

**09-14 National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force Report**

**Source:** Agencies **Event:** Taskforce, Standing/Ad-hoc Committees

**Committee:** [09-14] Social Justice Issues **Sponsor:** Task Force on National Racial Ethnic Ministries

**Topic:** Unassigned **Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

<http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=4705&promoID=328>

Assembly Action

On this Item, the General Assembly, acted as follows:

Approve as Amended

[action via Agenda: Wednesday Consent Agenda]

Consensus

**Final Text:**

**Amend Recommendation 3. by adding a new section "g." to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]**

**"f. Representatives from the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA)[;][;]**

**"[g. A report will be submitted to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) on these matters.]"**

Committee Recommendation

On this Item, the Social Justice Issues Committee, acted as follows:

Approve as Amended

[Counted Vote - Committee]

Affirmative: 67

Negative: 0

Abstaining: 0

**Final Text:**

**Amend Recommendation 3. by adding a new section "g." to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]**

**"f. Representatives from the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA)[;][;]**

**"[g. A report will be submitted to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) on these matters.]"**

## Recommendation

## Recommendation 1

**The National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force recommends that the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):**

**1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to hold a national consultation on developing regional racial ethnic ministries in 2015 for twenty-five participants over a two-day period. This consultation will have a planning team of ten people and shall include developing a vision and structure so each ministry may create its own unique way of doing ministry.**

## Recommendation 2

**2. Encourage the mid councils to collaborate with PMA translators and expand resources for other languages.**

## Recommendation 3

**3. Call for a churchwide conference on race, ethnicity, racism, and ethnocentricity in 2015. In addition, direct the Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to appoint a planning team of ten people for this event in consultation with the following groups:**

- a. **Racial ethnic congregational leadership;**
- b. **Racial ethnic caucus leadership;**
- c. **Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC);**
- d. **Presbytery and synod leadership;**
- e. **General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR);**
- f. **Representatives from the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA).**

## Rationale

## Rationale for Recommendation 1

The work of the National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force currently consists of only seven people who have a limited amount of time and resources to complete the task. In order for racial ethnic ministries to grow and flourish, a greater number and variety of people are needed so that a larger regional representation is involved in developing and implementing racial ethnic ministries. The outcome of this national consultation will be reported back to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

## Rationale for Recommendation 2

The National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force rejoices at the hiring of the new staff persons. As the diversity of racial ethnic people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) grows, there will be a need for more translation, interpretation, and documentation services.

## Rationale for Recommendation 3

Racial ethnic ministry, to a large extent, is a response to a history of discrimination and lament on current pains of structural racism and ethnocentricity within the church body. This churchwide conference will involve leadership to work in conjunction with larger and majority congregations to find visible solutions to visible and invisible racism and discriminations that are within different ethnic groups toward each other also. This conference will be the beginning step needed to recognize and heal wounds. The outcome of this conference and resulting recommendations will be reported to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

## Rationale Overall

These recommendations are in response to the following referral: *2012 Referral: Item 05-12. Recommendation 8. Instructing the Moderator of the 220th General Assembly (2012) Be Empowered to Appoint a National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force Exclusively to Review, Assess, and Explore the Call to, Responsibility in, and Vision for Racial Ethnic Ministry within the PC(USA), Reporting Its Findings for Implementation to the 221st General Assembly (2014) —From the General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils (Minutes, 2012, Part I, p. 277 of the electronic journal, p. 172 of the print journal).*

The ministry and witness of racial ethnic people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been evident for more than 200 years. Racial ethnic people have brought to the denomination various ways in which Scripture is understood through our unique experiences of the Holy Spirit: wonderful music that glorifies God with different melodies and instruments; multiple styles of worship; and perspectives on introducing others to a relationship with Jesus Christ. At the same time, racial ethnic people have contributed to the life and mission of the church by participating at all council levels of the denomination through service on committees and task forces, and as General Assembly

Moderators. As racial ethnic ministries continue to be led by the Holy Spirit to grow and flourish, the National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force encourages the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to partner and truly engage with our brothers and sisters to create a diverse church where all gifts in ministry are recognized and celebrated.

