

**ITEM C.102  
ACTION ITEM**

<i>FOR GAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY</i>					
	<b>A. Evangelism</b>		<b>D. Vocation</b>		<b>G. PC(USA), A Corporation</b>
	<b>B. Justice</b>		<b>E. Stewardship</b>		<b>H. Executive Committee</b>
<b>×</b>	<b>C. Discipleship</b>		<b>F. Audit</b>		<b>I. Personnel Committee</b>
	<b>P. Plenary</b>				

**Subject:** Report to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly – “Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement”

**Recommendation:** That, upon recommendation of its Procedures Subcommittee, the GAC Executive Committee requests the Discipleship Committee to review the above report to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, with a view of preparing a comment to the General Assembly on behalf of the GAC.

**Background:** The Executive Committee approved the Procedures Subcommittee recommendation during its conference call meeting of April 2, 2008. The Procedures Subcommittee recognizes that the Agreement has been developed over a lengthy period of time, and desires a deeper review of the full document by the appropriate GAC committee.

Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement

That the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations recommends to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) to:

1. Receive the report of the Episcopal/Presbyterian bilateral dialogue
2. Receive the Episcopal/Presbyterian Agreement as an ecumenical statement (G-15.0302b) and send it to the presbyteries for their ratification.

The General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations further recommends the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly give the following directions in implementing this ecumenical agreement:

3. Authorize 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.
4. Direct 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.
5. Direct the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations give oversight to this agreement and report to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) progress that has been made and any additional recommendations to support this agreement.

*Rationale*

The 211 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. 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-0130103s (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-150200 Relations with Other Denominations. This agreement does not require amendments to the Book of Order.**

**PRESBYTERIAN/EPISCOPAL BI-LATERAL DIALOGUE**

**I. Background**

It has been nearly fifty years since the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, proposed in a sermon at Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco, the establishment of a dialogue between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, in the hope that this would result in a united church that would be "truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical". This would later be expanded to include the United Methodist Church and, subsequently, seven other denominations, including three historically black Methodist denominations. This would give rise to the Consultation on Church Union, which would subsequently be succeeded in this vision in 2001 by Churches Uniting in Christ, with ten denominations from the Reformed, Anglican, Methodist and Moravian traditions.

Born alike in the ferment of the Reformation Era of pre-Stuart Britain, Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism grew up as cousins, if not siblings, in England, Scotland and later in Ireland and Wales, and the colonists brought their preferences to the New World. While the episcopal polity of the Church of England suffered there from years of neglect by the home country – never did an English bishop visit the colonies in the nearly 200 years from the Jamestown settlement until the American Revolution, nor were the colonies Permitted to have a bishop of their own – the Church of England was actually established as the state church in several colonies.

While some of the newly independent Americans were Presbyterian by conviction, others, though Episcopalian by preference, came to favor Presbyterian polity as a matter of necessity. In 1782 William White of Philadelphia wrote a tract entitled *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered* in which he advocated a Presbyterian polity for the new denomination which would take the place of the previous state Church of England, it being unlikely in his view that the newly independent Americans would be able to procure bishops ordained in the “historic succession” from their former English mentors. Many of White’s ideas in this treatise became part of the new Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, including the representation of lay people at every level of its governance, White was subsequently elected as Bishop of Pennsylvania, consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and recognized as the first Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church at its organizing convention in 1789. The 1784 consecration of Samuel Seabury to be Bishop of Connecticut by non-juring Scottish bishops had rendered moot the question of where the American church would find bishops in the “historic episcopate”. Having had common roots in Britain, as well as in the colonies, and being generally of similar socio-economic and educational levels, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, as those formerly loyal to the Church of England were now called, have over the years enjoyed a great degree of inter-personal relationship, with varying degrees of mutual respect and understanding. Over the years there has never been a time when some in both denominations have not looked toward the establishment of greater unity between them.

