



Whitewater Valley
— PRESBYTERY —

RESOURCES FOR PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONERS

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This is for any Presbytery Commissioner who wants to take a deep dive into what we do and how we do it.

It is not a policy manual or a rule book. This resource includes a summary of terms for quick reference to help Presbytery commissioners along with some theology and history for background on our rich legacy.



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INTRODUCTION

Dear friends and colleagues in ministry,

Our Presbytery Moderator, Ruling Elder Ron Snow, proposed this resource particularly to assist Ruling Elder Commissioners to be effective participants in the work of the Presbytery and to provide good support for our work together.

This isn't a policy manual, or new guidelines. It is a compilation of various references and resources. These come from a variety of sources. It can be used for commissioner training or church officers' training and even membership classes.

I am reminded that we are in part what others have taught us and what we have discovered for ourselves along the way so this is a working document. Please share your feedback, so we can continue to learn together and provide useful information to assist your leadership and ministry.

The *Book of Order*, our Presbytery Administrative Manual, and *Robert's Rules* prevail when it comes to questions of process and procedure, but as always, our Lord Jesus Christ, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of Scripture are our final authorities.

Stated Clerk,
Whitewater Valley Presbytery

QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

From time-to-time abbreviations and terms will be peppered throughout the assembly and in our communications. The following is a quick primer on *Presby-speak*. If you have questions about any of these terms or the way they fit into the larger picture of the life of the church, feel free to ask the Moderator, Stated Clerk, or Lead Presbyter.

A

- **Assembly** – Meetings of the Presbytery are often called an Assembly. Meetings of the national council of the PC(USA) are called General Assembly.

B

- **Board of Pensions**- The General Assembly agency charged with overseeing the benefits plans for pastors and other church employees.
 - **Book of Order** – Our denominational constitution, established by the General Assembly, our highest council of the church. It is Part II of our Constitution. Part I is the *Book of Confessions* that is comprised of the creeds and confessions affirmed by the church. *The Book of Order* has four sections: Foundations of Church Polity, Form of Government, Worship Directory, and Church Discipline. Citations are listed by letter (F, G, W, or D) and reference numbers indicating the chapter and paragraph (G-3.0301 is in on Composition and Responsibilities of the Presbytery). A free pdf download can be found here: [3 Large Print Cover and BoO Complete with links.pdf](#)

C

- **Candidate**- A person in the ordination process preparing, in partnership with their session and the presbytery, for the ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament.
- **COM**- The Commission on Ministry provides oversight and advocacy for congregations and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It receives Ministers of the Word and Sacrament from other presbyteries, approves and dissolves calls for pastoral services, oversees congregations without pastors, dismisses Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to other presbyteries, determines the criteria for validating ministries beyond the local congregation, and oversees Commissioned Ruling Elders serving congregations.
- **Commissioner**- Each congregation is allotted a set number of ruling elders who can vote on matters before Presbytery. The number of commissioners is based on congregation size and may be adjusted each year. Commissioners are assigned by their session. Together with all the minister members, and some committee/commission members, Commissioners are the voting body at each assembly of the Presbytery.

QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

- **Consent Agenda-** Routine business, referred to Presbytery by committees and isn't anticipated to require any discussion, can be approved by a single action of Presbytery. Questions about these items are in order and any Commissioner may request that an item be removed from the Consent agenda to be discussed and considered separately.
- **Council-** (1) In the context of Presbyterian polity and governance, a council is a governing body of the church. The councils of the PC(USA) are the session, the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly (2) **Coordinating Council** of the Presbytery acts as a commission elected by the Presbytery to act on behalf Presbytery on routine matters between stated assembly meetings. It coordinates the ministries of the presbytery and proposes the docket for presbytery meetings.
- **CPM-** The Commission on Preparation for Ministry oversees the process of preparation of persons who desire to be ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Each Inquirer (first phase) or Candidate (latter phase) is "under care" of a congregation where they hold membership.

E

- **Executive** - A staff person, known in this Presbytery as Lead Presbyter, called to shepherd the ministries, churches, and members of the presbytery, serving as a pastoral leader and head of staff. Our Lead Presbyter is the Rev. Dr. Erin McGee, who serves as a full-time staff person.

G

- **GA-** The General Assembly of the PC(USA) is the highest council of the church. It meets in even numbered years. The 2026 meeting will be held June 23 to July 2, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

H

- **HR-** Honorably Retired is a designation for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament retired from active service to the church who remain in good standing with the PC(USA).

I

- **Inquirer-** A person in the initial phase of the process of preparation for ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- **Interim Pastor-** A minister in a contracted, short-term, transitional position, with specialized training, engaged by the session to assist a congregation working toward calling a new pastor (see Transitional Pastor).

QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

L

- **Lead Presbyter** – The Lead Presbyter is the staff person called by Presbytery to shepherd the ministries, churches, and members of the presbytery, serving as a pastoral leader and head of staff. Our Lead Presbyter is the Rev. Dr. Erin McGee, who serves as a full-time staff person. (see Executive)

M

- **MDP**- A Ministry Discernment Profile is the standardized format for advertising vacancies in pastoral positions and other ministries through the online PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection.
- **Minister of the Word and Sacrament** is an ordained Presbyterian minister, sometimes called a Teaching Elder. They are members of the Presbytery with a vote and may be actively serving or retired.
- **Moderator**- The Moderator is the person elected to manage and moderate the meetings of Presbytery. It is an unpaid, elected position and may be held by Ruling Elders or Ministers. The pastor of a local congregation ordinarily serves as the moderator of session. Congregations with pastoral vacancies have temporary moderators appointed by the Commission on Ministry.

N

- **NCD/ NWC** New Church Development or New Worshiping Community are new ministries of the Presbytery engaged in a formal process to work toward establishing a new congregation or ministry context.

O

- **Ords/Ordination Exams**- Candidates seeking to become Ministers of Word and Sacrament must complete educational requirements and pass a set of exams as prerequisites to ordination.
- **Overture** – One Council's formal recommendation or motion for consideration by another council. The mechanism used by Presbyteries to request an action by the General Assembly.

P

- **PDA**- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is an agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA). PDA assists communities coping with natural and human-caused disasters.

QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

- **PNC-** Pastor Nominating Committee is a search committee elected by a congregation to seek, interview, and recommend a new pastor.
- **Presbyter-** A member of or commissioner to Presbytery, often used interchangeably with Commissioner. (See Commissioner)

R

- **RE/Ruling Elder-** Ruling Elder is a member of a congregation who has been elected by the congregation, and ordained and installed by the session to serve on the session of a congregation. Ruling elders are eligible for election as commissioners to presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Once ordained as a ruling elder one maintains that office whether actively serving on a session or not.
- **Robert's Rules of Order** – A widely used manual of [parliamentary procedures](#), which we use to govern and order our meetings and processes, together with our Book of Order.

S

- **Stated Clerk-** Stated Clerk is the administrative officer elected by the presbytery to support its work, maintain the official records and provide extracts when asked, assist with preparation for presbytery meetings, and answer questions about the records, Presbyterian polity, policies, procedures, and history. Our Stated Clerk is Rev. Terry Epling, serving as a part-time staff person.
- **Synod of Lincoln Trails-** Synod is the governing body (council) made up of multiple presbyteries in a region. It coordinates the work of the PC(USA) in that region.
- **Transitional Pastor-** A pastor in a temporary or interim role who has received specialized training to assist churches during a pastoral transition.
- **Teaching Elder-** Minister of Word and Sacrament

V

- **Validated Ministries-** Positions recognized as ministry by the presbytery such as Chaplains, Professors, not for profit Executive Directors, Pastoral Counselors, and other such ministries, excluding pastors of congregations.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR MEETINGS

Parliamentary procedure enables the presbytery to be an efficient, fair deliberative assembly, to seek the will of God and to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. Process is never an end in itself but ensures that the will of the majority to govern prevails while the rights of the minority to be heard are protected. Parliamentary principles balance individual rights to dissent with the will of the majority.

It takes seriously the following rights of individuals: (1) the right to know (due notice); (2) the right to speak (rules of debate); (3) the right to vote (membership); (4) the right to hold office (fair representation).

The Moderator represents the unity of the body. The Moderator preserves decorum and protects the rights listed above. Parliamentary procedure allows discussion of a subject only when a motion about that subject has been made. To speak during the meeting, first go to a floor microphone. When recognized by the Moderator, state your name, church, and status (such as Ruling Elder). You may speak to a pending motion or ask a question. The person making a motion will have first opportunity to speak to the motion. Only motions coming from individuals need a second. A motion made on behalf of a committee already has a second: the majority vote of the committee. Only commissioners may speak and vote on motions (Minister of Word and Sacrament /members of the Presbytery; Ruling Elders elected by their Session; and, members of the Coordinating Council).

