

Let Us Rise Up and Build!

(Neh. 2:18)

A Plan for Reformation
in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

2007

Appendices



THE
PRESBYTERIAN
COALITION

Appendices

The resources listed in these appendices are provided as an aid to implementation of the plan. Resources of a length too great for inclusion—ten pages or more—are available at www.presbycoalition.org or from the sources listed here or on the website. We intend that the website be a dynamic resource of contributions and links from those who share our hope for a transforming renewal and reformation of the PC(USA). (Please note: Not every goal has an appendix.)

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Appendix I. Reclaiming a Biblical Vision of the Church

A. “Union in Christ: A Declaration”

The following Declaration was adopted during Gathering III of the Presbyterian Coalition (Dallas, 1998).

Preamble

The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. God has called the church into being in order to carry out God’s mission to the world. We believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) must respond to that commission by reaffirming its Christ-centeredness, reclaiming its biblical faith, and remobilizing its missionary service.

Toward these ends, this Declaration and Strategy Paper calls us to prayer and self-examination, so that the church may seek to fulfill God’s mission, embracing Christ’s transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church

“He is before all things and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17)

With the witness of Scripture and the Church through the ages we declare:

I.

Jesus Christ is the gracious mission of God to the world and for the world.

He is Emmanuel and Savior,
One with the Father,
God incarnate as Mary’s son,
Lord of all,
The truly human one.
His coming transforms everything.
His Lordship casts down every idolatrous claim to authority.
His incarnation discloses the only path to God.
His life shows what it means to be human.
His atoning death reveals the depth of God’s love for sinners.
His bodily resurrection shatters the powers of sin and death.

gladdens our hearts, and transforms our lives more fully into the image of Christ.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore the need for repentance, that discount the transforming power of the Gospel, or that fail to pray, hope and strive for a life that is pleasing to God.

In Baptism and conversion the Spirit engrafts us into Christ, establishing the Church’s unity and binding us to one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that seek unity in theological pluralism, relativism or syncretism.

II.

The Holy Spirit joins us to Jesus Christ by grace alone, uniting our life with his through the ministry of the Church.

In the proclamation of the Word, the Spirit calls us to repentance, builds up and renews our life in Christ, strengthens our faith, empowers our service,

In the Lord’s Supper the Spirit nurtures and nourishes our participation in Christ and our communion with one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that allow human divisions of race, gender, nationality, or economic class to mar the Eucharistic fellowship, as though in Christ there were still walls of separation dividing the human family.

III.

Engrafted into Jesus Christ we participate through faith in his relationship with the Father.

By our union with Christ we participate in his righteousness before God, even as he becomes the bearer of our sin.

We turn away from any claim to stand before God apart from Christ's own righteous obedience, manifest in his life and sacrifice for our sake on the cross.

By our union with Christ we participate in his knowledge of the Father, given to us as the gift of faith through the unique and authoritative witness of the Old and New Testaments.

We turn away from forms of church life that discount the authority of Scripture or claim knowledge of God that is contrary to the full testimony of Scripture as interpreted by the Holy Spirit working in and through the community of faith across time.

By our union with Christ we participate in his love of the Father, manifest in his obedience "even unto death on the cross."

We turn away from any supposed love of God that is manifest apart from a continual longing for and striving after that loving obedience which Christ offers to God on our behalf.

IV.

Though obscured by our sin, our union with Christ causes his life to shine forth in our lives. This transformation of our lives into the image of Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit begun in this life as a sign and promise of its completion in the life to come.

By our union with Christ our lives participate in the holiness of the One who fulfilled the Law of God on our behalf.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore Christ's call to a life of holiness, or that seek to pit Law and Gospel against one another as if both were not expressions of the one Word of God.

By our union with Christ we participate in his obedience. In these times of moral and sexual confusion we affirm the consistent teaching of Scripture that calls us to

chastity outside of marriage and faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to pray for and strive after a rightly ordered sexuality as the gracious gift of a loving God, offered to us in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also turn away from forms of church life that fail to forgive and restore those who repent of sexual and other sins.

V.

As the body of Christ the Church has her life in Christ.

By our union with Christ the Church binds together believers in every time and place.

We turn away from forms of church life that identify the true Church only with particular styles of worship, polity, or institutional structure. We also turn away from forms of church life that ignore the witness of those who have gone before us.

By our union with Christ the Church is called out into particular communities of worship and mission.

We turn away from forms of church life that see the work of the local congregation as sufficient unto itself, as if it were not a local representation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church called together by the power of the Spirit in every age and time until our Lord returns.

By our union with Christ our lives participate in God's mission to the world; to uphold the value of every human life, to make disciples of all peoples, to establish Christ's justice and peace in all creation, and to secure that visible oneness in Christ that is the promised inheritance of every believer

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to bear witness in word and deed to Christ's compassion and peace, and the Gospel of salvation.

By our union with Christ the Church participates in Christ's resurrected life and awaits in hope the future that God has prepared for her. Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus!

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Appendix II. The Need for Reformation

A. On the need for reformation of the Church, from those who have gone before us

Scripture everywhere rightly assigns to God the task of both founding and renewing the Church. Moreover because the work is altogether divine in nature, as soon as any beginning is made Satan marshals whatever damaging strategems he has in a body either to stop further advance or to delay it. ...Anyone who takes it on himself to forward the doctrine of salvation and the safety of the Church must be armed with unconquerable perseverance; but since this is a matter beyond our strength, God will supply us with heavenly weapons.

—John Calvin, from the dedication of his Commentary on Hebrews, page. xiii

Indeed, if there are wicked persons in a church, surely one should hasten to it; in keeping with the example of Paul, one should shout, exhort, entreat, beg, and frighten, and should try everything to make them good. But one should not withdraw and cause a schism because of that sacrilegious fear of God (as they call it) and that impious zeal of conscience. What kind of love is it that has decided neither to endure the wicked nor help them? It is madness clothing itself most improperly with the name love.

—Martin Luther, commentary on Galatians, vol. 27, p. 169

We must be fond of this world, even in order to change it. We now add that we must be fond of another world in order to have something to change it to. We need not debate about the mere words evolution or progress; personally I prefer to call it reform. For reform implies form. It implies that we are trying to shape the world in a particular image; to make it something that we see already in our minds. Evolution is a metaphor from mere automatic unrolling. Progress is a metaphor for merely walking along a road—very likely the wrong road. But reform is a metaphor for reasonable and determined people; it means that we see a certain thing out of shape and we mean to put it into shape. And we know what shape.

—G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. 103

The Church, such as Calvin defines her in keeping with the Creed and the Scripture, hence has a twofold aspect: she is humble because she is still earthly and subjected to human weakness. She is glorious because she announces the glorious kingdom of God. She is a very dark mirror in which we perceive a very bright light. We ought to keep from two dangers: one consists in despising the Church (as people did readily enough twenty years ago), by comparing her with the kingdom of God and getting rid of her under the pretext that she is not the kingdom; if we do so, we betray the very kingdom which wants to be announced through the weakness of the Church; one becomes incapable of really labouring for this kingdom. The other danger consists in exalting the Church, in forgetting that she is not the kingdom, that she lives under the sign of the “Not yet”....

—Karl Barth, *The Faith of the Church: A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* (Meridian, 1958), pp. 125-126

At the time when divine truth lay buried under this vast and dense cloud of darkness; when religion was sullied by so many impious superstitions; when by horrid blasphemies the worship of God was corrupted, and his glory laid prostrate; when by a multitude of perverse opinions, the benefit of redemption was frustrated;...when the government of the church had degenerated into mere confusion and devastation; when those who sat in the seat of pastors first did most vital injury to the church by the dissoluteness of their lives, and secondly, exercised a cruel and most noxious tyranny over souls, by every kind of error, leading men like sheep to the slaughter; then Luther arose, and after him others, who with united counsels sought out means and methods by which religion might be purged from all these defilements, the doctrine of godliness restored to its integrity, and the church raised out of its calamitous into somewhat of a tolerable condition. The same course we are still pursuing in the present day....[W]e have had no other end in view than to ameliorate in some degree the very miserable condition of the church.

—John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (Protestant Heritage Press, 1995), pp. 38-39

B. “Turning Toward the Mission of God: A Strategy for the Transformation of the PC(USA)”

Coalition Strategy Paper: August 1998

Introduction

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)

As the fellowship of men and women who by grace have been engrafted into Christ by the power of the Spirit, the church seeks to live out its faith in and through the concrete structures and activities of her daily life and worship.

As the necessary complement to the Declaration, we offer the following strategic proposals for the Presbyterian Coalition’s service to the whole church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the present context it seemed good to us to lift up six areas of church life (mission, polity, discipline, theological education, worship, and educational ministries), suggested by the text of the Declaration, as fruitful areas for critical reflection, prayer, and striving, as we seek to live out the new life which God has opened up to us in Jesus Christ.

We anticipate that these six areas of transformation will be the focus of particular working groups. The role of each group will be to examine the needs of the church in their area and apply the affirmations of the Declaration in setting specific objectives for renewing and building up the church. They will propose and develop strategies for accomplishing their own priority objectives within a five year period.

These detailed proposals will be offered up to the wider church for consideration and implementation. We affirm that this work of renewal will be carried on in and through the existing structures of the PC(USA) whenever possible. The fruits of our labor are presented here as an offering by the Presbyterian Coalition for the building up of the whole church of Christ.

The general work of each task force is described in relation to an area of the Declaration, and each contains examples of existing problems and suggestions for action. They represent concerns and ideas which the Visioning Team discussed and offer as a starting place for discussion as the task forces begin their work.

While we are critical of many things within our beloved church, we acknowledge that all too often we have been part of the problem. We, too, present obstacles to the greater working of the Spirit in our midst. The critique we present is a self-criticism in some measure, and we stand under the judgment of God for the ways in which we have been a hindrance to the work of Christ in the church and in the world.

We anticipate that the outcome of implementing this plan will be a church engaged more fully in building up its own body theologically, spiritually, and morally, and more unified in the practice of Christian discipleship;

- where the local congregations are more actively involved in determining and carrying out the mission of the church;
- where the decisions and actions of higher governing bodies more faithfully reflect the commitments of local congregations;
- where church members and their elected leadership at all levels seek and find forgiveness and a restored life in Christ;
- where the structures that are intended to order our life together are more cost-effective, streamlined, and faithful in determining and carrying out the will of the body; and
- where the Triune God is worshipped in spirit and in truth.

THE RENEWAL OF MISSION

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must recognize that the Church’s mission is born out of God’s love for the world. The mission of the Church involves word and deed, body and soul, church and world. At its center is a zeal for the unreached and a desire to see persons and cultures transformed to the glory of God.

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- An incipient universalism that diminishes the urgency of the gospel message.
- A witness which echoes cultural ideology rather than biblical fidelity.
- A limited and biased view of ecumenism which has not allowed us to be in conversation with other evangelical mission enterprises or the rapidly expanding third-world mission organizations.
- A provincialism in the local church that simply ignores mission beyond its own walls.
- A denominational mission structure that fulfills more a gatekeeping role than a facilitating role for mission.

The task force on the **Renewal of Mission** will address the following strategic goals:

- Encourage, support, and promote a missional understanding of the church that encompasses both evangelistic outreach and the transformation of society and culture to the glory of God.
- Foster denominational support and encouragement of local church leadership in mission projects.
- Celebrate, publicize, and promote ongoing work by the denomination in supporting Trinitarian Christian mission in local congregations and around the world.
- Encourage sessions to designate mission giving to acceptable projects within the denomination as an alternative to withholding funds or redirecting them outside the church.
- Further encourage and develop strategic partnerships for Trinitarian Christian mission with renewal movements in our denomination, as well as in other denominations, and with para-church missional organizations, such as the AD 2000 and Beyond movement.
- Prioritize innovative new church development strategies as an effective means of evangelism and mission.
- Evaluate and assess the effectiveness of continuing denominational involvement in mainline ecumenical organizations, and explore participation in evangelical ecumenical organizations.

THE RENEWAL OF WORSHIP

“... at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess in heaven and on earth and under the earth that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must have worship that is Trinitarian, dynamic, and relevant to its cultural setting. The pressing worship issue will not be debates over style but whether or not the worship experience faithfully lifts up Jesus Christ and draws people to him.

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- The idolatry of holding that only one worship style is uniquely faithful in expressing the Reformed tradition.
- Nonbiblical and unconvincing preaching.
- Worship services that are manipulated by political and ideological agendas.
- Deep division between proponents of differing styles of worship. Failure to teach our children how to worship.

The task force on the **Renewal of Worship** will address the following strategic goals:

- Encourage, celebrate, and support worship expressions that reach across barriers of class, ethnicity, age, and culture.
- Establish national and regional conferences on Reformed worship that will include training and dialogue on effective preaching, music, the sacraments, and liturgy, from a variety of stylistic perspectives.
- Identify teaching churches across the country that model the diversity of dynamic, Christocentric worship within our tradition.
- Develop Reformed devotional materials for use in personal and family worship. Strategize for including children and youth in the worship life of the church family.

THE RENEWAL OF POLITY

“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must have a polity that promotes the spiritual objectives of the church. It should establish proper lines of accountability, place decision making and mission in the governing body closest to the congregation, and maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- An estrangement between the denominational leadership and the church it is called to serve.
- The ongoing transformation of the *Book of Order* from a constitutional document setting forth the essentials of our faith and governance to a detailed and unwieldy operations manual.
- Our failure to be knowledgeable, faithful, and responsible presbyters.

The task force on the **Renewal of Polity** will address the following strategic goals:

- Assess the composition, staff, and programs of governing bodies with a view toward the reduction of what is unwieldy and the elimination of what is biblically unfaithful. Examples of this could be the possible elimination of Synods and a comprehensive evaluation of the GAC.

- Develop an overall coordinating strategy for each General Assembly meeting. Implement a long-range plan for recruiting and equipping biblically faithful and effective leaders for service at every level of church governance.
- Develop programs for recruiting and training elder and pastor commissioners for effective service in the governing bodies of the church.
- Promote nominating processes for General Assembly commissioners that are fair and open. Encourage, and provide input to the work of groups seeking to streamline the *Book of Order*. Develop and encourage full and honest reporting of church expenditures in ways that demonstrate the faithfulness of church mission to donor intentions and respect the right of sessions to conscientious dissent from the support of programs they consider unfaithful.

THE RENEWAL OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your... mind.” (Mark 12:30)

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must have theological institutions which support the mission of local congregations in equipping believers to know the scriptures and think theologically within the Trinitarian faith of the church.

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- Theological education that is captive to ideological currents alien to the faith of the church.
- Theological education that is primarily responsive to the interests and agendas of the academic guilds rather than to the mission of the church.
- Graduates from our theological institutions who are ill-equipped for pastoral ministry.

The task force on the **Renewal of Theological Education** will address the following strategic goals:

- Initiate dialogue with seminaries for the purpose of better accomplishing our missional task. Identify seminaries that promote Trinitarian faith, uphold the constitutional standards of the church, and equip candidates for the mission of the local congregation. Direct qualified candidates and support to these seminaries and away from those that do not affirm these values.
- Work with local congregations to aggressively identify, recruit, and support faithful and gifted individuals for service in the ministry of our church.
- Identify and support promising candidates for advanced training toward service in seminary teaching positions.
- Explore and propose innovative models of theological education.
- Explore and propose innovative models of lay-leadership development, such as teaching churches, internships, mentoring, regional theological colloquia, and church-seminary partnerships.
- Develop and circulate theological resources that equip the parish minister and the wider church for fulfilling their mission. Such resources might include: sermon resources; curricula for the theological education of the laity; and conferences addressing major theological issues.

THE RENEWAL OF EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must promote a life-long process of growth in the knowledge of, love for, and obedience to Christ as revealed in Scripture.

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- The loss of the Christian home as the primary school for faith and life.
- Denominational ministries and programs for high school and college youth which have been ignored by many because of a loss of trust in their faithfulness to our theology and their ineffectiveness in reaching the target populations.
- The great exodus of college age students from the life of the church. Diminishing biblical knowledge and theological understanding within our congregations. The neglect of devotional practices and piety which are faithful to the Reformed tradition.
- Denominational curricula and materials that are inadequate for teaching biblical faith and frequently defy constitutional standards.

The task force on the **Renewal of Educational Ministries** will address the following strategic goals:

- Reaffirm and equip families in their responsibility for the spiritual nurture of their children. Develop and encourage vital youth ministries that nurture biblical faith among young people both within and outside of the church; explore new and effective youth ministries that include para-church partnerships; develop and promote regional and

- national youth training events that are faithful to scripture and our Reformed tradition.
- Emphasize biblically faithful, congregationally-based campus ministry as an effective tool for the evangelism and nurture of college students.
- Sponsor symposia on a variety of concerns relating faith to life, such as biomedical ethics, environmental issues, the sanctity of life, the persecuted church, economic justice, etc. Encourage, develop, and promote effective ministries which foster healthy marriages. Encourage, develop, and promote effective models for mentoring and discipleship. Encourage, develop, and promote devotional practices and resources that nurture and sustain Christian faith and life for believers of all ages and stations in life.
- Identify and produce faithful, engaging, and effective biblical curricula for believers of all ages.
- Identify and commission teaching churches regionally that are modeling effective educational ministry.
- Develop resources for helping adults integrate Christian faith and professional life. Develop biblically faithful curricula for congregational instruction of young people in sexuality that empowers and encourages sexual purity.

THE RENEWAL OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

*“And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:14)*

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the 21st century, we must be a disciplined community of faith whose members are accountable to God and to one another for the faithful living out of the Gospel in holiness and purity.

In order to accomplish this, we need to acknowledge and address the following frequently encountered obstacles:

- A refusal to live under the authority of the biblical and constitutional standards of the church.
- The acceptance of theological and moral pluralism at the expense of biblical and constitutional faithfulness.
- A distorted understanding of grace which confuses moral permissiveness with biblical compassion.
- An understanding of personal privacy which undermines practices of self-examination and mutual accountability and encouragement.
- Neglect of denominational procedures for the theological and moral examination of church officers and the disciplining of flagrant violations of constitutional standards.

