

**16-07** Report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century.  
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**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation 01

The Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century recommends that the 220th General Assembly (2012) do the following:

**1. Regarding Discerning New Ministries**

a. Call upon mid councils to actively identify and assist congregations to discern future possibilities utilizing available programs including New Beginnings, Starting New Churches, and Engage.

b. Call upon mid councils to give wise and caring support to closing churches. Each presbytery should appoint a point person who would actively identify closing congregations and provide guidance in the process of selling assets and distributing the proceeds for new church development.

c. Call mid councils to utilize these newly acquired assets in holistic evangelism for the purpose of starting new churches (especially amongst new immigrant communities and communities of color) and encouraging underrepresented leadership (particularly women and people of color), utilizing programs provided by the Office of Evangelism and Church Growth of the General Assembly Council and others as needed.

Recommendation 02

Charge the 220th General Assembly (2012) to appoint a task force to study and make recommendations affirming ordained bi-vocational ministry as a critically viable form of ministry in the 21st century church. This task force shall be directed to make recommendations regarding vocational development and training; fundraising, support, and interpretation of bi-vocational ministry within church councils; increasing the utilization of the Church Leadership Connection to connect churches and teaching elders called to bi-vocational ministry; and addressing issues surrounding the compensation and provision for benefits to support this important form of ministry. This task force would work with the Office of Vocation, the Committee on Theological Education, and other bodies to make recommendations to the 221st General Assembly (2014).

Recommendation 03

**3. Regarding Education and Support for Developing New Churches and Ministries in a New Day**

a. Call on PC(USA) seminaries to develop courses to better prepare students for emerging cultural realities. These would include training in new church development, non-traditional worshipping communities, and transformation of congregations. Courses should also address cross-cultural experiences, community organizing, and how to engage in ministries with underrepresented populations such as communities of color and people with disabilities.

b. Call on presbyteries to establish policies, consistent with the Book of Order, allowing for new categories of church (such as worshipping fellowships or missional communities) and develop richer understandings of membership. These designations would allow for more adaptive witness in diverse local contexts.

c. **Call on presbyteries and the General Assembly Mission Council (through its Office of Vocation and Office of Evangelism and Church Growth) to consider alternative ways to resource the development of church plants, including the funding and sending of local missionaries, individual and multiple leader church plant teams, as well as the creation and increase of grant-making funds for the creation of new ministries.**

d. **Call on the Committee on Theological Education (COTE) to work with PC(USA) seminaries to intentionally recruit and increase the numbers of racial ethnic and immigrant students in the seminaries.**

e. **Call on COTE to work with PC(USA) seminaries to develop plans to hire, mentor, support, and retain scholars from underrepresented communities, and to commit to prioritize finding candidates to replace retiring faculty with scholars from underrepresented communities.**

Recommendation 04

#### **4. Regarding New Immigrant Communities**

**Urge presbyteries to develop strategies to identify, engage, and welcome into membership Reformed and Presbyterian immigrant fellowships within their bounds, including investing financial resources to support these ministries.**

Recommendation 05

#### **5. Regarding Multi-Lingual Communications and Resource Development**

**Instruct the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to work together to develop and implement specific and comprehensive plans to offer all denominational news, policy statements, web information, telephone direction, church statements, and other communications in Korean, Spanish, and other languages as needed. Both entities will report to the 221st General Assembly (2014) as to their progress.**

Recommendation 06

#### **6. Regarding Supporting and Equipping Pastoral Leaders**

a. **Charge the General Assembly Mission Council, through its Office of Theology, Worship and Education, to articulate a Reformed understanding of just compensation based on our theology of God's providence and the grace in which we all live and serve.**

b. **Charge the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to study how to bring teaching elders receiving below-minimum compensation—a group that includes women and pastors of immigrant and underrepresented racial ethnic congregations, ministries, and fellowships—up to or above the minimum compensation set by presbyteries.**

c. **Charge the Office of the General Assembly to add annual compensation to the Annual Statistical Report, including salary and benefits, of all exempt church workers, identified by gender and race/ethnicity.**

d. **Urge presbyteries to set a maximum compensation level correlated with their minimum compensation level. Congregations, ministries, and institutions of the church wishing to offer compensation beyond the maximum would then be expected to match, dollar for dollar, the compensation beyond the maximum into a fund that could subsidize the salaries and/or benefits for teaching elders engaged in ministries that do not meet presbytery minimum terms of call.**

e. **Charge the General Assembly Mission Council, through its Office of Vocation, to study how to effectively address the pernicious situation set up by the ongoing and increasing debt crisis for many seminarians and recent seminary graduates combined with compensation offered to new pastors that is not adequate to service the debt load faced by many.**

f. **Charge the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to revisit study documents on compensation and justice, particularly the reports of 1983 and 2010, and to bring**

**a report to the 221st General Assembly (2014), including a comprehensive review of lack of parity in compensation based on class, gender, ethnicity, and type of service in the church.**

Recommendation 07

## **7. Regarding Christian Vocation**

**Charge the General Assembly Mission Council (through its Office of Theology, Worship and Education and its Office of Vocation) and the other five agencies of the PC(USA)—Board of Pensions, Foundation, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc., and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation—to articulate a renewed call for the priesthood of all believers, moving away from models of church that rely on an unhealthy dependence on professionalized ministry and ignore the call of believers for mission and ministry in daily life.**

Recommendation 08

## **8. Regarding Understanding Privilege**

**Urge presbyteries to examine the cultural contexts in which their congregations do ministry to enumerate compelling reasons for congregational leaders to broaden their understandings of community. We urge presbyteries to offer training to learn how white privilege and other discriminatory attitudes and practices limit potential for building up the Body of Christ.**

Recommendation 09

## **9. Regarding Ongoing Resources**

**Equip a subcommittee of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church for the 21st Century to develop practical resources for further communication with and use for mid councils, congregations, and individuals on forming faithful plans for our common future.**

Recommendation 10

## **10. Regarding Living Out Our Faith Publicly**

**a. Call on the PC(USA) to focus its ministry and resources on the society-at-large and to mobilize its agencies/entities, councils, congregations, and members/disciples to reach out holistically with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to participate in God's just peace and sociopolitical transformation.**

**b. Call on PC(USA) to mobilize our agencies/entities, councils, congregations, and members/disciples to prayerfully discern afresh where and how God is calling the whole church to live out our faith.**

**c. Call on the preaching and educational ministry of the church to equip Presbyterians to live out their Christian faith publicly through their various social roles and spheres of influence in practical demonstration of the love and teachings of Jesus, in concrete ways (as citizens, consumers, family, and individuals). Our budgets and programs must reflect our commitment to mission and focusing outwardly.**

### **RATIONALE**

Rationale for Rec. 01

In this season of great transition, many of our established churches are struggling, while new ministries and faith communities lack the resources they need to grow. We will work to respond to struggling congregations with grace and compassion, helping them to close if so led, and use their resources/assets to plant new congregations.

Rationale for Rec. 02

Currently about 44 percent of PC(USA) congregations are without a full-time minister, and that number is likely to increase in the coming decades.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, many seminary trained

leaders and teaching elders have been educated and equipped for ministry but not prepared for this new reality. Encouraging and equipping bi-vocational ministry within the PC(USA) will allow for greater creativity and flexibility for congregations, teaching elders, and ministry in the 21st century, while revitalizing the Reformed and Presbyterian witness in communities across the country.

Rationale for Rec. 03

Changing contexts require adaptive church leadership, but much of our education focuses on pastoring established congregations and older models of ministry. When pastors want to start a new community, they often have to take courses in non-Presbyterian seminaries in order to gain the tools they will need. In order to nurture innovation and creativity, it will be important to develop and offer opportunities for this education within Presbyterian seminaries.

Rationale for Rec. 04

Many immigrant communities already identify as Reformed Christians or Presbyterians, but find numerous institutional barriers keeping them from full inclusion and participation in the PC(USA). These communities often lack the financial resources needed to establish churches. Simply removing these barriers would greatly enrich our community and diversity.

Rationale for Rec. 05

In spite of the multilingual presence in our church, only a few selected PC(USA) resources and statements are translated into languages other than English. Presently, callers to the Presbyterian Center who do not speak English are not able to communicate in their own languages. The PC(USA) web site is predominantly in the English language. Thus, many current and prospective church members cannot read or hear information in their own languages, preventing them from full participation in the connectional church. As we prepare for an increasingly diverse future, we can make the ministry of the PC(USA) accessible to those who do not speak English.

Rationale for Rec. 06

Even as Presbyterians advocate for justice and equity, great inequalities in pay exist within ecclesial bodies and congregations. These inequalities particularly affect women and ministers from underrepresented racial ethnic communities. This not only inhibits the ministry of the church, but also distorts the witness of the church around issues of justice and stewardship of resources and gifts. The inequities can impede our capacity to grow the church deep and wide.

Rationale for Rec. 07

In many contexts, a top-down, corporate model of church that encourages over-dependence on professional church staff for the work of ministry has been dominant. This model is no longer financially sustainable for many congregations and diminishes the role of baptized believers to participate fully as members of the Body of Christ. We must recover the Reformed understanding of vocation that recognizes the call of the baptized to ministry in the Body of Christ.

Rationale for Rec. 08

The General Assembly has declared that it is opposed to racism, yet many presbyteries and their congregations have resisted the call to learn how internalized privilege informs attitudes about people from underrepresented racial ethnic communities and how racism harms the Body of Christ. By recognizing the changed cultural and demographic contexts, we can grasp compelling reasons for changing these attitudes. We are called to minister in a broken world, and, equipped with openness to all God's people, we will be prepared to discern together how to heal the brokenness.

Rationale for Rec. 09

The Special Committee on the Nature of the Church for the 21st Century's mandate included a charge to bring a report, make recommendations, and if appropriate, prepare "practical resources for individual and congregational use." At the conclusion of our study, we determined that practical resources are appropriate, but realize we need more time to develop them.

Rationale for Rec. 10

The church exists in the world to serve society-at-large, not only its own membership/disciples; the world is the context and society is the mission field, not the pews, and not the choir lofts. The church is called to focus not inwardly on buildings, programs, staff, and institutions, but outwardly on the local communities, neighborhoods, and implications of government policies, and dishonest market practices, and to challenge unethical societal norms. The PC(USA) has come to represent the elite and the rich, and must not fail to reflect and demonstrate God's grace, love, and compassion. Society, not church institutions, is the context of the church, and the church must grow and develop resources to respond more effectively to the ongoing social injustice and emerging societal challenges. The church is sent out to the world to bring about true healing and reconciliation, to serve practically and selflessly, to love genuinely and sacrificially, and to minister to all including the marginalized and outcasts in our society. The church is called to proclaim justice and hope, and to speak truth to the powers to be. The church is called to share power, resources, and fellowship with the least among us, to feed the hungry, and to minister to the vulnerable.

The PC(USA) has been emphasizing both the social witness and evangelism, and we have yet to bring about the impact on the larger society to which God is calling the church to serve. Despite the decline in membership and resources, the PC(USA) is still positioned to make a larger impact on transforming the world and living out our calling more faithfully. The call for councils and congregations is to serve their local communities, and for individual Presbyterians the call is to live out their faith in their neighborhoods and environments. We need to evaluate better our mission and witness in order to refocus our resources, both human and material, to serve society more faithfully and love the neighbor more genuinely.

Rationale Overall

## INTRODUCTION

These recommendations are in response to the following referral: 2010 Referral: Item 11-10. Direct the Moderator of the 219th General Assembly (2010) to Appoint a Committee of Eleven Persons to Study the Nature of the Church for the 21st Century—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (Minutes, 2010, Part I, p. 878 of the electronic version, p. 338 of the printed version)

The 201st General Assembly (1989) formed a special committee to study "The Nature of the Church and the Practice of Governance," which reported to the 205th General Assembly (1993). That committee found, ten years after reunion, that the church suffered from a lack of identity and had no clear and comprehensive strategy for the future of the denomination. Particularly noted were diverse biblical and theological interpretations and life experiences leading to different understandings of where the mission priorities of the church should be. The committee's study indicated that while the church held stated values for racial, ethnic, and theological diversity and inclusivity, the church had chosen to serve those values by requiring participation on committees and in governing bodies, neglecting a deeper commitment to learn the diverse cultural, racial, and theological values included in the body, to incorporate these diverse perspectives into our operative understanding of the church, and to plan for the future.

Today, the situation mirrors much of what the special committee found in 1993, except that in many ways the diversity of opinion has led to increased polarization and a more serious lack of communal identity. This has occurred in a time when demographic projections move us to look at where the PC(USA) is in our membership, evangelism, and stewardship strategies in a changing world.

Now, in a new century, with efforts to integrate increasing diversity into the church and its leadership, the time for a new study has come. The General Assembly created this special committee during the 219th General Assembly (2010) with a mandate to "help to increase understanding of the church from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective and assist current and new members in forming faithful plans for our common future" (Minutes, 2010, Part I, p. 879 of the electronic version).

We began our work by creating a list of resources, articles, and books to read about the church, its context, conditions, dreams, and visions. The committee established goals <sup>2</sup> and created questions <sup>3</sup> use as a survey tool in seeking feedback from people across the church. We met with staff from the OGA and the GAMC, people working in new and creative ministries, church members, leaders, and groups across the country who shared observations about the present and future of the denomination. Committee members spoke to attendees of the Big Tent gathering in June 2011 and offered an opportunity for shared conversation about the nature of the church and visions for its future.

The committee surrounded the process of discernment by worship and prayers for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. The committee members thank all of those who prayed for us as we worked, and are grateful for this opportunity to serve the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The report is in the form of a worship service and includes Scripture, prayer, litanies, and a hymn. We hope these will help the church catch a vision of ministry to the people of God well into the 21st century.

## Prologue

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a group of people from Galilee gathered together in a room in Jerusalem. This diverse group included men and women, wealthy and poor. Language and origin united them, along with one other crucial thing: the living God had touched each life, and now, in the midst of uncertainty and turmoil, they anticipated what God would do. As they waited, they prayed, and as they prayed, they waited, there, in a room.

With the sound of a violent wind, the Holy Spirit broke into the room and poured out upon this group of people. Individuals who followed the person of Jesus became the Body of Christ.

The story could have ended there, but it didn't.

Outside of the room, in the streets of Jerusalem, an even greater diversity of people—from many lands and of many tongues—had come together for the day of Pentecost. They gathered in astonishment, for they heard these Galileans speaking in their own languages. The Holy Spirit emboldened and empowered those in the upper room to share the good news of Jesus Christ. On that day, three thousand people were added to this pied tapestry of Holy Spirit weaving.

When they left the room, they became united with brothers and sisters from all corners of the world and all stations of life. Together they devoted themselves to teaching, fellowshiping, breaking bread, sharing resources, and praying for each other. None had any need. And day-by-day the Lord added to their number.

But what if they had never left that room?

They could have invited a few more into the room, and naturally, there would be some growth. They might form a building committee to add some new rooms to the house, or a wing for education. Their identity and nucleus would remain centered in that room. Perhaps others would hear some of the good news in passing, and want to follow the same Way. They could build their own chambers, of course, providing that they could raise enough money to do so.

The Galileans might determine that the same old room was no longer big enough for people of different opinions or persuasions. They might bisect the room with a new wall. Another group might decide to build their own house, and their own rooms, with other like-minded individuals. Some of the rooms are open to everyone—as long as the newcomers don't expect anything to change. Other doors remain tightly shut, opening only from the inside. Individuals gather in the rooms with others who look like, talk like, and think like themselves, while a whole new world develops just outside their doors. Those in the rooms fight over dwindling resources, fret about crumbling buildings, and devote more time to housekeeping, forgetting why they gathered in the first place.

What if those Galileans hadn't left the room?

As we prayed about our common future of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the 21st Century, this challenge stayed in the forefront of our minds, "Will we, as Presbyterians in the 21st Century, leave our rooms? Will we venture from our comfortable sanctuaries? Will we go out into the streets, learning different languages, embracing diversity, planting new congregations, and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ?"

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise be to God, Creator of all that is!

Praise be to the Almighty, Advocate for us all!

Blessing and honor be to the Eternal, the Great I Am, who brought the world into being and birthed the Body of Christ, the Church. The Church is God's and God's alone; through grace and in love, God grants us the opportunity to work with the Triune God in ministry in the church and the world.

#### CONFESSION

The Galileans left the room, but we have built many more rooms since then. Too often we have stayed inside our comfortable places in like-minded contentment. In this crucial time, as we discern God's call for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the 21st Century, we need to confess our sins—those things we have done as well as those things we ought to have done. We acknowledge our wrongs as we think about our inability to respond faithfully to cultural change, spiritual poverty, erected barriers, accumulated power, amassed resources, social witness, and theological education.

##### Cultural Change

The church of the 21st century exists in a radically different context than the church of the past, yet we confess that we have done little to understand and engage our surroundings. Congregations focus inward. We build and maintain buildings, programs, membership, and mostly serve our own membership. This model prospered decades ago, but has contributed to a self-centered church.

Most congregations no longer reflect our communities or engage them in significant ways. In addition, underrepresented racial ethnic and new immigrant constituencies are often perceived as unequal partners. Seeking comfort and safety in financial, cultural, and socioeconomic stability, we condemn the Gospel of Jesus Christ as irrelevant and out of touch with the needs and realities of our context.

Many church members grasp at former eras. With outdated cultural assumptions, we operate as in the past, spending for staff and programs that offer little return in terms of ministry or mission. Churches may fail to recognize, welcome, and provide support or programming for segments of their 21st century communities, including single parents, single adults, same-gender couples, disabled men and women, and underrepresented racial ethnic and immigrant adults and their families.

##### Spiritual Poverty

We confess our external and internal spiritual poverty. We neglected to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the detriment of those inside and outside of our church. We have been reluctant to step outside of comfort zones and incorporate different resources for spiritual formation. We have held onto rituals that no longer inspire and deepen faith, and some practices may obstruct the goal of nurturing disciples.

