

## Bylaws, Bills, and Overtures

January 28, 2012

**1. Recommendation:** The Task Force on Bylaws, Bills, and Overtures recommends disapproval of the overture proposed by the Session of the Middle Island Church.

Although adding 'within the Reformed tradition' is intended to be restrictive of leadership, it also becomes restrictive of membership. The committee is in full accord with the intention and recommends that the overture be referred back to the Middle Island Session for reworking and submission to the 221 General Assembly.

*The Session of Middle Island Presbyterian Church overtures the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:*

*Amend the text of the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity section F-1.0403 as follows: [Text to be inserted is shown as **bold**.]*

*The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction **within the Reformed tradition**. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.*

**Rationale :** *The new Form of Government (FOG) removed the words "within the Reformed tradition." This particular phrase is important for logical cohesiveness within the Book of Order, as well as being important to the continuity of the Church, and the integrity of the Christian faith as we affirmed it upon becoming members of this denomination.*

*We who are the current church may well understand that these words are implied. However, the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity are meant to surpass our own lifetimes and stand for future generations. We should not make assumptions about what future generations may, or may not, read into this passage. By reinserting the words "within the Reformed tradition", we clearly state what is currently only implied, thereby protecting the Reformed tradition as being the foundation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*

- 2. Recommendation:** The Task Force on Bylaws, Bills, and Overtures recommends that presbytery approve sending the following overture to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

*The Presbytery of Long Island overtures the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to:*

*Undertake a parenting initiative called the "Institute for Effective Parental Leadership," authorize the following four presbyteries as "project presbyteries:" the Presbytery of San Francisco, the Presbytery of Heartland, the Presbytery of New York City, the Presbytery of Chicago, and assign one of its entities to distribute the program resources and enlist consultant(s) to assist the project presbyteries to undertake the program. The appropriate entity will report progress on this Overture to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly.*

*Whereas the Presbytery of Long Island supports a parenting initiative called the "Institute for Effective Parental Leadership" (see attached) that will, among other things, teach effective parenting skills for parents with children six years old and younger; and*

*Whereas the PCUSA has as one of its goals the building and maintaining of healthy families by focusing on raising healthy children to adulthood as paramount to sustaining society; and*

*Whereas, unfortunately, poverty, racism, abuse, and neglect often accompany a child as he or she grows in adulthood, and these social pathologies can create complex physical, emotional, and intellectual challenges that come directly from childhood traumas; and*

*Whereas in the 1995 General Assembly particularly noted the factors especially implicated Young African American males as noted: "Young African American males are dying disproportionately from homicide. They are over represented in the prison population and school dropouts, but under-represented in the college population. The plight of African American males has declined to the point where they are considered an "at risk" population." And;*

*Whereas there exist overwhelming data supporting the notion that an interlocking sets of socioeconomic factors account for the precarious plight of young African American males and among these data more than 65% of African American children are born into settings headed by a single parent (usually the mother). Such interlocking factors as racism, poverty, family disintegration, economic shifts, and community disorganization are contributing factors that continue to play critical roles in the vulnerability of African American males; and*

*Whereas the 207<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1995) approved a resolution stating in effect that the PCUSA had historic interest and commitment to educating this nation's children; and*

*Whereas the 207<sup>th</sup> General Assembly reaffirmed the church's position on supporting presbyteries and synods to share resources and models for congregational dialogue; and,*

*Whereas the 209<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1997) approved a perspective on this issue entitled The Nature and Task of Christian Education from an African American Presbyterian Perspective by Gayraud S. Wilmore, it is appropriate that renewed efforts be put forward within the context of a new paradigm. The Church needs to help save and build the future of African American youth by doing ministry differently, namely, by working directly with the parents of young*

*children. The parent's role is the single most critical contribution to a child's development. Nothing in society can replace the importance of the role of a parent. The church must focus on educating, training, equipping, and assisting parents to be more effective in discharging their responsibilities; and*

*Whereas as noted in a New York Times article (January 8, 2012) entitled A Poverty Solution That Starts with a Hug by Nicholas D. Kristof, "This new research addresses an uncomfortable truth: Poverty is difficult to overcome partly because of self-destructive behaviors. Children from poor homes often shine, but others may skip school, abuse narcotics, break the law, and have trouble settling down in a marriage and a job. Then their children may replicate this pattern."*

