

MEMORANDUM
April 14, 2020

TO: Rev. Barbara Gaddis, Rev. Stephanie Anthony, Committee on the Office of the General Assembly
FROM: Rev. Larryetta Ellis, Elder Marco Grimaldo and the Moving Forward Implementation Commission
CC: Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Vision 2020, Special Committee on Financial Sustainability and Per Capita
RE: Moving Forward Implementation Commission (MFIC) and the 224th Assembly.

Greetings Friends and Colleagues serving on the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

As the Moving Forward Implementation Commission has continued to meet, we have been lifting each of you up in prayer as you navigate this trying time, not just in your personal lives and contexts but also as you work to faithfully lead the denomination, particularly the upcoming 224th General Assembly.

We have been following your work and deliberation from a distance and have begun processing what a potential change to the assembly means for us and our work. One of the most realistic options, an abbreviated assembly with only “Essential” business considered, has sparked conversation among the members of the Commission.

We’re grateful for the attention you are giving to the short-term needs given the crisis at hand. It’s essential that you stay focused on setting realizable goals for the next several months. We want to support your efforts by leaning into our mandate which has as its primary focus the long term organizational health of our church.

We do have some concerns. We are worried that to simply stop our work or push it out two years would significantly slow or stop meaningful momentum that the past two assemblies have sensed, acted on, and empowered us to move forward. Given that our Commission has invested two years in this work, and many of us have been a part of prior commissions and review committees, we would like to put our significant institutional knowledge and experience to work in this in-between time.

Previous assemblies have crafted our mandates because they have heard the need to address ongoing issues for the sake of denominational staff and officers, they have seen the importance of this work, and they have structured our Commission to best draw on our understandings of the past, present, and hoped-for future of our denomination and its agencies and entities. Although the present crisis presents great urgency, our work will be all the more timely and relevant as the denomination and its agencies face the challenge and the opportunity of institutional rebuilding after the crisis subsides.

It is this understanding that leads us to believe that if our report will not be heard and addressed by the 224th General Assembly, our commission should be extended so that the work within our mandate can continue to be shepherded until the 225th General Assembly takes it up.

The church has a unique opportunity to take advantage of this time to more deeply engage the vision and mandate already given to us by the General Assembly. In addition, the supportive relationships we

have built can continue as the Agencies determine how to move in a post-coronavirus era. We believe our ongoing work would include the following.

- Carry forward the issues and realities that the Way Forward Commission, All-Agency Review Committee, Moving Forward Implementation Commission, and Vision 2020 Committee have all identified and addressed
- Continue the work of the Special Committee on Financial Sustainability and Per Capita and continue that work which is pressing and requires timely action, particularly as the denomination will likely be facing new financial realities in the face of the current COVID-19 crisis
- Continue to support the work of transitioning to the new A-Corp structure and fulfill the interim mandate which included repeated reviews of this function (something for which we had proposed a permanent solution in our report)
- Continue to engage, support, and lift-up the work of the Diverse Voices Table and other diversity/equity issues, including Global Language (Translation) Services
- Assist Agencies and their governing bodies as they reflect, strategize, and move into the future as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, by serving as a sounding board and adding bandwidth to a system that will be addressing this crisis on the national, regional, and local levels.

Logistically speaking, we believe it is possible to do all or most of this work virtually. Because of the nature of the work we would be doing, it might be worth considering a small budget to meet two times in-person as a full commission and 3-5 sub-group meetings. Regarding membership, our recommendation would be that no current commission member would be required to continue and that all open seats be made at-large with a strong consideration given to members of the Special Committee on Per Capita and Financial Sustainability to fill those seats. Because of our two years working together, we would be able to hit our stride quickly as soon as the assembly is complete. Our knowledge, experience, and trusted relationships across the denomination have already been established.

Our hope and our goal would be to continue to help the agencies as we transition to a new future in an uncertain time. While our work doesn't directly relate to crisis response, our work is deeply connected to the life and future of the church as articulated and laid out in the vision of our mandate and previous bodies mandates and action. There is a lot at stake as the Presbyterian Church (USA) and indeed all of us make decisions that will impact how we work, live, and minister together for many years to come.

We give thanks to God for your ministry in the Presbyterian Church and we pray that we on MFIC can continue to be of service. May all we do be to the glory of God.

In peace,

Rev. Larryetta Ellis and Elder Marco A. Grimaldo

