

**Discussion Group Conversations  
GAC/MGB  
September 19, 2007**

**GROUP TOPIC: 2 and 3 Putting the Connect back into our Connectional Church and The Leadership Challenges and Opportunities of our Polity**

- Need to adapt to changing circumstances polity: balance between accountability and freedom
  - We are shifting our polity at a time of presbytery weakness
  - too much freedom leads to confusion
  - need clear core values where the institutions are holding people accountable
  - identify boundaries
  - a bishop would be comforting (smile)
  - connectionalism is hard work
  - we are reluctant to define boundaries
  - where are the polity folk at this discussion?
  - we've been asking our polity to do what our polity never intended to do
  - missional –polarity -- connectional – faithful and fruitful
  - who's doing the leading? Or does it matter?
  - are we moving from corporational to congregational? What happens to polity?
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**GROUP TOPIC: 4 Missional Ecclesiology and Praxis (Moving from Membership to Missional Focus)**

***What about the topic is intriguing?***

- membership needs to be addressed, how do we bring our concept of “member” to a missional framework?
- experience with congregations that focus their energy on “doing” the Gospel in the community they live in
- experience with presbytery that is re-identifying its mission core
- experience with a synod that self-identified as missional
- congregations have shifted

***Why is this one of the key important issues to address?***

- it's the getting back to who we are
- missional reminds us that faith is about who we are, as agents of God in the world.
- “being” the church in the world “sent” and “doing” is more powerful and compelling than sending.

***In order to to achieve 2010 goals, what needs to happen to GAC***

- Squish it down – presbyteries take responsibility in empowering congregations in transformation, missional skills to achieve more ...partnerships  
GAC and staff could visit or get a feel for our churches; discover more about the work in local congregations
- the missional mandate is an opportunity for local congregations to redirect their assets (including spiritual, tangible, historical, physical, financial, etc) OUTWARD toward their communities. In Newark Presbytery, we are not focusing on 8,000 presbytery “members” but on the almost 800,000 people that live within our bounds. We are empowering our pastors and congregations to increase their wellness and effectiveness. “Missional” in our presbytery is expressed as our value-add deliverables through the churches to the communities not the church

itself. We move missionally, from the inside out. Newark Presbytery is increasing our congregations "capacity to deliver good news to their communities.

### ***Headline – Denomination is Dead – Long Live the Mission Society***

***One important step to move us forward toward the vision we envision –***

- **Not assess per capita based on membership**
- **redefine membership**
- **course of study to deepen membership responsibilities not just prioritize**
- **The whole church focuses on shaping Christian identity at all levels**

***Text Message – Christ is Alive***

***Who is best suited to provide leadership to effect change? Everyone -- all who are called.***

### ***Missional Church conversation 4.2***

Sharing ideas about why we think this conversation is important:

- If we don't engage this conversation with young adults, we will soon be 60 and 70 year olds sitting on the sideline. What is the purpose of being followers of Jesus Christ in the world.
- The experience of S. Louisiana mission trips is, in some senses, the process of watching young people uncover and recover the church they'd like to be in.
- The missional direction – we may be moving us away from "delivering" religious goods and services – also creates a gap with a culture that is accustomed to being consumerist and having everything "packaged" for them.
- Another challenge is how do we stand against the "disinformation" campaign takes over. What is it we want to communicate, which needs to be determined before we think about how to communicate.
- Moltmann said in 1972 is that what the western church must learn is not that the church has a mission, but that the mission of Christ creates its own church. "The church exists for Mission as fire exists for burning." Or as Guder puts it – what is Christ doing in our community? Can the PCUSA get on board with what God is already doing with this missional energy?
- Our challenge is that we have thought of mission as a program – a thing we do. We're uncomfortable not knowing what Christ is doing – a similar problem to the Biblical people of God as well. How do we stand against the idea that this can be delegated to a "mission committee?" This is the work of the whole church.
- The church needs to engage with what Christ "longs for." Folks memories of churches from the fifties is, in fact, what many of our members long for, and unfortunately that appears to be antithetical to our experience of a "non-establishment" church today.
- This wilderness time that we are in is a good thing and we need to embrace it. The folks who "get this" tend to be people who are "refugees" from the dominant culture.
- The Japanese church is an interesting case study. They get the experience of wilderness from the relocation camps. They hear the stories of the New Testament in a way that is visceral, and difficult for those who have never been outside the dominant culture. "In a broken and fearful world, the spirit gives us courage."
- We're all reading different things right now, and we need to develop a common bibliography and theological vocabulary. However, there is also a richness to that diversity of language and reading, making us more multi-dimensional.
- So what holds us together? What is "the reformed tradition" at this point? If we can't figure that out in the midst of our growing diversity, how will we identify that? Right, and

