They act out of necessity because there are not enough laborers stepping up. That is healthy neither for them nor for the church. We have a tremendous need for those who love the Lord to follow Him, denying themselves and taking up the cross of service to Christ. As John writes in 1 John 3:18, “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” The remedy to a creeping federalism is a growing love for Christ that feeds a growing love for His church that leads to engagement in the work of His church as we seek the advance of the gospel throughout our communities and to the ends of the earth. Do you love the ARP Church? Are you willing to serve? Are you willing to encourage others to serve? May our love and engagement at least match that our of faithful non-ARP Central Services employees, and may the worship of our glorious Savior increase!

Rob Patrick

Following his address, Rob Patrick presented the Moderator-Elect, Alan Broyles, to the Synod and transferred the Moderator’s Shield to Mr. Broyles. Mr. Broyles then presented the Retiring Moderator’s Bible to Mr. Patrick.

Moderator Broyles presented his Moderator’s Challenge to the Synod.

To the ends of the Earth – together!

This is the theme of Synod this year, and it comes from a need to focus on the efforts of our denomination in several key aspects of church work.

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-19). “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

I will ask the following people to join me on the stage:

Dr. Steve Adamson, President of Erskine College & Theological Seminary

Mr. Alan Avera, Executive Director of Outreach North America

Mr. Alex Pettett, Executive Director of World Witness

Mr. Chip Sherer, President of Bonclarken

Mrs. Martha McKenzie, President of the ARPC Women’s Ministries

Dr. Robbie Bell, Chairman of the Dunlap Orphanage Board

Mr. Jeff Lesslie, Executive Director of the Brice-Sanders Foundation

Mrs. Cindy Scott, Executive Director of the ARPC Central Services

These are the people who have the primary responsibility for implementing the various denominational programs that the Synod has mandated. Over time the form or composition of these various agencies will change, but each one exists to address a specific area of need or ministry discipline. None of these agencies is more or less important than any of the others – their scope of work and sphere of responsibility may differ greatly, but each one contributes to the overall mission of the ARP Church AND to the spread of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In other words, even though Erskine or World Witness or ONA reach thousands of people a year, they are no more important to the Lord’s work than the Dunlap Orphanage Foundation.

And if you doubt this, let me remind you of the parable Jesus told His disciple in Matthew 18:12-14. “If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

So don’t think the impact is measured ONLY by the number of church members you have, or by how much money your church spends on missions, or how many of this or that your church or organization has or does or spends – the impact is how what you are doing affects others, and are you being obedient to God in what you do and where you do it.

So, there we have it - we are to go make disciples – to be witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem, in our hometown and community. This is the primary function of the local church. In Judea, throughout our state and even our nation this is what ONA does by planting churches all across our country. Next, Jesus said to go to Samaria. Why would He tell the disciples to go to Samaria, which is the LAST place any self-respecting Jew would go? Well, I think that is exactly the point. Wherever your Samaria is, the place that is at the bottom of your list for a mission destination, could be Africa, Central America, or my least favorite place New York City which is where we are to go next. And once we get rid of the “I ain’t going there” attitude, then we are free to go to the ends of the earth. In other words, there is no place we can go that we are excused from our duty to be a disciple and witness for Jesus – nowhere! WHEREVER WE ARE – whether we GO intentionally or we are just going about the business of living life day-to-day – we are to be His witness.

I grew up in a little Baptist church about 30 miles from here. During most of those years, the minister there was Rev. Thomas Ervin, and as I recall about one Sunday a month he would preach on the Great Commission. And at the end of each of those sermons, he would always ask the question: "WHAT PART OF 'GO' DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND?"

So this is WHAT Jesus commanded us to do just before He left earth to return to heaven: Teach, baptize, disciple, feed, clothe, welcome strangers, visit those in prison and hospitals – all these things paint a picture of Christian faith in action. In James 2 the apostle says that faith that does not do these things is DEAD!

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

Matthew Henry, a Welsh preacher in the 1700s, "The LORD so variously orders and disposes of the circumstances of his people in this world, that while some are in a condition to give relief, others are in need of it. Works of charity and benefit, according to our ability, are necessary to salvation and there will be more stress laid upon them in the judgment on that great day than is commonly imagined. These must be the proofs of our love, and of our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ."

My challenge to you is this: commit your church to a two-year effort to be a partner (or advocate) for one of the ministries that are part of the ARP denomination: Erskine College and Seminary, World Witness, Outreach North America, Bonclarken, Brice-Sanders Foundation (Camp JOY), Dunlap Orphanage Foundation, the ARP Women Ministries, or ARP Central Services. How you may choose to do this is entirely up to you. You might want to take a look at the GO2 Advocate program that ONA and World Witness recently implemented to get some ideas, but my intent here is to challenge you and your church to get to a higher level in your service to the Kingdom and to offer several choices as to how you might accomplish that goal. As an example, a particular church might consider sending a group to help at a Camp Joy session, or perhaps another may send volunteers to put on a VBS session at an ONA church plant, or another may choose to send volunteers here to Bonclarken for the annual work-week, or even a work-day. Erskine College and Seminary have a number of efforts going that could greatly benefit from having churches as partners or advocates.

If this idea of being an advocate for one of our ARP agencies is a little intimidating, there are other ways get involved in serving – to sort of ease into the waters: you could commit to ringing the Salvation Army bell at Walmart this Christmas, or volunteering at the local soup kitchen, or the crisis pregnancy center. All these are good ways to get out of our "comfort zone" and into the battle. Our church in Rock Hill is planning to send a group of teenagers to Rwanda in Africa for a week this summer to work with Erskine's Global Diploma program. I am particularly impressed with a few of these young people because they do not seem to be intimidated in the least at the prospect of flying halfway around the world to spend a week in an environment that they will not be able to comprehend for weeks after they return. But they are willing– even eager– to go.

The idea here is to go beyond what is "comfortable" and as most of you know, until we get uncomfortable with our daily routine nothing is going to change. I do not intend to insult anyone here, but for many of us, we are satisfied to do the bare minimum: we give a few

dollars to the Denominational Ministry Fund at Easter and Thanksgiving, and maybe attend a session at our churches Missions Festival, but doing much more than that is really pushing it.

Getting out of our “comfort zone” is essential to moving from passive spectators to active participants in the work of the Kingdom. For some of us, TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH means going across the street to share the Good News with a neighbor; for others, it may mean flying 10,000 miles to a country whose name you can’t even pronounce to share the Good News. Let this Synod meeting be the launching point for you and your church in getting out of your “comfort zone” and doing something meaningful for Christ and His kingdom. And then you will have a good answer when someone asks you, “What part of GO do you not understand.”

Alan Broyles

Moderator Broyles introduced Martha McKenzie, President of ARPWM, who brought greetings to the Synod.

I look over this assembly and could be fairly frightened. I see, however, friends - friends I grew up with in the Lake Wales ARP Church, friends with whom I attend Bartow ARP Church, former pastors - thank you - and former Camp Joy counselors who were in my Bible classes over the years. I see Bonclarken friends and neighbors, too. I love our denomination because it has remained true to the inerrant, infallible Word of God. I love that so many of us know one another, and pray for one another.

The Women of the ARP denomination was organized in 1915 as the Women’s Missionary Society. Our title has evolved, but we are still a missionary-supporting group. Over the years, we have solely supported women missionaries, who became known as our Jubilee Birthday Ladies. They were given that title on the 50th year of existence. I am so honored to say that in 2025 it will be the hundredth anniversary of the Jubilee Birthday Ladies. I’m sure these names are not new to many of you. Miss Mary Lesslie, Miss Minnie Alexander, Mrs. Janet White, Mrs. Imogene Covone, Dr. Margaret White, Mrs. Jerri Lotze, Mrs. Melanie Seeger, Mrs. Pam Brunson, Ms. Judi Hodges, Mrs. Judy Buis, Mrs. Nanette Howard, Mrs. Shelia Osborne, and Ms. Rebecca Carson. Shelia and Rebecca are our current Jubilee Birthday Ladies.

I am proud we are continuing to support those who have, are, and will continue to. spread the Love of our Savior where God has placed them. If you have any say-so in the matter, let’s have Jubilee Birthday celebrations in every church this upcoming year.

Martha McKenzie
ARPWM President

Principal Clerk Sims announced that all overtures were approved by presbyteries.

A motion **CARRIED**:

That the Synod meeting schedule be amended to present the Special Committee Report on Second Presbytery immediately following the fraternal delegate greeting Wednesday morning.

The report of the **Special Committee on Church Officers and Secret Societies** was presented.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY CHURCH OFFICERS AND SECRET SOCIETIES

The Special Moderator's Committee met several times during the past year. Members of the committee were Stephen Jordan (chairman), Billy Carnes, Charles Hammond, Bill McKay, Mark Miller, Tim Phillips, and Andy Webb. The purpose of the Moderator's Committee on Secret Societies was set by the following motion made at the 2023 meeting of General Synod: "That Synod approves a moderator's committee for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on the matter of church officers and secret societies, and that the work done thus far by the Theological and Social Concerns Committee (T&SC) on the issue of secret societies be provided to such a moderator's committee as a starting point."

Scope of the Committee Work

The primary focus of the committee's work was twofold. Firstly, the committee was tasked with conducting a thorough study and providing recommendations regarding the involvement of church officers with secret societies. Secondly, the committee was tasked with utilizing the groundwork laid by the T&SC Committee as a foundational starting point for its deliberations. In reviewing the history of motions and prior work conducted, the committee aimed to build upon existing knowledge and insights to inform its findings and recommendations. The following is a history of those motions:

June 2019: *"Therefore, the Canadian Presbytery memorializes the General Synod of the ARP to direct the Theological and Social Concerns Committee to study and compile the scriptural teaching on 'secret societies' and create a policy and draft a public statement regarding membership in such societies;"* **SYNOD APPROVED**

June 2020: *"That General Synod grant the Committee on Theological and Social Concerns another year to study the issue of membership in the Masonic Lodge and that we be allowed to report back to the 2021 General Synod."* **SYNOD APPROVED**

June 2021: There was no report from the Theological and Social Concerns Committee to General Synod, and therefore there was no request nor permission

from the floor of General Synod to extend the work to 2022 as directed in the approved motion from 2020.

June 2022: *“That the committee be permitted another year to conduct interviews and complete the paper on Freemasonry.”* **SYNOD APPROVED**; and further,

“That the Theological and Social Concerns Committee be dissolved as a standing committee of Synod upon completion of its previously assigned tasks.” **SYNOD APPROVED**

June 2023: *“That Synod approve a moderator’s committee for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on the matter of church officers and secret societies, and that the work done thus far by the T&SC Committee on the issue of secret societies be provided to such a moderator’s committee as a starting point.”* **SYNOD APPROVED**; and further,

“That the Theological and Social Concerns Committee be dissolved as a standing committee of Synod.” **SYNOD APPROVED**

The motion from General Synod (June 2023), which formed this special moderator’s committee, did not contain that same specific language as the original memorial from the Canadian Presbytery in 2019. As such, the committee’s mandate was “for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on the matter of church officers and secret societies,” while using the work that had been done by the Theological and Social Concerns Committee as a starting point.

Furthermore, Synod encouraged the committee working on this issue to examine funeral rites and to interview both current and former Freemasons who are officers in the ARP church. The work that was undertaken was a good-faith effort to encapsulate these concerns and make a recommendation to the General Synod of the ARPC.

Questions of Stewardship

In Christ’s Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), we are reminded that all power and skills come from God. In completing this work, the committee was mindful that gifts and talents are bestowed upon us for the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom. Affiliation with any organization is primarily a question of stewardship. While all will be responsible to the Lord concerning how they use their time, talents, and treasure, church officers have a heightened responsibility. Those with authority must exercise discernment and fidelity to biblical principles in every aspect of life, including affiliations and associations. The Word of God, alongside the Standards of the ARP, and especially the Westminster Confession of Faith, offers indispensable guidance for navigating the complexities of involvement in secret societies.

Definition of Secret Societies

It is important to note that the term “secret society” can be very broad and subjective. This has been evident as the committee has explored questions of whether a group

fits the criteria. Even the floor debate at General Synod on this motion included questions about which groups were included and excluded.

Therefore, the committee has set a definition for secret societies:

Secret Society - A secret society is an organization that conceals major aspects of itself. The clandestine aspects of such an organization can involve things such as: membership, symbols, codes, initiations, rites and rituals, purpose (whether cultural, social, political, or religious), goals, governance, beliefs, activities, agenda, communications, and access.

Freemasons as a case study

Summary of interviews

At the direction of Synod and the history of previous motions, the Society of Freemasons was chosen as a case study for the current investigation. The committee conducted interviews with both current and former members of Freemasonry who were officers within the ARP church. The interviews were structured around a set of 44 questions and ranged in duration from 45 minutes to two hours. Participants spanned an age range of 39 to 79 years old. Conducting interviews with active Masons posed some challenges due to their commitment to secrecy. Roughly an equal number of interviews were conducted with current and former Freemasons. Almost all the interviewees expressed strong opinions, both for and against, regarding the involvement of church officers in Freemasonry.

Active members tended to characterize Freemasonry as a fraternity with religious undertones, while former members often viewed it as a religion, a religious fraternity, or a religious cult. Some ARP officers who are former Masons discussed the religious rituals, prayers, altars, symbols of deity, and presence of Holy Books, making involvement problematic at the least. The greater difficulty for former members was their view that Masonic teachings of theology regarding sanctification, salvation, and the afterlife were incompatible with their Christian life. This was very evident in their experiences of Masonic funerals where it is affirmed that the deceased brother has ascended to the Masonic heaven and shall in due time be resurrected due to their living a moral life as a Mason. One interviewee reported his attempts to evangelize within the organization and invite people to church was often met with the simple retort, "The Lodge IS my church."

ARP officers who are current Masons expressed their belief that the rituals and rites either complemented their Christian life or were separated from their walk with the Lord. Many expressed the belief that the rites were very "Christian" and encouraged their walks with the Lord. One current Mason reported he was not active and had joined because his career required a connection to the community. He expressed apathy towards membership and had no convictions either way. He felt like his membership was no different than any other club. Furthermore, there were notable discrepancies in experiences across different lodges. While all Freemasons are required to profess belief in a deity, religious fidelity varies across communities. One such area that was explored concerned the invocation of the name of Christ.

When asked about the invocation of the name of Christ, three practices were reported. 1. The name of Christ was not allowed to be used. 2. The name of Christ was al-

lowed to be used. 3. The name of Christ was allowed to be used outside of the formal meeting. One reason that was given for the absence of the name of Christ during the formal lodge meetings was that these meetings are all scripted precisely as to every word that is to be uttered. This script for meetings is to be followed and there is no allowed deviation. One current member reported that a pastor in his lodge, out of habit, added the name of Christ in a scripted prayer and was later corrected. The correction was, "not because he said Jesus Christ, but because he did not follow the script". Another reported that the chaplain of his lodge always used the name of Christ in his prayers as he held that conviction. One ex-Freemason, who had served as a chaplain, had been rebuked for praying in Jesus' name and reminded that Masonic prayers had to be non-sectarian. Current Masons generally perceived their involvement as complementary to their faith, whereas former members regarded it as incompatible with their Christian lives.

One prominent point of contention raised during the interviews was the issue of blood oaths, a traditional criticism of Freemasonry, particularly in light of passages such as Matthew 5:33-37. The committee was impressed with the willingness of current Masons to consider any possible conflict with Freemasonry and Scripture.

Active members emphasized that Freemasonry should not be perceived as a "secretive society" but rather as "a society that holds certain secrets." Conversely, former members advocated for a clear stance from the Synod opposing officers in the ARPC to hold membership in the Masonic lodge and desired a clear condemnation of the organization.

Overall, the interviews gave the committee a limited view of Freemasonry due to its secretive nature. The writings on the subject held some agreement on some matters but conflicted on others. What was abundantly clear from all interviews was that believers would benefit from asking questions before joining any organization and seeking godly counsel before any such membership is undertaken.

Summary of other denominations' reports

Numerous denominations have undertaken extensive research, formulated opinions, reached conclusions, and established prohibitions regarding Freemasonry. Additionally, there is a plethora of literature, videos, articles, and other resources addressing the topic of Freemasonry. Understanding the nature of the organization and its implications can be challenging. Therefore, the committee advises all individuals interested in this matter to diligently utilize the available resources.

Of particular note, the Christian Reformed Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have all published papers on this subject, which may provide valuable insights to those seeking further understanding. There is an appendix (Appendix 1) attached to this report summarizing those papers.

Questions Every Believer Should Answer Before Considering Membership in a Secret Society or Other Organization

The mandate of the committee was to study and make recommendations concerning church officers' involvement in secret societies. While the Freemasons were within that scope, they were not the focus.

Therefore, a tool was developed to assist ministers, elders, and deacons in dealing with the broad question, "Should a Christian join a specific secret society?" The Lord reveals His will on how we should live through His Word. Since our lives are not our own, but we have been bought with a price, we must be intentional to seek the glory of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20). In seeking the Lord's will, He has given us His Word to help us find the paths we ought to walk. For this reason, the following questions are offered for anyone considering joining a secret society. While this tool was developed with secret societies in mind, the committee hopes it would be a useful tool for any believer considering affiliating with any organization. The committee especially encourages officers to explore these questions with their pastors, teachers, and scholars before joining any secret society.

Alignment of Vows:

1. How do the vows required by the organization align with the vows you have made before God, such as ARP member vows, ARP officer vows, or marriage vows?

Biblical Alignment:

2. How are the vows, theology, distinctives, rituals, funeral rites, and practices of this organization in line with biblical principles and the ARP confessional standards?

Impact on Christian Stewardship:

3. How will membership in this organization affect your Christian stewardship, including the use of your time, talent, and treasure for the furtherance of God's Kingdom?

Relationship with Local Church:

4. How will your membership in this organization impact your participation in the life of the local church?

Encouragement of Christian Living:

5. How does this organization encourage Christian living, promote Christian morality, and harmonize with Christian ethics?

In hopes of creating a useful tool, the committee created a document (Appendix 2) that has Scripture proofs as well as Westminster references to each of the questions.

Questions concerning Funerals and Religious Rites

The Theological and Social Concerns Committee was tasked with making recommendations on how to handle Freemason funeral rites and their incorporation within Christian funerals. The newest revision of the Directory for Public Worship leaves

some ambiguity on the issue. Thankfully, the Regulative Principle of Worship gives parameters for all worship services conducted within the ARP and a clear answer to this question. It is the ARP Church's position that funeral services are considered to be worship under "Occasional Parts and Special Services". Therefore, many activities are prohibited from being incorporated into worship, such as eulogies, Masonic funerals, and military honors. As such, ministers and sessions are called to be careful guardians of what transpires between the call to worship and the benediction.

We propose that the change be made to the *Directory of Public Worship* V.C.6. which deals with "Funerals and Memorial Services" by adding:

"f. No rites or ceremonies shall be permitted during a funeral worship service that are excluded by the Regulative Principle of Worship. This includes, but is not limited to, eulogies, Masonic funerals, military honors, or various other rites."

Appendix

Appendix 1. Summary of other denominations studies on Freemasons

Appendix 2. Bible Proofs and Westminster Confession References

Officers for 2024-2025: Rev. Stephen Jordan, Convenor

Recommendations:

1. That Synod adopt the "Questions Every Believer Should Answer Before Joining a Secret Society or Other Organizations" along with the Scriptural proofs and the Westminster Confession references (Appendix 1) as a tool for use in churches. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That Synod receive the summary of other denominations' positions concerning secret societies and Freemasonry **as information.** **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That Synod direct the Revisions Committee to change the *Directory of Public Worship* to add section V.C.6.f. **Moderator ruled this OUT OF ORDER.**
4. That the Moderator's Special Committee to Study Church Officers and Secret Societies be dissolved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Appendix 1

Summary of other denominations' studies on Freemasons

A Brief Synopsis of the Similarities Between the Reports of the CRC (1977), OPC (1942), PCA (1988), SBC (1993)

The Various Reports May Be Accessed Online Here:

CRC: <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1977agendaacts.pdf> OPC:

<https://www.opc.org/GA/masonry.html>

PCA: <https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/studies/2-300.pdf> SBC: https://m.chick.com/pdfs/mason_report.pdf

1. All of the Reports had in common that they were based upon interviews with past and present members of the Freemasons, along with materials published by Masonic au-

thorities including Masonic rituals along with explanations of said material by Masonic authorities. They all came to the conclusion, contrary to the opinion of many Freemasons, that there are sufficient amounts of accurate information available in print to come to sound conclusions regarding the compatibility or incompatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity. They also concluded that certain men and books are considered authoritative in Freemasonry, noting that these writers and their works are frequently quoted in Masonic publications.

2. They all concluded that despite protestations of individual Freemasons to the contrary, Freemasonry is a religion. The evidence for that is perhaps best and most concisely synopsisized in the OPC report:

"Is Masonry a Religion? On this score the evidence is overwhelming. There is no room for any reasonable doubt as to Masonry's being a religion. Not only do the symbols, rites, and temples of this order point unmistakably to it as a religion, but a great many Masonic authors of note emphatically declare it to be just that. Of almost numberless quotations that could be given here the committee has selected a few."

J. S. M. Ward, the author of several standard Masonic works, defines religion as "a system of teaching moral truth associated with a belief in God" and then declares: "I consider Freemasonry is a sufficiently organized school of mysticism to be entitled to be called a religion." He goes on to say: "I boldly aver that Freemasonry is a religion, yet in no way conflicts with any other religion, unless that religion holds that no one outside its portals can be saved" (*Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals*, pp. 182, 185, 187).

T. S. Webb says in his *Masonic Monitor*: "The meeting of a Masonic Lodge is strictly a religious ceremony. The religious tenets of Masonry are few, simple, but fundamental. No lodge or Masonic assembly can be regularly opened or closed without prayer" (p. 284).

Albert G. Mackey, General High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of the United States, and the author of numerous works on Masonry, has this to say: "Freemasonry is emphatically a religious institution; it teaches the existence of God. It points to the celestial canopy above where is the Eternal Lodge and where He presides. It instructs us in the way to reach the portals of that distant temple" (*The Mystic Tie*, p. 32). And in his *Lexicon of Freemasonry* the same celebrated authority asserts: "The religion, then, of Masonry is pure Theism" (p. 404).

The God of Christianity is the God of the Bible, the Holy Trinity. Is He also the God of Masonry, or is Masonry's God another? Recognized Masonic authorities themselves supply the answer.

Says T. S. Webb in his *Masonic Monitor*: "So broad is the religion of Masonry, and so carefully are all sectarian tenets excluded from the system, that the Christian, the Jew, and the Mohammedan, in all their numberless sects and divisions, may and do harmoniously combine in its moral and intellectual work, with the Buddhist, the Parsee, the Confucian, and the worshiper of Deity under every form" (p. 285). This amounts to saying that the God of Masonry is that Deity which is worshiped by the adherents of all religions alike. That the Christian conception of God differs essentially from all other conceptions of God and that the God of the Bible is God alone—these truths are ignored and by necessary implication denied."¹

3. All of the reports indicated that Freemasonry is universalist in its perspective, as referenced in the OPC report to that end:

"Christianity claims to be the only true religion and to set forth the one and only way of salvation. Christ Himself declared: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). 'In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). But Masonry teaches that there is salvation in other religions as well. W. L. Wilmhurst, Grand Registrar of West Yorkshire District, says: 'Our science in its universality limits our conception to no one exemplar. Take the nearest and most familiar to you, the one under whose aegis you were racially born and who therefore may serve you best; for each is able to bring you to the center, though each may have his separate method. To the Jewish brother it says: 'Take the father of the faithful, and realize what being gathered to his bosom means.' To the Christian brother, it points to him upon whose breast lay the beloved disciple. To the Hindoo brother it points to Krishna, etc. To the Buddhist it points to the Maitreya of universal compassion. And to the Moslem, it points to his Prophet, and to the significance of being clothed in his mantle' (The Masonic Initiation, p. 105)."²

4. All of the reports mentioned that Freemasonry teaches that salvation is by good-works. Several Masonic works as well as passages from Masonic rituals were cited to support that contention. Here is a citation from the PCA report to that end:

"Freemasonry clearly insinuates a salvation by works. This is seen in the rituals of the lodge. Masonry denies the biblical concept of 'original sin.' Man is not totally depraved—incapable by his own ability to reach God. This does not mean that Masonry believes man to be free of sin; it believes that he is polluted. The purpose of Masonry is to enable man to rid his nature of sin's pollution . . . but without Jesus Christ!"

We are told by Masons that Masonry's purpose is to enable "good men to be better." Masonry, in the meaning of its symbols and in the performance of its ceremonies, denies the Bible's concept of original sin. Masonry emphatically declares that men can, by their own good works, achieve eternal salvation. Masonic authority J.S.M. Ward has said, "Freemasonry has taught that each man can, by himself, work out his own conception of God and thereby achieve salvation" (Ward, *Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals*, p. 187).

The Louisiana Masonic Monitor has the Worshipful Master reciting to the candidate for the Master Mason Degree these words: "And now, my brethren, let us see to it, and so regulate our lives by the plumb-line of justice, ever squaring our actions by the square of virtue, that when the Grand Warden of Heaven shall call for us, we may be found ready" (p.132)."³

5. All of the reports mentioned that prayers made in Masonic Temples specifically exclude the name of Christ in both ritual and prayer, even removing references to him when scriptures that include his name are read. The OPC report puts it this way:

"Frequently in Masonic ritual the inspired Word of God is seriously mutilated, and in many instances this mutilation consists in the omission of the name of Jesus Christ. In Mackey's *Masonic Ritualist* the name of Christ is omitted from 1 Peter 2:5 (p. 271), 2

Thessalonians 3:6 (p. 348), and 2 Thessalonians 3:12 (p. 349). With reference to the elision of the Saviour's name from 1 Peter 2:5 the following explanation is offered: "The passages are taken, with slight but necessary modifications from the First Epistle of Peter" (p. 272). The reason for this modification is obvious. Masonry does not claim to be Christian but, on the contrary, purports to be the essence of all religions; therefore, its ritual has no place for distinctly Christian material. That the omission of the Name which is above every name is described as a slight but necessary modification speaks volumes.

In view of the foregoing it is to be expected that the name of Christ would be omitted also from the prayers offered in the lodge. As a matter of fact W. P. Loveless, a former Masonic chaplain who seceded, has this to say: "As Chaplain in the Masonic Lodge I offered the prayers of the Lodge and heard many others offered, but never one in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His name is excluded" (The Christian and Secret Societies, p. 14)."⁴

6. All of the reports mentioned above came to the conclusion that for all of these reasons membership in the Freemasons is inconsistent with being an evangelical Christian believer. However, it is also noteworthy that most of the reports did not conclude that Masons who will not end their membership in the Freemasons should be ejected from the church, or that Freemasons should not be allowed to join their denomination. The exception to that rule being the CRC which concluded:

"That synod maintain its position that a member of the Christian Reformed Church who becomes a member of a lodge will be subject to admonition and discipline (Acts of Synod 1974, Art. 05)."⁵

It should also be noted that the RPCNA has formally forbidden the membership of her members in all "secret oathbound societies" since at least 1871 declaring in her covenant adopted and published in that year:

"1. That we emphatically condemn all these orders as wrong in principle and necessarily injurious in their operation.

2. That it is as much the duty of the Church to prohibit the connection of her members with these orders as to forbid their participation in a system of rebellion or oppression.

*3. That in view of the advocacy of Secret Orders by influential papers, and even by respected Christian men and ministers, we pledge ourselves to labor for the thorough agitation of the subject, believing that a clearer understanding of their character and influences will lead to the withdrawal of their most effective support."*⁶

Addendum: Regarding whether the findings of these reports should be applied to other secret societies, the OPC also admitted that the mandate given to them to study oath-bound secret societies in general was too broad to be possible as there are thousands of similar societies, so they concentrated on the Freemasons arguing that the objections to be found with Freemasonry would apply to the other societies that have similar beliefs and practices:

“The mandate given this committee speaks of oath-bound secret societies in general. The committee frankly admits that it has not attempted a detailed investigation of all such societies. To accomplish that would have required even more time than was devoted to the preparation of this report, and much more time than the members of the committee had at their disposal. It may also be doubted whether so comprehensive an investigation is necessary. In the main the committee has restricted its study to that society which is known as the Ancient Order of Free and Accepted Masons. It should be borne in mind that Freemasonry, which is the oldest of the larger secret orders in this country, is generally admitted also to be their mother. Such popular orders as the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, the Knights of Pythias, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Independent Order of Odd-Fellows, the Improved Order of Red Men, the Woodmen of the World and the Order of the Eastern Star are all of them in many ways similar to their earlier prototype, the Masonic order. Their rituals, secrets, terms of membership, objects and purposes have in varying degree characteristics like those of Masonry. It follows that, if the objections which have been taken to Masonry are well taken, then these same objections apply also in the main to the other orders mentioned and to whatever smaller orders of similar character may exist.”⁷

After investigation, interviews, study, and discussion, the committee could find no evidence that would contradict the findings, determinations, or public statements of other denominations (SBC, PCA, OPC or RPCNA), which have all previously investigated the matter of membership in secret societies and Freemasons vs. membership in Christian churches. They all had serious concerns for members and officers in the Christian church maintaining membership in secret societies such as the Freemasons. Many other denominations have studied the issue of their members' participation in the Freemasons and secret societies. Their recommendations vary from concern to condemnation. The committee found no evidence of a denomination that studied this issue and approved of and/or encouraged believers to be members of the Freemasons.

END NOTES

¹ Report of the Committee on Secret Societies, Presented to the Ninth (1942) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, <https://www.opc.org/GA/masonry.html>

² *Ibid.*

³ THE REPORT OF THE AD-INTERIM COMMITTEE TO STUDY FREEMASONRY, 15th General Assembly, 1987, p. 464, Appendix R and 15- 75, p. 306

⁴ Report of the Committee on Secret Societies, Presented to the Ninth (1942) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, <https://www.opc.org/GA/masonry.html>

⁵ “The Lodge Oath and Church Membership”, 1977 *Acts of Synod*, Christian Reformed Church of North America, p. 105

⁶ *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America*, W. Melancthon Glasgow, (Baltimore: Hill & Harvey, 1888) p.136

⁷ Report of the Committee on Secret Societies, OPC, 1942

Appendix 2
“Questions Every Believer Should Answer Before Joining a Secret Society
or Other Organizations”
With Bible Proofs and Westminster Confession References

Alignment of Vows:

1. How do the vows required by the organization align with the vows you have made before God, such as ARP member vows, ARP officer vows, or marriage vows?

Matthew 5:33-37 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil

James 5:12: "Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ Otherwise you will be condemned."

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: "When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it."

Numbers 30:2: "When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said."

Deuteronomy 23:21: "If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin."

Psalms 116:14: "I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people."

Westminster Confession References:

Chapter 22, Section 7: Addresses the fulfillment of vows made to God.

Chapter 21, Section 5: Concerns oaths and vows in relation to the worship of God.

Chapter 22: Discusses the seriousness of oaths and vows and the obligation to fulfill them.

Biblical Alignment:

2. How are the vows, theology, distinctives, rituals, funeral rites, and practices of this organization in line with biblical principles and the standards of the ARP Church?

Matthew 6:1-4: "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when

you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death."

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."

Westminster Confession References:

Chapter 1, Section 6: Affirms the authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice.

Chapter 20, Section 2: Stresses the importance of testing doctrines and practices against the Word of God.

Chapter 22: Addresses the lawfulness of religious oaths and vows and their alignment with biblical principles.

Impact on Christian Stewardship:

3. How will membership in this organization affect your Christian stewardship, including the use of your time, talent, and treasure, for the furtherance of God's Kingdom?

Matthew 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 25:14-30: The Parable of the Talents teaches about stewardship of talents and resources.

1 Peter 4:10: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

Luke 16:10: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

2 Corinthians 9:6-8: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly—

ly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

Westminster Confession References:

Chapter 26, Section 1-2: Discusses the duty of Christians to use their time and resources for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Chapter 2, Section 2: Addresses the sin of idolatry, which includes the prioritization of anything over God in our stewardship.

