

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Assembly votes to cut number of synods, but by fewer than recommended

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General Assembly News

MIKE FERGUSON

Over the next two years, the number of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) synods will be reduced from 16 to between 10 and 12.

It will be up to synods and the presbyteries that comprise the synods to decide where the new boundaries are drawn, and which services each synod will provide.

On Friday, the 221st General Assembly (2014) voted 449-128, or 78-22 percent, to direct that a new configuration of synod boundaries be established “based on an emerging sense of purpose, partnership, context and call.”

The recommendation is based on a report from Mid Councils Commission II, which worked two years and spoke to 54 synod executives, stated clerks and others in order to complete the report.

The report concluded that synods “continue to have a vital role within our life as a denomination. However, the time has come for fewer synods within a structure of mutual accountability that encourages each synod to discern God’s call to find its unique role in affirming the creativity that already resides in our mid council system.”

Ruling Elder Commissioner Courtenay Willcox of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, moderator of the Mid Councils Issues Committee, quoted an unnamed committee member describing the way forward: “It may feel messy and chaotic, but we serve a God who brings order out of chaos.”

On their way to approving the shift, General Assembly commissioners turned down several proposals, including one that would have directed the PC(USA)’s Mid Council Ministries office to launch a process for synods and presbyteries to develop “mutually accountable mission goals” and engage synods and presbyteries “in a common assessment” of mission strengths, needs and opportunities.