The National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force was approved by the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in response to a recommendation from the General Assembly Mid Council Commission Racial Ethnic Strategy Task Force of the General Assembly Committee on Mid Councils. The recommendation was presented by the Assembly Committee on Mid Councils Review and approved by the General Assembly. The responsibility that was charged to the task force is to

... exclusively review, assess and explore the call to, responsibility in, and vision for racial ethnic ministry within the PC (USA), reporting its findings for implementation to the 221st General Assembly (2014) (*Minutes*, 2012, PCUSA, Part I, p. 277 of the electronic journal, p. 172 of the print journal)

In addition the task force is charged to

... be charged specifically to address the issue and the lack of language access, sensitivity, and resourcing (particularly as relates to the Spanish and Korean languages) within the existing frame of council operations, as well as within the context of any councils. (*Ibid.*)

Over the years there have been many actions taken by the General Assembly to address the growth and vitality of racial ethnic ministries. The 208th General Assembly (1996) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved an action calling the denomination to increase the racial ethnic membership to ten percent by the year 2005 and 20 percent by the year 2010 (*Minutes*, 1996, Part I, p. 378). The 210th General Assembly (1998) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved the "Racial Ethnic Immigrant Evangelism Church Growth Strategy" (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 406ff). The 212th General Assembly (2000) approved a Comprehensive Strategy for Ministries with Native Americans (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, pp. 206ff). The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the Strategy for Ministry with Hispanic-Latino Constituencies in the PC(USA) (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 531ff), and the 220th General Assembly (2012) approved recommendations from the Hispanic/Latino-a Leadership Conversation Group (*Minutes*, 2012, Part I, pp. 858ff). The 216th General Assembly (2004) approved a recommendation that directed Racial Ethnic Ministries to assist the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) to develop a strategy for church growth (*Minutes*, 2004, Part I, p. 683) and in addition the 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the Strategy for Church Growth for African Americans Congregations as well as appointing a task force to monitor the progress of the Church Growth Strategy (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 1235ff). The 218th General Assembly (2008) also recognized the National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus. And the 216th General Assembly (2004) approved recommendations from the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) Report on the Church's Effort to Combat Racism (*Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 683ff).

### *Observations*

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) has taken supportive and encouraging positions advocating inclusion and support of racial ethnic ministries. While this may be true, significant problems remain. Many of our racial ethnic congregations find themselves in presbyteries in which they are the only congregation of its kind and receive little or no assistance in the form of guidance, nurture, or resources. Some congregations and/or members of racial ethnic groups have not been fully welcomed to be present or to share their gifts in some presbyterian contexts and structures. The commitment to inclusion and racial ethnic ministry has waned in recent years and other priorities have taken the forefront in terms of resources, time, and energy. In past General Assemblies, racial ethnic ministries have been highlighted, proclaimed, and met with approval through statements and strategies but have received little support or funding. As the universal church in general and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in particular grapples with complex societal, theological, and cultural changes, racial ethnic ministries have in many cases taken a back seat or been declared a cause from another era. Although these are significant barriers to unity in the body of Christ, we believe that through God's Holy Spirit, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can experience a new life and vision through the witness and vision of racial ethnic members of this denomination and those who seek to claim the Reformed tradition as their home.

The implementation of the recommendations of the report of the National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force has the real possibility of further energizing and engaging the denomination in visioning a new day for racial ethnic ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). An understanding of this new vision includes networking, consultation, and collaboration with mid councils, caucus leadership, and members of congregations. This understanding will also give awareness of the rich diversity of gifts, skills, and practices of ministry that will enrich the body of the denomination.

The National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force began its work by assessing the mandate given by the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to examine the historical and social importance of racial ethnic ministries. This review included a view of the current and projected racial ethnic membership in the denomination by the Office of Research Services staff, as well as, conversations with staff from the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women's area and the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR).