Chapter 26, Section 1-2: Discusses the obligation of Christians to dedicate themselves and their possessions to God's service.

Relationship with Local Church:

4. How will your membership in this organization impact your participation in the life of the local church?

Hebrews 10:25: "Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Ephesians 4:16: "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Romans 12:4-5: "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Westminster Confession References:

Chapter 31: Discusses the scope of ecclesiastical matters and the authority of synods and councils in handling them.

Chapter 25: Addresses the importance of the local church in the life of believers and the duties of members toward it.

Chapter 21: Discusses the duties of Christians to participate in the worship and ordinances of the local church.

Encouragement of Christian Living:

5. How does this organization encourage Christian living, promote Christian morality, and harmonize with Christian ethics?

Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Ephesians 5:1-2: "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Colossians 3:12-14: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Westminster Confession References

Chapter 16: Discusses the duty of Christians to exercise charity and mercy toward others.

Chapter 19, Section 6: Addresses the necessity of living a holy and righteous life in obedience to God's commandments.

Chapter 19: Discusses the importance of Christian ethics and morality in all areas of life.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Stephen Jordan, Convenor

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Officers or Officer nominees who are members of a secret society be encouraged to consult with their session on the question every believer must ask before they join a secret society.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the 220th General Synod explicitly and forthrightly declare that Freemasonry is incompatible with Christianity.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the report on the Special Committee to Study Church Officers and Secret Societies be referred to the Committee on Revisions.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Synod Allocation be APPROVED.

The report of the **Special Committee to Study the Office of the Work of Deacon** was presented.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE OFFICE OF THE WORK OF DEACON

Introduction and Summary

On June 7, 2023, the General Synod approved a motion “That the Moderator appoint a study committee for the purpose, scope and authority of work of the office of Deacon.”¹ Desiring to complete the work committed to it without expanding beyond that commission, the committee has sought to examine, in Scripture, only the purpose, scope, and authority of the diaconal office. The “purpose” of the diaconate is the end for which the office was instituted; the “scope” of the diaconate is the range of activities to which deacons’ labors extend as they seek to fulfill their purpose; and the “authority” of the diaconate is the deference the office commands from the congregation as the deacons seek to accomplish their purpose and scope.²

The purpose of the diaconal office is to care for the physical welfare of God’s people, exhibiting the mercy and the service of Christ in the midst of His Body (Acts 6:1-7). In this, the diaconate officially exercises a grace that is to be evident in all of God’s people individually (I Timothy 3:8-13). However, set apart by Christ’s bestowal of gifts for the official exercise of that grace, the diaconate acts with the authority of Christ, serving as He served, its scope focusing on the physical needs of the congregation (Ephesians 4:1-16). This office is recognized by the church, and, along with elders, has prominence within individual congregations (Philippians 1:1).

Purpose

2And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God *to serve tables*. **3**Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. **4***But we will devote ourselves* to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-4; ESV, *italics* added).³

At the institution of the diaconal office in Acts 6:2-4, the purpose of the deacons is defined both positively and relationally. Positively, deacons are to “serve tables” (v.3), pointing to the oversight and implementation of the Church’s care for the needy and vulnerable, specifically the widows, in her midst. Relationally, deacons are to undertake the role in question so that others might be able to “devote [themselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (v.4).

The fact that the deacons’ purpose is bound up with their relation to other “office bearers” means that to grasp the diaconal purpose, one must consider the

larger landscape of “office” within the Church. The deacons’ purpose was entwined with the purpose, specifically, of the apostles. The work given to the deacons was work the apostles had been doing, that now was entrusted to the deacons so that the fulness of the Church’s work could be done. As the *Form of Government* notes more generally, “The offices of the church exist to complement one another for the sake of the ministry within the Body of Christ.”⁴ This larger complementarity necessarily has bearing on the purpose of each individual office.

Throughout the New Testament era, the relational dynamic between apostles and deacons shifted to mark the relationship between the offices of elders and deacons.⁵ In assessing the offices of elder and deacon in the New Testament, it is important to note that terminology can be varied. Sometimes, the New Testament will refer to the same office by two different names (e.g. “elders” are referred to as *episkopos* in 1 Timothy 3:1, as *presbuteros* in James 5:14). Other times, an office will be described without the use of formal titles (Acts 6:1-7). Other times still, vocabulary denoting a specific office will be used to describe a specific action or quality without necessarily implying the office (e.g. 1 Peter 5:5 refers to *presbuteroi*, but seems to envision older, in comparison with younger, members of the congregation, not the specific office of elder; Phoebe is called a *diakonon* in Romans 16:1, but verse 2 appears to connect this description to her acts of service rather than to a specific office).⁶ However, when the New Testament as a whole is taken into view, these two formalized offices, as offices, emerge.

The separation of the offices of elder and deacon within the congregation is itself rooted in two considerations – the delineation of Divinely-given gifts and the ordination to office. First, both elders and deacons are identified by the possession of certain Spirit-given gifts that are recognized as “qualifications” for each office (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 for elder; 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for deacon). Scripture is clear that the Resurrected Christ is the One Who pours out gifts on His Church and that, when He does so, He does so specifically so that those gifts might be used for the edification and growth of the entire Body (Ephesians 4:7-16; Psalm 68:18-19).⁷ Individuals do not choose to be elders or deacons; indeed, even congregations do not choose individuals to be elders or deacons. Rather, Christ, as Head of the Church, bestows specified gifts on individuals and those gifts mark out those individuals as called by God to the office in question. In view of this, God’s people are to “pick out” (Acts 6:3) those individuals, recognizing those gifts given to them by Christ.⁸ For an individual to not pursue the calling thus placed is an act of “neglect” (1 Timothy 4:14).⁹ In this important sense, the “qualifications” for office are as much evidence of the bestowal of that office as they are qualifications to seek it.

The second, and more succinct, consideration that sets apart the offices of elder and deacon is that individuals called to these offices are ordained to their office by the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14).¹⁰ “Ordination is the solemn act of setting apart a person to a church office by a court of the Church having authority to do so.”¹¹ This ordination is undertaken in recognition of the giving of gifts previously described. Indeed, “The act of ordination is not valid apart from the prior calling of God.”¹²

The dual distinction of giftedness and ordination is important because both the office of elder and the office of deacon recognize gifts that are not dissimilar from the graces evident in all Christians. All Christians are to live lives that glorify God in their upright conduct (Matthew 5:16), but elders and deacons are to have lives that are exemplary of that testimony (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9). All Christians are called to have some facility in articulating the faith (1 Peter 3:15-16), but elders are evidenced by being particularly “apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2; see also Titus 1:9). All Christians are called to serve others (Philippians 2:4-5), but deacons are evidenced by serving others in a particular way (Acts 6:2-3). Recognizing gifts and ordaining gifted individuals to office thus distinguishes individuals whose work is not entirely unlike that of other Christians, but nonetheless is distinctively prominent in the life of the church. For deacons in particular, this means that while all Christians are to fill serving roles, only deacons undertake that service with the unique status of church office.

Within these two perpetual offices, elders exercise spiritual oversight and care for God’s people (Acts 20:28). The specific responsibilities of this office are indicated clearly by the gifts wherewith God marks out those whom He has called to it. Specifically, alongside the constituent parts of an irreproachable Christian character, elders are marked by a facility in teaching others (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9), thereby ensuring that they are able to instruct and guard God’s people as such officers are enjoined to do (Acts 20:29-32; 1 Timothy 1:6-11, 18-20). Deacons, on the other hand, are recognized as those who care for the outward needs of God’s people (Acts 6:1-7).¹³ This focus on not explicitly doctrinal responsibilities is indicated by the fact that, while some of the first deacons were gifted evangelists and teachers (Acts 6:8), such abilities are not listed as gifts whereby Christ will indicate His calling of future deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Taken as a whole, these offices of elder and deacon are the means by which, and through which, Christ cares for His people until the time of His Return. As Christ cares for His people, He cares both for their souls and for their bodies and the fulness of that care is expressed through the more internally-focused care of elders, and the more externally-focused care of deacons.

While the office of deacon is explicitly a New Testament office, it represents the institutionalization of a principle that has marked God’s interaction with His people from the beginning. Recognizing this continuity is important in seeing how the diaconate fits within God’s overall, ongoing work in and among His people. Throughout the Old Testament, God makes clear that, being steadfast in His love of His creation and, most particularly, of His people, He will care and provide for that people. This care is extended to cover, for example, Levites, strangers, and bondservants. Levites, who served the LORD in very specific ways, did not receive a land inheritance with the rest of Israel, but their sustenance was supplied by God through the hands of the rest of Israel (Deuteronomy 14:26-29; 18:2). In effect, the Levites’ physical needs were being supplied by those to whose spiritual needs the Levites attended (Numbers 18:20). Similarly, strangers received God’s service-centered care. These aliens and sojourners, who attached themselves to the LORD through the nation Israel, were often in need of, and were entitled to, sustenance and protection (Deuteronomy 26:11-13). Similarly,

God forbids His people from oppressing or abusing bondservants, who voluntarily indentured themselves to pay debts they could not pay otherwise (Jeremiah 34).

While God's care and concern thus extend both to His people and to those within their midst, that Divine compassion extends most poignantly to those who are without human defenders (Exodus 22:21-24), perhaps most particularly to the fatherless and widows (Deuteronomy 16:10-15). Because of His care for the vulnerable, God expected His people to reflect that love and care for the needy among them (Psalm 68:5-6). Specifically, God's mandate for Israel to care for the vulnerable included blessings for taking care of the needy (Psalm 41:2), as well as curses for abusing or oppressing them (Ezekiel 16:48-58).

In Exodus 22:22-27, Scripture indicates why this care for the vulnerable and needy was so important. There, God calls Israel to care for the vulnerable (v. 22, 25-26), and He declares that if they fail to do so, He Himself will intervene (v. 23-24, 27). If it comes, that intervention – God's doing what He had called the Israelites to do – would come specifically because of His character (v. 27). God would hear the cries of the oppressed because "I am compassionate" (v. 27). Evidently, God requires Israel to care for the vulnerable as mediating agents of His own care and of His own glorious perfections. Israel's failure to render that service would bring not only God's chastisement, but also His immediate intervention to do what His people had failed to do on His behalf. God was commanding Israel to care for the vulnerable because that care reflected His character, and if His people would not display His character, God Himself would. Care for the needy mattered in God's Israel because that care reflected the character of Israel's God. Of a truth, "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him" (Proverbs 14:31).

As redemptive history moved to the New Testament era, care for the vulnerable and needy remained a central concern for "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). This concern is evidenced by the fact that the Church continued "distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:45) under the attentive oversight of the apostles (hence their need to delegate this duty, Acts 6:2-4). Important to the Church was care for her people, so important to the Church's labors was the care for her people. As Jesus' Church expanded to bring in a people of every nation, tribe, and tongue (Isaiah 60:9-14; Acts 2:8-12), this resulted in the strain reflected in Acts 6:1 – larger numbers of people from more dissimilar places made managing care more challenging.¹⁴ It was for the purpose of meeting this need within the Church that the long-standing diaconal care of God's people came to be concentrated in the specific office of deacon. From that point until Christ's Return, the purpose of the office of deacon, then, has been to concentrate, in a distinct office, God's continual care and provision for His people's externally-oriented needs, a care that reflects God's own holy character. God is compassionate, and in His Israel, His people find compassion.

This understanding of the diaconate's purpose has been characteristic of the Reformed Church since its earliest days. Care for the poor, for the vulnerable, and for those in crisis always has been entrusted to the diaconate. Within this physical ministry, John Calvin, who gave Presbyterianism "its first modern form," points to how the two different uses of the term deacon (*diakonia*) in Scripture are reflected

in different roles within the Church.¹⁵ In the first instance, deacons can refer to the office of almsgiving and distribution. In the second instance, deacon can have the more general sense of “servant.”¹⁶ This distinction observed by Calvin also appears explicitly in the *Second Book of Discipline*, one of the more rigorous descriptions of Presbyterianism in the Reformed tradition.¹⁷ This is an important distinction for understanding the work of deacons, as it indicates both an ordained officer of the church, and the unofficial way in which all communicant members show hospitality and charity towards those within the congregation.¹⁸ In the ARP Church, this understanding has continued, as the leading purpose of the diaconate is “the congregation’s ministry to those in material need or distress and all such things as can be covered by the term ‘mercy ministry.’”¹⁹ The deacons represent the centralization, in an ordained office, of a congregational imperative. The God of the ARP Church is a God of mercy, and in ARPC churches, His people find mercy; and they find it crystalized in the deacons.

Scope

3Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint *to this duty*. 4But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-3; *italics added*).

At the institution of the diaconal office, the scope of that office’s responsibility also is intimated. Upon their first selection, the deacons were appointed to a specific duty – caring for the distribution to the widows (v. 2-3). Deacons, then, were to attend to the administration and implementation of exterior-oriented care under the direction of the Church’s spiritual authority. The congregational focus of this activity is seen in Scripture’s presentation of individual Church bodies being represented by “the overseers (*episkopois*) and deacons (*diakonois*)” (Philippians 1:1). Within that congregational setting, resources are to be deployed wisely, so as to “contribute to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13) without indulging those whose sloth renders them ineligible (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Although the delegated work of the diaconate is centered within the congregation, it is a tangible display of the care and love that mark out the Church as God’s people (John 13:35), and thus there also are both evangelistic and even pastoral hues to the deacons’ activities (Acts 2:47).²⁰

This scope of the diaconal work is foreshadowed in the life of Old Testament Israel. From gleaning laws (Leviticus 19:9-10; Ruth 2:2-3), to almsgiving (Proverbs 22:9), to years of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10-17), God’s Israel was to order her life so that the poor and vulnerable found provision. God blesses His people generously and He expects His people to follow His example (Deuteronomy 15:7-10). Such care even was knitted into Israel’s worshipping life, with Israel’s feasts being occasions both of enjoying God’s bounty and of blessing those who were in want (Deuteronomy 16:10-15). This diaconal service and blessing was not limited to those who might repay, but was extended to all who were poor, those who had lost the covering of the family unit (widows and orphans), those who were strangers in the land, and the possession-free Levites.

While the formal office of deacon embodied all of these long-standing tasks, the Church continued to recognize that these tasks were undertaken in subservience to the Church's spiritual authority. In the fourth century, *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* noted: "Let him [the deacon] not do anything at all without his bishop, nor give anything without his consent. For if he gives to anyone as to a person in distress without the bishop's knowledge, he gives it so that it must tend to the reproach of the bishop, and he accuses him as careless of the distressed."²¹

In the current practice of the ARP Church, the diaconate continues to labor under the oversight of the Session.²² Thus laboring, the diaconate is concerned not only with the financial stewardship and "mercy ministries" that fall under its view, but also the care, stewardship, and upkeep of all physical property.²³ The scope of this ministry continues to have both pastoral implications, in caring for the physical needs of the congregation members, and evangelistic concerns, in witnessing to a watching world.²⁴

Authority

3Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven *men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.* 4But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6These they *set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them* (Acts 6:3-6; *italics added*).

The authority of the office of deacon is indicated at the office's founding in Acts 6, and it receives further clarification throughout the New Testament. In Acts 6:3, Scripture reports that seven men were "appointed" to the work in question, and verse 6 records that these men were ordained to the position by the laying on of hands of the apostles. Although the seven are not called "deacons" explicitly in Acts 6, the analogy of Scripture suggests strongly that the seven "servants" are the first of the "servants" – deacons (*diakonoi*). The deacons came to have prominence in local congregations (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:13 indicates that this prominence only increased as deacons exercised their office well) and were of such perpetual importance that qualifications for future candidates are given in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Deacons are ordained officers in the Church of Jesus Christ (Acts 6:6).²⁵ This fact is central to determining the authority of the diaconate.

Since "Christ is the Head of the Church" (Ephesians 5:23; cf. Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:12-20), anything done in the Church is rightly done only if done in His Name and by His power (John 15:1-5).²⁶ To that end, Christ, by the Spirit, has given specific gifts with the intention that those gifts are to be used for the good of the Church and for the glory of His Name (Ephesians 4:7-16; Psalm 68:18-19).²⁷ Some of those gifts even are identified in the New Testament as the markers by which Christ sets apart certain individuals whom He is calling to serve as officers in His Church (1 Timothy 3:1-13). When these qualifying gifts are discerned in an individual, the Church is then to recognize God's provision and set the individual aside as serving in the office for which Christ has gifted him (Acts 1:21-

26, 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:7-10; 1 Timothy 4:14). These individuals then carry out the responsibilities of their office in the name, and with the authority, of Christ (Matthew 16:19; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5). In this regard, all authority exercised by human office-bearers in the Church is delegated authority. Specifically, it is Christ's own authority being exercised by the individuals whom, by His specific gifting, Christ has set apart as His servants "to enforce God's laws and to establish God's reign."²⁸

As Christ exercises His authority in the Church through these means, the New Testament is clear that this is a distinctly Christian species of authority, taking its shape from the King of the Church. Christ came "not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). As such, Jesus' earthly ministry, which included miraculous power (Matthew 15:30) and authoritative teaching (Mark 1:22) also included washing the feet of others (John 13:1-5) and providing for their physical needs (Luke 9:12-17). In the Church that is the Body of this Regal Head, this same authoritative service continues to be exercised. While earthly leaders demonstrate authority through coercion and demanded deference, leaders in the Church – where "whoever would be greater among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27) – demonstrate authority through serving others, thus eliciting deference from the Body of the Servant King (cf. Matthew 20:20-29). This dissonance between how authority is exercised in the world and how it is exercised by Jesus in His Kingdom caused incredulous scandal in Jesus' own ministry, as Peter supposed that One with authority never could serve (John 13:1-8), and yet Jesus insisted that leading through serving was to be an example of how the leaders in His Church exercised authority in His Name (John 13:14-17). The apostles after Him continued to use the Regal reign of Jesus not as a call to worldly authority, but to service and humility (Philippians 2:3-11). This is particularly true for officers in the Church, through whom Christ continues to exercise His authority within His Body. This is evidenced, once more, by the gifts through which Christ indicates that He has called an individual to one or the other office. For each office, individuals are to exhibit the gifts needed for office by benevolently and commendably "ruling" (1 Timothy 3:4, 12-13; *proistemi*, "to rule, direct, be at the head" of their families as fathers) their "own household," a paternal rule naturally marked by authority (Exodus 20:12).²⁹

Certainly, this authority was recognized by the early Church, as the *Apostolic Constitutions* of the fourth century asserted, "For now the deacon is to you Aaron, and the bishop Moses. If, therefore, Moses was called a god by the Lord, let the bishop be honoured among you as a god, and the deacon as his prophet. For as Christ does nothing without His Father, so neither does the deacon do anything without his bishop; and as the Son without His Father is nothing, so is the deacon nothing without his bishop."³⁰

The authority of the diaconate continues to be the authority of service within the ARP Church, and it still is exercised under the oversight of the Session.³¹ "In the discharge of its duties, the diaconate is a board of, and under the supervision of the Session,"³² and "The Session shall have the authority to void or amend the

actions of the diaconate.”³³ Although a subservience of the diaconate to the Session exists within the ARP Church, upon ordination and installation to the office of deacon, the congregation vows to give individuals “all the honor, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office, according to the Word of God and the Standards of this Church, entitles them.”³⁴ Although the term “obedience” was removed in 2021 for ordination and installation to the office of deacon, the setting apart for service and recognition by the congregation for honor, encouragement, and assistance within the boundaries of Scripture still suggests an inherent authority. The force of the term “honor,” in particular, should not be undervalued. While deacons do not have the authority of worldly executives or legislators, within the economy of Jesus’ Kingdom, they do have authority. Amongst God’s people, the deacons’ giftedness for the office and their modeling of Jesus’ compassion elicits a deference from the congregation that compels the congregation to follow the deacons’ example and guidance as their norm.

Summary

Those whom Christ is calling to exercise spiritually-centered authority, He sets apart by gifts including an ability to teach (Ephesians 4:11; James 3:11). In order that those officers might focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer, Christ calls others to serve as deacons and care for the physically-oriented needs of the Church (Acts 6:3-4; I Timothy 3:8-13).

The scope of the office of deacon is to undertake those tasks entrusted to them by the Session in order to facilitate the Session’s attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2). Such tasks may include, but are not limited to, caring for physical needs through the collection and distribution of goods/resources and administrative duties (Deuteronomy 16:10-15; Psalm 68:18-19).

The authority of deacons is the authority of Christ Himself, delegated to them through the giving of spiritual gifts from Christ and the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6). Just as Christ the King came to serve rather than to be served (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45), so His lowly service is to be an exemplar not only to all Christians (Philippians 2:3-11), but especially to those who exercise authority while serving in His Name (John 13:14-17).

Psalm 36:9b,

James Alden Brown
Carl Cease
Matthew Joyner
Charles Mangum, Chairman
John Paul Marr
Stephen Myers
Trevor Raborn

ENDNOTES:

¹2023 *Minutes of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 40.

²Within these three categories, it is recognized that there is significant overlap between the “purpose” and the “scope” of the diaconate’s work, but some differentiation does exist.

³*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Crossway), 2001 (unless otherwise noted, the Scripture citations will come from the ESV).

⁴FOG 2.12.

⁵FOG 2.7, 5.21. Within the Reformed tradition, there are different understandings of the number of perpetual offices within the Church. In keeping with Scottish Presbyterianism, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church holds that there are three such offices – ministers, elders, and deacons. See FOG 2.9; *Directory of Public Worship* (hereafter DOPW) 5.c.7.b; *The Second Book of Discipline. With Introduction and Commentary by James Kirk*. Edited by James Kirk (Glasgow: Covenanters Press, 2005), Chapter 4, pages 183-186. However, as this is not within the remit of the current committee, only the offices of elder and deacon are treated here.

⁶First Presbytery Memorial made to General Synod of the ARPC in June 2021.

⁷WCF 26.2; FOG 1.3; DOPW 5.C.7.a.

⁸FOG 5.9.

⁹WCF 26.1; FOG 2.8.

¹⁰FOG 7.2; DOPW 5.C.7.a-d.

¹¹DOPW 5.C.7.b.

¹²FOG 7.1.

¹³FOG 2.9 n.24 and 5.1 refer to the diaconate as an office of “sympathy and service after the example of Christ.”

¹⁴Acts 6 gives no indication that the lack of the Greek widows had anything to do with intentional discrimination. Quite the contrary, the rapid and eager response in verses 5-6 indicates that the disproportion resulted from confusion and misunderstanding rather than malice.

¹⁵FOG 2.3.

¹⁶John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 volumes, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), Book IV, iii, 9.

¹⁷*Second Book of Discipline*, 8.1; FOG 2.3.

¹⁸It is noted in the 2023 Index 13 that John Calvin recognized the purpose of the official and unofficial office of deacons in the life of the Church. See E. A. McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1984), 159-184.

¹⁹FOG 5.5.

²⁰FOG 1.7.

²¹Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*, trans. James Donaldson, vol. 7, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), IV.XXXI, 411. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* is a fourth century document which appears to be a revision of the *Didascalia* with a focus on governmental structure, ordination, and spiritual disciplines. The decision to include this within the committee’s historical approach was to add further historical insight to the work already provided in the June 2021 First Presbytery Memorial as well as the 2023 General Synod report from the Special Committee on Women Deacons Study (Index 13, 2023 *Minutes*).

²²The 2002 *Minutes* Index 13 indicates since the deacons do not operate independently of the Session and do not sit on the court of the Church, they do not hold the power of the keys to the kingdom.

²³FOG 5.8.

²⁴FOG 5.5.

²⁵FOG 7.2.

²⁶WCF 25.6; FOG 1.2; DOPW 5.C.7.a.

²⁷FOG 1.1.

²⁸FOG 1.2. See also James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church*. 2 Vols. (1869, reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 1.190-192.

²⁹Walter Bauer, translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 870; hereafter BAGD.

³⁰*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, IV.XXX.

³¹This distinction is highlighted in the First Presbytery Memorial of General Synod June 2021 with the deacon directly under the supervision of the elder but also the office of the deacon as a potential stepping-stone to becoming an elder. Further research may be warranted within the ARPC of the number of deacons later installed as elders.

³²FOG 5.17.

³³FOG 5.18.

³⁴FOG 8.18. It is noted in the 2021 First Presbytery Memorial, the 2020 Theological and Social Concerns Committee proposed to delete “obedience” from the deacon vow. The 2023 FOG reflects the removal of “obedience” from the congregation vows of the deacon installation service.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the report of the Special Committee to Study the Office of the Work of Deacon be received as information.

A verbal report from the **Special Committee on Net Asset Reallocation** was presented by Harry Jeffcoat.

Having reached the 5:00 P.M. Order of the Day, Trevor Raborn closed the afternoon session with a prayer and blessing for the evening meal.

TUESDAY EVENING

Seth Nelson opened the evening session with a sermon.

A presentation on Erskine College and Seminary was made by Steve Adamson, President.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the report from Committee on Inter-Church Relations be postponed until Wednesday morning following the Fraternal Delegate Greeting.

The report on the **Committee on Investment** was presented.

COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT

The Investment Committee oversees various investments owned by General Synod, presbyteries, agencies, congregations, and individuals. The committee meets at least quarterly with its investment consultants to review portfolio performance and asset allocation and make any necessary changes in investment managers or investment strategies. Representatives of Synod agencies and boards with funds invested under the oversight of the committee are invited to participate in Investment Committee meetings in an advisory capacity.

Duties as prescribed in the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* are:

a. **Developing guidelines for the work of the committee.**

The Investment Committee reviews their Investment Policy Statement for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Trust on an annual basis to revise as needed. The Cornerstone Management model asset allocations are reviewed periodically and adjusted as required.

b. **Management of all investment funds under the oversight of the ARP Foundation/Stewardship (including the funds of the General Synod) and the Board of Benefits.**

These funds represent three distinct types of investments: The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan Trust, Endowment & Endowment-type Funds, and Charitable Remainder Trusts & Gift Annuities.

(1) Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan Trust. The Investment Committee meets on a quarterly basis with financial advisor The Corpening Group of Alex Brown, a subsidiary of Raymond James, to receive reports, evaluate the performance of the ARP Retirement Trust Fund, and make recommendations as to the management of our portfolio.

The value of assets invested as of December 31, 2023, was approximately \$44.9 million. The value of assets invested as of December 31, 2022, was approximately \$43.0 million.

(2) Endowments and Endowment-type Funds. The Investment Committee also meets on a regular basis with financial advisor Cornerstone Management to receive reports, evaluate the performance of these funds and make recommendations as to the management of our portfolio. These individual accounts belong to churches, presbyteries, and agencies of the General Synod. Conservative, Moderate, Moderate Aggressive, and Aggressive investment models are available based upon the risk profile of each account holder. As of December 31, 2023, endowment and endowment-type funds totaled approximately \$28.2 million. As of

December 31, 2023, endowment and endowment-type funds totaled approximately \$25.6 million.

(3) Charitable Remainder Trusts and Gift Annuities. The Investment Committee provides investment oversight over the ARP Foundation's charitable remainder trusts and gift annuities on behalf of the ARP Foundation Board of Directors. Each charitable trust is a separately invested entity, with a combined total value on December 31, 2023, of approximately \$227,000 versus \$213,000 for the prior year end. The balance in the Gift Annuity Fund on December 31, 2023, was \$103,000 versus \$101,000 for the prior year end. The Gift Annuity Fund assets exceed the liabilities as of December 31.

c. Reviewing all current investment relationships for funds currently invested under the oversight of the ARP Foundation/Stewardship and funds of the Board of Benefits.

As stated above, The Corpening Group serves as the investment consultant on the ARP Retirement Plan Trust, and Cornerstone Management, Inc. serves as consultant for the endowment and endowment-type funds as well as the charitable remainder trusts and gift annuities.

The Corpening Group reported on the performance of the Retirement Fund investments, indicating in the overall report a 14.3% annual gain for 2023. For the 5-, 7-, 10-, and 15-year periods the ARP Retirement Trust Fund's performance has exceeded its benchmark. In shorter periods the gain was slightly less than the benchmark, primarily attributable to the impact of the 7 large technology stocks. The return also exceeds that actuarial target of 5.25% for the 1, 5, 7, 10, 15- year periods.

Cornerstone also reported that individual portfolio allocations combined for an average 11.72% annual gain for 2023. The average is influenced by the models selected by the investing entities.

d. Discuss with other boards and agencies the possibility of including their funds in those under management.

The committee is available to assist any church, presbytery, or agency of the General Synod, both in an advisory capacity and to exercise responsibilities authorized by asset owners. Contact the Executive Director of Central Services with your questions regarding the financial services that may be available to your respective church, presbytery, or agency.

The Committee respectfully requests that representatives of Synod keep in mind the following important considerations when evaluating investment performance: Performance for the calendar year was in-line relative to the benchmarks established in the Investment Policy Statement. The investment models utilized by financial advisors and money managers are not predicated upon the cyclical difficulties of financial markets, but rather upon a long-term strategy. Evaluations of negative returns or less than average performance in the financial markets must always remain tempered by the

market's long-term track record, which often reverts back to the mean. Long-term financial strategy as it pertains to prudent Biblical stewardship, and not market volatility, is the primary focus of the Committee's considerations.

Officers for 2024-2025:

Matt Wylie	Chairman
Clarke McNair	Vice Chairman
Jamey Dagenhart	Treasurer
Cindy Scott	Secretary/Administrative Officer

Recommendations:

1. That this report be received as information. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the committee be granted \$5,500 for committee travel and expenses. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Wylie, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on pg 114.

The report of the **Committee on the Minister and His Work** was presented.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTER AND HIS WORK

First, in regards to the chaplains affiliated with our denomination, the Committee on Minister & His Work (MHW) discussed and approved a Synod-wide proposal for a job description to assist in finding an advocate from each presbytery to assist chaplains in finding ways to actively participate in presbytery activities and committees. We are recommending as well that ARP chaplains be given an advisory seat with the Synod's Committee Minister and His Work as soon as the Form of Government (FOG) can allow it, or if the way be made clear, each presbytery's MAD add this job description and every effort is made to add an advocate into their processes. A copy of the job description is attached.

Second, a motion was made to amend the FOG 9.3 G, by removing 9.3 G2, specifically, the words "from an accredited four year college or university" to read, "a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent" and by removing from G.3 the words "an accredited" so that it reads "a seminary approved by the presbytery."

Third, we are encouraging that each presbytery establish a process for mentoring new pastors, either recently ordained or one who has just moved into a new presbytery. Fourth, we are encouraging each presbytery to create avenues to stay abreast of all presbytery-wide congregations, if they have not already done so. The issue here is to prevent smaller churches or churches on

the fringes geographically of a given presbytery, from “falling through the cracks,” and disappearing.

Recommendations:

1. That the job description for chaplain advocacy be approved to go to all presbyteries. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the FOG 9.3G1, be revised to read: “A baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent.” That the FOG 9.3G2, be revised to read: “A master of divinity degree (or its equivalent) from a seminary approved by the Presbytery.” **SYNOD APPROVED. (Overtured to presbyteries)**
3. That a method of mentorship be created by presbyteries and encouraged by the Synod to assist newly ordained pastors or pastors newly received in a presbytery. **Amended to read: That the General Synod encourage presbyteries to create a method of mentorship to assist newly ordained or newly received pastors in a presbytery. APPROVED AS AMENDED.**
4. That a method of creating ways to stay in communication with all churches within a presbytery be established and implemented. **SYNOD DID NOT APPROVE.**
5. That Synod approve the MHW budget for 2024. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
6. That all Synod Boards and Committees be encouraged to give as much as possible to help fund the ARPC Ministerial Retirement Relief Fund, approved by Synod in 2023. **SYNOD APPROVED**

Respectfully Submitted

Buzzy Elder, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located in Index 37B

PRCC Presentation To Synod, June 2024

A special committee of members of Catawba Presbytery and First Presbytery have been meeting to create an avenue that would allow chaplains of our presbyteries to be more visible within each presbytery. This committee was put together from members of the MHW Synod Committee and others who represent the ARPC at the PRCC meetings held semi-annually. Our goal is to create a position that would allow accountability between chaplains and an individual from each presbytery so that chaplains will not feel as though they are alone with no one to help them once they are commissioned. Though the PRCC has accountability methods, we believe our presbyteries, and even our individual churches should step up and do our part to help these many men who are helping our military as they are deployed or are away from home and families. For these chaplains face those same obstacles.

