



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

194th General Assembly
Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Meeting June 16-20, 2025
Hilton Knoxville Airport • Alcoa, TN
Michael Sharpe, Stated Clerk

The following summary is NOT the authoritative document for guiding the Church's action. Only the General Assembly Minutes can serve that purpose.

ORGANIZATION

1. Elected the Reverend Jhony Montañó, Cauca Valley Presbytery, as the Moderator.
2. Elected the Reverend Daniel Barkley, Grace Presbytery, as the Vice Moderator.
3. Elected thirty-three people to serve on denominational boards and entities.
4. The Elder Lewis Leon Cole, board member of the General Assembly Executive Board (CPCA) and Moderator of Kentucky Synod (CPCA), brought greetings on behalf of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America.

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

5. The opening worship/communion service was held on Monday evening. Retiring Moderator Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn, Presbytery of East Tennessee, delivered a sermon entitled, "*Can These Bones Live?*" based on Ezekiel 37:1-8. The Reverends Larry Blakeburn and Anna Sweet Brockman (GA Worship Director, Murfreesboro Presbytery) served as co-celebrants of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. A brief service of installation of the newly elected moderator and vice moderator was part of the worship service.

6. Youth Advisory Delegate, Ms. Jett Murphy, from Murfreesboro Presbytery brought the devotional on Thursday morning.

7. Reverend Anna Brockman, worship director for General Assembly, provided the closing devotional.

OUR UNITED OUTREACH

8. Encouraged all congregations to provide financial support to Our United Outreach, as they are able.
9. Approved a goal of \$2,400,000 for Our United Outreach (OUO) for 2026.
10. Held an *OUO Lunch and Learn* meal during GA week. The Reverend Jeff McMichael, Development Coordinator for OUO, served as master of ceremonies. In his opening comments he announced the purpose of the luncheon: to educate, promote, and encourage those in attendance "to be part of something bigger than themselves." Guest speaker, Reverend Jhony Montañó spoke of his own Christian faith being shaped by the ministries and programs funded through OUO and missions giving.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

11. Encouraged all Cumberland Presbyterians to enter a time of reconciliation, and to consider the list of resources provided by the Ministry Council in those reconciliation efforts (see pages 83-85 in the Preliminary Minutes).
12. Asked translators of plan to discern translation accuracy of the word "reconciliation".
13. Emphasized the need for presbyteries to provide consistent information to presbyters regarding the Employee Assistance Plan.
14. Approved initiating the process to form a new synod composed of Andes, Emaus, and Cauca Valley presbyteries. Tasked the Missions Ministry Team to work closely with those presbyteries to develop and present a formal proposal outlining the structure, mission, and leadership of the synod, for consideration and approval by the next General Assembly.

COMMISSION ON FEDERAL CHAPLAINS

15. Encouraged congregations in the United States to receive an offering on the last Sunday of May, or another special day, to support our ministry through Presbyterian Council for Federal Chaplains.
16. Encouraged Presbyteries and Churches to make special efforts to communicate with those members serving as chaplains from their presbyteries or congregation.
17. Encouraged Clergy and Presbytery Committees on Probationer Care to include in their discussions of

a call with a ministerial candidate, the call to chaplaincy as a call to pastoral ministry.

18. Encouraged individual churches and members in the United States to designate special days through the year to engage in prayer to hold up the chaplains and their families in the service to which they have been endorsed.

19. Encouraged Presbyteries to request that their chaplains provide them with a copy of their annual report.

MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

20. Approved that the third Sunday in August (August 17, 2025, and August 16, 2026) be observed as Seminary/PAS Sunday. And that all churches be encouraged to share information about Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) and the Program of Alternate Studies (PAS) and receive an offering on that day, or on a more convenient day of the session's choosing. MTS leadership has committed to focusing these annual funds on growing the Baird-Buck Endowment of CP Studies until the chair in CP studies is fully funded.

21. Expressed gratitude and recognition to Rev. Michele Gentry for her contribution in advancing the work of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the mission of the Program of Alternate Studies in Colombia, South America.

