

## Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) 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.

### LIST OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

- 16.A. Child and Youth Protection Policy—On Amending G-3.0106
- 16.B. Parity in Committees—On Amending G-3.0109
- 16-C. Ordered Ministry Titles
  - 16-C.1.—On Amending F-3.0202
  - 16-C.2.—On Amending G-2.0102
  - 16-C.3.—On Amending G-2.0301
  - 16-C.4.—On Amending G-2.05 and G-2.0501
  - 16-C.5.—On Amending G-2.0701
  - 16-C.6.—On Amending G-3.0307
  - 16-C.7.—On Amending Titles in Directory for Worship and Rules of Discipline
  - 16-C.8.—On Amending W-4.4001a.
- 16-D. Relationship to the PC(USA) of a Person Who Has Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church
  - 16-D.1.—On Amending G-2.0509
  - 16-D.2.—On Amending D-10.0401
- 16-E. Certified Service Requirements—On Amending G-2.1101
- 16-F. The Ministry of Members—On Amending G-1.0304
- 16-G. Access to the Lord’s Table—On Amending W-2.401 1a. and b.
- 16-H. Revised Directory for Worship—On Replacing the Directory for Worship

**Transylvania’s General Assembly commissioners reviewed the amendments and make the following recommendations to Presbytery:**

## Report on Amendment 16-A

G-3.0106 Paragraph 4 seems to have caused much confusion as it is currently written. Some presbyters seemed to think that it was addressing a sexual misconduct policy to protect children and the age of the children was debatable.

Actually the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 was intended to be two policies. If you read it grammatically it says "All councils shall adopt and implement **a** sexual misconduct policy and **a** child protection policy". My bold print "**a**" is to emphasize there should be a policy to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct (no age limit) and a separate child protection policy. Because there has been some disagreement about age limits for the child protection part we are being asked to edit the end of G-3.0106 to read "...and a child and youth protection policy." The hope is that it will include ALL young people under the age considered to be an adult.

We all know children can be exploited, mistreated, and abused and it not be sexual. This separate policy would serve to provide protection for them. By adding the phrase "and youth" we would be protecting all those in our churches who are under the age of twenty-one.

In order to keep some policymakers from limiting the child protection to those under the age of thirteen, I recommend we approve this amendment.

Respectfully submitted by Candace P. Purdom, ruling elder, Perryville Presbyterian Church

## **REPORT ON AMENDMENT 16-B:**

### **Parity in Committees**

This amendment would change the current language in the *Book of Order* in regards to the composition of committees. As currently written, “Committees of higher than the session shall consist of both teaching elders and members of congregations, with at least one half being members of congregations.” The change would change, “with at least one half being members of congregations” to, “in numbers as nearly equal as possible.” The proposed sentence would be, “Committees of higher than the session shall consist of both teaching elders and members of congregations, in numbers as nearly equal as possible.”

The original resolution struck this entire sentence. While realizing it may create hardship in certain instances to have a committee that is at least half consisting of members of congregations (in a committee of three, at least two would have to be members of congregations), the importance of having parity and encouraging participation of all members is fundamental to the Presbyterian Church USA form of government. The language, “in numbers as nearly equal as possible” allows for more teaching elders on a committee in the example of an odd numbered committee without requiring the majority to be members of the congregation.

Recommendation: Pass

Submitted by Katie Busroe, Ruling Elder, Faith Presbyterian Church, Morehead

## Report on Amendments 16-C

### Ordered Ministry Titles

#### Introduction

From one overture to the Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry has come eight amendments to be presented to the Presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote. These are being presented to us individually for our consideration.

#### What's In A Name? You Decide

The rationale that was presented referred to the new Form of Government and the confusion that was generated by replacing the terms “minister of Word and Sacrament” with “teaching elder”, “elder” with “ruling elder” and “commissioned lay pastor” with “commissioned ruling elder”. Most churches do not use the new terminology. Many clergy, especially the younger clergy, feel disempowered by the term teaching elder. Also the term commissioned ruling elder seems to minimize the important pastoral roles these individuals serve and the term commissioned lay pastor seems much more appropriate for their responsibilities.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution was opposed to this amendment on the grounds that a title for ordered ministry differs from the functions the person performs locally. The ACC says a teaching elder may perform the functions of pastor, counselor, chaplain, or minister. They feel the terms are already interchangeable because in the new Form of Government teaching elders are called ministers of the Word and Sacrament two different times.