The task force on the **Renewal of Church Discipline** will address the following strategic goals:

- Develop and promote a network of covenant groups for pastors and laity. These groups will practice confession, mutual accountability, and encouragement and promote spiritual maturity and the preservation of truth in the body of Christ.
- Assist and advise sessions and pastors in such a way as to empower full grassroots participation in the life and government of the church.
- Encourage and equip sessions and presbyteries to initiate ministries of compassion and restoration for persons whose behavior has estranged them from biblical standards for the holy life.
- Educate and encourage elders and ministers for the more faithful and effective exercise of their vows and responsibilities as presbyters of the church, including the examination of candidates for church office.

C. “A Penitential Self-Examination,” by Jerry Andrews

Thinking theologically about the Church requires holding at once two realities: our life is lived within the eternal and perfect life of God and our life is lived in the midst of our fallen generation.

The first reality is a gift given by God to the Church. The Spirit baptizes us into the Son who, in unending and uninterrupted union with the Father, assures us of our eternal union with the life and love of God. We dwell in the midst of perfect peace, unity and purity.

The second reality is a necessary part of God giving the Church as a gift to the world. The alienation of the world from God and the alienation within the world is the environment in which the Church lives out and announces the reconciliation of God in Christ. That alienation is experienced within the Church also. We dwell in midst of an imperfect peace, unity and purity.

The painful acknowledgment of these two realities can be cause for schizophrenia—living alternately in one reality while momentarily ignoring the pull and truth of the other. We might acknowledge the blessedness of our life in God while suppressing the knowledge of our current alienations and thus leave unaltered because unattended the wretchedness of our world and selves, or forgetting our life in God we might affirm our sinful state and thus accede to an easy accommodation as though it is inevitable and unamendable. The former degenerates into detachment, the latter despair. Neither acknowledgment without the other tends toward sane and faithful living.

Reaffirming the faith of the Church - that its life is in union with the life and love of God is always to be a glad acknowledgment of the first reality – the Church has received a great gift from God. It is cause for wonder and worship.

Affirming the truth of the alienation within the world and within the Church—the second reality—by self-examination is a painful but necessary acknowledgment for a Church that fully desires to be a gift to the world. It is cause for repentance and reformation.

The Word proclaimed is used by the Spirit to prompt every faithfulness in and of the Church. While the Spirit may use the Word in any particular moment to a great variety of ends, repentance upon hearing the Word is always in order. Toward a repentance prompted by the Word and Spirit that leads toward reformation that in turn leads toward a more faithful Church effectively offered to the world, the following self-examination is offered to and by the Church. For the sake of our witness in an alienated world to the reconciliation of God, and that we may more fully experience the peace, unity and purity of our life in God, may we have the wisdom, courage and grace now to acknowledge our own need and repent of our sin.

Of what sin shall we repent?

First, let us repent of neglecting repentance. We have seldom offered a repentance. Difficult as repentance is, the nature of our particular sin and circumstance has made it more difficult. We are a divided fellowship. Many are in separate and combative parties. Offering repentance as the Church before the whole Church necessarily is either confessing the particular sins of our own party thus making our selves and our causes vulnerable which, in an environment of diminished trust, requires near heroism or foolishness, or we confess the sin of the other party and thus reduce our repentance to the appearance of mere accusation. Further, in this division few sins seem to be shared or shared equally among the parties so that a repentance offered by those not in parties also sounds like the choosing of sides or merely cursing a pox on both houses and thus adding to, rather than repenting of, the sin of the Church. We also find it difficult to be specific when repenting, yet the confession of something other than real sin offered after sincere and sustained self-examination is not helpful or worthy of a Church that trusts its Savior to forgive and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. The command to the Church to repent the sin of the Church requires that we assume the risk of vulnerability in a distrustful environment, appearing to accuse rather than repent, and being specific about our real sins. First, let us repent of our continued unwillingness to repent.

Second, let us repent of neglecting the Word. The Spirit uses the Word to prompt our self-examination, repentance and reform, yet we have valued other words more. The voices of the world and our own voices have been heard more frequently and given more deference than the one Word of God which we are called to hear and obey. The Church must strive to still within itself any voice but God’s own. To aid our self-examination, repentance and reform some voices to which undue authority has been given and because of which our experience of peace, unity and purity is diminished are here identified.

1. “The meaning of God’s Word is uncertain because its interpretation is debated.” The Church no longer reads and hears the Word together with a desire or hope for common understanding and commitment. Agreement is rare, consensus hard in our fellowship. This, in varying degrees, may have always been true in our history, but now it is accompanied by an easy concession to the impossibility of shared meaning. The voice says, “You have your interpretation and I have mine. Let us agree to disagree. Prolonged attempts at newly formed consensus regarding the knowledge of God’s Word will be fruitless.” There is resignation and defeatism in this voice. Our sin in listening to this voice is faithlessness which produces laziness.

The Spirit of God, promised by the Son, which leads us into all truth, is at work in the Church no less in our own than in previous generations. The Scriptures can be read together and heard aright together in all times and places. Diminished expectations of the work of the sovereign God in our common life within this generation is the result of hearing this voice say that the human must triumph over the divine—our circumstances over God’s intentions.

The voice says our private and partisan interpretations are irreducible and immalleable because intractable, and intractable because we are. This voice does not trust the Word of God to break through our presuppositions, perspectives and prejudices to reach and amend the human heart and mind and persuade the Church of what is good, right and true. This is a denial of the doctrine of illumination—the promised work of the Spirit to lead us together into all truth. Thus this is a faithless voice; it does not trust.

And it is a voice that urges laziness. This voice suggests that the careful and hopeful reading of the Word toward the end of shared knowledge and action in the Church is a rigor in excess of the value gained. It counsels us not only to accept our different interpretations as final but as preferable. Occasional and temporal ambiguity is not merely admitted by this voice, it is desired. It argues that the fragmented and partial readings by the varied parts of the Church are to remain unattended, even celebrated. The rigor required to give God’s Word serious and sustained reading together and then submit that reading to the whole Church around the world and through the ages is rejected as too hard and thus left undone. This is an especial laziness in a fellowship that once showed intellectual gifts serviceable to other fellowships.

Our faith in the efficacy of the Spirit’s work and our resolve to work toward agreement in faith and practice is weak. The faithless and lazy voice that celebrates the finality of fragmented meaning are to be rejected by every fellowship, and especially so by a Church that is self-consciously confessional. The peace, unity and purity of the Church is diminished by our faithlessness and laziness; it is enhanced by sustained and shared hearing of the Word.

2. “The world sets the agenda for the Church.” This second voice attempts to persuade the Church that its mission and its relevance is established and measured by its conformity to the world’s expectations and definitions of the usefulness of the Church. It confuses the object of the Church’s mission for its commissioner. The Word, not the world, is the God-given instructor and corrector of the Church. When the Church and the world are at cross-purposes, the Church is not therefore and thereby to be transformed. The continued conformity of the Church is to be oriented toward the image of Christ alone. While this other voice beckons us to hear the world as instructive, the Word invites us to see Christ more clearly and mature into him.

While the Church appropriately becomes familiar with the world, it must remember that the world is foreign. The Church is alien to the world in part for the sake of the world - that the Church can bring to the world the saving knowledge of the Savior. Instead, this voice insists that the state of the world’s knowledge now being greater than in previous generations it can and should judge the Word because of the Word’s ancient origins. “Written long ago and far away, the Word is not relevant,” it sneers. “It does not speak to or of us,” it says with a pretended sophistication. “Surely it is not God who has spoken, but mere mortals out of their unenviable infancy. We know so much more now; listen to the world, to us” it seduces.

Listening to this voice is rejecting not only the Word written but the Word Incarnate. It is rejecting both gift and Giver. It is the sin of ingratitude produced by an arrogance. The Word, given in part to enable the Church to fulfill its calling of bringing the world to its Living Savior, has been exchanged in our common life for the words of a world without the Savior. The Word, given to authoritatively direct our mission and keep us on it with minimal distraction from competing urgencies and agendas, lately has been judged by the Church to be inferior to our own reading of the world’s needs and desires. Our contentions and ineffectiveness are among the effects of the loss of our humility before the Word. The peace, unity and purity of the Church is diminished by our ingratitude and arrogance; it is enhanced by a renewed deference to all the Word teaches us to be and do.

3. “I have a sovereign right to my own conscience”. This third voice misquotes. The Church believes and teaches that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Thus, the conscience has a Lord and is not itself sovereign. The conscience is to obey its sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, insofar as Christ’s will for the Church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed. The Scripture is public and communal; it is not the possession of any one of us or any one party among us. The Scripture instructs the conscience of the Church. Thus, the conscience of the Church because instructed by the Scriptures has an entitlement to act, and in acting, though it too may err, does not infringe on the rights of our individual consciences. Put otherwise, the Church has a right to exercise its conscience. Placing the individual above and beyond the communal, hallowing the thoughts and freedom of action of the member or officer more so than recognizing the right of the Church to exercise its own discerning conscience and will has made discipline in the Church rare and of little effect.

Discipline too is a gift of God to the Church and a gift of the Church to all her parts. The third voice though reasons for the autonomous individual apart from the Church’s ministrations. It has led to the sin of pride in each of us and the sin of cowardice in the Church. Afraid to ask of her members and officers what the Church must ask for the sake of each of us and for its own sake, and the unwillingness on the part of each of us to give to the collective conscience and will of the Church what we demand for our selves, we prevent the Word from its full, healing and unifying work in our common lives. The neglect of discipline is a neglect of the ministry of the Word. Our peace, unity and purity is diminished by our pride and cowardice; it is enhanced when we exercise and abide by the discipline of the Church.

Third, let us repent of neglecting to love one another. By our Savior’s testimony our love for each other is derivative of and reflective of His own love for us. It is to be of the same quality. It is not. Our love for each other is half-hearted when present and sometimes altogether absent. It is the basis for our mission in the world, a mission which suffers greatly by our foolishly striving to love others more than we love each other. The world’s poor and the least are neglected because of our

self-preoccupations. The unsaved do not hear us proclaim the gospel because of our words against each other. The world's peace is at risk because of our strife. Among us, apathy masquerades as tolerance and the vocabulary of love has become an instrument of division. We have not loved as we have been commanded. Let us repent of our failure to love enough to love more.

Lord, we confess our lack of repentance, our faithlessness and laziness, our ingratitude and arrogance, our pride and cowardice, our lovelessness. We repent.

Appendix III. Premises for a Faithful Witness

A. Prayer as Work for Reformation

—adapted from material provided by Community Presbyterian Church, Ventura CA; Mark Patterson, pastor

Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

Because it is the chief part of the gratitude which God requires of us, and because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who sincerely beseech him in prayer without ceasing, and who thank him for these gifts.

--Heidelberg Catechism, Question 116, *Book of Confessions*, p. 48.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

--2 Chronicles. 7:14

Historically, reforms of the church, beginning with the accounts in the Old Testament, have been characterized by prayer. Nehemiah 1 and 9 are examples. Though we feel compelled to issue a call for prayer, it is God who calls us all to engage in prayer across our denomination. The “prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (James 6:16b) and the Lord has promised to glorify himself through the prayers we offer (John 14:13).

The prayer that pleases God and is heard by him is rooted in Scripture: one in which “we sincerely call upon the one true God, who has revealed himself to us in his Word, for all that he has commanded us to ask of him...” (Heidelberg, Q117). Prayer is powerful not as a human act but as divine, for in prayer God teaches his people that he alone can save, renew, and use the church and that it is for us alone to trust his word and call upon him. In prayer the church is most right, most holy, and most alive. In prayer the church best and most rightly practices faith as it not only throws itself upon the care of the Father, but also trusts that he is able and willing to heal and restore. The most important thing we can be doing at this point in our history, as we stand before hurts and controversies that are beyond human reconciliation, is to turn to God in prayer.

Congregations:

We call pastors and elders in each congregation to model and teach members the spiritual discipline of prayer, encouraging the body, individually and corporately, to pray regularly for our reformation. Let us consider it a matter of great urgency to meet with God regarding our troubled denomination. Let us consider particular days devoted to prayer and fasting for the Church. Let us pray regularly and specifically for the health of the denomination, at staff meetings, session and deacons meetings, and in congregational worship. Let us challenge leaders and members to set aside time for prayer and fasting, provide opportunity to gather in the sanctuary or other designated place set aside for worship, and urge prayer through a variety of other means as well. These should be times of prayer especially focused upon the renewal of the church and its full healing under God's vast grace, mercy, and love. Such prayers should expand to include regular intercession for meetings of the larger church (our presbyteries, General Assembly, General Assembly Council, renewal ministry groups and their events: every occasion of the body's gathering) with the conscious and intentional aim of seeking God's blessing and leading. We urge sessions to lead their churches into a life of prayer that calls for and relies upon the Father's gracious power to shape the church into the body of Christ. The practice of prayer may include many dimensions and practices, including:

- Prayers for the larger church that are included in each Sunday's service, either as part of the pastoral prayers of the people or in a special and specific time of prayer. We respectfully call each church to pray each Sunday for the reform and renewal of the whole church.
- Include presbytery and denominational level matters on the congregation's regular prayer list, forming intercession teams to pray regularly for the reform and renewal of the whole body.
- Encourage members in their private prayers to include the presbytery and larger church.

Presbyteries:

We respectfully call upon each presbytery to establish prayer as an integral part of covenant relationships between churches, sessions, and members of presbytery. Rarely is prayer given a central role in shaping the course of our meetings or their outcome. We urge presbyteries through their member elders and pastors to establish the discipline of prayer across and

through the presbytery. We urge covenant communities within its bounds to form and meet for prayer. Opportunities might include:

- Pastors and elders within a local area gathering regularly to pray for the meetings, work, relationships, and future of the presbytery and the larger church. This may include as few as two or three churches or a quarter or half the presbytery but should be planned with the distances and population of each presbytery in mind, to make participation relatively easy.
- Pray for extended period prior to the actual meeting of presbytery. This might be a half-hour gathering immediately preceding the meeting or an hour or more on another day of the week before the meeting occurs. Consider meeting by conference call where long distances hinder easy regular gathering.
- Intercession for the presbytery can occur during the actual meeting in member churches or in a separate room where the meeting is taking place. In either case the goal is to be praying for the meeting as it is taking place.

The Denomination:

We call on denominational leaders to lead us all in prayerful repentance, seeking our unity and peace in the cross of Christ. We acknowledge and give thanks for recent movement in this direction.

We call on the leadership of renewal organizations to respond to the urgency of the need for prayer by making prayer central to their work and by providing opportunities and information for prayer to those who read their publications and visit their websites.

B. Report from The Presbyterian Coalition's Future Group

Discerning a Way Forward: Guiding Principles for Common Action Presbyterian Coalition August 2006

In the winter of 2006, the board of the Presbyterian Coalition appointed a task force to study the future of the denomination and to think broadly about both the current crisis in our denominational life and the preferred future we might envision for the church. This task force has developed ten guiding principles they believe should be utilized to evaluate and develop any potential model for renewal and change. The Presbyterian Coalition Board offers these principles to you for your consideration and evaluation as you assess the various options available to us now and in the future.

1. **Any plan must be true to Scripture, the confessions of the PC(USA), and seek to take seriously the vows of ordination taken by ministers, elders, and deacons.** We assume the plan will uphold the seriousness of the vows we have taken, and our plan should recognize there are beliefs that are essential to our identity as Christians. (Nehemiah 9: 37-39; Eph. 4:17-5:20; John 13: 31-35; 15:12-17; Deut. 4:1-40)
2. **Any plan must lead us into effective mission and evangelism.** Our plan should focus on God's call to Kingdom mission in the world. Our primary emphasis for giving and doing must be missional. (Matt. 28:18; Matt. 25:31-34; John 15; John 20:21; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chs. X (PCUS and XXXV (UPCUSA); Confession of 1967: 9.37; Heidelberg: 4.086; Second Helvetic: 5.115, 5.117, 5.120-122; *Book of Order*, G-3.000)
3. **Any plan should acknowledge and support the primary role of the local congregation in furthering the mission of God.** Other forms of the church outside the local congregation should strive to serve the work of the local congregation. In whatever plan we develop, the local congregation should be the primary place where the Great Ends of the Church are carried out. (Ephesians 4:11-13; John 17; Matt. 28:18; *Book of Order* 1.0200)
4. **Any plan must help limit the infection of corruption in the church.** Any plan should foster ministry focused on helping those who are tempted and those who have fallen, but it should also make clear our commitment to use the courts of the church as a means of necessary discipline for the erring and unrepentant. (Eph. 5:3-17; 2 Tim 3: 1-9, 14-17; Titus 2:1; Westminster Larger Catechism, 7.261)
5. **Any plan must provide a measure of protection to vulnerable congregations and individuals.**
 - a. "Relief of conscience." The plan should provide protection for Presbyterians in all locations whose consciences are bound by Scripture and the vows of office they have taken. Our objective is to create a way for such persons to remain in the denomination, if possible, without the necessity to participate in or contribute to what their consciences forbid. (Jeremiah 10:10; 11:10; Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1: 18-20; Westminster Confession of Faith, 6:109)
 - b. Protection of those in hostile environments. Some Presbyterians will not only be unwilling party to actions taken by their own and other presbyteries that violate their consciences, but also will be subject to pressure, prejudice,

- prosecution, and persecution. Protection in these cases should include tangible support and interventions. (1 Kings 19; Jeremiah 13:17; 15:20; 2Cor 6:16)
- c. **Relocation.** We recognize that with the recent action of the General Assembly, some in our denomination will find themselves in an untenable position. In the event that a local congregation can no longer in good conscience continue in a particular presbytery, faithfulness, support, and intervention may include relocation either within or outside the PC(USA).
6. **Any plan needs to provide both differentiation and permeability.** The plan should distinguish between those who are planted in orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right practice), and those who seek what they believe to be a more progressive way of belief and life. But the plan should be designed with flexibility to avoid drawing solid lines. It should acknowledge the difference between core Christian beliefs and practices and embrace wide differences on everything else. (Matt 5:9; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:1-3; Eph 5:15-17)
 7. **Any plan should promote responsible stewardship tied to conscience bound by the Word of God.** We must reflect our emphasis on mission and evangelism by such means as: (a) giving consideration to the allocation of resources; (b) encouraging reexamination of all commitments so that no contributions are made to what we perceive is harmful or destructive; and (c) using Scripture, our confessions, and our covenants as the highest standards for our commitment of time and money. (Deut. 15:10; 1 Chron. 29:10-17; Psalm 112:5; Jer. 23:27-28,32; Matt 6: 1-4, 19-21; Matt. 20; 2 Cor. 8, 9; Phil 4: 15-20; 1 Tim. 6:18)
 8. **Any plan should not abandon reform of the PC(USA).** The plan should take into account our location within the PC(USA) and the covenanted relationship we have with the whole. As long as we are able, we should bear witness to the truth, care for and bring back the wandering and the lost, and bring reform to that which is broken. (Ezekiel 3:4-11, 17-27; Haggai 2; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 33:1-17; I Kings 8:22-61; Jude 17-23; Rev. 3:7-13; *Book of Order*, G-2.0200; Confession of 1967, 9.03; Second Helvetic, 5.003.)
 9. **Any plan should promote unity with the evangelical/orthodox wing of the church.** The plan should have a broad appeal. Whatever we do, we should try to do together. (Matt. 18:19; John 17:20-24; 1Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3)
 10. **Any plan needs to be achievable.** The plan should have a high potential for actual implementation.
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C. “A Modest Proposal for the Renewal of Theological Education,” by Richard Ray

From the earliest centuries of the church, people have felt called by God to set aside their ordinary patterns of life and to enter into special periods of spiritual and theological discipleship. The circumstances have, of course, been quite varied. They could be as strange as the cells of isolated monks in the desert, as stimulating as the early Christian academy in Alexandria, and as dedicated to the combination of spiritual discipline and scholarship as the 13th century abbey of St. Victor on the edge of Paris.

