



## More Harm Than Help A Revised nFOG Revised Again

October 22, 2009

### Dear The Presbyterian,

A proposed new Form of Government (nFOG) is on its way back to the General Assembly in 2010. An earlier version presented to the 2008 GA generated no enthusiasm and lots of opposition. Now, [the revision](#) of that version being offered by the task force shows no substantive improvement. Rather, its problems increase.

At the 2008 General Assembly, more than a dozen presbyteries sent overtures and overture advocates to speak against adopting the nFOG. At one point in the committee meeting, a commissioner went to a microphone and remarked that she had not heard a single speech in support of the proposal-other than from task force members. She asked to hear from someone in support of the nFOG. Her request was met with silence.

The GA sent the 2008 version back to the task force for another try. It charged the task force to solicit comment and response from governing bodies of the church. The task force did seek and receive some comment, but it has not shared with the church the comments it received. Thus, it is impossible to tell if input from presbyteries influenced the task force's new revisions.

Opposition to this effort to completely rewrite our Form of Government should come as no surprise. The rewrite is being done by a small group selected at the General Assembly level of the church. We have seen no evidence that their work represents any concerns but their own.

When the lower governing bodies have found need for changes in the Form of Government over the years, they have proposed amendments to it. Many of those amendments, now a part of the present Form of Government, would be simply wiped out by the proposed rewrite.

This nFOG project implies that the amendment process, provided for by our constitution and utilized regularly by our presbyteries, is inadequate. But it is the amendment process that allows for each change to be carefully considered. Wholesale change makes it very difficult to know what has changed and what the implications are of each change.

The task force claims that the rewrite will make us a more "missional" church. But most of us know that it is not the Form of Government that interferes with mission. And we know, too, that a wholesale rewrite of our polity will not make us more missional. Diminishing mission is a theological and spiritual problem that requires a very different sort of solution.

### More Harm Than Help

The proposed new Form of Government would be more harmful than helpful to the church. The Coalition website has [a list of some of those harms](#). We encourage you to read this year's version of the proposed

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rewrite and consider our inventory of problems. If you agree that the nFOG would be harmful, I hope you will consider proposing an overture to the 2010 GA that will end this process at the General Assembly in 2010. We offer draft wording for [an overture](#) that may be of help to you.

Please do not take this matter lightly. Our Form of Government affects for good or ill everything we do as Presbyterians. The negative effects of the proposed new Form of Government would be felt in your congregation and presbytery for years to come!

Watch the [Coalition website](#) for further detailed critique of this latest version of the nFOG.

Please contact me if I can be of assistance to you in pursuing an overture to General Assembly on this matter.

In Christ,

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