

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH
RELATIONS



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
216TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2004)

[The full text of the items referred to this committee may be found in the Reports to the General Assembly under tab 06.]

Moderator: Mary Gene Boteler
Vice Moderator: Rebecca Drover

There are recommendations contained in this report that will be moved as part of a consent agenda. Such items are marked with an asterisk (“*”) and are so indicated in the Table of Contents below.

There are recommendations contained in this report that have financial implications and are indicated with a “\$” sign next to the item. The details of the financial implication are provided with the item in the context of the report, and are so indicated in the Table of Contents below.

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The Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommends that the 216th General Assembly (2004) approve the following recommendations:

Interfaith Relations

Item 06-01. Recommendation Regarding Expansion of Work Regarding 1999 Referral 25.246: To Equip Presbyterians to Better Articulate Their Faith in Inter-religious Contexts.

That recommendations be approved with the following amendment:

Amend Recommendation 1. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

June 29, 2004, 4:56 PM

“1. Expansion of work responding to the 1999 referral to better equip the church for witness in pluralistic society, to be designed and carried out by a cross-divisional staff team coordinated by the Interfaith Relations Office. This team will also involve at least the Office of Theology and Worship and the Committee on Theological Education in the Congregational Ministries Division, the Office on International Evangelism in the Worldwide Ministries Division, and the Office of Evangelism and Church Development in the National Ministries Division. [To invite and include specialized ministers, chaplains, and others who work frequently in interfaith contexts to be included as part of the cross-divisional staff team.]”

Vote: 51/0/0

\$Item 06-02. On Forming a Task Force to Draft a Denominational Policy Consistent with the Religious Pluralism Reality in the USA—From the Presbytery of Eastern Oklahoma. +GAC

That the recommendation be disapproved and, recognizing the religious pluralism that exists in the U.S.A. and the world that informs our religious life, we instruct:

- 1. The Office of Interfaith Relations of the General Assembly Committee to communicate the strong policy statement opposed to religious bigotry and stereotyping as found in General Assembly *Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 79 and 663, and as printed below; and**
- 2. The Office of Interfaith Relations, together with other appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council, to prepare a guide for congregations that makes known and available the resources already available in regard to religious pluralism and Christian discipleship; and**
- 3. The Office of the General Assembly and the Office of Interfaith Relations of the World Ministries Division to bring the 217th General Assembly a recommendation on what further study or action might be needed to better equip the church to live in a religiously plural world.**

“Policy Statement from 1999

“1. call upon congregations and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to work prayerfully and carefully to eliminate the language, imagery, and symbols in their preaching and teaching ministries that perpetuate stereotypes through (a) viewing all persons of a particular religion as having certain characteristics in common without giving attention to differences within a religious community or tradition; (b) deriving characterizations of a religion from external sources rather than from the sources within the particular tradition involved; and, (c) comparing the best of Christian practices with the worst behavior or beliefs of the other community;

“2. call upon individual Presbyterians to reflect carefully and prayerfully on their use of language, symbols, and images in relation to other religions and to challenge stereotypes through appropriate means;

“3. call upon congregations and governing bodies to create opportunities for dialogues that provide opportunities to share ideas with adherents of other religions and to get to know them as persons of faith;

“4. call upon congregations and governing bodies to join in interfaith ministries of justice with individuals or congregations, or other appropriate groups;

“5. call upon individual Presbyterians to view media presentations of other religions critically and to challenge stereotypes when they are presented;

“6. direct the General Assembly Council, Worldwide Ministries Division, to make available resources that guide Presbyterians in overcoming problems that have developed through the history of Christian relationships with peoples of other faith communities and;

“7. direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to congregations and governing bodies for study and action.” (Minutes, 1999, Part I, p. 663)

Vote: 49/0/0

[Original Financial Implications: 2004: \$9,460; 2005: \$36,060; 2006: \$15,750 (Per Capita-OGA)]

[Committee Action: 2004: \$0; 2005: \$0; 2006: \$0]

Item 06-09. On Re-Examining the Relationship Between Christians and Jews and the Implications for our Evangelism and New Church Development--From the Presbytery of Hudson River. +ACREC +GAC

That the Recommendation 1. be approved as amended: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“1. Direct the Office of Theology and Worship, the Office of Interfaith Relations, and the Office of Evangelism to ‘reexamine [and strengthen] the relationship between Christians and Jews and the implications of this relationship for our evangelism and new church development in continuing response to the 211th General Assembly (1999) mandate to guide the church in “bearing witness to Jesus Christ in a pluralistic age.” ’ ”

Vote: 43/0/3

That the Recommendation 2. be disapproved.

Vote: 31/15/0

Ecumenical Relations

Item 06-03. Invite Churches to Send Ecumenical Advisory Delegates to the 217th General Assembly (2006).

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 48/1/0

Item 06-04. Congregations and MGBs Study and Response to WCC Decade to Overcome Violence.

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 47/0/1

Item 06-05. Support for Ecumenical Formation.

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 39/4/4

Item 06-06. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Understanding of 16th and 17th Century Condemnations of Other Churches in The Book of Confessions. *ACC

That the recommendations be approved with the following amendments:

1. Amend the second paragraph (policy statement) of Recommendation 1. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“Specific statements in 16th and 17th century confessions and catechisms in *The Book of Confessions* contain condemnations or derogatory characterizations of the [Roman] Catholic Church: Chapters XVIII and XXII of the Scots Confession; Questions and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism; and Chapters II, III, XVII, and XX, of the Second Helvetic Confession. (Chapters XXII, XXV, and XXIX of the Westminster Confession of Faith have been amended to remove anachronous and offensive language. Chapter XXVIII of the French Confession does not have constitutional standing.) While these statements emerged from substantial doctrinal disputes, they reflect 16th and 17th century polemics. Their condemnations and characterizations of the Catholic Church are not the position of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and are not applicable to current relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Catholic Church.”

2. Amend Recommendation 2. as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through and with brackets; text to be added or inserted is shown with an underline and with brackets.]

“2. Amend the Preface to *The Book of Confessions* by inserting the policy statement [above] between [paragraph 4 and] paragraph 5 [~~and the concluding quotation from the *Book of Order*.~~”

3. Add a new recommendation, “6.” to read as follows:

“[Direct the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations to consider proposing an additional paragraph in *The Book of Confessions*’ Preface concerning condemnatory language in *The Book of Confessions* towards other world religions similar to the one regarding the relationship between the PCUSA and the Catholic Church.]”

Vote: 50/1/0

Item 06-07. Review of National Council of Churches in Christ (U.S.A.).

That recommendations 1—10 be approved.

Vote: 44/3/2

*Item 06-10. Elect Delegates and Alternates to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (2006).

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 41/0/1

Other

*Item 06-08. Amend Standing Rule E.8.b. Regarding the Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 44/0/1

*Item 06-11. Confirm Election of Delegate and Alternate to the 24th Council of WARC.

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 42/0/3

Commissioners' Resolutions

Item 06-12. Commissioners' Resolution: Recommendation #2. On Calling on the Stated Clerk to Justify His Endorsement of the World Council of Churches and Reviewing PC(USA) Relationship with the World Council of Churches.

That the recommendation be disapproved.

Vote: 33/08/08

Item 06-13. Commissioners' Resolution. On Cooperative Ecumenical Strategy.

That the recommendation be approved.

Vote: 44/0/4

Committee Final Action and Report to Plenary

[The items listed below were acted upon and approved by the assembly committee. No further action is needed, and is here for information only.]

Item 06-A. Minutes, Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

That the minutes are approved.

Vote: 44/0/1