Up until that time there was a remarkable consensus. Preparation for spiritual strength and leadership involved concentrated periods given to daily prayer, praise, and the study of the Scripture. Before Gregory of Naziansus and Basil the Great joined Basil’s brother Gregory in articulating the terms of the Trinity they spent ten years of study in Athens, time in individual contemplative prayer, and a concentrated effort to compile the writings of the great third century expositor, Origen. Spiritual preparation can be difficult and trying. It traditionally concerned the preparation of one’s soul and heart with God before the assumption of any kind of learning. In Benedictine abbeys, with others soon following, prayer and worship occurred seven times a day.

With the advent of the University of Paris in the 13th century, theological education took a turn towards speculation and professional preparation in logic and scholarly debate. Spiritual preparation was no longer at the center. As the university guild-oriented context continued to emerge, others focused on the development of a personal spiritual path. The emphasis on scholastic debates was thus seen as not enough to guide the church. In the early fifteenth century, John Gerson, then chancellor of the University of Paris, called for a return to the study of the theologians who best combined spiritual depth with academic efforts. He especially urged a rereading of Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century) and Bonaventure (13th century). From his perspective, seeing a church wracked by theological arguments and torn by the deep division of the Great Schism, with competing popes in two locations, a return to earlier, spiritually oriented theology was imperative. Unfortunately, it did not work out so easily.

As the course of the Church toward the Protestant Reformation developed, we should remember that Martin Luther was first prepared in a monastic setting of contemplative reading and regular prayer. Both he and Calvin were deeply indebted to the spiritual reading of Augustine and Bernard, as we can see in the citations in their writings. And Zwingli had the

opportunity for years of relatively secluded study of theological classics as well as Scripture before becoming the leader of the reforming movement in Zurich.

Until the early years of the twentieth century, many protestant seminaries continued to consider themselves to be schools of piety as well as academies. Preparation of mind and heart bore more of the ambience of congregational worship. Some noticed, however, that as the seminaries developed during the course of the twentieth century, the influence of the European university model became stronger. Faculty members were increasingly regarded for the complexity of their doctoral dissertations and their publication potential. The prestige given to and frequently claimed by seminaries seemed to be based on the elusive character of academic excellence. The rear guard claim to be professional schools for producing clergy with specific skill sets became yet another way of avoiding the more ancient commitment for spiritual depth and for engendering regular patterns of prayer.

It is hard to imagine today what a seminary might be like without such a strong emphasis on academic preparation. Even so, it is worth noting that little about this pattern of assignments and courses seems to lead naturally into the life of a congregation, especially when it sees itself as a community for spiritual transformation under the prevailing power of Christ.

Perhaps it would help us to gain perspective on where we have come in theological education if we look at the following questions.

1. How are our seminaries now perceived to be under the government and discipline of the church? Their presidents are approved by the General Assembly, but their selection, as well as the appointment of their governing boards, is relegated to the seminaries themselves. They are increasingly separated from middle governing body support and more dependent upon their own skills in fund raising.

2. How should we compare the emphasis on austerity and self-discipline in earlier forms of spiritual training with the atmosphere in our seminary culture today?

3. What could be gained by learning more about the process through which our seminaries accept students into the student body?

4. Should we compare the older monastic setting, with disciplined patterns of worship seven times a day and with the emphasis on contemplative reading, with the amount of time now set aside for community worship and individual prayer in our seminaries? What could be learned from looking at the proportion of the time that is given to academic instruction now in comparison to the amount of time given by both faculty and students in community worship?

5. Seminaries often have well intended plans to evaluate students in terms of readiness for ministry in a congregational context as well as academic achievement. How could those involved in renewal movements play some role in such discussions?

6. Life long practice of preaching the Word of God involves worship and contemplative approaches to the study of Scripture. They are usually intertwined with prayer, humility, and expectation of new insight. What might result if practicing preachers became partners with the seminary professors of exegesis and homiletics?

7. What might be done to help seminary leaders to see the value of specified opportunities for seminary trustees to study the "Great Ends of the Church," to be led in spiritual retreat together, and to form commitments for mutual accountability in spiritual discipline?

8. While strong intellectual and scholarly gifts are important, what other characteristics should be prominent in the selection of faculty? Should their experience in personal evangelism, helping people to deal with the spiritual issues of sin, grief, guilt and other challenges, and leading congregations toward deeper commitments in missions, play a significantly larger role in the recruitment of faculty? And what contributions could a panel of representative pastors and laity make to the search for new faculty? Such searches are increasingly regarded as the sole responsibility of the faculties themselves. Should the interview results from pastors and elders be given serious consideration by those involved in such searches? By boards of trustees?

9. Our seminaries provide opportunities to study the *Book of Order* and the *Book of Confessions*. However, it might be helpful to ask how such classes are conducted. How can students be guided to see the deep repositories of spiritual wisdom in those valued documents?

10. What could be gained if some groups of renewal leaders asked for more opportunity to visit our seminary campuses, to take classes, to meet over lunch with professors, to share faith journeys and experiences with one another? Could we sponsor a "get acquainted project" before we sponsor an "improvement project"? This might help us to understand more clearly the role played by accreditation standards, professional guilds, cultural accommodation and other such issues in the seminary communities.

11. Finally, what might be accomplished if we initiated commitments from all renewal communities to pray for the seminaries including individual faculty members and administrators for a certain period of time before meeting with them?

Certainly there are other measures that presbyteries and sessions could take. These could include renewed attention to the meaning of one's Christian vocation as a calling from God, to the grounding of young adults in courses in deep evangelical piety and concern for the secularized people around them, to the development of seminars in presbyteries on "what to look for if you would like to consider visiting some seminaries." In short, we could personally become committed to re-cultivate the relation between seminary and church. It is the fruit of experience that relationships in families,

friendships, and churches should never be taken for granted. All improvements in personal relations are the result of individual and community initiatives. Thus, should we become “friend-makers for Christian ministry” in our new cultural circumstances? It may depend on us to initiate and cultivate this unique form of “friendship evangelism” in our church.

Inasmuch as those most interested in spiritual renewal in the life of the church have continued to serve as the stewards of this devotional heritage through the years they could serve as helpful partners with the seminaries in restoring this traditional balance. Thus it might be useful for Coalition partners to consider ways of suggesting their interests and resources to the seminaries. Our goal together would be, to use the words of Psalm 29, to help one another to hear the “voice of the Lord.”

Appendix IV: Reform and Renewal of our Congregations

Goal #1: Returning to the Scripture. Rediscovering a Right Understanding of God’s Word under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The materials and practices listed below, slightly edited, are the efforts of a number of our churches to raise the level of biblical understanding and knowledge of Christian faith. The full list appears on www.presbycoalition.org. This is only a beginning. We encourage churches to add their own best practices and programs to the list and help each other promote a return to Scripture.

From Pastor Robert Austell, Good Shepherd Presbyterian in Charlotte, NC: robert @ gspc.net; Check his website at www.gspc.net, for:

Missional Blog/Local Church Teaching Themes. Also, some of the teaching and themes I’ve been using at Good Shepherd on being a missional church are on my blog, specifically on that topic: <http://robertaustell.blogspot.com>

Year of the Bible Churchwide Focus Plan: details on our “Year of the Bible” - one sermon from each book of the Bible (1-2 got lumped together; choose a key passage rather than preaching a whole book); SS lesson plans to overview books of the Bible and highlight sermon texts; reading plans for the congregation.

From Stephen Eyre, former pastor at College Hill Presbyterian, Cincinnati, OH: seyre48 @ hotmail.com

I am doing something about biblical literacy. I have started a new ministry that seeks to engage an entire congregation in the study of a biblical passage in preparation for the Sunday sermon (**Church Discipleship Services: Connecting and Equipping Through the Scriptures**).

From Stan Huie, Spotsylvania Presbyterian in Fredricksburg, VA: Stan @ Huies.net

Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, while not explicitly Reformed, centers on discipleship and the Walk Thru the Old and New Testament. The seminars give a good overview of the Old or New Testament to give a context to Scripture. For many people, the Bible is like a puzzle and they only see various pieces of the puzzle in no general context. Walk Thru provides, as it were, the box top to the puzzle to show how the pieces fit together. The links below have a video, sample workbook pages and other resources to understand the seminars:

http://www.walkthru.org/site/PageServer?pagename=semOT_SD_Tour

http://www.walkthru.org/site/PageServer?pagename=SemOT_Ab

Walk Thru also has an excellent devotional called “**The Daily Walk**” for reading the entire Bible in a year. I am a bit biased because I have been teaching for this ministry and am now their Mid-Atlantic State Representative, but I became affiliated with them because I believe in their ministry.

Another ministry I am really excited about is **Man In the Mirror Ministries**. The best way to get an overview of this ministry is to read the first chapter of “**No Man Left Behind**.” In short, MIM insists that discipleship must be at the heart of a church’s ministry. Their strategy for men’s outreach (which is more broadly applicable to all the church) is to work through their “Create-Capture-Sustain” model to draw men into discipleship and thereafter into the many aspects of the church’s mission and ministry.

In the area of **Reformed Theology** I have particularly enjoyed the DVD resource **Amazing Grace: The History and Theology of Calvinism** by a ministry called **The Apologetics Group**. I recently used this for a study in conjunction with R. C. Sproul’s book **What Is Reformed Theology**.

I am currently giving a second run through the series **That the World May Know** by Ray Vander Laan. This is filmed on scene in Israel and does a wonderful job of giving background and context to Scripture. This is a very dynamic and interesting series and really draws people in.

More important than these, I believe is basic Bible Study. Some time ago I took about five or six years to **teach a survey course through the entire Bible**. Along with a host of good commentaries and overviews, I used Bruce Wilkinson and Ken Boa’s **Talk Thru the Bible** as a resource. One of the things I particularly appreciate about this resource is that for each book of the Bible they have a section on how Christ is depicted in that book, a center we always need to remember as we teach Scripture.

From Jennifer Kirkbride, elder/clerk of session at First Presbyterian in Wellsburg, WV: jennyvk @ stratuswave.net,

One thing that our church just finished was **The Truth Project by Focus on the Family**. It is a 12-session one-hour video curriculum that was *excellent*. The Truth Project is taught by Del Tackett and he does an excellent job explaining the differences between a cultural world view and the Biblical world view. Once you experience the differences and realize how far our culture has taken us from the Biblical world view, it really opens your mind to it. The web site is: www.thetruthproject.org.

From James Quillen, Co-Pastor, Highland Heights Presbyterian, Cordova, TN: jqullin @ bellsouth.net

Ten Big Ideas in Reformed Theology (A survey): See www.presbycoalition.org for this program

From Ron Rand, former pastor at College Hill Presbyterian in Cincinnati: ron.upbuilding @ gmail.com
Upbuilding Ministries. See my website at www.upbuildingministries.org. Note in particular the links: MINISTRY OPTIONS for the 7 different opportunities, CLERGY COMMENTS, especially the Presbyterian Pastors and their comments, and ABOUT US for some short videos of an overview of an UpBuilding Weekend.

From Ryan Rasmussen, Associate Pastor, FPC Goldsboro, NC: rrasmussen2 @ bellsouth.net

We have implemented the **Bethel Bible Series** at FPC Goldsboro, NC to help increase biblical literacy in our congregation. I've spent the past two years training seven people to become teachers for the congregational phase of the ministry. We spent one year on the OT and one on the NT. Now, my trainees are prepared to teach this study that is specifically designed to reach people who are intimidated by Bible study. Go to their web site, www.bethelseries.com if you're interested in sharing this with others.

From Lewis Toland, Ph.D., elder at First Presbyterian of Dexter, NM, Sierra Blanca Presbytery: toland @ plateautel.net

I direct **the training for CLPs** in Sierra Blanca Presbytery, a geographically large but numerically small presbytery in southern New Mexico. I have been promoting these courses for adults to learn more about the Scriptures and their heritage.

On a related matter, if Sunday school matters, can you think of any other school that never bothers with exams and credentials? Why don't more education committees survey the knowledge of our students, which Stephen Prothero's new book demonstrates to be so abysmal that many students believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife?

Goals #2. Developing Elders Competent to Provide Spiritual Leadership and Pastoral Care for the Congregation.

Goal #3. Preparing Elders to Lead Our Congregations and the Larger Church into the Fullness of Life that God Intends, Manifested in Direct Mission and Evangelism Efforts and in Participation in the Governance of the Church at Every Level. (Resources submitted in these areas overlapped the goals.)

A. The Nominating Process and a Focus on the Congregation's Spiritual Development

It is from our active membership that our officers are nominated. And from this membership come the members of the nominating committees, which are meant to be committees of members, not dominated by officers. Elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament are entrusted with the spiritual nurture of the body. Attending to the developing maturity of faith of those who become members of our church must not be neglected. Expectations for membership is one way of building up the body. The following written expectations for membership are used by Community Presbyterian Church in Ventura, CA.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ **Faith-Purity-Discipleship-Membership**

Introduction: Participation and Membership

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me.

Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me...keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Jesus, Matthew 11—The Message

Just as Christ Jesus welcomes all, so we welcome and invite all to participate in worship, study, fellowship, and prayer and to receive pastoral care. Whether seeker or devout, broken or healed, grieving or rejoicing, all are free to join us in our quest to seek, learn, and enjoy our God and to know the love and support of the church. While participation in any or all of these areas is open to all, without restriction, definition, or limitation, *Active Membership* is more carefully and precisely

defined in the Presbyterian Church. Every Christian church is entitled and expected to declare the terms of admission into its communion and describe the nature, content, and look of faith expected of its members. It is therefore crucial that the meaning of faith, discipleship, and membership are clearly defined and understood. In order to help members and those seeking membership to understand what is meant by this term and the special relationship it signifies, we present the following thoughts and invitation.

Faith and Active Church Membership

“One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life”

The church is God’s creation and work. We believe that the Father, from the creation of the human race, has faithfully preserved, instructed, multiplied, honored, and called from death to life, a gathering of faithful people. We affirm that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, making us his new creation, and calling us to be ambassadors of reconciliation and witnesses to transforming power of Christ’s resurrection. As such, the church exists as the body of Christ, a people of integrity, purity and devotion, born of God and ceaselessly striving to faithfully respond to the faithfulness of our Father in heaven. We are, by God’s gracious work, a people of faith.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only basis for church membership and thus *Active Membership* means nothing less than genuine, vibrant faith in Christ which accepts and exhibits his Lordship over all of life. By our faith, we are justified, that is declared righteous in his eyes and reconciled to God. Thus, faith provides understanding of God’s nature, will and work, binds us in trusting relationship to the Lord, and defines the shape of our lives. For these reasons, the health of the church and its members is directly tied to the depth, integrity, and truth of the faith they hold and live.

We understand faith to be “the sure and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gracious promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” Faith is not an opinion, perspective, or feeling. It is more than mere personal conviction. Faith is the fruit and effect of the Holy Spirit’s work on our lives. Revealing the truth of God to our hearts, the Spirit enables us to see and comprehend God’s will and enables us to wholeheartedly follow and live a life that is pleasing to God. Faith means understanding, receiving, and appropriately responding to the essential tenets of the Christian faith, that is, the real acts and revealed nature and thus truth of God our Father. These are learned from the Bible’s witness and include our affirmation...

❖ ...of the Trinity and God’s existence as one being in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	❖ ...of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead.	❖ ...that God has, through Christ, called a church into being to do His will and proclaim his nature and work.
❖ ...of the Lordship of Jesus.	❖ ...that salvation is through Christ alone	❖ ...that we are to live holy lives after the example of Christ
❖ ...of Jesus Christ’s dual nature, fully God and fully human.	❖ ...that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works.	❖ ...that we are to go into all the world, making disciples of all people and teaching them all that Jesus said and did.
❖ ...that Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried.	❖ ...of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son works to effect our salvation.	❖ ...that Jesus will return to gather his church to himself and reign forever over all creation.
❖ ...of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the person and work of Christ.	❖ ...of the Bible’s inspiration and authority.	

Faith as Response

Active Membership is a specific response of faith by which we publicly submit the whole of our lives to the lordship of Christ, entrust the whole of our lives to his mercy and grace, live the whole of our lives in joyous expectant obedience, and give the whole of our lives to the manifestation, exhibition, and expansion of his kingdom. Most practically, *Active Membership* means personal commitment to and sharing in the proclamation of the good news, participation in the life and worship of the church, prayer, study of the Scriptures and faith of the church, and supporting the church through the giving of money, time, support, and service. For faith informs and transforms our lives. Knowing and trusting God’s will and work we are justified (declared righteous) and living our faith before God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are sanctified (made righteous). In faith we turn to God and in the process, turn from all that would keep us from him and his blessings.

Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It’s rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretenses... In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all.

We hold that faith in Christ and purity of life are the two necessary sides of the one act of Christian discipleship. One cannot have one without the other. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it abundantly. This means that faith not only receives God’s gifts and blessings, it endeavors to throw off all that would limit, deny or annul them. Faith, and thus

church membership, is to put off the old and put on the new life God intends and thus—as an act of faith, in obedience and love to God, and in pursuit of that life Christ came to give—we put off our sinful nature seeking to reflect the image of Christ Jesus.