The definitive statement of the basis for church union in the Episcopal Church, indeed in Anglicanism as a whole, is the so-called Chicago Quadrilateral of 1886 (better known since its adoption by the world-wide Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1888 as the Lambeth Quadrilateral. Originally an invitation by the American Episcopal Bishops to discussions of union with various other church bodies, The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. alone responded. There were no permanent results of these discussions and as Gibson Winter observed long before the current round of bi-lateral discussions, “The fact, however, that these two churches had once enjoyed a brief courtship is probably one of the main lessons for the second courtship forty years later.” [*Presbyterian-Episcopal Negotiations the U.S.A (1937-1946)*] Several courtships later, the members of the Presbyterian/Episcopal Bi-Lateral Dialogue are in agreement, as well as with the conviction that this dialogue must not fade into what Gibson called “polite exchanges of resolutions of friendship”. The potential benefits are too great, the consequences of inaction too dire; the need for wholeness and Godly vision too urgent!

## **II. THE DIALOGUE**

The next to last round of Presbyterian/Episcopal dialogue may be said to have begun within the wider purview of the Consultation on Church Union’s development of the document *Churches in Covenant Communion: The Church of Christ Uniting* which ultimately produced in 1985 *The COCU Consensus –In Quest of a Church Uniting*, a Second Draft of which was approved by the COCU Plenary meeting in St. Louis in 1988. This draft was ultimately deemed inadequate by both the Presbyterian Church USA and the Episcopal Church in the USA because of disagreements over the conclusions of Section VII “MINISTRY”. This lack of resolution over its primary document foreshadowed the institutional end of COCU and its transformation in January, 2001, into Churches Uniting in Christ, a new relationship between nine member churches and one Partner in Mission and Ministry (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) with the Roman Catholic Church as an observer body.

With authorization from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (TEC), both partners in CUIC, the two denominations entered once again into a formal bi-lateral dialogue. At their initial meeting, held concurrently with the inauguration of CUIC in January, 2001, it was decided that the dialogue's conversations would take place within the larger context of CUIC's Ministry Task Force, which was to focus its work on revisiting the issues of Chapter VII of *The COCU Consensus*, eventually developing a report on *Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation of Ministry (MRMRM)*.

Members of the Dialogue have been:

For PCUSA: Elder Freda Gardner (former Moderator of the General Assembly of PCUSA), Co-Convener, Dr. Dale Gruder (resigned for work reasons), Elder Lee Moon, Elder Janice Sperry (resigned for personal reasons), the Rev. Dr. George Telford, and the Rev. Dr. Philip Wickeri (who holds ministerial credentials in both the Hudson Valley Presbytery and the Episcopal Diocese of California, having been ordained by Bishop K.H. Ting of China), with staff members, the Rev. Robina Winbush, Ecumenical Officer, and the Rev. Carlos Malave, Associate Ecumenical Officer. The Rev. Dr. Lewis Mudge and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Small, Office of Theology, have consulted.

For TEC: James Foster, Esq. (resigned for personal reasons), the Rev. Dan Krutz, the Rev. Dirk Reinken, the Rev. Sandra Richardson (resigned for work reasons), the Rt. Rev. Douglas Theuner, Co-Convener, Dr. Fredrica Thompsett-Harris, with staff members, the Rt. Rev. Christopher C. Epting, Ecumenical Officer and Dr. Thomas Ferguson, Associate Ecumenical Officer. The Rev. Dr. Robert Wright has consulted.

The Dialogue has met twice annually since its first meeting in January, 2001. It has met in various venues of each denomination including seminaries (**Fuller, Louisville**) and middle judicatory offices, with diocesan bishops, General Presbyters and parochial clergy, including twice at Indian Hill Presbyterian-Episcopal Church in Cincinnati and once at St. Matthew's Episcopal/Wilton Presbyterian Church in Wilton, Connecticut. It has met with prominent theologians (e.g. the Rev. Drs. Mudge, Small and Wright) of each tradition, as well as in conjunction with the Ministry Task Force of CUIC (of which the Presbyterian Co-Convener is a member). During this time the Episcopal Co-Convener served two two-year terms as an ecumenical member of the General Assembly Council of PCUSA and as an Ecumenical Advisor to PCUSA's Richmond General Assembly. A member of the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Relations of TEC during much of his tenure as Co-Convener, he also has met several times with the CUIC Coordinating Council of CUIC in his capacity as a member of CUIC's Local and Regional Task Force and he will serve as proxy for the Presiding Bishop of TEC at the meeting of Heads of Communion at CUIC's forthcoming Plenary Session I St. Louis. The Rev. Drs. Phillip Wickeri and George Telford have served as members of the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the PCUSA.