- the problem with that is folks in our pews are totally confused by that right now. Is it enough to just be “disciples of Christ.”
- Are we entering a day where “different missional delivery systems” will abound and we will need to find a way to embrace that? How do we turn up the heat on the question “how are we going to be in the world” as opposed to “what do we believe.”
  - Part of the problem is that people who are strong “j’s” have a need for definition, while P’s tend to be more comfortable with some fogginess. (In Myers Briggs typodgy, “j’s” want things settled, “p’s” want them left open ended.) “What is it Christ is longing for and how do we join in that longing” And more importantly, how to we “prompt that longing in our people.”

**Next Question: If in 2010 the PC(USA) is truly missional, connectional, fruitful, faithful, what is it the GAC and MGB’s are doing to get there.**

- Who gets to pick what we’re aiming for? Missional, connectional, fruitful. Maybe what we’re trying to do is figure out how to be where people are and how to connect with people? Could have had “prayerful” or other words – this actually isn’t meant to critique the words – it’s to wonder how we define the terms. (actually – there’s general agreement that we do like these words)
- Maybe our task is to “recover our baptismal calling of every believer” – ministry isn’t what someone does for us, it’s what we all as people of God are called to do. Can we recover the role of the teaching elder in our church? The work of the minister is to equip the saints – not to “do ministry” for them. How do we make those two changes? We need to recover that the primary identity of the clergy person is to help others discover who they are called to be in Christ.
  - This can be done for people of every age in our pews, it will change who comes in, the dollars in the collection plates, etc.
  - Can we delink “pay” and ministry. (clergy lay pastors, tentmakers, etc.) we need to watch the danger of dumbing down our professional class of pastors – and raise the bar for people in the pews.
- Another concern: we need to work on how to change the mental model of what a denomination is. We’re having this conversation with many folks who still think hierarchically (bishop envy) – the era that needed heroes (Henry Ford, Bill Gates), and we’re in an era of google, where no one even knows who created this culture or changing organization. What would that look like in the church? Linda and her new staff appear not to have ego in this – it’s about being a servant, not about being a Lee Iaccoca.
- It’s also true that many of these “emergent” churches are in fact well organized, though often in unseen way. We don’t want to throw out our decision-making processes that can help us to determine how to be involved in mission. Our polity can be our best aid in this. Pushing the Google metaphor, there is actually an “entrance exam” before you can apply for a job – creating a baseline of expectation before you can join the time. Have we set the bar too low? Are we actually setting the bar too low by not setting a standard for elders, etc?
- It comes back to whether we see church as missional, or as a club. We have to be clear at the point of entrance. We’re following Jesus!!! That’s what this is about. Are we willing to allow Jesus – and participation in this body of believers to change our lives?

**Headline: Are you willing to let Christ change your life?**

Put another way, “What is it Christ is longing for, and are you willing to join Christ in that longing.”

Known, washed, fed, sent.

A people called: taken, blessed, broken, shared.

Inquirer, disciple, apostle (noting “merit badge” problems)

A People Called: Christ Spoken, Seen and Heard.

Raising the bar on what it means to be a follower of Jesus  
No more Mission by Proxy

**The step that will move us toward the vision:**

Claiming our Baptismal calling and identity  
Claiming what it means to be “the teaching elder”  
Reclaiming the eucharist

**“We need a ‘comma’ campaign** – Could we put some folks to work on this in the denomination? Something that speaks to the broader culture, but has theological currency and challenge within the church.

**The great challenge is to insist that we must transform the culture of the church – and reclaim meaningful theological language, to match any slogan we come up with. You can’t use missional language but then refuse to act missionally.**

**What’s text message?**

Raising the bar on what it means to be Presbyterian  
Equipping the saints

We need to “brand” our denomination – something that hooks people into the message we are seeking to address. Can we put some time and energy into this.

“Let’s not throw the theological baby out with the communication bathwater”

This is what the recommendations of the new form of Government proposal are all about. It’s now live on the web as of today!

***Who is best-suited to provide the leadership to carry out the task?***

The leadership for missional movement will come from all over – wherever God’s Holy Spirit lifts up leaders

Our challenge is that we still have the hierarchical nature of the denomination – what we really need is “onward Christian Termites”

Having conversations like this one are extremely helpful in our ability to name the questions and define our tasks.