We have found easy comfort in church membership. Clinging to the way things were, we fear rather than embrace change. We worry about dying and fiercely grasp on to what we have and

what we have always done. When the church does adapt, it is often to the disordered parts of the culture. Called to be countercultural, avoiding controversy keeps the church from the hard work of discipleship.

Caught up in the pressures of congregational leadership, church leaders neglect the time to nurture rich personal spiritual lives that undergird ministry. Without spiritual development, church leaders may never realize the power of prayer, and lack confidence in God's presence as we work for change. We understand the need for transformation but may be unsure how to proceed. Lacking resources, knowledge, or support to proceed with transformational work, many church leaders resort to continuing to do things the way they have always been done.

### Erected Barriers

Though the church strives to speak the truth of God's love for all people and creation, we confess our complicity in the societal sins of racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia, and have perpetuated them within the church through formal and informal barriers to full inclusion.

A report from the Church Growth Strategy Team to General Assembly in 1996 projected potential growth in faith communities of color.<sup>4</sup> It concluded that the church had the potential to have underrepresented racial ethnic membership of 20 percent by the year 2020. At present, the church has less than 10 percent membership from those groups. The barriers to eliminating ongoing racism are multiple. The denomination's five<sup>5</sup> "racial ethnic caucuses" and other communities must compete with one another for the shrinking resources.

Shifting patterns in immigration resulted in an influx of diverse communities, not only from Latin America, but also the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and India. Rather than being welcomed fully into the Body of Christ, their arrival can invoke fear of the other and fear of social and institutional change. The way forward must be to journey together.

We confess that we erect institutional barriers to welcoming immigrant ministers from global Presbyterian churches. The denomination has the structure to waive some requirements, but many presbyteries are not inclined to bend when new congregations ask to affiliate with the presbytery.

Racism, sexism, and patriarchy still have a hold on the church. Evidence includes the vast difference in pay for women and ministers from underrepresented racial ethnic communities in comparison to what white men receive for the same positions.<sup>6</sup> Few women or underrepresented racial ethnic pastors serve as heads of staff of congregations over 1,000 members. Guidelines about the use of inclusive and expansive language for God and the people of God have been in existence since 1984, yet pastors resist modeling this language, and parishioners follow their lead, perpetuating sexist language in the next generation.<sup>7</sup>

### Accumulated Power

We confess that we misuse our power and privilege. As we look at the church institutions, including the six agencies of the PC(USA), mid councils, seminaries, and congregations, we recognize that we still struggle with issues of power sharing, particularly along lines of gender and underrepresented racial ethnic groups. Those with power to decide who shall be at the table can make decisions about how far to expand the circle. Even with the best of intentions, those in power may unconsciously resist changes that threaten to take away some of that influence. Others may even make conscious decisions to exclude those with whom they are not comfortable or whom they perceive as a threat to their efforts to control. Implicit hierarchies impede the empowering of congregational leaders and diminish the priesthood of all believers.

Even though church members may realize they are called to be a welcoming, inclusive community, hospitality itself becomes an exercise of power. Members happily and easily show hospitality to those who are like them, but pull back when visitors differ in dress, language or skin color.

### Amassed Resources



We confess our disordered relationship with money and pray that God will lead us to recover a faithful understanding of living into stewardship. There may be little discussion about giving, tithing, and generosity. In times of recession, teaching stewardship may seem too controversial for pastors to address except in an occasional sermon when pledges are due. We confess that we preach a God of abundance but live with a worldview of scarcity.

Substantial inequalities exist in our pay structures. Large churches offer high salaries while small churches struggle to afford part-time or weekly pulpit supply, let alone full-time pastors. While wealthy churches might be able to support ministers and ministries in contexts that cannot be self-supporting, this is rare in practice. Though we identify ourselves as a connectional church, that connection remains tenuous when it comes to sharing financial resources.

By continuing to define church by sustainability, independence, financial security, and size, many new churches and fellowships are not included in the Presbyterian family. It must be noted that this definition of a church—a self-governing, self-sustaining, self-propagating entity—is a 19th century church model not found anywhere in Scripture.

The majority of congregations continue to worship in buildings that require increasing costs in maintenance and upkeep, even as membership continues to decline, saddling fewer members with greater costs simply to keep the doors open. Congregations could seek out new ministries to house in the building or explore options for selling property, but often resist such alternatives. As a result, fewer and fewer resources go to support mission and outreach as funds are tied up in maintaining aging properties that are often impractical and inaccessible for many individuals.

#### Social Witness

We confess that the church has been more concerned with declining membership and revenues than with following the call of Jesus. Particularly in a time of economic crisis, we turn inward, focusing on buildings, budgets, and bureaucracies, while becoming isolated from the local communities we are called to love and serve. Dedicating diminished resources to self-serving survival strategies makes us prone to divisions and power struggles. In such a time as this, God urges the church to love sacrificially and serve faithfully, to take risks, to take up our cross and follow Jesus. The church must strengthen its social witness, promote just peace, and actively engage society as the heart of our mission.

#### Theological Education

We confess that a lack of culturally proficient theological education perpetuates blindness to the changing context of the church. Theological education often does not prepare ministers for shifting realities in our world and ministry, but seems designed to educate leaders who maintain the status quo. We lack courses that can develop social awareness and skills in the traditions and languages of new and younger communities. Courses geared toward changing needs in congregational and missional leadership are largely absent from required or elective curricula.

Theological education that includes an understanding of other Christian denominations would go far toward encouraging clergy to work cooperatively with others who share the same concerns for the needs in the context in which they minister. Sharing ideas, resources, and skills with other churches in an effort to benefit neighbors in need can provide the kind of hospitality that demonstrates God's love. Courses to expand understanding can eliminate the tendency to judge and to compete with other denominations in a local context.

#### Call To Confession

If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Our God, who continually makes all things new, is ready and eager to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In faith and humility, let us confess our sin together.

#### Litany Of Confession

One: Holy One, we have built walls around us to keep us safe and comfortable with others

who look, think, speak, and act like us.

All: Forgive us, God of grace. Help us to open the doors of our closed rooms and listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

One: We confess that we are timid in the face of change and do not welcome your children in all their diversity.

All: Forgive us, God of strength. Help us to be brave enough to open the doors of our churches to the world outside to see where the Spirit of God may lead us.

One: We have not greeted those we do not know. We have not sought ways to journey together with those different from us.

All: Forgive us, God of all. Help us to leave our sanctuaries to listen, work, and pray with others in ministry and to the community around us.

One: We confess we do not notice those missing from our churches, those who cannot attend church on our schedule, who do not understand our traditions and practices because of language and cultural differences, and those who may feel pressured to join and contribute, but who feel excluded because of stressful financial realities.

All: Forgive us, God of mercy, and help us to suspend the judgments that narrow our world.

One: Our failure to take time from our busy lives to spend time relating to you, dear God, has left us poor in spirit, fearful, clinging, and critical. We go through the motions of worship, thinking it is for our comfort but gaining little in spiritual nourishment.

All: Forgive us, God of power. Help us remember our worship is for you.

One: We see the poverty and injustice in our communities, yet we fail to understand how our own privilege contributes to the inequities. We do not make the effort to work with the voiceless, the marginalized, the suffering to learn how our resources and voices might be used to change oppressive systems.

All: God of justice, forgive our blindness to our privilege and our fear that keeps us from working with others to confront the status quo.

One: We repent of our grasping for power, position, and financial security. Our clenched hands hang on to buildings and traditions that no longer give vitality, but add burdens that overwhelm us, depriving us of joy.

All: God of freedom, forgive us for lacking the courage to let go, share, and discover the life-giving energy that comes from hearing all the voices, not just those that are loudest. Free us from fear. Open us to new ways of being Christ's Body in the world.

#### Assurance Of Pardon

One: We worship a God of grace and mercy, who creates us, loves us, redeems us, and is ready to forgive our failures. The Spirit of God has opened the doors of our closed rooms and has invited us into the world, to live lives devoted to service and love. Even before we repent of the sin that separates us from God, God is ready to greet us as cleansed and renewed disciples. In the name of the Holy Trinity, we are forgiven!

All: All thanks and praise to God!

#### THE WORD

#### Present Situation

The passing of the first decade of the 21st century reinforced how dramatically different the

social landscape of this century is from the last. In the United States, the first decade has been marked by terrorism, war, and deep economic recession. Environmental disasters threaten our land and make us vulnerable. The challenges that stem from those realities affect not only Americans, but also the entire global community.

Despite these issues, we also see hope and possibility. Ethnic minority communities grow, not just in population, but in economic, social, and cultural contributions. Advancing technologies alter the structures that dominate the way we speak, write, and collaborate as a society.

Since the Nature of the Church report published in 1993, areas of tension within our denomination have become more visible and urgent. Like many denominations, our ability to influence government and business has ebbed, yet we still have a great deal of material wealth. We hope to overcome our divisions in successive generations, however, many people in younger demographics feel disaffected, neglected by Presbyterian communities of faith. We continue to ignore the gifts and contributions of underrepresented racial ethnic groups, depriving us of the richness of the full Body of Christ.

