

SYNOD OF SOUTH ATLANTIC

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

1. NAME

This part of the Body of Christ shall be called the *Synod of South Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* (hereafter referred to as the Synod). It shall consist of the Presbyteries in the states of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, as established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Its duties and powers are outlined in the *Book of Order* and defined in this Manual.

2. JOURNEY AND VALUES OF THE SYNOD OF SOUTH ATLANTIC

2.1. **Journey Statement:** The Synod of South Atlantic, PC(U.S.A.) **embodies** the grace and love of Jesus Christ, **cultivates** authentic community within and across presbyteries, and **inspires** impactful ministry, developing leaders so that the Church becomes united in faith, hope, love, witness, and service.

2.2. Guiding Values:

Grace: We embody Jesus Christ's teachings by making grace the foundation of the Synod's work and interactions with others.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" - Ephesians 2:8-9

Love: We reflect Christ's love in our lives and work by listening deeply to one another and acting to build up the whole family of God.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Authenticity: We welcome the full selves of all who gather at our table, respecting one another and seeking to be open with each other, so that our relationships and interactions are sincere and true to the Christian faith.

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" - Romans 12:9

Transparency: We seek to practice openness in the systems and structures of the Synod so that nothing need be hidden from one another.

"O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you." - Psalm 69:5

Unity: We work to unite the presbyteries and their congregations in faith, hope, love, witness, and service, emphasizing the importance of togetherness and collective purpose within the Synod.

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" - Ephesians 4:3

Hope: We welcome the Spirit's presence that keeps us moving forward in hope, becoming the community God intends.

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” - Romans 12:12

Faithfulness: In our faithfulness, we reflect a commitment and devotion to seeing tomorrow today and seek to make that desired future real throughout the Synod.

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” - Hebrews 11:1

Reforming: As we are open to God’s reforming work, we develop presbytery and congregational leaders who share their faith and disciple others, using the patterns of the past to help us discern where God is guiding the church for the future.

“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, to the end of the age” - Matthew 28:19-20

3. SYNOD MEETINGS

Synod meetings shall be governed by the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* and this Manual, with meetings conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

- 3.1. **Stated Meetings.** The Synod shall meet in Stated Meeting twice each year, ordinarily via electronic meeting. The Coordinating Committee will establish a schedule of meetings and publicize it to the Synod, ordinarily one year in advance. The Synod will meet in-person at least once every two years, at a location to be determined by the Coordinating Committee.
- 3.2. **Special Meetings.** The Coordinating Committee shall call a special meeting of the Synod when it deems it necessary or when requested in writing by three Minister of Word and Sacrament commissioners and three Ruling Elder commissioners, representing three presbyteries, all of whom must have been commissioners to the most recent stated meeting of the Synod.
- 3.3. **Notice.** Notice of Synod meetings shall be sent to all commissioners, alternates, corresponding members, and presbytery staff no fewer than fourteen (14) days prior to each meeting. Materials for meetings will be available electronically no less than one week (7 days) prior to each meeting.
- 3.4. **Quorum.** The quorum for a meeting of the Synod shall be six (6) Ruling Elders and six (6) Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, representing six (6) Presbyteries of the Synod of South Atlantic.
- 3.5. **Use of Electronic Means for Meetings.** Meetings of the Synod and its entities will ordinarily be conducted by electronic means that permits all those present to hear one another and vote. Instructions for participation in the meeting shall be included with the notice of the meeting. Any necessary procedures or special rules for the electronic meeting may be defined by the Stated Clerk and included in the notice of the meeting. No action of the Synod shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of or poor quality of a commissioner’s individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.

3.6. **Minutes.** The Stated Clerk will distribute a draft of the minutes of each meeting of the Synod to all commissioners, members, and persons who are entitled to have a voice at any meeting of the Synod or its entities. Those persons will have fourteen (14) days to respond with any corrections to the draft minutes. After fourteen (14) days, the minutes will stand approved with any corrections as submitted.