(Could we have this meeting and the fall polity conference in different seasons to help us have more opportunities for contact, and have more time for open – but focused – dialog like this one).

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**GROUP TOPIC: 5 Mission Funding**

***Intriguing Thoughts***

- It’s a major issue
- Awareness of the fact that Presbyterians can be very generous with the right stimulation
- Funding for the mission of the church is central to everything for the future and that opportunities for increasing funding are there.
- How are shifts made without messing up what we already have

- it's a complex issue
- GAC, presbyteries and congregations have a stewardship problem – spiritual problem
- Question left out synods in discussion issues
- Need to keep stewardship and discipleship integral in the dialogue
- What we've learned from PDA gifts and not linking communications and technologies makes it intriguing
- frustration at cutting of stewardship office; congregations are having a spiritual crisis and this sends the wrong message
- before 1900, the church was the premier fundraiser in society and now the secular portion has taken over with much success
- follow the money is where you really care; a church that doesn't put its money into mission isn't doing what Jesus said.
- where is the appropriate level for stewardship education to take place

### ***Stewardship, Fundraising or Spiritual Problem***

- \$40m raised for Katrina relief by PCUSA
- huge learning from PDA gifts and that the majority came over the Internet with gifts larger than other gifts via congregations or checks; no reporting to congregations of who made gifts and whether interpretation was effective
- there doesn't appear to be a trust problem with PDA
- brief synopsis of mission funding task group report from C. Rocha
- Individuals are giving on their own terms, not our terms; if we don't provide channels to receive support for mission on the terms of the donor, we might as well quit
- What Hunter Farrell did on Tues. night would not have happened 3 or 4 years ago because it is outside the box; culture of the GAC is changing
- who is teaching the 30ish folks what stewardship is and what it means to give to the church? We're running out of time to be a force in the society.
- Communication is the primary issue and we slide in and out of it doing it
- MFTG report does not have a magic bullet but it has innovative ideas some of which are already in place
- We're learning disabled" in that we always expect simple answers to solve problems even as new things are emerging around us; lack of communication going widely is keeping us from sharing good things
- "casting a vision" around communication is critical; BOP and Lilly Foundation are "casting attractive vision
- money given to Katrina in many cases ended up being funds diverted from presbyteries and other work (is this true??)
- no consensus within the church that the denomination needs 4 levels of governing bodies; people in the pews may not trust that the infrastructure is necessary
- cost of infrastructure is paid staff which is different than years ago

### ***Spiritual context***

- we either need the stewardship office again or it needs to be intentionally a part of every work area, conversation, etc
- stewardship is a spiritual discipline and concern that it not get lost in the overall picture
- compelling stories need to be told so that it connected to the Biblical compelling story
- we don't tell compelling general mission stories

### ***What will be doing differently or what will have happened in 2010 that will have affected mission funding?***

- stewardship should permeate everything we do and every committee at every level will have education and involvement
- almost all funding options will be opened up throughout the church and every option will be blessed

- much more cooperative work with camps, etc. more will have gone broke and forced into more cooperation
- we'll be telling our story better and have a healthy pride in talking about what we do well; attitudes will be changed to be more positive about the denomination
- we'll have developed a common understanding that is more than intellectualism and stop talking about "your" and move to "our" work together
- we would have a revision of Appendix A – 5% fee has no integrity until revision
- we'll have figured out how to use the techniques in the non-profit world to the benefit of the church; major donors to non-profits are members of Presbyterian churches
- we'll have a compelling story and a clear ask and ease of responding
- we will have trained our ministers to understand stewardship
- headline to read, stewardship has reached a new generation, stewardship rules

***What is the one important step to move us to the future?***

- tell compelling stories
- clear ask for dollars
- education on all levels
- required education for seminary students

***What text message do you want to send to GAC mission work plan, MGB?***

- stewardship rules
- conversation switched from mission funding/fund raising to stewardship
- everyone learns to be a mature financial steward
- stewardship is what we do after we say what we believe
- propose "Stu 5" to promote Karen's goals (Stu Bear was an earlier stewardship tool).