Because the proposed change would require changing terminology, that change must be consistent throughout the Book of Order. IF these amendments pass the majority of presbyteries, the term “teaching elder” will be editorially corrected to “minister of the Word and Sacrament” and the term “ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service” will be editorially corrected to “commissioned pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder)”.

Passage of the amendments 16-C.1 – 16-C.8 will be used to editorially correct the Directory for Worship, if Amendment 16-H is approved.

**My recommendation** is that you prayerfully determine which of these eight amendments you want to approve or disapprove. I do not believe that any of these amendments will change the heart, the duties, or responsibilities of ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also known as teaching<sup>[1]</sup> elders) or of commissioned ruling elders (also known as ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service or commissioned pastor). It is my sense that these are more personal depending on how you feel about how you are “titled”.

Respectfully submitted by Candace P. Purdom, ruling elder, Perryville Presbyterian Church

## **REPORT ON AMENDMENTS 16-D.1 and 16-D.2:**

### **Relationship to the PC(USA) of a Person Who Has Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church**

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry discussed 3 proposed resolutions addressing renunciation of jurisdiction. The Committee recommended an amended resolution and the General Assembly approved a different amended resolution.

This debate centered on allowing a teaching elder who has renounced jurisdiction in the midst of the disciplinary process a path for permission to work for the church versus a permanent ban from the church. There were strong, heartfelt, valid arguments on both sides on this issue. In the Committee, the discussion to achieve a balanced solution was heated and emotional. For those who have been a part of a church involved in a situation in which a teaching elder was accused of serious misconduct, the permanent ban currently in the *Book of Order* does not seem too harsh. This amendment is an attempt to balance the serious nature of the misconduct and the effect it had on members of the church, with the church's philosophy of reconciliation, grace and forgiveness. The proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* allows a teaching elder who renounced jurisdiction in the midst of a disciplinary process to become a paid or volunteer worker of the church as long as the person resubmits to the disciplinary process.

The second part of the amendment focuses on a time frame. The *Book of Order* currently outlines the time frame of disciplinary proceedings as charges must be filed no later than 5 years from the time the offense occurred nor later than one year from the date the investigating committee was formed, whichever occurs first. The exception is that in instances of sexual abuse, the 5 year time limit does not apply. The proposed amendment removes any time frame. In order for a person who renounced jurisdiction to be able to work for the church, the investigation will occur regardless of the date of allegation or the inception of the investigating committee. The thought process was that this removed the temptation of the person renouncing jurisdiction to not participate for 5 years then be able to return to church life with no repercussions.

Recommendation: Pass, I think this is a sound solution to allowing a person who renounced jurisdiction to participate in the life of the church without being able to take advantage of the time limits of the disciplinary process.

Submitted by Katie Busroe, Ruling Elder, Faith Presbyterian Church, Morehead

## **REPORT ON AMENDMENT 16-E:**

### **Certified Service Requirements**

This amendment would change the current language in the *Book of Order*, by replacing the words, “in a handbook provided by” with “of.” The reasoning being, many organizations do not provide handbooks, but instead use electronic formats. This change would update the *Book of Order* so that electronic certifications are acceptable and be more reflective of current practice. The essence of G-2.1101 is not changed.

Recommendation: Pass

Submitted by Katie Busroe, Ruling Elder, Faith Presbyterian Church, Morehead

## **REPORT ON AMENDMENT 16-F:**

### **The Ministry of Members**

This amendment would add, “caring for God’s creation” to the ministry of members. Although it is debatable whether the *Book of Order* needs to be amended to include being good stewards of God’s creation since it is included in the Presbyterian Church USA confessional documents, caring for creation and life, is a way of participating in Christ’s mission.