3.7. **Expenses.** Expenses for commissioners shall be defrayed by the annual budget of Synod and shall be in accordance with a Synod-approved Travel Policy.

4. **SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

4.1. **Working Together.** When the Synod of South Atlantic meets, it shall consist of the commissioners elected from its constituent presbyteries and any at-large commissioners elected in accordance with this Manual. Commissioners serve as leaders of the synod. They seek and discern the will of Christ, interpret the mission and actions of the synod, and serve the needs of the denomination in the region and member presbyteries. Commissioners, in taking action as the full Synod, speak with one voice. It is expected that while not all actions will be unanimous, the decisions of the body will be respected and supported by all. One voice ensures clarity of purpose and direction.

4.2. **Embody Leaders.** Every commissioner, in their first year of service to the synod, is expected to take part in the “Embody Leaders” program. Every commissioner also serves on one of the three committees described below based upon the commissioner’s input of personal discernment, the discernment of the Embody Committee, and the needs of the Synod.

4.3. **Conflicts of Interest.** Commissioners, while offering their gifts, skills, and abilities to the work of the Synod, will avoid conflicts of interest in exercising their responsibilities, including but not limited to fiduciary responsibilities.

4.4. **Attendance.** To promote the effective conduct of business and respect the time of all involved, Commissioners are expected to attend all meetings of the Synod Assembly and their assigned committees or provide advance notice of their absence to the Stated Clerk whenever possible. The Stated Clerk may declare that a Commissioner is considered to have resigned after missing two consecutive meetings or three total meetings in a twelve-month period without providing advance notice of their absence whenever possible.

5. **COMMISSIONERS AND CORRESPONDING MEMBERS**

5.1. **Commissioners from Presbyteries.** Each presbytery shall elect two commissioners: one Minister of the Word and Sacrament and one Ruling Elder. Upon election, the stated clerk of each presbytery shall report to the Stated Clerk of the Synod the names and contact information of Synod commissioners from presbyteries by November 1 of the year prior to the year in which their term of service will begin or within seven days of election, whichever is later.

Commissioners to Synod from presbyteries shall serve terms of two (2) years, with each presbytery electing a commissioner each year, rotating between a Minister of the Word and Sacrament and a Ruling Elder. Commissioners from presbyteries may be

re-elected to full or partial terms, not exceeding three consecutive terms.

Commissioner's terms will begin on January 1st after election by their respective Presbyteries unless elected by a presbytery to fill a vacancy, when service begins upon election and is for the remainder of the unexpired term.

In the event that a commissioner from a presbytery is unable to fulfill his or her term as a Synod Commissioner, the Stated Clerk of the Synod shall notify the stated clerk of the commissioner's presbytery of the vacancy so that the presbytery may elect another commissioner to fill the unexpired term.

- 5.2. **At-Large Commissioners.** The following persons shall be at-large Synod Commissioners with voice and vote during their terms of elected service to the Synod:
- persons elected as co-chairs of Synod committees who are not commissioners from presbyteries;
 - two (2) leadership staff members of presbyteries (i.e. executive/general presbyters or stated clerks) elected to the Coordinating Committee; and,
 - the Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the Synod (see below), if not continuing in service as a commissioner from a presbytery.
- 5.3. **Corresponding Members.** The following persons shall be seated as corresponding members of the Synod with voice but not vote:
- the Synod Executive/Stated Clerk;
 - any Assistant Stated Clerk elected by the Synod;
 - the Treasurer of the Synod;
 - up to two (2) leadership staff members designated by each of the presbyteries (ordinarily the executive/general presbyter and the stated clerk);
 - one member designated by each Synod Network;
 - advisory members of Synod committees;
 - the Moderator of the Synod's Presbyterian Women; and
 - other corresponding members designated by the Coordinating Committee.

6. **OFFICERS**

- 6.1. **Moderator and Vice-Moderator.** The Moderator of the Synod shall lead the meetings of the Synod and serve as a symbol of the unity of the Church across the Synod in representing the Synod to the broader church and world, in coordination with the Synod Executive. The Vice-Moderator shall serve in the absence of the Moderator.

Each year, the Synod shall elect one of its commissioners from presbyteries to a two-year term of service, with the first year as Vice-Moderator and the second year as Moderator. Such election shall rotate between a Minister of the Word and Sacrament and a Ruling Elder.

The installation of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall occur at the conclusion of the final Stated Meeting scheduled for each calendar year. Their terms of service shall begin on January 1 following the Stated Meeting.

Synod shall budget an amount to pay the expenses of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator incurred in the discharge of official duties.

- 6.2. **Stated Clerk.** The Synod shall elect a Stated Clerk to serve for a designated term upon the appropriate committee's recommendation and may be elected to successive

terms. The duty of the Stated Clerk shall be to discharge those responsibilities described in the *Book of Order* and in the position description approved by the Synod.

6.3. Assistant Stated Clerks. The Synod may elect one or more assistant clerks for a designated term to assist the Stated Clerk. Any such clerk shall be nominated by the Stated Clerk for purposes approved by the Coordinating Committee.

7. STAFF

The Synod's staff shall consist of the Synod Executive and such other staff as Synod may authorize. The Synod's staff are responsible for resourcing the work of the Synod, particularly through its committees, and providing specialized services as may be required by the Synod.

The Coordinating Committee is responsible for providing for the assessment and supervision of the staff of the Synod on behalf of the Synod, including maintaining position descriptions, a Personnel Manual, and any other appropriate policies to govern Synod staff.

7.1. Synod Executive. The Synod Executive shall be the chief administrative officer of the Synod and is responsible for administration and coordination of the Synod and the supervision of staff. The Executive shall be elected and installed to a definite term by the Synod upon nomination by the appropriate committee and may be elected to successive terms. The Executive shall be accountable to the Synod through and evaluated by the Coordinating Committee.

7.2. Treasurer. The Synod shall elect a Treasurer to a designated term and may be elected to successive terms, all upon the nomination of the appropriate committee. The Treasurer shall be accountable to the Synod through the Synod Executive and the Inspire Committee.

7.3. Other Staff. Other staff authorized by the Synod may be employed by the Coordinating Committee upon recommendation of the Synod Executive. All staff shall be under the supervision of the Synod Executive or their designee. The work of the staff shall be reviewed and evaluated at least annually by the Synod Executive.

8. COMMITTEES

8.1. General Provisions. The Synod's committees are established to support the mission and administration of the Synod. Each committee is assigned the responsibilities outlined in its description below, including the appropriate areas where it is specifically empowered to act on behalf of the Synod.

8.1.1. Membership. Each committee consists of Synod commissioners from presbyteries and other persons elected to service in accordance with this Manual. Minimum numbers of commissioners are defined for each committee so that they may have the resources necessary to complete their work while allowing commissioners to serve where their gifts best fit and they feel most called. The Synod Executive shall be an ex officio member without vote of each committee and may designate other Synod staff members to support the work of each committee.

8.1.2. Leadership. Each committee shall have co-chairs elected by the Synod for a one-year term, renewable for up to three terms. Co-chairs will begin their term

on January 1 of each year, unless filling a vacancy. At least one co-chair shall be a Synod commissioner from a presbytery.

- 8.1.3. *Meetings.* Each committee establishes its own schedule of standing meetings and may call special meetings with three (3) days notice. The schedule of all meetings is posted on the Synod website. Committee meetings are open to any person with voice in a meeting of the Synod, as described in this Manual. A committee may move into executive session, with only voting members present, for a particular purpose of addressing personnel, legal, security, and/or property matters, upon majority vote of those voting members present, with any decisions reached recorded in the minutes and made public as soon as possible following the end of the closed meeting.
- 8.1.4. *Quorum.* The quorum for any committee of the Synod is a majority of the voting membership of the committee.
- 8.1.5. *Subcommittees.* Each committee may establish subcommittees to support its work. Such subcommittees may include persons who are not elected members of the committee.
- 8.1.6. *Advisory Members.* Each committee may select advisory members to participate in the committee's discernment and work for up to one year renewable and report them to the Synod. Advisory members are members of the PCUSA within the bounds of the Synod and have voice only on committees and at Synod meetings.
- 8.1.7. *Minutes and Records.* Minutes and other records of committees are maintained by the Stated Clerk or their designee.

