

OVERTURE to move the PCUSA from a four tiered to a three tiered mission/governance system by eliminating the middle governing body of synod by deleting Chapter 12 and G-3:4.

The Presbytery of New Hope overtures the 219th General Assembly of the PCUSA to move the PCUSA from a four tiered to a three tiered mission/governance system by eliminating the middle governing body of synod by December 31, 2012, in the following manner:

- (1) a) Directing the Stated Clerk to send an amendment to remove Chapter 12 from the *Book of Order: Form of Government* and all references to Synod found in the *Book of Order* to the presbyteries for their affirmation or negative votes.
b) Should the 219th General Assembly approve the New *Form of Government* with instructions that it be sent to the presbyteries, direct the Stated Clerk to also send an amendment deleting G-3.4 and all references to Synod in the *New Form of Government* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes.
- (2) If the presbyteries concur in removing synods from the Book of Order or proposed Form of Government, that the Stated Clerk and Moderator of the 219th General Assembly be authorized to appoint a Synod Transition Administrative Commission by July 2011 to ensure that all matters related to the elimination of synods be addressed. This includes review of presbytery minutes, Permanent Judicial Commissions, or other constitutional functions assigned to Synods. The commission would be authorized to resolve all fiduciary functions related to synods and any regional groups that are currently functioning as part of synods.
- (3) Recognize with gratitude the historically valuable role that synods have played.
- (4) Encourage presbyteries to cooperate and work among themselves on programs or support activities to further the PCUSA's mission and ministry.

RATIONALE

- 1) We recognize and appreciate the diversity of ways in which presbyteries and synods have evolved and function, resulting from a combination of tradition, circumstances such as geography, Book of Order mandates and other factors. Synods; however, are essentially upper middle management governing bodies no longer needed in the PCUSA..
- 2) The historical and demographic conditions under which synods were organized in 1983 have changed dramatically and no longer apply.
- 3) Regional Permanent Judicial Commissions, if genuinely deemed necessary, could replace Synod Judicial Commissions.
- 4) Funds development is critical to the future of the PCUSA. New funding streams are needed at all levels of the church, and synods are perceived to be hindrances in credibly promoting and telling the Presbyterian story for today's church.
- 5) The common wisdom of sessions, pastors, presbytery staff, and many retired or retiring synod executives is that synods have long since outlived their usefulness.

- 6) The cost of synod infrastructures is expensive and inefficient, especially when measured in relationship to actual mission funds disbursed or ministry delivered.
- 7) Synods of the PCUSA receive a percentage of undesignated funds contributed to the General Assembly, a practice that has repeatedly been scheduled for closure yet reinstated for over 20 years.
- 8) Some synods hold assets in money and property that can be as effectively and efficiently managed without synods.
- 9) Synods are not necessary players in partnerships between presbyteries, congregations, and other organizations.
- 10) Large synod per capita reserves, maintained by some synods through their standing rules, allow synods to remain solvent at the expense of presbyteries and congregations.

On October 17, 2009 at the 78th Stated Meeting at Peace Presbyterian Church, Winterville, NC the Presbytery voted unanimously to Overture the 219th General Assembly Meeting in Minneapolis, MN to submit this Overture to move the PCUSA from a four tiered to a three tiered mission/goverance system by eliminating the middle governing body of synod by deleting Chapter 12 and G-3:4.



Leigh Gillis, Moderator



Barbara Campbell Davis,
Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk