

WHO ATTENDS SYNOD MEETINGS?

The Synod of Lincoln Trails Standing Rules provide that at least two elders and two ministers per presbytery be elected as commissioners. Commissioners represent the presbytery which elects them to a three year term. Other visitors and corresponding members are invited and encourage to attend any or all regular Synod meetings.

A. COMMISSIONERS

The Presbyterian Church makes decisions in "governing bodies." In a classic statement, the Form of Government says:

"All governing bodies of the Church are united by the nature of the Church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The governing bodies are separate and independent, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole Church performed by it through the appropriate governing body." (G-9.01-03)

Commissioners who make up a Synod or a General Assembly are chosen in a way designed to put flesh and blood on the Form of Government's language about governing bodies: "united...separate and independent...mutual relations..."

You were elected by your presbytery. That election makes you also a member of the Synod of Lincoln Trails. Commissioners are persons the Church sets apart to embody in a special way the mutuality among its parts that Presbyterians believe is necessary for the Church to be fully the Church.

You were elected by your presbytery, and you should be conscious that what happens at a Synod meeting may have serious effect upon your presbytery. But you should be guided by your conscience as a member of Synod, and you are encouraged to consider what is best for the whole Church.

A Synod is not a presbytery or a General Assembly. Every Synod has its own patterns, customs, and mission. Therefore, a further question must be asked to translate the principles of Presbyterian government into practice in the Synod of Lincoln Trails: "What does it mean for me to be a commissioner to this Synod? What are my tasks?" The following is an attempt to answer that question:

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSIONER

1. TO DISCERN THE WILL OF GOD

You have been elected by your presbytery as a Commissioner to help the Synod discern and respond to the will of God. You will do this through your own spiritual discipline, including participation in your congregation, and by participating in meetings of the Synod. There are four one-day Synod Meetings each year.

Not only will you be part of a decision making governing body, but also you will be part of a community of faith which worships, nurtures its community and members, and celebrates its history and tradition as part of the PC(USA). As part of this community you will help the Synod discern the will of God and make faithful decisions.

2. TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE SYNOD'S LIFE AND MISSION

A hallmark of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is its commitment to being governed by representative groups of elders and ministers. The Synod is one of those representative groups and you have been elected to help govern the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in this two-state region. Some responsibilities for governing are assigned to ecclesiastical committees: Nominating; Representation; and Permanent Judicial Commission. The Synod, composed of Commissioners meeting four times each year, reviews or acts on the work of these committees and is responsible for the rest of the Synod's life and mission.

In order to make decisions about its life and mission, the Synod is organized into three Standing Committees, each of which is composed of Commissioners and members-at-large. Standing Committees normally meet during the Synod Meetings. Each of the Standing Committees is assigned particular areas of the Synod's life and mission which it is to encourage, interpret, plan, support, evaluate and critique on behalf of the Synod. Your role with the Standing Committee is extremely important. Standing Committees will empower subcommittees, task forces, networks and individuals to conduct mission or do specific tasks on behalf of the Synod. The Standing Committees will make recommendations to the Synod regarding policy, priorities and budget development as well as initiation and termination of programs.

3. TO BE A COMUNICATOR

You are an important communication link with your presbytery, your congregation and other Presbyterians. You should seek ways to share with these constituencies what the Synod is doing and to share with the Synod the concerns and needs of these constituencies. The work of the Synod is done primarily by collaboration which depends on open and active communication with the presbyteries and congregations the Synod services. The Standing Committee on Administration and Mission Coordination and the Synod staff will provide you with information and tools for fulfilling this role.

B. MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

This Synod has a long history of striving and struggling for inclusiveness. Although the number of racial/ethnic persons in the Presbyterian Churches within this Synod accounts for less than 5% of the total active membership, the desire to tap this valuable resource has been a prime concern for Synod leadership. The reality is that meetings of the Synod would have very limited participation of racial/ethnic persons unless other measures are employed. Commissioners-At-Large have all of the rights and responsibilities assigned to other commissioners, including the right to vote and hold office.

C. EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Various persons with particular responsibilities within the life of the Synod are given the status of ex-officio membership. Many of them are expected to attend all or at least some of the meetings of the Synod to interpret programs, identify issues or share information which might be helpful to decision-makers. These persons have the right to speak at meetings and vote on matters other than ecclesiastical matters. Synod staff members have voice but no vote.

The following persons have been identified as ex-officio members of the Synod:

1. Moderators of subcommittees and the President of the Board of Directors if they are not commissioners;
2. Moderator of Presbyterian Women of the Synod (1 person);
3. Stated Clerk (1 person)
4. Synod Co-Executives (2 persons);
5. Members At-large of Standing Committees.

D. CORRESPONDING MEMBERS

Any person who is a member in good standing of a Presbyterian Church or of any other Christian Church which is in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may be seated as a corresponding member of the Synod. This status is also accorded to Executive/General Presbyters and Stated Clerks of presbyteries in this Synod when they are in attendance at a meeting of the Synod. When granted this status, they are entitled to the privilege of the floor but without vote.