

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

and

PROPOSED ECUMENICAL STATEMENTS

**APPROVED BY THE 218TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2008) AND
RECOMMENDED TO THE PRESBYTERIES FOR THEIR
AFFIRMATIVE OR NEGATIVE VOTES**



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE STATED CLERK

LOUISVILLE, KY

NOTE

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes proposed changes in the language of the *Book of Order* that, if approved, will amend the Constitution. Please be sure that a separate vote is taken on each PROPOSED AMENDMENT. A presbytery may vote on the amendments, upon the recommendation of a presbytery committee, by putting some, or even all, in a consent agenda or omnibus motion, that identifies each amendment separately.

You will note that reference is made to item numbers that indicate the assembly committee reports related to each proposed amendment. These item numbers also indicate where to find background information from various entities that was available electronically to the assembly commissioners prior to the assembly. That information may now be accessed at <http://www.pc-biz.org>, then click on Committees. The “Item Number” references are the same as will be found in the *Minutes of the 218th General Assembly (2008)*, Part I [*Minutes*], which are expected to be available to the presbyteries by the time they consider the amendments. The advice of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) can be found immediately following the item in the *Minutes* for which the advice is given.

Unless otherwise indicated, new language to be added to the *Book of Order* is in italics and any language to be stricken will have a line through it. In providing background material, we have attempted wherever possible to use quotations from the various groups that presented or commented on these materials as they went to the General Assembly. Within those quotations, bracketed material [] has been inserted editorially. If there are no numbers recorded for votes made by the General Assembly, those motions were approved either by voice or a show of hands, which would not have been counted.

This year there are also included in this booklet four ecumenical statements that are being sent to the presbyteries for ratification. For more information on ecumenical statements, go to page 28.

Thank you for your time and careful attention as you prepare to vote on these proposed amendments.

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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**08-A Vows of Membership
On Amending G-5.0200 (Item 04-02)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-5.0000 be amended by inserting new text as G-5.0200 and renumbering the remaining items in G-5.0000 (G-5.0200–.0500 becomes G-5.0300–.0600) as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

“G-5.0200

“2. *Membership Vows*

“After new members are examined, affirming their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and are received by the session, whether by profession of faith, certificate of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith, they shall be presented to and welcomed by the congregation during a service of worship where they shall make a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as do confirmands (W-4.2003a, b, and c).”

Background and Rationale

The Presbytery of Mission proposed an amendment to G-5.0200 that contained three questions to be asked of new members and the specific answers to those questions. The Assembly Committee on Church Polity produced an alternate recommendation which it sent to the General Assembly and which was approved. The presbytery’s rationale said, in part:

“Chapter IV of the Directory for Worship describes confirmands’ reaffirmation of baptismal vows taken on their behalf (W-4.2003). ... The same chapter (W-4.2004) highlights the reception of other new members into the congregation as an appropriate opportunity, as well, for reaffirmation of baptismal commitments, public profession of faith, and commitment to participation in the worship and mission of the church.

“While these professions are described in the Directory for Worship, the actual reception of new members takes place in the context of a session meeting, directed by the Form of Government (G-10.0102b). ...

“It is desirable that the *Book of Order* be amended to include constitutional questions for those seeking active membership since

“1. having common, standardized, questions for use throughout the denomination will emphasize the fact that membership is not solely in the local church, but in the larger, connectional, whole as well;

“2. it will provide a resource of readily accessible, doctrinally sound, and well-constructed questions for use by the local churches;

“3. it will provide guidance and clarification to member-candidates in the step they are taking as outlined in G-5.0101a (“One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life.”); and

“4. its placement in G-5.0000 appropriately emphasizes the promises and responsibilities of membership along with the meaning and privileges of membership.”

**Advice from the Advisory
Committee on the Constitution**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised the 218th General Assembly (2008) to disapprove the original overture. Their advice included this rationale:

“The meaning of membership is contained in Chapter V of the Form of Government. In becoming a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a person professes (or reaffirms) faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life (G-5.0101). Membership means accepting Christ’s call to involvement in the ministry of the Church, especially as defined in G-5.0102a–i.

“The Directory for Worship presently contains language that largely accomplishes the goal of the overture. The vows required of persons being received into active membership in W-4.2003 (and of parents who present their children for baptism, W-3.3603a–d) deal with the same subjects as questions 1, 2, and 4 proposed in the overture, although not in precisely the same terminology. The overture would add a question concerning faithful discipleship that is not explicitly covered by language in W-4.2003. ...

“The principal difference between the existing language in W-4.2003 and that proposed here is that the overture proposes specific formulae with which the confirmand must respond to catechetical questions posed by the liturgist. Section W-4.2003 does not specify the precise terms of response, leaving open the possibility that the language employed in this section could be used as questions to which the confirmand responds, “I do.” The language of W-4.2003 also leaves open the possibility that affirmations of faith in Christ, renunciations of evil, and declarations of intent to participate in the life of the church might be made in language that is nontraditional. Whether the language of affirmation constitutes an affirmation of faith, renunciation of evil, or declaration of intent, is a matter for sessions to determine on a case-by-case basis.”

The ACC noted further:

... “that antecedent polities to the present *Book of Order* did contain such questions as this overture

contemplates. ...” and that “[i]n 1990–1992, a series of overtures were proposed that would have placed affirmations very nearly identical to these in the Directory for Worship, at W-4.2003. The overtures were referred to the (then) Theology and Worship Ministry Unit (TAW) for response. The TAW advised the 205th General Assembly (1993) to disapprove the overtures, and the assembly agreed. ...”

The ACC continued:

“As it considers this overture, the General Assembly may wish to consider the degree to which the inclusion of particular language for profession of faith invites forms of subscriptionism. While language is the primary, if indeed not the only, tool we have by which to express the nature of our faith, the church must be on guard against assuming that profession of faith can be reduced to subscription [or] to formulae. The present overture is careful to provide for alternative means of profession for those limited by physical or mental disability. But it does not provide for the possibility that there may be other, more meaningful language not herein contemplated by which a believer—and not necessarily one who is disabled—might make acceptable profession. In the end, it seems to us that the essence of faith is not to be found in the intellectual constructions to which we give assent but in the One in whom we repose our ultimate confidence and trust.”

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity to approve alternate wording was 50/2/0. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation by a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 48, 49, 241, Item 04-02). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1425.

08-B Ordained Officers
On Amending G-6.0106b, G-14.0240, and G-14.0450 (Item 05-09)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Shall the current text of G-6.0106b be stricken and new text be inserted to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

~~“G-6.0106 b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate’s sincere efforts to adhere to these standards.”~~

2. Shall G-14.0240 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-14.0240 Preparation and Examination for Office

~~“When persons have been elected to the office of elder or deacon, the session shall confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the office. The session shall provide for a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine the officers-elect as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the office; and readiness to assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation (see W-4.4000). If the examination is not approved for one or more elected officers, the session shall report its action to the congregation’s nominating committee, which shall bring nomination(s) to a meeting of the congregation for any office(s) not filled.”~~

3. Shall G-14.0450 be amended by inserting a new paragraph “b.” and by re-lettering current paragraphs “b.” through “d.” as “c.” through “f.” The text shall read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-14.0450 Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry

~~“In the final year of theological education or when a candidate has satisfied all of the requirements of this section, and before the candidate has received a call, the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate’s presbytery shall conduct a final assessment of the candidate’s readiness to begin ordained ministry. A summary of this assessment shall~~

be reported to the presbytery and shall be transmitted to a calling presbytery when requested. The committee on preparation for ministry shall report to the presbytery when it has certified a candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. This consultation shall focus on the outcomes of inquiry and candidacy and shall include each of the following requirements of certification:

“a. demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament as required to fulfill the candidacy phase of preparation;

“b. *demonstration of readiness to assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation;*

“~~b.~~ c. presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma;

“~~e.~~ d. presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts;

“~~d.~~ e. presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.”

Background and Rationale

This amendment was proposed by the Presbytery of Boston and included this rationale:

“The opening paragraphs of the Form of Government are a powerful statement of the fundamental Christian and Reformed affirmation that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. In support of this primary affirmation, Chapter I of the Form of Government calls Christians to attend to the Scriptures, insofar as they set forth “Christ’s will for the Church,” and Chapter II identifies the church’s confessions as its guides, subordinate to the authority of Jesus Christ and to the witness of Scripture. Our church thus has bound itself to a hierarchy of authority in which we are to obey Jesus Christ its Head, and, additionally, to heed first the Scriptures and then the confessions, to the extent that they accurately bear witness to Christ’s will. This fundamental hierarchy of authority is accurately and eloquently reflected in the first three of the constitutional questions, the assent to which is required of each candidate for ordination and/or installation.

“Although the hierarchy of the church’s authority is clear, it is subverted by the current language of G-6.0106b, which substitutes for our obedience to Christ two concepts that are foreign to Reformed understanding: “obedience” to Scripture and “conformity” to the confessions. The proposed amendment would remove this paragraph and substitute new language, which (1) reflects the church’s understanding of where its authority is to be found, and (2) reaffirms the church’s reliance on the examination of candidates by its governing bodies as the principal means by which to ensure the commitment of its ordained officers to the duties of faith. The amendment additionally would insert appropriate language to ensure that each such examination would include discussion of the constitutional questions and the governing body’s determination of the candidate’s readiness to accept their principles and live by them to the extent any of us is able.

“In order to be able to rely on Jesus Christ as its Head and as its chief guide in all of life, the

church must shed any subordinate source of authority that would bind its ability to follow where he leads. The overture therefore also calls for the rescission of past interpretive statements that have had the effect of limiting Christ's freedom to use his servants as he would choose.”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution gave advice to the 218th General Assembly (2008) which included a number of options. Their advice was given on Item 05-01 and also applies to this Item 05-09. Go to <http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=505> for the full comment of the ACC. The 218th General Assembly (2008) chose the following option:

“f. The General Assembly may submit to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote an amendment to repeal G-6.0106b (or replace it with a different standard), and either withdraw or leave in place the authoritative interpretation of gay and lesbian persons found in *Blasdell*. ... [which said ‘[i]t is our considered opinion, and we so find, that the “Definitive Guidance” of the 190th General Assembly (1978) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the “Definitive Guidance” of the 119th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States on the issues of ordination of self-affirming, practicing

homosexuals were, in fact and in substance, authoritative interpretations of the Constitutions as they were then and as the Constitution presently exists. Therefore, it is unconstitutional for the Church to ordain any self-affirming, practicing, and unrepentant homosexual as elder, deacon, or minister of the Word.”(Union Presbyterian Church of Blasdell, New York, et al. v. The Presbytery of Western New York (Remedial Case 197-9).’]”

Editor’s Note: The Office of the General Assembly reminds the presbyteries that the overture included an authoritative interpretation which was approved by the 218th General Assembly. This interpretation is now in place since authoritative interpretations do not require approval by a majority of the presbyteries.

The Assembly Committee on Church Orders and Ministry recommended approval by a vote of 41/11/0, with this comment:

“Presbyteries are strongly encouraged to consider this overture using a process of listening and discernment.”

The 218th General Assembly (2008) voted to approve the committee’s recommendation and comment by a count of 380/325/3 (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 42, 43, 371, Item 05-09). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1461.

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08-C Replacing the Word “Sympathy” with the Word “Compassion” On Amending G-6.0202b and G-6.0401 (Item 04-01)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Shall G-6.0202b be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“b. The permanent pastoral offices of ministers of the Word and Sacrament are pastors and associate pastors. When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice. The pastor is responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for administering Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, for praying with and for the congregation. With the elders, the pastor is to encourage the people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision making of the church, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons the pastor is to share in the ministries of ~~sympathy~~ *compassion*, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, he or she is responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in the governing bodies above the session and in ecumenical relationships.”