22. Expressed its gratitude to trustees Reverend Dr. Larry Hilliard and Reverend Dr. Deborah Smith for their faithful service to Memphis Theological Seminary and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

23. Appointed a special committee with Jaime Jordan as legal advisor, to work in conjunction with the Memphis Theological Seminary in Merger/Affiliation, and Partnership discussions, to review and evaluate all options and determine future needs for Clergy/Leadership Training in the denomination, in consultation with the General Assembly Corporation, the Pastoral development Ministry Team, and the Program of Alternate Studies.

24. Appointed the following persons to be members of the special committee: Rev. Dr. Larry Blackburn (Presbytery of East Tennessee), Rev. Bobby Coleman (Arkansas Presbytery), Rev. Lisa Oliver (Murfreesboro Presbytery), Elder Dr. Mo Ottinger (Robert Donnell Presbytery), and Rev. David Linski (Grace Presbytery).

25. Requested presbyteries and congregations of the CPC to pray for the future of Memphis Theological Seminary, Program of Alternate Studies, and all

future needs for clergy/leadership training in the Cumberland Presbyterian Denomination, recognizing that the Spirit of God goes before and with these institutions and all those touched by them.

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

26. Commends the professionalism and dedication to higher education provided by Bethel University. Their continued vision and forethought have shown by their dedication to keep programs and services relevant to today's societal educational needs.

27. Called on Cumberland Presbyterians worldwide to support Bethel University in prayers, financial support and in recommending students.

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

28. Commended Cumberland Youth and Family Services and the staff and especially Courtney Banatoski (President and Chief Executive Officer), for their continued work in the care, support, and transformation of lives of children and families in all walks of life. Their willingness to adapt to the changing situations in lives of children and families in crisis situations deserves continued prayers and financial support.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

29. Commended the work of Archivist Ms. Susan Knight Gore and the Historical Foundation.

30. Encouraged the Board of Trustees of the Historical Foundation to develop an emergency action plan for the ongoing operation of the Archives and report back to the 195th General Assembly.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

31. Directed the Synod of the Midwest to rescind its April 2012 policy instructing the Disciplinary Commission of the synod to overturn any action of the presbytery to ordain if ordination records are not sent to the Stated Clerk of Synod.

32. Received the Cauca Valey Memorial as a communication that expresses the concerns of the Cauca Valley Presbytery.

33. Adopted the following responses to the Memorial from Tennessee-Georgia Presbytery regarding *Starting a Graduate School of Theology* (see page 162 in [Preliminary Minutes](#)):

•Questions One and Three – *Determined that Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACCOCS). These accrediting bodies do not authorize MTS to establish*

satellite campuses or provide oversight for another graduate school of theology.

Therefore, if a particular church desires to start its own graduate theological institution under Constitution 6.34, it may not represent MTS as formal partner, academic resource, or institutional affiliate for the purposes of promotion, recruitment, or enrollment inducement. Any use of MTS's name or materials in such a context could be misleading and potentially violate accreditation standards.

If there is interest in collaboration or theological education support, it must be explored through appropriate and authorized channels, consistent with both institutional governance and accreditation guidelines.

•Question Two – Presbytery approval is not required but it should be involved in the life of the church and its ministries. However, the presbytery will not be able to ordain those who attend based on digest ruling 6.34.

•Question Four - This decision would be left to each Presbytery unless the General Assembly amends the Constitution 6.34.

• Question Five – No, a particular church does not have to obtain approval of presbytery if it wishes to start a graduate school of theology.

34. Adopted a Resolution requesting Review of the Permanent Judiciary Committee Response to the Brunswick Church Session Inquiry and Guidance on Conflict of Interest.

35. Appointed a committee to inquire into the work of the Permanent Judiciary Committee and to explore ways to walk alongside them-seeking understanding, unity, and healing among committee members and those they serve. Members of the Committee: Rev. Leanne Kerner (Red River Presbytery), Rev. Kip Rush (Nashville Presbytery) and Elder Shane Wickson (Red River Presbytery).

JOINT COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS

36. Approved sending the following proposed changes to the Constitution to the Presbyteries for vote:

1. That the Rules of Discipline, Section 2.5 be amended to read: *“Each presbytery shall have a standing commission which shall be called the **“disciplinary commission.”** Each judicatory above the session shall have a standing commission which shall be called the **“judiciary committee.”** Notwithstanding that these bodies may be called “committees,” each of these standing commissions shall exercise the powers and responsibilities entrusted to it under these Rules and shall be authorized to deliberate upon*

and conclude any business submitted to it pursuant to these Rules. A judicatory may assign other duties and responsibilities to its judiciary committee or its disciplinary commission, with or without the authority to act upon or to conclude such other matters.”