We are grateful for the churches that have come to the end of their lifespan and celebrate their ministries. We also recognize the challenging fact that the loss of churches has grown steadily over the decade. Congregations have been dissolved (691), merged (116), or dismissed (101).<sup>8</sup>(See Figure 1, Dissolved, Merged, Dismissed Congregations, in the pdf file, sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century under "Additional Resources.")

As we thank God for the vital ministries of these congregations, we hope that their land, buildings, and resources (when available) will be used to plant new communities of faith. If a congregation leaves the denomination, we encourage presbyteries to negotiate for money or resources for starting a new congregation or supporting an emerging immigrant fellowship. (See Figure 2, Merged, Received, and New Congregations, in the pdf file, sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century under "Additional Resources.")

As we look at the trend over the decade, we see that we lost more churches than we planted and the loss of churches has more than doubled in the last eleven years.<sup>9</sup>(See Figure 3, Net Loss of Congregations, in the pdf file, sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century under "Additional Resources.")

Currently, 44 percent of our congregations are without installed pastoral leadership, and an increasing number of congregations can no longer afford an installed pastor.<sup>10</sup> Though we rejoice in the vital work of those congregations who are led by commissioned ruling elders and stated supply pastors, we also recognize the fragile position that these congregations face in the coming decades. (See Figure 4, Pastoral Leadership, in the pdf file, sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century under "Additional Resources.")

Even as we support congregations who face changing realities, as we think about our plans for our common future, we know we must put more energy into planting new congregations that focus on diverse communities and younger generations. As we look at new immigrant fellowships and new church developments, we rejoice in these new communities. Yet, we realize that there are many obstacles before these communities of faith become officially organized or can be received in our larger denomination.

Most presbyteries want congregations to be self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-propagating before they become officially organized. This causes difficulties, because it means that those who are part of new communities do not have a recognized vote or voice within our larger system. Often worshipers in new communities are more diverse and younger than the dominant church culture, and we need to hear their perspectives in order to meet the challenges of the years ahead.

We, as a committee, recognize common roadblocks for developing worshipping communities, particularly relating to our cultural bias and finances.

## Cultural Bias

In the next generation, Caucasians will be a minority in our country. As we look toward vital years ahead, we will need to focus on nurturing diverse communities. Even though immigrant fellowships and other diverse communities are the fastest growing groups in our denomination, they can face considerable obstacles as they try to organize as Presbyterian congregations. Here are four examples.

- A Somali community meets every week to worship together. It's a vibrant body, with more than three hundred in attendance. Yet, the presbytery has not recognized them as a "church" because they do not have enough official members.

The people who attend worship do not have the same notions of membership that the prevailing Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has. A person might be active in a congregation, but reluctant to give up membership in a former congregation. Other worshipers find it odd that they would have to stand up in front of the congregation, profess their faith, and have their names written in a book in order to become members. The PC(USA) idea of membership has kept the church from organizing.

- A Mexican community gathers in a living room, praising God. The community is Reformed and they have a Presbyterian pastor. As they work and worship together, they grow in numbers and vitality. They visit their local presbytery and ask if they can become a part of the denomination. The pastor, with many years of ordained ministry experience in Mexico, faces numerous roadblocks—he must pass culturally biased ordination exams, meet very specific educational requirements, and navigate unwieldy committee structures. The barriers become so numerous and costly that the community eventually gives up on trying to become a part of our denomination.

- A Presbyterian Portuguese community worships together. When they outgrow the living room of the pastor's house, they ask the presbytery if they know of a space where they can worship. The presbytery leads them to a wonderful building, home to an aging Caucasian congregation. At first, the situation works out well, as the Portuguese community grows into its new space. The immigrant community gives a portion of its income to the white congregation.

Friction arises over the shared space, and the white congregation begins to complain about the mess that the children make, the additional electricity costs, and the wear and tear on the building. Quickly, the white congregation no longer sees the situation as a ministry partnership, but they see themselves as landlords and the immigrant community as tenants. They begin to pressure the emerging congregation to find another home.

- An immigrant pastor begins a congregation in her neighborhood, and she is welcomed into presbytery membership. As she continues to work in her congregation, she sees that she is well below the presbytery's minimum salary. She notices that when the denominational body is planting a white church, they call it an "intentional new church development," but her community is an "immigrant fellowship." With all of the work that she has been putting into the church, she knows that her community has also been "intentional." The only thing that is not intentional is the level of commitment and resources that the denomination allots. The difference between what the presbytery puts into a white church plant versus her immigrant congregation is substantial.

As we think about the decades to come, we encourage presbyteries to understand the ways in which they work against diverse communities, and find ways to nurture the fellowships in their midst.

## Finances

Financial stability is a major criterion for a congregation to move from the development phase to being recognized as an organized congregation. A new immigrant fellowship or a new church development officially becomes a "church" when the membership can support a full budget. Although this hurdle seems like a practical necessity, it can be difficult for diverse and younger communities to become financially stable in the short time that funding allows. In fact, most of our

congregations would not be financially independent if it weren't for the faithfulness of previous generations; existing congregations have been blessed with property, buildings, and (sometimes) endowments that have been passed onto our generation. Even with those gifts, an increasing number of established congregations can no longer afford an installed pastor.

As we plan for future decades, we can realize the tenuous position in which many new communities might find themselves. We can realize that financial independence should not be the leading signifier of a worshipping community. We can recognize alternative categories of church (such as worshipping fellowships or missional communities) and support them for longer periods.

### Scripture Stories

Change and crisis are not simply endemic of our present situation; they are part and parcel of the journey of God's people. When the disciples of Jesus gathered on Pentecost after his resurrection, they commemorated God's giving of the Law at Sinai. The tongues of fire sent by the Holy Spirit upon the disciples that day were like the divine fire that inscribed tablets of the Law before Moses at Sinai. The Law served as God's gift to bind together the mixed multitude that came out from Egypt in a covenant with God and one another. After the fresh experience of liberation from bondage, the Law instructed them how to remain a free people, loving God, neighbor, and self through true worship and holy living.

Many generations later during the Babylonian exile, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision that illustrated how God would again unify this chosen people in the midst of change. Ezekiel's vision of God descending from the sky on a throne moved by large wheels represented God's willingness to move in order to comfort a chosen people. It reminds us that God's presence will take up residence wherever we are. As the prophet Isaiah confirmed, God can indeed do a new thing among us (Isa. 43:19).

Because God maintained relationship with God's people in and out of exile, the disciples gathered at Pentecost knew the unbound power and presence of God. Scripture tells us that the disciples gathered together with one accord. However, the Spirit disrupted that easy unity. In its place, the Spirit offered them a deeper unity that could withstand the sending of the disciples out of the room and into a world of risk and opportunity. The world took notice of this miracle of unity amidst diversity, and the Gospel was shared to the ends of the earth. If the disciples hadn't left that upper room, where would we be today?

The New Testament gives us a portrait of what Christian community looks like when it accepts this miracle. The body of believers, conceived in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, grew into a *koinonia*—a community known by its deep communion and sharing. Common practices that resulted from their Pentecost encounter held this community together.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:42–47).

They held things in common, sharing in the manner that Jesus had demonstrated to them in feeding multitudes. They broke bread together, sharing a common table that spoke of their willingness to welcome, overcome differences, and become mutually vulnerable. They prayed, seeking to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and to better follow their Lord and Savior.

They dared to yield to the hospitality of others. When Cornelius, a Roman soldier, sent for Simon Peter in Joppa and brought him back to instruct him as to the Gospel of God and the new community, Peter's understanding of community changed. Peter changed his behavior according to the Spirit, and his mind was transformed (Acts 10:27–28). What could have been a failure to accept the unsettling command of the Holy Spirit was redeemed in risky discipleship. Accepting the welcome of a Gentile allowed Peter to make a startling confession:

I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is

acceptable to [God]. You know the message [God] sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ —[who] is Lord of all. (Acts 10:34–36).

These Scriptural reminders of the source of our unity and the unbound power of God affirm that the nature of the church in the 21st century and the heart of Presbyterian witness will be in making disciples in diverse and transformative communities to the greater glory of God.

Many have understood what has happened in our denomination in the late 20th and early 21st centuries through the lens of exile. While there are many elements of the biblical experience of exile within our context, there are signs of liberation and restoration, characteristic of exodus. Indeed both exodus and exile co-exist in the PC(USA). In exodus, we journey from the known to the unknown, from old ways to new ways. What sustained the PC(USA) in past generations is not what will sustain us in this generation and beyond. We must go out by a different way, discerning our path in discipleship together.

### Disciples

As disciples we witness to Christ in word and deed, and in doing so understand the fullness of our identity in Christ. To strengthen our witness within the context of 21st century America, Christians in PC(USA) congregations must move from a focus on membership to a focus on discipleship as the primary locus of their identity. Disciples seek to love God and love neighbor in the way and person of Jesus Christ.