2. Shall G-6.0401 of the *Book of Order* be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of ~~sympathy~~ *compassion*, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, ~~warm sympathies~~ *sincere compassion*, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office.”

Background and Rationale

This overture came from the Presbytery of Albany with these notes requesting a change in the wording from “sympathy” to “empathy” at G-6.0401. Their rationale said in part:

“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the belief that as Christ’s faithful evangelists we demonstrate ‘by the love of its members for one another and by the quality of its common life the new reality in Christ; sharing in worship, fellowship, and nurture, practicing a deepened life of prayer and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit’ (*Book of Order*, G-3.0300c(2));

‘participating in God’s activity in the world through its life for others by ... ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless, ... giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer’ (*Book of Order*, G-3.0300c(3)(b, d)). ‘It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith. ...’ (*Book of Order*, G-6.0402).

“Sympathy, as defined in the Merriam Webster Dictionary, is ‘an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein

whatever affects one similarly affects the other.’ This implies a degree of equal feeling or suffering together. It is our belief that a more appropriate response to those in need is one of empathy. Empathy, as defined in the Merriam Webster Dictionary, is ‘the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.’ An empathic person recognizes but does not share other’s suffering. ...

“Empathy is more directly related to serving others. Service to others is indicated throughout the Bible. Luke 6:31 states “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (NRSV). Romans 12:15–16 states “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are” (NRSV). By participating in the emotions rather than actually feeling the emotion, we are being empathic toward others, helping them process their own emotions, feelings, and grief rather than fixing their problems.

“Deacons are often called to tend to the sick, elderly, lonely, grieving, and those in need. In such cases, if a deacon truly acted in a sympathetic manner, he or she would be taking on other’s emotions and carry feelings to a level that would be unhealthy, over burdensome, and emotionally exhausting. By taking on a more empathic role, deacons can tend to others by considering another’s feelings and responding to their needs, helping them move through various stages of emotion at their own pace and comfort level, with autonomy and grace.”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 218th General Assembly (2008) to disapprove Item 04-01. Their rationale included the following:

“The overture seeks to replace the word ‘sympathy’ with ‘empathy’ and ‘warm sympathies’ with ‘sincere empathy’ in G-6.0401. A review of linguistic authorities shows that ‘sympathy’ and ‘empathy’ have semantic fields that significantly overlap, so that the very

arguments used for ‘empathy’ could just as easily be applied to ‘sympathy.’ Therefore, neither increased clarity nor precision of meaning is gained by the substitution.

“The use of ‘sympathy’ is to be preferred for the following reasons:

“*History:* The use of “sympathy” as a qualification for the office of deacon has a long history of use in predecessor denominations, dating back at least to 1911 in the UPCNA *Book of Government and Worship*; at least to 1923 in the PCUS *Book of Church Order*; and to 1958 in the UPCUSA *Book of Order*.

“*Biblical attestation:* The word “sympathy” is a direct transliteration of the Greek word “συμπαθής” (*sympathēs*), which occurs as a noun or verb three times in the New Testament, most notably in the list of Christian virtues in 1 Peter 3:8, and in Hebrews 4:15 in which Christ is proclaimed as a Great High Priest who is able “to sympathize with us in our weaknesses” (NRSV). By contrast, the word “empathy,” from the Greek “εμπαθειος” (*empathios*) does not occur in the New Testament.

“Should the assembly seek an alternative word for ‘sympathy’ in G-6.0401, the committee would find amendment to ‘compassion’ as proposed by the Form of Government Task Force to be a preferred alternative. The committee also advises the assembly that for clarity and consistency in Chapter Six of the Form of Government, any amendment to G-6.0401 should be accompanied by a parallel amendment to G-6.0202b, which states, ‘With the deacons, the pastor is to share in the ministries of sympathy, witness, and service.’”

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity chose to follow the Advisory Committee on the Constitution’s alternative approach.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity to approve as amended was 54/3/0. The 218th General Assembly (2008) voted to approve the committee’s recommendation by a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 48, 49, 239, Item 04-01). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=537.

**08-D General Assembly Mission Council Name Change
On Amending Throughout the *Book of Order* (Item 08-05)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the *Book of Order* be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

G-9.0701 b. Election of Executives

Each presbytery may elect an executive presbyter in consultation with synod council, or other unit designated by the synod when there is no council, and may do so jointly with other presbyteries if program and resources make that necessary. Each synod may elect an executive in consultation with the General Assembly *Mission Council*.

G-9.0702 Other Administrative Staff

Other administrative staff positions in presbyteries may be authorized by the presbytery in consultation with the synod council or other unit designated by the synod when there is no council. Other administrative staff positions in synod may be authorized by the synod in consultation with the General Assembly *Mission Council*.

G-9.0901 Councils, Committees, and Commissions

Within this Constitution, it has been assumed that the governing bodies beyond the session will delegate particular aspects of their task to councils, commissions, and committees. The references made to such agencies are for clarification of organizing for mission, of establishing offices, and of administering the program of the church. Reference to these is given without formally entitling them wherever possible so that governing bodies may have freedom in structuring themselves and in naming their agencies. In several instances—such as the committees on representation, the General Assembly *Mission Council*, and the presbytery’s committee on ministry—definite titles are given in order to regularize the procedures that shall enable the governing bodies to work together in joint mission. Reference to such agencies, designated by functions or by formal titles, is not intended to limit the governing bodies to these structures but to describe those which will expedite the mutual work of the whole church.

G-9.0902c. General Assembly

In the General Assembly

General Assembly *Mission Council* (G-13.0200)

Committee on Representation (G-9.0105, G-13.0108)

Nominating Committee (G-13.0111)

Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-13.0112)

Board responsible for pensions (G-14.0534, G-16.0201t, G-17.0201j)

Permanent Judicial Commission (D-5.0000)

G-13.0103h.

h. to establish and superintend the agencies and task forces necessary for its work, including a General Assembly *Mission Council*, providing for the regular review of the functional relationship between the General Assembly’s structure and its mission;

G-13.0200 2. General Assembly *Mission* Council

G-13.0201c. to develop and propose, for General Assembly approval, the mission directions, goals, objectives, and priorities of the General Assembly *Mission* Council, doing so by taking into account the mission work being done by sessions, presbyteries, and synods, and to propose for General Assembly approval an accompanying budget that will implement the mission work plan of the General Assembly *Mission* Council;

G-13.0201d. to act in those specific matters assigned to the General Assembly *Mission* Council by the General Assembly or this Constitution, acting always according to previously enacted General Assembly policies, reporting fully to each subsequent General Assembly its actions;

G-13.0202a. Manual of Operations of General Assembly *Mission* Council

The membership, terms of office, and officers of the General Assembly *Mission* Council shall be approved by the General Assembly as provided for in the Manual of Operations of the General Assembly *Mission* Council.

G-13.0202b. Nominating Committee of the General Assembly

In the nominating process, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall consult with the General Assembly *Mission* Council to identify needed skills, and shall provide for diversity and inclusiveness in accordance with G-4.0403. It will maintain a goal of at least twenty percent racial ethnic membership for the General Assembly *Mission* Council. It will also follow the provisions of G-9.0104, G-9.0105, and G-13.0111 and shall ensure that, exclusive of the Moderator and predecessor Moderators, one third of the members are ministers of the Word and Sacrament (both women and men), one third laymen, and one third laywomen. The committee will also provide that members be nominated in such a manner as to provide three classes of approximately equal size. Any vacancy occurring during a term shall be filled pursuant to General Assembly policies.

G-14.0720 Certification for Christian Educators

In order to provide effective guidance for educational ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the General Assembly shall offer a handbook containing the training and continuing education process for Christian Educators, which shall be administered and certification granted by the Educator Certification Council on behalf of the General Assembly *Mission* Council. The handbook shall also provide suggested models for support and accountability that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to fit local circumstances.

G-14.0722 Educator Certification Council

The Educator Certification Council shall establish certification standards, designate Educator Certification Advisors in consultation with presbyteries, evaluate certification examinations, and grant certificates and report to the General Assembly *Mission* Council.

G-14.0742 Certification

Certification is overseen and granted by the individual associations; the requirements for certification are reported to the appropriate body of the General Assembly *Mission* Council.

G-14.0742 a. Members of the Administrative Personnel Association (APA) include secretaries, administrative assistants, bookkeepers, and support staff in church related settings.

b. Members of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians (PAM) include choir directors, organists, ministers, and other persons interested in the quality and integrity of music in the worship experience.

c. Members of the Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association include pastors and lay persons serving primarily as administrators in particular churches and church related entities.

G-14.0743 Notification of Status

Names of those who have earned certification through these associations shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly *Mission* Council, which will forward them to the Office of the General Assembly and to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.

D-2.0101a. the prevention and correction of irregularities and delinquencies by governing bodies, the General Assembly *Mission* Council, or an entity of the General Assembly (Remedial Cases, D-6.0000);

D-2.0202 Remedial

A remedial case is one in which an irregularity or a delinquency of a lower governing body, the General Assembly *Mission* Council, or an entity of the General Assembly may be corrected by a higher governing body.

D-6.0202b. Against Session or General Assembly *Mission* Council or Entity (Time Limit)

In the instance of a complaint against a session, the General Assembly *Mission* Council, or an entity of the General Assembly, a complaint of an irregularity shall be filed within ninety days after the alleged irregularity has occurred; and a complaint of a delinquency shall be filed within ninety days after failure or refusal of respondent to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, provided that a written request to do so has been made prior to said meeting. Those eligible to file such a complaint are

D-6.0202b.

(2) a session, a presbytery, or a synod against the General Assembly *Mission* Council or an entity of the General Assembly, with the General Assembly;

D-6.0202b.

(3) a person who is an employee of the General Assembly *Mission* Council or an entity of the General Assembly, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the General Assembly *Mission* Council or an entity of the General Assembly, with the General Assembly.

D-6.0302 Committee of Counsel

When a governing body, the General Assembly *Mission* Council, or an entity of the General Assembly becomes either a complainant or a respondent, it shall designate no more than three persons to be a committee of counsel. This committee shall represent that complainant or respondent in the case until final decision is reached in the highest governing body to which the case is appealed.

D-6.0302a. Provide by Rule

A governing body, the General Assembly *Mission* Council, or an entity of the General Assembly may provide by rule for the appointment of a committee of counsel.

Background and Rationale

This proposal came from the General Assembly Council, recommending that the 218th General Assembly (2008) approve a name change for the General Assembly Council and the enabling changes to the *Book of Order, Organization for Mission*, and the GAC Manual of Operations so that the new name will be “General Assembly Mission Council.” Their rationale included the following:

“In March of 2007, following a General Assembly Council (GAC) meeting, members of the GAC began a conversation regarding the identity of the General Assembly Council. The key question from that conversation was, ‘Shouldn’t our name be a better indicator of what we are about?’ The conversation was productive and rich.

“The email began a time of discernment among General Assembly Council members. Discernment was followed by work on a General Assembly Council communication strategy, and the beginnings of the work of the General Assembly Committee on Review of the General Assembly Council. These activities confirmed a common discernment regarding a potential name change.

“In July of 2007, the General Assembly Council Executive Committee voted to request the General Assembly Council to change its name. In September of 2007, the General Assembly

Council concurred with this request, and initiated a process to select the appropriate name.

“The General Assembly Committee on Review of the General Assembly Council, in its report, strongly encourages the General Assembly Council to change its name to clearly identify the role of the GAC in coordinating the mission work of the General Assembly. ...

Based on this advice, in February 2008, the General Assembly Council voted to change its name to a clear statement of its role within the church: General Assembly Mission Council.”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 218th General Assembly (2008) that if it agreed with the goal of Item 08-05, there is no constitutional impediment. “The language is clear and consistent with the stated intent of the proposal.”