Recommendation: Pass

Submitted by Katie Busroe, Ruling Elder, Faith Presbyterian Church, Morehead

## **REPORT ON AMENDMENT 16-G**

### **Access to the Lord's Table**

The General Assembly Committee on Theological Issues and Institutions (14) was asked to consider an amendment to the current Directory for Worship that would broaden the statement about who may be welcomed to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to include those who come in faith and penitence, but are not yet baptized. The Committee chose to respond by affirming the intent of the amendment, but proposed an alternative that uses the exact wording from the proposed revised Directory for Worship (Amendment 16-H). *It can be found in the amendment booklet on p. 28: in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> paragraphs as a part of W-3.0409: Theology of the Lord's Supper, and on p. 30, W-4.0202: Welcoming to the Table.*

While still holding to the understanding that baptism normally precedes participation in the Lord's Supper, and encouraging baptismal preparation and baptism, this amendment acknowledges that there are circumstances where pastoral exceptions may be needed and allows for them to be made. The authors of the amendment also stated the belief that the practice in most PC(USA) congregations, is to invite all who profess faith in Jesus Christ, with no mention of having to have been baptized.

Why are we asked to consider this amendment if the language is taken directly from the proposed Revised Directory for Worship in Amendment 16-H? If Amendment 16-H is approved by a majority of the presbyteries, this amendment, 16-G is also approved. But, if 16-H is not approved by a majority of the presbyteries, but this amendment is approved, the current Directory for Worship will be amended.

Recommendation: Pass

Submitted by Lisa Eye, Teaching Elder Commissioner



## **REPORT ON AMENDMENT 16-H**

### **Revised Directory for Worship**

This amendment would replace the current Directory for Worship with the proposed Revised Directory. If approved, it will be the first major revision of the Directory for Worship in twenty-seven years. The process that has led to the proposed Directory for Worship began in 2004, with the action of the 216th General Assembly (2004). That Assembly directed the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, Office of Theology and Worship to make an “analysis of the Directory of Worship with the goal of evaluating its influence and effectiveness in guiding sessions, pastors, and higher governing bodies in planning and conducting worship that is authentically Reformed and culturally appropriate” and to bring recommendations to the next Assembly. In response, a study was conducted in 2005 and a recommendation based on its findings was made to the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2006) that the Directory for Worship would be more accessible and helpful if it were rewritten in a form that was shorter and better organized. However, at the same time, the process to revise the Form of Government was beginning. It was decided to hold the revision of the Directory for Worship until after the Form of Government revision was complete.

Once consideration of the new Form of Government was completed, work on the Directory for Worship resumed and a revised draft was produced that tried to reflect some of the same principles that guided the new Form of Government: offer more freedom and flexibility, with openness to a broader range of worship styles, while also remaining thoroughly Reformed.

The Office of Theology and Worship and the Office of the General Assembly organized a consultation with a diverse group of scholars, pastors, and mid council leaders in in September 2013 to provide feedback on the proposed revision and a second draft incorporating the group’s feedback was prepared. A final report was presented to the 221st General Assembly (2014). That General Assembly commended the proposed revision of to the denomination for study and comment, with comments due by July 1, 2015. A second consultation to consider and respond to the many comments into the proposed revision was held in October 2015. The resulting proposed revision of the Directory for Worship was brought to 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016) and was assigned to the Theological Issues and Institutions Committee (14) for consideration. The committee voted unanimously to recommend its adoption by the Assembly.

After debate (primarily about the issues in the previous amendment 16-G concerning access to the Lord’s Table), the Assembly approved the recommendation by voice vote.

The proposed Revised Directory for Worship is shorter by two chapters and its organization and language reflects an effort to make it more consistent with the language of current Form of Government.

**Recommendation:** Pass. While I personally appreciate the greater detail and direction of the current Directory for Worship, particularly in the areas of the Language of Worship, Responsibility and Accountability for Worship, and its emphasis on the shared responsibility for worship education, I believe this revision will still offer important guidance while also allowing for greater flexibility as our PC(USA) churches and worshipping communities become more diverse and seek to worship in ways that faithfully respond to both established tradition and emerging vision.

Submitted by, Lisa Eye, Teaching Elder Commissioner