

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recommends the following action for consideration by the 225th General Assembly (2022):

1. Continue a General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils, to serve until the convening of the 226th General Assembly (2024), with the authority to act as the General Assembly by “approving the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e), and to approve mid council name changes, when the synods and presbyteries involved have approved the actions, with the exception of matters related to new non-geographical presbyteries. The [Co-]Moderator[s] of the 225th General Assembly (2022) would have the option of reappointing some or all members of the Administrative Commission that has been serving, filling any vacancies, or appointing a new group to serve until the 226th General Assembly (2024).
2. Direct the Office of the General Assembly, in consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation, consult with mid councils to explore whether such an administrative commission should be made permanent, and report to the 226th General Assembly (2024) with a proposal to implement that change if warranted.

Rationale: The 224th General Assembly (2020) authorized the formation of an Administrative Commission on Mid Councils in response to an overture from the Synod of the Northeast, which was nearing the conclusion of a lengthy process of reorganizing the presbyteries in New Jersey but was not ready for action to be taken by summer 2020. The Administrative Commission was able to consider and approve that reorganization when the proposal was ready, allowing the presbyteries to move on with their mission without waiting for action by the 225th General Assembly (2022). The Administrative Commission also approved several other actions that were submitted to the 224th General Assembly (2020) but could not be considered due to the special circumstances forced by the pandemic.

Other conversations about changes in presbytery boundaries and names are still happening across the church and will likely continue. An administrative commission with the power of the General Assembly to approve actions that all parties have agreed are beneficial would allow a nimble response not tied to a meeting that happens only every two years. It would also save the time of the full General Assembly. The creation of a new non-geographic presbytery would be the exception, as that should be a decision of the fully representative body. In the meantime, the Office of the General Assembly, in consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation, can explore whether and how such an administrative commission should become a permanent part of our structure.