The Assembly Committee on Mission Coordination and Budgets voted to approve the recommendation by a count of 57/1/3. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation with a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 22, 23, 617, Item 08-05). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1605.

08-E Non-Geographic Presbyteries
On Amending G-11.0102 and G-12.0102k (Item 03-07)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Amend G-11.0102 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“In each presbytery the minimum number of ministers shall be ~~twelve~~ *ten* and the minimum number of churches with duly constituted sessions (G-7.0202a) shall likewise be ~~twelve~~ *ten*. In an isolated area, upon recommendation of the synod, the General Assembly may permit a presbytery to be organized with fewer than these minimums, provided that there shall be at least five ministers in each presbytery.”

2. Amend G-12.0102k as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

“k. to organize new presbyteries, to divide, unite, or otherwise combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries previously existing, and, with the concurrence of existing presbyteries, to create nongeographic presbyteries in order to meet the mission needs (G-12.0102a; G-11.0103a) of identified racial ethnic or immigrant congregations; subject to the approval of the General Assembly. Such presbyteries shall be formed in compliance with the requirements of G-7.0201 and G-11.0102 and be accountable to the synod within which they were created. *When such mission needs arise inside a congregation that lies within a synod lacking such a nongeographic presbytery, that synod may permit, with the approval of the General Assembly and unless some legal or ecclesiastical issue would prohibit, that congregation to join a nongeographic presbytery inside the bounds of another synod with the consent of that other synod, the geographic presbytery, and the nongeographic presbytery; such presbyteries should be formed only on the basis of language, and there should be a sunset clause (end date) added at the formation of each nongeographic presbytery.*”

Editor’s Note: The wording of the final two clauses of G-12.0102k above has been changed in consultation with the Advisory Committee on the Constitution. The language approved by the 218th GA has been edited as follows: “~~the creation of such presbyteries should be formed where there is a need~~ *only on the basis of language only, and that there should be a sunset clause (end date) added to each at the formation of a each nongeographic presbytery.*”

Background and Rationale

These recommendations were written by the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, the General Assembly Stated Clerk, on behalf of the Office of the General Assembly in response to the 2006 Referral: Item 05-22. *On Establishing a Committee or Task Force to Conduct a Feasibility Study for Creating a Nongeographic Korean American Synod—From the Presbytery of Midwest Hanmi* (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 430–33). The rationale said in part:

“The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) believes that the PC(USA) is at a “tipping point” in relation to whether new immigrant communities will be welcomed into the life and ministry of our denomination or go the route of creating separate denominations based on ethnic affiliation. How we respond to this challenge over the next decade will determine whether there is one major Presbyterian church inclusive of the multicultural diversity of this nation or many different Presbyterian churches, each organized along different racial and ethnic lines.

“The COGA believes God is calling us to the option of being a truly united, multicultural church and that these amendments to our *Book of Order* can make a significant contribution to that reality. It would be a tragic mistake for the PC(USA) not to allow the flexibility in our polity at this point in history to enable various new immigrant communities to make the transition into the life and ministry of the PC(USA).

“This denomination has a long history of using nongeographic, language-based presbyteries as a way to welcome new immigrant communities and to achieve long-term unity in the church. In the nineteenth century, German and Czech language nongeographic presbyteries made this transition possible for immigrants from parts of the world where English was not the language and Anglo-Saxon culture was unfamiliar. The same is proving true in the 20th and 21st centuries relative to Korean-language presbyteries. To make these nongeographic, language presbyteries more effective, the 217th General Assembly (2006) asked COGA, in consultation with the leaders of those presbyteries and the National Korean Presbyterian Council, to consult and bring proposals to the 218th General Assembly (2008) as to whether a Korean-language synod or other adjustments to our polity related to nongeographic presbyteries might make this approach more effective.

“A very helpful gathering among these parties was held in December 2006, and it was agreed that the move to a Korean-language, nongeographic synod was probably not the best way to achieve this goal. Instead, it was felt that the best way forward would be to amend the current Form of Government to reduce the number of congregations required to constitute a language-based presbytery from twelve to ten and to add a provision that would allow congregations in synods where no such presbytery exists to affiliate with a language-based presbytery in an adjacent synod, with concurrence of the geographic presbytery involved and both synods.

....

“We are in a time when a growing number of Korean American congregations are finding a welcome home in our geographic presbyteries and many are establishing English language, multicultural congregations. At the same time, there is also continuing immigration from Korea and a large number of Korean Americans who

find Korean-language congregations and presbyteries helpful to their faithful ministry and to their long-term relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Both of these groups represent numerical and spiritual growing edges of the PC(USA).

“Especially at the 218th General Assembly (2008), when we will be taking action on a covenant agreement with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America, it is important that we show flexibility and welcome to Korean American congregations that seek a home in the PC(USA), one that also welcomes and honors the language and culture of these congregations. These amendments to our Form of Government will do just that without making any significant deviation in the patterns already enshrined in our Constitution.

“The PC(USA) will be a stronger and more faithful church if we take the risks to welcome Korean Americans and other immigrant groups fully into the life of our church, even if it requires flexibility in our polity. We believe these changes will both make us a stronger and more faithful church and allow us to reach out and enlarge our church by welcoming more Korean Americans into our ministry. ...”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that as it was originally written, Item 03-07 presented constitutional issues. These were both addressed by additional amendments made by the Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures, resulting in the wording approved by the General Assembly. One concern was the lack of General Assembly approval in the process of a presbytery becoming a part of a synod in which it is not geographically located, and the other concern related to the lack of any time limit or requirement for periodic renewal. The ACC noted:

“The proposed amendment would make the synod where the congregation is located the key governing body to permit the cross-boundary relationship of the congregation to the nongeographic presbytery. That synod would be required to verify that the geographic presbytery

where the congregation is located, the nongeographic presbytery, and the synod where the nongeographic presbytery is located all agree to the relationship across boundaries.

....

“Although nongeographic presbyteries are not the normative way in which presbyteries are constituted within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the proposal ... would ensure that such presbyteries are approved when there is a valid mission purpose that has the approval of the General Assembly, two synods, and two presbyteries.”

About the amendment to G-11.0102, the ACC said:

“...The ACC finds that the Form of Government [in the second sentence of G-11.0102] should and does state a minimum number of ministers and churches with duly constituted sessions in a presbytery. The amendment proposed by COGA does not change the actual lower limit, and ensures that there would be at least five ministers in a presbytery.”

The 218th General Assembly (2008) followed the Advisory Committee on the Constitution’s advice.

Advice and Counsel from the Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) advised that this item be approved, with a proposed amendment that was approved by the Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures. It is the portion at the end of the amendment that follows the semicolon. This addition was meant to underscore the transitional nature of language-specific, nongeographic presbyteries. The nongeographic, Korean language-specific presbyteries serve to facilitate the greater participation of immigrant congregations in the larger, connectional life of the church. The ACREC noted:

“The ACREC believes that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is called to be a multiracial, multicultural community of faith, reflecting the vast diversity of God’s human family. While we

recognize that the diversity of language and culture bring challenges that the church is not always prepared to address, we believe the church should always be striving to live into this vision. The creation of nongeographic presbyteries on the basis of language is acknowledged as a compromise. It facilitates the life of immigrant congregations, but creates an institutional barrier to the inclusive welcome of all people in the life of geographic presbyteries. It is our fervent hope that this request from Korean congregations serves to remind the larger church that living into our vision of becoming a more diverse community of faith will require the larger church to change in ways that will enable greater participation of diverse communities in the life of the church as a whole. ...

“In the life of every immigrant congregation, there is a generation whose first language is English. Both the nongeographic presbytery and the geographic presbyteries must be intentional about supporting and nurturing the full participation of emerging English-speaking ministries and second and third generation pastors who are English dominant who may be better served by relating to the larger church through geographic presbyteries.”

Advice and Counsel from the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns

The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC) concurred with the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC)’s advice and counsel. They noted:

“Understanding that non-geographic presbyteries are organized primarily for language purposes for a limited time, ACWC concurs with ACREC’s comments, and feels it is an appropriate compromise at this time. The ACWC understands this is an active and ongoing effort to transition from specific language presbyteries to becoming fully inclusive geographic presbyteries in the near future. Division is not intended as a permanent solution. Unity in Christ is the goal and enriches our ability to be “the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0200). ...

“The ordination of women and their leadership in governing bodies at all levels of the church is of particular concern for the Advocacy

Committee for Women's Concerns. The *Book of Order* mandate for the ordination of women needs to be fulfilled when organizing language specific presbyteries. ... Korean language congregations and presbyteries do not call many women clergy. Korean women clergy have shared in forums and consultations with ACWC their frustrations and difficulties. Generational differences profoundly influence the needs of these congregations.”

The vote of the Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures on the amended wording was 44/0/1. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 34, 146, Item 03-07). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1573.

**08-F Presbytery Membership of Certified Christian Educators
On Amending G-11.0407 and G-14.0730 (Item 04-23)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Shall G-11.0407 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-11.0407 Rolls

“The stated clerk shall maintain four rolls, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are active members, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are members-at-large, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are inactive members, one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings *during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery*, and a fifth roll listing those who have been deleted from the other rolls. [Paragraph continues unchanged.]”

2. Shall G-14.0730 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-14.0730 Presbytery and Certified Christian Educators

“The presbytery shall

“a. support the certification process by encouraging educators to seek certification, providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor, and encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification; and

“b. provide the following support to the certified Christian educators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4.4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503); and.

“~~e.~~ *The presbytery may grant the privilege of the floor to the certified Christian educator at all its meetings with voice only, and, in the case of certified Christian educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b, during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery. (G-11.0407)*”

Editor’s Note: This amendment is offered separately from 08-I because they came from different sources and were not dealt with together by the assembly committee or by the assembly itself. Either, neither, or both of the amendments could be approved, and they should be voted upon separately. If both are approved, their wordings will be merged. Questions about compatibility will be sent to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.

Background and Rationale

These amendments are a result of a request to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution from the stated clerk of the Presbytery of Santa Fe about the presbytery membership for Certified Christian Educators, answering specifically these questions:

“Is there any input requested from presbytery such as a review, reference checking, and/or examination prior to certification?”

“Is certification, once conferred, permanent?”

The ACC recommended these amendments in answer to these questions “to establish the presbytery’s right to determine whom it will enroll” as a member of the body.

Advice of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution answered other questions in the letter and said about these amendments:

“With respect to the fourth question presented, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution finds that there is [currently] no constitutional provision requiring consultation with the presbytery before the status of Certified Christian Educator is conferred. The handbook describes a process for the presbytery and the Educator Certification Council (ECC) to work together toward the certification of Christian educator applicants. However, the ECC and presbyteries may not have partnered in the certification process of particular educators in the ways described in the handbook. Presbyteries may be unaware of their roles in the process of certification. Or they may be unwilling or unable for a variety of reasons to provide the personnel to participate in the process. Presbyteries may feel that they do not need to abide by the provisions of a handbook they did not adopt. ...

“The Advisory Committee on the Constitution further finds that it is an aberration in our polity

that a person is granted the privilege of the floor, or, in the case of elders, full membership privileges without the approval of the body in which those privileges will be exercised. ...

“The Advisory Committee on the Constitution also notes that certification itself is contingent upon having employment as a Christian educator in a Presbyterian church [PC(USA)]. However, once the certification is conferred, the presbytery is *required* to enroll the certified Christian educator with voice, or, if an elder, with voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b, whether or not the educator remains employed. Once established, the relationship to the presbytery is not contingent upon service or employment in a Presbyterian church. Further, the certified Christian educator could move his or her church membership to a particular church in a different presbytery and that presbytery would be required to enroll the certified Christian educator regardless of employment status and without any right to determine suitability for membership in the presbytery. Conversely, the first presbytery has no authority or warrant for dismissing or removing a departed Christian educator from its roll of certified Christian educators, required by G-11.0407.