The Dialogue has extensively examined relevant documents and deliberations from the past and present both in the United States and abroad, including the Formula of Agreement between the PCUSA and the ELCA, UCC and RCA denominations, the Call to Common Mission document between TEC and the ELCA, and the Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation document of CUIC. At every meeting of the Dialogue, members have worshipped together using rites approved by either denomination or according to the authorized CUIC liturgy, with ordained ministers of each denomination officiating.

Among the most significant achievements of the Dialogue was the co-sponsorship with CUIC of a *CONSULTATION ON EPISCOPE* held in St. Louis in October, 2006. Although the Dialogue identified the need for such a serious theological consultation and requested the sponsorship of CUIC, the latter organization did "the heavy lifting" in terms of organizing and producing the Consultation. In addition to opening and closing remarks by representatives of the Disciples of Christ and the Methodist tradition, there were five scholarly papers presented; one by an Episcopalian, two from the Reformed Tradition (PCUSA and UCC) and one each by a member of the ELCA and the Christian Methodist Episcopal

Church. These papers, together with three bible studies By the Rev. John Ford (RC) and other related presentations have been published in *Call to Unity- Resourcing the Church for Ecumenical Ministry*, generously published by the Council on Christianity Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

### **III. CONCLUSION**

At its initial meeting in Memphis in January, 2001 members of the dialogue present all agreed that both churches were within the “apostolic succession”. Although it might appear that it should have been “easy sledding” from there, the dialogue was still unable to agree on a basis for full mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministry. Disagreements centered on the concepts of “personal” and “corporate” *episcopate*. Episcopalians believe that a necessary mark of the church is a continuous passage of *episcopate* through the laying-on-of-hands by bishops in direct, individual succession from apostolic times. Presbyterians, citing a “pre-Ignatian” model, believe that *episcopate* has been passed on corporately from apostolic times through the laying-on-of-hands within the presbyterate. Of concern to Presbyterians was the feeling that CUIC MRMRM proposal failed to recognize the significance of the presbyterate, which Episcopalians felt that they had done in the United States through the requirement of lay involvement and approval at virtually every level of ecclesiastical governance, albeit their lay people are not ordained as elders.

Mutual recognition and reconciliation seems to rest upon mutual acceptance of the concepts of “personal” and “corporate” *episcopate*. Until this matter is mutually resolved it will be difficult to move into full altar and pulpit fellowship, the place where mutual ministry between the denominations seems most likely to have an effect at the parish level; the basic level of ministry in both denominations. Because of that the Dialogue has met with collaborating congregations of each denomination and seeks to encourage church leaders to initiate and nourish additional relationships of that type; particularly in planting new congregations. Although full mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministry still eludes us, we believe we have found a way in which to encourage preliminary altar and pulpit fellowship and, hence, to allow our congregations of both denominations to commonly pursue the mission and ministry of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; a reality which we believe already exists in the Mind of God.

To that end, the Presbyterian/Episcopal Dialogue requests our respective authorizing bodies to reconstitute the Dialogue for future deliberations and that both of our Heads of Communion commit themselves publically to this effort and, if it seems good to them, that they arrange a public celebration of our progress to date and our hope for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Elder Freda Gardner  
Co-Convener , PCUSA

The Rt. Rev. Douglas E. Theuner,  
Co-Convener, TEC

#### **Agreement Between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA)**

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 (*episcopo*) 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, 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 (USA) to receive Holy Communion in their churches and the Presbyterian Church (USA) 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
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.