We are proposing then, that each presbytery pass this job description on to their respective organizations so that we might have a uniform set of guidelines to follow throughout the ARPC. Also, that each presbytery assign or seek at least one volunteer presbyter to be a liaison between the chaplains of their presbytery and also create at least an annual report to that presbytery. With that being said, we as the Shepherding Commission are proposing the job description below to be considered to become part of our MOP and at that proper time, Rev. Mark Levine be allowed to be our liaison for Catawba Presbytery.

Furthermore, this proposal will be given to the MHW Synod Committee for approval so that all presbyteries might adopt this proposed job description as soon as is possible. We will also, at next year's Synod, ask that our constitution be changed to allow a chaplain to be a part of the MHW Synod Committee in an advisory capacity.

Proposed Job Description for ARP Presbytery Chaplain Advocates

Background

The Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains (PRCC) is the official ecclesiastical endorsing agency for our denomination. Among other duties, the PRCC is charged with recruiting, credentialing, providing on-going training and front-line pastoral support of military and civilian chaplains, officially 320+ endorsed chaplains. Currently, the ARP has 24 endorsed chaplains or chaplain candidates in the PRCC.

In order to better encourage and support the chaplains of our presbyteries, the PRCC suggests that every presbytery which currently has chaplains on their rolls recruit either a minister or ruling elder to assume a more deliberate pastoral role in supporting these men. As many of our (especially) military chaplains serve out-of-bounds of our presbyteries, a position ("Chaplain Advocate") would function as a man responsible on behalf of the presbytery for the more deliberate pastoral care and promotion of chaplains' ministries.

Job Description

Ideally, the function of a "Presbytery Chaplain Advocate" would include the following:

- (1) Keep in touch with the chaplain members of his presbytery. Encourage those chaplains:
 - to keep their Stated Clerk apprised of any changes to their current contact information, addresses and family circumstances,
 - to send the Stated Clerk a request for an "excused absence" when they will not be able to attend a scheduled presbytery meeting,
 - to participate in "virtual" meetings whenever that is an option.
- (2) Bring these chaplain brothers up in prayer at each presbytery meeting.
- (3) Invite chaplains to pray or share an update occasionally when they are able to attend or send a video, email, or letter.

- (4) Provide opportunities for local civilian chaplain members to periodically report on their ministries from the floor of presbytery.
- (5) Make the presbytery aware when any member military chaplains are deployed. For deployed Reserve Component chaplains:
 - Consider how best to minister to the spouses and families of deployed Reserve Component chaplains.
 - Check with the session of their churches to see if they have any special needs while their chaplain pastor is deployed (e.g., perhaps offering to provide pulpit supply).
- (6) Stay aware of PRCC/MNA Chaplain Ministries by reading and praying through The Guardian prayer calendar (the tri-annual publication of brief Chaplain reports and specific prayer requests)
- (7) Update the presbytery of any current PRCC/Chaplain Ministries needs or activities of which he is made aware. (e.g., the Combined Federal Campaign CFC) which takes place each fall giving all federal workers (including military personnel) the opportunity to contribute to the PRCC's CFC #38370 through their federal employer's CFC campaign
- (8) Encourage chaplains to actively participate on the various committees of their respective presbyteries (e.g., via Zoom, if such capability is available).

Proposal

That the ARP officially include the position of Presbytery Chaplain Advocate on the Minister and His Work Committees of those presbyteries which have military or civilian chaplains (or chaplain candidates) on their rolls. Additionally, that when a presbytery currently not having a military or civilian chaplain subsequently ordains or transfers in a man for chaplain ministry, that the presbytery establish a Presbytery Chaplain Advocate position on their respective Minister and His Work Committee.

Once the position is established and the Presbytery Chaplain Advocate identified in presbyteries, the PRCC Staff will regularly send him periodic updated information regarding their presbytery's chaplain members.

A motion **CARRIED**

That we suspend the rules concerning the revisions committee.

A motion **CARRIED**:

That Committee on Revisions in cooperation with the Executive Board revise the section in the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* to present a clear revised Committee on Revisions section to the Synod in 2025.

The report of the **Committee on Conferences** was presented.

COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES

Officers for 2024-2025:

Rev. Matt Lucas	Chairman
Rev. Garison Taylor	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Emily Woodard	Secretary

Other committee members: Rev. Brad Anderson, Rev. Rhett Carson, Rev. Mike Chipman, Mr. John Meachum.

The conferences of the ARP – Horizon & Quest, Family Bible Conference – are important opportunities for people to grow in the word of God, strengthen bonds of fellowship, and enjoy a restful time at Bonclarken away from the busy routine of life. We are excited for what God will do through the conferences this summer.

The Committee on Conferences is tasked with oversight of Synod's conferences. Most of the detailed planning and logistical work of the conferences are done by two planning teams, which report to the committee. Each planning team has a Director and Assistant Director as well as volunteer members. The committee is grateful for those who serve on the planning teams.

A few months ago, Rev. Andrew Di Iulio stepped down from his position as Director of Family Bible Conference. We gratefully acknowledge his years of hard work to make FBC a high-quality conference for our denomination. We will miss his leadership and thank him for his service.

The committee has made recommendations to Synod's nominating committee for future members. The planning team directors and assistant directors for 2024-2025 are:

Horizon & Quest: Rev. Brad Anderson (Director)
Rev. Rhett Carson (Assistant Director)
Family Bible Conference: Rev. Philip Bunch* (Director)
Mr. John Meachum (Assistant Director)

*Pending Synod approval of his nomination to be on the committee.

The Committee approved a request from the Horizon & Quest planning team to spend up to \$10,000 from reserve funds to create a climate-controlled space in the old gym at Bonclarken Conference Center. This space will store equipment that is used every year and needs to be in a climate-controlled room.

Horizon & Quest Report:

We count it an honor to serve the students of our denomination through the conference ministries of Quest and Horizon. For Quest 2023 the speaker was Rev. Andrew Shoger, Coddle Creek ARP Church in Mooresville, NC, and he spoke on the topic "The Story of Scripture" and preached through texts in Gen-

esis, Romans, and Revelation relaying the unifying story of redemption. For Horizon 2023 the speaker was Rev. Jeremiah Thomas, and he spoke on the topic "Let's Talk About Truly Living" with texts from John, James, Psalms, and Philippians asking students to consider what it means to know the Gospel and for it to be central to their lives. For Quest 2024 the speaker will be Rev. Clint Davis, Chester ARP Church, Chester, SC, speaking on the theme "You Belong Here (Ephesians 2: 11-22)." For Horizon 2024 the speaker will be Rev. Zack Keuthan, church planter, Hendersonville, NC, speaking on the theme "Jesus Is the Same (yesterday and today and forever, Hebrews 13:8)."

Attendance for each week (including students, leaders, and conference staff):
Quest – 305; Horizon – 408.

Family Bible Conference Report:

The 2023 Family Bible Conference theme was *Faithfulness in Troubled Waiting* with Micah 7:7 as our theme verse. We were grateful to have Dr. William VanDoodewaard (GPTS) and Dr. Michael Barrett (PRTS) to lead our morning and evening worship. In addition, we heard seminars from many others on topics. There were 203 adults and 103 children that attended.

FBC 2024 is planned for July 29 – August 1. We are looking forward to hearing from our two keynote speakers as they present in the morning and evening on the topic of the *Upper Room Discourse*. Dr. Charles Barrett, currently serving at Wayside Presbyterian Church, will cover themes in the book *Lessons from the Upper Room* by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson. Dr. Derek Thomas, retired ARP minister, will be preaching in the evenings.

The fall meeting of this committee is tentatively scheduled for September 26, 2024.

Recommendations:

1. That the report and budget of Committee on Conferences be approved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Lucas, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

The 8:50 PM Order of the Day was reached. Fraternal Observer, Jeff Temple, brought greetings from Canadian Reformed Churches.

The evening session was closed with prayer by Bill McKay.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

Juan Carlos Bonilla opened the Wednesday session with a sermon, followed by greetings from Dean McHenry, Fraternal Delegate from RPCNA.

Patrick Malphrus recused himself as Parliamentarian. Jeff Kingswood assumed the role of Acting Parliamentarian.

Kyle Sims recused himself. Tim Phillips took over as Acting Principal Clerk.

The report of the **Special Committee to Investigate Second Presbytery's Handling of Allegations Against Chuck Wilson** was presented.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE SECOND PRESBYTERY'S
HANDLING OF ALLEGATIONS AGAINST CHUCK WILSON**

The following motion was adopted at the General Synod's 2023 Stated Meeting:

"That a special committee be formed to investigate Second Presbytery's handling of the allegations against Mr. Chuck Wilson and that this special committee report back any irregularities and/or deviations from our Standards to the Executive Board at its Fall 2023 meeting along with any recommendations for further action."

The Committee began its work late Summer 2023. The composition of the committee included: Kyle Sims, Patrick Malphrus, Ken Wingate, Clint Davis, Jonathan Cowan, Brian Murray, Aaron Rozeboom, Brian Taylor, Jack Van Dyk, Phil Williams, David Walkup, Donald Bean, Brian Schouwstra, and Scott Smith. (Brian Murray and Scott Smith were inactive members.) In an attempt to divide this considerable workload, we formed two subcommittees: one to address the actions/inactions of Second Presbytery, and a second to examine weaknesses in the *Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* that contributed to issues with Second Presbytery's handling of allegations. Our committee suffered from several limiting factors.

First, no one was asked to serve on this committee. Instead, Synod appointed men who had already invested a considerable amount of time the previous year on the Miller Commission and Synod's investigation of Mr. Chuck Wilson. Busy men with busier schedules were appointed to serve on a committee whose size alone made scheduling regular meetings a real challenge.

Second, the scope of this case was massive. The more the committee examined, the more issues we found with how this case was handled. One committee member remarked that if we had the resources of a congressional committee, we could have easily produced a report in detail of over 1000 pages.

Third, there were difficulties in dealing with members and officers of Second Presbytery. The committee asked for documents that were used in the Mr. Matt Miller case, but to date, have still not been turned over to our committee. This is particularly troubling as Second Presbytery requested Judicial Reference and according to *Book of Discipline* 6.2, when a lower court requests Judicial Reference from a higher court, "All evidence

and records shall be transmitted to the higher court, that the case may be heard with as little delay as possible.” Additionally, Mr. Scott Cook who served as chairman of Second Presbytery’s Minister and Work Committee during the time in question, transferred out of Second Presbytery.

Despite the multiple challenges that have been expressed thus far in this report (and countless others that are not expressed), our committee was able to complete an investigation and presents to you the findings listed below. The following events all happened in time and space, and therefore, the court must contend with the reality they present.

1. *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A. states that “When a church court receives an allegation of a general or public offense, it shall appoint one or more investigators...”

Our committee was charged with reporting irregularities and/or deviations from our *Standards*. Instead of following *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A., Second Presbytery deviated from our *Standards* and created a “Pre 4.2.A.” category of investigation. The end result was an invention of policies and procedures that not only protected Mr. Chuck Wilson, but also gave Mr. Wilson certain advantages when insider information was shared with him prior to any official investigation. In addition, Second Presbytery allowed action to proceed against Mr. Matt Miller, who filed allegations against Mr. Wilson.

As it relates to this deviation from our *Standards*, Mr. Harper Price, member of Second Presbytery’s Minister and His Work Committee, said, “We never had permission to do preliminary investigation.” The rationale for this deviation was that Second Presbytery, through its Minister and His Work committee, had to determine if the allegations received against Mr. Wilson were to be classified as a General and Public or a Private Offense. However, had Second Presbytery followed *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A, their investigation would have shown whether or not the allegations made against Mr. Chuck Wilson were in order. Second Presbytery never appointed any investigators, per *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A., even though its proper application is not ambiguous. “Shall appoint” means shall appoint.

This deviation from *Book of Discipline* 4.2 gave certain members of Second Presbytery extraordinary authority in controlling every aspect of the investigation, contrary to the prescribed course of action outlined in the *Book of Discipline*. Amongst other improprieties, this deviation also allowed one member of Second Presbytery to be the sole intermediary between the presbytery and the principal parties involved. Such deviation is disturbing, painting a picture of judicial corruption and inequity, especially when coupled with the fact that insider information was shared with Mr. Chuck Wilson about the allegations made against him prior to any official action of the court.

2. Based on the deviation of *Book of Discipline* 4.2, Second Presbytery allowed its Minister and His Work committee to function as unofficial investigators, exercising power and control that were not theirs to wield. Second Presbytery allowed Mr. Scott Cook, Parliamentarian of Second Presbytery and chairman of its Minister and His Work committee, to continue in his official capacities, despite well-known connections he shares with Mr. Chuck Wilson. Mrs. Erlene Wilson, Mr. Chuck Wilson’s wife, is a member at Mr. Scott Cook’s church. Mr. Chuck Wilson was also Oconee ARP’s original planter and pastor. Mr. Wilson’s personal relationship with Mr. Scott Cook is further shown by his contin-

ued attendance at the now Oconee PCA Church when Mr. Wilson is not preaching at Lower Long Cane ARP Church.

A motion was made at a presbytery meeting to recuse Mr. Scott Cook but it was ruled out of order by Second Presbytery's Moderator at the time, Mr. Seth Yi. No one in Second Presbytery challenged Mr. Yi's ruling, despite the fact that there was no reason to rule the motion out of order.

3. Rather than processing allegations made by Mr. Matt Miller, Second Presbytery allowed members of its court to pursue disciplinary action against him. This course of action is troubling as it indicates a culture of retaliation and inequity of process within Second Presbytery. An example of such inequity is also shown in the speed of judicial process against Mr. Matt Miller, as opposed to how allegations against Mr. Chuck Wilson were handled. Mr. Matt Miller was accused of violating process. Mr. Chuck Wilson was accused of the highest forms of child abuse. The fact that judicial process was swift and precise against Mr. Matt Miller, but was ambiguous and crept along for months against Mr. Wilson is inexcusable.

4. Second Presbytery allowed its Minister and His Work committee to carry out *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A.2.c. when it challenged evidence presented against Mr. Wilson, rather than allowing Mr. Wilson to challenge the evidence himself. Why Second Presbytery allowed its Minister and His Work committee to defend Mr. Chuck Wilson and not Mr. Matt Miller is unknown, but troubling.

5. Records were requested from Second Presbytery numerous times, with great difficulty, often to no avail. There seemed to be great reluctance on Second Presbytery's part to release records to our committee, even to the Principal Clerk, despite the committee's charge given by the General Synod and the rights of the Principal Clerk according to the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* 8.B.

6. Second Presbytery withheld materials vital to our investigation in the form of a letter written by its former Minister and His Work chairman, Mr. Hank Wilson. In a later meeting, Mr. Scott Cook revealed that they knew *Book of Discipline* 6.2 required that all evidence and records were to be transmitted, but that they withheld this piece of evidence based on a promise made to Mr. Hank Wilson concerning his letter's anonymity. Such actions present serious concerns regarding the 9th commandment at a minimum, and the fidelity of proceedings against Mr. Matt Miller, as a whole. Mr. Kyle Sims officially requested that Second Presbytery, through its Stated Clerk, turn this letter over to the General Synod on 2-29-24 but, at the writing of this report, this letter has still not been received from Second Presbytery.

7. Second Presbytery's Minister and His Work Committee and Moderator, Mr. Seth Yi, entrapped Mr. Matt Miller with a letter written by Mr. Hank Wilson (the same letter mentioned in item #6). According to testimony, the Minister and His Work Committee asked Mr. Matt Miller if he received any counsel contrary to that which he followed when he filed allegations against Mr. Chuck Wilson. Mr. Harper Price has since testified

that the committee knew the contents of Mr. Hank Wilson's letter and that he told Mr. Matt Miller to file allegations in a different manner. Thus, the committee questioned Mr. Matt Miller knowing the answer to their questions, so as to set a trap. The committee also questioned Mr. Matt Miller based on evidence that had been withheld from him. Such actions have no place in church discipline and present serious concerns about the committee's investigatory integrity, and their adherence to the 9th Commandment. Perhaps most troubling is that all of this took place under the guise of the Minister and His Work committee offering to help Mr. Matt Miller and provide him with counsel, when all the while they used these tactics to prosecute Mr. Miller. Such actions show a continued culture of intimidation and guile that has come to characterize Second Presbytery over the last decades.

8. Second Presbytery allowed Mr. Tony Locke to revise and withdraw the public allegations he made against Mr. Matt Miller, but did not allow Mr. Matt Miller to withdraw or revise the allegations he made against Mr. Chuck Wilson. Why such permission was given to Mr. Tony Locke but not to Mr. Matt Miller is unknown. Such actions paint a picture of judicial activism, inequity of process, and a culture of intimidation in Second Presbytery.

9. Second Presbytery failed to act on Mrs. Sara Frazier's initial letter of allegations against Mr. Scott Cook and the Minister and His Work committee. Later, Second Presbytery would consider Mrs. Frazier's letter a complaint, instead of official allegations. According to *Book of Discipline* 5.12, "Any communing member in good standing of an ARP Church or Presbytery has the right to make a complaint against any court to which he is subject." Mrs. Frazier is not subject to Second Presbytery, and thus her letter should have been considered an allegation. Additionally, no one offered to help Mrs. Frazier with her allegations, unlike Mr. Tony Locke, who received help rewriting his allegations.

10. In a letter dated 12-27-22, Mr. Mark Miller wrote a letter of allegation against Second Presbytery's Minister and His Work committee. Yet again, Second Presbytery deviated from *Book of Discipline* 4.2.A. and failed to act. The fact that Mr. Mark Miller would withdraw his letter under threat of prosecution is immaterial because his letter was public and allegations were officially made. The *Book of Discipline* is based on the principle that false allegations render accusers liable for slander. This principle was ignored. In addition, the fact that those who were accused went on to investigate and threaten their accuser shows a gross miscarriage of justice and failure to act on Second Presbytery's part. Members of Second Presbytery were accused of hiding a sexual abuser, and Second Presbytery allowed the accused to go after their accusers. These actions are consistent with the prevailing culture of Second Presbytery.

11. Second Presbytery's Minister and His Work committee met privately with Mr. Chuck Wilson and shared insider information about the allegations made against him before any official investigation began. Second Presbytery did nothing about this inappropriate sharing of insider information.

12. Second Presbytery, through its Minister and His Work committee, refused to consider Mr. Matt Miller's allegations against Mr. Chuck Wilson as general and public. Instead, they insisted on dividing Mr. Matt Miller's charges, concluding that some of his allegations involved private offenses. This resulted in extra requirements for Mr. Matt Miller in making his allegations, but also added requirements for witnesses against Mr. Chuck Wilson. And again, it should be noted that the Minister and His Work committee was never given the authority to take such action, but Second Presbytery did nothing to stop this deviation from the *Book of Discipline*.

13. Minutes from Second Presbytery's Fall 2022 Stated Meeting were never received by the General Synod or our committee. Again, *Book of Discipline* 6.2 states that when judicial reference is requested "All evidence and records shall be transmitted." It should be noted that these particular meeting minutes contain much information about events surrounding allegations against Mr. Chuck Wilson and how Second Presbytery chose to proceed, as well as how Second Presbytery handled Mrs. Sara Frazier's communications to their court.

14. Mr. Seth Yi, then Moderator of Second Presbytery, led a group of Minister and His Work committee members that presented Mr. Matt Miller and Mr. Mark Miller with a plea deal proposal stating that if Mr. Matt Miller plead guilty to the allegations made against him, he would only receive a censure of rebuke. This course of action was not only out of order, as Second Presbytery's Moderator and Minister and His Work committee did not have such authority, it is also extremely troubling.

Amongst other reasons, church discipline is exercised for the church's purity and out of love for those presumed to be in sin. To reduce church discipline to plea deals and bargaining is inexcusable. Furthermore, according to *Book of Discipline* 2.6.A, the censure of rebuke is reserved for those who are not repentant. Mr. Matt Miller had already confessed his sin publicly and had written letters seeking forgiveness from multiple members of the court and private individuals. Both former and current members of Second Presbytery have testified that similar tactics were employed by Second Presbytery in 2003 when Mr. Chuck Wilson avoided church discipline by agreeing to honorable retirement.

15. Mr. Seth Yi, then Moderator of Second Presbytery, sent an unsolicited email to Mr. Mike Whitehurst, chairman of the Erskine Board, about Mr. Matt Miller's conduct. In this email, Mr. Yi asked what actions Erskine would take against Mr. Miller in light of the allegations against him. This email was highly inappropriate and in some legal opinions, violated employment law. The Erskine Board had no authority over Mr. Matt Miller's employment, so this email served only to slander Mr. Matt Miller.

16. Mr. Seth Yi, then Moderator of Second Presbytery, went on to send a response email to Mr. Mike Whitehurst, chairman of the Erskine Board, and Erskine President, Dr. Steve Adamson. In his response, Mr. Yi stated that as the Moderator of Second Presbytery, he could no longer support the work of Erskine College and Seminary due to their inaction in dealing with Mr. Matt Miller. Such actions by Second Presbytery's Moderator showed an abuse of power.

17. Mr. Seth Yi, then moderator of Second Presbytery, committed to pursue peace with Mr. Mark Miller and Mr. Matt Miller if they agreed to withdraw the allegations they made against Mr. Yi and the Minister and His Work Committee. Mr. Mark Miller and Mr. Matt Miller withdrew their allegations; but Mr. Yi presented evidence against Mr. Matt Miller to the Miller Judicial Commission, thus violating his professed intentions to work toward peace.

18. *Book of Discipline* 8.1 states that, “When a member wishes to withdraw his membership or ministerial credentials without transferring to another branch of the Church visible, the church court that has original jurisdiction shall solemnly warn him that his actions are tantamount to apostacy, and that he is, in effect, practicing self-excommunication by placing himself outside of the visible Church.”

On May 22, 2023, Mr. Chuck Wilson withdrew from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. He did so on the day of his trial, foregoing the opportunity to face his accusers and defend himself from charges filed against him. In keeping with *Book of Discipline* 8.1, Mr. Kyle Sims, Principal Clerk of the General Synod, warned Mr. Wilson that renouncing the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was tantamount to apostacy, and that Mr. Wilson was declaring himself outside of the Church of Jesus Christ. Mr. Chuck Wilson did not heed this warning.

At the time of this report, Mr. Chuck Wilson still preaches regularly in Second Presbytery at Lower Long Cane Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, despite the fact that his activities have been widely known since September of 2023. And not only has Mr. Chuck Wilson been preaching regularly, the Session of Lower Long Cane presented a Memorial at Second Presbytery’s Spring Stated Meeting, calling on the General Synod to “repent and reconsider their judgment in the matters pertaining to his (Mr. Chuck Wilson’s) dismissal.” Their memorial was ruled out of order based on the timeline in which it was received, but no other action was taken. It is the committee’s understanding that the Lower Long Cane Session desires that Mr. Chuck Wilson be approved as their Stated Supply.

Additionally, Mr. Tony Locke, a member in good standing of Second Presbytery, distributed a slanderous document naming specific individuals and an entire presbytery in its lies. Second Presbytery has done nothing to address such egregious actions, thus violating a mark of the true Church.

19. In April 2023, at a called meeting, Second Presbytery’s Moderator stated from the chair that *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* functioned as guidelines but were not authoritative for how the court should proceed with the aforementioned issues. Second Presbytery did nothing to address this error.

20. Since our committee’s creation, multiple members of Second Presbytery from all sides of these issues have expressed their desire that Second Presbytery be dissolved, citing its volatility, culture of intrigue, and inability to perform the key tasks of any church court, including church discipline. Multiple members of Second Presbytery have also expressed disgust over the fact that no one seems to be accountable for any of the events described in this report.

Summary:

As indicated in this report, Second Presbytery is unable to function as a court of the Church and is irrevocably broken. Their brokenness has led to a culture of intimidation, retribution, fear, and inaction, based not on the actions of a few, but on the inaction of the whole. Serious errors were made at every turn, either directly by Second Presbytery in session, or by its members throughout this entire ordeal, and all the while Second Presbytery has done nothing meaningful to rectify its mistakes. The Lord has not been honored, victims of the highest forms of abuse have been ignored, *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* have been exploited, and God's Word has not been followed.

Recommendations:

1. That Second Presbytery be dissolved as of September 1, 2024. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the bounds of Catawba Presbytery be extended to include those churches in South Carolina that were formerly in Second Presbytery. **SYNOD APPROVED**
3. That the boundaries of Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery be extended to include the State of Georgia. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
4. That the General Synod encourage members of Second Presbytery to transfer their credentials to Catawba or Tennessee-Alabama presbyteries (depending on their geographical location). **SYNOD APPROVED.**
5. That the Moderator appoint a commission in order to oversee the transfer of assets and dissolution of Second Presbytery. **SYNOD DID NOT APPROVE.**
6. That the General Synod encourage Catawba and Tennessee-Alabama presbyteries to use assets received for the purpose of church strengthening, already existing church plants, and new church planting, giving special consideration to the geographical areas of the former Second Presbytery. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
7. That the General Synod review Catawba and Tennessee-Alabama presbytery boundaries after a period of 3 years. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
8. That the Moderator appoint a committee to review and revise *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* with special emphasis on the church discipline process in the *Book of Discipline* and special emphasis on the *Form of Government*, as it relates to judicial commissions. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Taylor, Secretary

The 10 A.M. Order of the Day for a short break was reached.

After a short break, discussion continued regarding the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Second Presbytery's Handling of the Allegations Against Chuck Wilson.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the 11:45 A.M. Order of the Day be extended.

The 11:55 Order of the Day was reached. Phil Williams offered a closing prayer and blessing for lunch.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

The afternoon sermon was given by Stacey Cox, followed by fraternal greetings from Matthew Holst, the OPC fraternal delegate.

Business continued with the Special Committee to Investigate Second Presbytery's Handling of Allegations Against Chuck Wilson. Bob Elliott assumed the role of moderating the meeting. Recommendation #1 of the committee's report was approved.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church publicly ask the forgiveness of those for whom we have neglected our duties as spiritual fathers and brothers in matters pertaining to Mr. Chuck Wilson, particularly his wife and children. (Citing Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 130.)

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator establish a commission to oversee and distribute funds to fulfill and continue the existing obligations of Second Presbytery and that the same commission study the best use of the remaining funds for the furtherance of the gospel in our denomination.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator direct the commission to deal with funds of Second Presbytery and be allowed to deal with the dissolution of Second Presbytery and to handle any requests for churches in Second Presbytery to change from their new presbytery.

At 4:55 P.M. the Order of the Day was reached. Casey Freswick, fraternal observer brought greetings from the URC.

The blessing and closing prayer was given by Dan Eller.

WEDNESDAY EVENING

The Camp Joy Singers led by opening the evening session with special music, followed by a sermon from Mel Wines.

Patrick Malphrus resumed his role of Parliamentarian and Kyle Sims returned as Principal Clerk. Alan Broyles resumed his role as Moderator.

The report of the **Committee on Inter-Church Relations** was presented.

COMMITTEE ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

The Committee on Inter-Church Relations of the ARP Church met via Zoom on August 17, 2023 at 2pm; via Zoom on December 18, 2023 at 2pm; and via Zoom on February 22, 2024 at 2pm.

Ecumenical Organizations

The ARP ICR committee was able to send representatives to the 2023 meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) held at Warwick, Rhode Island from November 14-16, 2023. It was hosted by the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC). The ARP delegation consisted of Rev. Benjamin Glaser, Rev. Kyle Sims, Rev. Billy Barron, and Synod Moderator Rev. Rob Patrick. The 2024 meeting will be hosted by the Reformed Church of the United States and will be held in Kansas City, Missouri. The ARP ICR committee continues to discuss our future membership in the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF). The next meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches will be in 2026 in South Korea.

Churches in Fraternal Relations

The churches in fraternal fellowship with the ARPC are the Korean-American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW), and the Free Church of Scotland (FCoS). At the ARP Synod of 2023, action was taken to extend fraternal relations to the United Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches. The ARP is waiting on action by those two communions before any further action on our part is taken on this matter. It has been our practice to exchange delegates annually with the OPC and RPCNA. Our practice is to alternate years of sending and receiving delegates with the EPC and PCA. We exchange delegates with the KAPC, EPCEW, and FCoS on an occasional basis. The committee continues to review our relationship with the EPC. The ARP IRC has instructed our representatives to have open and frank discussion with their EPC colleagues about the situation in the EPC. We invited our EPC brethren to our 2023 ARP Synod where they addressed us. For several years, we have been discussing and monitoring the situation in the EPC. We continue to

ask the Synod as a whole to prayerfully consider our future fraternal relations with the EPC. We also continue to encourage presbyteries and churches to invite local NAPARC churches to their meetings and events.

Fraternal Delegates / Representatives

In 2024, we have approved the sending of fraternal delegates to the meetings of the OPC, RPCNA, and the EPC General Synod/Assemblies. We also have invited the PCA, the OPC, and the RPCNA, to send a fraternal delegate to our General Synod. As has been our practice for several years now, we have invited the Canadian Reformed Churches, URC, IPAR, LERC, and the Bible Presbyterian Church to send observers. Bonclarken is working with us to be able to host our fraternal delegates for a dinner together on Tuesday evening during Synod week. Rev. Benjamin Glaser and Rev. Kyle Sims were approved by our ARP ICR committee to be the representatives of the ARPC at the 2024 General Assembly of the EPC. Our representative at the RPCNA assembly is TBD. Rev. Bill Barron will be attending the OPC General Assembly.

Other Relationships

The 2022 ARP General Synod asked our committee to investigate relations with the ARP churches in Mexico and Pakistan. In God's providence, in December of 2023, the ARP Synod was invited by the Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada (IPAR) de Mexico to attend their Synod meeting at Ciudad Valles, San Luis Potosi, Mexico from February 8-10. The ARP ICR committee met via Zoom on December 21st to discuss the request. The committee moved that we accept the request on the condition that after a Zoom meeting with the corresponding IPAR Inter-Church committee some concerns about the nature of the trip were clarified. That meeting took place on January 4, 2024. Questions being answered, the ARP ICR committee approved Rev. Benjamin Glaser, Rev. Rob Patrick, Rev. Scott Moore, and Rev. Justin Brickey to attend the meeting of IPAR. The trip was an excellent time of renewing acquaintances, making new friends, and witnessing the beauty of Christ's gospel with fellow brothers in the Lord. There is much to be encouraged by in the work of IPAR in Mexico. We are glad to report that the ARP ICR committee is recommending that the Synod extend fraternal fellowship to IPAR at this meeting of Synod. At the winter ARP ICR meeting, the committee sought that we also investigate the nature and existence of our relations with the ARP Synod of Pakistan and report back to the next meeting.

Officers for 2024-2025:

Rev. Benjamin Glaser, Chairman

TBD, Vice Chairman

Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, Secretary

Recommendations:

1. That the ARP General Synod initiate the process of elevating the Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de Mexico to Fraternal Fellowship status and, if the way be clear, that the Principal Clerk of Synod communicate this action to his compatriot in IPAR. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the ARP General Synod officially welcome the representatives from IPAR and grant them the privilege of addressing the Synod, and that the Synod pause for prayer for IPAR. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That the ARP General Synod direct the Inter-Church Relations committee chairman to communicate with his compatriot in the ARP Synod of Pakistan to encourage relations. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
4. That the ARP General Synod officially welcome the representative from the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church and the Synod pause for prayer for LERC. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
5. That the ARP General Synod pause for prayer for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
6. That Synod authorize the following as our fraternal delegates: RPCNA (June 10-14, 2024 at Geneva College, Pittsburgh, PA) Name TBD; EPC (June 17-20, 2024 at Memphis, TN), Rev. Tim Phillips; OPC (June 19-25, 2024; Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA), Rev. Billy Barron; URC (June 17-21, 2024 in Escondido, CA) Rev. Richard Vander Vaart. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
7. That the ARP General Synod would authorize the Committee on Inter-Church Relations to assign fraternal delegates for the meetings of NAPARC and any other fraternal situations as needed. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
8. That the ICRC budget be approved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
9. That the report be approved as a whole. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Glaser, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

Fraternal delegates from the ARP Mexico and IPAR Seminary addressed the Synod.