*As Frederick Douglas noted, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."*

**3. Concerning requests that Presbytery concur with other overtures:**

**Recommendation:** The Task Force on Bylaws, Bills, and Overtures recommends that Presbytery not concur with overtures from other presbyteries this year. (1) The presbytery does not ordinarily act to concur with overtures from other presbyteries. (2) Neither request for concurrence presented to the committee add any new information to the discussion of the issues by the commissioners to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

This recommendation is the committee's response to two requests to concur:

- a. *The Session of Old South Haven Presbyterian Church has studied the Overture from the Presbytery of Boston to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 (in this packet) and has voted to strongly recommend that the Boston Overture be brought before the Presbytery of Long Island with a motion to concur with it.*
- b. *The Session of Old South Haven Presbyterian Church has studied the Overture from the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (in this packet) to respond faithfully to concerns regarding the for-profit health care industry, and the resultant denial of health care to millions of people.. The overture instructs Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to report to the General Assembly Mission Council on the corporate Practices of Cigna, Aetna, Humana, WellPoint, United Health Care health insurance companies – in particular as such practices compare with and relate to previous General Assembly actions relative to health care in view of the urgency of the ongoing health care crisis, and has voted to strongly recommend that the Mid Kentucky overture be brought before the Presbytery of Long Island with a motion to concur as has Albany Presbytery.*

**For presentation January 28, for vote April 17.**

1. Because the new "Book of Order" leaves the organization of the Committee on Representation up to individual presbyteries, the Committee on Bylaws, Bills, and Overtures" moves that:

The Bylaws of the Presbytery of Long Island be amended under

CHAPTER IV: ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESBYTERY

C. Support and Facilitation Network

3. The Committee on Representation as follows:

**Membership:** The Committee on Representation shall consist of ~~eight~~ **three** persons, nominated by the Presbytery Nominating Committee, and elected by the Presbytery in three classes of three years each. ~~and shall be constituted in accordance with the Form of Government.~~ The committee shall select its own chair annually.

**Responsibilities:** This committee shall fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the Form of Government.

2. Add the following to the Bylaws of the Presbytery of Long Island under

CHAPTER IV: ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESBYTERY

A. Shepherding Council

5. Council Structure:

**e: New Church and Fellowship Development Committee**

**Membership:** The New Church and Fellowship Development Committee shall consist of three persons, nominated by the Shepherding Council Nominating Team, and elected by the Shepherding Council in three classes of three years each. Persons may serve for consecutive terms provided that no term of service exceeds six years. The committee shall select its own chair annually.

**Responsibilities:** The New Church and Fellowship Development Committee will develop intentional strategies for supporting communities of faith in different contexts; listen to the needs of people and their circumstances, support designs for ministry that will be an effective response to those needs; and identify and overcome the barriers within our Presbytery to ministry in different cultures.

**f: The Stewardship Development Team:**

**Membership:** The Stewardship Development Team shall consist of three persons, nominated by the Shepherding Council in three classes of three years each. Persons may serve for consecutive terms provided that no term of service exceeds six years. The committee shall elect its own chair annually.

**Responsibilities:** The Stewardship team will Manage The Presbytery Fund for Education & Mission; will create opportunities and raise awareness for estate sources of income as well as financial gifts of gratitude from among Presbyterians and others among the Presbytery of Long Island and will serve as a resource for mission interpretation and stewardship within the Presbytery of Long Island.

**g: The Presbytery Communications Team:**

**Membership:** The Presbytery Communications Team shall consist of three persons, nominated by the Shepherding Council in three classes of three years each. Persons may serve for consecutive terms provided that no term of service exceeds six years. The committee shall elect its own chair annually.

**Responsibilities:** The Communication Teams will manage the Presbytery website for the purpose of keeping it on the growing edge of usefulness for the constituents of the Presbytery. (Robust, interactive, multidimensional, and evolving.); will create and distribute resources for mission interpretation & stewardship among the members of the Presbytery of Long Island and will capitalize on the growing utility of social networking as pragmatic tools for advancing the mission and goals of the Presbytery.