

[OVT-024] On Creating a General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils**Source:** Presbytery**Committee:** Unassigned**Event:** 226th General Assembly (2024)**Sponsor:** Synod of the Northeast**Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

Recommendation

On Creating a General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils

The Synod of the Northeast overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to:

1. Establish a permanent General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils, nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee in consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation, for the purpose of “approving the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e) and approving exceptions to the minimum composition of a presbytery (G-3.0301). The commission is to be constituted no later than December 31, 2024.

2. Amend the Standing Rules of the General Assembly by adding Section K1 as follows and renumbering other paragraphs of section K, or placing in the appropriate section of any revised version of the Standing Rules approved by the 226th General Assembly (2024):

K.1 The General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils has the authority to act as the General Assembly, upon request of synods and presbyteries, with the authority of the General Assembly to “approv[e] the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e), and to approve exceptions to the minimum composition of a presbytery (G-3.0301). The administrative commission shall be composed of seven members whose length of term will be 4 years with eligibility for an additional 4-year term.

Rationale

We are in a time when many presbyteries and synods are considering significant transformational changes. We are also in a time when many presbyteries and synods are considering how to handle decreased PC(USA) membership and decreased resources. Across the denomination presbyteries and synods are in the process of determining how to reconfigure presbyteries and churches to address these issues. Over the next few years this may lead to boundary changes whereby presbyteries merge or reconfigure their boundaries in various ways that require General Assembly approval.

No matter the issue, the work that it takes to discern what God is calling a presbytery or synod to do and to make a new plan that all interested parties can agree upon is significant. It can take several years to achieve this. Once the presbyteries and synod are ready to act, they need approval that is swift. For people who have been working on such a plan and ensuring that all necessary parties agree, nothing could deflate the effort and the energy more than having to wait until the next General Assembly for approval. This work creates a momentum that builds on itself. Having to wait possibly a year or more until the next General Assembly once all the pieces are in place could lead members of this work to begin to focus their energy elsewhere. Agreements

made around certain programs or sharing of resources could fall apart for lack of action. Having a permanent General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils would allow the dedicated work of presbyteries and synods to move forward in a timely fashion.

We believe that most if not all the work of such a commission could be handled via Zoom, thereby requiring no additional funds. This was the case between the 224th and 225th General Assemblies, when the General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils that was established for that period had to meet via Zoom due to Covid-19.