A motion **CARRIED**

**That the addresses given by IPAR be presented in the
Minutes of Synod in Spanish and English.**

miércoles, 12 de junio de 2024
Bonclarken

¡La Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de México les envía un cordial saludo, especialmente a todos ustedes que de una u otra manera han colaborado con nuestro Seminario!

El Seminario Ebenezer, ahora llamado la Comunidad Reformada de Estudios Superiores (CRES), fue fundado en la década de los 70s por estudiantes de los misioneros que ustedes enviaron a México. Es más, a lo largo de los años, otros misioneros enviados por el Sínodo de los Estados Unidos han servido como maestros, y hasta directores muy queridos por los estudiantes (¡algunos de ellos están entre nosotros ahora mismo!) Durante la década de los 90s, muchas iglesias ARP aquí en los Estados Unidos apoyaron con sacrificio la construcción del edificio actual del Seminario, tanto con recursos financieros como con mano de obra.

Queridos hermanos, en nombre de quienes hemos sido y somos parte de la Comunidad Reformada, ¡les agradecemos sinceramente por todos estos gestos de amor y hermandad! Creemos también que con la gracia de Dios podemos encontrar líneas de colaboración entre nuestras instituciones teológicas, principalmente en el área académica.

Este año, la Comunidad Reformada cumple 50 años. La gracia y la fidelidad de Dios se han manifestado en cada momento, incluso en los momentos más difíciles. Por eso queremos agradecer a Dios por su misericordia con actividades de alabanza y conmemoración. En nombre del Sínodo General de la PAR Mexicana y la Comunidad Reformada, extendemos una cordial invitación a las actividades de aniversario que se llevarán a cabo los días 2 y 3 de noviembre de 2024 en Tampico, Tamaulipas. Serán muy bienvenidos y será un honor que participen en esta celebración que nos pertenece a todos.

El Seminario en México les espera. Nos ponemos a su disposición como hermanos en Cristo, y como institución hermana con una misma misión común: “llevar juntos el evangelio hasta los confines de la tierra” y edificar la iglesia sobre el fundamento seguro de la Palabra de Dios, nuestro mayor deseo.

Atentamente,

*Dr. Joel Almanza Amaya, Director
Comunidad Reformada de Estudios
Superiores*

*Wednesday, June 12, 2024
Bonclarken*

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico sends you a cordial greeting, especially to all of you who have collaborated in one way or another with our Seminary!

Ebenezer Seminary, now called the Reformed Community of Higher Studies (Comunidad Reformada de Estudios Superiores or CRES), was founded in the 1970s by students of the missionaries you sent to Mexico, but over the years many missionaries you have sent have been served as teachers and even directors much loved by the students; (some of them are among us right now!) During the 1990s, many ARP churches here in the States sacrificially supported the construction of the current Seminary building, both with financial resources and labor.

Dear brothers, on behalf of those of us who have been, and are, part of the Comunidad Reformada, we sincerely thank you for all these gestures of love and brotherhood! We also believe that with the grace of God we can find lines of collaboration between our theological institutions, mainly in the academic area.

This year, the reformed community turns 50 years old. God's grace and faithfulness has been shown at every moment, even in the most difficult times. So we want to thank God for his mercy with activities of praise and commemoration. On behalf of the General Synod of the Mexican

ARP and the Comunidad Reformada, we extend a cordial invitation to the anniversary activities that will take place on November 2-3, 2024 in Tampico, Tamaulipas. You will be very welcome, and it will be an honor to have you participate in this celebration that belongs to all of us.

The Seminary in Mexico awaits you. We put ourselves at your disposal as brothers in Christ, and as a sister institution with the same common mission: to "carry the gospel to the ends of the earth together" and to build the church on the sure foundation of the Word of God, our greatest desire.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Joel Almanza Amaya, Director
Comunidad Reformada de Estudios Superiores*

Tampico, Tamps. México a 7 de junio de 2024.

Asunto: el que se indica.

R. Sínodo General de la Iglesia Presbiteriana
Asociada Reformada de los Estados Unidos
PRESENTE

Gracia y paz a vosotros, de Dios nuestro Padre y del Señor Jesucristo. Efesios 1:2

Apreciados hermanos y consiervos en Cristo: Reciban un saludo fraterno en el amor de nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo, Jefe y Cabeza de la Iglesia. Oramos que la bendición y dirección de nuestro Dios sea sobre sus vidas en el desarrollo de la presente reunión Sinódica.

Agradecemos la amable y fraterna invitación que nos hicieron llegar a través del Rev. Benjamin Glaser, presidente del Comité de Relaciones Intereclesiásticas, para asistir a la presente reunión de vuestro Sínodo General de la IPAR de los Estados Unidos. Es nuestro privilegio y gozo poder acompañarles por medio de nuestros delegados fraternales: el Dr. Joel Enrique Almanza Amaya, Rector de la Comunidad Reformada de Estudio Superiores; el Pbro. Luis Humberto Betancourt Gonzáles, secretario del R. Sínodo General de la IPAR de México; y el Pbro. Mario Eduardo García Moore, pastor de la IPAR "Filadelfia" en San Luis Potosí, SLP. Muchas gracias la recepción y las atenciones brindadas durante su estancia en el desarrollo de esta importante reunión.

Así mismo, queremos expresar nuestra gratitud por haber aceptado nuestra invitación para estar presentes en la pasada reunión de nuestro Sínodo General de la IPAR de México, llevada a cabo del 8 al 10 de febrero de 2024, en Cd. Valles, S.L.P. México. La presencia e importante participación del Rev. Rob Patrick, Rev. Benjamin Glessner, Rev. Justin Brickey y Rev. Scott W. Moore, fueron de gran bendición en el desarrollo de nuestra asamblea, así como en el diálogo intereclesiástico.

Como Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de México, damos muchas gracias a Dios por los esfuerzos de vuestra iglesia en los Estados Unidos al enviar misioneros para sem-

brar con el mensaje del Evangelio en nuestro país y contribuir en la edificación de la Iglesia en México a lo largo de casi 150 años de nuestra historia. Parte de esa importante labor misionera se vio reflejada en la formación de nuestro seminario “Eben-Ezer”, el cual ahora lleva por nombre de “Comunidad Reformada de Estudio Superiores”. En el presente año estamos celebrando el 50 aniversario de haberse establecido el seminario en la ciudad de Tampico, Tamps. Por tal motivo, deseamos hacerles una fraterna invitación para que nos acompañen en las actividades de aniversario que se llevarán a cabo los días 2 y 3 de noviembre, en la ciudad de Tampico, Tamaulipas. Será un gran honor recibirles y celebrar junto con ustedes la gracia de nuestro Dios sobre esta importante institución educativa para la iglesia en México.

Finalmente, como parte del mismo Cuerpo de Cristo, deseamos reiterar nuestra sincera disposición para continuar fortaleciendo las relaciones fraternas entre ambos cuerpos eclesiales. Es nuestro deseo y oración que nuestra comunión siga creciendo y se fortalezca cada vez más para la mutua edificación de nuestras Iglesias y sus respectivas instituciones. Oramos que nuestra motivación sobre todas las cosas sea la gloria de nuestro Señor Jesucristo y la continua expansión de su Reino hasta lo último de la Tierra.

Sin otro asunto en particular, agradecemos su atención y quedamos a vuestro servicio en el amor de Cristo.

Atentamente

Por Orden del Sínodo General de la IPAR de México

Pbro. José Othoniel Juárez Báez
Presidente

Pbro. Luis Humberto Betancourt Gonzales
Secretario

c.c.p. Comité de Relaciones Intereclesiásticas de la IPAR de los Estados Unidos.
c.c.p. Secretaría de Relaciones Intereclesiásticas de la IPAR de México.

General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of the United States

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 1:2

Dear brothers and fellow servants in Christ:

Receive a fraternal greeting in the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Chief and Head of the Church. We pray that the blessing and direction of our God be upon your lives during the proceedings of your Synod meeting.

We appreciate the kind and fraternal invitation extended to us through the Rev. Benjamin Glaser, Chairman of the Committee on Interchurch Relations, to attend the present meeting of your General Synod of the ARP of the United States. It is our privilege and joy to be able to accompany you by means of our fraternal delegates: Dr. Joel Enrique Almanza Amaya, Rector of the Reformed Community of Higher Studies; Rev. Luis Humberto Betancourt Gonzales, secretary of the General Synod of the IPAR of Mexico; and Rev. Mario Eduardo García Moore, pastor of the IPAR “Filadelfia” in San Luis Poto-

sí, SLP. Thank you very much for the reception and attention provided during their stay in the proceedings of this important meeting.

Likewise, we want to express our gratitude for having accepted our invitation to be present at the last meeting of our General Synod of the IPAR of Mexico, held from February 8 to 10, 2024, in Cd. Valles, S.L.P. Mexico. The presence and important participation of Rev. Rob Patrick, Rev. Benjamin Glaser, Rev. Justin Brickey and Rev. Scott W. Moore, were a great blessing in the development of our assembly, as well as in inter-church dialogue.

As the Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico, we thank God very much for the efforts of your church in the United States in sending missionaries to sow the message of the Gospel in our country and contribute to the building of the Church in Mexico throughout almost 150 years of our history. Part of that important missionary work was reflected in the formation of our "Eben-Ezer" Seminary, which is now called "Reformed Community of Higher Studies." This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of establishing the seminary in the city of Tampico. For this reason, we wish to extend a fraternal invitation to join us in the anniversary activities that will take place on November 2 and 3, in the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas. It will be a great honor to receive you and celebrate with you the grace of our God on this important educational institution for the church in Mexico.

Finally, as part of the same Body of Christ, we wish to reiterate our sincere willingness to continue strengthening fraternal relations between both ecclesiastical bodies. It is our desire and prayer that our communion continues to grow and become increasingly stronger for the mutual edification of our Churches and their respective institutions. We pray that our motivation above all things will be the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the continued expansion of His Kingdom to the ends of the Earth.

Without any other matter in particular, we appreciate your attention and remain at your service in the love of Christ.

Sincerely,

By Order of the General Synod of the IPAR of Mexico

Rev. José Othoniel Juárez Báez
Moderator

Rev. Luis Humberto Betancourt Gonzales
Principal Clerk

BREVE RESEÑA DE LA LLEGADA DE LOS PRIMEROS MISIONEROS PRESBITERIANOS A MÉXICO

La llegada de los primeros misioneros Presbiterianos a México a mediados del siglo XIX marcó un punto de inflexión en la historia religiosa del país. Este evento fue parte del movimiento misionero protestante que se extendió por América Latina durante esa época.

La misión presbiteriana en México comenzó en 1837 cuando en la IPAR de Estados Unidos quedó asentado en el Acta de la Reunión de ese año, la intención de tener Misiones Extranjeras y en cada una de las reuniones a partir de esos años, manifestaban la intención de extender el Evangelio de Jesucristo en algún país.

Fue hasta finales de 1874 que la señorita Mary E. Galloway, de Due West, Carolina del Sur se ofreció, en la Junta de Misiones Extranjeras para la Obra Misionera. En 1875 salió para trabajar en la Misión Presbiteriana Unida de Egipto. Hija del Reverendo Galloway, his grave is at Due West cemetery. I was there.

En 1878, el R. Sínodo acordó establecer una Misión en México. Respondió al llamado el Reverendo Neil E. Pressly y su esposa y sus hijos, en diciembre del mismo año salieron hacia la ciudad de México con el fin de aprender el idioma. En diciembre de 1879 llegaron a la ciudad de Tampico, Tamaulipas, para establecer la obra misionera de la IPAR.

Su objetivo establecer iglesias y difundir la fe protestante en un país predominantemente católico.

BAJO LA SIGUIENTE ESTRATEGIA:

- Predicar el Evangelio a quien quisiera escuchar
- Prestar ayuda Física y Moral
- Establecer culto Cristianos de un orden nuevo
- Entrenar a Predicadores mexicanos
- Instruir a los nuevos creyentes para que comprendieran la nueva Fe
- Dirigir el desarrollo de un grupo de Congregaciones que se sostuvieran financieramente y
que se propagaran.

Uno de los aspectos más destacados de la labor misionera presbiteriana en México fue su enfoque en la educación y la atención médica. Establecieron escuelas y Casas Hogar en diversas regiones del país, brindando servicios a comunidades que carecían de acceso a la educación y la atención médica.

La presencia de los misioneros presbiterianos no estuvo exenta de desafíos y controversias. Enfrentaron oposición por parte de las autoridades eclesiásticas católicas y resistencia por parte de algunas comunidades locales. Sin embargo, a lo largo de los años, lograron ganarse el respeto y la confianza de muchas personas a través de su trabajo humanitario y su compromiso con el bienestar de las comunidades a las que servían.

El legado de los primeros misioneros presbiterianos en México perdura hasta el día de hoy. Sus esfuerzos contribuyeron a la diversificación del panorama religioso del país y sentaron las bases para el crecimiento y la expansión del protestantismo en México. Además, su labor en áreas como la educación y la salud dejó un impacto duradero en las comunidades que atendieron.

En resumen, la llegada de los primeros misioneros presbiterianos a México representó un capítulo importante en la historia religiosa y social del país, caracterizado por su dedicación a la fe, la educación y el servicio comunitario.

Piensen, piensen en la importancia de las decisiones que se toman en estas reuniones, Nosotros salimos de los lomos de la reunión Sinódica de 1837 de hermanos que escucharon y fueron obedientes a la voz del Espíritu Santo. Hoy la Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de México esta integrada por un Sínodo General que agrupa a dos R. Sínodos: R. Sínodo Eben-ezer formado por 5 Presbiterios y Castillo Fuerte por 3 Presbiterios.

Dios ha sido bueno y ha tenido misericordia de quién ha tenido misericordia.

Si, Es la Obra del Espíritu Santo que inició en 1879 con el Reverendo Neil E. Pressly y su esposa. A Dios le pertenecen, la Gloria, la Honra, el Imperio y la Alabanza y Adoración.

Gracias, muchas gracias y abundantes bendiciones de Dios para Ustedes amados hermanos en Cristo Jesús. God bless you. Amén

Rev. Mario Eduardo Garcia Moore, Pastor
Iglesia PAR "Filadelfia", San Juis Ptosí, SLP, Mexico

BRIEF REVIEW
OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARIES TO MEXICO
delivered by Rev. Mario Eduardo García Moore
member of the Delegation from the Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de México
at the Meeting of General Synod, June 12, 2024

The arrival of the first Presbyterian missionaries to Mexico in the mid-19th century marked a turning point in the country's religious history. This event was part of the Protestant missionary movement that spread throughout Latin America during that time.

The Presbyterian mission in Mexico began in 1837 when the ARP of the United States stated in the Minutes of the Meeting of that year, the intention of having Foreign Missions and in each of the meetings from those years on, they expressed the intention to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in some country.

It was not until the end of 1874 that Miss Mary E. Galloway, of Due West, South Carolina, volunteered to the Board of Foreign Missions for Missionary Work. In 1875 she left to work in the United Presbyterian Mission of Egypt. She was the daughter of Reverend Galloway, whose grave is at Due West ARP cemetery. I know because I visited his grave there last week!

In 1878, the Synod agreed to establish a Mission in Mexico. The Reverend Neil E. Pressly and his wife and children responded to the call. In December of the same year they left for Mexico City in order to learn the language. In December 1879 they arrived in the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas, to establish the missionary work of the ARP.

Their goal was to establish churches and spread the Protestant faith in a predominantly Catholic country. The key elements of Rev. Pressly's approach were:

- **Preach the Gospel** to whoever would listen
- **Provide physical and moral help**, such as schools, orphanages, and medical assistance
- **Establish Christian worship** according to the dictates of Scripture
- **Train Mexican Pastors** to lead the new churches
- **Disciple new believers** to understand their new faith
- **Direct the development of congregations** that were financially self-sustaining

One of the most notable aspects of Presbyterian missionary work in Mexico was its focus on education and health care. They established schools and orphanages in various regions of the country, providing services to communities that lacked access to education and health care.

The presence of Presbyterian missionaries was not without challenges and controversy. They faced opposition from Catholic ecclesiastical authorities and resistance from some local communi-

ties. However, over the years, they managed to earn the respect and trust of many people through their humanitarian work and their commitment to the well-being of the communities they served.

The legacy of the first Presbyterian missionaries in Mexico endures to this day. Their efforts contributed to the diversification of the country's religious landscape and laid the foundation for the growth and expansion of Protestantism in Mexico. Additionally, their work in areas such as education and health left a lasting impact on the communities they served.

In summary, the arrival of the first Presbyterian missionaries to Mexico represented an important chapter in the religious and social history of the country, characterized by their dedication to faith, education, and community service.

Reflecting over this, I urge you to weigh very carefully the importance of the decisions that are made in these meetings. Consider the ramifications and the great importance they carry in the Kingdom of God! We, the members of the Mexican ARP Church, sprang from the loins of the Synod meeting of 1837 which was made up of brothers who listened and were obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Today the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico is made up of a General Synod that comprises two Synods: Ebenezer Synod with its five Presbyteries and the Castillo Fuerte Synod and its three Presbyteries.

God has been good and has had mercy on whom he has had mercy!

Yes, It is the Work of the Holy Spirit that began in 1879 with the Reverend Neil E. Pressly and his wife. Glory, Honor, Dominion, Praise and Adoration belong to God!

Thank you, thank you very much and abundant blessings from God to you, beloved brothers in Christ Jesus! God bless you! Amen!

Sincerely,

*Rev. Mario Eduardo García Moore, Pastor
Iglesia PAR "Filadelfia", San Luis Potosí, SLP, México*

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator form, and Synod fully fund, a delegation to be present at the 50th Anniversary of the IPAR Seminary in Tampico, Mexico, in November, in response to the invitation of ERAS and IPAR.

The Synod rose to sing **Psalter 117**.

A motion **CARRIED**

That in light of our renewed relationship with our brothers in the IPAR and in response to the challenge we heard from Rev. Juan Carlos Bonilla on the need to share the Gospel among the more than 65 million Hispanics living in the United States, we ask the IPAR help us in this mission by sending missionaries, training our churches, and teaching us as the ARP to accomplish the Great Commission.

A motion **CARRIED**

That Rev. Zeeshan Sadiq be given the privilege of the floor in order to address the Synod concerning the ARP Church of Pakistan.

The report of the **Bonclarken** was presented.

BONCLARKEN CONFERENCE CENTER

Dear Gentlemen:

The Board of Bonclarken continues to serve Jesus Christ, our thousands of guests, and General Synod through the management of our Conference Center.

We continue to make decisions within the framework of our mission to “provide and promote a Christian environment for inspiration and renewal.” The purpose of this report is to update Synod on the activities of our Board since the last meeting of Synod, to share the ministry impact of Bonclarken, and to make recommendations for consideration by Synod.

Bonclarken’s ministry impact can be illustrated in a response from a first-time guest who attended a conference last summer. She shared with President Chip Sherer that *“I had assumed, based on the photos I saw on Bonclarken’s website, that this was a nice place. However, when I arrived I realized the pictures did not do this place justice. More importantly, I have been so renewed in my faith during my visit...what a blessing I have received by attending this conference.”*

The Board thanks Synod and the many churches that support Bonclarken through their giving to the Denominational Ministry Fund.

We are also indebted to the hundreds of volunteers who assist with our ministry each year. The Bonclarken staff is always encouraged by the time and effort provided by so many fine friends.

Duties

The Board of Bonclarken is responsible for oversight of the management and ministry of the Conference Center, which includes all properties and facilities. In the exercise of this responsibility, the Board implements the five duties as reflected in the Manual of Authorities and Duties.

Duty #1:

“To be responsible for carrying out the PURPOSE of Bonclarken: ‘To serve God through the ministry of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod by providing for the denomination opportunities for Christian worship, education, recreation, and fellowship; by assuring a wholesome atmosphere for Christian development; and by making facilities available to the agencies and institutions of Synod, its Presbyteries, and local congregations to fulfill their missions and goals.’ In the interest of oneness

with God, the facilities may be shared with other Christian and educational groups when scheduling permits.”

Response to this duty:

Providing opportunities for Christian worship, education, recreation, and fellowship is the primary mission of Bonclarken. The Board and the Administration work together to keep this mission as the focus of our efforts.

Each Monday morning, Bonclarken President Chip Sherer sends an email to our Board (and nearly two hundred other friends of Bonclarken) listing the groups attending during the upcoming week and asking for prayer that these guests will be receptive to the call of the Holy Spirit and that the work of our staff will glorify Christ. *Christian development* is fostered when guests are open to the call of the Holy Spirit, and the Bonclarken staff works diligently to *assure a Christian atmosphere* for this development.

Bonclarken is open year-round, thereby *making facilities available to the agencies and institutions of Synod, its Presbyteries, and local congregations to fulfill their missions and goals.*

In the interest of oneness with God, the facilities may be shared with other Christian and educational groups when scheduling permits. Bonclarken has hosted many other like-minded Christian and educational groups in the past, and we pray these friends will continue to be interested in holding their events at our conference center.

Duty #2:

“To elect officers and employ and supervise the president of Bonclarken, who in turn will employ and supervise such persons as may be necessary for carrying on the work of Bonclarken in accordance with the policies established by the Board.”

Response to this duty:

The following officers were elected to serve in 2023-24: Jim Ashburn, Chairman; Dan Eller, Vice Chairman; Elaine Reed, Secretary; Blake Moore, Treasurer.

The Board employs and supervises Chip Sherer as President of Bonclarken. The Board entrusts Mr. Sherer with the duty of carrying out the policies of the Board and managing the day-to-day operations of the Conference Center.

Duty #3:

“To make such rules and regulations for its own governance as may be consistent with the Constitution of Bonclarken Conference Center and the policies of Synod.”

Response to this duty:

The Board regularly reviews its By-Laws and Board policies as to current applicability and makes revisions when deemed appropriate.

Duty #4:

“To manage, sell, lease or purchase real property as determined appropriate by the Board to carry out the mission of Bonclarken.”

Response to this duty:

The Board continues to ensure that all property owned by Bonclarken is appropriately managed and took the following significant actions from May 2023 through March 2024:

Action taken at the May 2023 Board meeting:

Established a Special Committee to study the metrics related to our operating budget and our continuing goal of having operating revenues be at least 85% of operating expenses, with the remaining 15% being received through contributions.

Action taken at the October 2023 Board meeting:

Approved the Administration's request to install new HVAC units in the Youth Activity Building and in the Dining Room Kitchen.

Selected Carl Shaw, CPA, to perform the 2023 Financial Review.

Actions taken at the January 2024 Board meeting:

Approved the 2024 Operating Budget.

Approved the 2024 Endowment Income Budget and Withdrawal schedule.

Approved revisions to the Policies for Property Owners.

Duty #5:

"To make an annual report to the General Synod."

Recommendations:

1. That the meeting of General Synod for 2026 be held at Bonclarken beginning Tuesday, June 9, 2026. (*The meeting of General Synod for 2025 was approved by the 2023 Synod to be held at Bonclarken beginning Tuesday, June 10, 2025.*) **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That General Synod continue to support Bonclarken through the allocation of funds from the Denominational Ministry Fund and through the annual Easter offering. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That General Synod ask all presbyteries, boards, and churches to encourage and assist their members in attending the various camps/conferences/retreats hosted by Bonclarken during the year. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,
James P. Ashburn, Chairman
Board of Bonclarken

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the remarks by Rev. Zeeshan Sadiq be recorded in the Minutes of Synod.

It is an esteemed privilege to serve as the fraternal delegate representing the ARP Church, Pakistan, at this historic annual synod meeting of US and Canadian ARP churches.

First of all, I wish to express my profound appreciation to the Inter-Church Relations Committee for extending to me the gracious invitation to address this distinguished assembly today. The ARP Church in Pakistan cherishes its longstanding relationship with the US ARP denomination. Our Synod is deeply indebted to the US ARP church for its pivotal role in our establishing our denomination back in 1906.

Our denomination holds the services of the all US missionaries in high esteem, who tirelessly labored in Pakistan to establish churches, schools, the MLP Girls Hostel, and Mission Hospital. I trust that you will hear more about these endeavors from the respective representatives. Nonetheless, it is a distinct honor to speak on behalf of the ARP Synod Pakistan, which comprises four Presbyteries and approximately 85 pastors.

Our denomination commends the SEED Ministry of the World Witness and Erskine Theological Seminary for initiating the Global Diploma program in Pakistan, which currently enrolls around 185 students. This remarkable initiative is poised to assist us in achieving the following objectives:

- 1. Preparing future leadership for the church in Pakistan*
- 2. Equipping our pastors who didn't get any opportunity to get theological training before.*
- 3. Promoting Reformed Faith in Pakistan*
- 4. Strengthening our relationship together*

I extend heartfelt gratitude for the presence of esteemed individuals such as Rev. David Griffin our new field director, Rev. Lee Shelnut, Dr. David Galleta, Rev. Ross, Rev. Sam Cotton, and Rev. Justin Brickey, who have endeared themselves to all.

Our Synod remains steadfastly committed to:

- 1. Convening Sunday worship services*
- 2. Holding the Annual Sahiwal Convention*
- 3. Organizing the Annual Women Synodical Meeting*
- 4. Engaging in church planting endeavors both in Karachi and Lahore*
- 5. Conducting Sunday school and Youth Programs*
- 6. Hosting the Summer Camp in Murree*
- 7. Providing support to persecuted communities and churches, such as those in Jaranwala. Our Synod is deeply grateful to the World Witness for standing in solidarity with us in this noble cause.*

Prayer Requests:

We humbly request your continued prayers for:

- 1. The protection of our churches and communities, two recent tragic events this year have greatly*

saddened our people, especially in Jarawala. According to the Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP) report, 19 churches were burned and 89 Christian houses destroyed in an attack on Jaranwala and over 400 houses were affected and others in Sargoda city where a Christian shoe factory owner was brutally tortured by the big mob. He was taken to hospital, remained admitted there but could not recover and went home to be with the Lord.

2. Remember to pray that our folks won't lean towards Egalitarianism because one of the biggest Presbyterian denominations in our country has started ordaining women.
3. Pray that the prosperity gospel won't ruin our commitment to the reformed faith.
4. Pray for our ongoing planting project in Lahore would continue to be flourishing.
5. Pray that we shall be able to convene our Synod meeting as well, we desperately wish to conduct our annual Synod meeting, but we haven't been able to do since 2016 because of division and lawsuits issues.
6. Pray for the establishment of a theological library at Knox Home. We would be profoundly grateful for any consideration of financial contributions or donations of Biblical books towards this endeavor.

May the Lord continue to bestow His blessings upon us all.

Rev. Zeeshan Sadiq

WORLD WITNESS REPORT NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE

For more information, contact 864-233-5226

**WORLD WITNESS REPORT
NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE**

For more information, contact 864-233-5226

Keith Ackerman presented a video of ARP Christian Schools in Pakistan, and World Witness Executive Director, Alex Pettett, addressed the Synod.

A motion **CARRIED**

That with deference to the wisdom of Mr. Pettett concerning names and entities that may need to be removed, that the words of his report presented to this body be recorded in the Minutes of Synod.

“To the ends of the earth Together” is reminiscent of the theme of missions in the mid-1800s. In the mid-1800s during the time of the great US western expansion, there was also an eastern, spiritual expansion marked by the mobilization of American missionaries crossing the Atlantic and embarking on what is called “The Great Century of Missions.” The mantra for this movement was “Doing our part for world evangelization for our generation.” And these are the exact words Minnie Alexander declared at a public conference when she announced her intention to become the first ARP missionary in Pakistan.

And man did they do their part! The Unengaged/ Unreached (Frontier People Groups) were 60% of the world’s population in 1800. Today, it is down to 25% or roughly 2 billion people. But Ken Lotze, one of our retired missionaries, recently challenged the World Witness Board by saying, “We have come a long way, but there is still MORE WORK to be done. And what’s left is THE HARD STUFF.” Reaching that remaining 2 billion people, from people groups that have remained unconverted for almost 2,000 years, THAT’S the hard stuff.

Some of the Unengaged/Unreached people groups are the 71,553,000 Urdu-speaking Muslims in India, the 32,097,000 Pashto-speaking Muslims in Pakistan, the 31,328,000 Marathi-speaking Hindus of India, and the 61,482,000 Turkish-speaking Muslim people in Turkey. These 2 billion people represent the most Gospel-resistant people in some of the most difficult areas of the world.

You probably noticed that the largest group’s religion is Islam. For years, World Witness has endeavored to work with Muslim people groups that reside in Europe, Africa, and Pakistan.

In 2023, Bridge Europe reports work among Muslims including 15 new baptisms, 3 multi-ethnic church-plant works, student café ministry to 150 students, and social media outreach videos that have hundreds of thousands of views. SEED Ministry, working in Pakistan and East Africa, has a total of 5 cohorts reaching 245 students/pastors. In the United States, Ethnē Out-

fitters conducted 37 aid visits for Afghans, 4 outreaches to Muslim students, and regularly conducts 2 discovery Bible studies.

In addition, World Witness has dynamic church-planting and strengthening efforts in Germany, Lithuania, Spain and the United Kingdom. Europeans are often called “least reached”, meaning, without significant efforts by people like the Alexanders, Bonillas, Cochrans, Casons and Van Dalens Europe will continue to devolve spiritually.

This work requires apostles. The definition of apostle I am using is, “one who is sent out.” In Latin, “to be sent” is the word “missio” which is where we get our modern word for “missions.”

But, in a Western society increasingly concerned with “safety-ism” and gripped by anxiety, “being sent out” has lost its luster as a generation of Christians has begun to lose their courage. To effectively maintain our witness to the Church/world, and most effectively contextualize the Gospel, World Witness must make the “sending” of missionaries its primary focus.

But what does it mean to send missionaries? The role of SEED ministry is to train and mobilize pastors, ultimately for church-planting and strengthening. They are creating missionaries. In places like South Sudan, SEED can train and mobilize pastors to reach Muslim populations in Sudan itself, one of the most unreached countries in the world. In case you did not notice, one of the greatest humanitarian crises at this very moment is in Sudan due to its rekindled civil war.

The Sudanese Reformed Church ministers constantly to refugees of the Sudanese civil war and may be a viable partner for World Witness. The South Sudanese recently ended their own civil war in 2018 but it is acutely felt there today. In fact, in a recent visit to South Sudan, I asked their General Secretary about their church politics, referring to how unified they are, he responded, “you know Alex, church politics are hard. The civil war that ended in 2018 has left us with blood feuds in our churches. So, you know when one congregant murders or stabs another congregant, as a pastor, you have to step or many may die.” He concluded by reiterating that, “Church politics are really difficult.” That gave me a whole new perspective on church politics.

Sudan is one of those countries where “the hard stuff” is. It is ministries like SEED that have a Pauline-style ministry of raising up pastors and missionaries by visiting and revisiting churches and pastors to instruct and mobilize.

At the same time, a Pauline-style ministry must be matched by ministry like the Apostle Thomas who traveled all the way to India to end his days planting churches there, eventually facing martyrdom according to church tradition.

So yes, we train and mobilize new generations of pastors abroad, but at the same time, we must not lose our focus of sending our own flesh and blood, our sons, and our daughters. We need to remember that no price is too high when it comes to the God we serve. That price is often sacrifice and commitment.