The task force also conducted a review of the historical connection of racial ethnic ministries to the mid councils with respect to synods and invited comments from the leadership of the following racial ethnic caucuses and/or entities: National Asian Presbyterian Council (NAPC); National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC); National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus (NMEPC); National Presbyterian Hispanic/Latino Caucus (CNPH); National Council of Korean Presbyterian Churches in the PC(USA) (NCKPC); Native American Consulting Committee (NACC); the Advisory

Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC); and participants of the Mid Councils as Partners in Immigrant and Multicultural Communities workshop at the 2013 Big Tent Event in Louisville. In light of this information, we offer the following observations:

1. The racial ethnic population of the United States is growing at a fast rate, which will move the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be in discussion and dialogue on how best to engage in ministry with a diversity of cultures, races, and experiences.
2. There are a growing number of new immigrant fellowships worshipping in various places and settings in our denomination. Some of these are very small groups that began as Bible study groups and may be loosely associated with either an individual congregation or mid council.
3. There is a need to maintain a regional expression of racial ethnic ministries in synods/presbyteries or in a subsequent proposed structure.
4. There is a low representation of Presbyterian racial ethnic seminarians in Presbyterian seminaries.
5. There is a need for mid councils (specifically presbyteries) to find creative call positions for racial ethnic graduates, especially women of color.

As we look toward the future of racial ethnic ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the task force believes that God is working in the midst of the established and immigrant racial ethnic faith communities together with the whole body of Christ to bring life, joy, and love for one another through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### *Social, Biblical and Theological Foundations*

If the church is to be attentive to the increasing and unavoidable “browning” of the United States, how will its ministries respond to this increasing demographic change? This demographic shift provides the church an opportunity to embrace new ways to proclaim the gospel, to nurture fellowship, to practice and live in worship, to live in the truth, to promote social justice, and to build up the kingdom of heaven in the world (*Book of Order*, F-1.0304). The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been blessed throughout its history by indigenous and long-standing racial ethnic communities as well as different immigrant communities that have come and continue to come to the United States for different reasons and in a variety of circumstances, many of which were and are violent and denigrating to human dignity. In each of these instances the church has been influenced, and continues to be influenced by their presence, experiences, and circumstances. Today, as in the past, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and American Christianity are faced with social, linguistic, economic, and cultural challenges that require—at all levels of the church—a response that is relevant, welcoming, and faithful. The church, in its response through its witness and ministry, will inevitably find opportunities of transformation and regeneration for the glory of God, and the spiritual growth of the body of Christ.

One of the challenges faced by the church is becoming aware of and responding with solidarity to the plight of immigrant communities. To migrate inevitably carries the pain of separation, not only from the homeland, but from people and landscapes that are familiar and close to one’s own being. Challenged by our church’s past and present in the reality of immigration, the church is challenged to experience the reality of immigration not from an expectation of assimilation, but from the experience of the migrant. Prophetic Scripture does not shy away from the plight and realities of migrant communities in its abundant narratives of the migrant experiences of ancient Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah (29:4–11) lifts up the “strangers in a foreign land”, the people of Judah. In his “letter to the exiles”, Jeremiah encourages the immigrant community to prepare for a more permanent reality in exile (build houses, plant orchards, give children in marriage). The experience of immigration for many will become a more permanent situation that immigrants recognize will require an effort on their part to “root themselves” in the realities of the context they now live in. And as Jeremiah encouraged the exiles from Judah, immigrants in the past and today are challenged by the call to not simply put down roots, but to “seek the welfare of the city” where they are found, and “pray to the Lord on its behalf.” (Jer. 29:7, NRSV) The church is, then, the space where immigrant communities have sought and continue to seek the welfare of the cities and towns where they are found. But for many immigrants the church may also be one of those places and spaces where they are called to put down roots, and struggle with the reality of migration and settlement. The call to the church, then, is to be a body of people who welcome the immigrant, and provide for ways in which the newcomer, whether from around the corner or from across the world, may find means in which to become not an object of the ministry of the church, but a subject of the witness of the gospel in the body of Christ, and to the larger community. This becoming a subject of ministry—and not an object—presumes that the church will recognize and celebrate the individuality and particularity of each of its members, especially each other’s life story, and its implication in faith, witness, and fellowship.