***Who is best prepared/responsible to implement these changes?***

- All of the above
- Karen's office
- the role the synods play will vary by region

***GROUP TOPIC: 6 Strategies for communication and mission interpretation (Who's talking... Who's listening ... and what is the person in the pew hearing?)***

***What is it about this topic that you find intriguing? Why is this one of the key and very important questions for the church to address?***

- Much of communications is listening/a two-day dialogue as opposed to a one-way/information being sent. You have to be in a place of full dialogue before you can complete the circle of full dialogue.
- There are so many people who don't know how the church works. You've got to know how the organization works in order to get things done.
- Sense of frustration with the battleground of communications: who are the truth-tellers? Communication feeds trust-building and trust-building feeds communication.

- We are finding that a lot of our churches are lacking knowledge. We need to listen to find out how much knowledge they do have. We need to have an education piece to teach people. Interpretation. Somebody needs to go out and teach. Key issue is listening and education the people in the pews.
- We're kind of invisible because we don't communicate. Engaging in dialogue with other groups so that we share with other groups. Know that we are not going to agree on absolutely everything.
- To communicate invites dialogue. Communicate in as many different ways as people have learning styles.
- A real investment in infrastructure. Try to reduce the "noise." Gatekeeper/pastor. Really get to the people in the pews.
- Have to learn how to push information. How we say, not only the means but the content, so that we're open, welcoming, inviting and not unintentionally unwelcoming.
- If we don't succeed, we'll see more disconnect than connect.
- It's obvious there's a lack/a void in the media. Where's the voice of the Presbyterian church? It's just not there.
- If you don't do it first, just don't do it.
- We need to send stuff out.
- Just getting time on dockets.

***In 2010, what one thing has the PCUSA done that has been encouraging about communication:***

- We've used a lot more video
- Approach communication from a positive message
- "Push;" assertive communication
- More personal reporting on the good that the church has done from the perspective of recipient.
- An internal understanding of the multiple methods and how to be more effect in what we're saying.
- Reach every member – insure they are aware of how to get plugged in
- A framework that transforms noise to a coherent message
- Multiple media ways of communication what we're doing and connecting with other Presbyterians all round the world.
- Because of all this we have joyful people in the pews who are excited to be Presbyterians.
- Every clerk of session gets info directly from GAC and the GA
- Get the correct interpretation out first.
- A new commitment from lower governing bodies to take what GA produces and be honest about what they distribute.
- A firm and clear communications strategy, action steps and budget to present.
- Telling more stories on DVD.
- The world will know that Presbyterians and not the group that fights one another all the time but a force for good in the world.
- The best communicator.
- 50 percent of the serving elders can tell the difference between Presbyterians and Methodists.

- Church alert network

### **Headline**

**Working together ...  
Making a difference because of the love of JC  
Joyfully  
Following Jesus and working together.  
Enjoying God and helping  
Love one another, no matter what  
Dude, that was sweet!**

### **One important step**

**Itunes.**

**Mastering microcontent.  
Getting the microcontent to people in the pews.**

### **Text msg**

**PC(USA) working tgther☺**

### **Who best suited to provide leadership to effect the change we want to see on this topic?**

**Elders in the pews.**

### **What msg to GAC:**

**Each area needs to understand what they're going and coordinate.  
Message to GAC about the website: needs to be more available to the people.  
The whole infrastructure needs to be set up to --- here are the ways to help you do that.  
By 2010, people believe they have a part to play.  
By 2010, we are looking at 2020 already.  
It's not an either/or proposition. We need to figure out how to reach all audiences, new and old.  
Visit congregations.**

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## ***GROUP TOPIC: 8 Practices, Protocol and Values for Cultivating Healthy Congregations, Healthy Presbyteries and a Healthy PCUSA [Including GAC]***

### ***Why Topic is Important/Key Issues***

- key to think about being healthy – we live in a culture not healthy – church being a witness to healthy – and relationship – good news
- healthiness – our witness as a church (not meanness – work on own witness)

What does a health look like? Why is it important?

- Opposite not where we want to go
- definition not membership; both definition – educate – mission, ministry churches don't want to engage
- inspire to do in presbytery – think positive – practice healthy things – positive base

- small congregations:—waiting for presbyteries to be healing angel.
- refocus necessary – (congregations support)
- presbyteries to focus on health of congregations
- what do we have to give up to be healthy
- Important – not forget larger picture
- each judicatory do what God calls to do and congregations
- if all focus on congregations to keep larger picture
- move beyond anger and focus more on God – without healthy congregations – denominations will not be healthy – need understanding of how to work together
- healthy and unhealthy catching – pastor healthy – congregation healthy