PUT OFF- Marks of the sinful nature:

- Sexual immorality: adultery, impurity, fornication, homosexual behavior, lust, pornography, orgies, prostitution, carousing, lewdness
- Malice: slander, deceit, murder, bitterness, falsehood, dissent, gossip, discord, revenge, hatred, unwholesome talk, course joking, obscenity, abusive talk, strife, disobedience to parents, treachery
- Greed: envy, love of money, theft, jealousy, idolatry, covetousness, swindling
- Lack of self-discipline: fits of rage, drunkenness, debauchery, laziness, love of pleasure
- Pride: selfish ambition, arrogance, boasting, conceit
- False spirituality: witchcraft, false teaching, empty religion

PUT ON- Marks of the new life in Christ:

- Sexual purity: fidelity to marital vows between a man and a woman, chastity in singleness
- Love: honesty, peacemaking, speaking truth in love, forgiving, a mastered tongue, self-control, patience, kindness, sincerity, impartiality, mercy, consideration, forbearance, compassion, thankfulness, loyalty, gentleness
- Humility: regard for authority, submissive
- Freedom from greed: contentment, faithful stewardship, financial/vocational integrity, generosity
- Sound doctrine: passion for godliness, worshipper of the true God, lover of the Truth

Not one of us is free from sin, not one of us is perfect, and thus we are all ever in need of God’s grace and forgiveness which is available to all who confess their sins. We are ever in need also of the loving guidance and support of the church, recognizing that Scripture teaches us to rescue and restore one another in love. Only together, in humility and confession, in the fullness of mutual encouragement and love, can we grow into the life Christ died to provide.

In keeping with the above understanding of faith, church membership, and response to God’s work and call, we invite members of [name of congregation] to join us in the following covenant affirmation. After prayerfully studying the above teachings and standards, we invite you to sign your name below, freshly affirming your faith in our great and wonderful God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

<p><i>Statement of Faith and Intent:</i></p> <p>I believe that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth and the Savior, Redeemer, and Lord of my life. As a disciple of Jesus Christ I commit myself to the proclamation of the good news, participation in the life and worship of the church, prayer, study of the Scriptures and the faith of the church. I commit to supporting the church through the giving of my money, time, support, service, and leadership. As a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and as a member of this particular church, I will endeavor to lead a life of faith consistent with the Bible’s witness and standards. If my behavior contradicts these standards, I request that my brothers and sisters in Christ exhibit love for me by leading me back to wholeness through the restorative process outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20. Relying on the grace and power of Christ Jesus and the loving support of the congregation of [name of congregation], I willingly reject the marks of the sinful nature and embrace the marks of new life in Christ, desiring and intending that Jesus Christ be Lord over the whole of my life.</p>		
(Print name)	(Sign name)	(Date)

B. Officer Preparation, Examination and Development

From Pastor Robert Austell, Good Shepherd Presbyterian in Charlotte, NC: website www.gspc.net, robert @ gspc.net

Officer Retreat Resources: I have material for a 6 hour officer retreat on missional themes, to teach, identify, and evaluate effectiveness at being a missional church and to help reframe current ministries in that light.

From Pastor Jay Hull at Covenant Presbyterian, in Reno, NV: www.covenant-reno.org

We do an annual **Leadership Training Day** (prayer, team-building activities, study of servant-leadership examples and instructions from Scripture, and discussion of duties for elders and deacons outlined in the *Book of Order*). In addition we have a weekend retreat every February for our elders for prayer, evaluation and planning. I also would encourage other Presbyterians to check out our church website and especially our “**BASIC Newsletters**” which share the essentials of our faith.

From James Quillen, Co-Pastor, Highland Heights Presbyterian, Cordova, TN: jqullin @ bellsouth.net

The Office of Elder in Scripture (see complete resource at www.presbycoalition.org)

Foundational Principles of Presbyterian Order (see complete resource at www.presbycoalition.org)

From Bob Sundquist, elder at First Presbyterian in Paola, KS: Bob.Sundquist @ garmin.com

Officer **training** is a passion of mine and something I have been pushing for and working on in our church. We have developed a 10-week course and are planning to use **San Diego's Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives** (<http://www.presbycoalition.org/tenets.pdf>) as part of our training. I have attached a draft syllabus, still a work in progress. I have long felt our local church is weak in understanding of the confessions and Reformed theology. (See www.presbycoalition.org for the syllabus.)

From Terry Schlossberg, elder at National Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C.: terryschlossberg @ comcast.net

Our congregation has a document called **Biblical Standards of Leadership**. We require that officers and Presbyterian staff of the church agree to the statement in writing:

BIBLICAL STANDARDS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

"It is a true saying that if someone wants to be a church leader they have a good ambition. For a leader must be a good person whose life cannot be spoken against... Those who do well as leaders will be well rewarded both by respect from others and also by developing their own confidence and bold trust in the Lord" (1 Timothy 3:1-2a, 13).

Leadership in the church is a responsibility and not a right. It is extended to those who come under the authority of the church's teaching as expounded in the Bible and *Book of Confessions*. It has always been a demanding calling. Today, the gap between Christian and societal values makes this particularly challenging. As we serve Christ in leadership, we model what we really believe about our faith. Both our beliefs and our lifestyles are critical to the way we serve Christ and project Christian leadership.

The lack of clear moral guidelines in our society leaves many confused; this confusion extends often to church life. In an effort to bring some clarity, we have distilled some Biblical principles for the selection, training and development of those who serve the church as leaders. We want to be faithful to Biblical standards yet avoid being judgmental. All of us have sinned, with failings both public and private. At the same time, believing that our leadership and lifestyles must demonstrate our beliefs, we should be able to say with Paul, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."

There are three principal passages in the New Testament that explicitly discuss the guidelines for Christian church leaders. They are: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1. Christian life standards are described well in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 and Ephesians 6: 1- 5 and instruction on Christian service is found at Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16 and Philippians 2:1-4. The Christian leader should continually seek the Lord's help in achieving the standards set forth in these passages. We have drawn from them the following guidelines. We encourage you to consider them, praying that God will honor your desire to model Christian beliefs and lifestyle.

All who seek to lead in the Christian community will strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to exemplify the following Biblical standards of Christian living:

Personal Standards

- Integrity: The Christian leader shall be committed to the highest ethical standards in both personal and professional conduct.
- Speech: Christian leaders speak truth in love and are not quarrelsome. Their speech should reflect their commitment to Christ.
- Self Control: The Christian leader exercises self control in speech and action and is free from substance abuse (alcohol, drugs and other dependencies).
- Sexual Behavior: The Christian leader is committed to fidelity in the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, and chastity in singleness.
- Distinctive Lifestyle: The Christian leader will demonstrate in lifestyle what is desirable in all believers—the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Our leaders seek to illustrate a ministry of grace in their own lives.

Spiritual Standards

- Personal Faith: Christian leadership requires a mature, vibrant and Christ-centered faith. That faith includes a personal grasp of basic Christian beliefs; an active, ongoing relationship with God, rooted in prayer; obedience to Scripture; and a commitment to growth in love, holiness, service and fellowship. Christian leaders should not be recent converts.

- Lordship of Christ: In short, the Christian leader is one who desires Jesus Christ to be Lord in all areas of life.
- Servants: Christian leaders are to be the servants of others, and be willing to help those in need.
- Christian Growth: Christian leaders make spiritual growth a continuing priority, reflected in Bible study, fellowship with other Christians, worship and involvement in Christian community.
- Confession: Christian leaders are able to confess and repent of their sins. They lead the church in demonstrating humility and the need for God's grace.
- True to the Word of God: Those who lead are teachers in the Christian community. They must teach with doctrine faithful to the Scriptures and the guidance of the *Book of Confessions*. They come under the authority of the Bible in their own lives.
- Commitment to Local Church: Christian leaders at NPC are to be members of the congregation, regular in attendance of worship and faithful to the extra commitments their positions require.
- Stewardship: Christian leaders are to have a growing commitment to progressive and disciplined giving, proportional to resources. They are to be generous in giving of their time, talents and financial resources.

Leadership Standards

- Balance: The Christian leader makes an ongoing effort to balance quality relationships among family, occupational and church responsibilities.
- Concern for Others: Christian leaders have a heart for seeing people come to know Christ and develop their Christian walk; they cultivate an ability to share their faith.
- Commitment to Training Leaders: The Christian leader is committed to training others, encouraging them, and giving them opportunities to use their gifts.

I have read, understand and subscribe to the Biblical Standards for Christian Leaders as described above.

(Signature)

The National Presbyterian Church
Washington, D.C.

(Date)

We at National also have a plan for study, preparation and examination of officers, following the *Book of Order* requirements. We have a plan that adds to that basic instruction and examination a program for the spiritual development of officers.

C. Mission and Evangelism

From Pastor Phil Olson at Church on the Mall in Plymouth Meeting, PA: revphil @ churchonthemall.com

Reformed witness doesn't separate word from deed, thus 'holistic evangelism' or 'holistic ministry' is proper terminology. Evangelism is distinct from social action/social ministry/social concern/social righteousness/social justice (or whatever you want to call it) and vice versa. Yet, the gospel witness (with two distinct sides—you can tell a head from a tail—you can tell evangelism from outreach) is one coin: mission (your definition in your request for materials confined mission' to global—I wouldn't separate local & global—current thinking uses terms like "glocal" [cf. Len Sweet, Bob Roberts, et al]).

I offer resources that I and my colleagues at Evangelicals for Social Action developed. We have an A-Z text on holistic mission, **Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News & Good Works by Sider, Unruh & Olson** (featuring three PC(USA) congregations); a CD-ROM, **Becoming a Church That Makes a Difference: Ventures in Holistic Ministry by Unruh & Olson** (includes over 200 pages plus 45 downloadable worksheets web-linked); by the end of the summer of 2007, I will have a Power-Point training tool available on helping your congregation engage your community in holistic ministry (based on a class I teach as adjunct professor at Palmer Seminary, called "Community Focused Ministry"). We also have a free e-zine (e-Pistle), which has a holistic ministry channel to which I contribute. Check out www.esa-online.org , www.esa-online.org/ or email me at revphil@churchonthemall.com.

From Pastor Don Baird in Sacramento, CA: drdonaldbaird @ aol.com

In the area of mission, we are doing two things that have greatly increased our congregation's giving and interest.

1 - We are doing **Short Term Mission**. We've only adopted one African tribe (this keeps it simple and personal). When a team goes to Ethiopia we do a patch to worship here on Sunday morning and interview the Mission team and those they are ministering to.

2 - We **designate** 100% of all our Special offerings (OGHS, JOY, PEACE and Witness) to ONE, only one, project for each offering that can be photographed. For example, we decided to dig a dozen, or as many as the money could buy, water wells for the Shacicho People at \$2,000 each. We raised \$40,000 for that with the Peace Offering. Prior giving to this offering typically was \$2,700.

In Evangelism: During the Witness offering we raised \$10,000, instead of the \$2,500 we usually do, to provide the **Alpha program** for all of the churches in the Sacramento Presbytery: materials, conferences, training, coaching, etc. Now churches in our Presbytery who want to do Alpha can. If they don't it's because they don't want to. If we have money left over we're offering the same to the Nevada Presbytery, and others, until the money is gone.

From Rev. Dave Hackett, formerly of Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, now of Visionsynergy dhackett @ visionsynergy.net

Dave sent his two minute presentation on the **Marks of a Missional Church**:

What are the marks of a "missional church"? One of my pastor friends, Hu Auburn, says that, "A missional church is one that has more arrows pointing 'out' than it has arrows pointing 'in'." Missional churches ask the "out" question far more frequently than the "in" question. Every program or department of the church is evaluated by how well it helps the outward pulse of the church.

WholeFoods, the grocery store, has a new motto that missional churches can use as well: The motto says, "It's not something we do, it's everything we do."

The top question, the organizing principle, of missional churches, is this: "What has God called us to do for the Kingdom of God?" They ask this on three levels: the personal level, the church level, and the network level:

- 1) On the personal level ("What has God called *me* to do for the Kingdom of God?");
- 2) At the church level ("What has God called us as a church to do for the Kingdom of God? How are we especially gifted to give witness to Christ?"); and
- 3) At the network level ("Who else beyond our church has God called us to join forces with, to build up the Kingdom of God? How can we do more together with others than we can do by ourselves?")

Missional churches find their identity more in their outreach than in their fellowship. They take great encouragement in the mission they do, so they talk about it a lot. They don't pay others to do mission for them; they support ministries that help them live out the mission commitments the church has already made. For example: Instead of supporting a disabilities ministry because *it* believes in caring for the disabled community, a missional church itself cares for the disabled community, and one expression of that commitment is to support a particular disabilities ministry.

Missional churches have discovered the secret that Christians have the deepest experience of faith and fellowship *when* they are in ministry and mission. Ask those who have gone on mission trips if that's true for them!

100 years ago, in 1907, my great uncle Samuel A Moffett ordained the first seven Korean Protestant pastors in Korea. Those seven went on a retreat to decide what their first act would be as a truly indigenous Korean church. Above everything else they could have chosen, their first decision was to send out a missionary. "Real churches," they said, "send out missionaries!"

If we want to become a missional church, let's get our arrows pointing out!

From Pastor Lucky Arnold in North Palm Beach, FL: RevLuck @ aol.com

Like many congregations we have an **annual Missions Conference** and bring many of our mission partners to the church to build relationships with our people because our experience has been that people give to people. We also have a stated goal to have all of our people who are able to **experience** one overseas cross cultural mission experience in their life. This has increased the personal connections to our mission partners and the places and people they serve.

We have been using a program by Andy Stanley called **Go Fish** for evangelism training and worked in conjunction with our local FOX affiliate TV station and several other evangelical churches to produce TV commercials that are stylized like the billboard campaign of some years ago in which God asked questions or made brief statements. We have sought to stir the community by the commercials and stir our people by training them to be prepared to share their faith. So far it is working well though it is not inexpensive.

Appendix V: Reform and Renewal of our Presbyteries

Goal #4. Examining Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Those in the Preparation Process according to the Constitution.

A. A suggested resolution for presbyteries

Following the 2006 General Assembly, the renewal groups issued suggested wording for a resolution that a presbytery might adopt expressing its determination that compliance with the requirements for ordination adopted by the whole church is an essential of Reformed polity. We commend the wording to you. It avoids several pitfalls, one of which is the necessary and important distinction between asking candidates to believe or approve the requirements rather than asking them to obey or live in conformance to them. On constitutional requirements for ordination, our polity permits dissent; it does not permit disobedience.

In its discernment of the essentials of Reformed polity and for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, this governing body adopts the principle that compliance with the standards for ordination adopted by the whole church in the Book of Order is an essential of Reformed polity. Therefore, any departure from the standards for ordination expressed in the Book of Order will bar a candidate from ordination and/or installation by this governing body.

Provisions of the Book of Order are signified as being standards by use of the term “shall,” “is/are to be,” “requirement,” or equivalent expression.

B. Examination Questions and Process

Ask the right questions in examination, and follow up when necessary

The Joint Renewal Legal/Discipline Team urges you to be sure that the examination process of your session and presbytery is sufficient to determine whether a person’s answers give assurance of eligibility for ordination or installation. We suggest that you ask at least the following questions:

“The Stated Clerk and the General Assembly agree that our current constitutional standards categorically preclude the ordination and/or installation of any person who, without repentance, engages in intimate sexual activity outside the bounds of a marriage of a man and a woman. In light of that understanding of the requirements for ordination are you personally in compliance with the constitutional boundaries for ordination? And do you intend to continue to be in compliance?”

*“If ordained, would you advise a session or another ordaining governing body to be in compliance with those standards as long as they are the expressed requirements of the Constitution of the PC (USA)? If part of an examining body, would you vote to ordain/install a candidate not in compliance with the Constitution as thus understood?”**

*If these questions are asked of any candidate without additional prior basis, they must be asked of all candidates. The other questions need not be asked of every candidate, but may be.

In addition, we urge you to read and consider the Essential Tenets paper [<http://www.presbycoalition.org/tenets.pdf>] adopted by San Diego Presbytery. The paper was developed as an aid to effective examinations.

How the right questions serve the church well

Failing to stand and ask the right questions acquiesces to the effort to admit into leadership in our church those who are not spiritually and ethically qualified to serve the Church of Jesus Christ. It is session elders and presbyters who have the responsibility to determine who is and who is not ready to lead God’s people. The process is examination. If we fail here—in the opportunity and responsibility of examination—we fail in our responsibility for those who lead our denomination. In this we must not shrink back.

So, the first reason to stand and put the questions is to defend the Gospel and preserve the Truth.

The second reason for the right questions is so that the church courts may be brought into play effectively in cases where those who are not eligible are nonetheless ordained or installed. You do not have to be on the winning side in the vote if you have posed the right questions and received the wrong answers. It is then that the provision in the authoritative interpretation comes into play to appeal to the courts of the church. The success of the church court process depends to a great extent on the evidence produced by the examination.

Don’t quit without following through on the process

Please keep in mind that you have the right as a presbyter to challenge in the courts of the church any decision of the body. If your goal is to see the requirements for ordination upheld by the PC(USA), it now becomes your responsibility to stand ready to use the courts in cases where the responses in the examination show the candidate unready or ineligible for ordination or installation.

C. Resources and assistance from the Joint Renewal Discipline/Legal Team are available on the web at www.presbycoalition.org and by contacting **polity-help @ presbycoalition.org**.

Goal #5. Strengthening the church’s covenant life by building up one another. Form Covenant Communities for Mutual Accountability and Support among Presbyters.

A. Resources for forming communities

A Reformed and Reforming Fellowship within the PC(USA), by Jerry Andrews

Presbyterian polity as currently practiced and, to some extent, as designed, gives a great freedom to individual members, officers, congregations and other governing bodies to act and covenant together to act, both as alternative or supplement to

the deliberations, decisions and commitments of governing bodies. Machen would not now be put on trial for a designing a mission board rival to the denominational mission board—here think how thriving are the Outreach, Frontier, and Medical Benevolence folks, how free and effective in serving the Savior, which is not to say necessarily welcome or received with joy equally throughout the PC(USA), but possible, responsible, able.