When we shift from membership to discipleship, our understanding of leadership changes. In a membership-oriented model of church, members are the recipients of benefits within the congregation. In a discipleship-oriented model of church, disciples seek to serve and be served in the nurturing of Christian faith and life. The future of leadership in the 21st century church belongs not only to teaching elders, but also to ruling elders, deacons, and others equipped for the ministry to which we are being called.

A shift from membership to discipleship occurs as God sends us out into the world. In a membership-oriented model of church, we often stay within our own silos, more concerned with our guilds and circles than with the larger mission of Jesus Christ. We become tethered to our customs in an unhealthy way. In a discipleship-oriented church, we stay rooted in tradition and yet are sent out in an apostolic manner, requiring adaptation to changing circumstances so that we can more closely mirror Christ in our context. Education, worship, spiritual disciplines, service, and mission, form us more completely as disciples.

### Transformed And Transformative Communities

The Holy Spirit transforms Christian communities into communities that shape disciples, empowering them to become transformative in a world marked by God's gifts of diversity. In encounters with enemies, strangers, and the marginalized, the disciples understood the power of Christ to form their full humanity. The Christian community appreciates that it takes the whole people of God, in all their diverse perspectives, in order to get a fuller glimpse of God's vision for us in the 21st century.

While we may feel more comfortable focusing our efforts on specific groups of like-minded people, ethnically, theologically, or socially, God calls us to exhibit the reign of Christ to the world and to model a society in which the reconciling of differences is at the source of divine power and the purpose of human community. In living in such communities seeking transformation, disciples within that community are themselves transformed.

Transformed communities need the resources necessary to thrive. We recognize that the established churches in our denomination continue to benefit from the faithful stewardship of those saints who have gone before, through the benefits of property, endowments, and other funds that continue to enable ministry today. New church developments and new missional communities today begin without those benefits, and often find themselves reaching out to those on the margins of society and the church—groups that lack the financial means for full support. These communities need more equity and flexibility. They need more support from the connectional church, not simply

in terms of prayer and good will, but in terms of finances, property, and other material helps.

Discipleship and apostleship drive us toward the risk necessary for Christian witness in our time. As Christians we should not only sustain ourselves or perpetuate our existence; rather our uniqueness is in following the one who gave himself up for others, emptied himself, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

This servant posture accounts for the honor given Christ. Christ calls us to be willing to serve, learn from, heal, and comfort those unlike ourselves. This is the heart of true evangelism.

God has given us a bigger mission than we have given ourselves. Just as disciples cannot be nourished by worship or service or education alone, so our mission cannot be relegated to only one area of human life or community. Likewise, the gifts we have been given are not meant for our own satisfaction or comfort. For to whom much has been given, much is expected. At a time when Presbyterians are among the wealthiest of Christians in the United States, we need to respond with faithful stewardship, to receive our blessing as a responsibility to be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

God is glorified when we are reconciled in our diversity to anticipate the realm of God, and to exhibit that great vision to the world around us.

### THANKSGIVING

As we recognize the world in which we live, the ways in which we have been blessed and gifted to minister in that world, and our call to do so, we cannot help but give thanks to God. We give thanks because God is good. We belong to God in life and in death by the costly grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

However, for more than two decades denominations, including the PC(USA), have been preoccupied with dim statistics of relentless decline in membership and funding, and division of all kinds. Deep in anxiety, we focus upon ourselves rather than on God and God's work in our midst. The church is in danger of having its life of thanksgiving replaced by a life of anxiety. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, urges the church not to worry about anything, but instead to engage in a life of prayer and thanksgiving in joy. Paul also writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "give thanks in all circumstances ... ." From these passages and many others we learn that thanksgiving is more than an acknowledgement of mutual benefit or a kind of thankful feeling. Thanksgiving, according to Paul, is to focus our whole lives solely on God. This has several important implications for the church in the 21st century.

We give thanks, acknowledging that God is restoring and renewing the church for God's glory.

We continue to give thanks for God's faithful accompaniment and steadfast love for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as well as for the privilege of participating in mission in the past, present, and future.

We give thanks, affirming that the PC(USA) is part of God's church founded by Christ in the Holy Spirit. We give thanks and praise in all circumstances because we belong to God, and for the hope that we have through the resurrection of Christ.

We give thanks, anticipating the new and unfamiliar ways that God will renew the church for mission, in ways that may be hidden to us. We continue to trust that God will finish the good work started in us through Jesus Christ.

We give thanks for the wonderful ways God has gifted the PC(USA). We are thankful for the continuing ministries of more than 10,000 congregations and many emerging worshipping communities; for the colleges and seminaries educating people in witness to our Lord Jesus Christ; for the ordained women and men who serve as teaching and ruling elders; for the deacons who serve those in need; for the mission partners around the world bringing the Good News and hope of Jesus Christ to those thirsting for righteousness; for the mid-church councils and their leaders who serve God and neighbors; for the marvelous diversity of racial ethnic communities in our

denomination; for the older and younger generations who worship and engage in mission together; for the challenging ministry and mission opportunities around us that we can engage in creative and faithful ways with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We are grateful for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that we have received. We thank God for the rich faith tradition of our Reformed heritage through which we can thank and praise God through our minds, hearts, and strength. For the church in the 21st century, we pray that the Holy Spirit will move us powerfully and set our hearts on fire for God's justice and righteousness, that we will be passionate disciples of Christ and agents for God's steadfast love for this world. We will recover and own that part of our Reformed heritage, from Calvin to Jonathan Edwards, and from feminist and womanist theologies to liberation theologies of many different contexts, that affirm that God transforms us through faith.

We are thankful for the gift of the sacrament of the Eucharist, through which we receive the visible and the living Word by the host, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through bread and wine, words and action, this sacrament makes the promise of God visible and concrete. "In the Eucharist the church blesses God for all that God has done, is doing, and promises to do, and offers itself in obedient service to God's reign."<sup>11</sup> Eucharist is a way in which God the Holy Spirit empowers the church, nourishes the church, nurtures and challenges the church with the very presence of Jesus Christ. We will give thanks for God's mighty acts in the past, in the present, and in the future. We will praise God for God's creation of the world and the cosmos as well as God's providential care for all that God has made. We will give thanks to Christ for his redemptive life, death, and resurrection. We will continue to call upon the Holy Spirit to empower us to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ who can faithfully carry out God's work.

Looking back at the first decade of the century, we thank God that we have planted new congregations and found vital life and better use of resources as congregations merge, resulting in 370 new churches.<sup>12</sup> (See Figure 5, New Churches, Received Churches, and New Church Developments Comparison, in the pdf file, sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century under "Additional Resources.")

We give thanks for the new things that God is doing in our midst.

## Sending

Gathered by God, we confessed our sins, listened to the Word, and gave thanks for the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and church. We embraced the call and challenge to ministry. In virtue of our baptism, we are all called and empowered to go forth into the world in new and creative ways to witness to God's saving love and grace in the communities in which we live.

As we go out, we will need to meet the challenges of this transitional time—the increasing loss of congregations, the lack of diversity in our denomination, and the inability for churches to call full-time pastors. We can do it, with the Spirit's leading, by leaving our like-minded rooms, planting diverse communities, and encouraging creative ministries and vocations.

As congregations come to the end of their lives, we will support churches that are called to close, and use our resources for emerging immigrant fellowships and new ministry opportunities. We will affirm pastors who feel called to bi-vocational ministry and innovative communities. Realizing our changing cultural contexts, we will identify, plant, and nurture immigrant fellowships, taking care to remove the barriers that might keep them from full participation in our life together. We will support and equip pastoral leaders through just and equitable pay, especially for women and people of color.

Moving forward, we lift up and learn from new and diverse models for authentic ministry in the 21st century, inspired by the faithful and creative work that God is doing in our midst. Here are several examples of models alive within the PC(USA):

New immigrant fellowships. A group of people who recently immigrated from another country



will meet, worship, and support one another in someone's living room. Often they outgrow their house church and continue to be a viable community and church.

New communities planted by an established church. Using money from a large congregation and denominational funding, a church is planted. Neema Community Church, now a chartered congregation, was birthed from Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas.

Multicultural congregations. Often churches realize that they can't connect with their changing neighborhoods, so they welcome another immigrant congregation within their existing church structure. This works best when it's not seen as a landlord/renter relationship, or even a "nesting" relationship, but a mutual ministry and partnership. Beechmont Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, has become a multicultural congregation by incorporating Latino and Sudanese communities into a multicultural model of shared ministry and governance. Alternately, multicongregational models of church share facilities and some mission, while maintaining their unique identities and leadership structures. Other congregations have managed to move away from mono-ethnic identities to incorporate members, leaders, traditions, and gifts from multiple and diverse ethnic groups in a vibrant witness to God's diverse creation.

Intentional Christian Communities. A group of Christians live together and share resources so that they can serve their larger community. The members of the community might work part-time and spend the rest of their time worshiping, praying, and loving their neighbors. They might plant a community garden, provide child-care for children, or help neighbors navigate immigration bureaucracy. The Formation House in Pittsburgh is a good example of an intentional community.