“The Advisory Committee on the Constitution finds that constitutional amendment is warranted to establish the presbytery’s right to determine whom it will enroll.

“With respect to the fifth question presented, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution finds that there is [currently] no constitutional provision for review or termination of Certified Christian Educator status.”

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity voted to recommend approval by a vote of 58/0/0. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the recommendation by consensus (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 48, 51, 277, Item 04-23). For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1875.

08-G Synod Membership on Permanent Committees
On Amending G-13.0107, G-13.0108, and G-13.0202a (Item 04-18)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Shall G-13.0107 be stricken. [Text to be stricken is shown as a strike through.]

~~“Each synod will have a representative, nominated by the synods, on each permanent committee of the General Assembly. The General Assembly Nominating Committee will coordinate this process, keeping in mind the need for synod representatives and members at large, and seeing that special attention is given to the principles of participation and representation expressed in G-4.0403, G-9.0104, G-13.0111, and G-13.0202.”~~

2. Shall G-13.0108 be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

“The General Assembly shall establish a permanent Committee on Representation as required by G-9.0105, which shall advise the General Assembly Nominating Committee of any need for nominations in particular categories needing increased representation. The Committee on Representation shall report to each meeting of the General Assembly (other than special or adjourned meetings) regarding progress toward fair representation of the categories of persons listed in G-4.0403. The committee shall consist of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are one third ministers (both women and men), one third laymen, and one third laywomen.”

3. Shall G-13.0202a be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

“The membership, terms of office, and officers of the General Assembly Council shall be approved by the General Assembly as provided for in the Manual of Operations of the General Assembly Council. The Council shall include members from each of the synods of the church.”

Background and Rationale

This item came as a request for constitutional clarification from the Assistant Stated Clerk, Manager for General Assembly Nominations and Moderatorial Staff Services. The final wording for the proposed amendments came from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution in 2006 when it commented on a variety of constitutional changes that were proposed to the 217th General Assembly.

**Advice from the Advisory
Committee on the Constitution**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution noted:

“... [T]he revision of G-13.0107 ... approved by the 217th General Assembly and adopted by the presbyteries, requires each permanent committee of the General Assembly to have a member nominated by each synod. ‘Permanent committee’ is not defined in this provision of the *Book of Order*, but logically would include all committees of the General Assembly whose work is continuing in nature and whose size or means of election is not otherwise defined inconsistently by specific provisions of the *Book of Order*. The size of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and means of electing the General Assembly Nominating Committee are set forth by separate provisions of the *Book of Order*, which control G-13.0107. “

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution recognized “that the language of

G-13.0107 would substantially expand the size of a number of permanent committees of the General Assembly. Indeed, the ACC advised the 217th General Assembly (2006) on this point, encouraging the assembly to ‘consider whether the size of permanent committees should be defined by the mission of the committee rather than a formalistic approach’ (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, p. 644).”

General Assembly Council Comment

The General Assembly Council proposed new clarifying language to G-13.0107. Then they added:

“The amendment to G-13.0107 of the *Book of Order* offered by the General Assembly Council to the 217th General Assembly (2006) was intended to only affect membership on the General Assembly Council. ...

“However, approval of the 2006 amended language by the General Assembly and the presbyteries has called into question whether the permanent committees of the General Assembly are now required to have representation from and be populated directly by each of the synods. One concern of the General Assembly Council is the lack of a defined term or specific description in the *Book of Order* for permanent committee of the General Assembly. Additional concerns arise from the resultant application of such an interpretation requiring synod representation as offered by the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) and the General Assembly Nominating Committee: this would be extremely expensive to the denomination, would place an undue burden on the nominating process for synods to adhere to such a requirement, would greatly expand the membership size, and may alter the composition of such committees, and could change the face of the governance of the church to the extent that the General Assembly nominating process would no longer be able to ensure the diversity of committee membership.”

General Assembly Nominating Committee Comment

The GANC made this comment:

“Upon recommendation by the 217th General Assembly (2006), G-13.0107 of the *Book of Order* has been amended so that it now requires the General Assembly to elect an individual from

each synod to each permanent committee of the General Assembly. ...

“The GANC continues to be concerned about the impact on its mandate to ‘ensure careful nominations’ (G-13.0111) as well as the potential burden on the synods if they are required to provide an increased number of nominations to permanent committees.

“As it coordinates the nominations process for those committees with middle governing body representational slots, the GANC solicits no less than three names from each affected synod. These names are determined through the synod’s own nominations process. This process provides the GANC with a pool of names from which it makes selections that ensure that constitutional mandates for clergy/lay balance, gender balance, as well as racial ethnic representation can be met.

“Synods already are required to make proposals for five committees. The *Book of Order* requires that a member from each of the sixteen synods serve on the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission and the General Assembly Nominating Committee. In addition, because of membership requirements, a member from each of the sixteen synods serves on the General Assembly Committee on Representation, while persons from six synods serve on the GAC’s Mission Development Resources Committee, and there is one synod position on the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc.”

The General Assembly Nominating Committee said that it “supports the 2006 advice of the ACC and suggests that the 218th General Assembly (2008) consider approving it.”

Committee on the Office of the General Assembly Comment

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly concurred with the General Assembly Nominating Committee on Item 04-18.

The Assembly Committee on Mission Coordination and Budgets approved the alternate recommendation by a vote of 58/0/0. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee recommendation by consensus. (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 48, 50, 266, Item 04-18) For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1853.

**08-H Five Ordination Examinations
On Amending G-14.0431 (Item 14-01)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the first paragraph of G-14.0431 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-14.0431 Five Ordination Exams

~~“Inquirers or candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. The other four examinations may be taken by inquirers or candidates after completion of two full years of theological education. These four examinations shall only be taken upon approval by the committee on preparation for ministry of the inquirer’s or candidate’s presbytery. Inquirers and candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. The other four examinations shall ordinarily be taken by inquirers or candidates only after completion of two full years of theological education, or its equivalent, and shall be taken only upon approval by the committee on preparation for ministry of the inquirer’s or candidate’s presbytery, which shall first attest that the inquirer or candidate has completed adequate academic preparation in each examination area and adequate supervised experience in the practice of pastoral ministry. The areas of examinations are:~~

- “a. Bible Content.
- “b. *Open Book Bible Exegesis.*
- “c. Theological Competence.
- “d. Worship and Sacraments.
- “e. Church Polity.”

Background and Rationale

This proposed amendment came as a result of the Self-Study of the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCCEC). Their rationale noted:

“The PCCEC is concerned that many candidates take the examinations before they are sufficiently prepared. Too often the result is unsatisfactory grades and unnecessary frustration with the examination process. The examinations are meant to be comprehensive and integrative,

and for this reason, the PCCEC encourages candidates to take them together (rather than one by one at different times of year) and in the middle of the senior year of seminary or later.

“The PCCEC, however, affirms the need for presbyteries to have flexibility in determining when candidates take the examinations, given candidates’ diverse circumstances and in order to guard against imposing undue burdens on candidates (especially in their senior year of

seminary when many wish to receive a call). The *Book of Order* currently provides this flexibility ... [and] ... believes that this language should be revised so as to retain presbytery flexibility, while emphasizing that the examinations are best taken after candidates' completion of necessary academic work and supervised ministry experience."

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution noted:

"that the [2007] revision to Chapter XIV of the Form of Government removed specific provisions regarding ordination examinations" Their advice continued:

"... the proposed amendment increases the flexibility of the presbyteries' committees on preparation for ministry in determining when such examinations are appropriately taken.

"... [T]he recommendation sets a new standard for the approval of candidates to take

these examinations by replacing the requirement that committee on preparation for ministry give approval to a candidate to take the examinations with requirement that it "attest that the inquirer or candidate has completed adequate academic preparation in each examination area and adequate supervised experience in the practice of pastoral ministry.

"The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 218th General Assembly (2008) that the proposed language is clear and accomplishes the stated intent of the recommendation."

The Assembly Committee on Review of GA Permanent Committees approved the recommendation as amended by a vote of 39/3/1. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendations by a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 36, 1279, 1280, Item 14-01). For the full report go to [www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1829](http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1829).

**08-I Certified Christian Educators
On Amending G-14.0730 (Item 04-17)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

Shall G-14.0730c be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“c. grant the privilege of the floor to the ~~e~~Certified Christian ~~e~~Educator at all its meetings with voice only, and, in the case of ~~e~~Certified Christian ~~e~~Educators who are ordained as elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b. (G-11.0407)”

Editor’s Note: This amendment is offered separately from 08-F because they came from different sources and were not dealt with together by the assembly committee or by the assembly itself. Either, neither, or both of the amendments could be approved, and they should be voted upon separately. If both are approved, their wordings will be merged. Questions about compatibility will be sent to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.

Background and Rationale

This amendment came as a response from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution to a question about the possible conflict between G-14.0730b and G-11.0407, from the Associate for Certification and Christian Vocation. Her question was:

“In view of the removal of reference to Certified Associate Christian Educators from G-14.0730, and in view of the continuing requirements of G-11.0103n and G-11.0407 that preserve reference to Certified Associate Christian Educators, shall the provisions of G-14.0730 b and c concerning Certified Christian Educators be interpreted to apply to Certified Associate Christian Educators also?”

**Advice from the Advisory
Committee on the Constitution**

The ACC recommended that the 218th General Assembly (2008) approve an authoritative interpretation about the provisions of G-14.0730b, which the GA did approve, stating:

“The provisions of G-14.0730b regarding the responsibility of the presbytery to establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators, to provide access to the committee on ministry on the part of Certified Christian Educators, and to

grant privilege of the floor with voice only to Certified Christian Educators shall apply to Certified Associate Christian Educators who have met the standards established by the Educator Certification Council (G-14.0722) and described in the handbook on the certification process for Christian Educators (G-14.0720).”

The ACC continued, in its rationale:

“In its revision of Chapter XIV of the *Book of Order*, the General Assembly omitted reference to the Certified Associate Christian Educator in G-14.0720-14.0731. However, the Assembly did not act to strike references to Associate Christian Educator in G-11.0103n (minimum compensation standards), G-11.0407 (rolls of persons entitled to the privilege of the floor), and G-11.0503 (communication with the Committee on Ministry). The Advisory Committee on the Constitution concludes that it was not the intent of the Assembly to eliminate the status of Certified Associate Christian Educators, but rather to leave to the Educator Certification Council the designations, standards, and examination procedures for Christian Educators (G-14.0722).

“Since there was not an evident positive intent to eliminate the title of Certified Associate Christian Educator, the more general provisions of G-14.0730 may be interpreted to mean that the presbytery has a responsibility to provide support for all persons who are ‘certified Christian educators’ (emphasis added). The committee

notes that the lower-case initial ‘c’ and ‘e’ may be seen as an indication that the term “certified Christian educator” in this context is a general reference to persons who have met the standards for certification in G-14.0720 – 14.0721 and as defined by the Educator Certification Council (G-14.0722), rather than as part of a specific title, i.e., ‘Certified Christian Educator’ as opposed to ‘Certified Associate Christian Educator.’ Thus the language of G-14.0730 does not require the limitation of the provisions of the section to Certified Christian Educators. Under this interpretation, the existing requirements of G-11.0103n and G-11.0407 are controlling. ...