### ***Signs of a Healthy Congregation?***

- connectivity in body – communication
- trust leadership, committees
- systems theory – anxiety – need separate/connected/balance
- autonomy a congregation needs, need to be connected
- key building blocks is health leadership
- presbytery intentional about getting/helping healthy leaders
- committee has ability to influence
- also retreats and training
- need healthy COM and CPM (CPM that can say “no!”)
- need to have a Biblical culture – i.e. doing justice, truth in love
- spiritual maturity to create Biblical culture. Disciple building
- unhealthy of church leaving – too pastor led. What does that say about dealing with pastor (Presbyterian)
- energy – talking to each other
- passion
- focus – disaster relief – side by side working together
- God centered and God focused
- Vision – without something to look to – they looked inward
- know what trying to be – not survival
- focused outward community and world

### ***Practice, Protocol and Values – Congregations***

- Presbytery de Cristo – started by presbytery – enabled 800 to 900 people and they came back excited about church and it builds connectedness – they know people
- when church loses pastor – do assessment process; then set up things before they can move to begin process i.e., by laws, personnel policy
- communicate positive – tell positive stories
- celebrate successes
- getting local farms to intercity food banks, 88,000 lbs – story get people involved
- hungry good news – but like to tell the bad
- have spiritual practices – Bible, prayer
- trust lay people – get together and pray even if no moderator
- ministering to those outside – community, world
- understand – value added in Christ’s church
- vital worship
- God enter, make disciples
- Reformed Biblical understanding
- have healthy pastors
- people in the pew don’t understand more than congregation; need to know missional church, One Great Hour of Sharing
- see what larger churches does – i.e., disaster relief
- see they are a part of larger church

- build trust – i.e. distrust of institutions – we are larger structure – people wanting to do good – how do we address issue (radical individualism – norm – my choice)
- artificially independent

***In order to to achieve 2010 goals/Steps to Do***

- each judicatory will focus on healthy congregations and on “what God calls them to do” things that can best be done at each level and healthy presbyteries, healthy GA’s/congregations
- transparency – communication – good and bad, trust
- Steps future vision
  - leadership healthy
  - passion – energy – faith
  - vision
  - connectedness – trust
  - Judicatories focus on healthy congregations
- PCUSA has –
  - healthy congregations
  - clean bill of health
  - Christ gives heart to PCUSA
  - Healthy heart/healthy church
- PCUSA reports congregational vitality
- who provide best leadership
- our common call – everybody
- all leaders/all servants
- Like vision presbytery
- who builds trust – not just each presbytery – hold certain things in common – how to answer;
  - don’t have a common voice
  - build trust – build relationships (needs two to build)

***Healthy Congregations, presbyteries and GA***

- PCUSA: Healthy heart/healthy church
- Each judicatory will focus on “healthy congregations” and also on what God calls them to do – things that can best be done at each level
- signs of health at all levels includes
  - healthy leadership
  - passion – faith – energy
  - clear vision
  - connectedness and trust
  - a common call - everybody

***GROUP TOPIC: 9 Re-inventing General Assembly Decision-Making processes and protocol [How can we begin focusing on the Important, not just the urgent?] – Note: This builds on one of our topics from last year***

***What about this topic is intriguing? Why do we need to address it?***

- in many of these areas GA and pby become triangulated. How to avoid triangulation is an issue.
- purpose of GA is to bring us together as a Council yet it divides us. How can we focus on the pastoral responsibility of the GA?
- we track financial implications how can we track pastoral implications? A full “environmental impact” statement – commissioners would get this before voting.

- also system is flawed – too many items are considered at an Assembly. Not all are important. Embracing too much means we don't handle it all well
- e.g. GA debated sending postcards to home churches – waste of time for GA
- purpose of GA – to express the unity of the PCUSA – plus other items
- can we do away with overtures to focus on discernment?
- perhaps last GA should have focused on PUP report – only – spent the week in discernment
- perhaps overtures could go first to synods for larger approval prior to being considered by GA
- GA committees are too large also
- Book of Order says GA is highest governing body – represents unity of synods, pby, sessions, to congregations
- everyone knows we have a problem but no one knows how to fix it
- we spend too much time reacting to recurring issues
- problem is – what are the important issues? It varies from pby to pby
- we are a church that has different values – we have to face that this is a strength and a weakness
- it is the purpose of the GA to let every voice be heard? Heart says yes, intellect says no –something has to give
- technical solution – get full costs of decisions on the table
- issue – resource persons have more knowledge on each issue than any commissioner – and can only speak if spoken to by Moderator – this doesn't seem right
- opposite also happens – staff interject themselves into the business
- each higher governing body is less trusted – therefore what is the role of higher governing bodies?
- Options – yes, no, abstain perhaps another option should be added – “At this point, we are not prepared to speak on this item.”
- part of it is that we need a different way of deciding
- commissioners tend to feel good about GA process – but people in the pew have a disconnect
- perhaps commissioners should be required to engage pby on the issues of GA and pbys required to present them.
- selecting commissioners also an issue – some select by turn – others by merit based on involvement in pby
- whatever change is made at GA ought to be made throughout the system so that process works the same at all levels
- choice of committee moderators is also a very important matter – pbys need to do more training of committee moderators
- Let GAC pick an issue that we will spend 50% of GA time on
- commissioners should have some say in which committee they serve, but some would pack the committees
- what if one day prior to GA – commissioners gathered to discern what is important to us as a body ... what is our purpose?
- then before each issue – you revisit your purpose and what is important
- first thing of the assembly is a political process – electing a moderator – perhaps elect a moderator at the end of the assembly to serve for 2 years then moderate the next assembly