8.2. Embody Committee

As they embody the grace and love of Jesus Christ, the Embodiers on the Embody Committee help people find their place in the Synod, focusing on the practical and relational work of leadership, representation, and service in the Synod. It shall consist of at least six (6) synod commissioners from presbyteries and up to three (3) advisory members.

The Embody Committee shall:

- a. Work with staff to orient commissioners to the Synod.
- b. On behalf of the Synod, appoint commissioners to standing Synod committees and commissions based on their interest in particular service and attention to unity in diversity.
- c. Prepare nominations for persons to be elected to other service in the Synod.
- d. Serve as the Committee on Representation for the Synod, in accordance with G-3.0103, reviewing the composition of all Synod entities and making recommendations for the Synod to more deeply embody its unity in diversity.
- e. On behalf of the Synod, administer the Embody Leaders program to provide leadership training for Synod Commissioners and others.
- f. Encourage presbyteries to work together to develop leaders to serve in specialized roles (i.e. CREs, presbytery leaders).
- g. Provide space for ecumenical relationships with appropriate partners.

- h. On behalf of the Synod, maintain policies required by the Book of Order.

8.3. Cultivate Committee

The Cultivators on the Cultivate Committee prepare, develop, and support space for authentic communities to prosper and grow within and across presbyteries. It shall consist of at least ten (10) synod commissioners from presbyteries and up to five (5) advisory members.

The Cultivate Committee shall:

- a. Cultivate the formation and growth of Synod Networks, which are open, collaborative groups, centered on a shared interest, purpose, mission, or ministry, that build relationships and connections across the Synod, in accordance with the definitions outlined in this Manual.
- b. On behalf of the Synod, administer a process to give appropriate standing and provide seed money to Synod Networks.
- c. Identify resources in presbyteries and around the Synod to assist in cultivating Synod Networks.
- d. Provide space for having authentic, open, honest, candid, and courageous conversations.
- e. Receive and evaluate Synod Ministry Partner proposals and submit them to the Synod for approval.
- f. Ensure Synod Ministry Partners agree to and affirm the Synod Ministry Partner Covenant.
- g. Connect Synod Ministry Partners and Synod Networks to other ministries of the Synod.

8.4. Inspire Committee

The Inspirers on the Inspire Committee seek to discern the unfolding will of God. They use the resources God provides to develop and support impactful ministry within the Synod. It shall consist of at least six (6) synod commissioners from presbyteries and up to three (3) advisory members.

The Inspire Committee shall:

- a. Encourage, support, and develop good fiscal grantsmanship and scholarship practices.
- b. Align the budget and stewardship efforts with the Synod's journey statement and values.
- c. Promote awareness of opportunities and resources to support the work of inspiring and leading others in faith, hope, love, service, and witness.
- d. On behalf of the Synod, administer a process for awarding grants and scholarships.

8.5. Coordinating Committee

The Coordinators on the Coordinating Committee provide a place for the entities of the Synod to share and align their work so that all may be empowered for their purposes and further the journey of the Synod.

The Coordinating Committee is composed of the following persons:

- the Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the Synod;
- the two (2) co-chairs of the Embody, Cultivate, and Inspire Committees; and
- two (2) leadership staff members of presbyteries (i.e. executive/general presbyters or stated clerks).