“The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that the language of G-14.0730, as interpreted above, would create a new privilege of the floor with voice and, under certain conditions, vote to Certified Associate Christian Educators. In the previous version of G-14.0705c (prior to the revisions to G-14.0000 approved in 2007), the ability of the presbytery to grant the privilege of the floor with voice was limited to Certified Christian Educators, and there was no provision for the privilege of vote whatsoever. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution concludes that opening these privileges to

Certified Associate Christian Educators was the intent of the 217th General Assembly (2006) in wording the present provisions of G-14.0230c. However, if the 218th General Assembly (2008) wishes to limit the privilege of the floor with voice and, under limited circumstances, vote to Certified Christian Educators only, it may accomplish that purpose by amending G-14.0730c to capitalize the words ‘certified’ and ‘educator/s’”

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity voted 46/12/0 to approve the recommendation with this comment:

“That the inclusion of Associate Christian Educators be examined by the appropriate General Assembly committee or entity.”

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation and comment by a voice vote. (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 49, 265, Item 04-17) For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1847 .

**08-J Alternative Forms of Resolution
On Amending D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h (Item 04-15)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

1. Shall D-2.0103 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“To meet the goals of D-1.0103, the investigating committee may initiate if it deems appropriate, and with the written consent of ~~all parties involved~~ the accused, alternative forms of resolution conducted by professionally trained and certified mediators and arbitrators. The purpose of the process is to achieve justice and compassion for all ~~parties~~ persons involved through mediation and settlement.”

2. Shall the first paragraph of D-10.0202h be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“h. initiate, if it deems appropriate, alternative forms of resolution, ordinarily after the investigation has been completed, probable cause has been determined, but before the charges have been filed. The purpose of alternative forms of resolution will be to determine if agreement can be reached between ~~all parties involved~~ the investigating committee and the accused concerning any charges which may be filed.”

3. Shall D-10.0202h(3) be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“(3) The session or permanent judicial commission shall convene to receive the settlement agreement; vote to approve it by at least two-thirds of the members eligible to vote; make a record of its proceedings according to the provisions of D-11.0601d, including the name of the accused, the substance of the ~~accusation or~~ charge(s), and censure; and transmit its decision to the clerk of session or the stated clerk, who shall report it according to the provisions of D-11.0701.”

4. Shall D-10.0202h(4) be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“(4) ~~All parties shall be provided an advocate~~ The investigating committee shall provide an advocate for the accused throughout settlement negotiations, and may provide an advocate for other interested persons at its own discretion.”

5. Shall D-10.0202h(5) be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“(5) If a settlement satisfactory to ~~all parties involved~~ both the investigating committee and the accused in the ~~mediation~~ alternative form of resolution is not reached, the investigating committee shall designate a prosecuting committee per D-10.0202j, and the case shall proceed to the filing of charges on the charges filed.”

Background and Rationale

These suggested amendments came from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution in response to two of the questions asked by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of National Capital:

“What is the meaning of “all parties” in D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h? ...

“Do the Rules of Discipline give the accuser in a disciplinary proceeding veto power over an A[lternate] F[orm of] R[esolution]?”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution noted:

“With respect to [these] questions ... , the Advisory Committee on the Constitution finds that the questions point to a deficiency in the current language of the *Book of Order* best addressed by constitutional amendment.

“Regarding [the first] question ... , in the Rules of Discipline, the words ‘party’ or ‘parties’ have specific meanings. In nearly all occurrences, they refer exclusively to the persons identified at trial as the complainant (or complainants) and respondent (or respondents) in remedial cases (D-6.0201), or to the prosecuting committee and the accused in a disciplinary case (D-10.0402b). The use of ‘all parties’ in D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h, however, creates the possibility of confusion as to who is intended. D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h refer

to procedures preliminary to the filing of charges and the creation of parties in a disciplinary case.

“While recent amendments have had the purpose of broadening the judicial process to take into consideration the rights and perspectives of persons alleged to have been harmed, nevertheless, in disciplinary cases, these rights and perspectives, while important, do not override the rights and responsibilities of the whole church to exercise discipline of offenders. The use of “parties” in the Rules of Discipline is specifically and intentionally limited to those persons representing the governing body (i.e., the investigating committee or prosecuting committee), and the accused. Presbyteries should exercise pastoral care towards all persons involved in disciplinary cases (persons alleged to have been harmed, the accused, and others as needed). And, while the interests of accuser(s) and/or person(s) alleged to have been harmed should be considered in the process of developing an alternative form of resolution (AFR), the only persons with the authority to agree to such a petition are the investigating committee on behalf of the larger church, and the accused. Therefore, no veto power over an AFR is accorded to an accuser.”

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity approved the recommendation by a vote of 58/0/1. The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation by consensus. (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 48, 49, 262, Item 04-15) For the full report go to www://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1819.

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ECUMENICAL STATEMENTS

From time to time the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) enters into agreements with other churches; these are called Ecumenical Statements. This year there are four such statements to be ratified by the presbyteries. Each particular statement will go into effect when the appropriate bodies have ratified it.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that these proposals come under the provisions of G-13.0103s, giving the General Assembly the responsibility and power “to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationship that will enlarge the life and mission of the church[.]” They comply with the provisions of G-15.0201 and G-15.0302c. When approved by the requisite General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries, each will be published as a Received Ecumenical Statement of Guidance.

The *Book of Order* describes ecumenical statements at G-15.0302:

G-15.0302a. Ecumenical Statements

a. In the search for the unity of Christ’s Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may from time to time receive for guidance statements of ecumenical consensus that regularly chosen representatives of this church have helped to formulate. The purpose of receiving such ecumenical statements shall be to guide the particular churches and governing bodies of this church as they share in joint action with other ecclesiastical bodies seeking ways to express the unity of the Church and to discover its possible future form.

G-15.0302b. Approved by General Assembly

b. Such an ecumenical statement shall be approved by the General Assembly as a guide for such shared action and shall be submitted to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes together with a statement of the specific purpose and the effect of approving it. When the next ensuing General Assembly shall have received written advice that an ecumenical statement has received the affirmative vote of a majority of the presbyteries, that statement shall serve as guidance for participation in ecumenical activity.

G-15.0302c. Received Ecumenical Statements

c. Ecumenical statements which have been approved by the General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries in the manner described in the preceding paragraphs shall be published as “Received Ecumenical Statements of Guidance.” Such statements shall not be a part of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* as defined in G-1.0500 unless adopted as amendments pursuant to Chapter XVIII, “Amendments.” Ecumenical activity under the guidance of such received ecumenical statements may be conducted only under provisions of the Constitution thereof.

G-15.0302d. [Mutual Affirmation and Admonition]

Governing bodies are encouraged and permitted to discover and engage in opportunities to minister together in mutual affirmation and admonition with churches with whom the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion.

08-K Ecumenical Statement with the Roman Catholic Church On Ratifying a Common Agreement on Baptism (Item 07-08)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the Common Agreement on Baptism as an ecumenical statement for guidance and directed the Stated Clerk to send it to the presbyteries for ratification:

COMMON AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM Roman Catholic-Reformed Church dialogue

- 1. Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22–23), the church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity.**
- 2. Together we affirm that Baptism is the sacramental gateway into the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in Christ.**
- 3. Together we affirm that incorporation into the universal church by baptism is brought about by celebrating the sacrament within a particular Christian community.**
- 4. Together we affirm that Baptism is to be conferred only once, because those who are baptized are decisively incorporated into the Body of Christ.**
- 5. Together we affirm that baptism is a sacrament of the church, enacted in obedience to the mission confided to it by Christ's own word. For our baptisms to be mutually recognized, water and the scriptural Trinitarian formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 19–20) must be used in the baptismal rite.**
- 6. Together we affirm that the validity of Baptism depends on its celebration according to the apostolic witness by the church and its authorized ministers.**
- 7. Together we affirm, as a sign of our unity and as a witness to ecumenical commitment, the practice of inviting the presence and, where appropriate, the participation of members of our respective communions in the celebration of Baptism. At the same time, we affirm our responsibility to respect the integrity of the distinct baptismal practices of the communions in which the rite of Baptism is administered.**
- 8. Given our mutual recognition of Baptism, we encourage using baptismal registers in the local church community and, when requested by another church for a pastoral need in the life of an individual, providing written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used. Such cooperation and mutual accountability honors the dignity of the sacrament of Baptism.**

We rejoice at the common faith we share and affirm in this document. We understand that the journey toward full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us. Because of these convictions, we encourage Roman Catholic and Reformed pastoral leaders to continue their commitment to regular dialogue about theology and pastoral practice from local to international settings. Pastoral leaders engaged in such dialogue embody our hopes for unity, collaborative effort, and common witness. We believe that respectful dialogue can provide a strong witness to the wider church about our commitment to a relationship

in Christ and can stand as a safeguard against the unreflective judgments that have, at certain times in our history, diminished and distorted our relations.

Background and Rationale

This ecumenical statement came from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations (GACER). Their rationale stated:

“As a follow up to the 2001 delegation visit to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the 213th General Assembly (2001) instructed the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations to invite the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to join in a study that would enable us to mutually affirm one another’s baptisms. The 215th General Assembly (2003) authorized the seventh round of dialogue with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and requested that a report be given to the 218th General Assembly (2008). As part of that round, the dialogue was asked to focus on the meaning and practice of baptism, the relationship of baptism to Eucharist, and the role of both sacraments in shaping our churches and drawing them toward fuller communion. The methodology of the dialogue was to be designed to address issues that are theological, ecclesiastical, and pastoral. The dialogue has completed the section on baptism and is forwarding this report and common statement to the churches. The dialogue will continue to work on issues related to the Eucharist.”

In addition to the 218th General Assembly (2008) receiving the report on baptism from the Catholic Reformed Bilateral dialogue, the assembly also directed “the General Assembly Council, through the Theology Worship and Education ministries area, to develop congregational study guides for the *Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism* and make [them] readily available to congregations, pastors, and seminaries.”

This statement basically affirms what is already the PC(USA) practice of recognizing the baptism of persons who have been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. It will not go into effect until it is ratified by a majority of the presbyteries.

The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended this ecumenical statement to the General Assembly by a vote of 59/0/0. The 218th Assembly approved it by a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 14, 15, 527, 529, Item 07-08), For the full report go to <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1735>.

08-L Ecumenical Statement with the Episcopal Church On Adopting an Agreement (Item 07-11)

The 218th General Assembly (2008) received the Episcopal/Presbyterian Agreement as an ecumenical statement (G-15.0302b) and directed the Stated Clerk to send it to the presbyteries for their ratification:

Agreement Between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- 1. We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.**
- 2. We acknowledge that in our churches the Word of God is authentically preached and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are duly administered.**
- 3. We acknowledge one another's ordained ministries as given by God and instruments of grace, and look forward to the time when the reconciliation of our churches makes possible the full interchangeability of ministers.**
- 4. We acknowledge that personal and collegial oversight (*episcopate*) is embodied and exercised in our churches in a variety of forms, episcopal and non-episcopal, as a visible sign of the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.**
- 5. We agree that authorized ministers of our churches may, subject to the regulations of the churches and within the limits of their competence,¹ carry out the tasks of their own office in congregations of the other churches when requested and approved by the diocesan bishop and local presbytery.**
- 6. We agree that The Episcopal Church will invite members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to receive Holy Communion in their churches and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will invite members of The Episcopal Church to receive Holy Communion in their churches. We encourage the members of our churches to accept this Eucharistic hospitality and thus express their unity with each other in the one Body of Christ.**
- 7. We agree to continue to dialogue in the areas such as diaconal ministries, historic episcopate, the office of elder, etc., that would lead to full reconciliation of our ministries and interchangeability of our ministers.**
- 8. We encourage diocesan bishops and presbyteries to provide regular occasion for planning, discussing, resourcing for missional, educational, and liturgical life together. In addition, to explore possibilities for new church development and redevelopment together.**
- 9. We agree to develop a process to support and implement the above recommendations.²**

10. We affirm these proposals mark an important step in moving toward the full, visible unity of the Church. We know that beyond this commitment lies a move from the recognition to the reconciliation of churches and ministries within the wider fellowship of the universal Church.