It is advisable to speak only once on a subject, but you may seek to speak a second time only after everyone who wishes to speak has spoken. All remarks during debate shall be addressed to the Moderator. Questions seeking information from a person who has the floor shall be addressed to the Moderator. Speeches addressed to an individual or the whole presbytery are not permitted during debate. If not on the docket, reading reports or documents out loud requires the permission of the body. In debate, remarks shall be confined to the pending motion. Remarks shall not disparage another commissioner or that person's motives.

To end debate, a commissioner must go to a microphone and, when recognized by the Moderator, state: "I move (or *call*) the previous question." If you plan to offer a substitute motion or amendment, you should give the Moderator and Stated Clerk a written copy in advance. Not only will this help these officers facilitate the work of presbytery, they may also be able to help you with suggestions as to how and when it would be appropriate to make a motion. The Stated Clerk and the Moderator are available to advise commissioners on the wording of any motion so that it can clearly express the concerns of the commissioner. When in doubt, ask. Your contribution to the process is important!

OUR MEETING SCHEDULE FOR PRESBYTERY

When does Presbytery meet?

The Presbytery has three stated meetings annually. The schedule of upcoming meetings is as follows: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis; Saturday, February 28, 2026; Wednesday, June 3, 2026; and Wednesday, October 29, 2026. The locations of meetings in 2026 have not yet been determined.

What topics will the meeting address?

The Presbytery gathers to worship, hear reports and decide business from its committees, task forces, congregations, and Council. The meeting docket, which includes the agenda and supporting documents will be distributed electronically to those registered and will be posted on the website before the meeting.

OUR PRESBYTERY STAFF, COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE CHAIRPERSONS

STAFF



Lead Presbyter

Rev. Dr. Erin McGee

(317) 923-3681

Work Week: Sunday - Thursday



Stated Clerk

Rev. Terry Epling

Works Remotely

(314) 402-7929



Administrative Assistant

Dawn West

(317) 923-3681

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday

Remote Hours: Friday



Finance Consultant

Eric Herzog

(317) 923-3681

Office Hours: Wednesday & Thursday

OUR PRESBYTERY STAFF, COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE CHAIRPERSONS
LEADERS: MODERATOR



Presbytery Moderator

Elder Ron Snow

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Co-Moderators, Rev. Ruth Moore, Rev. Gracie Payne

COMMISSION ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Moderator, Rev. Rex Espiritu

COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION

Moderator, Rev. Gretchen Schneider

COORDINATING COUNCIL COMMISSION

Moderator, Rev. Elizabeth Kaznak-Hall

RULING ELDER COMMISSIONER NUMBERS, BY CHURCH

Location	Church Name	Commissioners
Elwood	First	1
Brookville	Mount Carmel	1
Knightstown	Bethel	1
Tipton	First	1
Lewisville	First	1
Winchester	Winchester	1
Edinburg	Edinburgh	1
Greensburg	Kingston	1
Fort Wayne	United Faith	1
Clayton	Clayton	1
Jonesboro	First of Grant County	1
Connersville	First	1
McCordsville	Christ	1
Greensburg	Springhill	1
Westfield	CrossRoads	1
Hartford City	First	1
Fort Wayne	Grace	1
Indianapolis	Fairview	1
Rushville	Trinity	1
Greensburg	First	1
Rushville	First	1
Avon	White Lick	1
Richmond	First	1
Greenwood	Greenwood	1
Portland	First	1
Indianapolis	Southminster	2
Shelbyville	First	2
Anderson	First	2
Boggstown	Boggstown	2
Franklin	First	2
Muncie	St Andrew	2
New Castle	First	2
Indianapolis	John Knox	2
Indianapolis	Faith	2
Indianapolis	First Meridian Heights	2
Bluffton	First	2
Indianapolis	Witherspoon	2
Indianapolis	Korean Ch/Indianapolis	2
Muncie	First	3
Noblesville	First	3
Fishers	New Hope	3
Indianapolis	Irvington	4
Indianapolis	Orchard Park	5
Fort Wayne	First	5
Indianapolis	Northminster	5
Indianapolis	Tabernacle	6
Zionsville	Zionsville	7
Indianapolis	Second	8
Total Commissioners		100

Additionally, voice and vote is granted to Ruling Elders who are members of Coordinating Council or moderators of Presbytery standing committees and commissions.

BEING A RULING ELDER

Presbuteros, the Greek word meaning *elder*, is used 72 times in the New Testament. It provides the name for the Presbyterian family of churches, which are included in the Reformed family of churches of the world. Not all Reformed Churches are Presbyterian. *Reformed* refers to our theology. *Presbyterian* refers to our form of government.