Evangelicals pioneered these and other like enterprises—here think of the various ministries of PFR to youth, couples, their well received retreat and congregational revitalization efforts, the evangelism work of Knox Fellowship, the ministry to and with those whose sexuality is at odds with their faith by OnebyOne, the advocacy of Presbyterians Pro-Life, and others in what is quite a long list of important work done within the denomination but not by the denomination—using well formed evangelical instincts not shared by the whole denomination such as committing to fulfill the great commission in global missions, personal evangelism, disciple making, and prophetic witness to a culture intent on rebellion against God. Some of these projects have received a warm welcome by broad sections of the denomination, some a lukewarm reception, some hostility, but all these projects are free to hear Christ’s call and to respond to it with without the need to seriously consider being at a distance from the denomination. Indeed some of these projects are intentionally witnesses to the whole denomination precisely by being distinguished from it while being very much in it.

There has also been a freedom from needing to support a weakened and weakening structure. While evangelicals are not of one mind or practice on this, the formal, and even informal coercions to invest in the maintenance or advancement of current denomination commitments is much, much less than once it was, with no signs that the mega-trend toward decentralization in thought, word, or deed will soon end.

There has also been a freedom from responsibility to govern. The wisdom of this, too, is debated among us, but I do not think it can be denied that we more or less (more “more,” I think) chose and choose not to bear the burden of leadership in our presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, and in their enterprises. The wisdom is this has been seen as focusing our attentions on what we do well, with passion and experience, and not divert our resources – time, talent and treasure – into the general work of the denomination which is part honoring of, neutral toward, and hostile to the gospel, and is seen most often as irrelevant to the gospel and thus distracting from it.

A great freedom to act without a great burden to govern, with all the necessary and inevitable structure building and maintaining work accompanying governance, is the genius of a fellowship.

It is also its flaw. Without willingly and gladly taking on the responsibility of governance there is loss of right to determine the shape or substance of the governance.

Of the ways forward now being considered this way invites the serious consideration of the question, Will a Reformed and Reforming Fellowship within the PC(USA) give continued sufficient freedom to discern and act (which all evangelicals want), with a sufficient freedom to decide to invest in the whole by direct and enthusiastic participation or not (evangelicals having different postures here) and at the same time sufficiently protecting these freedoms and the individual and collective consciences (which may or may not be increasingly at risk by governances not led by evangelicals)?

The questions of what will be the shape and substance of the Reformed and Reforming Fellowship will also need to be answered. Generally, the Fellowship will need to be publicly identifiable within the whole and to the world, and have the means by which resources can be invested in projects preferred and committed to by the Fellowship. (Here it may be wise to consider that less is best in the beginning and more is probably, maybe even happily, inevitable.)

A model provided by Pastor Robert Austell, Charlotte, NC: robert@gspc.net

Local Renewal Ministry Networking Plan: I’m attaching a plan I’ve suggested to the local renewal group for networking for worship, fellowship, training, and mission. We are moving forward, with a shared worship service on July 8, 2007. I’m hoping by this fall to be doing some officer training together, and maybe mission together by the Spring of 2008. It’s not comprehensive, just some initial ideas.

A PROPOSAL FOR THE LOCAL NETWORK OF EVANGELICAL PC(USA) CHURCHES

I. WORSHIP – *we will most easily find true unity as together we worship the triune God and hear and respond to the inspired and authoritative Word of God in Scripture.*

Proposed Summer Worship Event:

- One church could host, one provide music, one provide preacher (or use a retired local preacher)
- Consider adding several lay testimonies from various churches and a sermon by one of the pastors
- Maybe plan for a 90 min. service with some food/fellowship time before or after
- A combined choir might aid congregational participation
- Combining with a training event (II below) might also help attendance

Other worship ideas:

- ❑ Pulpit exchanges between evangelical churches in the presbytery
- ❑ Choir exchanges between churches

II. DISCIPLESHIP - *Share resources to train church leaders.*

Proposed Fall Training Event for Church Officers (and teachers?):

- ❑ Perhaps a keynote with worship
- ❑ Seminar format topical sessions, perhaps repeating 2-3 times so each officer could attend more than one
- ❑ Pool and create shared training resources and/or bring in outside evangelical resources/trainers (e.g. PFR's "Officer Training")

Other discipleship ideas:

- ❑ Lay renewal weekends (teams of laypeople lead a weekend of worship, testimony, and small group reflection; e.g. PFR "Congregational Renewal Event"; PRMI "Spirit Alive"; Knox Fellowship event)
- ❑ Combined men's conference/women's conference (themed or otherwise)

III. MINISTRY – *we begin with worship and discipleship with a view of moving toward area ministry and mission together. The ideas below are just the beginning of the possibilities!*

Possibilities:

- ❑ Latino ministry
- ❑ Compare notes on local ministries and benevolences and begin to partner around shared ministry commitments
- ❑ Combine resources: the sum-is-greater-than-the-parts principle

IV. MISSION – *there is such potential in teaming together to support missions!*

Possibilities:

- ❑ Could we identify common missionaries and maybe a group of sister churches and do our own partnership?
- ❑ Combined mission trips together (youth, adults, families)
- ❑ If we find common missionaries, we could begin to "host returning missionaries or have a local-area missions conference.
- ❑ We could provide training and equipping for churches to begin to develop ministry models that communicate into the post-modern culture
- ❑ Plant a new church together! (... the "store front" model rather than the spend-a-million-bucks model). If 5 churches trained and sent 20 people each, the "loss" of core people to each church would be less and a new church could be "seeded" with 100 committed, called, and trained people. We could share the cost of the church planter, who could serve each of our churches part-time and begin the training of those who would seed the new church, etc....

Model for developing covenantal and missional relationships beyond the walls of each congregation

(from the Presbytery of Santa Barbara)

We, the Presbytery of Santa Barbara resolve to form *The New Covenant Task Force* comprised of a total of nine members comprised of roughly equal number of elders and pastors of the presbytery chosen by the moderator and executive presbyter and affirmed by the vote of the presbytery charging them with the following tasks and responsibilities (as well as others made necessary by their work):

- a. Determine like-minded presbyteries and congregations with whom we might enter a covenantal and missional relationship.
- b. Explore as a presbytery and with other like-minded presbyteries and congregations the potential shape, function(s), mission, and nature of these covenantal groups.
- c. Study and evaluate issues, decisions, and actions occurring in and through the PC(USA) for the purpose of educating the presbytery and, where deemed important or necessary, formulating a response that will be presented to the presbytery for its approval.
- d. Explore issues of property, per capita, pensions, and others that effect the presbytery, its member churches and ministers, making recommendations to presbytery regarding actions that further our faithfulness to God, the Great Ends of the Church, stewardship of that which God has given, the Constitution of the PC(USA), and our covenantal relationships.
- e. Explore how the presbytery, with other covenantal partners, might seek to bring reform and renewal to our member churches.
- f. Explore how the presbytery, with other covenantal partners, might seek to bring reform and renewal to the PC(USA).

- g. Make regular reports to the presbytery regarding its findings, work, and recommendations.
-

B. Information on issues of per capita and property from the Discipline/Legal Team:

Pursuing Our Highest Moral Obligations: Facts and Sample Resolutions Concerning Per Capita

[Note: This paper is part of a series prepared by a group of leaders and experts in church polity associated with several renewal groups within the Presbyterian Church (USA) to address concerns that have arisen in the aftermath of the 217th General Assembly (2006). The papers provide suggested resolutions for presbyteries, along with historical background and analysis of pertinent sections of the Book of Order and related actions by the General Assembly and its Permanent Judicial Commission. The resolutions are fully consistent with PC(USA) polity and our covenantal obligations.]

Preface

In the aftermath of the 217th General Assembly (2006), a number of sessions and presbyteries have considered how to respond faithfully concerning issues such as ordination standards, per capita funding of higher governing bodies, and property. In many cases, opinions expressed by denominational leaders and by Presbyterians in the lower governing bodies have been at variance with the facts and our constitutional law in the *Book of Order* and authoritative interpretations.

A group of men and women experienced in polity, some of them with experience in the church courts including the General Assembly's permanent judicial commission, and associated with a number of renewal groups have studied these issues. They are preparing papers that compile pertinent information and suggest possible resolutions and practical approaches on these controversial subjects that sessions and presbyteries are encouraged to follow.

The papers provide facts, information, supporting documentation, and suggested resolutions. The intent is to provide accurate information and wording for actions that may be taken to help presbyteries clarify their own positions on these matters. The resolutions and actions proposed in the papers have been carefully written to be fully consistent with church law and the underlying teaching of Holy Scripture, thus providing a solid and defensible position of integrity on which to stand.

Sessions are encouraged to consider any or all of these resolutions as overtures to their presbyteries. The reasoning, history, and background may be useful as rationale. Presbyteries that are already considering other resolutions on these topics may find this information useful as they deliberate and refine their actions.

Introduction

The nature of presbyteries' responsibility to remit per capita payments to General Assembly and Synod has been a matter of both debate and confusion in recent years in the Presbyterian Church (USA). A collaborative group of concerned Presbyterians has worked together to articulate key facts related to per capita and to suggest how presbyteries might best express their commitment to make decisions about remitting per capita in a manner that is sensitive to the presbytery's other responsibilities and obligations.

Facts

Per capita is an apportionment requested of sessions by presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly (GA) to support their respective operating expenses, including administrative personnel (G-9.0404d). Per capita was originally requested in the early 1800s to defray the actual costs of persons attending meetings of governing bodies. Over time, GA Per Capita has been expanded to cover a wide range of programs, salaries, and expenses, including the administration of the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, GA permanent and special committees, and various GA advisory and advocacy committees. The total 2006 GA request is over \$13 million. A fuller discussion is available here.

GA also has normally used per capita for donations to ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, and World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and expenses related to our participation in these organizations.

Payment of per capita is a high moral obligation of sessions. (*Minihan v. Scioto Valley*, General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) Remedial Case 216-1, 2003). Nevertheless, per capita is a benevolence, and it is settled church law that sessions have absolute discretion over benevolences.

Sessions may not be compelled or coerced to pay per capita. Non-payment of per capita may not be the sole or primary reason for a presbytery penalizing a session or pastor in any fashion. (*Johnston et al. v. Heartland*, GAPJC Remedial Case 217-2, 2004). Provided that funds are available, presbyteries, are required to pay the full apportionment assessed by synod and GA. 211th GA minutes (1999, 65, 107, 16.008-.009, Req. 99-1, see Appendix below). Note: This was an Authoritative Interpretation (AI) of the constitution by the General Assembly. An AI has the force of law.

That presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to the sessions of the churches within their bounds does not trump the express power (a technical term meaning the only ones who can do something) of a session to direct the benevolences of the congregation (G-10.1012i; *Minihan v. Scioto Valley*). G-11.0103a & b give the presbytery the express power to develop strategy for and to coordinate the mission of its member churches for the most effective witness to the broader community. The factual question of whether funds are actually available for paying per capita remains a matter within the authority of each presbytery to decide.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution has declined to speculate on circumstances that would make funds unavailable. In recent years, some presbyteries have not remitted all or part of their GA per capita assessments. Each year's budget of the Office of the General Assembly accounts for this shortfall.

Rationale for a Sample Resolution

We all wish that we could do all things for all people. But we can't. As mere humans, we are limited in time, talent and treasure. If we were to deny our limitations and try to do and be everything, in the end, we would not actually do or be much. The call to proclaim the gospel effectively is imperative. Therefore, as a presbytery, we are called carefully and prayerfully to discern and set funding priorities for ministry. Within these priorities is our responsibility to remit per capita payments to GA and synod. While fulfilling per capita is a high moral obligation, it not the highest moral obligation. There are two key questions. First, who determines how presbytery responsibilities are prioritized? Second, who determines if funds are available? The answer to both is the presbytery.

Therefore, it is appropriate for a presbytery to carefully contemplate how to prudently fulfill its obligations, including per capita and define the basis for determining whether funds are available. Below are two sample resolutions a presbytery might consider.

Sample Resolutions

Sample 1: Be it resolved that with regard to finances, this presbytery considers remittance of its per capita to General Assembly and synod to be a high moral obligation. Be it further resolved that this presbytery holds its express powers and duties enumerated in G-11.0103a & b to include higher moral obligations. Therefore, funds will be available for per capita payments after the presbytery prudently sustains and fulfills the higher moral obligation of its ongoing ministries. Notwithstanding, any monies specifically designated by sessions for per capita will be transmitted to the higher governing bodies.

Sample 2: This presbytery recognizes that it has a responsibility to remit per capita to General Assembly and synod if funds are available, whether or not every session presents a per capita offering. This presbytery accepts the responsibility of determining whether or not funds are available for that purpose and will remit per capita on the basis of that determination. Notwithstanding, any monies specifically designated by sessions for per capita will be transmitted to the higher governing bodies.

Appendix of Citations

G-9.0404d. Each governing body above the session shall prepare a budget annually for its operating expenses, including administrative personnel, and may fund it with a per capita apportionment among the particular churches within its bounds. The presbyteries shall be responsible for raising their own per capita funds, and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and to the General Assembly. The presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to the sessions of the churches within their bounds.

G-10.0102i. [The session has the responsibility and power] to establish the annual budget, determine the distribution of the church's benevolences, and order offerings for Christian purposes, providing full information to the congregation of its decisions in such matters.

G-11.0103a. [The presbytery has the responsibility and power] to develop strategy for the mission of the church in its area consistent with G-3.0000.

G-11.0103b. [The presbytery has the responsibility and power] to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility.

Pertinent Excerpts from Authoritative Interpretation of the 211th GA (1999)

(*Minutes*, 1999, 65, 107, 16.001-.012, Req. 99-1) G-9.0404d provides that "The presbyteries shall be responsible for raising their own per capita funds, and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and to the General Assembly." Further, G-9.0404d provides: "The presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to the sessions of the churches within their bounds. . . ." Therefore, a presbytery has the responsibility to remit per capita allocations to synod and General Assembly, even though a congregation does not pay the per capita allocated to it by the presbytery.[GA answered in the affirmative the following question]: If churches refuse to pay their portion, does the presbytery have the responsibility to pay the full amount irrespective to the specific collection from churches, as long as funds are available within the presbytery?"

Pertinent Excerpts from the Most Applicable GAPJC Cases

John Minihan and J. Randall Richards, Complainants/Appellants v.The Presbytery of Scioto Valley, Respondent/Appellee(Remedial Case 216-1)

In the instant case, the issue is whether the language added to G-9.0404d in the 1992 amendment ("presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to the sessions") grants a presbytery power to compel a session to transmit the per capita apportionment assigned to it. Although the Presbytery contended at oral argument that its resolution did not compel a session to remit per capita monies, our reading of the resolution leads to a different understanding. Specifically, the necessity of a session applying to the Presbytery for an "excuse" from its "responsibility" to pay per capita monies strongly suggests

compulsion if an excuse is not given.

Even if one concludes that the phrase “may direct” in G-9.0404d is ambiguous (meaning “may require,” as the Presbytery essentially argues, or “may ask,” as the Appellants contend), we conclude that it was not the intent of the 1992 amendment to G-9.0404 to change the historic practice of voluntary giving of per capita monies. There was nothing in the overture that indicated that it was intended to change the historically voluntary nature of per capita giving. The presbyteries approved the amendment by an overwhelming majority.

Moreover, if the General Assembly had desired to compel rather than trust sessions to transmit per capita to the presbyteries, it would have used mandatory language to express the sessions’ obligation regarding per capita parallel to the language used to express the presbyteries’ obligation. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the 1992 amendment was neither considered nor a part of the *Book of Order* at the time of this Commission’s decision in the Central case, we hereby reaffirm this Commission’s holding that **“a church may neither be compelled to pay nor punished for failure to pay any amounts pursuant to such [per capita system] plan.”** (*Emphasis added*)

We are not persuaded by the argument of the Presbytery and the conclusion of the SPJC that the “reserved powers” clause of G-9.0103 and the 1994 Authoritative Interpretation confirm a power in the presbytery to compel payment by the session of per capita apportionment.

G-9.0103 provides that the jurisdiction of a governing body is limited by the express provisions of the *Book of Order* “with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.” This Commission is of the opinion that this provision does not apply in the present matter because G-10.0102i gives a session the power to determine the distribution of a church’s “benevolences.” This includes the power to raise and transmit per capita funds. **In making this determination, the Commission interprets the word “benevolence” to include per capita funds.** (*Emphasis added*) The Commission therefore concludes that the power of presbytery to act in this regard has been preempted. Similarly, the 1994 Authoritative Interpretation of G-11.0103f, indicating that a presbytery’s guidance to sessions is “mandatory” to the extent that it incorporates requirements established by the presbytery, is also not applicable because G-9.0404d does not give the presbytery the power to require payment of per capita apportionment by sessions. But, as both parties acknowledged, the theological heart of this case is the covenantal nature of the Church. Indeed, both parties refer to per capita as a high moral obligation and as one of the sinews that binds the covenant community together. This is consistent with the historic nature of Presbyterian order that we have shared power and responsibility (G-4.0302).

Therefore, while our Constitution does not technically permit presbyteries to make per capita mandatory, we are necessarily bound together as a covenant community through our union to God Almighty in Jesus through the Holy Spirit (A Brief Statement of Faith, C-10.4, lines 52-57). Thus, there is a high moral obligation based on the grace and call of God to participate fully in the covenant community. Full participation includes time, talent, and treasure (G-10.0102h; W-5.5004). Moreover, all officers are obligated, by virtue of ordination vows (G-14.0207i; G-14.0405b(9)), to participate fully in the life of the Church. To participate partially or not at all and yet claim to be within the covenant community represents a grievous misunderstanding of our reciprocal covenantal obligations under the singular Lordship of Jesus (The Second Helvetic Confession, C-5.124-141). In other words, we are called to turn from the sin of individualism run rampant and embrace the covenantal community in which our Lord Jesus has called us to live as those who love as we have been loved (John 13:34). Therefore, withholding per capita as a means of protest or dissent evidences a serious breach of the trust and love with which our Lord Jesus intends the covenant community to function together (G-7.0103).

Kirk Johnston et al. , Complainants/Appellees v. Heartland Presbytery, Respondent/Appellant
(Remedial Case 217-2)

In this case, Presbytery is understandably wrestling with the tensions created by the following factors: (1) a presbytery’s constitutional responsibility to remit full per capita apportionments to synod and General Assembly for all its churches, whether or not those congregations pay full per capita apportionments to it, (2) a presbytery’s inability under the *Book of Order* to mandate a session’s payment of per capita apportionments, (3) the limited dollars available for mission, and (4) the acknowledged high moral obligation of all congregations to participate fully in the life of the larger church by sharing the costs of the larger church’s mission and operations.

