

# “Ecumenical” and “Interreligious” Relations

**Item:** 3-16: Amend IV.C.7. of the *Organization for Mission* Regarding the Committee on Ecumenical Relations

**GA Committee Assignment:** 03 General Assembly Procedures

## Summary of the business and what it asks the Assembly to do:

This item of business requests a change in name and mandate for what is currently the “Committee on **Ecumenical** Relations.” Item 3-16, from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, would add “Interreligious” to the name and responsibilities of that permanent committee, making it the “Committee on **Ecumenical and Interreligious** Relations.” [Note that the “Committee on Ecumenical Relations” is not an Assembly Committee which is formed temporarily to make recommendations on General Assembly business. Instead, this is a permanent Committee that functions throughout the year and continues from year to year. It is the ongoing body charged with carrying out ecumenical work on behalf of the General Assembly.]

## Background

1. **Ecumenical** relationships involve the various branches of the church of Christ. The purpose of ecumenical relationships is for the different parts of the church to work together **to build up the body of Christ**. This work is currently done by the permanent “**Committee on Ecumenical Relations**.”
2. “Interfaith” (or “**Interreligious**”) relationships are completely different because these groups, by definition, are not Christian. Our involvement with them is **to be good neighbors**. These relationships with non-Christian religious bodies are currently handled by the **General Assembly Mission Council**.
3. The two types of relationships (“ecumenical” and “interreligious”) and the objectives of the work involved in each of those types of relationships, are completely different. It is therefore **appropriate and, in fact, highly preferable that “ecumenical” and “interreligious”** relationships continue be handled by **different** bodies.

## Analysis of the business and how it would affect the church:

Although initially the requested change might seem to be a minor one, the potential consequences are highly significant. To combine “ecumenical” with “interreligious” responsibilities under the same permanent Committee is not only messy, but it **risks blurring and ultimately losing the absolutely critical distinction between what is Christian and what is not Christian**. The potential for serious confusion and harm makes this change unwise. In the current climate of distrust in the denomination, any change that could open the door to losing the critical distinction between what is Christian and what is not Christian must be avoided.

## Action by GA that will help the Church:

*Disapprove*

Advisory prepared by Carol Shanholtzer  
Joint Renewal Team  
April 2010

**An Advisory on Business to the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010)**

*From the Joint Renewal GA Team*