### ***Top Issues to be Addressed***

- add one day to GA for spiritual discernment and discussion of the purpose of the meeting
- elect moderator in the middle or at the end of GA
- pastoral responsibility/implications of overtures – how will it affect the church if it passes, or doesn't pass?
- too many issues/not enough time

***Headline: GA Prays for a Day Without a Yea or a Nay***

***One important step to move us forward toward the vision we envision –***

- Ask COGA to take steps to adjust docket/calendar for 2010. Committees could do this in 2008 – as part of orientation of committees AEPS could training for how pbys function. This day would be for spiritual discernment/discussion/purpose.
- Ask Bills and Overtures to identify a few potential key issues for discernment process
- Ask COGA to look at placement of moderator's election
- develop list of pastoral responsibilities that GA has to the whole church – committees leadership will address these questions as they present business

***Message – We are changing the way we do business – we don't want to go to Abilene***

***Best Suited: COGA***

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***GROUP TOPIC: 11 Claiming Spiritual Leadership from the Top – Breaking the Bureaucrat Stereotype***

Why here?

- Church bureaucracy
- reorganization
- spiritual discernment
- pastor – pastor
- businessman – CEO
- Bottom up
- spiritual formation
- shift how leaders are perceived
- a way of seeing the world
- role model

***Why is Spiritual Leadership important?***

- focus on God, not tasks
- institutional survival
- life giving
- transformation of the elements; presence of the spirit
- teach believers with your life
- servant leaders
- church is the bride of Christ
- is “executive” so bad
- executive servant
- always worship
- infuse, permeate in all aspects
- speak it, live it
- life fish in water – surround by the spirit
- expected to act like a “bishop”
- when did you feel like a spiritual leader
  - changing the docket – liturgical atmosphere
  - prayer calendar
  - special days in individual lives

- letters go out
- help "Aunt Betty" in her journey
- It will be ok
- awareness does not mean approval
- speaking the language – does this glorify God?
- ripple effect

Spirit

What does the Bible say?

Relationships – over rules?

Where is God in this?

Discernment

- Human being – ness – Human doing – ness
- where is the mission in this?
- I'm humility, confession -- I'm right
- giving power away
- transparency
- nurture the nurturer
- Spirituality types – mystical or active
- God is the core

Lack of

What do the lawyers say?

Book of Order Rules determine

Problem solving outcome

**Headline: Church Seeks, then Speaks**

***GA Votes that all Executives have a Spiritual Director***

***Presbyterians – a prayerful people – prayer matters – God Matters***

***God centered, Jesus led spirit powered – Guided by the Spirit***

***Presbyterian Church finally Figures out that God is really in Charge***

***What is the important step that needs to be taken to move us toward the future?***

- spiritual directors – trained, available sabbaticals
- accountability – covenant community
- working together non-judgmentally
- making faith relevant by asking questions
- \* faith that is alive
- make it so that church is priority over business
- leaders covenant for having a living faith – recognizing God is in charge, covenant communities are created for spiritual nature.,

**Text message**

\* **Prayer matters**

\* **? God (the) ? – Ask God the question**

\* **person, presence, power, purpose**

***Who is best suited to provide leadership to effect the change on this topic?***

- pastors and elders at all levels of the church
- MGB/GAC, any one who is the face of the denomination
- leaders who work at living out of a spiritual core.

