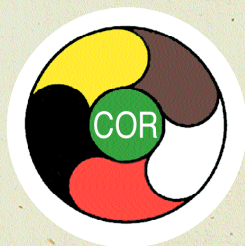


GENERAL ASSEMBLY Committee on Representation



DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVENESS

G-4.0400

“The church in its witness to the uniqueness of the Christian faith is called to mission and must be responsive to diversity in both the church and the world. Thus the fellowship of Christians as it gathers for worship and orders its corporate life will display a rich variety of form, practice, language, program, nurture, and service to suit culture and need.

Our unity in Christ enables and requires the church to be open to all persons and to the varieties of talents and gifts of God’s people, including those who are in the communities of the arts and sciences.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall give full expression to the rich diversity within its membership and shall provide means which will assure a greater inclusiveness leading to wholeness in its emerging life. Persons of all racial ethnic groups, different ages, both sexes, various disabilities, diverse geographical areas, different theological positions consistent with the Reformed tradition, as well as different marital conditions (married, single, widowed, or divorced) shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church.”

Called for in

- Presbyteries
- Synods
- General Assembly

The committee on representation will assist the church to move toward the goal of “wholeness in the emerging life” of the church. This wholeness is evident when all members of the body of Christ are able to use the gifts they have been given by the Holy Spirit for the equipping of the people of God. Wholeness is a part of God’s “shalom” for the world.

Suggestions for Getting Started

Establish Membership (G-9.0105)

- equal numbers of men and women
- majority of members from racial ethnic groups within the governing bodies
- shall include persons from the following categories:
 - majority male membership
 - majority female membership
 - racial ethnic male membership
 - racial ethnic female membership
 - youth male and female membership
 - persons with disabilities

Study

References in the Articles of Agreement (8.1) and in the Book of Order

References (G-4.0403, G-9.0104, G-9.0105, G-11.0103, G-13.0201) and *outline* your responsibilities. *Look for action verbs.*

Diversity in Your Governing Body

- the diversity as a whole (racial ethnic members, women, different age groups, persons with disabilities, and groups with various theological positions in the presbytery or synod)
- the diversity in the make-up of the committees, boards, and agencies (include boards of related schools, homes, etc.)
- the diversity of employed personnel.

Pattern of Participation and Inclusiveness in Your Governing Body

- on committees, boards, and agencies for the last several years
- in employment for the last several years

Standing Rules or Manual of the Governing Body

Are changes needed to enable participation and inclusiveness?

Report Results of Your Study to the Governing Body

Consult with nominating committees, racial ethnic and women's groups, youth, the aged, and persons with disabilities to share expectations and find out about resources.

G-9.0105 calls for you to consult with the nominating committee of your own governing body and review the work of your own nominating committee.

G-9.0105 calls for you to consult with racial ethnic groups and women's groups prior to nomination or appointment of racial ethnic persons, women, different age groups, persons with disabilities, or groups with various theological positions.

Establish goals based on your studies and consultation.

Present them to the governing body for approval.

Plan your budget and request funds (for meeting costs including travel, mailings, phone, consultations, etc.).

Avoid These Pitfalls

Legalism conforming to the letter of the law in a way that undervalues the gifts of persons. This breaks the wholeness of the church.

Tokenism a minority of one on a committee often means that persons will not feel free to use their gifts. Build in support through numbers, especially in the face of hostility.

Tunnel Vision failure to recognize and utilize available resources to include population representatives not traditionally included in the process. Be sure to use networks, caucuses, and racial ethnic congregations as sources of information and recruitment.

Some Questions You Will Encounter

What Does Racial Ethnic Mean?

In relation to the provisions for participation and inclusiveness, this would seem to mean *previously excluded* racial ethnic categories such as Asian, Black, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and Native American persons.

What Is the Definition of Youth?

The 203rd General Assembly (1991) adopted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, which specifies *youth as 25 years old and under*.

What Does It Mean to Serve as an Advocate?

For the representation of racial ethnic members, women, different age groups, and persons with disabilities?

Since an advocate is an intercessor who argues for a cause or pleads in another's behalf, education may be needed so that the committees and agencies can fulfill their responsibilities to be inclusive.

What Does It Mean "to Consult?"

The General Assembly Council has defined consultation as "ordinarily a face-to-face experience between duly elected representatives of governing bodies to exchange information, perspectives, opinions, and advice regarding their arenas of mission, personnel staffing, etc., for the health of the whole church. A written digest of the consultation will be prepared and shared."

What Does It Mean to Be Inclusive?

To have as a component part, to involve as a primary or as a comprehensive entity.

What Does It Mean to Review?

To go over or examine critically or deliberately.

Who Is a Person with Disabilities?

The 203rd General Assembly (1991) adopted the use of the following definition of the term "persons with disabilities":

"Persons with disabilities are a diverse group of individuals who have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as relating, caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

"Further, it endorsed the World Health Organization definitions: an impairment is the cause (for example, diabetic blindness); a disability is what a person cannot do (read, print, drive a car); a handicap is something for which society is responsible (lack of Braille and taped material, failure to provide adequate accessible public transportation, architectural barriers)."

For information contact:

General Assembly Committee on Representation
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street, Room 4417
Louisville, KY 40202-1396