

Synod of Living Waters Assembly Report  
January 26-27, 2020

The evening of Sunday, January 26 synod commissioners, presbytery leaders, synod staff and leaders gathered together for refreshments and fellowship.

Monday morning the Synod Assembly gathered in the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church of Franklin, Tennessee for worship, which included the sacrament of the Lords' Supper. The new synod executive Rev. Greg Goodwiller preached.

The synod then convened in Wilson Hall for its business meeting, which included the following:

- officer and commission reports
- greetings for the PCUSA Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
- greetings from colleges and universities within the synod bounds and are Covenant Partners
- reports from synod officers
- invitation to and approval of becoming a Matthew 25 synod
- report from synod Permanent Administrative Commission on the revision of the synod's *Manual of Administrative Operations* in light of the 2019 Synod approval of the restructuring of the synod to focused function (G-3.0404, *Book of Order*)
- approval of the revision of the synod's *Manual of Administrative Operations* (See attachment for revision summary.)
- report from Executive Director of Living Waters of the World, which included the exciting news that over 1,000 water systems have been installed
- report from Synod Presbyterian Women

After lunch synod commissioners and guests met around tables to share stories of how in their congregations and presbyteries God is at work, especially through the lens of Matthew 25. Highlights from these small group conversations were shared with the whole body.

The 2020 Assembly of the Synod of Living Waters was then adjourned with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Karen Hartsfield, Synod Teaching Elder Commissioner

Ginny Shanda, Synod Ruling Elder Commissioner

## **A Summary of Changes in the Synod of Living Waters' Rules In the 2020 Proposed Revision of its *Manual of Administrative Operations***

At its 2019 Stated Meeting, the Synod of Living Waters adopted a revision of its "Standing Rules" in preparation for the transition to new synod leadership. The changes in that revision included the following:

- Introduction of the concept of a "Focused Function Synod," with the synod's mission defined as being a synod that "forms, fosters, and furthers relationships . . ."
- Election of synod officers for two year terms instead of one year terms, and adjustment of other elected offices and appointments to two-year cycles. This would make biennial synod meetings feasible, should the synod decide to meet less frequently.
- Deletion of all committees at the synod level, except for a Nominations and Representation Committee, shifting certain responsibility (primarily related to review of presbytery partnerships) to the Executive Forum and to the Permanent Administrative Commission (covenant relations and communications).
- Expansion of the Permanent Administrative Commission (PAC) from eleven to twelve members, and replacing the seats of those chairing synod committees with at large members.
- Inclusion of a brief section defining the Presbytery Executive Forum
- Reducing the Synod Executive position to part-time, in addition to a very part-time Stated Clerk position and a volunteer Treasurer.

The Transition Task Force that prepared the revision was aware that the changes needed to be further fleshed out in a Manual, and recommended the appointment of a new task force to accomplish this work.

The Manual Task Force, having reviewed a number of other synod's governing documents, determined that while the synod's governing document has historically been called its "Standing Rules," that document in fact serves as the synod's *Manual of Administrative Operations* (as required by G-3.0106 of the *Book of Order*) and contains its bylaws, and both special rules of order as well as standing rules, in addition to various policies. It was therefore decided that an entire revision of the document (including a name change) would be necessary in order to fully implement the changes adopted in the 2019 revision.

The new proposed revision contains a number of grammatical and formatting changes for ease of use and readability. Terminology and language has also been updated to conform with the *Book of Order* and our parliamentary authority. The following is a list of specific content changes in the order in which they occur in the *Manual*:

- As was historically the case, the Synod Executive, as an installed member of the synod staff, is elected for an indefinite term.
- The “Financial Administrator” is a defined member of the synod staff.
- The Stated Clerk and Treasurer’s terms have been lengthened from two years to four years.
- Details of the composition of PAC have been added – including flexibility in the number of at-large members to ensure that parity is maintained between ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders as required by the *Book of Order*.
- PAC’s structure includes four standing committees, each of which will be composed of at least four members – two of whom are PAC members. These are a Personnel Committee, a Budget and Finance Committee, a Covenant Relations Committee, and a Communications and Technology Committee. PAC may also appoint special committees as needed, composed of at least two PAC members, with other members as desired.
- The Presbytery Executive Forum section is expanded particularly with respect to its processing of requests for presbytery partnerships.
- The Living Waters for the World and Presbyterian Women sections have been re-worded and expanded in consultation with representatives of those organizations.
- A new section titled “Cultural Affinity Groups” replaces references to racial ethnic “caucuses,” using language recommended by denominational staff, to better represent our synod’s diversity and provide avenues for advocacy and inclusion.
- Appendices have been added so that the *Manual* includes all of the synod’s governing documents and adopted policy statements.