Presbyterians trace our history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Our heritage, and much of what we believe, began with the French lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of Reformed thinking.

Calvin did much of his writing from Geneva, Switzerland. From there, the Reformed movement spread to other parts of Europe and the British Isles. Many of the early Presbyterians in America came from England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Scottish reformer, John Knox (c. 1514-1572) was very influential in the formation of Presbyterian identity in America.

The first American Presbytery was organized at Philadelphia in 1706. The first General Assembly was held in the same city in 1789. The first Assembly was convened by the Rev. John Witherspoon, the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Today's Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was organized by the 1983 reunion of the two main branches of Presbyterians in America, separated since the Civil War: the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The latter had been created by the union of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1958.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is distinctly a confessional and a connectional church, distinguished by the representation of ruling elders, men and women, in its government. The denomination had a membership of 1,094,733 at the end of 2023, and 17,978 ministers (including retired), and 8,572 congregations in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

BEING A RULING ELDER

Ruling Elder

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. (*Book of Order*, G-2.0301)

RULING ELDER WEBPAGE

A variety of training materials for Ruling Elders are located at the website www.pcusa.org/rulingelders. The site offers lists and links to current trainings, books, videos, and other materials that may be of interest to Ruling Elders and the Teaching Elders who serve with them.

Ruling Elders are elected by congregations as "persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit" (G-2.0301).

CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

A major contributor to Reformed theology was John Calvin, who converted from Roman Catholicism after training for the priesthood and in the law in France. In exile in Geneva, Switzerland, Calvin developed the *presbyterian* pattern of church government, which vests governing authority primarily in elected persons known as ruling elders.

Ruling Elders are elected by the congregation. The body of elders elected to govern a particular congregation is called a *Session*. Together with pastors, ordained as teaching elders/Ministers of Word and Sacrament, they exercise leadership, government, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a particular church as well as the church at large.

Elders are elected by the congregation and their primary charge is to seek the will of Christ and to be led by the Scriptures as they govern. Presbyterian elders are *examined* and *ordained* by the Session. Through ordination they are officially set apart for their particular service. They retain their ordination beyond their term of service on the Session.

The Session is the smallest, most local governing body. The other governing bodies are Presbyteries, which are composed of multiple churches in a region (ours is Whitewater Presbytery); Synods, which are composed of several presbyteries; and the General Assembly, which represents the entire denomination. Ruling and Teaching Elders are elected to serve as commissioners to higher governing councils.

In addition to Elders and Ministers, there is a third ordained office in the church, the role of *Deacons*. Deacon ministry focuses on connectional and compassionate service in the church and is not focused on the governance of the church. Like Elders, Deacons retain their ordination beyond their term in office.

CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

Theology is a way of thinking about God and the world. Reformed theology evolved during the 16th century religious movement known as the Protestant Reformation. The focus of the Reformation was to change the church and the practice of faith. Reformed theology emphasizes God's sovereignty that draws us into faith, and the Bible as is the final authority to guide our lives as followers of Jesus. Our Creeds and Confessions are considered reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, but these historic statements of faith do not replace the authority of Scripture.

Central to the Reformed tradition is the affirmation of the providence of God who creates and redeems the world through sovereign love and grace.

Presbyterians share many beliefs with other Christians, including:

- *The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit*: One God who is our creator and redeemer.
- *The Incarnation of Jesus Christ*: God redeemed humankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is fully human and fully divine.

Presbyterians also share beliefs with other Protestants, including:

- *Justification by Grace through Faith*: We are not able to fulfill God's law and we are not righteous or just in God's eyes. But through God's love and the gift of irresistible grace through Jesus Christ, God draws us to faith and to accept our free gift of salvation.
- *Authority of Scripture*: The Bible is, by the Holy Spirit, the inspired revelation of God's good news of salvation and a reliable, authoritative resource for believers who desire to live in gratitude and obedience to God.

Presbyterians share beliefs with other Reformed Christians, including:

- *God is Sovereign*: God is the source of all power and good.
- *Election of God's people for service and salvation*: Obedience and service is a way of showing our gratitude to God for choosing us. We don't earn our gift of salvation through service.
- *God's Covenant with chosen people*: God calls people into relationship..." I will be your God and you will be my people."
- *Faithful Stewardship*: All things are created by and belong to God and should be shared freely for God's purposes.
- *Human depravity of sin, idolatry and tyranny*. All people are captive to sin, broken and require a savior.
- *Transformation*: The mission of God's people is to respond to God's love and grace in gratitude by seeking justice and living in obedience to God to transform ourselves and the world.

CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

The PC(USA) has adopted these creeds and confessions of the church as providing helpful interpretation of Scripture in the Reformed tradition and accordingly, providing instruction for our life of faith together. These can be found in our *Book of Confessions*.

Date: 4th Century

Name: **The Nicene Creed**

Occasion: The Emperor Constantine, having made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, wanted doctrinal agreement to strengthen the power of the church as a cohesive element for the empire.

Key Issues: This short creed is concerned with the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity.

Date: 5th Century

Name: **The Apostles' Creed**

Occasion: This creed is based on a baptismal creed used in Rome from the end of the second century, and reflects doctrines from at least by the end of the first century. It was affirmed by those seeking membership in the church through baptism.

Key Issues: A brief general statement of Christian belief based on Trinitarian outline.

Date: 1560

Name: **The Scots' Confession**

Occasion: This creed was written in the crucial and confusing time when Presbyterians asserted their faith and held their first General Assembly in Scotland. Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic, ruled the land while Elizabeth of England gave support to the Scottish Protestants. John Knox had just returned from exile in Geneva and was a major contributor to the confession.

Key Issues: The Presbyterian Church in Scotland held to the Apostles' Creed but devised this confession as a fuller explanation of the church's belief. It sought to clarify points which it felt the Roman Catholic Church had obscured or confused.

Date: 1563

Name: **The Heidelberg Catechism**

Occasion: The area around Heidelberg, Germany, had both Lutheran and Reformed influences, as well as a considerable Catholic population. Frederick III ordered the writing of this catechism in order to have a definite doctrinal statement to settle the unrest in his kingdom. The two men he asked to write this statement had been influenced by the Swiss Reformation, and they produced a strong Reformation confession.

Key Issues: The catechism is divided into three sections: "Of Human Misery," "Of Human Redemption," and "Thankfulness."

CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

Date: 1566
Name: **The Second Helvetic Confession**
Occasion: The Heidelberg Catechism, with its strong Reformed emphasis, increased theological tension. Frederick III found it necessary to justify that statement. He asked Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's son-in-law and successor, to provide him with an exposition of the faith. Bullinger sent him this statement, which had been written five years earlier as a personal confession. It was also ratified by the Reformed Church in Switzerland.
Key Issues: This rather long statement is moderate in tone and emphasizes Christian experience. Like the Scots' Confession, it places considerable emphasis on the church.

Date: 1646
Name: **The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms**
Occasion: The writing of this Confession was commissioned by the Long Parliament in England as a means of articulating its Protestant viewpoint against the Catholic King Charles I. The assembly, chosen by Parliament, included members of the Houses of Lords, House of Commons, and Protestant ministers.
Key Issues: The Westminster Assembly chose not to use an historic framework for its doctrinal statement, but rather to set down its confession in abstract terms in order to be more precise. The sovereignty of God and God's covenant with humanity are major themes. Two-thirds of the confession deals with the Christian life, indicating the importance of a life obedient to God's will.

Date: 1934
Name: **The Theological Declaration of Barmen**
Occasion: This statement was made by the German Confessional churches (Lutheran and Reformed) in the face of the rising power of Hitler and his attempts to make the church subservient to the state. The declaration sets six statements from Scripture against six false doctrines promoted in Germany at that time.
Key Issues: Jesus Christ is Lord.

Date: 1967
Name: **The Confession of 1967**
Occasion: This confession is a response of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to the conviction that the church must bear "a present witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ." It declares that "confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as Scripture bears witness."
Key Issues: "Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly, this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme."

CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

Date: 1983
Name: **The Brief Statement of Faith – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)**
Occasion: In 1983 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) was formed by the reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States and the Presbyterian Church in the United States and this statement is intended to be an articulation of our common identity and a resource for worship.
Key Issues: This confession emphasizes the significance of Jesus' ministry as guidance for our lives together and is distinctive in affirming the role of both men and women in God's covenant and affirms gender inclusiveness in all areas of the church, including ordination.

Date: 1986 (adopted by PC(USA) in 2016)
Name: **The Belhar Confession**
Occasion: This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the confession as it was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986 in response to post-Apartheid calls for racial reconciliation.
Key Issues: Continued impact of racism and God's call to the whole church towards justice, transformation, unity and reconciliation.