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**GROUP TOPIC: 12 How; can GAC redirect its priorities and resources toward fostering healthy and strong presbyteries?**

**Headline: GAC directs 50% of staff and resources to foster healthy and effective presbyteries**

*One need: Need purpose statement e.g. mission of PCUSA is two-fold: foster healthy growing presbyteries and foster mission which no one presbytery can do alone*

*Text Message: Please always partner with us (pbys) when resourcing congregations*

*Who: GAC – unique job/efforts between OGA/GAC – define goals – means toward the goals; systemic evaluation for accountability*

*ADDITIONAL NEED: Additional resources and staff to MGB Coordinator to effect this change*

*HEADLINE: Two Year Churchwide – study reveals Core Values*

*Steps: Churchwide discussion of Core Values*

*Text Message: T8K TyM 4  
Core VLUS B4 FOG*

*Who: MGBs take lead in partnership model*

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**GROUP TOPIC: 14 Who is responsible for the big pictures – for caring for the whole of the PCUSA at the denominational level (all the entities and agencies together)**

**Headline: 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Celebrates Fact that 95% of overall membership completed 100 hours of service to community world**

*Model of Service during our own meetings*

*Just do it*

*Individual members of Church (Passionate Core)*

- *No one governing body – all of us together through worship, preaching, learning and teaching*

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**GROUP TOPIC : 15 How does each part of the church understand itself in the current reality that is the church? And how do we understand ourselves to be in ministry together in the current reality that is the church?**

***If in 2010 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is truly missional, connectional, faithful and fruitful, what are the things we need to be doing at the General Assembly Council and Middle Governing bodies to get there?***

First Question: (in pairs) What is it about your topic that you find intriguing? Second Question: (also in pairs) Why is this one of the key, important issues for the church to address?

- It's a moving target – the reality is different at every level for all of us. We are often lost in tactics, and until you have a clear view of strategy, you can't really deal with the tactical questions.
- It is not just the current reality, but what should the church be at every level; how do we change from regulatory thinking to mission thinking/action? What drew me here is the current reality of the issues (especially New Wineskin churches), and how it is possible to deal with them.
- Here's an opportunity to talk from different points of view – just agreeing to do better doesn't translate into action – do we need to reorganize? 'What is the true meaning of the church' is the underlying question. We need to define what the church is.
- It is the "playing field" where perspective gets translated into action – and the actions are interpreted by different perspectives.

Now, discuss our topic (above), within the context of the overall movement toward

General discussion about our topic in the context of the overall '2010' question:

- Concerned about the basic question – we need consistency in understanding.
- Challenge to that thought, also is that we need to understand that the organizational task is to get things done, but the task needs to be defined and we need to define how to get the actions accomplished.
- It is good to use 'non-normal' language to describe what is being done – because this will get people away from traditional thinking.
- Church as missional versus attractional – the primary meeting place for the church meeting the world is outside the congregation – and congregation exists to empower people in that world, the presbytery to empower congregations – and on up. Everything beyond that is the same perspective, who is the 'community?'
- The issue of attractional can't be the salve that eases the pain of overall loss of membership – rather, we need to have disciple-creators as new members rather than those who ask 'what can the church do for me' instead say 'what can I do for the church?'
- The story of the prodigal son – grace is found by the father – when he realizes the issue is to bring together the two sons – the law breaking one and the law keeping one. To translate this into presbytery terms – how do we connect congregations so that the 'skills of doing' are combined into being overall better able to be "missional, connectional, faithful, and fruitful."
- The organizations in the secular world are becoming flatly organized with commensurate devolvement of authority, responsibility, etc. Our denomination needs to work toward having particular churches, presbyteries work together – not because they have similar cultures, but because they have similar missions and focus.
- We need space to put in practice within the overall geography, however.

Competition tasks:

1. Headline: "PCUSA focuses outward, and does mission at the lowest effective level."
2. One important step: Communicating the headline and how to implement it to people who need to understand how the PCUSA needs to work in the future.
3. Text message: Look for the opportunity to learn new ways to do mission within your own congregation's outward focus; among communities of churches who are on the same path.
4. Who is best suited to lead the change:

- Task 1: GAC

- Task 2: MGBs (regional, relational bodies)
- Task 3: Clusters of particular churches – collected into regional communities.