Our brothers from Mexico shared that our first missionary was Mary Galloway Giffen to Egypt. Shortly thereafter, the Pressly family began mission work in Mexico which eventually birthed the ARP Synod of Mexico. But the part that we did not hear is that it was Mary Galloway’s farewell gathering where the Pressly family committed their own lives to missions. Neil Pressly, witnessing the sacrifice and commitment of Mary Galloway as she said goodbye to her own family for the last time “formed the high and holy purpose to devote his life to the mission cause.”¹

“There is no success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice, it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success, it is because someone will succeed after.” - Adornirum Judson.

Sacrifice and commitment are our evidence of faith and testimony of belief, in essence, it's our witness, it's even in our name, World Witness. This witness means we do not seek only to train others to risk their lives, but that we put ours on the line as well. When it comes to being a witness for Christ, you cannot outsource "blood."

And before you declare it only a young man's game, know that Rev. Heiko Burklin is moving back to Germany to take over team leadership for Bridge Europe and remember Rev. Frank and Emily van Dalen moved to Lithuania to give 10 more years to missions when most pastors are considering retirement. Missions is everyone's game and everyone's mandate.

And the call is urgent as we seek to replace families like the Mebergs and the Wittes who leave behind a wonderful legacy of sacrifice and commitment to church planting. Many of our missionaries have been with World Witness for over a decade and it is time for a new generation to join them.

To that end, SEED ministry is looking for two ARP families to form a beachhead by living and operating their ministry out of Rwanda. Please begin to pray that the Lord would raise up in your church these courageous people willing to be sent-out.

To go after the "hard stuff," World Witness believes our core values of humility, boldness, and connectedness are critical. First, we want to work in Christ's strength, not ours, which takes humility. If we are working from Christ's strength, we have boldness to proclaim His name, and not our name. And lastly, Christ's strength is multiplied when we strive for connectedness in working through the Church, and not alone. This is what World Witness means when we expect missionaries to work in humility, boldness and connectedness.

When you think of boldness, you probably think of the apostle Peter. He was brash and learned lessons the hard way. He had grit, staying power, and eventually whole-hearted submission to Christ. Except for a brief mention of his being in Jerusalem in Acts 15, the last thing revealed about his work is that "he departed and went to another place..." (Acts 12:17). We know from Peter's epistles that he continued to encourage the Church to stand in persecution, and church tradition places his martyrdom in Rome. But before this, it's as if Peter's name began to fade from Scripture, as Christ's name and story grew ever larger.

The Meberg family served in a small town in Turkey, for many years. They left behind two converts, one who turned out to be an anti-missionary spy. Neither were true Christians but rather were wolves in sheep's clothing. The Mebergs left feeling broken and tired. But their bold witness and proclamation of Christ's name gave a nearby church courage to raise up another church planter, a Turkish man, to take their place. Now, there is a large protestant church, composed mostly of former Muslims, in this once spiritually desolate place. Except for the pastor, no one knows the name Meberg in Mardin, but the name of Christ is well known, for that is the one thing the Mebergs left behind.

To be an apostle/missionary today is to be willing to go out humbly and boldly proclaiming Christ in Christ's strength, and if need be, have your own name forgotten by the world, so that Christ's name will forever be remembered. Missionaries know well what John meant when he said, "he must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

The vehicle that carries this name is the Body of Christ, the Church. This is what it means to work in humility, boldness, and connectedness. This is what it will take to finish the hard stuff..

I mentioned above that a generation is losing its willingness for sacrifice and commitment. These were characteristics often modeled to us by our mothers and fathers, by a nuclear family which has greatly deteriorated in recent years.

Let me suggest this, for the church to raise up its next generation of ministers and missionaries, its going to take pastors and elders intentionally investing in young Christians for whom they see ministry potential.

During my college years, the pastor of a large church was discipling me, and three other young men, twice a month for several hours over two years. The pastor, "Buster" Brown (yes, Buster was his nickname), was an extraordinary communicator and brilliant Bible scholar. He also introduced me to Reformed theology. Yet, what was most impressive about this incredibly busy man were the hours he took out of his schedule to patiently answer questions, gently speak into our personal lives, and to pray for us as brothers in Christ.

Toward the end of my college years, I was uncertain about what to do and determined, half-heartedly, to enter the military. I shared this with my pastor. His quiet, gentle response was, "You might be good at that, but have you considered foreign missions?" That was all he needed to say. There was no big speech, no guilting, and no pressure. Just five simple words, "Have you considered foreign missions?" I took this, not only as advice from a man I respected, but as the calling of God from a man who had taken years to love, guide, and build me up. Pastor Buster's investment gained him the right to discern God's calling in my life to foreign missions.

The hard stuff doesn't get done without the Church raising up the next generation of ministers and missionaries. There are 2 billion people in the world completely unreached by the Gospel, please invest in the next generation of missionaries as we once again "do our part for world evangelization for this generation." Fathers, brothers and sisters find the next generation that we may go, "to the ends of the earth...together".

Alex Pettett

Endnotes:

¹Galloway, JC, "The Life and Letters of Mary Galloway Giffen", 1882, p. 40.

Matt Joldersma closed the evening session with prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING

Gil Martin opened the Thursday session with a sermon.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the report of Memorials be taken up immediately after the Moderator and Vice-Moderator elections.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator appoint a committee to include members of the Nancy Fulwood Hospital Society Board and the Board of World Witness to study the advisability and feasibility of the formation of the Nancy Fulwood Hospital Society as a standing committee of the General Synod, and to formulate a plan to accomplish that purpose

if the committee so recommends, and to report back to the annual meeting of Synod in 2025.

The 10 A.M. Order of the Day for a break was reached.

Following the break, Rev. David Walkup was nominated for the office of Moderator to take office at the 2025 General Synod meeting.

A motion **CARRIED**

That Rev. David Walkup be elected by acclamation.

Frank Hunt III was nominated for the office of Vice-Moderator to take office at the 2025 General Synod meeting.

A motion **CARRIED**

That Mr. Frank Hunt, III be elected by acclamation.

The report of the **Committee on Memorials** was presented.

MEMORIALS

Canadian Presbytery Memorial #1

Re: The Formation of a Canadian Synod

The Canadian Presbytery of the ARP hereby memorializes the General Synod to dismiss the Canadian Presbytery to form our own Canadian ARP Synod as per FOG 12.22. A. The new Synod is to be named The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In making this petition we would humbly assure the General Synod that the overarching reason for requesting our release from the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church for the formation of a Canadian ARP Synod would be that we might be a greater blessing to Christ's church in Canada.

One of the goals of any cross-national missionary endeavour is the establishment of an 'indigenous ministry'. There has been an increasing emphasis in the philosophy of missions on the need to have self-supporting, viable, and vibrant churches in the nation in which we have been ministering.

This emphasis is in contrast to the dependence model where the church in any given country is totally dependent on the church of a foreign nation. While we in Canada share many similarities to the United States of America, we also have much that makes us very different. We, the Canadian Presbytery of the ARP, believe that there needs to

be a Canadian church that exists to minister to Canadian culture.

We believe that forming our own Synod would be a blessing to present reformed churches who also long for an indigenous Canadian ministry. We are mindful of churches who are of the same mind theologically and confessionally who would be encouraged to work with us for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in Canada.

The formation of our own national ARP Synod would be a better use of our financial resources. The money we spend going to our current Synod meetings could be used for church planting and presbytery growth. The average cost for our travel to Synod is \$1,300.00 per person. This figure multiplied by the representatives of ten churches (6 organized and 4 mission) soon becomes significant. These monies moved from our church budgets to the denominational expense and ministry fund would, over a short period of time, provide funds for the beginning of another church plant.

The third item is also a matter of stewardship. We believe that the formation of our own national ARP Synod would be a better use of the time and gifts of our ministers and elders. The labour that we currently expend on Boards and Committees that are primarily related to the US church could be directed to ministry needs in our own national context. We would be enabled to use our energies to think through the theological, cultural, and ecclesiastical issues of our own country. By God's grace we would be

enabled then to give faithful answers to these issues and implement biblical practices in our Canadian church.

The international border that divides our nations is real and we have already been forced to deal with our own health care and pension issues. The strictures of the Canada Revenue Agency have also required the formation of our own Presbytery church planting fund and our Presbytery Mission Committee (Canadian Presbyterian Mission) with our own mission policies and support. We are thankful to World Witness for continuing partnership and guidance in this process and trust that cooperation could continue along similar lines to help facilitate the areas of mutual labour in foreign missions.

The challenge of finding men to supply our congregations and missions has also highlighted our national differences. Men from the United States, for a variety of legitimate issues, are reluctant to come to minister in Canada. Canadian students who go south for seminary education, with very few exceptions, have a natural tendency to become involved in the US church and to accept calls to US congregations after graduation.

The primary disadvantage arising from the formation of our own national ARP Synod would be a loss of the fellowship and encouragement that we have enjoyed, and thanked God for, since the beginning of the ARP's work in Eastern Canada in the 1990's. We feel very close to our colleagues from the United States and hope and pray that fraternal relations may be maintained until the Lord returns.

In making this move we intend, the Lord willing, to continue to use the current Constitution of ARP as found in the Form of Government (2.13), adopting the Book of Discipline as it was prior to the 2023 adoption of the current Book of Discipline, with the intention of making amendments and revision for the Canadian context as necessary.

It is our intention, as soon as is practicable, to form two Presbyteries: An Ontario Presbytery and a Maritime Presbytery. We would hold two Synod meetings annually and each Presbytery would determine the frequency of its meetings.

Therefore, the Canadian Presbytery of the ARP Church, humbly petitions the 220th General Synod of the ARP to release our presbytery for the formation of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Canada beginning with our Fall Presbytery meeting, September 2025.

The **Moderator's Committee on Memorials** recommended that the Canadian Memorial on formation of a Canadian Synod be approved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

A motion **CARRIED**

That the ARP Synod communicate with Jack and Nancy Whytock to thank them and give glory to God for their faithful and self-sacrificial service in church planting, pastoral care, educational work, and churchmanship in the years they served in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator form a Special Committee to develop a documented framework of practical denominational cooperation which reflects the unique and special relationship between the proposed Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church which will enable both Synods to maintain and work in a unique and close fraternal partnership in areas of common evangelical interests and, further, that this report be presented to the General Synod in June 2025 and further, that there be at least two members of Canadian Presbytery serving on this committee.

The delegates rose to sing the Song of Christian Unity.

Moderator Alan Broyles closed the morning session with prayer and a blessing for the lunch meal .

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

Ben Carver led the afternoon session with a sermon.

Bob Elliott assumed the role of Moderator.

First Presbytery Memorial #1 (Adopted March 12, 2024) was presented.

WHEREAS, the Westminster Standards enshrine the following tenets of classical Trinitarian theism as the doctrine of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church:

1. Monotheism (WCF 2.1; WLC 8; WSC 5);
2. Divine Simplicity (WCF 2.1 "...without body, parts, or passions...");
3. Divine Immutability (WCF 2.1; WLC 7; WSC 4); as well as
4. The Unity and Equality of the Three Persons of the Trinity (WCF 2.3; WLC 9, 11, 36; WSC 6); and

WHEREAS, the doctrines of monotheism, divine simplicity, and immutability mean that all three Persons of the Trinity have one mind and will, and do not change; and

WHEREAS, the concept of eternal subordination and submission in the Trinity assumes distinct minds and wills, as well as the ability to change; and

WHEREAS, the Westminster Standards' statements that the three Persons are equal in "power" (WCF 2.3; WLC 9; WSC 6) indicate equality of authority as well as strength (see the use of the word "power" in the Authorised Version of 1611, e.g. Matt 28:18, John 17:2, Cf. John 5:27);¹ and

WHEREAS, WCF VIII "Of Christ, the Mediator" restates the equality of the Person of the Son: (WCF 8.2) "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father...;" and

WHEREAS, WLC 38 and 39 state that it was requisite that the Mediator be God in order to "give worth and efficacy to His ...obedience," and that He be man "that He might...perform obedience to the law," thus clarifying that obedience was proper to the human nature of the incarnate Christ; and

WHEREAS, the prooftext cited as the exegetical basis for the statement in WCF 8.3 that "which office He took not unto Himself, but was thereunto called by His Father" says that "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.." (Heb 5:4), clarifying that Christ's willing obedience to the Father's call was proper to His human nature; and

WHEREAS, the position paper adopted by the General Synod of 2005, "Women in the Life of the Church," makes the following statements (all of which draw from 1 Corinthians 11:3)

— It is also important to note the reasons for this relationship of headship. First, it is rooted, Paul says, in the relationship between "Christ" and "God" (v. 3). That is, Paul sees an analogy or connection between the relationship of headship involving male and female, and the intra-trinitarian relationship of Christ and the Father. (p.3)

— It is also apparent that the headship principle Paul articulates is not a matter of merely temporary or local significance. By rooting his teachings in theology proper (the doctrine of God) and in the order of creation, Paul articulates a truth that transcends local need or peculiarity, and so Paul adds, "we have no other practice – nor do the churches of God" (v. 16). (p. 4)

— The principle of "headship" applies to both home and church, according to the New Testament writers, and this headship involves a priority of authority and responsi-

bility on the part of the male. Moreover, this teaching is grounded, not in temporary circumstances or in the effects of the fall, but in the order of creation, in the redemptive relationship between Christ and the church, and in the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. (p. 6)

—Here, of course, we must again note that Paul does not primarily ground male headship and priority in the post-Fall situation (although the fall narrative is referenced in 1 Timothy 2:14), but in the (pre-Fall) order of creation (1 Corinthians 11:3-9; 1 Timothy 2:13), in the intra-trinitarian relationship of the Father and the Son (1 Corinthians 11:3), and in the church's experience of redemption in Christ (Ephesians 5:23-24). (p. 10); and

—Finally, a recent but persistent form of argument has challenged the connection traditionally drawn, in part on the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:3, between male headship and the doctrine of the Trinity. As we saw above, advocates of the traditional understanding of gender roles have argued from the intra-trinitarian relationship involving a functional subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father to the functional subordination of female to male.²⁸ Some egalitarians have responded by contending that those who argue in this fashion are guilty of the trinitarian heresy of "subordinationism."²⁹

In fact, however, recent studies have demonstrated that this notion of equality and unity of essence combined with subordination of function is firmly rooted in the orthodox Christian tradition.³⁰ (pp. 12-13); and

WHEREAS, the statement on p. 13 of the 2005 position paper ("...recent studies have demonstrated that this notion of equality and unity of essence combined with subordination of function is firmly rooted in the orthodox Christian tradition") cites and appears to refer directly to the following statement:

The orthodox doctrine has always been that there is equality in essence and subordination in role and that these two are consistent with each other.

Certainly this is consistent with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that "the head of Christ is God," thus indicating a distinction in role in which primary authority and leadership among the persons of the Trinity has always been and will always be the possession of God the Father;² and

WHEREAS, Grudem's statement that the Father has "primary authority and leadership among the persons of the Trinity," necessarily implies that the Son and the Spirit are unequal to the Father in authority, have distinct minds and wills, and are mutable; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 position paper does not quote or allude to Grudem's statement that "primary authority and leadership among the persons of the Trinity has always been and will always be the possession of God the Father;" however, it draws from the same statement that contradicts the Westminster Standards on the three Persons' equality of power/authority, divine simplicity, and the immutability of all three Persons of the Godhead; and

WHEREAS, Scripture draws an analogy between human marriage and the Church's union with Christ (Eph 5:22-24), not the intra-trinitarian relations between the Father and the Son; and

WHEREAS, the only verse that the position paper mentions to support the notion that "this headship involves a priority of authority and responsibility on the part of the

male...grounded... in the relationship between the persons of the Trinity," is 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God;" and

WHEREAS, 1 Corinthians 11:3 does not state that "the head of the Son is the Father," but "the head of Christ is God," which does not necessarily imply any subordination or submission of the Son to the Father beyond the obedience of the incarnate Christ according to His human nature;³ and

WHEREAS, John Calvin's comments provide a more orthodox interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3 than that which takes it to speak of the intra-trinitarian relations between the Father and the Son:

God, then, occupies the first place: Christ holds the second place. How so? Inasmuch as he has in our flesh made himself subject to the Father, for, apart from this, being of one essence with the Father, he is his equal. Let us, therefore, bear it in mind, that this is spoken of Christ as mediator. He is, I say, inferior to the Father, inasmuch as he assumed our nature, that he might be the first-born among many brethren;⁴ and

WHEREAS, the Father and the Son are not a husband and a wife; and

WHEREAS, position papers are not official standards of the church; however, they are posted on the ARP Church website on a page entitled "What We Believe,"⁵ and

WHEREAS, the posting of the 2005 position paper on the "What We Believe" section of the ARP website gives the impression that the ARP Church embraces the aberration known as "Eternal Relations of Authority and Submission," "Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS)," and/or "Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS);" and

WHEREAS, there is an abundance of clear Biblical support for the ARP Church's position against the ordination of women to the offices of elder and minister without constructing an intra-trinitarian argument that runs afoul of the Westminster Standards and classical Trinitarian theism; and

WHEREAS, a 17-page paper dealing with the full range of marital and societal roles of men and women is superfluous to the issue of "Women in the Life of the Church," which is that the ARP Church is conservative in its views of Scripture, and does not ordain or install women to offices of authority (1 Tim 2:12); and

WHEREAS, Hebrews 1:8 provides an inerrant interpretation of Psalm 45:6, in which God the Father addresses the Son as God, equal in authority to Himself: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom;"

THEREFORE, First Presbytery memorializes the General Synod of the ARP Church to:

1. Re-write the 2005 position paper, "Women in the Life of the Church," so as to remove all teaching based on the theological position known as "Eternal Relations of Authority and Submission," "Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS)," and/or "Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS)" since it is incompatible with the classical Trinitarian theism

enshrined in the Westminster Standards and to address the pastoral and ethical questions of our day.

2. To remove the 2005 position paper on "Women in the Life of the Church" from the ARP website until a paper is re-written.

Endnotes:

¹The root word "exousia" is rendered as both "power" and "authority" in the King James Bible, which was translated (1611) within a generation of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1653) and which the Assembly cited in its prooftexts. The statement in WCF 8.3 that the Father "put all power and judgement into His hand," references as its exegetical basis John 5:27, which in the AV/KJV reads: "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." In WCF 8.3, then, the WCF uses the word "power" to indicate "authority."

²Wayne Grudem, "The Meaning of Kephalē ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies" (Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. (Crossway, 1991), pp. 457. (The 2005 position paper, in footnote 30, cites the entirety of Grudem's article, pp. 425-468.)

³ The grammar and syntax of 1 Cor 11:3 alone do not foreclose the interpretative issue. The larger Biblical and theological context must be considered (see WCF I.9).

⁴ John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John Pringle, (Baker: 1999), I:353

⁵ <https://arpchurch.org/learn/what-we-believe>

The **Moderator's Committee on Memorials** recommended that the First Presbytery Memorial on women in the life of the church not be approved. Synod **DID NOT APPROVE** the memorial on women in the life of the church.

A motion **CARRIED**

That Memorial #1 from First Presbytery be referred to a committee to be appointed by the Moderator to consider issues related to ESS and eternal subordination in the paper and to bring recommendations to the 2025 General Synod for action and that the Moderator direct the Principal Clerk to edit the 2005 position paper, "Women in the Life of the Church," so that every line of said paper questioned in this memorial be replaced with bracketed ellipses.

First Presbytery Memorial #2
Adopted March 12, 2024

WHEREAS, the censure of excommunication is durational in nature¹; and

WHEREAS, all censures are formal actions by the court of jurisdiction²; not privately to be imposed by the individual upon himself, or presumed lifted by the individual under discipline; and

WHEREAS, the current BOD 8.1 uses the term “self-excommunication,” which may give the impression to some that they are removing themselves from the Visible Church rather than being removed by the Church; and

WHEREAS, we firmly believe, and our Standards teach, that there is no ordinary possibility of salvation outside the Visible Church³; and

WHEREAS, the NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations (1987) lays out provisions and details regarding these situations which be of use pastorally in bringing “fugitives from discipline” to repentance.⁴

THEREFORE, First Presbytery memorializes the General Synod to:

1. Strike the phrase “practicing self-excommunication by placing himself outside of the Visible Church.” from BOD 8.1 and replace it with “attempting to withdraw from the Visible Church, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”
2. Include the following immediately after the replaced phrase: “The court of original jurisdiction shall remind the member that, should he/she be excommunicated.
 - The censure will be durational and binding according to Matthew 18:18 and 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; and
 - The court shall endeavor to plead with the member that if they persist in their rebellion they are Biblically being handed over to Satan according to 1 Corinthians 5:5; and
 - All Christians will be bound to consider the person as an unbeliever according to 1 John 2:19 and as a rebel to God according to 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; and
 - Only the court imposing the censure or an appellate court may remove the censure; and
 - That what the court imposes is “bound in heaven” by the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

The court shall further direct the member to the aforementioned section of the NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations as part of their plea for the member to repent. Section 2 of this agreement shall be included for reference below BOD 8.1.

3. That the words, “the theological equivalent of” be stricken from BOD 8.1.
4. That the following be added to BOD 8:1 after the preceding material: “No ARP church shall knowingly serve communion to a fugitive from discipline, receive him/her into membership, or in any other way undermine any of the censures of another ARPC court.”

Endnotes:

¹BOD 2.6 “The censures of Rebuke, Suspension, Removal from Office, and Excommunication are durational, which is to say that they continue in effect until the person censured has been restored, and the censure resolved or removed. Thus, a person who has been censured with Rebuke, Suspension, Removal from Office, or Excommunication is to be considered “under discipline.””

²Ibid, “CENSURE: A formal application of discipline by a church court.”

³WCF 25.2 “The Visible Church... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

⁴NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations: “2. Transfer with Irregularities. a. That upon request for a transfer of membership by a person under discipline, the sending session/consistory or presbytery/classis inform the receiving body of the nature and extent of the disciplinary procedure before implementing the requested transfer, thus enabling informal consultation between the pastors and elders of both churches. b. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church has taken into serious account the discipline of and the information supplied by the sending church. c. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church is satisfied that proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been seriously attempted. d. That a “fugitive from discipline” who is no longer a member of a church or who is no longer on the roll of a presbytery shall not be received until the former judicatory/assembly has been contacted to determine if proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been attempted.”

The Moderator’s Committee on Memorials recommended that First Presbytery’s Memorial #2 regarding the *Book of Discipline* **NOT BE APPROVED**. **Synod DID NOT APPROVE** the First Presbytery Memorial #2.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the First Presbytery Memorial #2 on *Book of Discipline* be referred to the Committee on Revisions.

Memorial #1 from Tennessee-Ala Presbytery Regarding New Days Church (Duluth, GA) March 16, 2024

WHEREAS the New Days congregation (Duluth, GA) lies geographically outside the bounds of the Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC); and

WHEREAS the TN-AL Presbytery has communicated with Second Presbytery (ARPC) about the matter, and they no longer desire to pursue said work and have also written the TN-AL Presbytery in support of receiving this congregation under its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS the New Days congregation is no longer affiliated with any denomination; and

WHEREAS she already has a connection with the TN-AL Presbytery through several relationships with our Korean brethren.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the TN-AL Presbytery memorializes the General Synod of the ARPC to allow the New Days congregation to join the TN-AL Presbytery and be placed on her roll.

The **Moderator's Committee on Memorials** recommended that the memorial from Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery be approved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Committee on Revisions be abolished and the *Form of Government* be changed to reflect this action.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the General Synod, through its Inter-Church Relations Committee, invite Dr. Jack Whytock to attend and address the 2025 General Synod.

The report of **Outreach North America** was presented.

OUTREACH NORTH AMERICA

Outreach North America (ONA) is the agency of Synod that helps presbyteries plant and strengthen Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches undergirded by evangelism. This report will follow the eight duties Synod has assigned to ONA through the *Manual of Authorities and Duties*.

1. To work with our presbyteries and other agencies to develop and implement strategies for evangelism, including strategies to help our presbyteries and churches reach the increasingly ethnically diverse population in the United States and Canada.

ONA is continuing to research and explore how to help churches encourage their members to express freely the genuine enthusiasm they have for their faith. Not everyone can be a Bible teacher, but everyone can be a faith sharer. This includes recognizing the importance of a spirit of hospitality and invitation and the transformative power of the gathered community of the church in worship under the means of grace. With that in mind, the topic of the **Pre-Synod Conference on Evangelism this year is Hospitality and the Great Commission**. The conference seeks to help church leaders answer the question: **"How can we help non-Christian neighbors perceive our church as welcoming?"**

Jim Klukow has developed an evangelism DNA survey that can help church leaders better understand where church members are in terms of sharing their faith

in Christ. We anticipate church leaders using the results of the survey to understand better how to motivate church members in sharing the gospel. This instrument is still being beta tested. If your church would like to test this survey, contact Jim Klukow in the ONA office.

As a reminder, ONA recommends the following evangelism tools for use in our presbyteries and churches:

Evangelism Explosion

Everyday Evangelism

Christianity Explored

ONA continues to partner with World Witness to support the Ethnē Outfitters ministry. *Ethnē* means people groups. Outfitters equip, train, and lead. Ethnē Outfitters helps to place Jesus' followers in active ministry among Muslim peoples in response to Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28. As more people from Muslim backgrounds come into the United States and Canada, supporting Ethnē Outfitters is one way ONA is helping churches reach the increasingly ethnically diverse population in the United States. Julia Klukow, our office administrator and events coordinator, is a missionary candidate with World Witness to serve with Ethnē Outfitters.

Demographic trends indicate that the population in the United States and Canada will continue to grow more ethnically diverse. ONA seeks to encourage and learn from existing ethnically diverse ARP churches, especially those of Hispanic, Korean, and Chinese backgrounds. Learning from these congregations can help us support presbyteries in developing strategies to reach the increasingly diverse populations within their bounds.

2. To work with our presbyteries and other agencies to develop and implement strategies to enhance church vitality.

Wayne Frazier retired in December 2023 from his seven and half years of faithful service as ONA's Church Strengthening/Church Vitality Coach. We ask the Moderator to have Synod rise in appreciation for Wayne's service and pause for prayer for increasing vitality in ARP churches and for Wayne in his future endeavors. One future endeavor is that Wayne has trained to be a Gospel Coach so that he can serve as a coach for a couple of our church planters.

With the transition from Wayne, ONA has the opportunity to consider a new direction for our church vitality ministry. The new direction is one where ONA will help presbyteries recruit and train church vitality/church strengthening coaches regionally, rather than tasking a part-time ONA staff member with coaching all 270 ARP churches. With that in mind, we have developed a new job description for an ONA Church Strengthening Coordinator. The role is explained in the job overview: the part-time Church Strengthening Coordinator helps presbyteries identify and recruit presbytery church strengthening coaches and then equip and resource them to work with churches and pastors in their presbyteries. ONA will begin developing a list of possible candidates for this new position, but we anticipate hiring a new Executive Director prior to hiring the Church Strengthening Coordinator.

Until ONA hires a Church Strengthening Coordinator, existing ONA staff will continue helping presbyteries and their churches as they seek renewed church vi-

tality. Three specific ways ONA will assist include: 1) helping churches use the MissionInsite demographic program that ONA provides free to ARP churches via a denominational subscription; 2) helping churches with the “Key Elements of a Healthy Church” diagnostic tool that is available from the ONA office; and 3) encouraging presbyteries to use The Lampstand Conference ministry out of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham. The Lampstand Conference ministry is based on the principles developed in Dr. Harry Reeder’s book *From Embers to a Flame*. The Lampstand Conference ministry will include three components: a conference for primary church leadership; a follow up onsite spiritual foundations retreat for the entirety of church leadership and for the congregation; and then vitality coaching. The Lampstand Conference leadership is ready to work closely with the ARP.

3. *To work with our presbyteries and other agencies to develop and implement strategies for new church development and for ARP expansion in the United States and Canada.*

ONA is diligently working with our presbyteries to establish a proven track record of successful church planting in the ARP. Since 2021, we have overhauled our church planter assessment process to bring it under the oversight of presbyteries with ONA providing guidance and administration. The presbyteries that have used the new process have evaluated it highly in terms of promoting presbytery ownership of the process. It has also made assessment more responsive when a presbytery needs to have a potential candidate assessed. Presbyteries can now assess couples one at a time, rather than waiting until there are enough candidates for an ONA assessment center.

A proven factor in increasing church planting success is providing a Gospel Coach for each church planter. We are working to increase the number of trained coaches available. We now have 17 people trained in Gospel Coaching through Church Multiplication Ministries. There is another training session coming this fall.

One common reason linked to past church planting failures has been some sort of relational trouble between the church planter and his wife. Church planting puts additional pressure on a marriage. ONA is seeking to develop stronger support systems for our church planting wives. This includes training some women to be Gospel Coaches for church planting wives, as well as working with ARP Women’s Ministries to provide support and encouragement for our church planting wives.

Another way ONA serves our presbyteries is by providing annual training for our church planters through a church planters’ retreat. For the past two years, this has been a family retreat. The retreat not only provides training but also helps build community among our church planting families. Additionally, it provides time and space for ministry marriages to be recharged. It takes healthy planters, as well as healthy church planting families, to plant healthy churches.

We are continuing to develop a pipeline of future church planters. As we host events at seminaries, as we meet people in our travels, and as we actively seek to recruit new church planters, we are developing a list of men who are not ready now, but when they complete their education or get ministry experience, they may become future church

planters. We want to cultivate a relationship with these men over time. This is our pipeline of future church planters. We currently have more than 30 men in this pipeline.

As we reported last year, based on the church planting goals presbyteries have set, the overall 10-year church planting goal for the ARP is 64 new churches. The good news is that presbyteries are setting goals and recognizing the need for church planting. But we need to recognize that hitting this goal will result in an average of 6.4 new churches per year, leaving us short of the 7.5 new churches per year we need to become a growing denomination. We still have work to do in creating a church planting culture in the ARP and promoting an “all-hands-on-deck” mentality. We also have room to grow through welcoming established churches from outside the ARP that are looking for a denominational home and are a good fit for the ARP.

An encouraging sign that a culture of church planting is beginning to take root in the ARP is the increasing amount of conversation we are hearing about church planting. As part of that conversation, we want to help people understand that there is more than one way to plant a church, and there are many ways for existing churches to get involved. You can learn more at the annual **Church Planting Breakfast on Wednesday morning during Synod**. Our target for the breakfast is leaders of existing churches who are interested in or curious about church planting, as well as men who want to explore opportunities in church planting. **This year, our topic for the Church Planting Breakfast is Three Ways to Plant a Church**. Mark Forbes will speak about mother-daughter church planting, Mike Chipman will speak about bivocational church planting, and Stacey Cox will speak about planting a church from scratch.

Congregations that have either organized or have been received as organized churches since the last Synod meeting are:

Grace Presbyterian, Redding, CA

Living Hope Belmont, Belmont, NC

4. Through the Evangelism and Multi-Ethnic Ministries committee of the Board, to serve as liaison to the American Bible Society by assisting the American Bible Society in the annual offering for the American Bible Society as approved by the General Synod, reviewing the annual report of the American Bible Society and reporting items of special interest to the General Synod.

As the ARP Synod is no longer receiving a special offering for the American Bible Society, this duty seems no longer relevant. ONA recommends that this be removed from the list of ONA duties in the *Manual of Authorities and Duties*.

5. To communicate the importance of financial support for these purposes and to oversee the use of financial resources received from all sources for these purposes.

ONA financially supports new church development in our presbyteries through supplements, grants, and loans.

Explorer and New Church Supplements provide financial help over a total of four years as new churches get started. ONA supplements are only one source of

funding for new churches getting started. Funding also comes from presbyteries, from local sources, and from fundraising by the church planter. The rationale for these supplements is to make up for the tithes and offerings of mature disciples who have not been reached or made yet. Since we expect the number of generously giving mature disciples to increase over time, the supplements are scheduled to decrease over time.