Endnotes

1. Because we do not yet have reconciliation and full interchangeability of ordained ministries, all authorization for these special opportunities must confirm to the *Book of Worship* and the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*.
2. Guidelines will be developed by each of the communions.

Background and Rationale

This recommendation came from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations. Their rationale stated:

“The 212th General Assembly (2000) mandated a bilateral dialogue with the Episcopal Church for the purposes of moving toward mutual reconciliation of ministries within the Consultation on Church Union (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, p. 107). The bilateral dialogue began meeting in June 2002 and worked closely with the Ministry Task Force of Churches Uniting in Christ. It became clear through the CUiC process that we are not yet able to reconcile our ministries. However, the dialogue team is prepared to recommend actions that will allow our churches to recognize each other’s ministries as authentic and valid with the prayer that we will one day be able to fully reconcile our ministries.

“Constitutionally, for the PC(USA) this agreement is based upon G-13.0103s (establish and maintain ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church); G-11.0405 (permission for ministers of other denominations to serve in temporary pastoral relationships); G-15.0200 (Relations with Other Denominations). This agreement does not require amendments to the *Book of Order*.”

The 218th General Assembly (2008) received the report of the Episcopal/ Presbyterian bilateral dialogue along with the Episcopal/Presbyterian Agreement as an ecumenical statement (G-15.0302b) and directed that it be sent to the presbyteries for their ratification. In addition, the 218th

General Assembly gave the following directions in implementing this ecumenical agreement:

“a. Authorize[d] the next round of dialogue with the Episcopal Church for purposes of further study and dialogue in the areas of diaconal ministries, historic episcopate, the office of elder, and other related subjects as a continued effort toward the full reconciliation of our ministries and interchangeability of our ministers.

“b. Direct[ed] the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to work with presbyteries in understanding this agreement and facilitating their partnership with Episcopal dioceses.

“c. Direct[ed] the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations to give oversight to this agreement and report to the 220th General Assembly (2012) progress that has been made and any additional recommendations to support this agreement.”

This proposal must be ratified by a majority of the PC(USA) presbyteries as well as by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2009; it will not be in effect until all parties have approved it. This agreement is not a covenant nor a full communion agreement. It does make provision for temporary or occasional service of ministers of both denominations in congregations of the other.

**Comment from the
General Assembly Council**

“The General Assembly Council recognizes the importance of this bilateral consultation, appreciates the evident progress that has been made to date, and commends the report for serious consideration and deliberation.”

The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended this ecumenical statement to the General Assembly by a vote of 58/0/1 with this comment:

“In recognizing the spirit of cooperation already present in the agreement, the 218th General Assembly (2008) suggests that further dialogue between the PC(USA) and the Episcopal Church give special attention to mutuality in language regarding both church governance and worship practice.”

The 218th Assembly (2008) approved it by a voice vote . (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 14, 15, 538, 541, Item 07-11) For the full report go to <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1803>

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**08-M Ecumenical Statement with the
Korean Presbyterian Church in America
On Adopting a Covenant Relationship Agreement (Item 07-04)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) received the “Covenant Relationship Between the Korean Presbyterian Church of America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” as an ecumenical statement (G-15.0302b) and directed the Stated Clerk to send it to the presbyteries for their ratification.

**COVENANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE KOREAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
AND
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” Ephesians 4:1–6 (NRSV)

I. History of Relationship

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [PC(USA)] and the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA) are denominations with common roots and commitments in the Reformed tradition. The emotional ties are the legacy of their mission history. Protestant Christianity in Korea began through the sending of U.S. Presbyterian missionaries to Korea in 1885. Over the past century, Presbyterians in Korea have demonstrated phenomenal growth despite their difficult experiences of suffering. They have become genuine partners in mission and ecumenical engagement not only in Korea and Asia, but also throughout the world.

In the middle of the 1960s, the U.S. immigration law changed, opening the doors for many Koreans to immigrate to the United States. This started a new page in the history of Korean Presbyterians. Unfortunately, the PC(USA) was unprepared to welcome and accept the large number of Korean Presbyterians into its life. While some Koreans joined the PC(USA), some felt the need to establish an independent Korean Presbyterian Church in the United States. Each of these organized groupings of Korean American Presbyterian churches has contributed to the growth and development of the Presbyterian witness in the United States through its unique gifts and calling.

After many years of informal cooperation between leadership of the two churches, the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the PC(USA) and the 17th General Assembly (1992) of the KPCA authorized the establishment of the Joint Committee on Presbyterian Cooperation Between the PC(USA) and the KPCA. Over the past thirty years, the joint committee has focused its work in the areas of ministries and education, global mission, peace, justice, reconciliation, and church polity. Of particular note, is the opportunity that

Korean Americans born and raised in the United States present for our churches to move from immigrant-focused ministries to ministries directed toward future generations. The work of the joint committee has been important in shaping the relationship between the PC(USA) and the KPCA.

The joint committee believes that God is calling us to move to a deeper relationship between the KPCA and the PC(USA) and to request our General Assemblies to declare covenant relationship between the two churches. Covenant relationship establishes a formal mutual commitment in our ecclesial and missional life together. The nature of covenant relationship is a call to mutuality based upon core theological principles.

II. Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation

A. As churches within the Reformed tradition, each holding membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is preached, sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God, and the mission of Jesus Christ is lived out.

B. Baptism marks us as belonging to Christ and Christ' church. According to Scripture, there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). To that end, we recognize the baptism of each of our churches and welcome one another's members as brothers and sisters in Christ. We recognize that it is Christ that has showed us the way of self-sacrificing love and given to us the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to remember this love and to be fed with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. We encourage the sharing in the Lord's Supper together in all arenas of the church.

C. Christ has entrusted the ministry of the gospel to all of his disciples, calling us to follow him in the way of love, righteousness, peace, and justice. Ordination is the act by which men and women are set aside for particular ministries of the Church. We identify and name these ministries as deacon, elder, and minister of Word and Sacrament. We recognize that the calling and setting aside of persons for service in the church and the world is for the sake of the mission of Christ. We recognize the authenticity of one another's ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons.

D. The church lives to fulfill the mission of God in the world. The church does not live for its own sake, but seeks to witness to the saving work of Jesus Christ, the transformative power of the gospel, justice and reconciliation in all areas of its life and witness. God's gift of unity strengthens the witness of the church. While divisions within the church cannot destroy the mission of the church, they do serve as distractions to the message and the mission of the church. We recognize that the mission of our churches is strengthened by commitment to work cooperatively in the areas of congregational support, resource and leadership development, national and global mission.

III. Covenant Commitments

A. We covenant to support one another through prayer, dialogue, and continued cooperative work. Through mutual affirmation and admonition, we covenant to an honest relationship in which our joys are celebrated, our trials are shared, and disagreements are addressed with the goal of strengthening this covenant. We will seek to affirm the witness of our churches and when necessary speak loving words of correction for the edification of the body of Christ.

B. While we recognize each other's ministries as authentic, we covenant to develop a process of orderly exchange of ministers. This provision will be governed by the principle that the presbyteries decide who shall be members and approves calls for service in churches. This process will allow for ministers to share in the ministry of each other's churches, identify processes for transferring ministers, and the procedures for ministers to be dually affiliated. This process will only apply to ministers who are in good standing and include processes for discipline in accordance with our individual polities.

C. We recognize that we are one family and our congregations have common roots. Many Koreans within the PC(USA) and in the KPCA have shared roots in Korea. We covenant to develop a process of orderly transfer of congregations. This process will encourage, where feasible, congregations to share together in ministry and to be dually affiliated. We covenant to develop a process that seeks to strengthen the witness of our churches and not to contribute to divisions within the body of Christ. This process will be developed in a way that respects our individual polities.

D. We recognize that there is much we share in mission together. We covenant to continue to work together in the following areas of mission and pray that other areas may also emerge—curriculum development; second generation and youth and young adult ministry; congregational support and leadership development; women's leadership and resource development; global mission and justice and reconciliation in the world.

IV. Enabling Acts

A. This covenant will be forwarded to our General Assemblies through the appropriate channels in each of our churches for action by 2008.

B. Our assemblies will be asked to enter into covenant relationship, make the necessary constitutional amendments to enable this covenant, and to forward it to presbyteries for ratification.

C. Upon the ratification by presbyteries, covenant relationship will be established and a service of worship celebrating and formally entering into covenant relationship will be held by 2010.

D. A covenant implementation committee will be established to shape and support the covenanting process and to make recommendations that enable us to live fully into this covenant.

V. Prayer for the Future

We offer thanksgiving to you O God, Creator of the Universe, Lord of all peoples. You sent the gospel to Korea through the work of Presbyterian missionaries. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you have nurtured the faith of Koreans in the midst of difficult sufferings and we witnessed the growth of the church in Korea and amongst Korean Presbyterians in the United States. We recognize that while there has been a separation because of human limitations, you have continued to work in and through each of our churches. You have taken our differences in culture, custom, and language and made us one family in Christ. We are grateful that you are bringing us to this time of deeper relationship and seek your guidance and blessing as we make this covenant between the

Korean Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for now and generations to come.

**“Now to him who by the power at work at within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
(Eph. 3: 20–21 (NRSV))**

Background and Rationale

This recommendation came from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations. Their rationale stated:

“The Joint Committee on Cooperation Between the Korean Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was established by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the PC(USA) and the 17th General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA). Believing that their work over the past fifteen years has brought them to a point of being able move into a deeper relationship between the two churches, the joint committee is recommending to our respective General Assemblies that covenant relationship be established.

“Constitutionally, for the PC(USA), this covenant agreement is based upon G-13.0103s (establish and maintain ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church); G-11.0405 (receiving ministers from churches with which we are in correspondence and full communion); G-15.0200 (Relations with Other Denominations); and G-16.0000 (Union Churches). It is the intent that covenant is to provide the same authority for our presbyteries as was given them under the Formula of Agreement and accompanying constitutional amendments.”

The 218th General Assembly (2008) gave the following directions in implementing the covenant:

“a. Direct[ed] the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations to appoint members to serve on a joint implementation committee.

“b. Direct[ed] the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to convene tables to develop processes and procedures for the orderly exchange of ministers and the orderly transfer of churches.

“c. Direct[ed] that the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council report these processes and procedures to the 219th General Assembly (2010).”

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 218th General Assembly (2008) to approve Item 07-04. Their rationale stated:

“...If [this proposal] ... is approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008) and a majority of the presbyteries, it will ... provide the same authority for the Korean Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to explore and carry out shared ministries that the ‘Formula of Agreement’ provides for the four partner churches that that adopted it.”

The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended this ecumenical statement to the General Assembly by a vote of 58/0/2. (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 14, 15, 513, 514, Item 07-04) The 218th Assembly approved it by a voice vote with this comment:

“The value of the covenant within these two denominations will depend in great measure on agreement about implementation, which will take place across all governing bodies of both denominations. Therefore, the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations, the Office of the General Assembly, and the General Assembly Council are urged to consult with presbyteries and synods that have direct experience of working with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America.”

For the full report go to <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1715> .

**08-N Ecumenical Statement with the Moravian Church
On Adopting a Covenant Partnership Agreement (Item 07-10)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) received the Moravian/Reformed Covenant Partnership Agreement as an ecumenical statement (G-15.0302b) and directed the Stated Clerk to send it to the presbyteries for their ratification:

*AN INVITATION TO THE TABLE:
A PROPOSAL FOR A MORAVIAN/REFORMED COVENANT PARTNERSHIP*

*We're gonna sit at the welcome table,
We're gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah!
---Traditional Spiritual adapted*

As representatives of five different communions met for theological discussion, worship, and fellowship between 2002 and 2007, the image—and reality—of *the table* emerged as central in the group's understanding of its task. We have identified three ways (happily and conveniently Trinitarian) in which this image speaks to our past work and our future hopes.