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**GROUP TOPIC: 16 What would be the advantages/disadvantages of a combined OGA/GAC**

- different structure than @ MGB's
- combination makes it less confusing to whole church
- unity of the church
- more responsiveness from GA offices
- do already – combined offices (eg vocations and MGB office) show us examples
- GAC should not be continued because it has shown (through re-visioning, re-structure, etc), it does not know its reason for being.
- past battles b/t GAC and OGA have changed
- look @ how things were when there was solely a GAC, no COGA
- GAC's recent changes to Chap 13 (be mission agency solely) left us w/floating duties assigned nowhere.
- why aren't other GA agencies/corps, included in this question
- unified and cohesive message would come from combination of GAC/OGA
- much duplication of work currently (e.g, communications, ecumenical relations, etc)
- current cooperation has arisen from individuals filling office rather than structure
- can the body that serves mission function also serve the GA coordination function? This was the 1980's model that has now been dismantled in some/many respects.
- we have a complicated system; distrust of centralized power
- if focus is on missional church, how does structure follow
- too much compartmentalization and failure to focus on needs of larger church (e.g. 3 separate offices on women's matters and evangelism office reduced)
- two funding streams are difficult to explain to the particular churches and creates a false dichotomy b/t mission work of the church
- unified comm. (one brand) helps interpretation
- combining the 2 would be a good model for the rest of the church
- invite other GA corps. To join in and include those who desire it
- may come about b/c of – funding challenges; mandate of GA; or planned proposal. -
- People will adapt to it even if compelled to do so.
- systems are flattening at MGB's this is something the GAC/OGA should embrace
- a GA may mandate it because so many presbyteries have been through it
- no one would design the system we now have
- opposition to plan would likely be about who is at the pinnacle
- 98% of PCUSA doesn't know or care about this structure question
- if serious about being a missional church/missional servies, then denominational loyalty is not as important
- governance/regulatory church is based within a denominational system
- can be better missional church but must have denominational system or we simply become a group of congregations
- should GA process of agency review be adjusted so that the GA review committee would look at relationships b/t GA agencies and possible reorg?
- do we need a churchwide conversation about structures of the PCUSA, not just MGB's
- keep primary focus on congregations (mission locus, evangelism) and serving them. This is what presbyteries are doing and GAC/OGA need to focus on as well.
- the churchwide conversation needs to be all 4 governing bodies (incl. Sessions) this will cause a common conv. And reduce focus or move towards Congregationalist system

- may see opposition at middle levels of 100 Witherspoon staff b/c of their passion for their work and concern it won't be done otherwise or done well.
- wants a church that still focuses on justice and not only relief, etc

**Headline: Jesus Returns: Church unsure to name him Stated Clerk or Exec. Dir.**

**Church Speaks with One Voice**

**One mission, one voice**

**We exist to serve the world**

**One important step –**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| - Trust in God as you step into chaos                                     | -- Get rid of synods                                 |
| - Use a GA comm.. as a think tank on the topic                            | -- all gov bodies must be included in the discussion |
| - Retool GA review comm. to engage issue                                  | -- move from polity that supports mission            |
| - Broaden conv. of future of MGB's to the future of governance with PCUSA | -- just do it  |

**Text Message: TO GAC Mission Work Plan; MGB's; church-at-large**

**Change is coming; get on board**

**Grovel and grow**

**A New Way for a new day**

**Who is best suited to provide leadership to effect desired change?**

**MGBs**

**GROUP TOPIC**

**17 Restablishing Trust**

**What's intriguing and why is it important**

- can't do a lot without trust
- leads to other problems
- changes can't be sustained
- adaptive question (not technical)
- elephant in the room
- unwilling to be vulnerable
- last year – elephant in the closet
- all levels
- based on "hurt"
- larger societal problem
- no healing process
- is an identity issue
- linked to responsibility
- old/deep roots

- reunion?
- once there was trust
- Louisville – spend resources
- trust starts here
- reference checks – honesty?
- legal culture discourages trust in references
- mistrust in many different areas
- trust can be (re)established
- theological/seminary training variations
- suspicious re: motives
- need to classify/polarize others
- is it an intractable
- “civility” a veneer

***Headline: Trust pandemic hits be PCUSA***

***Stereotypes outlawed***

***Archeologist discover trust in the PCUSA***

***Presbyterians stop the blame game***

***One important step***

- transparency
- being vulnerability
- adaptively changing how we think of responsibility
- focus on relationships
- focus on what we are about
- give up the rules
- give up governing body language
- written on hearts not stone
- more permission-giving
- develop a let go sign among Presbyterians
- generate abundance rather than scarcity
- think in terms of both and rather than either or

***Text Message***

Put yourself out there

Thanks for your discipleship

Share God's Love

U R Trusted

Who is best suited to provide leadership and reestablish trust

YOU

I AM