Explorers and church plants receiving ONA supplements since the last Synod meeting are:

First Presbytery

Fletcher, NC – Rev. Zack Keuthan

Living Hope, Belmont, NC – Rev. Mark Forbes

Florida Presbytery

Christ's Community Church, ARP, Chuluota, FL – Rev. Mark Nelsen

Christ Presbyterian, Fernandina Beach, FL – Rev. Tom Hawkes

First Presbyterian, Sebring, FL (restart) – Rev. Karl Davis

Faithful City Presbyterian, St. Cloud, MN – Rev. Scott Smith

Iglesia En Movimiento, Lake Placid, FL – Rev. Tim Sewell

Redbud Church, Claremore, OK – Rev. Scott Mitchell

St. Augustine Presbyterian, St Augustine, FL – Rev. Mark Soud

Second Presbytery

Hope Fellowship, Gainesville, GA – Rev. Stacey Cox

Macon, GA – Rev. Josh Garrett

The Church Multiplication Fund encourages mother-daughter church planting in our presbyteries through investing strategically in churches that have both the potential and the desire to grow into multiplying churches actively planting new ARP churches.

Church receiving Church Multiplication funding since the last meeting of Synod:

First Presbytery

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Hendersonville, NC

Matching Grants for Land or Building help new churches purchase land or build their first building. No churches received the matching grant since the last meeting of Synod.

Revolving Loans help new churches purchase property or build their first building. A loan has been approved for Good News Presbyterian in Frederick, MD, Northeast Presbytery.

Ministry Expansion Grants (MEG) are given for a specific purpose that expands the ministry capacity of a church plant or a church vitality grant for a church going through the FFCM process with ONA's Church Strengthening Coach. The purposes fall into three categories: personnel, community outreach, or building and equipment. Congregations receiving MEG grants since last Synod meeting are:

First Presbytery

Living Hope Church, Belmont, NC

Florida Presbytery

Christ Presbyterian, Fernandina Beach, FL

First Presbyterian Church, Sebring, FL

Iglesia En Movimiento, Lake Placid, FL

Redbud Church, Claremore, OK

Mississippi Valley Presbytery

River City Reformed, Little Rock, AR

Second Presbytery

Hope Fellowship, Hall County, GA

MEG grants were developed as a temporary measure to ensure investment in church planting even when a minimum of four churches were not planted in any given year. They were originally named Minimum Annual Distribution of Funds (MADF) grants. In Fall 2021, they were renamed Ministry Expansion Grants (MEG). As they have extended beyond a temporary measure, the Board voted this year to add the MEG grants to the ONA Policy Book. This means adding a new paragraph B under section VI. Financial Policies. B. Ministry Expansion Grants (MEG). Renumber the existing B. to become C. and continue the renumbering through section VI. The newly renumbered C. will be renamed from Grants to Matching Grants for Land and Building. The new paragraph B. will read:

B. Ministry Expansion Grants.

1. Spirit and Rationale for MEG grants. ONA seeks to help churches reach their community for Christ. As it relates to church planting, we recognize that financial resources can be the difference in helping a vision become reality. We desire to get as much money into the field to help church planters as possible, but we have a fiduciary responsibility to the General Synod to ensure broad, even, and effective distribution of the DMF funds entrusted to us.
2. ONA budgets to assist presbyteries in starting a specific number of churches each year. In support of this goal, we seek to assist presbyteries in bringing on interns and explorers. In the years that there are not the minimum number of explorers or new works getting started, we want to help those church plants already in progress expand their ministry capacity. Church plants already in progress can apply through their presbytery for a Ministry Expansion Grant (MEG).
3. ONA will budget a minimum amount each year to invest in new church development. The priority for spending the budgeted amount is first starting new church plants, and then second, providing MEG grants up to an approved yearly cap for those plants already in progress.
4. Guidelines for MEG grants.

- a. Grant requests must be made through the organization's presbytery Church Extension/ONA committee.
- b. Any plant that has previously received an ONA grant may apply, but their application will be given consideration only after those that have not received a previous grant have been awarded.
- c. Church plants may apply for up to 3 different categories of grants per year. The categories are: Personnel; Community Outreach; and Building or Equipment.
- d. Church plants can apply for the same grant with the same purposes the following year, with priority given to first-time requests. When a church plant applies for a similar MEG grant for a 2nd year, the church plant will need to show measurable progress from the previous year's grants.
- e. Applications for the grant will be considered by the New Church Development and Finance Committees of the ONA Board at both the Spring and the Fall Board Meetings.
- f. Grant requests will only be considered if the church plant is currently giving to DMF or sets up a plan to begin giving quarterly to the DMF.

6. *To prepare and recommend to Synod each year a budget with which to do the work of this Board.*

ONA has submitted a budget with its report to Synod.

7. *To appoint such administrators as are necessary for the work of the Board.*

ONA Executive Director Alan Avera has expressed his desire to retire from the position by early 2025. The Board has established a search committee to find and recommend to the Board a new Executive Director. Rev. Duff James is Chairman of the search committee.

Due to a sudden and unexpected resignation, ONA needed to hire a new Office Administrator and Events Coordinator just as we were entering the busy season of planning and implementing the annual Church Planters' Retreat. We thank Julia Klukow for accepting the position and guiding us through a successful retreat.

Rev. Dr. Jim Klukow adds great value to the ministry as Program Coordinator, taking initiative and going above and beyond expectations. Tessa Taylor continues her fine work as part-time Communications Administrator.

8. *To make an annual report to the General Synod.*

This constitutes our annual report.

Officers for 2024 – 2025:

Andy Webb, Chairman

Howard Wheeler, Vice Chairman

Chip Maley, Secretary

The ONA Board has set the following Board Meeting dates:

November 19-20, 2024

April 1-2, 2025

Recommendations:

1. That Synod rise in appreciation of Wayne Frazier's seven and half years of service as Church Strengthening/Church Vitality Coach and pause for prayer for increasing vitality in ARP churches and for Wayne in his future endeavors. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That Synod amend the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* to delete Duty #4 under the Board of Outreach North America. Duty 4 currently reads: *Through the Evangelism and Multi-Ethnic Ministries committee of the Board, to serve as liaison to the American Bible Society by assisting the American Bible Society in the annual offering for the American Bible Society as approved by the General Synod, Reviewing the annual report of the American Bible Society and reporting items of special interest to the General Synod.* **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That Synod approve this report and the actions reported therein. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Seth Yi, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the General Synod be moved to change the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* to reflect the changes to the responsibilities of the Synod Bill Clerk by adding section "c" to his duties which shall read, "Assist Synod's Principal Clerk by recording the actions and movements of Synod and provide a daily record of Synod events to the Principal Clerk, the Director of Communications and the Moderator, and that Synod change the title of the Bill Clerk to "Recording Clerk" to reflect these changes.

The report of William H. Dunlap Orphanage, Inc. was presented.

WILLIAM H. DUNLAP ORPHANAGE, INC.

The William H. Dunlap Orphanage, a ministry of the ARP Church, has been providing care for children since 1905. It was founded in the west Tennessee town of Brighton

in 1905 by Annie Belle Dunlap to honor the memory of her Father, William H. Dunlap, and her aunt, Elizabeth Dunlap Spain. The orphanage cared directly for children until 1978, when it was closed by the General Synod. Assets and proceeds of the property were turned over to Synod and invested as an endowment to provide funds to continue to care for orphans. Significant contributions made by other individuals over time have increased the endowment to provide funds for annual distribution.

The Board appreciates new contributions to the trust and the several endowments which allow us to increase our support for children. The social and spiritual ills of today's society cause children to be caught in untenable situations where there are dangerous living conditions and no care. The need is great to provide these children with a safe and loving Christian environment. Dunlap receives no assistance from General Synod's Denominational Ministry Fund or Special Offerings. Resources for Dunlap's work are provided solely from gifts, endowment earnings, and trust funds which name Dunlap as the beneficiary. The Board encourages giving to the Dunlap ministry and using the services of the institutions that Dunlap supports for children in need.

Dunlap's purpose is stated in the bylaws, which state that the "object of the corporation is to provide care, support, maintenance, and education of orphaned, or fatherless, or helpless, or needy children, and to support projects related to such children." The corporation fulfills this duty through the Board of the William H. Dunlap Orphanage. Synod's Treasurer serves as treasurer of the corporation and works closely with Brian Such, Director of Finance in Central Services. The Executive Director of Central Services serves as administrative officer for the Board.

The Dunlap Board meets two times each year. The March meeting is devoted both to receiving updates from our residential facilities that have ongoing relationships with Dunlap and to considering grant applications for discretionary grants from other ministries for the upcoming year. Grants are effective from April 1 through March 31 of the following year. The Board meets again in November to receive updates from funded institutions and to consider any interim business.

Dunlap grants are provided in a three-tiered manner:

1. Erskine College receives a minimum of \$24,000 per year (\$12,000 per semester to be given to eligible students.
2. The Dunlap Board has established with the following homes a relationship which guarantees yearly funding as moneys are available: Collins Children's Home - Seneca, South Carolina; Palmer Home for Children - Columbus, Mississippi; French Camp Academy - French Camp, Mississippi; and Mabel Lowry Pressly Hostel - Sahiwal, Pakistan. These homes make a report to the Dunlap Board at the March meeting. The reports of what these organizations are doing to impact the children's lives are inspiring and prove the worthiness of the denomination's endeavor.
3. Other ministries to orphans submit grant applications each year and are considered on a year-to-year basis. These are discretionary grants and are allotted as funds are available.

All supported ministries must agree with the Dunlap Statement of Biblical Christian Belief, and, for the coming year, they have the aid of the ARP members or ARP churches which are involved in their work.

For the year 2024-2025, the Dunlap Board is pleased to be able to provide \$195,200 for financial assistance to the following organizations:

Ongoing Grants:

Erskine College: \$24,000

Collins Children's Home (Seneca, SC): \$28,000

French Camp Academy (French Camp, MS): \$28,000

Palmer Home for Children (Lake Cormorant, MS): \$24,000

Mabel Lowry Pressly Hostel (Sahiwal, Pakistan): \$10,000

Discretionary Grants:

Calvary Home for Children (Anderson, SC): \$18,000

Hope for the Fatherless (Ethiopia): \$24,000

Reach the Children of Rwanda International (Kigali, Rwanda): \$14,000

King's Kids (Nigeria): \$24,000

Dunlap has two other ministry funds which have been established to provide assistance to adoptive families and to orphans studying at Erskine College:

1. The Dunlap Adoption Assistance Fund was established in 2011 to assist families of ARP pastors, elders, and members in good standing who are in the process of adopting children, a process that is often long and expensive. With income from this fund, the Board has been able to provide 16 adoption assistance grants since 2017 for a total of \$55,900.
2. The Jim Barker Fund was established in memory of ARP Minister Jim Barker, who served on the Dunlap Board. It will provide a yearly scholarship for an eligible Erskine College student who exhibits characteristics of Christian leadership. Disbursements from this fund began in 2022. As of December 2023, this fund had a balance of \$30,363. Any and all contributions to this fund will be greatly appreciated.

The Board of the William H. Dunlap Orphanage, Inc. is grateful for the ongoing and past support and gives thanks to our heavenly Father for His provisions and guidance in this exciting, worthy and compassionate ministry. We encourage the congregations of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to continue to support prayerfully and financially the many needy and precious children whose lives are touched through the Dunlap ministry.

Recommendations:

1. That all presbyteries, sessions and congregations be encouraged to participate in this vital ministry by giving to the ARP Adoption Assistance Fund as a practical statement of the denomination's stance on the value of human life. **Synod APPROVED.**

2. That interested individuals are encouraged to consider making gifts of assets and assigning such funds as beneficiaries in their will or trust. **Synod APPROVED.**

William H. Dunlap Orphanage, Inc. Officers for 2024-2025:

Robby Bell – Chairman

John Kimmons – Vice Chairman

Erin Ulerich – Secretary

Sincerely,

Robby Bell, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the reports of the Executive Board, Brice Sanders/Camp Joy and Benefits be taken in omnibus and all recommendations contained therein be approved.

Alan Broyles resumed his role as Moderator.

The report of **Erskine College and Seminary** was presented.

ERSKINE COLLEGE AND SEMINARY

Introduction

The Chair of the Board of Trustees of Erskine College submits this report to the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Chair affirms that the Synod's Philosophy of Christian Higher Education guides and directs the Board in its responsibilities.

During the past twelve months, the Board of Trustees has served Erskine College with continued commitment and dedication. Foremost in their service has been diligence in prayer and applying their time, talent, and treasure. All Board members contributed personally or via networking relationships to the fundraising efforts of Erskine, an absolute requirement of today's college boards. Additionally, the trustees have been deeply involved in overseeing the financial investments of the Institution, reviewing the College's audit report, providing fiscal governance, and supporting President Adamson in achieving the Institution's vision *"to equip students for lives of service and leadership, building Christ's church and influencing society for God's glory."*

Erskine's Board of Trustees wishes to thank the Sub-committee on Nominations for Erskine (SCONE) for collaborating with the Institution in vetting Trustee candidates. Erskine's accrediting agency, SACSCOC has indicated that it is imperative that Erskine continue to bring in trustees with the necessary skill set to execute on its fiduciary and

governance responsibilities to the institution. Finding trustees of deep faith and exceptional ministry, business, finance, networking, fundraising, legal, and other critical governance skills is paramount to Erskine's success in a highly competitive higher education business environment.

As in past years, this report is structured around and highlights efforts that constitute the College's strategic plan based on the four pillars of Missional Fidelity, Financial Stewardship, Educational Excellence, and Expanding Reach.

Pillar 1: Missional Fidelity - *Steadfast adherence to the biblical principles encompassed in the College's vision, mission, and core values.*

During the past twelve months, much of Erskine's Pillar 1 focus has been on reinforcing missional fidelity throughout the organization. Handbooks, operational procedures, training, and communication are now aligned with Erskine's controlling documents and reflect the Christ-centered mission of the College. While often overlooked, this effort is without parallel in its ability to provide guardrails, ensuring Erskine's fidelity to its mission.

Equal to the critical work of document revision in this pillar is implementing a student-body Worldview Survey. Under the umbrella of what will become the Erskine Center for Worldview Studies, the College collected student responses to a short questionnaire that assists in determining the worldviews of its incoming, returning, and graduating students. Being just one of two colleges in America with such a capability, Erskine uses survey results as an objective measure essential in curriculum feedback. Under the guidance of President Dr. Adamson and the new Provost, Dr. Ed Clavell, Erskine has begun redesigning the Institution's Core Curriculum to better educate students on the truths found only within a Biblical Worldview. Survey results will be used as part of the never-ending task of program assessment, helping to ensure all programs reinforce a Biblical perspective.

Finally, we are proud to partner in gospel ministry to our students and community youth with the Due West ARP Church. We will provide some of the funding needed to assist them in their search for an Associate Pastor of Youth and College Relations. In the fall of 2024, we will reinstate the ARP Student Union on campus. In our estimation, these are vital gospel ministry steps in connecting Erskine students to the ARP Church and supports the overall ministry of the ARP Synod.

Pillar 2: Financial Stewardship - *Faithful pursuit of sustainability and stewardship of financial resources and assets.*

Erskine's fiscal year 2023-24 budget called for a conservative baseline of \$22.66M in revenue and \$21.85M in expenses, resulting in an operational surplus of \$811K. Inflationary pressures from utilities, dining fees, critical deferred maintenance, insurance coverage, and other contracted/vendor services are pushing operational expenses close to \$24.2M. However, through the efforts of the Board of Trustees, and President Adamson and his administration, revenue is expected to exceed \$24.3M, yielding an operational surplus above \$100K. As with last year, Erskine's most recent audited financials

and IRS 990 forms reporting (available from the IRS and Pro-Publica) were completed on time, demonstrating continued excellence in financial reporting.

Erskine's revenue continues to be generated from four main sources: Student Tuition/Fees, Annual Fund, Endowment Draw and Alternative Revenue sources. Through the work of Dr. Adamson and his administration, progress has been made to reduce the student discount rate. A portion of Erskine's 2023-24 revenue comes from contributions raised through the Advancement Office and Endowment investments. As of February 2024 (fiscal year 2023-24) Annual Funds that have been raised through the Advancement Office (\$2.6M) and the Endowment Draw (\$1.25M, a 6% Endowment draw) reflect diligent fundraising and the exercise of care in financial stewardship. A further indication of the success of the stewardship pillar of the strategic plan is that the Institution anticipates returning to its internal investment policy of a 5% maximum Endowment draw in the near future.

Currently, the Endowment stands at \$38M. Erskine, after a detailed RFP process, selected UBS as the Institution's new Endowment manager. The UBS team's experience managing endowments from other similarly sized Christian colleges and its ability to provide consolidated financing made it the clear choice.

While the 2023-24 fiscal year results will not be finalized until after June 30, having financial stewardship as one of the four pillars of the strategic plan focuses institutional attention and is producing sound fiscal management results. Erskine anticipates its 2023-24 audit will show positive values on the Institution's Statement of Activities, Operational Cash Flow, and Unrestricted Net Assets, something which has not been collectively achieved in over ten (10) years.

Achieving these results in the College's 2023/24 audit is absolutely essential for Erskine to be removed from accreditation warning at the SACSCOC December 2024 meeting. There is a possibility, even with positive financial results, that our accreditor may require Erskine to demonstrate two years of sustained performance, which would necessitate Erskine being placed on probation.

Today, the economics of higher education places significant emphasis on non-student revenue sources; as such, Erskine's future annual fundraising goals will double, leading to requests to seek more substantial support from our long-time supporters. Dr. Adamson and his administration continue to look for ways to generate additional revenue through partnerships and other activities. Also, Erskine is grateful to the ARP Synod for their continued annual support of nearly \$380,000. In addition, we would like to thank those who supported Erskine's annual Day of Giving (March) which generated over \$150,000.

Pillar 3: Educational Excellence - *Continuously strive for excellence in curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular education marked by attitudes of service and global influence*

This past fall, Erskine launched the Honors Institute, six new undergraduate degree programs, and a new first-year experience course. The Board of Trustees is working with Dr. Adamson, the administration and faculty to develop educational performance metrics which align with our mission. This has entailed an increased focus on institutional research and the subsequent data necessary to effectively measure pro-

gress. Erskine continues to be recognized by entities such as *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges* as a high-ranking regional college. This year Erskine expects to graduate nearly 150 undergraduates, many going on to graduate school, and nearly 25 seminary students, embarking on Christian ministry.

Erskine's new Provost took the faculty through an assessment and redevelopment of the Institution's learning goals. The six learning goals (critical thinking, ethics and morals, communication skills, relationship development, global awareness, Christian faith and academic inquiry) were approved by the Board of Trustees and serve as the foundation for all educational programs (curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular; undergraduate, graduate, and Seminary.) During the years to come, all student-facing programs, both academic and non academic, will be regularly assessed to ensure the delivery of these goals.

The Seminary implemented a new comprehensive evaluation plan to assess student learning, ensure the quality of its theological programs, and identify areas for continuous improvement. The Provost is using the structure of this new evaluation plan to enhance the program currently in place for all students (undergraduate and graduate.)

The Board of Trustees would like to recognize Dr. Alessandra Brivio (Assistant Professor, History), our South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Excellence in Teaching Award Winner. We would like to thank Dr. William Evans, Younits Professor of Bible/Religion and Dr. Loyd Melton, Professor of New Testament at the seminary, for their dedicated work to Erskine and wish them well in their retirement. Erskine's faculty and staff continue to provide a learning-living community that is second to none. The uniqueness of Erskine's community ethos, long its hallmark, remains the administration's focus.

Pillar 4: Expanding Reach - *Achieve global reach and influence as an authentic Christian institution of higher education.*

Enrollment at the undergraduate level was again over 800, marking the third year in a row that the College has seen record enrollments. For the 2024-2025 year, we are focused on specific initiatives to advance traditional student enrollment and ultimately would like to see an Erskine undergraduate enrollment capped at around 900 with a balance of 400 traditional students and 500 student-athletes. Through its sponsorship of the Charter Institute at Erskine, the College regularly interfaces with nearly 28,000 South Carolina K-12 students, which raises the visibility of the Institution as an education innovator.

The Chair/Board of Trustees, Dr. Adamson, the Dean of the Seminary, seminary faculty/staff, and Dr. Kyle Sims, new Director of Church Relations and Seminary Admissions are regularly involved in efforts to expand the reach of Erskine. These efforts include 1) leveraging the Columbia and Greenville campuses; 2) developing an identity as America's preeminent pastor/shepherd seminary; 3) focusing on relationships with the ARP and other Reformed congregations; and 4) partnering with World Witness for the Global Diploma in Theology and Christian Leadership. This year, the Erskine College Choraleers have participated in worship at a number of ARP churches and recently returned from Lithuania where they served with Rev. Frank and Emily Van Dalen. Over Spring Break, Erskine students served on a mission trip to the Memphis, TN, community.

Finally, the expanding reach pillar of the strategic plan is not just concerned with increasing total enrollment but has in view expanding the visibility of Erskine as a kingdom-minded institution committed to serving the global community for God's glory. Within this vein, Erskine's annual Garnet and Gold Forum hosted the well-known Christian Scientist Dr. Stephen Meyers, which brought many people to campus with no prior connection to the College.

Recommendation:

1. Erskine's Board of Trustees recommends the following changes (see attached Exhibit A) to the *Manual of Authorities and Duties* (MAD). These changes are designed to 1) facilitate the recruitment of strong Christians with exceptional gifts to serve as Board members and 2) to focus the MAD on the essential general powers of the Board, affording Erskine's Trustees the required flexibility to update its specific duties based on the rapidly changing legal, regulatory, and accreditation requirements of higher education. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Steven Adamson, President

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

**CHANGES TO THE MANUAL OF AUTHORITIES AND DUTIES
(SYNOD APPROVED)**

~~Strikethrough~~ = text to delete

Underline = text to be added

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF ERSKINE COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
(Revised 2024 Synod)**

Membership:	At Large: Fifteen (15) members, at least three (3) of whom shall be Associate Reformed Presbyterian ministers. (Synod 2022)
Advisory:	The Moderator of Synod and current Alumni Association President serve as non-voting board members. Other advisors may be called on at the pleasure of the chair.
Terms of Service:	At Large: Five (5) years. <u>Three (3) years. Eligible for two consecutive terms.</u>
Ex-officio and Advisory:	As determined by the office to which appointed or elected.
Stated Meetings:	As determined by the Board to include <u>a minimum of two per year. August, October, February and May</u>

- Organization: Officers: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer
- Standing Committees: As determined by the Board and in accordance with requirements of accrediting bodies ~~Executive Committee~~
~~College Committee~~
~~Finance and Facilities Committee~~
~~Seminary Committee~~
- Ad hoc Committees: As determined by the Board ~~Nominating Committee~~
- Authority: The Board of Trustees of Erskine College has direct control of the operation of Erskine College and Erskine Theological Seminary and is empowered to establish policies and educational programs and to manage all properties and funds. In the exercise of its authority, the Board shall comply with *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*, and its policies and programs shall be consistent with the purpose of the General Synod.
- General Powers: The Institution shall be governed by the Board which sets all policy for the Institution. The President of the Institution is responsible for implementing these policies. A complete enumeration of the Board's specific roles and responsibilities is contained in the corporate documents under the Board's legal, regulatory, and accreditation authority. The following constitute the Board's general powers.
- a. Only the Board of Trustees may appoint or remove Corporate Officers except the Treasurer, sell or mortgage assets of the Institution, incur debt, dissolve the corporation, modify the ~~B~~bylaws, rescind or modify a decision of the Board or Executive Committee, recognize, bargain with, or contract with employees collectively ~~and authorize degrees except the awarding of Honorary Degrees to a Commencement speaker.~~
 - ~~b. Board grants all degrees and certificates. The administration shall fully inform the Board of changes to admissions policies and graduation requirements.~~

~~c. The Board shall annually set tuition rates.~~

~~d. The Board shall approve all changes to the core curriculum.~~

be. The Board shall approve the annual operational and capital budgets; devise methods for increasing funds, resources, and properties; and care for, maintain, and secure the physical facilities.

cf. The Board shall hold in trust all endowments and titles to properties and will execute them in accordance with the stipulated purposes for which they were given, conveyed, or bequeathed.

dg. The Board shall hire the President of the Institution and set his benefits and salary. ~~The Board shall, based on the recommendation of the President, approve all persons who shall serve on the full-time Seminary faculty. The President may terminate a member of the Seminary faculty.~~

e. The Board shall participate in the theological assessment of all persons being considered for full-time Seminary and undergraduate Bible faculty positions.

fh. The Board shall submit recommendations to Synod's Committee on Nominations.

gi. The Board shall make an annual report to the General Synod, to include a special section relating to the implementation of the Statement of Philosophy of Christian Higher Education.

~~j. The Board shall adopt the purpose and responsibilities for each Committee. These shall be reviewed at least every three (3) years.~~

~~k. The Board shall develop a position description for all Corporate Officers, which describes their roles, authority and responsibilities. These shall be reviewed at least every three (3) years by the Board.~~

POSITION DESCRIPTION FOR PRESIDENT OF
ERSKINE COLLEGE & SEMINARY

The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Institution, reports to the Board, and shall be responsible for executing Bboard policies. Under the direction of the Board he shall be responsible for the programs, services and assets of the Institution.

The president is a member of all committees created by the Bbylaws of the Board of Trustees and has seat and voice at all meetings, including executive sessions unless excused by the Board. He reports to the board at every meeting and makes recommendations as appropriate. The president is responsible for implementing board policies, attaining goals adopted by Bboard resolution, and executing all documents as directed by the board. The president may appoint and remove deans and other administrative officers excepting the Board Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary.

The report of the **Executive Board** was presented.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board of the General Synod is the agency empowered to carry out the work of the General Synod in the interim period between meetings of Synod. It provides oversight for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center Facility, Central Services, and the promotional work of the General Synod.

This report reflects its activities since Synod 2023 and presents the recommendations of the Executive Board to the General Synod for 2024. In its duty to implement directives of the General Synod, coordinate the work of the Synod and supervise Central Services and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center Facility, the Executive Board submits the following report.

In addition to monthly meetings of the Committee on Administration (CoA), the following Executive Board meetings were held since the 2023 Meeting of Synod:

Fall Meeting of Executive Board was held on October 26, 2023 via Zoom

Re: Allegations against Scott Cook made by Mrs. Sara Frazier (See Exhibit A)

A motion **CARRIED**

That, at the request of Scott Cook, the Executive Board declare an emergency (due to him being a minister of the gospel with his call being held up) to deal with allegations against him.

A motion **CARRIED**

That a Judicial Commission be appointed by the Moderator.

This motion was made moot by Mr. Cook joining Calvary Presbytery of the PCA later that day.

Re: Allegations again Mr. Tom Shoger by Mr. Seth Yi (Exhibit B)

With no action taken by the General Synod's Executive Board, this request for judicial reference by Second Presbytery will be taken up at the 2024 General Synod meeting

The Committee on Administration brought a motion that **CARRIED:**

That the changes be made to the Board of Benefits membership, and if approved by Synod, be reflected in the Manual of Authorities and Duties. (See Appendix C)

A report from Synod's Archivist was received as information (**See Appendix D**).

Spring Stated Meeting held in person at the ARP Center, Greenville was held on March 21, 2024.

Committee on Administration made the following recommendations:

1. That the MAD be amended to add the Executive Director of Central Services as an advisory member on both the Board of Brice-Sanders Foundation (Camp Joy) and the Committee on Conferences. **EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVED.**
2. That a part-time employee be hired for Central Services to assist with the ARP Magazine and Communications offices. **EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVED.**
3. That the Executive Board approve a wage increase for the Central Services Office Administrator. **EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVED.**
4. That the Executive Board recommend to Synod that the Director of Communications be authorized to contract with *Grace at Work* for website design and maintenance. **EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVED.**

Erskine's President, Steve Adamson, presented information on the recommended changes to the Erskine section of the MAD which will be included in their report to Synod 2024.

The **EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVED** Moderator-Elect Alan Broyles Moderator's Theme and Monthly Emphases. (See Appendix E)

A report was received from the Special Committee to Investigate Second Presbytery's Handling of Allegations Against Chuck Wilson regarding their investigation and the committee plans to have a report ready for Synod 2024.

A report was given by John Paul Marr from the Special Committee to Study the Work of the Office of Deacon. This committee plans to have a report for Synod 2024.

A motion **CARRIED:**

That the Parliamentarian, Principal Clerk and the Chairman of the Committee on Revisions examine and develop guidelines to explain how the Committee on Revisions functions.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod approve the budgets for Executive Board, The ARP Center Facility, and Central Services. **Synod APPROVED.**
2. That Synod endorse the Moderator's proposed theme and monthly emphases.

Synod APPROVED.

3. That changes be made to the Board of Benefits membership, and if approved by Synod, be reflected in the *Manual of Authorities and Duties (MAD)*. (See Appendix C) **Synod APPROVED.**
4. That the MAD be amended to add the Executive Director of Central Services as an advisory member on both the Board of Brice-Sanders Foundation (Camp Joy) and the Committee on Conferences. **Synod APPROVED.**
5. That the Executive Board recommend to Synod that the Director of Communications be authorized to contract with *Grace at Work* for website design and maintenance. **Synod APPROVED.**
6. That the actions of the Executive Board reported herein be received as information. **Synod APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,
 Kyle Sims
 Principal Clerk

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

APPENDIX A: Allegations Against Scott Cook

I, SARA FRAZIER do hereby MAKE FORMAL ALLEGATIONS against REV. SCOTT COOK for his ministerial misconduct while serving in his former role as the chairman of the Minister and His Work Committee of Second Presbytery.

Whereas your Presbytery's MHCW former chairman Scott Cook, attempts to run and hide from two daughters of the ARP Church who did the right thing to protect the dignity of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and do so peaceably, and in a godly way, through a MHCW assigned to us BUT who acted with negligence, if not blatant contempt, by failing to communicate with my sister and me, by lying to me, by showing bias toward Chuck Wilson (a part of your church, your mentor, dear friend) and not confronting him with ANY sin on his Presbytery report; and

Whereas, Rev. Scott Cook has yet to write me a letter of apology, explanation, or anything of a spiritual or pastoral nature or that signifies basic biblical integrity or any humanity of kindness; and

Whereas my husband has directed Rev. Scott Cook to repent and come clean with Second Presbytery and the Synod but has failed to listen to wisdom to do so, to be accountable, but INSTEAD plays the part of a coward who refuses to make things right and flees to another denomination, and

Whereas Rev. Scott Cook has failed to apply basic pastoral wisdom according to 2 Timothy 3:16,17 where he is commanded to use God's Word "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" in confronting Chuck Wilson, encouraging the offended, and leading the sheep, and

Whereas Rev. Scott Cook has betrayed his ministerial vows to promote and maintain the "peace, purity and prosperity" of Our Lord's beloved Church, as he vowed in his

ordination, by not recusing himself and demonstrating a clear and conscious bias toward his long time friend, mentor, and church member, AND to flee to another denomination without reconciling his mistakes and/or misdeeds, and

Whereas Rev Scott Cook has failed to uphold his own Presbytery's policy on sexual harassment, and DEFAMED my name with Dr. Jim Newheiser, professor at RTS Charlotte, without my consent or desire and assumed that I needed counseling for yet again confronting known sin, and

Whereas, Rev. Scott Cook sent a report to Second Presbytery that clearly sided against Rev. Matt Miller and thereby cast a dark shadow on the veracity of my testimony condemning me to counseling and choosing the side of Chuck Wilson, maligned my character and good name, and

Whereas, Rev. Scott Cook failed to listen to the testimony of even one witness to the accusations made by Rev. Matt Miller as to a pattern of behavior that was confronted in accordance with Matthew 18 and in confrontation to known sin, AND failed to hear and read in simplicity that 2 daughters have pleaded with their father and mother to repent from sinful patterns and actions (per Rev. Matt Miller); and

Whereas, lastly, Rev. Scott Cook highlighted in his report to Second Presbytery the "legion", "complexities", "perplexities" and "conflicting" testimonies of a family in absolute chaos and could find no sin but instead chose to cast doubt on two daughters who have submitted to the courts of the ARP Church,

I hereby, YET AGAIN, attempt to do what is right and preserve the peace and purity of the Church and attempt to recover the dignity of my good name by making formal allegations against Rev. Scott Cook, who personally endeavored to sully my reputation by formulating and fomenting "perplexities" and "complexities" and doubt in your Presbytery in order to cover sin and showed bias against me, my sister, and Merideth Melton.