The Commission appreciates Presbytery’s effort to give substance to the connectionalism that distinguishes our system of polity from episcopal and congregational forms of church government. Indeed, all of the Commission’s decisions on per capita apportionments, and all parties to this case, acknowledge that payment of per capita apportionments is a high moral obligation, the fulfillment of which visibly demonstrates the covenantal ties that bind us as the one church of Jesus Christ. In light of this acknowledged moral obligation, a congregation’s effort to pay its full per capita apportionment and to fulfill a mission pledge is clearly relevant as one factor among many others that a presbytery may consider in exercising its stewardship responsibility to allocate limited resources in acting upon a congregation’s request for assistance. This Commission does not wish to remove discretion or capacity of the presbyteries to fulfill their constitutional duties, but to assure them that such responsibilities can be effected without infringing on the powers of sessions.

The policy improperly turns payment of per capita apportionments or the fulfillment of a mission pledge into a mandate ... A presbytery’s right of oversight cannot be construed to give presbytery a right that our polity withholds—namely, a right to mandate a session’s full payment of per capita apportionments as a condition of its eligibility to seek presbytery’s assistance ... While the *Book of Order* refers to a higher governing body’s “right of review and control over a lower one” (G-4.0301f), these concepts must not be understood in hierarchical terms, but in light of the shared responsibility and power at the heart of Presbyterian order (G-4.0302).

Peace, Unity, and Property

Introduction

“. . . [Y]ou are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Eph. 2:19-22)

“The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it” (G-4.0200). We believe that our unity as a denomination, our true connectionalism, comes from Christ, our Chief Cornerstone. It is our prayer that we would all be one in Christ, just as Christ and the Father are one. But this oneness should be based upon the unity of the Spirit and the Faith that we hold in common. Congregations should not be held as unwilling captives by the denomination’s claims upon their property, or coerced into sullen acquiescence by threats and intimidation.

We shall not treat property as a basis for unity or as an opportunity for division. Thus, we encourage every congregation, every presbytery, and every member to stay and renew this denomination. Yet we would exercise forbearance, not coercion, toward any who believe, after due consideration and prayer, that they can better serve the Kingdom of God from outside our fellowship. Our goal always should be to further the Great Ends of the Church, not the parochial interests of the denominational structures.

Therefore, it is appropriate for a presbytery to carefully contemplate how to prudently fulfill its obligations under G-8.000 and G-11.0103i concerning church property. We offer the following sample resolution and supporting information to assist presbyteries and provide a way to advance the true unity of the Church in Christ and reject coercion and a false unity enforced through the exercise of power.

Sample Resolution

Be it resolved that this presbytery:

- A. shall not treat property as a basis for unity or as an opportunity for division;
- B. recognizes and acknowledges its authority under G-8.000 and G-11.0103i to evaluate questions concerning church property in light of the particular circumstances presented in each instance and to exercise its good judgment in accordance with Authoritative Interpretations of G-11.0103 made by the General Assembly in 1988, 1989, and 1990;
- C. respectfully requests that the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly bring his advice into conformity with the 1988, 1989, and 1990 Authoritative Interpretations and publicly correct the advice of his legal counsel regarding actions to be taken in secular or church courts against pastors, sessions and congregations who might contemplate or seek dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (USA), so that it accords with the ordination vow to “try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ” (G-14.0405b(9));
- D. shall therefore work pastorally (Londonderry v. Northern New England) with any pastor, session or congregation that contemplates or seeks dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (USA);
- E. shall not take any preemptive coercive action, such as that recommended by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, against any pastor, session, or congregation who merely considers faithfully following the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200) in another Reformed denomination (G-1.0301a(1)(a));
- F. interprets “use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” in G-8.0201 to mean whatever, in the sole judgment of this presbytery, furthers the Great Ends of Church (G-1.0200); and
- G. interprets its express power “to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility” (G-11.0103b) to mean that in some cases, a congregation, with its property and financial assets, may be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church (USA) without penalty.

Facts

“The Great Ends of the Church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world” (G-1.0200). In 1990 General Assembly stated that “It is to these ends that the church must use and own its property” (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, p. 260, Request 90-24 at 21.244).

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is but one denomination within the Church. (G-4.0101) The *Book of Order* currently states that all church property is held in trust for “the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” (G-8.0201).

The *Book of Order* currently states that a congregation must have written permission from the presbytery before it 1) sells or encumbers any of its property, 2) leases any property for the purposes of worship or 3) leases any property for more than 5 years (G-8.0500). This provision does not apply to those congregations who, at the time of reunion, properly exercised their right to be exempt from Chapter VIII of the *Book of Order* pursuant to G-8.0701.

Presbyteries have the express power (a technical term meaning the only ones who can do something) to dismiss a congregation (G-11.0103i). General Assembly affirmed in 1990 that “A presbytery has authority under G-11.0103i and G-11.0103y to consider and act on any request of a church to be dismissed with its property” (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, p. 252, Request 90-25). Only a presbytery may dismiss a congregation (PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99, *Strong and Bagby v. Synod of Mid-South* (No. 1 - 1976)). The PC(USA) is a party, but not the sole party at interest in a presbytery’s consideration of a request

to dismiss a congregation with its property. (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, p. 140, 12.231(b))

Requests for dismissal should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Predetermined guidelines are strongly discouraged and, if they restrict a presbytery's deliberations can be a cause of action in the church courts. A presbytery is strongly advised to trust its own good judgment in particular situations. (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, p. 237, 21.196.)

It is the duty of every church member to follow the biblical model of conciliation and mediation, rather than litigation (D-1.0103). "All parties should endeavor to outdo one another in honoring one another's decisions, according the presumption of wisdom to ordaining/installing bodies in examining candidates and to the General Assembly, with presbyteries' approval, in setting standards" (Report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity, 5.E, approved by General Assembly in 2006).

Rationale

Historically, we Presbyterians are connectional, constitutional, and confessional. All too often, we have also been combative and confrontational, as evidenced by our numerous splits and mergers. While we have a long tradition of encouraging people to advocate strongly for their positions, we also have a deeply rooted ethos to be conciliatory, even in the midst of great strife.

Since the 217th General Assembly in 2006, many faithful believers within the Presbyterian Church (USA) have been experiencing crises of conscience that may lead them to seek dismissal from this denomination. This has resulted in increasing discord and turbulence in the denomination over the issue of property.

In 2005, during the ongoing deliberations of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly (SC) engaged legal counsel regarding possible actions to be taken against pastors, sessions, and congregations who might seek dismissal from the denomination. Some of the advice is contained in two documents that have been widely disseminated online, though not officially made public: *Processes for Presbyteries in Responding to Congregations Seeking to Withdraw* ("Processes for Presbyteries") and *Church Property Disputes: A Resource for those Representing Presbyterian Church (USA) Presbyteries and True Churches in the Civil Courts* ("Church Property Disputes").

The documents recommend many harsh tactics that would be considered aggressive but common in the secular realm and are unmistakably designed to squelch as much potential dissent as possible. Presbyteries are counseled to establish predetermined rules and processes. The long list of recommended actions includes:

A. Forming administrative commissions to:

remove pastors who merely seek to discuss the possibility of being dismissed from the denomination (*Processes for Presbyteries*, III.4.D.1.b);

assume original jurisdiction to prevent the session from calling a congregational meeting to vote to request the presbytery to exercise its G-11.0103i power to dismiss the congregations (*Processes for Presbyteries*, III.4.D.2.d);

"keep the presbytery in a 'defensive' secular legal posture (let the schismatics seek Caesar's help)" (*Processes for Presbyteries*, III.4.F.2);

remove a pastor from office on the presumption of guilt, even before disciplinary charges are filed, much less sustained (*Processes for Presbyteries*, III.4.F.3.A.1);

B. Preemptively filing an affidavit against the title of property trust of the real estate. (*Church Property Disputes*, page 3). In other words, the presbyteries are being encouraged to file a lien or encumbrance against congregational real estate in public records. Effectively, this is a way of warning people that there is a claim against the ownership of the property. It would make it difficult for a congregation to use the property as collateral or to sell it; and

C. Labeling the defendants as "schismatics" in all legal filings (*Church Property Disputes*, page 3). What is troubling here is not that secular lawyers would propose such measures, aggressive as they are. We expect lawyers to be lawyers. Rather, there are two problems. First, these unbiblical and vexatious tactics (see Westminster Larger Catechism, C-7.252) fundamentally forsake the connectional nature of our community by being both harsh and preemptive. The compulsion of civil law cannot replace true connectionalism. Second, while the Stated Clerk was publicly affirming the PUP Task Force's call for peacefulness, community, and conciliation, his office was privately promulgating a diametrically opposite approach. The Stated Clerk's office has not repudiated or tempered this legal advice. The lack of repudiation feeds the fear that those who would exercise freedom of speech will face preemptive retaliation. The result is conformity through intimidation.

The Stated Clerk's advice in *Processes for Presbyteries and Church Property Disputes*, along with his more recent *Advisory Opinion #19*, stands in stark contrast to the action of General Assembly in 1988, 1989, and 1990. In its *Authoritative Interpretations of G-11.0103*, GA warned against rigid guidelines on property issues, mandated fact-specific, case-by-case analysis, and recognized that presbyteries should trust their own good judgment. But now the Clerk insists on predetermined, inflexible answers and threatens retribution against presbyteries that exercise that good judgment.

Against the Clerk's approach are the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200) and the first Historic Principle of Church Order, namely, "God alone is Lord of the conscience" (G-1.0301). First, our goal is to further the Kingdom of God, which transcends the boundaries of any single denomination, including the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is our high responsibility to use our resources in ways which will most effectively further these Great Ends rather than to lay up treasure on this earth (Matt. 6:19-21). Second, Presbyterians historically have been given wide latitude to discuss decorously all manner of issues. To squelch discussion or dissent preemptively, and by fiat, is troubling.

First Corinthians 6 is clear in directing believers to come together before going to secular court. We are deeply concerned that the denomination has earmarked substantial funds for anticipated secular legal battles. As people of faith, as ordained officers who are bound together by common vows, we should follow biblical principles for conflict

resolution, rather than employing scandalous tactics that are designed to win at all costs, or that turn congregations into unwilling servants of the denomination, rather than the denomination serving the congregations.

In John 17:21, Jesus prays that those who believe in him would be one. We believe that the unity Christ calls us to is beyond denominational lines. The Presbyterian Church (USA), like all Christian denominations, is only one part of the Church over whom Christ alone is the head (G-1.0100). Therefore, whatever furthers the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200) serves for the “use and benefit” of our denomination (G-8.0201).

Appendix of Citations

Book of Order

G-1.0200 The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

G-1.0301 Right of Judgment

(1) (a) That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”

G-4.0101

The church in its witness to the uniqueness of the Christian faith is called to mission and must be responsive to diversity in both the church and the world. Thus the fellowship of Christians as it gathers for worship and orders its corporate life will display a rich variety of form, practice, language, program, nurture, and service to suit culture and need.

G-8.0201 Property Is Held in Trust

All property held by or for a particular church, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a particular church or of a more inclusive governing body or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

G-8.0500 Selling, Encumbering, or Leasing Church Property

G-8.0501 Selling or Encumbering Church Property

A particular church shall not sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber any of its real property and it shall not acquire real property subject to an encumbrance or condition without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the particular church.

G-8.0502 Leasing Church Property

A particular church shall not lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the particular church.

G-11.0103i. to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members.

D-1.0103 Conciliate and Mediate

The traditional biblical obligation to conciliate, mediate, and adjust differences without strife is not diminished by these Rules of Discipline. Although the Rules of Discipline describe the way in which judicial process within the church, when necessary, shall be conducted, it is not their intent or purpose to encourage judicial process of any kind or to make it more expensive or difficult. The biblical duty of church people to “come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court...” (Matthew 5:25) is not abated or diminished. It remains the duty of every church member to try (prayerfully and seriously) to bring about an adjustment or settlement of the quarrel, complaint, delinquency, or irregularity asserted, and to avoid formal proceedings under the Rules of Discipline unless, after prayerful deliberation, they are determined to be necessary to preserve the purity and purposes of the church.

Book of Confessions

C-7.252

Q: What are the sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment?

A: ...vexatious lawsuits...

Pertinent Excerpts from General Assembly Actions

Minutes, 1988, Part I, p. 140 12.231(b)

A presbytery may dismiss a church with its property pursuant to G-11.0103i and G-11.0103y, provided the request is made in proper form and provided proper consideration is given to the interests of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as provided in Chapter VIII. In particular, G-8.0201 recognizes the principle that all property by or for a particular church is held in trust for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Thus the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a party in interest when a presbytery takes action with respect to a request to dismiss a church with its property. Both traditions in our present denomination have always held that church property of any kind is held in trust for the use and benefit of the denomination as a whole, even though both differed somewhat in its application of this principle to churches wishing to withdraw from the denomination. This implied principle is now explicit in our present Form of Government (G-8.0101) and was also explicitly written into both Constitutions prior to reunion.

Minutes, 1989, Part I, p. 237. 21.195

When dealing with a request by a church for dismissal with its property pursuant to G-11.0103i and G-11.0103y, the

presbytery is responsible for exercising the expressed trust provisions of G-8.0201 recognizing and protecting the interests of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Separate consideration should be given to the questions of dismissing the congregation, the disposal of property, and the relationships of ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

21.196 Each request for dismissal should be considered in the light of the particular situation and circumstances involved. If guidelines are established, it should be done with extreme caution. Any guidelines which restrict presbytery in its deliberations and in the exercise of its responsibility and authority might be subject to question in a case of judicial process within the church. Instead of establishing guidelines a presbytery might be better advised to trust its good judgment in particular situations.

Minutes, 1990, Part I, p. 260, Request 90-24. 21.242

Request 90-24, from the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Houston, Texas, asks for an answer to the following question:

Shall G-8.0701 be interpreted so that the “Constitution of the church of which it was a part, prior to the reunion. . .” and “the Constitution to which it was subject immediately prior to establishment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” be understood to mean the Constitution as it existed in 1981?

21.244 To answer this question it is first of all important to state the purpose and ends of the church which are “the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world” (G-1.0200). It is to these ends that the church proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ, worships, works and witnesses under the “joyous reality of the grace of God” (G-1.0100d). “In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgement, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (G-1.0100c). It is to these ends that the church must use and own its property.

Minutes, 1990, Part I, p. 252, Request 90-25. 21.270a

The director of constitutional services of the Office of the Stated Clerk has asked for answers to the following questions which have arisen under Article 13 of the Articles of Agreement. . .

21.270d, k

3. If, after June 10, 1991, a congregation requests to be dismissed within its property, does presbytery have authority under G-11.0103i and G-11.0103y to consider and act on the request?

Ans: Yes. A presbytery has authority under G-11.0103i and G-11.0103y to consider and act on any request of a church to be dismissed with its property.

21.270e, l

4. Does the response to inquiries in the *Minutes* 1988, page 141, and *Minutes* 1989, page 226, mean that the presbytery may dismiss a congregation with its property without seeking the approval of the General Assembly?

Ans: Yes. While it was the practice of action of the former United Presbyterian Church that the disposition of the property of a church that had been dismissed by a presbytery was to be determined by the General Assembly, this is not the case in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Article 1.9 of the Articles of Agreement provides that “Each and every policy statement adopted by or issued at the direction of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States or of the General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America shall have the same force and effect in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as in the Church which adopted or issued it until rescinded, altered or supplanted by action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” The provisions now found in G-8.0301 and G-8.0401 clearly rescind and supplant this practice and give presbytery the power to determine the disposition of such property.

21.270f, m

5. May the presbytery also consider the circumstances of the congregation, and its pastoral responsibilities for the gospel ministry to all of the persons involved, and as a result agree with the congregation on an equitable division of the property between those who chose to remain with the presbytery and those who chose to be dismissed to another denomination?

Ans: Yes. Under Article 13, G-11.0103i, and G-11.0103y, a presbytery has this authority.

21.270g, n

6. If so, would the final terms of such an agreement be subject to the approval of the congregation? The congregation may have voted to seek to leave the denomination, but the results of the negotiation between representatives may not be known for months. Considering G-7 .0304d and G-11.0103i, must the congregation vote on the final terms?

Ans: Yes. The final terms of an agreement described in question five are subject to the approval of the congregation.

Pertinent Excerpts from the Most Applicable GAPJC Case

Strong and Bagby v Synod of Mid-South (PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99, (No. 1 - 1976)). “It is an essential characteristic of the Presbyterian form of church government that specific limited powers are constitutionally allocated for exercise in the first instance by different ones of its representative assemblies (or courts), arranged in a “regular order of gradation.” . . . In this denomination the different courts in their regular order of gradation “are not separate and independent tribunals” but “have a mutual relation” which is designed to “express the unity of the church.” . . . It is critical to the maintenance of this form that the various courts exercise the specific jurisdiction conferred upon them, neither usurping that not given them nor declining to exercise that given, whether by default or by attempted delegation. . . . Within this constitutional system exclusive original jurisdiction to dismiss churches BCO 16-7(8), and to dismiss ministers, BCO 16-7(13), is vested in presbytery. Neither

appears among the enumerated matters over which sessions (or congregations) possess exclusive original jurisdiction, BCO 15-6.

“Consonant with these principles we conclude that the action of the Presbytery of East Alabama in question here was an unconstitutional attempt to abdicate the powers possessed exclusively by it to dismiss churches and ministers within its jurisdiction. In the case of churches, this included an effort to delegate the power to individual sessions and congregations. While the resolution ostensibly delegated this power to an administrative commission of presbytery, it is manifest upon inspection of the prescribed procedure that the true power of decision on the matter was sought to be given over directly to sessions and congregations. Under its design the administrative commission acted as nothing more than a loose supervisor of the congregational voting process, having only the function of observing the voting procedure (if any of the commission members so desired), of receiving reports of the voting results, and of acting upon those reported results in accordance with a predetermined mandate, having no power of substantive review. By this means presbytery sought utterly to abdicate any power to exercise independent judgment about the substantive propriety of dismissing churches within its charge, and to deprive its commission of any power to exercise such independent judgment. The unmistakable intent of this presbyterial action was to permit unilateral congregational withdrawals under the pro forma imprimatur of “dismissals” by an administrative commission of presbytery and to cut off the power of substantive review of such actions by higher church courts. This is patently at odds with the clear constitutional arrangement wherein the power to make that decision in the first instance is cast upon presbytery acting as a reasoning, evaluative body, with the power then to review presbytery action, both procedurally and substantively, reposed in higher courts of the denomination.”