Church and nonprofit hybrids. Presbyterian congregations, along with the presbytery, came together to form The Common Table in Bend, Oregon. It is "a nonprofit Social Entrepreneurship project for the betterment of our community and world." As a restaurant and ministry, they put faith in action as they invest in people who need jobs, wholesome food, community, education, and experience.

Pastors serve bi-vocational callings. Pastors go into bi-vocational ministry so that they can serve the congregation as well as the community. Pastors may roast coffee, brew beer, counsel the community, write books, or participate in a number of callings alongside their call to the local church. Teaching Elder Edward Hilton serves as the pastor of Truckee Lutheran Presbyterian Church in Truckee, California. He works full-time as a teacher at the Sierra Continuation High School, allowing him to minister in multiple ways to the small mountain community. Some of our seminaries support this model through offering joint degrees along with the M.Div. such as the MSW, MAMFT, JD, MBA, and others.

Art ministries. Churches find new vitality as they begin to look toward the arts as a way of serving the community and attracting creative membership. Wicker Park Grace in Chicago is a good example of this type of community. Wicker Park Grace was planted in an art gallery, and creating art, poetry, and music has become central to who they are in their work and worship. In other places, a church might rent space to artists or partner with artists-in-residence.

Food ministries. Many congregations are using food—farmer's markets, local food movements, and community gardens—to connect with the community and (in some cases) provide additional funding. Milwood Community Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, has been a leader in the locavore movement, encouraging its community to eat locally produced food.<sup>13</sup>

Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the years ahead, we can continue to expand into new churches and forms of ministry, supporting innovation and encouraging growth.

#### CLOSING AND SENDING

Two thousand years ago, a group of Galileans left the room where they were gathered, and the world hasn't been the same since. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they became the diverse body of Christ in the world, going out near and far to share the good news of God's love, grace, and mercy with all. We inherit this legacy, and the legacy of our Reformed and Presbyterian

heritage, even as we seek to follow God's call to us in a new day and time. May we be transformed through the work of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ that God has created us to be, leaving our rooms of comfort and going out into the world of God's good creation.

#### Sending Hymn

"Send Us Out" (Can be sung to NETTLETON [Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing])

With the dawning of each new day, nature sings a song of praise;  
Let us join with all creation, hearts and hands and voices raised.  
For all that you've done before now, and all that you're doing new,  
God, Creator, we now offer, this new song of praise to you.

For our heritage, we thank you, and we honor what has been,  
And we pray now for your guidance to be with us, now, as then.  
Through your Holy Spirit, bind us, so that we may be set free -  
Free from all that would divide us. Lord restore our unity!

Give us sight to catch your vision of a world transformed by grace.  
Let us bear your hope and justice into every time and place.  
Lead us, God, into a new day; may we boldly heed your call.  
Send us out again in mission, serving you by loving all.

#### Charge

Go out! Let us go out from the rooms of our own creation; let us move beyond all that would divide us.

Go forth! Let us go into this world of God's creation, bearing God's justice, peace, and love to a world scarred by strife and division.

Go in the faith, hope, and love of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God!

Benediction (from Ephesians 6:23 and Romans 15:13)

Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Amen.

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#### Endnotes

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2. We will submit an informed paper that sets out a compelling vision for the nature of the church for the 21st century that will make a difference in our church. In addition, we will help create practical, interactive, well-designed resources that individual churches can use to help us to:
  - Rethink the model of the church in response to our shifting cultural contexts (immigration, race, age demographics, and technology). We will offer nimble and creative strategies for planting churches and for existing congregations to engage more fully in their context. And we will encourage

congregational vocational discernment as well as individual discernment that includes pastors, elders, deacons, and lay people.

- Communicate our faith as Presbyterians from a Reformed perspective. Equip members to evangelize and share the gospel.
- Recognize the impact and contribution on the church of emerging majorities on U.S. society and in the PC(USA), seeking new ways of being church together, learning together, and engaging with one another.
- Understand the particular challenges and gifts of younger generations.
- Recognize technology's impact on our culture and church.

3. (1) What is your vision for the church in the 21st century? (2) What characteristics will draw the great diversity (racial ethnic, age, gender, etc.) of our country into our community of faith in the 21st century? (3) What do you think are the highest priorities and challenges for the church in the 21st century? (4) What unique voice do we, as Presbyterians in the Reformed tradition, bring regarding vital ministry in churches and in society? (5) How do we move the church past division in theology, evangelism and mission to work toward unity in Christ?

4. As a committee, we confess that our language has limits. We struggled with words to appropriately describe different communities. As we use the terms "people of color" or "communities of color," we refer to those underrepresented racial ethnic communities in our Euro-American constituencies.

5. African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Middle Eastern, and Native American caucuses and related councils as well as staff working with new immigrant communities.

6. God's Work in Women's Hands: Pay Equity and Just Compensation.  
<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/gods-work-womens-hands-pay-equity-and-just-compens/>.

7. From Item10-13 comment by the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, 212th General Assembly (2010). The use of inclusive language for the people of God and expansive language for God was affirmed by the 196th General Assembly (1984). Again, the 197th General Assembly (1985) adopted Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language (PDS 70420-01-003).

8. Research Services, "Comparative Statistics 2010: Information about the members, ministers, and finances of the Presbyterian Church (USA)" (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2012).

9. Research Services, "Comparative Statistics 2010: Information about the members, ministers, and finances of the Presbyterian Church (USA)" (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2012).

10. Research Services, "Comparative Statistics 2010: Information about the members, ministers, and finances of the Presbyterian Church (USA)" (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2012).

11. Book of Common Worship, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 41.

12. Research Services, "Comparative Statistics 2010: Information about the members, ministers, and finances of the Presbyterian Church (USA)" (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2012).

13. Craig Goodwin wrote about how his congregation connected with the local food movement in A Year of Plenty (Sparkhouse Press, 2011).

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

**Item 16-07, Rec 02 & 06c, 2013: \$47,159; 2014: \$38,655 (per capita - OGA)**

**Rec 05 & 06a, 2013: \$68,281; 2014: \$39,677 (per capita - OGA)**

**Rec 09, 2013: \$16,060; 2014: \$8,450 (per capita - OGA)**

**Rec 06-b, 2013: \$4,000; 2014: \$3,500 (per capita - GAMC)**

**ACREC A&C, 2013: \$36,230; 2014: \$16,195 (per capita - OGA)**

**(2013) \$794,107 (2014) \$224,839 [GAMC - Unrestricted]**

## COMMENT

**COMMENT**

## ACREC ADVICE AND COUNSEL

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) advises that Item 10-13 be answered by the advice and counsel of ACREC to Item 05-12 (Mid Council Commission Report of the General Assembly), which was to approve an alternate resolution to read as follows:

"1. Instruct the Moderators of the 218th, 219th, and 220th General Assemblies (2008, 2010, 2012) to appoint a Racial Ethnic Ministry Commission.

"2. Empower the appointed commission to develop strategies to address the questions raised in the reports noted above, and to be granted adequate budget for this work.

"3. Direct the commission, in consultation with representative groups, to develop strategies toward the path forward for the PC(USA)

"a. for the development and support of ministries and structures that support and grow established and emerging racial ethnic congregations;

"b. for the development and support of ministries and structures that support and grow multicultural congregations;

"c. for the development and support of ministries and structures that support new immigrant congregations;

"d. for the growth of understanding of the issues race, culture, and ethnicity raise within the Christian community, including development of churchwide strategies to raise consciousness of white privilege.

"4. Provide commission staffing from both the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Mission Council.

"5. Give representation on the commission to the following groups:

"a. racial ethnic caucuses

"b. new immigrant congregations and ministries

"c. racial ethnic congregations

"d. multicultural congregations

"e. Women of Color Joint Working Group

"f. mid council staff

"g. ACREC

"h. GACOR;

"and that all decisions would be made by consensus in order to ensure voice for all commission members.

"6. Direct the commission to consult with other groups as needed, both within and outside the PC(USA), to develop workable and sustainable strategies.

"7. Bring recommendations to the 221st General Assembly (2014)."

## Rationale

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns hears echoes of voices from across the church in the report's Recommendation 8, which calls for the formation of a National Racial Ethnic Ministry Task Force. Specifically in reports to this General Assembly, calls have been made for

- a national consultation to develop strategies and collaborate on growing new and existing African American congregations and communities of faith in the PC(USA)(Item 16-03, African American Church Growth Strategy Report, Recommendation 1);
- the development of a national strategy for Hispanic/Latino Church Growth, and infrastructure built to support this new strategy (Item 10-17, Hispanic/Latino/a Leadership Conversation Group Report, Recommendation e.);
- a national consultation to develop strategies and policies to support racial ethnic, multicultural, and new immigrant church growth in the PC(USA) (Special Task Force to Study Racial Ethnic and New Immigrant Church Growth, Recommendations 1–6);
- recommendations to develop effective strategies for the development of racial ethnic and new immigrant worshipping communities; train seminary students in emerging cultural realities, and develop strategies within our seminaries to work toward curricular and faculty reform and change, that we might train racial ethnic and new immigrant leaders more effectively; develop multilingual resources and translation capacities to better witness within our increasingly diverse society; explore disparities in compensation between those of more and less represented groups in our church; develop resources to support the growth of new immigrant ministries and congregations, and increase the understanding among Presbyterians of white privilege that we might repent and be renewed and empowered for more faithful service (Item 10-13, Report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century, Recommendations 1.c., 3.a., d., e., 4., 5., 6.b., c., f., and 8, respectively).