Mrs. Sara Frazier

Christian, member of King's Cross Church in First Presbytery, wife of Rev Nathan M. Frazier, WoC leader, Christian School Teacher, and mother of three boys

APPENDIX B: Allegations Against Tom Shoger

Before Second Presbytery

In the Matter of: Mr. Tom Shoger

Date: September 1, 2023

To: The Clerk of Second Presbytery

We, the undersigned, file this Allegation against Mr. Shoger, pursuant to Book of Discipline 4.1.

On February 21, 2023, Mr. Shoger violated the Ninth Commandment when he claimed that the Second Presbytery Committee on the Minister and His Work and the acting Moderator, Mr. Seth Yi, an ex-officio member, was biased concerning the Committee's investigation of allegations against Mr. Charles Wilson. In stating that the Committee and Mr. Yi were biased, Mr. Shoger prejudiced the truth, prejudiced the good

names of the undersigned, slandered the undersigned, misconstrued intentions, and spoke too meanly of the undersigned (See Larger Catechism Q&A 145).

Respectfully submitted,

Brion Holzberger

John Cook

Seth Yi

John Calvin Grier

R.J. Gore

APPENDIX C: Proposed changes to Board of Benefits in the MAD

BOARD OF BENEFITS (Proposed Change)

Membership:

At Large: ~~Twelve~~ **Ten (10)** members appointed by the General Synod ~~one of whom shall be a person chosen by the ARP Women's Ministries. The majority shall be lay persons. (1999 Synod)~~ **at least seven (7)** of which shall have significant financial and/or healthcare benefits experience.

Advisory: ~~The Treasurer of the Retirement Plan Fund and the Secretary of the Board if these are not members of the Board;~~ The Moderator of Synod; Moderator-Elect of Synod; Executive Director of Central Services/Administrative Officer; Treasurer of Synod; Human Resource Director/ Representatives from Bonclarken, Erskine College, and World Witness; ~~and Chairmen of Presbytery Committee/Commission on Minister and His Work.~~

Ex-Officio: Chairman of General Synod's Committee on Minister and His Work.

Terms of Service: At Large: ~~Six (6)~~ **Five (5) Years.**

Ex-officio and Advisory: As determined by the office to which elected.

APPENDIX D: Report from Synod Archivist M.J. Denning

Archivist Report to ARPC Executive Board - October 26, 2023

Actions taken by the Archivist:

- Last visited archives @ the Presbyterian Heritage Center (PHC) in April 2022. Hope to visit Nov. 2023
- Seven extensive phone conversations regarding archival business w/ PHC point of contact in 2023
- Multiple consultations w/ ARPC Women's Ministry Historian, Mrs. Wilson via phone or email. She hopes to visit the Archives for the first time this fall. I hope to be present when she does. It is my understanding that the majority of the ARPC Women's Ministry Histories are currently housed at the ARPC Conference Center in Flat Rock, NC.
- Authorized ARPC Women's Ministry Historian to access Archives at her convenience

- Authorized Rev. Bill Holliman to access Archives for research related to Arkansas congregations
- Authorized Elder Buddy Auten to access Archives for Neely's Creek ARPC historical committee
- Digitized Gilead ARPC Session Minutes (Huntersville, NC) from 1864-1992. Submitted digital copies to the Gilead Session and the PHC
- Digitized Back Creek ARPC Session Minutes (Charlotte, NC) from 1844-1972. Will be submitting digital copies to the Back Creek Session and the PHC
- Took possession of Mooresville ARPC (Mooresville, NC) congregational records from Rev. Andy Ward in order to deposit with PHC. That congregation merged with Lake Side Fellowship in September 2023.

Information reported by the Archivist:

- There were 270 cubic feet of ARPC archival material according to the PHC Director in 2022.
- Mrs. Lisa Harold is now our primary point of contact @ the PHC.
- In 2022 PHC Director reported that 55% of those seeking access are for genealogy research, 20% are representatives of individual ARPC congregations seeking information about their congregation and 25% are independent researchers who are writing a book, thesis or some other type of report.
- Congregations may deposit Session minutes, Diaconate minutes, congregational meeting minutes, membership rolls, lists of marriages, baptisms and member deaths with the archives. Presbyteries may deposit minutes of their meetings. Generally, the archives do not have room for three dimensional objects or financial records.

APPENDIX E – MODERATOR'S THEME AND MONTHLY EMPHASES

Synod 2024-25 Theme and Emphases

Theme: To The Ends Of The Earth – TOGETHER

July – The Imperative – Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8

August – Outreach North America: "Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria"

September – World Witness: "to the ends of the earth"

October – Erskine Theological Seminary: "teach them to observe all I have commanded you"

November - Erskine College: "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"

December – The Birth of the Messiah

January – Bonclarken: A place to refresh, plan, and reflect February – Dunlap Foundation: "Pure and undefiled religion" March – Camp Joy: "Let the little children come to Me"

February – Dunlap Foundation: "Pure and undefiled religion"

April - Easter: "He lives!"

May - ARP Womens Ministries: "... a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised"

June – ARPC Central Services: "if service, in our serving"

A motion **CARRIED**

That the General Synod take original jurisdiction over the allegations against Mr. Tom Shoger as Second Presbytery requested.

A motion **CARRIED**

That the Moderator appoint investigators to investigate the allegations against Mr. Tom Shoger.

The report of Brice/Sanders (Camp Joy) was presented.

BRICE/SANDERS (CAMP JOY)

More than I would have thought has happened since our last Synod report. Busy can be good, and it's been great to have been reviewing, planning as well as seeing things come to fruition already this year with Camp Joy. As I hoped, 2023 was a great year for us and the first full year for me in my new role. New opportunities and relationships arise and I, along with the Board, am continuing to learn every day. For those who may not know me, I am Jeff Lesslie, the Executive Director with the Brice-Sanders Foundation. My first exposure to Camp Joy was in 2001 as I went as a counselor bringing my father as the camp doctor and mother as a Bible teacher. The Lord changed all of us that week, and I will keep coming back as long as they will have me! I met my wife Katie there as a fellow counselor, and she continues to serve each summer as well. I am very honored and humbled to be the Executive Director of such an amazing ministry and will never lose grasp of the bond between camper and counselor, as well as what all the Lord teaches at Camp Joy.

As the Executive Director, one of my main focuses has been pouring into *relationships*. Specifically, meeting as many people as I can while getting to know better our Directors, the Board, and Camp Joy partners who all work to support this ministry. From Camp Joy's origins at Bonclarken in 1980 serving 9 campers, to now being in four states serving hundreds of campers and counselors, there is no shortage of relationship building opportunities. One thing I have learned this past year is that people passionate about Camp Joy *want* to give and serve...they just do not always know *how*. Being a conduit for their passion has been fun and an honor to navigate.

This past year we have continued to work out our internal 'systems' to be as efficient as possible. These include systems for timely contribution/donation processing and notifications, working with our computer software programs, getting our online store up and running, networking/marketing, etc. We had a great time in February for our annual 'Camp Joy Spotlight Month.' With the goals of spread-

ing awareness about Camp Joy and fundraising, we spent the month posting testimonials of counselors and campers, launched our online store, had the annual camper Zoom call, launched a new fundraising platform website we are testing, did a radio interview etc. As with last year, our goal continues to be ‘shoring up’ our team and processes as we also keep an eye on growth. As we keep our eye on potential for new camps, we are continuing to make sure our house is in order before going too fast...i.e. a “crawl before you walk” mentality.

I think 2024 will be very exciting for Camp Joy! We continue to be eager about the future as we have entered an exciting new chapter as Brice-Sanders Foundation (B-SF), an independent 501(c)(3) entity. The Board of Directors met on September 28-29, 2023 of last year, and February 22-23, 2024 of this year. We continue to look at what has been done in the past, evaluate what we are currently needing to do, and look to the future as the Holy Spirit guides us as His hands and feet. The Lord continues to call the equipped and equip the called with this great ministry of His. I’m so happy to be along for the ride! Thank you for your prayers and support.

Officers for 2024-2025:

Bob Elliott	Chairman
Neal Stroup	Vice Chairman
Brian Such	Treasurer
Laurel Patrick	Secretary/Administrative Officer

Recommendations:

1. That the ARP General Synod approve our budget. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the ARP General Synod pray for the Brice-Sanders Foundation and Camp Joy. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Bob Elliott, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

The report of the **Board of Stewardship** was presented.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

General Synod has given the Board of Stewardship “responsibility for working cooperatively with the congregations and agencies of General Synod to develop and administer programs and ministries to secure financial resources to meet the operating needs of the General Synod; to present to the General Synod a recommended allocation of those resources; and to receive, maintain, and administer funds given to the General Synod and/or the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Foundation, Inc., and to expend income for the furtherance of the work of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church” (*Manual of Authorities and Duties*).

The members of the Board of Stewardship also serve as the board of directors of the ARP Foundation. The Boards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church Foundation, Inc. and Stewardship have a united mission of promoting stewardship and increasing the assets of the ARP Church and ministries. Synod’s Investment Committee serves as Investment Advisor to the Foundation board.

ARP Foundation

The Board of the ARP Foundation greatly appreciates the generous gifts of assets and bequests made by members to strengthen churches, agencies, ministries and special projects far above their regular giving commitments. The ARP Foundation regards it an honor as a board to be entrusted with the management of gifts to help meet current financial needs and build resources for the future of local churches and ministries important to our denomination.

Since the ARP Foundation has some monies in reserve, the Board is not requesting monies from the Denominational Ministry Fund (DMF) for 2024.

In seeking to be faithful stewards, the Board is allocating a portion of funds in the Cash Investment to other investment portfolios to earn a higher rate of return.

Cindy Scott, Director of Central Services and the Administrative Officer of the ARP Foundation along with her capable team is assisting with ARP Foundation inquiries, requests, and ongoing guidance for gift planning.

Beginning May 1, 2024, retired Minister and Missionary, Ken Lotze, will join this effort of planned giving to the ARP Synod.

Stewardship

General Synod created agencies, boards, and committees to serve the entire ARP Church in the proclamation of the Gospel of God by every means possible. **Every agency, board, and committee is dependent upon the free-will giving of every member of every congregation to the Denominational Ministry Fund in the financial support of our ARP Ministries.**

The Board of Stewardship was asked in 2020 by the Special Committee on Net Assets Reallocation (also known as Moderator’s Blue-Ribbon Committee) to dedicate 20% of Denominational Ministry Fund allocations to contribute toward funding the retirement plan actuarial deficit until the recapitalization of the pension plan is secured. In light of

the current financial pension crisis and the lack of fund replenishment, the Board of Stewardship is recommending to Synod contribution of the Denominational Ministry Fund toward this honorable effort of ministers and their widows in retirement. The Board of Stewardship takes its fiduciary responsibility to the ARP Church and to the Lord seriously. In seeking to be faithful stewards, the Board is allocating a portion of funds in the Cash Investment to other investment portfolios to earn a higher rate of return.

The Committee on Minister and His Work in coordination with the Board of Benefits has established a Ministerial Retirement Relief Fund to aid ministers who meet the criteria established in the ARPC Ministerial Retirement Relief Fund Guidelines. Some funds were available to establish this fund but Stewardship has extended up to \$20,000 to secure the initial contribution to this needed fund.

Special Offerings

Easter Offering:	<u>2023</u>	Thanksgiving	<u>2023</u>
ARP Foundation	\$ 8,320	Erskine Seminary	\$ 6,774
Bonclarken	\$19,296	Erskine College	\$11,369
ONA	\$17,399	Christmas Benevolent	\$45,114
World Witness	\$30,082		
Subtotal	\$75,087	Subtotal	\$63,527

Under the oversight of the Executive Board of Synod, the Office of Central Services serves as an accounting and finance resource for all agencies of the denomination, particularly Synod's committees, Board of Benefits, William H. Dunlap Board of Directors, Board of Stewardship and Outreach North America. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance as a non-profit and 501(c)(3) religious organization.

The Board has engaged the independent auditing firm SuggsJohnson LLC, for the December 31, 2023 audit which includes the books of the Treasurer of Synod, the ARP Foundation's custodial funds, the ARP Foundation's gift annuity funds, and Outreach North America's revolving loan fund.

Administrative Information

Officers for July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025

Marc Faulkenberry, Chairman

Charlie King, Vice Chairman

Paul Matthews, Secretary

Jamey Dagenhart, Treasurer

Recommendations:

Recommendations to Synod from the ARP Foundation:

1. That the General Synod commend the Director of the Central Services, Cindy Scott, and the entire ARP Central Services Staff, along with Ken Lotze for their able assistance to the ARP Foundation Board. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Recommendations to Synod from the Board of Stewardship:

1. That the proposed 2024 Board of Stewardship budget be adopted. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That individuals, congregations and presbyteries across the ARP denomination contribute toward the replenishment of the ARP Defined Benefit Recapitalization Plan. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That congregations contribute to the DMF for the glory of God and the advance of the gospel and the building up of his church through the boards, agencies and committees of the ARP Church. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
4. That Synod encourage all churches to visit the arpchurch.org website for a fuller explanation of the Denominational Ministry Fund. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
5. That Synod committees analyze their reserves at the end of the year to determine if they are justified, and those reserves that are unjustified be returned to the General Synod reserve. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
6. That the Thanksgiving and Easter offerings be continued for Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
7. In keeping with the suggestion of the Committee on Investment, that Synod boards, agencies and committees with monies in the Cash Investment allocate a portion of these funds to other investment portfolios to earn a higher rate of return. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
8. That Synod express its gratitude to David Lauten for his eight (8) years of faithful service as Chairman of the the Board of ARP Foundation and the Board of Stewardship. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
9. That the General Synod commend the Executive Director of the Central Services, Cindy Scott, and the entire ARP Central Services Staff for their able assistance to the General Synod and the Board of Stewardship. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
10. That General Synod pause for prayer, thanking God for His provision for our denomination, asking that all current and future ministry needs be met and seeking His wisdom to be faithful stewards of His provisions for the advancement of His kingdom and glory. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

David Lauten, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located on page 114.

CHURCH DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY ANALYSIS

Churches meeting or exceeding 20%	3
Churches giving 10% -19%	19
Giving percentage not determined	113
Remaining at same percentage	43
Increased percentage level	68
Increased by at least 1%	39
Decreased percentage level	30
Decreased giving but 10% or above	3
Churches reporting but no pledge recorded	13
Churches not reporting	79
Churches with pledges	133

Note: The figures reported are based on information recorded in the Statistical Reports for calendar year 2023 from individual congregations. Total churches = 255 (does not include the Canadian Presbytery churches.)

All budgets for Synod's agencies, boards and committees are consolidated in this section in the following order:

Committees:

Inter-Church Relations

Investment

Minister & His Work

Revisions

Conferences

Nominations

Boards:

Bonclarken

World Witness

Outreach North America

Erskine College & Seminary

Dunlap

Executive Board

Central Services

Center Facility

Brice/Sanders (Camp Joy)

Stewardship

Benefits

COMMITTEE ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS			
	<u>Actual</u> <u>2023</u>	<u>Synod</u> <u>Approved</u> <u>2024</u>	<u>Synod</u> <u>Proposed</u> <u>2025</u>
Denominational Ministry Allocation	\$ 12,292	\$ 11,910	\$ 11,910
Expenses:			
General Office Expense	\$ -	\$ 210	\$ 210
Committee Travel	174	0	0
Synod Planning	0	300	300
ARP Fraternal Delegates/Representatives	7,421	4,500	4,500
Hosting Fraternal Delegates	3,400	2,400	2,400
World Reformed Fellowship Dues	0	500	500
NAPARC Dues & Meeting Travel	1,000	4,000	4,000
ICRC Dues & Meeting Travel	0	.	.
Total Expenses	\$ 11,995	\$ 11,910	\$ 11,910
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 297	\$ -	\$ -
Beginning Balance	\$ 9,448	\$ 9,745	\$ 9,745
Ending Balance	\$ 9,745	\$ 9,745	\$ 9,745

COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT			
	<u>2023</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>Synod</u> <u>Approved</u>	<u>2025</u> <u>Synod</u> <u>Proposed</u>
Revenues			
Denominational Ministry Allocation	\$ 3,612	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500
Total Revenues	\$ 3,612	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500
Expenses			
Committee Travel & Meeting	\$ 1,384	\$ 3,300	\$ 3,300
General Office-Copy, Etc	-	200	200
Total Expenses	\$ 1,384	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 2,228	\$ -	\$ -
Beginning Balance-Investment	\$ 7,116	\$ 9,344	\$ 9,344
Ending Balance-Investment	\$ 9,344	\$ 9,344	\$ 9,344

MINISTER & HIS WORK			
	<u>2023</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2024 Synod</u> <u>Approved</u>	<u>2025</u> <u>Synod</u> <u>Proposed</u>
Revenues			
Denominational Ministry Allocation	\$ 18,268	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500
Presbytery-PRCC \$1,000/minister	8,800	24,200	19,200
Total Revenues	\$ 27,068	\$ 28,700	\$ 23,700
Expenses			
Committee Travel & Meeting	\$ 1,279	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500
General Office-xfer to Minister Releif	\$ 2,500		
Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Co	22,100	24,200	19,200
Total Expenses	\$ 25,879	\$ 28,700	\$ 23,700
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 1,189	\$ -	\$ -
Beginning Balance-MHWC Reserve	\$ 3,869	\$ 5,058	\$ 2,558
Ending Balance-MHWC Reserve	\$ 5,058	\$ 5,058	\$ 2,558

ARP Synod			
Revisions Committee			
Summary of Financial Results and Budget Comparison			
	<u>2023</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2024 Synod</u> <u>Approved</u>	<u>2025 Synod</u> <u>Proposed</u>
Revisions Committee-DM Alloc	3,612	1,800	1,800
Revisions Committee-Expenses	-	1,800	1,800
Net Income-Revisions	3,612	-	-
Beginning Balance-Revisions	3,527	7,139	7,139
Ending Balance-Revisions	7,139	7,139	7,139

Account Description	Committee on Conferences					Committee on Conferences					Committee on Conferences				
	2023 Actual Results					2024 Synod Approved					2025 Synod Proposed				
	70	60	80	90	Total	70	60	80	90	Total	70	60	80	90	Total
	Quest	Horizon	FBC	Conf Committee		Quest	Horizon	FBC	Conf Committee		Quest	Horizon	FBC	Conf Committee	
Revenues															
DM Allocation	6,192	6,192	9,624	3,793	25,801	6,000	6,000	9,325	3,675	25,000	6,000	6,000	15,000	3,000	30,000
Contributions		100	5,300		5,400					-					-
Registration	35,225	48,593	25,057		108,875	35,000	49,000	25,000		109,000	36,000	50,000	26,000		112,000
Total Revenues	41,417	54,885	39,981	3,793	140,076	41,000	55,000	34,325	3,675	134,000	42,000	56,000	41,000	3,000	142,000
Expenses															
Total Conference Exp.	30,994	41,400	18,645	-	91,038	35,000	49,000	25,000	-	109,000	36,000	50,000	26,000	-	112,000
Total DM Exp.	6,354	9,626	19,124	3,129	30,325	6,000	6,000	9,325	3,675	18,435	6,000	6,000	15,000	3,000	30,000
Total Expenses	37,348	51,026	37,768	3,129	129,271	41,000	55,000	34,325	3,675	134,000	42,000	56,000	41,000	3,000	142,000
Net Income	4,069	3,859	2,213	664	10,805	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beginning Reserve Balance	13,413	13,413	7,486	(36)	34,276	12,482	12,272	9,699	628	35,082	12,482	12,272	9,699	628	35,082
Ending Reserve Balance	17,482	17,272	9,699	628	45,082	12,482	12,272	9,699	628	35,082	12,482	12,272	9,699	628	35,082

ARP Synod			
Nominations Committee			
	<u>2023</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>Synod</u> <u>Approved</u>	<u>2025</u> <u>Synod</u> <u>Proposed</u>
Revenues			
Denominational Ministry Allocation	\$ 4,128	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
Total Revenues	\$ 4,128	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
Expenses			
Committee Meeting	\$ -	\$ 3,900	\$ 3,900
General Office-Copy, Etc	-	100	100
Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 4,128	\$ -	\$ -
Beginning Balance	\$ 3,653	\$ 7,781	\$ 7,781
Ending Balance	\$ 7,781	\$ 7,781	\$ 7,781

BONCLARKEN CONFERENCE CENTER			
	2023 Actual	2024 Approved	2025 Proposed
Revenue			
Operating Revenue:			
Rooms	\$ 1,361,212	\$ 1,474,000	\$ 1,510,676
Meeting Room rental	12,015	9,600	10,000
Food Service	794,307	846,500	863,430
Conference Fee	79,835	80,000	80,000
Programs	17,910	18,000	18,000
Camps	119,762	123,850	125,000
Gift Shop/Nibble Nook	54,372	54,500	55,000
Property Owners	40,599	53,900	53,900
Miscellaneous	49,181	60,790	61,000
Total Op. Revenue	\$ 2,529,193	\$ 2,721,140	\$ 2,777,006
Non-Operating Revenue:			
Synod's DMF	\$ 108,096	\$ 93,000	\$ 93,000
Mountain Club/Churches/ARPWM	509,469	502,000	505,000
Easter Offering	18,344	18,000	18,000
Other		-	
Total Non-Op. Rev.	\$ 635,909	\$ 613,000	\$ 616,000
Total Revenue	\$ 3,165,102	\$ 3,334,140	\$ 3,393,006
Expenses			
Cost of Sales:			
Food - Revenue Meals	\$ 353,575	\$ 380,925	\$ 384,226
Food - Nonrevenue Meals	29,673	30,000	30,000
Gift Shop/Nibble Nook	34,079	34,000	34,000
Total Cost of Sales	\$ 417,327	\$ 444,925	\$ 448,226
Total Pyrl/Benefits	\$ 1,871,123	\$ 1,878,573	\$ 1,904,780
Other Expenses:			
Administration	\$ 155,483	\$ 174,290	\$ 176,000
Camps	98,131	100,000	100,000
Finance	40,478	42,000	44,000
Food Service	35,655	38,000	39,000
Guest Services	55,686	58,000	60,000
Maintenance	242,235	245,000	245,000
Marketing	52,927	36,000	36,000
Prop and Liab Insurance	88,639	93,000	95,000
Recreation	29,050	30,000	30,000
Utilities	196,105	209,000	215,000
Total Other Expenses	\$ 994,389	\$ 1,025,290	\$ 1,040,000
Total Op. Expenses	\$ 3,282,839	\$ 3,348,788	\$ 3,393,006
Net Surplus (Loss)	\$ (117,737)	\$ (14,648)	\$ (0)

WORLD WITNESS			
	Actual 2023	2024 Board Approved	2025 Proposed
<u>SUPPORT & REVENUE:</u>			
<u>CONTRIBUTIONS:</u>			
Public Support	\$ 985,474	\$ 1,046,987	\$ 1,066,734
General Synod	528,383	470,000	\$ 470,000
	\$ 1,513,857	\$ 1,516,987	\$ 1,536,734
<u>DESIGNATED INCOME:</u>			
Missionary Direct Support	\$ 3,111,784	\$ 2,919,985	\$ 2,923,698
Field Ministries	830,915	294,500	294,500
ASHA Grant for Hospital	-	-	-
ST Trips and Other Ministries	127,751	-	-
	\$ 4,070,450	\$ 3,214,485	\$ 3,218,198
<u>OTHER:</u>			
Other Income	\$ 368,509	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Income (loss)	127,114	106,500	122,500
	\$ 495,623	\$ 106,500	\$ 122,500
TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE:	\$ 6,079,930		
Less: Non Budgeted Income:	\$(1,078,485)		
TOTAL CORE SUPPORT & REVENUE:	\$ 5,001,445	\$ 4,837,972	\$ 4,877,432
<u>EXPENSES:</u>			
<u>MINISTRY SERVICES:</u>			
Missionary Direct Support	\$ 3,428,869	\$ 2,889,985	\$ 2,893,698
Field Ministries	1,156,002	679,669	655,796
ASHA Grant for Hospital	-	-	-
ST Trips and Other Ministries	163,748	-	-
	\$ 4,748,619	\$ 3,569,654	\$ 3,549,494
Total Salary & Benefits (Office)	\$ 1,137,193	\$ 1,268,318	\$ 1,327,938
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$ 5,885,812		
Less: Non Budgeted Expenses:	\$(1,117,965)		
TOTAL CORE EXPENSES:	\$ 4,767,847	\$ 4,837,972	\$ 4,877,432
TOTAL NET INCOME OR (LOSS):	\$ 194,118	\$ -	\$ -
UNREALIZED GAIN (LOSS):	\$ 129,620	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS:	\$ 323,738	\$ -	\$ -
Net Assets, Beginning of year	\$ 4,156,513	\$ -	\$ -
Net Assets, End of year	\$ 4,480,251	\$ -	\$ -

World Witness		
2025 Preliminary Budget Summary		
	Income	Expenses
Unrestricted Income	\$ 720,895	\$ (161,600)
Investment Income	\$ 82,500	\$ -
Barnabas Ministry	\$ 765,390	\$ (765,390)
Bridge Europe	\$ 883,305	\$ (883,305)
Ethne Outfitters	\$ 320,675	\$ (320,675)
Germany	\$ 1,000	\$ (1,000)
Home Office	\$ 885,839	\$ (1,253,838)
Latin America Ministries	\$ -	\$ (4,800)
Lithuania	\$ 128,221	\$ (128,221)
Pakistan Hospital	\$ 140,000	\$ (245,496)
Pakistan Mission	\$ 145,500	\$ (310,000)
Short Term Trips	\$ 88,400	\$ (88,400)
Spain	\$ 297,225	\$ (296,225)
Turkey	\$ 6,000	\$ (6,000)
United Kingdom	\$ 412,481	\$ (412,481)
US Ministry	\$ -	\$ -
2025 Preliminary Budget	\$ 4,877,432	\$ (5,209,440)

OUTREACH NORTH AMERICA			
	<u>2023</u> Actual	<u>2024</u> Synod Approved	<u>2025</u> Synod Proposed
Revenue			
Denominational Ministry	\$ 449,950	\$ 397,447	\$ 397,447
Contributions for Ministry	65,545	59,250	64,000
Invested Funds, Interest, RLF Int'r & Other Rev	168,609	102,760	127,055
Total Revenue	\$684,104	\$559,457	\$588,502
	-	-	-
Expenses			
New Church Development (NCD)	\$ 257,096	\$ 307,000	\$ 305,000
Evangelism Expenses	32,603	22,500	17,500
Church Vitality	61,860	71,576	74,572
National Presence	33,533	38,081	39,859
Administration Expenses	234,748	280,843	386,663
Total Expenses	\$619,841	\$720,000	\$823,594
	-	-	-
Net Income (Loss)	\$64,263	(\$160,543)	(\$235,092)
Beginning Fund Balance	328,691	392,954	385,106
Ending Operating Fund Balance	\$392,954	\$232,411	\$150,014

ERSKINE COLLEGE & SEMINARY

Erskine College 2023-2024 Financial Highlights and ARP Synod Allocations
 Fiscal year forecasted results are based on an analysis of March 2024 actuals.
 (Erskine's fiscal year runs from July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)

	2023-2024 Budget	2023-2024 Project- ed Results
	Budgeted	Forecasted
Total Budgeted/ Forecasted Revenue	\$22.66M	\$24.3M
Total Budgeted/ Forecasted Opera- tional Expenses	\$21.85M	\$24.2M
Total Budgeted/ Forecasted Opera- tional Surplus	\$811K	\$100K
Allocation of ARP Synod \$385K Budg- eted Annual Contri- bution	\$231K (60%) for undergraduate scholarship support	\$154K (40%) for graduate and sem- inary scholarship support

WILLIAM H. DUNLAP FUND			
Allocation, Fund Balances and Operations			
	2023	2024	2025
<u>Allocation and Fund Balances</u>	Actual	Synod Approved	Synod Proposed
Anticipated Revenue	\$ 148,619	\$ 196,757	\$ 183,200
Beginning Fund Balance	71,494	4,500	6,300
Total Available	\$ 220,113	\$ 201,257	\$ 189,500
Less: Reserve for Potential Revenue Shortfalls	(4,700)	(6,300)	(5,900)
Percentage of Revenue	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Administration	(3,085)	(4,540)	(4,800)
Ersine & Barker Scholarships	(24,000)	(25,200)	(25,300)
Remaining for Allocation	\$ 193,028	\$ 165,217	\$ 153,500
<u>Summary of Dunlap Fund Balances</u>			
Dunlap Ministry Operations	29,028	6,200	6,200
ARP Adoption	132,071	138,106	136,100
Dunlap Orphanage Ministry	1,018,583	1,242,742	1,049,100
James Barker Ersine Scholarship	30,363	20,938	30,100
McGregor Memorial Fund	178,166	182,037	183,500
Will Ministry	337,439	410,569	347,600
Bada & Robert Helms Children Fund-Recommended			62,100
Total Fund Balances	\$ 1,725,651	\$ 2,000,593	\$ 1,814,700
<u>Supporting Detail</u>			
<u>Income</u>			
Denominational Ministry			
Miscellaneous Gifts	14,395	4,000	4,000
Interest Allocation			
B. J. Wade	106,749	96,137	103,200
Ola B. Hunter	4,016	4,580	4,100
McGregor Memorial	7,630	8,840	7,700
Orphanage Fund	53,124	60,340	45,200
Will Ministry Fund (min bal of \$255,022)	17,548	19,940	15,000
Bada & Robert Helms Children Fund-xfer to Invest	(56,743)		
Bada & Robert Helms Children Fund-5% of \$18k	900	1,720	2,700
Barker Scholarship	1,000	1,200	1,300
Total Income	\$ 148,619	\$ 196,757	\$ 183,200
<u>Ministry Expenditures</u>			
Barker Scholarship to Ersine	1,000	1,200	1,300
Ersine-guaranteed	24,000	24,000	24,000
Total Ongoing Relationships Expenses	87,000	-	-
Discretionary-these relationships are reviewed annually			
Calvary Home	17,144		
Boys Farm	12,750		
Miracle Hill	10,000		
Hope for the Fatherless	6,500		
RCRI (Reach Children of Rwanda Int'l)	3,000		
King's Kids/Throwing Seeds	28,500		
James Barker Scholarship-Ersine Orphans	3,000		
Ethiopia Mission Trip	2,500		
Committed for 1st Qrt next year	(7,394)		
Remaining for allocation	-	165,217	153,500
Total Discretionary Expenses	76,000	165,217	153,500
Sub-Total Ministry Expenses	\$ 188,000	\$ 190,417	\$ 178,800
Total Administration Expenses	\$ 3,085	\$ 4,540	\$ 4,800
Total Ministry Expenses	\$ 191,084	\$ 194,957	\$ 183,600
Net Income over/(under) expenses	\$ (42,465)	\$ 1,800	\$ (400)
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 71,494	\$ 4,500	\$ 6,300
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 29,028	\$ 6,300	\$ 5,900