The gist of what has been said so far is that this attempt by presbytery to delegate to individual congregations the power in effect to dismiss themselves violates the church constitution. Judgment could well be rested on that ground alone. If this were done, however, two questions might remain which should appropriately be addressed in this opinion. The first is whether by any action a presbytery may constitutionally give to an administrative commission its decision-making power in respect of the dismissal of churches. The basic ground for decision here is that the particular administrative commission created by the resolution in question was a mere shell, with no power of decision; that the actual delegation was therefore to congregations; and that this was unconstitutional. This leaves the question whether a more appropriate direct delegation of this particular power to an administrative commission, truly acting as such, see BCO 19-2, 118-2, might pass constitutional muster. If the answer were no, this would provide an additional ground for judgment. Suffice it for this case to express strong reservations, without deciding the point explicitly, whether presbytery by any form of delegation may give over to an administrative commission the power to dismiss churches.

This leads to the second question. Assuming that some form of delegation of the dismissal power by presbytery to an administrative commission might be permissible, to what ecclesiastical bodies might presbytery authorize it to make dismissals? Clearly presbytery could not authorize a commission to effect dismissals which presbytery itself could not effect. There are constitutional limits on presbytery’s power here. They were expressed in 1974 by the General Assembly in the case of *Harvard A. Anderson vs. The Synod of Florida*, *Minutes of the 114th General Assembly*, pp. 119-121 (1974). That case, decided after adoption of the resolution in question, held that a presbytery could not constitutionally dismiss its churches to “independency” nor to any specified body except another presbytery of this denomination or of ecclesiastical bodies with which union with this denomination is permitted by *the Book of Church Order*.

These [two] statements [above] are a collaborative work of the individuals named below, several of whom deal with concerns on behalf of renewal organizations. For advice, contact polity-help@presbycoalition.org.

Rev. Dr. James D. Berkley, Director of Presbyterian Action for Faith and Freedom and a board member of the Presbyterian Coalition, has observed and critiqued the Theological Task Force’s activity since 2003.

Elder Whitman H. Brisky, Attorney and Partner of the Chicago firm of Mauck & Baker, LLC and Clerk of Session of First Presbyterian Church, Evanston, IL.

Rev. Dr. Michael D. Bush, Professor, Erskine Theological Seminary, Due West, SC, and a leader of Constitutional Presbyterians.

Elder Gordon E. Fish, Ph.D., Member of Grace Presbyterian Church, Montclair, NJ; physicist and Registered US Patent Agent with an intellectual property law firm; co-counsel with the late Julius B. Poppinga in the Londonderry and Benton GAPJC cases. He serves on the board of the Presbyterian Coalition.

Rev. Dr. Winfield R. (Casey) Jones, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Pearland, TX, member of Presbytery of New Covenant and past Chair of its Committee on Ministry. He was a candidate for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly in 2000.

Rev. Dr. Paul Leggett, Senior Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Montclair, NJ; member and current Moderator of Newark Presbytery and commissioner to the 217th General Assembly. He served as Vice Moderator of the Committee of Fifteen on the Brief Statement of Faith.

Rev. Dr. Richard Randall, Pastor of the Village Church at Lake Tahoe; member and past Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada; commissioner to 217th General Assembly serving on the Ecclesiology Committee.

Rev. James R. Tony, Senior Pastor of Palos Park (IL) Presbyterian Community Church; member of Chicago Presbytery and former member of its Permanent Judicial Commission. He serves on the board of the Presbyterian Coalition.

Rev. Michael R. Walker, former Executive Director, Presbyterians for Renewal.

Rev. Christopher A. Yim, Senior Pastor of Neelsville Presbyterian Church, Germantown, MD; member of National Capital Presbytery and a former member and Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission. He serves on the board of Presbyterians for Renewal and the Presbyterian Coalition.

Note: Book of Order citations in the two documents above are taken from the 2006-2007 edition, current at the time of writing, and do not reflect the amendments approved in 2007.

C. Resources

Ministry and Mission organization resources appear in Appendix VIII, along with contact information.

Discipline/Legal Team resources are available through links on www.presbycoalition.org or by contacting polity-help@presbycoalition.org.

Appendix VI: Reform at the General Assembly Level of the PC(USA)

Goal #8. Establishing a Closer Relationship between Presbyteries and the GA in Regard to Responsibility and Authority for Policy-making.

A. Overture draft: On the participation of presbyteries in GA decision making

Resolved, that The Presbytery of _____ overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) to direct the Stated Clerk to send to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote this amendment to the *Book of Order* by inserting the following language as G-13.0105 and renumbering the remaining paragraphs of the chapter, or by inserting this language in the appropriate place of any revised Form of Government:

G-13.0105 Referral of Decisions

When the final action on a General Assembly item of business, excluding constitutional amendments, concludes in a close vote with a prevailing majority of sixty percent or less, the action shall be subject to potential approval or disapproval by vote of the presbyteries. The Moderator shall recognize any commissioner who indicates intent to move to refer the decision to the presbyteries for approval or disapproval, and any such motion shall be acted upon by the General Assembly. The motion and vote must be completed prior to the close of the final session of that General Assembly meeting while a quorum is present.

Should the motion for referral to the presbyteries receive at least a forty percent vote of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall circulate the text of the decision to the presbyteries at the time when proposed constitutional changes are circulated, and presbyteries shall vote to approve or disapprove the General Assembly decision.

Voting shall be completed and reported by presbyteries according to the deadline used for constitutional amendments and shall become effective at the point at which a majority vote of the presbyteries is determined. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall announce the results of the vote publicly, immediately following the determining vote. No such referred General Assembly decision shall be enacted without approval by a majority of the presbyteries.

Rationale

Commissioners to General Assemblies are required to vote on an overwhelming number of items in a short amount of time. Moderator Joan Gray reported that the General Assembly in 2006 voted on more than 900 items of business. Commissioners are aware that most of them cannot have thorough knowledge of all the issues and the implications of the issues before them.

It has often been the case that General Assembly decisions enacted by narrow margins of votes meet with great dissatisfaction and upset by church members and the community at large. At times, the decisions of one assembly have been reversed by a subsequent assembly, but not without harm in the interim. The church has witnessed the value of hearing from its members, officers, and ministers of Word and Sacrament.

This change permits the larger church to determine issues where General Assembly votes have been far less than mandates. It does not send every decision of Assemblies to the presbyteries for their consideration, but it allows broader judgments regarding matters on which the General Assembly does not express a clear and unified mind.

This amendment provides time for greater considered judgment by a larger representative body of the church. It is aimed toward the peace, unity, and purity of the church by allowing more time, broader judgment, and more representative wisdom on matters of controversy. Additionally, the amendment is aimed toward looking to our lower governing bodies for their serious involvement in the decision making regarding the mission of the whole church.

Constitutional amendments are excepted since they are already required by the constitution to be transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote.

B. Overture draft: On amending “Organization for Mission” and “Forming Social Policy” to focus Presbyterian social policy

The Presbytery of _____ overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) to do the following:

1. Amend Section 2 of the document “Forming Social Policy” to add subsections “h,” “i,” and “j” as follows [text to be inserted is shown as italic]:

- h. All social witness policy documents, listed in section 1 above, require a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly, either to be adopted or re-adopted.*
- i. All social witness “policy statements” defined in section 1.a. above, together with any “resolutions” defined in section 1.b. above that apply to any particular policy statement, shall expire ten years after the policy statement is approved, and thus shall cease to be in effect as policy. Any social witness policy statement that has become an authoritative interpretation is exempt from this provision.*
- j. A presbytery may overture General Assembly to reconsider a policy (and associated resolutions) scheduled to expire. General Assembly may then take one of three actions: (a) re-adopt the documents, (b) adopt amended or substitute versions, or (c) disapprove the documents. Any reconsidered policy statement failing to receive a two-thirds vote for approval shall be considered disapproved.*

2. Amend Section 7 of the document “Forming Social Policy” to add subsection “g” as follows [text to be inserted is shown as italic]:

- g. Any social witness policy document, listed in section 1 above, that fails to receive a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly, either when being newly considered or when being reconsidered after ten years, shall be deemed to lack sufficient consensus to have policy status. Therefore, all national offices and entities of the church shall cease advocacy on the issue, advocating neither for nor against the issue, until such time as a social witness policy on the issue is properly approved.*

3. Amend section VI.A.1 of the document “Organization for Mission” as follows [text to be stricken is shown in strikethrough; text to be inserted is shown as italic]:

The Executive Director has the responsibility for the advocacy and advisory committees, which shall work under the oversight of the General Assembly Council. All three groups have direct access to the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, and their work is coordinated through the ~~Office of the Deputy Executive Director~~ Executive Administrator and reviewed by the General Assembly Council.

4. Further amend section VI.A.1 of the document “Organization for Mission” as follows [text to be inserted is shown as italic]:

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy ... [and so on] Part I, Standing Rule B.12. Such positions are intended to be few, focused, rare, significant, theologically grounded, and representative of a broad consensus of Presbyterian convictions.

Rationale

This set of amendments to the process for developing national policies would do the following:

- 1) Require a two-thirds vote for social witness statements to be adopted. These policy positions become a very public witness and should represent a broad consensus of the church. Hence, adoption of a social witness document ought to reflect no less than a supermajority of commissioners at a given General Assembly.
- 2) Require that policies more than ten years old be brought back for reconsideration. General Assembly can reaffirm the policy, amend the policy, or disapprove the policy. This will keep policies current, since situations often change dramatically. In addition, no policy will be allowed simply to be forgotten. (Since resolutions are not free-standing but rather are attached to a particular policy, it makes sense to reexamine the entire package of a policy and its attached resolutions when the policy’s ten-year clock has run out, no matter how recently a resolution may have been attached.)
- 3) Prohibit national-church lobbying and promotion of policies that fail to gain a two-thirds vote, thus preventing a well-placed and vocal minority or slim majority in a deeply split church from speaking publicly for the church as if the church were of one mind. National-entity advocacy only from a broad consensus furthers the peace of the church.
- 4) Place the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy within the reporting structure of the denomination under the General Assembly Council, so that this elected body is accountable to a higher authority, as other entities are, and not unique, having access to power but not accountability, except through staff relationships.
- 5) Seek to moderate the proliferation of social-witness pronouncements and make them theologically rather than politically driven.

The result would be fewer, better, more current, and more theologically sound social-witness statements that are more broadly representative of the beliefs and sensibilities of Presbyterians as a whole. This would reduce acrimony, both from society and from within the denomination, and thus less “damage control” would be required of pastors, sessions, presbyteries, and national staff needing to interpret statements that are not widely supported.

The most recent copy of “Forming Social Policy” and the “Organization for Mission” can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/ga217/delegates/manual06.pdf>.

Goal #9. Electing—to Any Office at the General Assembly Level—Those Who Conform in Faith and Manner of Life with the Theology and Polity Requirements of the Constitution As Promised in Their Vows.

Renewal resource: Joint renewal resources, including an Elections Work Group, are available to provide research, coordination of effort, and guidance in the process.

Goal #10. Identifying and Supporting a Candidate for Stated Clerk at the 2008 General Assembly.

Renewal resource: Joint renewal resources to provide research, coordination of effort, and guidance in the process.

Goal #11. Preserving a Polity That Is Faithful in Belief and Practice to Scripture and the Confessions of the Church, and That Best Represents Reformed Life in Community.

A. Wording of the authoritative interpretation of section G-6.0108 (2006) [from the Les website of the PC(USA): “Assembly Action”]

a. *The Book of Confessions* and the Form of Government of the *Book of Order* set forth the scriptural and constitutional standards for ordination and installation.

b. These standards are determined by the whole church, after the careful study of Scripture and theology, solely by the constitutional process of approval by the General Assembly with the approval of the presbyteries. These standards may be interpreted by the General Assembly and its Permanent Judicial Commission.

c. Ordaining and installing bodies, acting as corporate expressions of the church, have the responsibility to determine their membership by applying these standards to those elected to office. These determinations include:

(1) Whether a candidate being examined for ordination and/or installation as elder, deacon, or minister of Word and Sacrament has departed from scriptural and constitutional standards for fitness for office,

(2) Whether any departure constitutes a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity under G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*, thus barring the candidate from ordination and/or installation.

d. Whether the examination and ordination and installation decision comply with the constitution of the PC(USA), and whether the ordaining/installing body has conducted its examination reasonably, responsibly, prayerfully, and deliberately in deciding to ordain a candidate for church office is subject to review by higher governing bodies.

e. All parties should endeavor to outdo one another in honoring one another’s decisions, according the presumption of wisdom to ordaining/installing bodies in examining candidates and to the General Assembly, with presbyteries’ approval, in setting standards.

B. Overture draft: Replace the 2006 GA AI with a new AI clarifying the meaning of G-6.0108.

ORDINATION STANDARDS OVERTURE (7-10-07)

The Presbytery of Cherokee overtures the 218th General Assembly (2008) of the PC(USA) to approve the following authoritative interpretation of subsection G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*:

A governing body is not permitted to ordain or install a candidate for deacon, elder, or minister of the Word and Sacrament after determining that the candidate has departed, without repentance, from the standards for ordination expressly provided in the *Book of Order*. Such unrepentant departure is a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed polity, and is a negative answer to the required constitutional question: Will you be governed by our church’s polity? Provisions of the *Book of Order* are signified as being standards by use of the term “shall,” “is/are to be,” “requirement,” or equivalent expression.

Rationale

Summary

The 217th General Assembly (2006) approved, with amendment, an authoritative interpretation (AI) of G-6.0108

recommended in the report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. The AI sets forth the manner in which the church establishes ordination standards and the process that governing bodies are to follow in applying those standards. While the AI mentions departures from “essentials of *faith and polity*,” the absence of specificity regarding compliance with *Book of Order* requirements leaves considerable confusion. Particularly, the AI is not clear as to whether a governing body may ordain or install a candidate who has departed, without repentance, from standards for ordination expressly provided in the *Book of Order*.

This lack of clarity has created confusion and has led many sessions and presbyteries to adopt resolutions that set their own policies, so further interpretation is needed. The AI proposed in this overture clarifies the question in a manner that is consistent with the *Book of Order*, with previous authoritative interpretations, and with rulings of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission.

The contrary interpretation – that a governing body may ordain or install such a candidate – is not consistent with those authorities, and requires that certain express provisions of the *Book of Order* be ignored. It would be a *de facto* amendment to, rather than an interpretation of, the *Book of Order*, and would require approval of the presbyteries to be valid.

These summary statements are developed more fully, with references, below.

Lack of clarity in the 2006 AI

The 2006 AI is not clear as to whether ordaining bodies can override the plain meaning of provisions of the *Book of Order* and judicial directives that require compliance with expressed standards¹ for ordination. While the task force’s supporting rationale states that an ordaining body can ordain a candidate not compliant with G-6.0106b [lines 1222-30], the AI itself makes no such explicit statement. The Office of the General Assembly has issued Constitutional Musing #11 and Advisory Opinion #18 to clarify the matter, but they fail to do so, in large part because CM #11 contradicts portions of AO #18.

Consistency of the proposed AI with the church’s constitution

Sections G-1.0300, G-1.0400, and G-4.0300 set forth the historic basic principles of church government and polity. Four of these principles, together with express provisions of the *Book of Order* that are based on them, establish church polity related to standards for ordination. They are:

The church’s right to establish ordination standards. In its ruling on the Londonderry case, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission stated that G-1.0302 explicitly gives the church the right to make and enforce qualifications for ordination established by the whole church.² Several subsections of the *Book of Order* establish specific requirements for ordination. Among them are those relating to training and education [G-14.0240, 14.0482], successful completion of an examination [G-14.0240, 14.0482], affirmative response to the constitutional questions [G-14.0330, 14.0342, 14.0491, 14.0492], personal conduct [G-6.0106b], and adherence to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity [G-6.0108a]. As provisions of the *Book of Order*, these requirements are standards adopted by the whole church.

The church’s unity. The ordination or installation of an elder, deacon, or minister of the Word and Sacrament by an appropriate governing body is an act of the whole church [G-1.0400, 9.0103]. With power to act on behalf of the whole church, a governing body must faithfully apply the ordination standards adopted by the whole church. The failure of governing bodies to do so, without prompt correction by higher governing bodies, would seriously damage the church’s unity and diminish the authority of the church’s constitution.

The review of governing bodies’ actions. Ordination decisions and all other actions of a governing body are subject to review by the next higher governing body [G-4.0301f, 9.0103].

The freedom of conscience. The first sentence of paragraph 6.109 of *The Book of Confessions* (Westminster Confession) proclaims freedom of conscience “in matters of faith or worship.” This sentence is the foundation of the principle that the *Book of Order* reaffirms in G-1.0301a. But there are limits placed on this freedom in both *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

In *The Book of Confessions*, immediately following paragraph 6.109, is the warning: “**They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty.**” Freedom of conscience is not intended to be a dispensation to continue sinful practices.

In the *Book of Order*, G-6.0108 limits freedom of conscience by providing that it is to be maintained unless there is: (1) a serious departure from “the essentials of Reformed faith and polity as expressed in *The Book of Confessions* and the Form of Government,” (2) an infringement on the rights and views of others, or (3) an obstruction of the constitutional governance of the church. The proposed AI is consistent with these limitations, as explained below.

(1) In general, the Form of Government expresses essentials of Reformed polity by establishing requirements or mandates and, in relation to ordination, by adopting ordination standards. Therefore, a candidate’s declaration of a scruple with respect to an ordination standard expressed in the *Book of Order* and his or her unrepentant failure to comply with it would be a serious departure from the essentials.

(2) An ordination standard adopted by the whole church necessarily represents the views of many Presbyterians. The ordination of a candidate who deliberately and without repentance refuses to comply with such a standard would be a clear infringement of the rights and views of many others.

(3) The ordination of a candidate who deliberately and without repentance refuses to comply with an ordination standard adopted by the whole church would be an obstruction of the constitutional governance of the church because the ordaining body would have ignored a requirement of the *Book of Order*. It also would indicate that the candidate could not honestly give an affirmative answer to the required constitutional question: Will you be governed by our church’s polity?

It should be noted that paragraph c of the 2006 AI, which describes how governing bodies are to apply ordination standards, calls for them only to make a determination relative to (1) above. It does not include the determinations relative

to (2) and (3), which are clearly required by G-6.0108a. This is another reason that further interpretation is needed.