These, in addition to the recommendation from the Mid Council Commission to develop a National Racial Ethnic Ministry Task Force, make it clear that while Presbyterians have been thinking about racial ethnic and new immigrant ministries for over a century—and while many faithful ministries have been launched in many contexts that have borne much fruit—we know and are voicing in many arenas our awareness that there is still much work to do. Race, culture, and language still divide us, marring the image of Christ we share with a world in need and blunting our witness to the good news. The current excitement about developing “1001 New Worshipping Communities” will not be realized without the engagement and investment of racial ethnic Presbyterians. To date, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has not addressed issues of race and culture sufficiently to ensure either that the needed engagement would happen, or that the voices of racial ethnic Presbyterians would be heard in the conversation.

Therefore, to faithfully steward the resources entrusted to us by taking a proactive approach to a number of overlapping initiatives and recommendations, the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) advises the 220th General Assembly (2012) to answer all the recommendations noted above with the approval of this recommendation.

#### ACSWP ADVICE AND COUNSEL

This report makes recommendations in ten areas to strengthen the church to face changing cultural, financial, and institutional contexts, including measures for new ministries, bi-vocational ministers, solidarity among those serving as pastoral leaders, and ways for all members to witness with integrity and effectiveness in the 21st century world.

The ACSWP advises the assembly to approve the report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century.

#### Rationale

This rationale is not intended to address all recommendations of the report, but to note that ACSWP believes it can address Recommendations 6.b., f., and 10. within its current budget. It can also help other offices of the GAMC in addressing 6.a., with the theological work done in the policy approved by the 219th General Assembly (2010), “[Neither Poverty Nor Riches: Compensation, Equity, and the Unity of the Church](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/Neither-Poverty-Nor-Riches/)” (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/Neither-Poverty-Nor-Riches/>). The ACSWP views Recommendation 10. as an affirmation of the role of discernment in social witness. In line with that recommendation, we note the Peace Discernment process currently



underway as a means for congregations to participate in developing new modes of peacemaking for the 21st century (see Item 14-05).

#### COTE COMMENT

The Committee on Theological Education makes the following comments regarding the Report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century:

Recommendation 3.a.: The Committee on Theological Education (COTE) recognizes that PC(USA) seminaries have, do, and continue to adjust courses, supervised ministry, and continuing education opportunities as the cultural and other shifts take place.

Recommendation 3.d.: Seminaries play supportive role in discernment for ministry where God, through the Church, calls people into ministry. Specifically, a call to ministry of a teaching elder is the responsibility of sessions, congregations, and presbyteries. The General Assembly may want to call on congregations to recognize these gifts in young persons and encourage the PC(USA) to be more intentional in seeking a diversity and depth of persons supported as they discern a potential call to ministry as a teaching elder. Seminaries of the PC(USA) have, do, and will continue to recruit members of underrepresented populations, many of which are not Presbyterian.

Recommendation 3.e.: Since 1997 and according to action of the 209th General Assembly (1997), the COTE has been tracking and reporting to subsequent General Assemblies the race, gender, and ecclesial status of board members of PC(USA) seminaries. See current report in Item 17-04, New Trustees Elected by PC(USA) Theological Institutions.

Recommendation 6.e.: The COTE invites the 220th General Assembly (2012) to consider the larger issue of educational and consumer debt in the U.S. and to encourage the study to focus on the seminarian debt side of this complex national issue. A 2010–11 Association of Theological Schools educational debt report shows that 90 percent of students graduating from PC(USA) seminaries incur less than \$30K debt with 52 percent adding no debt versus 77 percent and 46 percent respectively for all ATS schools. The COTE welcomes continuing conversation about reducing seminarian debt.

Recommendation 9.: The Committee on Theological Education (COTE) welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with this subcommittee should it be established and suggests the COTE be consulted and/or represented on it.

#### GACOR COMMENT

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully offers the 220th General Assembly (2012) the following comments on Item 10-13 and its recommendations:

The GACOR concurs with the recommendation made by the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) in its comment on this item and Items 05-12, 10-17, and 16-03. In addition, GACOR offers these comments on Item 10-13:

1. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 1.c.

While the scope of this recommendation is limited to mid councils using resources from the Office of Evangelism and Church Growth, GACOR wants to commend the attention paid to “encouraging underrepresented leadership (particularly women and people of color).” Seeking leaders is a first step. Connecting those leaders to resources (and people) is part of building the church and equipping the saints. We encourage the ministries and programs to make their materials accessible in the widest way possible and to search for better ways to reaching their intended leaders. We encourage mid councils to include their committees on representation in the process as it falls within their function to “advocate for diversity in leadership” in their council.

2. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 2

The challenges of bi-vocational ministry are great and affect one’s capacity to participate in the life of the larger church. Investing resources to explore how to support these ministries better is

intelligent given the recent trends of ministry in the PC(USA). Task forces are expensive and ideally the constituents we hope would be recruited for leadership with this group will have challenges in meeting face-to-face. Being tied to additional jobs limits most bi-vocational people from serving in a traditional task force pattern. The church needs to learn new patterns of service and engaging in this work promises to provide a learning opportunity.

3. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 3.a.–e.

The GACOR appreciates the intentional references in this recommendation to under-represented groups (including communities of color and people with disabilities). We annually examine who is serving as teaching elders in the PC(USA). When we look at that data in disaggregated forms, we find that there are missing persons and categories within the larger groups—young women of color in particular are very rare. Encouraging COTE and the seminaries to “intentionally recruit and increase the numbers of racial ethnic and immigrant students in the seminaries” is important. There’s much more to do to enable non-dominant culture groups to enter the seminary process. Perhaps this work will encourage deeper conversations and prompt insights. The efforts will be better informed and effective in this work if the communities of the desired leaders are involved in the process from the very start. Encouraging seminaries to “hire, mentor, support, and retain scholars from underrepresented communities” is a part of the solutions. May the church embody these recommendations throughout its life and ministries.

4. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 4

This recommendation encourages connecting new immigrant communities to the PC(USA). The GACOR would want to remind the church that meaningful involvement in decision-making, true partnership, and sharing power are also important aspects of what we know to be in ministry and relationship. We encourage mid councils to think in innovative ways, to build mutuality into its shared ministries and mutual openness in its relationships with these emerging communities, opening themselves to be transformed as they do ministry together and submitting to one another’s leadership.

5. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 5

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully advises approval of 10-13, Recommendation 5 and offers the 220th General Assembly the following comment:

Regarding Multi-Lingual Communications and Resource Development, Recommendation 5 is already happening in many of the ministries of the PC(USA) but there is always room for improvement. The GACOR encourages offices in the Office of the General Assembly to do more than they have to—that said, everything from the Constitution to the Stated Clerk’s monthly column appear in Spanish, Korean, and English as a rule. The GACOR would like to see more web communications available multilingually. The primary means for distributing documents and information in the PC(USA) is web and social media. Resources need to be distributed appropriately to empower this more faithfully.

6. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 6.a.–f.

Within its function regarding the employment of personnel, GACOR enthusiastically advises approving this action. It would reduce vulnerability to pay inequalities while bringing awareness to the ways we do not yet value all according to their gifts. If this recommendation were to be accepted and implemented, it would strengthen GACOR and other CORs ability to give effective advice with regard to the employment of personnel (G-3.0103). Parts of this recommendation strive to limit wide pay gaps and model more equitable compensation frameworks. We applaud the intent and acknowledge this would be difficult to implement. Hard conversations and decisions must be made if pay inequality is to be addressed. People from underrepresented groups generally have less wealth and are more vulnerable to the pitfalls of debt. Examining the inequities through lenses of “class, gender, ethnicity, and type of service in the church” will benefit the wider witness as well as give good contextual snapshots of how the church is an employer. Complex work: but valuable.

## 7. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 7

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully advises approval of Item 10-13, Recommendation 7, and offers the 220th General Assembly (2012) the following comment:

The Elders Conferences (now likely called Ruling Elders Conferences if we comply with the language of the Form of Government) have been growing stronger each year. "Elders Rule!" is not just a t-shirt and bumper sticker. There are good things happening to encourage these spiritual leaders and more needs to be done. The GACOR commends the special committee in reminding the church that all are called to ministry—some to particular service.