First is the table of conversation. We recognize that each communion brings specific gifts to this table, and that all share a commitment to honest and far-ranging exploration of our differences and similarities. The table of conversation is graced by sincere questioning and respectful listening. We have discovered that miscommunication can result when shared terms carry different meanings, and have spent long and fruitful hours expanding our understanding of one another's polity and practice.

For example, both the Moravians and the Presbyterians include the office of Elder, so at first glance it would appear that this is one instance of commonality. But as we discovered, the structure and functions of the office are quite different. Moravian Elders are elected for a fixed term and installed to serve only the congregation, district, or province in which they are elected. They form a governing board and have oversight responsibility within the jurisdiction, which they serve. Presbyterian Elders, on the other hand, are ordained for life and can function as elder within any Presbyterian congregation. They have ministerial duties, which in the Moravian church are reserved for the ordained clergy.

Another example is the office of bishop. One of the gifts that Moravians bring to the table of conversation is the concept of bishop as a pastor to pastors, one charged with providing spiritual leadership and praying for the welfare of the church. Considerable discussion centered on the function of the bishop within the Moravian Unity. Reformed partners in the Dialogue were surprised and intrigued to learn that Moravian bishops have no administrative duties by virtue of their office.

As Christians we are a people of story. In sharing the narrative of our faith journeys, as individuals and as denominations, we make of the table of conversation a place to gather in witness to the wonder and graciousness of God's work in the world.

The second table is the table of fellowship. The simple act of sitting together to share a common meal recalls the Agape meal of the early church, with its emphasis on hospitality to all who gather. While all of our denominations recognize the benefits to the community of church suppers and other opportunities for food and fellowship, the Moravians demonstrate with their practice of Lovefeast a way to integrate meal and liturgy in a service of worship engaging all the senses. The Lovefeast, precisely because it is not sacramental in nature, has the added advantage of being a liturgical meal in which all may participate freely.

The Psalmist invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Psalm 34:8) In the Lovefeast hymns, participants taste sweet words of praise and thanksgiving, and in the Lovefeast meal itself they taste the sweet buns and pungent coffee, filling mouths and hearts with gratefulness for the Lord’s bounty. The table of fellowship invites all to delight in God’s graciousness.

The third table is, of course, the Eucharistic table. It is the place where each of us encounters our crucified and risen Lord. It is the table of nourishment for our spirits, before which we stand or kneel in awe and wonder. The covenant partnership to which we aspire recognizes no barrier to full participation by any of our members in the celebration of Holy Communion in any one of our churches. The verse of a familiar Moravian hymn expresses it clearly and simply: “With one cup and with one bread thus one cov’nant way we tread.” In such manner we join to bear witness to God’s all-encompassing invitation. The feast is prepared. The banquet table is spread. Let us work together to gather in all who are hungry and thirsty, that all may be satisfied.

To this end we offer a proposal for Covenant Partnership.

A Brief Introduction and Background for This Proposal

The Moravian-Reformed Dialogue, and its proposal for “covenant partnership” among the Moravian Church,¹ the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ, are products of earlier ecumenical work.² In 1998, *A Formula of Agreement* initiated a full communion relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and three Reformed partners: the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC(USA)), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC). In 1999, the ELCA and the Moravian Church entered an agreement of full communion.

For almost fifty years, Churches Uniting in Christ (CUiC) and its predecessor body, the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) have searched for a meaningful and demonstrable expression of church unity that is “truly catholic, truly reformed and truly evangelical.” The PC(USA), the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the UCC have been full participants in this process from the beginning; more recently the Moravian Church-Northern Province has become a full participant. Among the stumbling blocks to progress have been questions and tensions regarding certain reformed and episcopal practices of the ministry of oversight. “Reformed” generally refers to oversight by representative bodies of

¹ For the purposes of this document and the relationships it establishes, reference to the Moravian Church is exclusive to the congregations who are organized under the authority of the Northern and Southern Provinces.

² Descriptions of each of the participating communions are at the end of this document.

both clergy and laity. “Episcopal” generally refers to oversight vested in an individual, especially a bishop whose authority derives from participation in the historic succession.³

Recognizing that the Moravian Church practices a ministry of oversight that is at once reformed and episcopal, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2000 invited the Moravian Church to enter into a formal dialogue. Because of earlier ecumenical commitments made through the *Formula of Agreement*, the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America were also invited to join; the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was included because of its participation in CUiC and its long-standing ecumenical partnership with the UCC.

The PC(USA) entered the dialogue with several goals: (1) to reach an understanding of the ministry of oversight in each tradition; (2) to explore areas of cooperative work in global, national and local settings; (3) to enable PC(USA) and Moravian congregations to gain greater knowledge of one another and of the denominations’ cooperative work; and (4) to seek common agreements that could lead to establishing full communion between the Moravian Church and one or all of the Reformed churches.⁴ The dialogue began formally in April 2002 in Winston-Salem, and representatives have met once or twice annually through May 2007, although changes in the Moravian Church occasioned a yearlong hiatus in 2003. Initial meetings focused on introducing and clarifying the several communions’ structures and the ordering of ministry within those structures. The group gave particular attention to identifying the divisive issues within each of the five churches, recognizing that many of these issues were common to all. Equally important, conversation about the theological principles held in common among all five communions made clear that no doctrinal or ecclesiological barriers stand in the way of closer relationships.

While the impetus for this dialogue, and the present proposal, was the relationship of “full communion” that both the Moravian Church and three of the four Reformed churches have with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have chosen to use the language of “covenant partnership” in our recommendation that a new relationship be established. There are two reasons for this linguistic choice. First, in both the Reformed and the Moravian traditions, we understand ourselves to be called into covenant relationship with the Divine. As a covenant people we are called to seek meaningful relationships with other Christian bodies as a reflection of our covenant with Christ. Covenant partnership indicates a commitment to gather at Table together—for dialogue, fellowship and Eucharist; it also indicates commitment to rise from Table and to engage in mission together. Second, we believe that the language of “full communion” suggests a relationship accomplished, rather than—as we envision—a relationship emerging and ongoing. “Covenant partnership” points toward a shared journey, one that leads us together to greater faithfulness and witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ. It seeks to name

³ In practice, denominations mix and vary these elements of collective and individual oversight. Moravian bishops, while standing in historic succession, do not exercise judicial oversight; rather such oversight is exercised by the Provincial Elders Conference, a representative body of clergy and laity. The PC(USA) and RCA, on the other hand, vest oversight exclusively in representative bodies (presbyteries and classes) of clergy and laity.

⁴ It should be noted that the three other Reformed partners (RCA, UCC, CC/DC) entered the dialogue primarily with the first three goals in mind. As the dialogue proceeded, however, representatives of all three communions perceived the appropriateness and usefulness of seeking deeper formal relationships with the Moravian Church. If pursued, such relationships would be effected bilaterally, rather than (as with the *Formula of Agreement*) by the Reformed bodies acting together. It is further understood that the Moravian Church will proceed in each case only if both the Northern and Southern Provinces agree to pursue a closer relationship with a given denomination.

relationships that already exist on many levels, and to open the door for growing relationships in the future.

Toward a Deeper Relationship: Past History and Ecumenical Commitments

Both the Moravian Church and the four Reformed bodies see no obstacles, present or past, to covenant partnership. Moreover, all five churches have histories of cooperative and ecumenical commitments.

The Moravian Church

The Moravian Church has a long history of ecumenism. In its first decade (1457-67) adherents managed with dissident Catholic priests before they sought an ordained ministry of their own. Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the chief influence in the renewal of the church in the 1700s, saw the Moravian Church as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, a pietist “yeast” and mission society within larger state churches of Germany and Scandinavia. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many Moravian preaching places in America became congregations of other communions. More recently, Moravians have been active in ecumenical groups from local bodies to the World Council of Churches. In 1999 the Moravian Church concluded a full communion agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and it is now involved in dialogue with the Episcopal Church, as well as with the four Reformed partners in this dialogue.

Because of their world mission heritage, identification with the global Moravian communion has always been important for American Moravians. However, with the end of political colonialism and the independence of former “mission fields,” this is less central than in the past. Also, Moravians are increasingly aware that denominationalism has sometimes distracted them from seeking relationships with other Christians and responding to social issues closer to home.

There appear to be no discernible barriers to deeper relationships between the Moravians and the communions engaged in this dialogue. The Moravian spirit toward traditional creeds and confessions is expressed in *The Ground of the Unity*, the official doctrinal statement of the denomination, adopted in 1957 and modified only slightly since then:

The *Unitas Fratrum* recognizes in the creeds of the Church the thankful acclaim of the Body of Christ. These creeds aid the Church in formulating a Scriptural confession, in marking the boundaries of heresies, and in exhorting believers to an obedient and fearless testimony in every age. The *Unitas Fratrum* maintains that all creeds formulated by the Christian Church stand in need of constant testing in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

It acknowledges as such true professions of faith the early Christian witness: “Jesus Christ is Lord!” and also especially the ancient Christian creeds and the fundamental creeds of the Reformation.⁵

⁵ In the various Provinces of the Renewed *Unitas Fratrum* the following documents gained special importance, because in them the main doctrines of the Christian faith find clear and simple expression: The Apostles’, Athanasian, and Nicene Creeds, The Confession of the Unity of the Bohemian Brethren of 1535, the Twenty-one Articles of the unaltered Augsburg Confession, Martin Luther’s Shorter Catechism, the Synod of Berne of 1532, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, the Barmen Declaration, the Heidelberg Confession.

The irenic spirit with which the Moravian Church approaches creeds also inform its approach toward potentially church-dividing issues such as baptism and human sexuality. Because of the understanding of prevenient grace, the normal practice of the Moravian church is children's baptism; however, parents have the right to postpone the baptism of their children. There are differing convictions among Moravians regarding sexual orientation, but the Unity Synod (the highest international Moravian body) has stated that the issue of human sexuality "does not rise to the level of the Lordship of Christ," indicating that believers can in good faith disagree on some questions of sexuality.

There are, of course, differences of emphasis. Moravians, for example, have put more stress on devotional life and have been less likely than some Reformed bodies to see social and political advocacy as part of the total Christian witness. This is one of the many areas in which we can learn from one another.

The Four Reformed Churches-- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ

Although these four Reformed communions have different origins, structures of governance, and confessional emphases, all share historical commitments to, and participation in, ecumenical activities. Beginning in the mid-1790s, members of the Dutch Reformed Church (now the RCA) partnered with other denominations to send missionaries to the American Indians. In 1801 Presbyterians and Congregationalists⁶ adopted a Plan of Agreement, often called the first formal ecumenical agreement in America, which for half a century committed the two bodies to work cooperatively in planting churches on the frontier. Roughly two decades later, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) emerged as a movement committed to ending the unscriptural "party divisions" of both belief and practice that separated denominations.

All four bodies are presently active in numerous bilateral and conciliar ecumenical relationships. All are members of the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; individually, each participates in other ecumenical alliances and conversations, including Christian Churches Together and Churches Uniting in Christ. Three of the four participants (the UCC, PC(USA), and RCA) were signatories to the *Formula of Agreement* with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shares with the United Church of Christ an ecumenical partnership that enjoys full reconciliation of ministries.

None of the Reformed bodies perceives historic or present barriers, either of theology and practice or of governance, to fuller and deeper partnership with the Moravian Church.