In the Londonderry ruling, the GAPJC rejected an assertion that G-1.0301a and G-6.0108 affirm freedom of conscience with respect to matters addressed by G-6.0106b.³ The proposed AI is consistent with that ruling.

The interpretation that a governing body may ordain or install a candidate who has departed, without repentance, from standards for ordination expressly provided in the *Book of Order* would permit inconsistent application of standards that could be unfair to some candidates. One governing body may deny ordination to a candidate because it determines a particular manner-of-life practice of the candidate to be a departure from the essentials of Reformed polity, while another governing body may ordain a candidate who engages in that same practice. The question of whether a candidate's engaging in a particular practice is a departure from the essentials should apply to that practice, not to the candidate. Consistent application of the standards adopted by the whole church is required to assure fairness to all candidates.

This interpretation, which is contrary to the proposed AI, also would create a conflict between two parts of the *Book of Order*, the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline. A candidate's unrepentant declaration that his or her personal conduct does not comply with a manner-of-life mandate of the Form of Government is an admission of guilt of an offense. An offense is defined in the Rules of Discipline [D-2.0203b] as an act contrary to the Scriptures or the church's constitution; it does not have to be a departure from the essentials of Reformed polity. If the ordaining body determines that the conduct is not a departure from the essentials and ordains the candidate, the candidate would be subject to censure and the ordaining body would be subject to correction by a higher body for failing to initiate disciplinary action. It should be noted that, in the Londonderry ruling, the GAPJC stated that tensions and ambiguities between provisions of the church's constitution are to be resolved "in such a way as to give effect to all provisions. It is not within the power of any governing body or judicial commission to declare a properly adopted provision of the *Constitution* to be invalid."⁴

Endnotes

1. The word "standard" can have several meanings. In this interpretation, "standard" means "requirement." (See *World Book Dictionary*, 2003, definition 2, and *American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th Ed., 2000, definition 6b.) That "requirement" is the proper meaning in this context is clearly shown by the text of the second sentence of G-6.0106b, the focus of this debate. It begins: "Among these standards is *the requirement* to live either..." [Emphasis added.]

2. *Minutes of the 213th General Assembly* (2001), part 1, page 579, paragraph 12.1045.

3. *Ibid.*, page 578, paragraph 12.1043.

4. *Ibid.*, page 578, paragraph 12.1044.

C. Overture draft: Addition of language to current AI to clarify that an ordaining/installing body may not declare an express requirement of the constitution to be "non-essential."

Amend by adding section f. to AI

Nothing in this authoritative interpretation shall be construed to exempt any governing body from: (i) complying with any express provision of the Constitution signified as required or mandated practice by use of the term "shall," "is/are to be," or equivalent; or (ii) requiring compliance with such required provision by any person or governing body under its jurisdiction.

D. Overture already adopted: Rescind the AI

Overture from Presbytery of South Louisiana Regarding the Report of the PUP Task Force, adopted, Feb.17, 2007

Whereas the recent adoption of Recommendation Five of the report of the Task Force on the Peace Unity and Purity of the Church does not seem to be promoting the peace, unity and purity of the church, and...

Whereas, with one significantly divided vote the General Assembly apparently made the constitution's standards for ordination optional ("Ordaining and installing bodies acting as corporate expressions of the church...determine...whether a candidate being examined for ordination and/or installation...has departed from scriptural and constitutional standards [and]...whether any departure constitutes a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith...thus barring the candidate from ordination and/or installation"), and...

Whereas this authoritative interpretation has been perceived by many as accomplishing a change that would more properly have been done through a constitutional amendment for action by the presbyteries, and...

Whereas in 1998 66% of the presbyteries and in 2001 73% of the presbyteries voted to retain G6.0106b as an ordination standard, and...

Whereas the adoption of this authoritative interpretation has resulted in the loss of several churches, and may result in the loss of more churches and members throughout the denomination, and...

Whereas General Assembly actions now take twice the time to address since the decision to move to biennial assemblies, now therefore...

Be it resolved that the Presbytery of South Louisiana requests that the 218th General Assembly (2008) rescind the action of the 217th General Assembly (2006) on Recommendation Number Five, the Authoritative Interpretation, of the Report of the Task Force on the Peace Unity and Purity of the Church.

Overtures should begin appearing by Spring of 2007 and continue until February 22, 2008 (120 day deadline for constitutional changes, including AIs) or April 22 (60 day deadline for overtures with financial implications).

Sessions should work together to assure proper process in presbytery and prepare to defend the overture, identify the overture advocate, and follow a process to prepare for advocacy at the General Assembly of 2008, collaborating with advocates from other presbyteries.

E. Renewal Resource. The General Assembly Team provides advice and assistance, including resources, to sessions and to the overture advocate up to and through the GA. **Additional Overture** drafts are available from the Overture Development Work Group. Contact info@presbycoalition.org.

Appendix VII: Renewal Organizations, a Summary of Their Resources, and How to Contact Them

Reform and Renewal Partners in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Constitutional Presbyterians

Rev. Stephen Moss
105 Windmill Rd., Salisbury, NC 28147
PH: 704-638-6490 | Email: [moss @ constituionalpresbyterians.org](mailto:moss@constituionalpresbyterians.org)
www.constituionalpresbyterians.org

Evangelical Pastors Fellowship

Rev. Paul Gaug, President
203 South 31st Street, Saint Joseph, MO 64501.
PH: 816-279-0983 | Email: [pgaug @ aol.com](mailto:pgaug@aol.com)

The PC(USA) Evangelical Pastors' Fellowship was begun in 1982 in Kansas City, MO. It was established to promote a yearly conference of PC(USA) pastors of evangelical persuasion in the midsection of the country. The tradition continues each first week in May as PC(USA) pastors gather for fellowship, learning, and prayer. Pastor Paul Gaug of Brookdale Presbyterian Church, St. Joseph, MO is the current President of the group.

Knox Fellowship

Dr. Robert A. Pitman, President
800 Airport Blvd., #304, Burlingame, CA 94010
PH: 650-347-6248 or 800-877-6248 | Email: [KnoxFellowship @ SBCGLOBALNet](mailto:KnoxFellowship@SBCGLOBALNet)
FAX: 650-347-0619 | WEB: www.knoxfellowship.com

The Knox Fellowship assists and enables the ministry of evangelism and the discipleship supporting evangelism among the reformed family of churches throughout the world. This mission includes assisting churches to have a mindset and commitment to do evangelism in contemporary American society with a strategic plan and equipped leadership to enable the ministry. Among Presbyterians Knox Fellowship enters into partnership with Presbyteries throughout America to conduct one-day Schools of Evangelism and Discipleship. As part of the process of structuring such events a personal visit is made to each church of a Presbytery to ascertain their challenges so as to customize the event. Internationally, Knox Fellowship enters into partnership with denominational groups in the reformed tradition to assist them in their respective responsibility to proclaim the gospel and invite people to declare Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Church bodies in the countries of Africa, Europe and South America are actively involved. Challenged by the multi-cultural environment of the United States, the Knox Fellowship develops and encourages Christian ministry among people groups speaking Spanish, Portuguese, Nepali and Hindi languages. The international team of Knox Fellowship are ministers fluent in these language groups.

Literacy & Evangelism International

Rev. Sid Rice, Executive Director
1800 S. Jackson Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74107
PH: 918-585-3826 | Email: [general @ literacyevangelism.org](mailto:general@literacyevangelism.org)
FAX: 918-585-3224 | WEB: www.literacyevangelism.org

Literacy and Evangelism International (LEI) is a missionary fellowship that desires to see the Church effectively reaching the illiterate (non-reading half of the world) in every nation, bringing them the Living Word, Jesus Christ, through enabling them to read the written Word of God. LEI assists churches and missions with materials and training for basic literacy by developing Bible-content basic readers (primers) in any language. We employ the best practices of linguistic methods in creating phonetically based basic readers, while integrating the life-changing story of Jesus Christ. LEI develops church leaders and missionaries in ministries of basic literacy, sending them to strategic locations around the world to nurture church-based literacy programs.

New Wineskins Association of Churches

Rev. Dean Weaver and Rev. Gerrit Dawson, co-moderators
Elder Renee Guth, Executive Coordinator
c/o Memorial Park Presbyterian Church | 8800 Peebles Road | Allison Park, PA 15101
PH: 888-754-9693 | Email: rguth @ newwineconvo.com
www.newwineconvo.com

New Wineskins' networks and congregations seek to be filled, transformed, and sustained by the New Wine as he is being poured out around the world. Therefore, God is realigning and reshaping us for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ in North America and around the world.

OneByOne

Kristin Johnson, Executive Director
PO Box 648, Pittsford, NY 14534
Email: [excdirector @ oneby1.org](mailto:excdirector@oneby1.org)
PH: 585-586-6180 | WEB: www.oneby1.org

The mission of OneByOne is to educate and equip the Church to minister God's truth and grace to those who are in conflict with their sexuality. OneByOne was formed in January 1995 by Presbyterian pastors and lay leaders throughout the United States who were concerned about the lack of such ministry within the PC(USA). OBO's goal is to serve as a resource for educational material and to help create and/or support local ministries to those struggling with sexual brokenness, including but not limited to homosexuality.

Presbyterian Action for Faith and Freedom

Rev. Jim Berkley, Director
304 128th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA 98005
PH: 425-637-7742 | Email: [jberkley @ ird-renew.org](mailto:jberkley@ird-renew.org)
FAX: 425-637-7742 | WEB: www.ird-renew.org
Elder Alan Wisdom, Vice-President, Institute on Religion and Democracy
1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005
PH: 202-682-4131 | Email [awisdom @ ird-renew.org](mailto:awisdom@ird-renew.org)
FAX: 202-682-4136 | WEB: www.ird-renew.org

Presbyterian Action for Faith and Freedom is a committee of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD). Presbyterian Action defends and promotes biblical values within the Presbyterian Church (USA), particularly in respect to social witness. It challenges national church pronouncements when they are unbiblical, unwise, or unbalanced. Presbyterian Action believes that the most powerful political message the church can deliver is simply the gospel of Jesus Christ, not any partisan agenda. Presbyterian Action speaks out at the General Assembly for the many Presbyterians who feel excluded by the dominant activist circles of the left. Presbyterian Action is one of several IRD committees, including committees for Religious Liberty, the United Methodist Church, and Anglicans.

Presbyterian Coalition

Elder Terry Schlossberg, Executive Director
4222 Fortuna Center Plaza, #802, Dumfries, VA 22025
PH: 703-680-4571 or 703-490-8775 | Email: [terryschlossberg @ comcast.net](mailto:terryschlossberg@comcast.net) or [info @ presbycoalition.org](mailto:info@presbycoalition.org)
WEB: www.presbycoalition.org

The Presbyterian Coalition is a movement of people committed to life and transformation in the Presbyterian Church (USA) by exalting Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, energizing its congregations and upholding historic biblical leadership standards: by coordinating with all individuals and groups who share the convictions expressed in the Coalition's Declaration, "Union in Christ," and who are working for a revitalized church; by reaffirming the Coalition's commitment "that this work of renewal be carried on in and through the existing structures of the Presbyterian Church (USA) whenever possible"; by encouraging all individuals, groups and governing bodies who share our convictions, to act creatively and passionately to identify and implement strategies consistent with these convictions and purposes.

Presbyterian Elders in Prayer

Rev. Melany Hamilton and Rev. Nancy Abiera, Co-Executive Directors
300 Ridge Road, Rochelle, IL 61068
PH: 815-761-1415 | Email: [hamiltons5 @ verizon.net](mailto:hamiltons5@verizon.net)

PEP publishes a prayer newsletter and offers help with officer training for elders, along with encouraging prayer by elders. Goal is to enable all elders of the Presbyterian churches across the United States of America to pray with one accord daily for the whole church.

Presbyterians for Faith, Family and Ministry

Rev. Sue Cyre, Executive Director
P.O. Box 3940, Fredericksburg, VA 22402
PH: 540-898-4244 | Email: [scyre @ swva.net](mailto:scyre@swva.net)
WEB: www.theologymatters.com

Presbyterians for Faith, Family and Ministry (PFFM) provides resources and study materials that assist Presbyterians in clearly proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior. PFFM's bi-monthly publication *Theology Matters* includes articles that help Presbyterians examine issues facing the family, the church and the larger culture in light of Reformed faith derived from Scripture and expressed in the confessions. PFFM is convinced that an obedient understanding of family and ministry can only grow out of faith in Jesus Christ that is based on Scripture and is free from compromise with false teachings.

Presbyterians for Renewal

Rev. Dr. Paul E. Detterman, Interim Executive Director
8134 New LaGrange Rd., No. 227, Louisville, KY 40222
PH: 502-425-4630 | Email: [paul @ pfrenewal.org](mailto:paul@pfrenewal.org)
WEB: www.pfrenewal.org

“Mobilizing and equipping leaders of congregations within the Presbyterian Church (USA) to be biblically faithful and missionally minded in their service to Jesus Christ”

Founded in 1989 when Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns and the Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians merged, PFR works and prays for the recovery of gospel hope within the PC(USA) through leadership development, networking, resource publication, and mentoring. PFR's ministries include the Network of Presbyterian Women in Leadership, Wee Kirk Ministry, Congregational Renewal /Officer Training Events, Seminary Ministry, and publication of reFORM (annual journal), reNEWS (quarterly commentary), yearly women's Bible studies and materials speaking to the issues currently before the denomination.

Presbyterian Forum

Gabrielle Avedian, Executive Director
149 S. Barrington Avenue #317, Los Angeles, CA 90049
PH/FAX: 310-208-0910 | Email: [smith @ pforum.org](mailto:smith@pforum.org)
WEB: www.pforum.org

The Presbyterian Forum is an organization made up of members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) who are working for reformation through overt political action. It is our fervent hope that those who vote are guided by the leading of the Holy Spirit. But, in the end, the position that prevails is the one that can garner the support of the majority of the commissioners. The majority of Presbyterians in the PC(USA) believe in the historic biblical standards and the confessions upon which the PC(USA) was founded and have made this known in its continuous rejection of actions by the General Assembly to undermine these principles. But the convictions of these majority Presbyterians are not often represented by the majority of GA commissioners selected by their presbyteries. Therefore, we have committed ourselves to help individuals and groups within presbyteries to organize—within the rules set by our polity—to make sure that the GA commissioners that are chosen from their presbytery are qualified, and will make competent commissioners. We stand ready to assist Presbyterians in congregations and presbyteries.

Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship

Rev. Bill Young, Executive Director
7132 Portland Av #136, Richfield, MN 55423
PH: 612-869-0062, 800-720-4733 | Email: [byoung @ pff.net](mailto:byoung@pff.net)
FAX: 612-869-1888 | WEB: www.pff.net

Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship works with Presbyterians to help them engage in what God is doing in the world to reach unreached people groups with the good news of Jesus Christ. We consult with mission committees or staff, teach seminars or classes on various aspects of mission, take people to see what God is doing, help people work with others who share their interest or focus, and seek in other ways to help Presbyterians be faithful to God's call to make disciples of all nations. Our vision is expressed in the following: For Every People: An Indigenous Church; For Every Church: A Mission Vision.

Presbyterian Lay Committee

Stephen G. Brown, Chief Executive Officer/Chairman of the Board
136 Tremont Park Drive, P.O. Box 2210, Lenoir, NC 28645
PH: 828-758-8716; Email: letters @ layman.org
WEB: www.layman.org

The Presbyterian Lay Committee is an independent news, information and resource ministry whose mission is to inform and equip Christians to share the Biblical faith by proclaiming Jesus Christ alone as the Way of salvation; the Truth of God's Word; and the Life of discipleship. Its flagship publication is *The Layman*, while its online news service is *The Layman Online* [www.layman.org]. As a complement to these efforts to provide reliable information and resources concerning significant issues confronting the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Church Universal, the Presbyterian Lay Committee also publishes valuable Presbyterian and Reformed books and other resources through Reformation Press and PLC Publications [www.resourcecatalog.org]. The news, information and resources provided by the Presbyterian Lay Committee help to: Equip and empower faithful congregations and leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and other denominations to fulfill the Great Commission in the 21st century.; Inform and equip congregations and leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and other denominations concerning the urgency for greater emphasis on the teaching of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and regular Bible study and prayer; Inform and equip congregations and leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and other denominations concerning the urgency of presenting Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior through preaching, teaching and witnessing, with evangelical zeal, as the primary mission of the Church.; Inform and equip individual Christians in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and other denominations to engage the ethical and moral issues in cultural, economic and political affairs as Christ's active disciples.

Presbyterians Pro-Life

Elder Marie Bowen, Executive Director
3942 Middle Road, Allison Park, PA 15101
PH: 412-487-1990 | Email: PPLbowen @ verizon.net
FAX: 412-487-1994 | WEB: www.ppl.org

Presbyterians Pro-Life seeks to be a prophetic witness to the Presbyterian Church (USA) upholding the sacred value of human life and the family. We believe the Scriptures teach that God, who made us in his own image, has forbidden us to shed innocent blood. Therefore, Presbyterians Pro-Life is committed to protecting the right to life of every human being from the moment of fertilization to the moment of natural death. We seek to equip churches for life-preserving ministry. Our publications offer educational resources for teaching a biblical view of life issues. PPL's workshops prepare pastors and lay leaders to extend God's grace and healing to those whose lives have been touched by abortion.

Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International

Rev. Dr. Zeb Bradford Long, Executive Director
115 Richardson Blvd., P.O. Box 429, Black Mountain, NC 28711
PH: 828-669-7373 | Email: prmi @ prmi.org
FAX: 828-669-4880 | WEB: www.prmi.org

Voices of Orthodox Women

Elder Sylvia Dooling, President
2409 N. Estrella Avenue, Loveland, CO 80538
PH: 970-669-4656 | Email: sdooling @ vow.org
FAX: 970-669-9702 | WEB: www.vow.org

Voices of Orthodox Women is a nationwide network of people committed to renew and reform the Presbyterian Church (USA) through the promotion of the doctrines and practices of historic, biblical, and confessional orthodoxy against those of an encroaching culture. The work of the VOW network includes: Purposeful and specific prayer for our church and its ministries, the encouragement of like-minded individuals and groups, the political empowerment of orthodox women, education, calls for accountability, and a faithful and gently assertive presence within the PC(USA).