## 8. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 8

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully advises approval of 10-13, Recommendation 8, and offers the 220th General Assembly (2012) the following comment:

For a church that is 91 percent Caucasian, it is imperative we all do work in looking at privilege and power, and particularly white privilege. The GACOR has included this content in its biennial synod COR training events for more than six years and have found them critical in helping council leaders and ourselves understand the context in which we serve. We commend committees on representation in the mid councils and as resources and means for this good work. How does one till the soil for the planting so that one day the Lord can reap if one doesn't look first at the soil and its context. Discriminatory practice is alive and well, we still struggle with the words we confess, claiming belief

"In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace" (The Book of Confessions, A Brief Statement of Faith, 10.4, Lines 65–71, emphasis added).

This is but one of the confessions, but the these returns over and over (an assurance that we are not the first to claim Christ and struggle with loving one another and that it has been important to the church for a long time).

## 9. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendation 9

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully advises disapproval of Item 10-13, Recommendation 9, and offers the 220th General Assembly (2012) the following comment:

While we appreciate the work the special committee did, we respectfully suggest that permanent General Assembly committees, ministry units, and offices have the means to implement their recommendations with little or no additional financial implications beyond the costs of printing or designing.

## 10. Comment on Item 10-13, Recommendations 10.a.–c.

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) respectfully advises approval of Item 10-13, Recommendation 10, and offers the 220th General Assembly (2012) the following comment:

We agree with the special committee and, with them, assert, "budgets and programs must reflect our commitment to mission." Authenticity and integrity are essential in ministry as well as other justice work.

The General Assembly Committee on Representation is made up of sixteen persons, elected by the General Assembly, who are drawn from ruling and teaching elders from across the church. Its mandate and functions are described in G-3.0103 of the Book of Order (Form of Government).  
GAMC and OGA COMMENT

The Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and each mission area of the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC) provides resources, content, and expertise in various languages. The following text highlights much of the work already completed or underway in the area of multicultural translation.

### 1. *Resources*

Congregational Ministries Publishing (CMP) publishes key language-specific resources for teaching and study in the Reformed Tradition. Currently CMP provides materials in Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese. While this ministry is greatly valued by the respective constituents, the costs to produce these materials substantially outweigh the available market in which to sell these resources; therefore GAMC underwrites the deficit between the sales and costs. This amounts to approximately \$350,000 per year from unrestricted monies. Resources currently provided are listed below:

#### a. *Spanish*

*Así Creemos. Based on the We Believe curriculum, this resource is the denominational curriculum for children in Spanish. This is now offered at no charge online as a way to aid Spanish-language new church developments.*

*The Spanish Language office has launched its new adult curriculum called Estudio Bíblico Reformado, which is a thematic, quarterly curriculum written especially for Spanish-speaking Presbyterians.*

*Two of the more popular Being Reformed adult studies have now been translated into Spanish. Titles now available include: Theology for Presbyterians and Discipleship.*

#### b. *Korean*

*Korean Present Word is a transformational Bible study resource for building mature faith communities. The quarterly curriculum consists of both a leader's guide and a student book.*

*Kuyuk. Kuyuk Bible study has been published for more than ten years and is written by Korean Presbyterian pastors. It reflects the life and faith of Korean American immigrants and congregations and connects with a variety of subjects such as discipleship, caring ministry, stewardship, justice, and peacemaking issues.*

*Three of the more popular Being Reformed adult studies have now been translated into Korean. Titles include: Theology for Presbyterians, Worship as Evangelism, and The Lord's Prayer.*

#### c. *Portuguese*

*Nos Acreditamos: Palavra de Deus para as Pessoas de Deus for youth is the newest member of the We Believe and Así Creemos family. It teaches youth about biblical truths using the Bible and the confessional documents of the church. These materials are offered free of charge to our Portuguese-language congregations and fellowships.*

### 2. *Documents and Materials*

*Key GAMC and OGA documents and other materials have been translated into other languages. The following list highlights some of the documents translated to date.*

- *Book of Order 2011–2013 (Korean, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and selections in Portuguese);*
- *The Book of Confessions (Korean, Spanish, and selections in Portuguese);*
- *Communication regarding changes in standards of ordination (translation of different interpretation materials);*
- *Presbyterians Today magazine Lenten devotion was translated in Korean in 2011 and Spanish in 2010;*
- *Promotional materials for Big Tent;*

- *Ordination exams;*
- *Confession of Belhar (Korean and Spanish);*
- *Special Offerings (various resources);*
- *Presbyterian Women's Horizons Bible study (two times);*
- *Living the Vision: Multicultural Ministries in Spanish;*
- *Translation of Presbyterian Disaster materials (Haiti, for example);*
- *Materials for the Office of Immigration Issues (217th General Assembly (2006) Policy on Immigration in Spanish, Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States in Spanish, Family Plan in Spanish);*
- *Presbyterians and Military Service (Spanish);*
- *Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (document regarding mental illness: Enfermedades mentales severas: Buscando una respuesta cristiana integral);*
- *Translation of Who Are We Presbyterians video;*
- *Translation work for the Office of Mission Grants;*
- *Translation of OGA materials include: Proposed Form of Government materials, Peace Unity and Purity Task Force report, Proposed Book of Amendments, Statistical Workbook for Congregations, General Assembly Committee on Representation Fact Sheet (Spanish and Korean);*
- *In addition, OGA provides the following study documents in Spanish and Korean: All the Live Long Day; Brief Statement of Faith; Church and Homosexuality (Korean); Covenant of Life (Spanish); General Assembly Bible Study: Crossing Ten Seas, Is Christ Divided; Parliamentary Procedures; Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity video; Turn to the Living God.*

### 3. Websites

*In order for Spanish- and Korean-speaking constituents to find resources efficiently, specific pages on the PC(USA) website have been created that enable language-specific material to be found in one place. Links to the webpages are referenced below.*

*All Spanish resources: <http://www.pcusa.org/browse/resources-resource/language/spanish/>*

*All Korean resources: <http://www.pcusa.org/browse/resources-resource/language/korean/>*

*All Spanish pages: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/browse/ministries-ministrycontent/language/spanish/>*

*Ministry page in Korean: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/curriculum/korean-language-resources/>*

*The current PC(USA) website is comprised of approximately 12,000 sub-pages, donation pages, and resources pages. Given the current in-house rate for translation, the estimated cost to translate the entire website using a trained translator would be approximately \$300,000 per language. If translation software were to be utilized instead, the cost would decrease, but a proofreader/editor would still be required to ensure cultural context and correct translation. Estimated cost of this process is \$84,000 per language, as well as ongoing costs for regular updates and maintenance of the website.*

*The Church Store ([store.pcusa.org](http://store.pcusa.org)) is equipped with multi-language functionality. Customers wishing to purchase products on-line, can choose to view the web store and shopping cart in Spanish or Korean by using the language selection feature.*

### 4. On-site Translation for Customer Service

*The GAMC employs staff who have expertise in multiple languages and are available to serve as*

*interpreters and translators for constituent inquiries. More than twenty staff members provide this service in the following languages: Korean, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, French, German, Hindi, Malayalam, Portuguese, Tshiluba.*

*Recommendation 5 calls for the GAMC and OGA to implement specific and comprehensive plans to offer all communications in Korean, Spanish, and other languages as needed, without providing specific direction on the need. Considerable effort is already expended to produce the results listed above. If additional translation efforts are sought by the General Assembly, designating some projects as a priority would assist the General Assembly Mission Council and the Office of the General Assembly in meeting that need.*

#### OGA COMMENT

In regards to Recommendation #2 of this report, the Office of Vocation, a department of the Office of the General Assembly, would like to inform the assembly that they have already made the nurture of bivocational ministry a priority by

- affirming bi-vocational ministry in news stories, in web resources and advisory handbooks, and in all of our education events with presbytery committees on preparation for ministry;
- providing debt assistance for bi-vocational ministers (see [www.pcusa.org/tlda](http://www.pcusa.org/tlda));
- partnering with Union Presbyterian Seminary's Supervised Ministry department as they design new contextual courses preparing for bi-vocational ministry;
- planning a webinar series "Moving into Bi-Vocational Ministry" with a variety of leaders providing expertise;
- including more types of positions, more flexibility in CLC as it is revised (2012–2013).

In regards to Recommendation 6, the Office of the General Assembly urges the 220th General Assembly (2012) to consider the following issues in relation to this recommendation:

1. Currently, the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) collects and publishes the salary and benefits information for exempt staff of all presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly agencies in the Minutes of the General Assembly, Part II, Statistics. The term : "church worker" encompasses a wide variety of exempt employees within the PC(USA) including and not limited to teaching elders and staff of local congregations. To accommodate the collection process proposed in the report, the OGA would be required to hire a part-time employee, at minimum.

2. Only 65 percent of the mid councils comply with the current mandate to submit salary information. Unless a higher percentage of the 10,000 plus congregations comply with the proposed request for salary and other information on staff, the information gathered will be inconclusive and give an inaccurate picture of the race/gender breakdown in the church.

3. Another consideration is the issue of privacy, which become a concern when asked to publish gender and race/ethnicity of persons. Policies in place at the present time prevents the PC(USA) from publishing and/or providing personal information about individuals.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century Charts.

[sp-com-nature-of-the-church-in-21st-century.pdf](#)