Toward A Deeper Relationship: Current Cooperative Work

Moravians and Reformed bodies already work together in many ways, both formal and informal. All participant communions in this dialogue are members of the National Council of Churches of Christ. The Moravian Church—Northern Province and three Reformed bodies (UCC, CC/DC, and PC(USA)) are members of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUiC). Reformed bodies have at various times worked with Moravians in Nicaragua and Honduras. Sister bodies in the Caribbean work together at a seminary in Jamaica. Since

⁶ Congregationalists are the largest constituent body within the United Church of Christ.

the fall of the iron curtain, Moravians, Presbyterians and others in Alaska have done church planting among people in nearby Siberia.

Theological seminaries of all the bodies welcome students from the other groups, and faculties serve across denominational lines as well. (This is a significant change from a not-too-distant past when pastors were educated almost exclusively at denominational seminaries.) Ordained ministers of Word and sacrament serve across denominational lines, both as interim pastors and installed pastors. A closer ecumenical agreement will only facilitate the ongoing exchange and eventual reconciliation of ministries.

Most of the communions in this dialogue are concentrated in some geographic areas and less represented in others. (For example, there are Moravian congregations in only seventeen states.⁷) This regional distribution has affected where congregations of the dialogue communions have worked together thus far. Nevertheless, there are many local instances of common effort, especially in social service—for example, homeless shelters, Habitat for Humanity projects, CROP Walks, food pantries, and racial justice work.

Covenant Partnership: A Proposal

The value of a covenant partnership between the Moravian Church and one or more Reformed bodies is evident. Such partnership reminds us, first of all, that our separate churches have missed many opportunities to share in ministry and mission, although God calls us to work together as one. Equally important, covenant partnership makes intentional witness to the churches' diversity in unity. Discussions in our five-year-long dialogue have highlighted a number of ways, both in practice and in polity, in which each communion brings unique and valuable gifts to the table. Rather than minimize denominational differences in favor of bland uniformity, a covenant partnership will recognize and celebrate the many different ways in which partners are able to worship the one Triune God and proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the world. Contemporary groups, both civil and religious, too often suggest, "my way is the only way." Partnership offers the opportunity to speak a prophetic word to those who disparage diversity.

Finally, covenant partnership will facilitate a process for joint—and thus more effective—mission. Ideally, the various mission boards will come to the point where a covenant partner or partners will automatically be invited to participate in any new mission efforts. (Indeed, if covenant partnership is to become real locally, joint mission is essential. Perhaps, for example, concrete goals—such as local partnerships to build Habitat for Humanity houses—could inaugurate the partnership and make it more meaningful.)

What is involved, specifically, in a covenant partnership between the Moravian Church and one or more of the Reformed communions?

- As Covenant partners, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Moravian Church Northern and Southern Provinces recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God in the Scriptures.

⁷ North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Wisconsin, Maryland, Minnesota, District of Columbia, Florida, Virginia, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, North Dakota, Michigan

- **As Covenant partners, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Moravian Church Northern and Southern Provinces recognize each other's ordained ministries as valid and will seek to reconcile their ordained ministries. We will develop a process to provide for the orderly exchange and mutual oversight of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. When possible, partners will regularly consult regarding the preparation of candidates for ordination, and the processes necessary for preparing them to serve both within their tradition and ecumenically.**
- **We covenant to work cooperatively—locally, regionally, and nationally—in mission. Such efforts may include sharing models of existing cooperation, as well as creating new opportunities for common witness and mission.**
- **We covenant to invite mutual participation in governance and other activities. We will invite each other regularly to participate in church-wide assemblies, synods, and councils; and where appropriate, to give advice and counsel regarding the ongoing work and decision-making in the churches. We will also encourage and invite mutual representation in various caucuses, conferences and other gatherings, with particular attention to youth/young adult and racial/ethnic caucuses.**
- **We covenant to develop joint resources, as appropriate. Such resources may include but not be limited to Christian education curriculum, mission education resources and liturgical resources that could be used jointly and may facilitate mutual understanding and commitment throughout the wider church.**
- **We covenant to seek regular opportunity to sit at Table together for conversation, fellowship, and sacramental celebration. In this intimate sharing, partners will deepen their knowledge of one another, their faith in God's abundant presence, and their commitment to being Christ's body together in a world that needs both help and hope.**

We find this language, adapted from *A Formula of Agreement*, to be an appropriate way to conclude:

In affirming covenant partnership, each participating communion acknowledges that it is undertaking a serious commitment, one that involves actions as well as words. Covenant partnership cannot be achieved without awareness of existing differences and similarities among the partners; it will demand dedication to walking and working together in ways that may, at times, represent a break with the past. Walking together involves not only the likelihood, but also the certainty of mutual challenge and change; because of this commitment, each body will eventually be different in ways that presently cannot be seen. The partner churches commit themselves to this new relationship with seriousness of intent, and full assurance that the One who calls us to greater visible unity is faithful and worthy of trust.

Five Communion Have Participated in the Moravian-Reformed Dialogue

***The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* is a faith community of some 700,000 members across the United States and Canada. From its founding along the western frontier of the United States in the early 19th century this church began as a movement proclaiming the unity of the church and oneness among all Christians gathered at a**

common Table of the Lord's Supper. Initially the vision of unity was based upon the restoration of New Testament practices; today, the denomination's efforts in seeking unity focus upon covenantal agreements and shared mission.

The church is structured in three expressions: congregational, regional and general. Each expression has its own particular responsibilities and authority, but always in covenant and ministry with the other expressions to fulfill the whole church's mission. The congregations are divided into 33 geographic regions that bear responsibility for oversight and nurture. Eleven general ministries and the Office of General Minister and President link the denomination with the wider church, world missions and support services to expand the church's ministry to fulfill the mission of being "a faithful, growing church, that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice."

The Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum) is a worldwide body consisting of nearly 800,000 members in 19 provinces. In the United States and Canada, the Northern and Southern Provinces together include, respectively, roughly 25,000 and 18,000 members. Alaska and Labrador are separate provinces. Governance is representative: quadrennial synods plan the work of provinces, while Provincial Elders' Conferences, with both lay and clergy members, exercise ministries of oversight (including ministerial ordination and discipline) between synods. There are three orders of ministry: Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop; all three orders may preside over the rites of the church, including baptism and Holy Communion. Bishops, elected for life, exercise no special ministries of administrative oversight; rather, they serve as theological resources, servants at the request of the Provincial Elders' Conferences, intercessors for the church and "pastor to pastors."

The Moravian Church recognizes a variety of historic creeds and confessions; it steadfastly maintains, however, that the Bible contains no single system of doctrine, and it refuses to use any one creed as a litmus test of faith. (Indeed, the best picture of Moravian doctrine may be found in the group's hymns and liturgies.) Moravians are eager to recognize and partner with all Christians and Christian denominations that recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Two mottos guide members' life and work: "Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow him"; and "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love."

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) traces its ancestry back to Scotland and England by way of reformers John Calvin and John Knox. In the United States, the Presbyterian church has split and united several times. The PC(USA), formed in 1983, is the result of reunion between northern and southern branches of the church. With roughly 2.5 million members, it is the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States.

The Constitution of the PC(USA) consists of two volumes, *The Book of Confessions*,⁸ which includes ancient and contemporary creeds and confessions, and the *Book of Order*, which enumerates governmental, worship, and disciplinary standards. The latter volume makes clear that the "nature of Presbyterian order is such that it shares power and responsibility. The system of governing bodies,⁹ whether they have authority over one or

⁸ Included are the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds; the Scots, Heidelberg, Second Helvetic, and Westminster Confessions; the Shorter and Larger Catechisms; the Barmen Declaration; the Confession of 1967, and A Brief Statement of Faith.

⁹ The governing bodies are sessions (local congregations), presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly.

many churches, sustains such mutual relationships within the structures such as to express the unity of the church.”¹⁰

The PC(USA) understands itself to be only one part of the Body of Christ. It is committed to seeking the full visible unity of the church and is active in conciliar, cooperative, missional and bilateral dialogues and partnerships, including membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to living its faith both in creedal affirmation and in faithful public witness and social action.

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) was founded in 1628 as the established church of the Dutch Colony of New Netherland. Strongest in the mid-Atlantic region and the upper Midwest, it consists of roughly 300,000 members. Governance is presbyterian and conciliar. Ordained ministers, elders and deacons meet in deliberative assemblies at four levels: local consistories, classes (analogous to presbyteries, with the power of ordination and discipline), regional synods, and a general synod.

The denomination’s heritage is Calvinist; today the RCA is theologically conservative but irenic and non-judgmental. Traditionally it has stressed doctrine over lifestyle. Pastors must hold to several historic creeds and Reformed confessions, including the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. From the 19th century, foreign missions were ecumenical, and the RCA has historically been a strong participant in ecumenical activities. This commitment is expressed both in a pattern of partnership globally with indigenous bodies, and in conciliar and full communion relationships with other denominations, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) was formed in 1957, the union of two previously merged bodies in the United States. The Congregational and the Christian churches (joined in 1931) have their origins in the English reformation and post-Revolutionary America, respectively; the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church (joined in 1934) were churches of German heritage with roots in the continental reformation. Current membership is roughly 1.2 million. UCC polity is both congregational (the rights of local churches are inalienable) and connectional (ministerial standing and discipline are handled regionally, by Associations). The concept of “covenant”—mutual accountability and respect among individuals in, and settings of, the church—binds together otherwise autonomous Associations, Conferences, and a biennial General Synod. The latter representative body, which coordinates the work and witness of the denomination, speaks “to, not for” the local churches.

Theologically, the UCC “looks to the word of God in the Scriptures,” and “claims as its own” historic creeds and confessions, while insisting that Christians in each generation must re-examine and re-interpret these authoritative sources¹¹. From its founding in what has been called “an ecumenical crucible,” the UCC has engaged in numerous bi- and multi-lateral conversations and partnerships. Its members are active nationally and globally in direct action for social and economic justice and peace.

¹⁰From The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order*, G-4.0302.

¹¹ *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ* (2001), 2.

Background and Rationale

This Covenant Agreement with the Moravian Church came from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations (GACER). The 218th General Assembly (2008) gave the following directions in implementing this ecumenical agreement:

“a. Direct[ed] staff in the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to work with Moravian colleagues to develop processes and procedures for the orderly exchange of ministers.

“b. Direct[ed] staff in the General Assembly Council to explore with Moravian colleagues opportunities for strengthening mission partnerships, joint evangelism efforts, and development of shared resources, and to encourage Presbyterian conferences and gatherings to extend invitations to Moravians for participation as appropriate.

“c. Direct[ed] staff in the Office of the General Assembly to explore with Moravian colleagues opportunities for appropriate invitations to share in the governance and communal life of each other’s churches.

“d. Direct[ed] the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to work with presbyteries in understanding this agreement and facilitating their partnership with Moravian synods.

“e. Direct[ed] the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations to give oversight to this agreement and report to the 220th General Assembly (2012) progress that has been made and any additional recommendations to support this agreement.”

The General Synods of the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church will meet in 2010 to vote on this proposal; the

agreement cannot be effective until after they have met and ratified it. Assuming approval at each step, a Process of Orderly Exchange (similar to that of the Formula of Agreement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ) will be jointly developed, detailing how the process will work.

Comment from the Office of the General Assembly

The Office of the General Assembly (OGA) noted:

“On Item 07-10, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly would like to inform the 218th General Assembly (2008) that the document, ‘An Invitation to the Table: A Proposal for a Moravian/Reformed Covenant Partnership,’ will need to be approved as ‘a received ecumenical statement’ by our General Assembly, the majority of our presbyteries, and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church.

“Because of our deep commitment to this move toward visible unity, it is our common understanding that if any of these bodies are not able to approve the document, the dialogue would be reconstituted to continue working toward the goal of covenant relationship.”

The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended this ecumenical statement to the General Assembly by a vote of 60/0/0. The 218th General Assembly approved it by a voice vote (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 14, 15, 531, 532, Item 07-10) For the full report go to <http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1795>

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