2. That the Constitution 10.1 through 10.5 be renumbered as 10.2 -10.6 and a new 10.1 be inserted reading as follows: *“10.1 The Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America having the same Confession and Constitution, shall recognize and accept the ordinations of ministers, elders, and/or deacons should a person ordained to one of these offices transfer from one Cumberland Presbyterian denomination to the other.”*

37. Referred to the Joint Committee on Amendments a Memorial requesting that the following change to the Rules of Discipline:

That Rules of Discipline 3.401 which states: “A complaint of misconduct on the part of a minister should be reported to the stated clerk of the presbytery or a member of the disciplinary commission. The person who receives the complaint shall promptly communicate it to the chair of the disciplinary commission and the stated clerk.”

Be amended to read as follows:

*“A complaint of misconduct on the part of a minister should be reported to the stated clerk of the presbytery or a member of the disciplinary commission. The person who receives the complaint shall promptly communicate it to the chair of the disciplinary commission and the stated clerk. **Absent extraordinary circumstances, the disciplinary commission shall complete its work and prepare a report for the judiciary committee within 90 days of the stated clerk receiving the report.”***

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- 38.** Approved the Church Calendar dates for 2025-2026 (see pages of the Preliminary Minutes).
- 39.** Requested that the Trademark Committee remain constituted, continue ongoing communication with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, and provide a report the next General Assembly.
- 40.** Encouraged all presbyteries to consider hosting future meetings of the General Assembly.

THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

41. Commends the work by the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns for their work on

the soon to be released baptismal workshop blueprint, and appreciates the continued emphasis on ensuring broad cultural considerations of the sacrament.

42. Referred the memorial “*Dignity of the Unborn*” (see page 160 in the Preliminary Minutes) to the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns.

43. Referred the concerns outlined in the memorial from Cauca Valley Presbytery, not addressed by the Permanent Judiciary Committee, to the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns for further reflection and response.

44. Referred the resolution “*A Biblical Call to Followers of Christ: Speak Up Against Injustices*” to the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns.

STEWARDSHIP

45. Expressed gratitude and thanks to the staff of the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits for all their diligent work.

46. Encouraged all congregations to support their ministers and church staff, by establishing a retirement account.

47. Encouraged all presbyteries to determine if a retired pastor or spouse could benefit from the Cumberland Presbyterian Ministerial Aid Program and work with the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits in assisting qualified people to enroll in the program.

MISCELLANEOUS

48. A Joint Luncheon and Program, sponsored by the Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Bethel University and Memphis Theological Seminary was held on Wednesday. Ms. Courtney Banatoski, Cumberland Youth and Family Services President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Perry Moulds, Bethel University President, Reverend Dr. Jody Hill, Memphis Theological Seminary President, brought greetings, presentations on their respective institutions, and their continuing appreciation for the prayers and mission support given by Cumberland Presbyterians. Reverend Dr. Michael Qualls, Director of the Program of Alternate Studies (PAS) introduced Reverend Troy Suey, new PAS Program Assistant.

49. The Women in Ministry Reception was held on Tuesday evening, hosted by MTS/PAS, CPWM and the Ministry Council’s Pastoral Development Ministry Team. The 2025 Clergy Women of the Year recipients were announced. The international award was presented to the Reverend Ruby Micolta (Cauca Valley Presbytery), and the USA award was

presented to the Reverend Micaiah Tanck (Robert Donnell Presbytery).

50. The General Assembly Adopted a *Resolution of Thanks* presented by the Reverend Bill James, Cornerstone Presbytery.

NEXT MEETING

50. The General Assembly adjourned to meet in Rogers, Arkansas on June 14-19, 2026

Copies of the General Assembly Minutes when completed will be made available in the following formats:

- Online: www.cumberland.org/gao

- A limited supply of printed copies will be made available through the Cumberland Presbyterian Resource Center (901-276-4581).

2025 General Assembly Theme & Logo:



Bind Us Together

*"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."
Colossians 3:14 (NSRV)*

