

General Assembly Council Report at the June 10, 2006 Presbytery Meeting

At the June 10, 2006 Presbytery Meeting, Mary Lynn Walters addressed the General Assembly Council's most radical restructuring of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s mission program since 1993, as it moves to reduce the 2007-2008 General Assembly mission budget by \$9.15 million. In all, 75 national staff positions in Louisville have been eliminated (most effective May 1st) as well as 55 overseas mission co-worker positions. Staff cuts in Louisville account for \$4 million of the budget reduction, while the total for the overseas mission positions is \$1.2 million. A 19-page document entitled *2007-2008 Mission Work Plan: Objectives, Outcomes and Funded Work*, is available on the PC(USA) Website which outlines the dramatic overhaul of its mission program work with an overview of the work involved in each objective, what it considers to be successful outcomes, and detailed rationales for the programmatic work that will be funded as well as work that will be discontinued or scaled back. The sweeping organizational changes will, by October, eliminate the current Deputy for Mission Support Services and Deputy Executive Director positions and the existing ministry divisions - Congregational Ministries (CMD), National Ministries (NMD) and Worldwide Ministries - as well as the jobs of senior executive and top administrative staff of those divisions.

Rather than ministry divisions, programmatic work will be organized around teams related to the objectives. The 2007-2008 budgets approved by the GAC allocate money according to the MWP objectives, not the traditional program entities. The new structure is built around the four goals of the Mission Work Plan: Evangelism and Witness, Justice and Compassion, Leadership and Vocation, and Spirituality and Discipleship — and the eight more concrete objectives that flesh them out: evangelism, multi-cultural ministry, poverty, peacemaking, Reformed identity, family ministry, Christian vocation and small churches. Overall, the MWP emphasizes the GAC's determination to de-emphasize its own programmatic role in the PC(USA) in order to more strongly support the ministries of congregations and presbyteries.

Following is an outline from Mary Lynn's report, of the objectives and anticipated results:

The new structure and budget for the General Assembly Council has been built around the four goal areas with their objectives. Gone, as of October 1st, will be the "divisional way of doing business" with National, Congregational, and Worldwide Ministries. There still will be a support component for all goal areas. There currently is a task force that is doing the realignment as GAC members are moved from their "divisional committees" to the five new work areas. Rather than concentrating on one or two of the divisions, staff will now relate to all four of the goal areas requiring intentional coordination across the lines. There also is a task force working to establish the evaluation tool that will be put in place to measure the desired outcomes.

GOAL

Objective

Objective explained

- Successful outcomes being sought

EVANGELISM AND WITNESS

Evangelism Objective

- Equip Presbyterians, governing bodies and others to witness locally and globally to the Gospel of Jesus Christ with an emphasis on those with no active church affiliation.
- Presbyterians more prepared to tell their faith stories and eager to share them with others.
- Presbyterians better recognizing and responding to more opportunities to witness to their faith in their communities and in the world.

Multicultural Objective

- Support presbyteries' efforts to develop congregations and fellowships that will enable them to reflect the multicultural makeup of our society.

- Increased number of congregations that reflect and incorporate the diversity of their communities.
- The life of Presbyterian congregations increasingly incorporating the unique customs and traditions of society's diverse culture.

JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

Poverty Objective

- Enable partnerships with governing bodies and others to actively address the causes and effects of poverty locally, nationally and globally.
- An increasing number of synods, presbyteries, and congregations more actively engaged in ways of discovering and addressing the underlying causes of poverty.
- An increasing number of synods, presbyteries, and congregations more actively engaged in ways to alleviate poverty locally, nationally, and globally.

Peace Objective

- Encourage and support presbyteries and congregations to be active in seeking non-violent solutions to conflict in their own communities and in the communities of the world.
- Increased instances of successful non-violent responses to conflict, ultimately increasing trust and respect, thereby preventing conflict.
- Presbyterians more aware of non-violent options for conflict resolution and better equipped to employ them.

SPIRITUALITY AND DISCIPLESHIP

Reformed Identity Objective

- Encourage and support presbyteries and congregations to further develop their members' ability to appreciate and understand their Reformed identity, experience and practice disciplines of reformed spirituality and apply them in today's world.
- A church membership that is clear and secure in affirming and living out what we, as Presbyterians, believe, teach, and practice as a denomination.
- More awareness in the culture of the unique perspectives and contributions Presbyterians bring to 21 st Century living.

Families Objective

- Enable presbyteries and congregations to ground families, in all their manifestations, in Christian discipleship that helps them confront and resist idolatries of society today.
- Pastors and congregations equipped to promote healthy Christian households and intimate community relationships.
- Families strengthened to identify and effectively resist destructive pressures and temptations in society.

LEADERSHIP AND VOCATION

Small Church Objective

- Facilitate the exchange and development of alternative models for pastoral and mission leadership in small churches.
- Increased number of healthy, vibrant small churches with strong mission programs.
- Recognition and understanding throughout the church of congregational life cycles, transformation occurring when possible, and compassionate assistance for congregations nearing the end of their ministry in their particular time and place.

Vocation Objective

- Equip presbyteries and congregations to help members discern that their vocation is a call from God to

- Christian witness in society and the church.
- More Presbyterians who understand and live out their vocation, whatever it may be, as a sacred call from God.
- More Presbyterians discerning a call to leadership in the church, particularly ministers of word and sacrament serving congregations.

This new structure will present challenges. There are areas and services that no longer will be there but the groundwork has been laid to make the General Assembly Council more of a resource for the mission of the church in presbyteries and their congregations. There has been good news since the original budget work was done; a providential gift has been received that will make it possible not to make further cuts of the missionaries at work around the world. GAC took action at its special meeting in May that will increase the budget funds for the next two years to insure that only those positions that will be lost through natural attrition will be abandoned.

Another dynamic change that has occurred is the election of a new Executive Director that took place on May 23rd. Elder Linda Valentine was chosen, subject to GA confirmation at the 217th Assembly, to replace John Detterick at the helm of the GAC. Linda, a fourth-generation Presbyterian, is an elder from Fourth PC in Chicago and was presented to the Council for its examination prior to her election. As a corporate attorney, she has served as a senior vice president, one of the top two women in Motorola. She also served as the interim executive director at Chicago's Fourth PC, as well as the senior vice president of TenFold, a software products company in Utah. For the past two years, she has been the fund manager and general counsel for Opportunity International, one of the world's largest microfinance networks, which provides loans and financial services to poor persons in 28 developing countries. Linda is a graduate of the University of Michigan and Georgetown University Law Center and studied business in the MBA program of the University of Southern California.

All in all, times are changing but there is a renewed dedication toward re-energizing and reinforcing efforts to become a Church in which the members of the congregations and presbyteries take on a more active leadership role and seek to live more faithfully in being disciples and in bringing others to follow Jesus Christ more fully.