The Coordinating Committee shall:

- a. Share information about the work of committees of the Synod to encourage coordination across entities.
- b. Make recommendations to the Synod to support missional alignment across its entities.
- c. Annually assess the Synod's work towards its common journey, making recommendations to the Synod as necessary to encourage continued development of common language and deepened purpose.
- d. Plan meetings of the Synod, including calling special meetings as appropriate.
- e. On behalf of the Synod, provide for the assessment and supervision of Synod staff and other related responsibilities specified in this Manual.
- f. On behalf of the Synod, authorize the celebration of the sacraments at meetings of the Synod, its entities, and other events and gatherings under the Synod's jurisdiction.

8.6. SYNOD PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION

The purpose of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission is to consider and decide Synod judicial matters in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*.

The Synod Permanent Judicial Commission shall:

- a. Have a membership nominated by presbyteries and elected by Synod.
- b. Have up to sixteen (16) members, one from each presbytery, balanced between Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders in accordance with the Book of Order, each elected to a six-year term.
- c. Elect from its members such officers as it may determine.

9. SYNOD NETWORKS

Synod Networks are open, collaborative groups, centered around a shared interest, purpose, mission, or ministry, building relationships and connections across the Synod. Networks are organized by people and/or ministries that come from multiple presbyteries. They may form for various lengths of time to accomplish their purposes.

Synod Networks are approved by the Cultivate Committee. A designated person from each approved Synod Network may have voice in the deliberations of the Synod. Participants in Synod Networks are invited to offer themselves for service in the Synod.

10. SYNOD MINISTRY PARTNERS

Synod Ministry Partners are independent organizations that have entered into a relationship with the Synod of South Atlantic by adopting a standardized covenant. (PCUSA entities directly above and below the Synod are already in relationship with the Synod and are not considered ministry partners.)

Synod Ministry Partners are approved by the Synod upon recommendation of the Cultivate Committee.

11. BUDGET AND FINANCE

- 11.1. *Processing of Contributions.* Per Capita and Mission Contributions from Presbyteries are ordinarily retained in a board designated fund to be applied to the budget for the following year. Unless otherwise specified, all gifts received (undesignated, designated as general mission or other), other than Presbytery per capita and/or mission support, will be applied to income during the year in which they were received.
- 11.2. *Budget.* The Inspire Committee will ordinarily present a budget based on projected income to the full assembly at the fall meeting. At the winter/spring meeting any necessary adjustments, based on the total received the previous year, will be proposed for approval by the assembly.
- 11.3. *Financial Review.* The synod will conduct an annual, professional, external financial review, in accordance with the provisions of G-3.0113.
- 11.4. *Grant Requirements.* Synod grants shall be disbursed only to organizations that conduct annual financial reviews or formal audits. The synod may require copies of these financial reviews or audits.
- 11.5. *Scholarship Requirements.* All scholarships are ordinarily paid directly to the event or institution.
- 11.6. *Financial Reports.* The synod will provide complete and accurate reporting to include budget and financial statements for the synod, as well as those ministries for which the synod provides legal/financial oversight, reflecting all restricted and unrestricted funds, at each Stated Meeting and to the Inspire Committee at least quarterly. Other persons and entities may request such information through the Synod Executive and/or Inspire Committee.

12. INVESTIGATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Upon proper notification and/or request, the Stated Clerk, in consultation with the Moderator, shall appoint a committee for the purposes of special administrative review (G-3.0108b) or investigation under reference (D-7.0401). The creation of such committee shall be reported to the next regular meeting of the Synod or a special meeting called for that purpose, with all directed response (G-3.0108c) to be approved by the Synod.

13. EXCEPTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 13.1. *Suspension of the Manual.* Any provision of this Manual, except those related to amendments of the Manual, may be temporarily suspended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Synod.

- 13.2. *Amendments to the Manual.* Recommendations for proposed amendments to this Manual or the Bylaws of the Synod shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk and transmitted to the Coordinating Committee for their review and recommendation. Following review by the Coordinating Committee, the proposed amendment shall be included in the materials for the Synod meeting where the changes will be considered. A three-fourths majority vote of the Synod is required for adoption.

Approved by Synod Assembly, November 16, 2024

Revised by Synod Assembly, October 20, 2025