EXECUTIVE BOARD OF SYNOD			
Summary of Financial Results and Budget Comparison			
	2023 Actual	2024 Synod Approve	2025 Synod Propose
Revenues		15.4%	0.0%
General Synod Allocation	\$ 86,334	\$ 83,900	\$ 83,900
Transfer from prior Ex Board fund	18,931		
Misc Income	2,074		
Total Revenues	\$ 107,339	\$ 83,900	\$ 83,900
Expenses			
General Synod Officers			
Moderator	\$ 8,890	\$ 6,000	\$ 8,000
Vice-Moderator	-	1,500	1,500
Moderator-Elect	326	1,000	1,000
Vice-Moderator Elect	-	500	500
Principal Clerk	5,760	5,000	5,000
Treasurer	3,600	3,675	3,675
Total General Synod Officers	\$ 18,576	\$ 17,675	\$ 19,675
Net General Synod Meeting	\$ 3	\$ 4,500	\$ 3,600
Total Ex. Board Meeting & Office	\$ 3,864	\$ 5,900	\$ 5,900
Total General Synod Contingency	\$ 19,003	\$ 22,820	\$ 13,935
Communication & Operations			
The ARP Net	\$ (626)	\$ 1,550	\$ 3,000
Net Adult Quarterly	\$ (1,221)	\$ 850	\$ 700
Net ARP Bookstore	\$ (10,368)	\$ (2,900)	\$ (2,000)
Total Website & Internet	14,896	15,068	18,600
Net Copier, Postage & Banking	4,742	\$ 4,317	\$ 5,800
Total Other Expenses	11,290	\$ 14,120	\$ 14,690
Total Communication & Operations	\$ 18,713	\$ 33,005	\$ 40,790
Total Expenses	\$ 60,159	\$ 83,900	\$ 83,900
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 47,180	\$ 0	\$ 0
Beginning Reserve	18,931	\$ 66,110	\$ 66,110
Ending Reserve	\$ 66,110	\$ 66,110	\$ 66,110

Central Services (MR Fund)			
Summary of Financial Results and Budget Comparison			
	<u>Actual 2023</u>	<u>2024 Synod Approved</u>	<u>2025 Synod Proposed</u>
<u>Revenues</u>			
Current Funds		24.8%	3.0%
Denominational Ministry Funds	\$ 357,340	\$ 489,810	\$ 504,308
Miscellaneous Gifts	500	0	0
Total Current Funds	\$ 357,840	\$ 489,810	\$ 504,308
<u>Agency Support</u>			
Board of Benefits-13% of total Disbursement	\$ 157,900	\$ 59,700	\$ 77,600
Retirement Support-DB Plan 2.6%	0	13,800	15,500
ARP Foundation	5,000	0	0
Total Agency Support	\$ 162,900	\$ 73,500	\$ 93,100
Total Revenues	\$ 520,740	\$ 563,310	\$ 597,408
verify	-		
<u>Expenses</u>			
Total Salary and Benefits	\$ 517,325	\$ 536,557	\$ 571,347
<u>Staff & Program</u>			
Worker's Compensation	\$ 1,023	\$ 1,483	\$ 1,242
Director Travel & Expenses	236	1,500	1,000
Staff Travel & Expenses	772	800	800
Training	25	1,000	1,000
Dues/Subscriptions	-	100	100
Total Staff & Program	\$ 2,056	\$ 4,883	\$ 4,142
Total Equipment	\$ 1,742	\$ 750	\$ 750
<u>General Office</u>			
Software Maintenance	\$ 8,146	\$ 7,200	\$ 8,700
Bank Fees-Net	126		\$ 200
Communication	4,219	4,344	4,344
Office Supplies	6,892	9,000	7,500
Commercial Insurance	350	576	425
Total General Office	\$ 19,732	\$ 21,120	\$ 21,169
Total Expenses	\$ 540,854	\$ 563,310	\$ 597,408
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (20,114)	\$ 0	\$ -
Beginning Fund Balance	40,662	20,547	17,044
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 20,547	\$ 20,547	\$ 17,044

	ARP CENTER FACILITY			
				<u>2025</u>
<u>Acct #</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>2023 Actual</u>	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>Proposed Budget</u>
Receipts				
	Denominational Ministry	90,163	\$ 87,360	\$ 87,360
	Misc Gifts	1		
Total Rental Income		137,943	111,471	111,026
TOTAL RECEIPTS		\$ 228,107	\$ 198,831	\$ 198,386
		-		
Expenses				
Facility Expenses				
	Facility Repairs	10,761	24,000	25,000
	Facility Management	93,621	73,754	78,742
	Utilities	29,341	28,500	31,000
	Facility - Other	81,659	58,983	63,645
TOTAL Expenses		\$ 215,382	\$ 185,237	\$ 198,386
Net Income (Loss)		\$ 12,726	\$ 13,594	\$ -
Beginning Facility Fund Balance		-	12,726	12,726
Ending Facility Fund Balance		\$ 12,726	\$ 26,320	\$ 12,726
Plant Sinking Fund #800000-013				
Beginning Balance		\$ 100,648	\$ 83,644	\$ 124,644
Contributions		65,000	45,000	45,000
Expenses		(82,004)	(49,120)	(15,000)
Ending Plant Sinking Fund Balance		\$ 83,644	\$ 79,524	\$ 154,644
PSF Shortfall vs Estimated Target		\$ (79,056)	\$ (105,668)	\$ (63,673)
<i>Minimal new lessors assumed. More rental revenue would lower shortfall</i>				

Brice-Sanders Foundation				
		Actual	Synod	Synod
		2023	Approved	Proposed
Operations			2024	2025
Revenues				
Contributions		111,585	39,100	56,035
Go Method Gifts				4,000
Transfer from Ann Brice Fund		7,630	22,475	8,220
Misc.		584		
Administration Fee-12.5% of Camp Registr		2,837	5,450	4,184
Total Revenues		122,636	67,025	72,439
Expenses		-		
Total Salary & Benefits		56,294	60,186	60,839
Board and Administration Expenses				
Board Expenses		8,599	2,589	6,200
Bank Fees		192	250	250
Commercial Insurance		1,058	1,500	1,150
Supervisor Clinician		2,000	2,000	2,000
Office Supplies		2,941	500	2,000
Total Board and Administration Expenses		14,790	6,839	11,600
Total Expenses		71,084	67,025	72,439
Receipts Over Disbursements		51,552	-	-
Beginning Reserve Fund		32,958	84,510	84,510
Ending Reserve Fund-BSF		84,510	84,510	84,510

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP (SR)			
OPERATING FUNDS			
	2023	2024	2025
	Actual	Synod Approved	Synod Proposed
Revenue			
General Synod Allocation-Stewardship	\$ 14,965	\$ 14,500	\$ 21,400
Special Offering	8,321	7,000	8,500
Total Revenue	\$ 23,286	\$ 21,500	\$ 29,900
Expenses			
Board Travel & Expenses		\$ 7,000	\$ -
Administrative Support	5,000	5,000	5,000
General Synod Audit & Legal	14,000	12,500	15,000
General Office	1,307	1,600	1,400
Bank Fees	\$ 5,761	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500
Commercial Insurance	\$ 1,973	\$ 800	\$ 2,000
Intra-Fund Transfers (Endowment)		\$ 27,000	
Total Expenses	\$ 28,041	\$ 60,400	\$ 29,900
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (4,756)	\$ (38,900)	\$ -
Beginning B of S Reserve	52,464	47,708	8,808
Ending B of S Reserve	\$ 47,708	\$ 8,808	\$ 8,808
Policy of 40% of DM Alloc. Reserve	319%		41%
Verify Income	-		
General Synod (GS)-Denominational Ministry Reserve			
Beginning General Synod Reserve	482,763	\$ 496,769	\$ 495,917
Increase/(Decrease) in GS Reserve	130,578	(852)	-
Ending General Synod Reserve	613,341	495,917	495,917
General Synod Reserve Balance %	22.96%	19.28%	18.55%
Target General Synod Reserve (a)	220,462	214,298	222,643
(a) Targeted Reserve Balance (Rules of Order, VIII.F) - 6.5% of Anticipated Funds for Allocation: modified 4/21/16, 7.5% in 2016, 8.0% in 2017, 8.33% in 2018			

ARP Synod			
Board of Benefits			
Summary of Financial Results and Budget Comparison			
AP Fund-Frozen DB Plan	<u>Actual 2023</u>	<u>2024 Synod Approved</u>	<u>2025 Synod Proposed</u>
<u>Revenues</u>			
<u>Unrestricted for Operations</u>			
General Synod Allocation-Board	3,102	4,835	3,635
Board of Benefits-Endowment-Brd expenses			1,200
General Synod Allocation-DC Plan	6,453		
General Synod Allocation-DB Plan		13,800	15,500
General Synod Allocation-DB Retmt Debt	532,435	523,185	523,185
Total Unrestricted	541,990	541,820	543,520
<u>Retirement Plan Resources</u>			
Ola B. Hunter Trust for Retirement	4,016	4,670	4,210
ARP Retirement Plan Contributions	211,315	-	-
Total Retirement Plan	215,330	4,670	4,210
Total Revenues	\$ 757,320	\$ 546,490	\$ 547,730
<u>Expenses</u>			
<u>Board and General</u>			
Board Travel & Meeting	2,891	4,435	4,435
Office and Miscellaneous	211	400	400
Total Board and General	3,102	4,835	4,835
<u>ARP Retirement Plan</u>			
Audit	12,125	-	5,000
Legal	2,035	-	-
Administrative Support	-	13,800	15,500
Direct Contribution account fees	6,453		
Transfer to Trustee-DB Plan	733,605	527,855	522,395
Total ARP Retirement Plan	754,218	541,655	542,895
Total Expenses	\$ 757,320	\$ 546,490	\$ 547,730
Net Income (Loss)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Beginning Reserve-Operations	\$ 3,621	\$ 3,621	\$ 3,621
Ending Reserve-Operations	\$ 3,621	\$ 3,621	\$ 3,621

The report of the **Board of Benefits** was presented.

BOARD OF BENEFITS

The Board of Benefits oversees the benefit programs of the ARPC. The Board works to provide financial support for eligible individuals and families in the areas of benevolence, insurance, and retirement benefits administered through the Office of Central Services.

Benevolence

The ARPC has a long history of benevolence to our retired ministers, their widows, families of ARPC ministers who died while serving a congregation, and retired ARPC agency employees. These faithful servants of God are not to be forgotten by the church they loved and served.

The Christmas Benevolent Fund distribution is funded by the annual Thanksgiving Offering, the J. C. Lott Endowment, the Helen W. Carson Fund and by special gifts and offerings. A full 100% of the money collected is distributed annually to qualified recipients. The Christmas Benevolent Fund distribution for 2023 was as follows:

Need-Based Assistance	\$ 6,000.00
Christmas Gifts	\$40,171.00
Total Distribution	\$46,171.00

The Board of Benefits appreciates all who contributed to the Christmas Benevolent Fund last year to assist those who have faithfully served our denomination. Please continue your generous contributions.

The Board of Benefits also administers the Ministerial Relief Fund which was approved by General Synod in 2023. There was no activity in the fund in 2023.

Insurance

Medical Plan

The ARPC Medical Insurance Plan (Plan) is self-funded. Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina serves as Third Party Administrator of the Plan.

Alera Group (formerly named Forum Benefits) of Greenville, SC serves as benefit advisor to the Board of Benefits. Alera Group reviews and recommends design changes in the Plan, evaluates potential providers and competitive bids on an annual basis to control the cost of premiums, maintains the legal compliance of the Plan, provides "Open Enrollment" for members through their *Employee Navigator* Benefits portal and supports Central Services in the daily administration of the Plan.

In addition, Alera Group has developed cost savings and income producing programs with our new Medicare HRA Plan for members that continue to be employed past their Social Security retirement age and a new Prescription Benefit Manager Rebate Plan, respectively.

Alera Group reviews the market for network, administration, and stop loss fees. Blue Cross continues to be the most competitive provider. Administrative fees are in rate lock until 2026.

Change in Plan Year

In 2023, the plan moved to a December 31 year-end leaving a short period from August 1 – December 31, 2023.

Change in Plan Regarding COBRA

COBRA (Continuation of Coverage) is no longer available under the ARP Insurance Plan. The decision to eliminate COBRA was made in part due to the fact that there are numerous other plans which can provide similar coverage when someone is terminated or leaves employment. In addition, now that there is no disqualification for pre-existing conditions, it is easier to get other coverage. We encourage everyone to keep this in mind when termination or severance situations come up.

High Deductible Medical Plan (HDHP)

A motion was made to adopt Alera Group's recommendation of adding in a 3rd medical plan option. This option was recommended to be a high deductible plan at a Bronze level, to offer a reduction in the monthly premium amount.

By adding this 3rd option, this allows the employee a choice when electing medical coverage for themselves and their family. The HDHP medical plans offer lower monthly premiums, therefore the recommendation is for the church to contribute the difference in premium into the employee's Health Savings Account (HSA). These pre-tax HSA funds, which are recommended for the church to contribute, can be used for qualified health expenses (such as higher medical deductible).

HDHP Buy-Up Plan	Annual Difference from Coplay plan to fund HSA
EE	\$808.92
EE + 1	\$1,739.16
Family	\$2,184.12

HDHP Base Plan	Annual Difference from Coplay plan to fund HSA
EE	\$2,697.14
EE + 1	\$5,798.87
Family	\$7,282.38

Eligibility

Eligible employees include all employees of an ARP church or agency working at least 30 hours per week and any retiree meeting the requirements specified in the contract.

Dental Plan

Synod's dental program is also a self-insured plan. For the 2024 plan year, dental claims are expected to increase, therefore a 3% premium increase was recommended by Alera Group. Administration Fees are locked in until January 2025.

Vision Plan

Synod's vision program is fully insured. For the 2024 plan year there was no increase. These rates are locked until January 2026.

Life, Accidental Death & Dismemberment, and Long-Term Disability

These three benefits are *fully insured* and *mandatory* for all full-time employees. The employing church or agency pays for the coverage. This premium is mandatory even in the event the employee declines the offer of medical and/or dental coverage. There are no exceptions under the insurance contract. If premiums are not paid it will be directed to the presbytery to address.

HIPAA Privacy

As a self-insured Plan, the primary privacy focus is on the protection of Personal Health Information. Plan participants are given a Privacy Notice and Plan Document. Security policies and procedures are in place, including Business Associate Agreements that conform to HIPAA requirements.

Enrollment

Medical, dental, and vision coverage is conditional on eligible employees enrolling within the first 31 days of eligibility. Late enrollment is not allowed under the Plan and will result in the denial of benefits. Eligible employees who desire to enroll after the annual "open enrollment" period may do so upon a "qualifying event". Contact Alera Group at employeeecare@aleragroup.com or Central Services for specific eligibility and enrollment.

Post-Retirement Medical Coverage

General Synod's medical, dental and vision coverage terminates at retirement for those who qualify at the age of Medicare eligibility. Persons retiring prior to attaining Medicare eligibility may continue coverage pursuant to certain requirements outlined in the Plan.

Termination of Insurance Benefits

Pursuant to policy adopted by the Board of Benefits, when insurance premiums of an employee are 60 days in arrears, Central Services will write to the appropriate church or agency stating that the account is delinquent giving that church or agency 120 days from the date of the notice to bring the account current. If the account balance is not a zero (0) within the 120 days, insurance coverage for the employee of the church or agency will be terminated. The employee's insurance coverage may *only* be reinstated secondary to a qualifying event as stated in the Plan plus payments of all past due premiums.

<u>Insurance Premiums, Fees, and Reserve Balance</u>				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Insurance Pre- miums Collected -	\$5,460,634	\$5,451,533	\$5,519,098	\$6,206,178
Fees Paid to Third Party Administrators-	\$ 932,601	\$1,131,316	\$ 551,317	\$1,070,699
Paid Insurance Bene- fit Claims-	\$3,645,379	\$4,210,196	\$5,833,905	\$4,838,797
Administrative Costs -	\$ 95,200	\$ 122,063	\$ 195,300	\$ 157,900
Claims Reserve In- vestment Gain/(Loss)	\$ 179,220	\$ 259,660	\$ (297,622)	\$ 147,383
Balance of Claim Reserve -	\$3,001,075	\$ 3,197,317	\$1,838,271	\$2,124,436

Additional Alera Group Services

Alera Group continues to offer the benefit portal to General Synod at no cost and maintains all eligibility data for ease of administration and compliance. Alera Group also handles the Affordable Care Act tax forms for each church/location and mails them to all employees.

Retirement ARPC 403(b) Plan (Defined Contribution Plan)

The ARPC 403(b) is provided in partnership with Geneva Benefits (formerly PCA RBI). Geneva provides the administration and investment capabilities for the plan. The ARPC 403(b) is the ongoing retirement plan for ministers and eligible employees.

The *Form of Government* requires a Call to have provisions for the church to make contributions at a designated percentage of a participant's earnings to the minister's retirement plan. General Synod has set this as 12%. It is recommended that these contributions be made to the ARPC (403(b)) plan. However, if a church decides to secure their own retirement plan for a minister they need to sign and return the form from Central Services acknowledging the risks and responsibilities associated with an individual church plan.

Key statistics for the plan at December 31 are below.

	2022	2023
Assets	\$11,420,000	\$15,520,000
Individual Participants	239	256
Participating Churches and Organizations	150	155

The plan offers additional flexibility to churches. Some of the additional areas in which the plan can be used by churches include the items below. Please contact Geneva Benefits for more information.

- Can be used by churches for other staff to have voluntary withholding.
- Churches can make contributions to staff accounts.
- Part-time ministers such as bi-vocational or supply can participate, and churches can contribute if they so choose.

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Plan (Defined Benefit Plan)

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Plan (Plan) is a qualified, noncontributory, defined benefit plan.

As of July 31, 2021, benefits under this plan were frozen and active and vested terminated employees received lump sum payouts. Remaining participants in the plan are those receiving benefits or that were eligible to retire as of July 31, 2021 and elected to remain in the plan. For those electing to remain in the plan, their benefit in this plan was frozen but they would receive contributions under the ARPC 403(b). The Synod remains responsible for the obligations related to retirees.

The Board of Benefits Retirement Committee serves as Administrator for the Plan. Copies of the Plan are available through the Office of Central Services. The Board of Benefits (Board) monitors the financial health of the Retirement Plan Trust on an ongoing basis by reviewing changes in the demographics of the Plan's participants, investment outlook, and refinement of actuarial methods used to determine the value of assets and costs. USI of Columbus Ohio serves as actuary to the Board.

Synod's Committee on Investment oversees the ARP Retirement Plan Trust portfolio. Alex.Brown Institutional Consulting manages the retirement plan assets. Truist Bank of Atlanta serves as Trustee and Custodian of the Plan assets. The Board works closely with the Committee on Investment concerning portfolio performance and setting target rates of return on investments. The Chairman of the Board of Benefits Retirement Committee serves as an advisory member of the Committee on Investment.

	Jan 1 2023	Jan 1 2024
Actuarial Value of Assets	\$51,600,000	\$47,800,000
Actuarial Liability	\$51,500,000	\$49,400,000
(Unfunded) Actuarial Liability ("UAL")	\$100,000	(\$ 1,600,000)
Percentage Funded	100.1%	96.8%
Market Value of Assets	\$43,000,000	\$44,900,000
UAL Funded % on Market Value of Assets Basis	83.6%	91.0%
Participants	227	220
Beneficiaries	45	45
Total	272	265

Key Actuarial Assumptions	Jan 1 2023	Jan 1 2024
Valuation Interest Rate	5.25%	5.25%
Mortality	PRI-2012 /MP-2021	PRI-2012 /MP-2021
Funding Method	Pure Unit Credit	Pure Unit Credit
Asset Smoothing Period	4-years	4-years
Amortization Period for Gains/Losses	15 years	15 years

With the freezing of the plan in 2021, the assumptions were adjusted for the remaining population and the asset smoothing was reset.

The UAL recognizes the volatility of the markets and spreads asset gains and losses over 4 years.

The 2023 versus 2022 decline in assets is attributable to the significant market decline in 2022. As noted previously, this is spread over four years for the actuarial assets and through this also impacts the 2024 valuation. The Retirement Trust has exceeded the actuarial valuation rate of 5.25% for the 5-, 7-, 10- and 15-year periods.

The plan remains at risk for the impact of market changes.

Retirement and Disability Housing Allowance Resolution

The Board of Benefits updated the Retirement and Disability Housing Allowance Resolution to cover both the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Plan (Defined Benefit) and the ARPC 403(b) plan. This resolution can be found on the ARP church website under Resources\Ministers Benefits\Annual Housing Allowance.

Financial Review

Suggs Johnson, LLC of Columbia, South Carolina, an independent certified public accounting firm, conducts the formal review and agreed upon procedures of the Plan. The financial activities of the Board of Benefits are included in the audit of General Synod.

Ministers Opting Out of Social Security

General Synod has taken the position that there is nothing in the Standards of the Church that would support the “**religious principles test**” in the event a minister opts out of Social Security as provided for in Section 1402(e) of the Internal Revenue Code.

To opt out of Social Security a minister must file an exemption application (Form 4361) certifying that he is *“conscientiously opposed to, or because of my religious principles I am opposed to, the acceptance (for services I performed as a minister...) of any public insurance that makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age, or retirement, or that makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care.”*

A minister must base his filing on religious conscientious objection alone, not on a desire to personally invest funds that would otherwise be paid to Social Security. The deadline for filing an exemption is the due date of the federal tax return for the second year in which a minister has net earnings as a minister of \$400 or more. A minister who plans to file for exemption must inform “the ordaining...body of the church...that he is opposed” prior to the time the exemption is filed. Ministers planning to opt out of Social Security must notify the ordaining presbytery.

Applicants for exemption should be aware that the exemption is not official until the IRS has confirmed it in a written response to the individual’s application. Bi-vocational pastors should note that the exemption applies only to monies received in exchange for ministerial services; monies earned through non-ministerial employment are subject to Social Security laws.

IRS rules regarding opting out of Social Security are stringent. Infractions can result in significant retroactive financial penalties to the pastor. Therefore, the Board strongly encourages that ministers exercise great care before making such an important decision.

Role of Central Services

Central Services is responsible for the administration of the benevolence, insurance, and retirement benefits for eligible employees. Central Services receives, records, and disburses gifts for benevolent purposes, insurance premiums, and retirement contributions. Central Services provides each church with a detailed invoice for insurance premiums monthly.

Officers for 2024-2025

Chairman:	Louie Cason
Vice-Chairman:	Ed Lamb
Secretary:	Chip Smith
Treasurer:	Treasurer of Synod
Administrative Officer:	Cindy Scott, Executive Director of Central Services

Recommendations:

1. That Synod give thanks to God for his provision to fund the benevolence, insurance and retirement benefits referenced in this report. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That the Christmas Benevolent Fund Offering continue to be taken during Thanksgiving and that the churches encourage the members of each congregation to support those in need who have served the Church so well. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
3. That presbyteries direct all their churches (except Canadian Presbytery) to **offer** General Synod medical, dental and vision insurance plan or plans to all eligible employees. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
4. That presbyteries direct their churches to **enroll** and **pay** premiums for all eligible employees to participate in the life, accidental death and dismemberment, and long-term disability plans. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
5. That presbyteries direct their churches (except Canadian Presbytery) to enroll and make contributions for the minister’s retirement. (It is recommended that these contributions be made to the ARPC (403(b)) plan. However, if a church decides to secure

their own retirement plan for a minister they need to sign and return the form from Central Services acknowledging the risks and responsibilities associated with an individual church plan.) **SYNOD APPROVED.**

6. That the proposed budget for 2025 be approved. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Heppel, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located in Index 37B.

The report of the **Committee on Nominations** was presented.

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

Since the last meeting of Synod, the Committee on Nominations (CON) met by zoom on February 8, 2024 and April 3, 2024.

The following officers were elected for the Committee on Nominations 2024-2025:

Rev. G.J. Gerard, Chairman
Rev. Ike Hughes, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Brandy Glaser, Secretary

The 2025 stated meeting of the Committee on Nominations is scheduled for Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 10:00 am (EST) by zoom.

The deadline for submitting names to the Committee on Nominations (excluding Erskine) will be Friday, January 17, 2025.

The committee approved SCONE members for 2024-2025: (Joey Donahue, Clint Davis, Rob Roy McGregor III).

The Committee on Nominations, by consensus, presents to the Synod the persons listed in our report as nominees to serve on Synod's boards and committees and as officers or representatives of the General Synod. The terms of service will begin July 1, 2024, and will expire June 30 of the year indicated. All nominees have indicated a willingness to serve, if elected.

The committee expresses appreciation for those who submitted nominations, and for those who were nominated and are willing to serve.

Recommendations:

1. That those persons listed in this report be approved for service in the positions indicated. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
2. That each presbytery appoint an alternate representative to Synod's Committee on Nominations in the event that the chairman of a presbytery's committee on nominations is not able to attend Synod's committee meeting. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

3. That presbyteries consider making recommendations for service during their fall meetings. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
4. That sessions consider making recommendations for service during their November and December meetings. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
5. That recommendations for the Board of Erskine College and Seminary be made by October 31 each year. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
6. That those making Recommendations for Service to the Committee on Nominations (by mail or online) use the proper form and provide helpful information concerning qualifications for each person recommended. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
7. That various boards, committees and commissions of Synod provide both a clear and concise Needs Analysis and a Recommendation for Service form to the CON following their Fall stated meetings and that they clearly communicate their ministry and needs to pastors, sessions and presbyteries through in-person presentations, video, *Minutes of Synod* or other social media in order to educate the larger congregational church regarding opportunities to serve. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
8. That all persons resigning from Synod boards and agencies be reminded to submit their resignation request to the Principal Clerk of General Synod and the chairman of the board or committee from which they are resigning. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
9. That the General Synod authorize \$4,000.00 for committee expenses for 2024. **SYNOD APPROVED.**
10. That the Nominations Committee be empowered to fill remaining, open, unexpired terms, beyond the 2024 stated meeting of the General Synod and up until the 2025 stated meeting. **SYNOD APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted,

G.J. Gerard, Chairman

Note: All budget information is located in Index on page 114.

<i>Board/Committee/Commission</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Nominee</i>
Benefits	2030	Adam Bloom
Benefits	2030	
Benefits	2025	
Benefits	2025	
Benefits		
Benefits	PR (A)	John Shearouse
Benefits	PR (C)	Mark Miller
Benefits	PR (F)	Dan Hazen
Benefits	PR (L)	Mike Avato
Benefits	PR (G)	Ross Durham
Benefits	PR (M)	Mike Chipman
Benefits	PR (N)	Nathan Beard
Benefits	PR (S)	John Cook
Benefits	PR (T)	Philip Bunch
Benefits	PR (V)	Stephen Laughridge
Bonclarken	2030	Elise Horton
Bonclarken	2030	Bill Patrick
Bonclarken	2030	Boyce Wilson
Bonclarken	2025	Jane Shelton Dale
Brice/Sanders (Camp Joy)	2030	Joseph Michael Lunsford
Dunlap	2030	Janis Cunningham
Dunlap	2028	
Dunlap	ARPWM	Erin Ulerich
Dunlap	PR (A)	
Dunlap	PR (C)	David McCain
Dunlap	PR (F)	Joe Rolison
Dunlap	PR (L)	Trevor Raborn
Dunlap	PR (G)	John Kimmons
Dunlap	PR (M)	Diane Clowers
Dunlap	PR (N)	Peter Lee
Dunlap	PR (S)	Robby Bell
Dunlap	PR (T)	William Kidd
Dunlap	PR (V)	Andrew Groth
Erskine	2029	Patrick Malphrus
Erskine	2029	Robert Ingram
Erskine	2029	Rhonda Joy Webb
Erskine	2025	Jerry Brewer

Executive Board		Martha McKenzie
Executive Board	PR (A)	Kevin Carter
Executive Board	PR (C) 2026	Bob Elliott
Executive Board	PR (F)	Bob Cara/Ken McMullen
Executive Board	PR (L)	Matt Joyner/Kent Adrian
Executive Board	PR (G)	Randy Foster
Executive Board	PR (M)	Larry Littlejohn
Executive Board	PR (N)	GJ Gerard/Jack Van Dyk
Executive Board	PR (S)	JP Marr/Billy Barron
Executive Board	PR (T)	Seth Philbrick/James Hakim
Executive Board	PR (V)	Max Bolin
Outreach North America	2029	Warren Harvey
Outreach North America	2030	Chad Tvenstrup
Outreach North America		Gillian Brickey
Outreach North America	PR (A)	Peter Lindsay
Outreach North America	PR (C)	Sean Henderson
Outreach North America	PR (F)	Rhett Carson
Outreach North America	PR (L)	Tanner Cline
Outreach North America	PR (G)	J. Brunson
Outreach North America	PR (M)	Howard Wheeler
Outreach North America	PR (N)	Peter Kemeny
Outreach North America	PR (S)	Seth Yi
Outreach North America	PR (T)	Charlie Mangum
Outreach North America	PR (V)	Ken Bush
Stewardship	2028	
Stewardship		Brandy Glaser
Stewardship	PR (A)	Simon Oosterhof
Stewardship	PR (C)	David Lauten
Stewardship	PR (F)	Leo Markwat
Stewardship	PR (L)	Bob Johnson
Stewardship	PR (G)	Charlie King
Stewardship	PR (M)	Dan Cobb
Stewardship	PR (N)	Paul Matthews
Stewardship	PR (S)	Bill Cain
Stewardship	PR (T)	Ron Derksen
Stewardship	PR (V)	Randy Brevard

World Witness	2030	Jennie Costner
World Witness	2030	Ken Zappone
World Witness		Beth Smith
World Witness	PR (A)	Henry Bartsch/Bill McKay
World Witness	PR (C)	Sean Henderson
World Witness	PR (F)	Ken Jackson
World Witness	PR (L)	Randall Anderson
World Witness	PR (G)	Phil Williams
World Witness	PR (M)	Joey Donahue
World Witness	PR (N)	GJ Gerard
World Witness	PR (S)	David Griffin
World Witness	PR (T)	Charles Edgar
World Witness	PR (V)	Frank Heinsohn
Inter-Church	2030	Nick Robison
Inter-Church	2030	
Inter-Church	2026	Kevin Muldoon
Inter-Church	2027	
Inter-Church		
Investment	2029	Stewart Hurst
Minister & His Work	PR (A)	John Shearouse
Minister & His Work	PR (C)	Buzzy Elder
Minister & His Work	PR (C)	Jon Oliphant
Minister & His Work	PR (F)	Dan Hazen
Minister & His Work	PR (F)	Nick Napier
Minister & His Work	PR (L)	David Walkup
Minister & His Work	PR (G)	Ross Durham
Minister & His Work	PR (M)	Mike Chipman
Minister & His Work	PR (N)	Steven Badorf/Ryan Mowen
Minister & His Work	PR (S)	John Cook
Minister & His Work	PR (T)	James Brown
Minister & His Work	PR (V)	Stephen Laughridge

Nominations	PR (A)	Simon Oosterhof/Bill McKay
Nominations	PR (C)	Clint Davis/John Rogers
Nominations	PR (F)	Rob Roy McGregor III
Nominations	PR (L)	Justin Westmoreland
Nominations	PR (G)	Eric Hancox
Nominations	PR (M)	Joey Donahue
Nominations	PR (N)	G.J. Gerard
Nominations	PR (S)	Will Barron/Tony Locke
Nominations	PR (T)	Bernard Sanderson
Nominations	PR (V)	Ike Hughes
Nominations		Brandy Glaser
Revisions	PR (A)	Kevin Carter
Revisions	PR (C)	Jim Mitchell
Revisions	PR (F)	Dan Hazen
Revisions	PR (G)	Andy Webb
Revisions	PR (L)	Gilbert Moore
Revisions	PR (M)	David Dively
Revisions	PR (N)	G.J. Gerard
Revisions	PR (S)	Billy Barron
Revisions	PR (T)	Jeremiah Thomas
Revisions	PR (V)	

A motion **CARRIED**

That the final reading of the Minutes and the final roll call be waived.

Rob Roy McGregor, Jr, made a motion to adjourn and closed the meeting in prayer.

The Synod sang Psalm 133 The Song of Christian Unity.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Broyles, Moderator
Bob Elliott, Vice-Moderator
Kyle Sims, Principal Clerk
Mark Miller, Reading Clerk
Ben Glaser, Bill Clerk
Patrick Malphrus, Parliamentarian