The apostle Paul reminds us in 1Corinthians 12 that we all have been given multiple gifts from the same Spirit. Racial ethnic members of the body of Christ are no different. Racial ethnic constituencies have multiple gifts of ministry, and can minister within the whole church for the building up of the God’s beloved community and the transformation of the church.

Finally, the intent behind these recommendations is for this church to intentionally and honestly begin an ongoing effort to a path of reconciliation. All we do as children of God we do with the purpose of reaching reconciliation. This task force has a real commitment for this church to achieve reconciliation within its members. In doing so we must be honest with one another, we must acknowledge the historical context and wounds that have shaped and continue

to shape the way we are, the way we do church, and the especially the way we interact and engage different people. An initial step on the path to reconciliation is one that recognizes the explicit and implicit forms of racism in the history of the church, and in its current structures and ministries. The next step is one that intentionally seeks the healing of racial, ethnic, native, and immigrant communities—those in the church and those outside it.

This task force recognizes that these recommendations are not the ultimate solutions for racial ethnic ministries in the PC(USA). What this task force recognizes is the need to begin a conversation with as many people as possible. We want to recognize the gifts we all bring to the body of Christ and recognize that we are all part of the same body. We hope these recommendations will steer the church on the path of reconciliation.

#### Bibliography

*Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) Report on the Church's Effort to Combat Racism.* 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 683ff)

*Comprehensive Strategy with Native Americans.* 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, pp. 206ff)

*Strategy for Church Growth for African American Congregations.* 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 1235ff).

*Racial Ethnic Immigrant Evangelism Church Growth Strategy.* 210th General Assembly (1998) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 406ff)

*Strategy for Ministry with Hispanic-Latino Constituencies in the PC(USA).* 215th General Assembly (2003) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 531ff)

#### Financial Implication

Presbyterian Mission Agency - \$82,210 (2015) \$8,640 (2016)

#### Comment

##### ACREC Advice and Counsel

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises the 221st General Assembly (2014) to approve Item 09-14.

The ACREC thanks the task force members who actively participated on this committee and for this report that presents important observations about issues concerning racial ethnic ministries in the PC(USA). These observations include fast-growing racial ethnic populations in the U.S., new immigrant fellowships, racial ethnic presence in the reorganized regional synod bodies, low representation of candidates and staff at Presbyterian seminaries, and calls for women of color seminarian graduates. These are cutting edge issues that will likely shape the future church.

We support the task force's recommendation for a two-day consultation involving a larger group of persons to develop relevant and effective strategies for racial ethnic ministries. With limited resources, the task force was able to obtain some comments and views from members of the racial ethnic caucuses and other relevant church groups. However, in order to be true to their charge to "review, assess, and explore the call to, responsibility in, and a vision for racial ethnic ministry within the PC(USA)," the task force believes that more responses are needed from a greater variety of people from a "larger regional representation." In order to minimize costs, this two-day consultation could be held just prior to or during the Big Tent in 2015.

We also support the recommendation for a church-wide conference on race, ethnicity, racism, and ethnocentricity. Racism is still a major social and institutional issue in the United States, including our churches. There was an attempt to have a discussion on race with PC(USA) leadership during an ad hoc meeting at the Big Tent in 2013, in reaction to the acquittal in the Trayvon Martin murder trial. An intentional, well-planned conference—where a larger and broader audience would be in attendance—will provide an opportunity for a healthy general discussion about race in the church, and could be the beginning of a road to healing that is still needed in our church.

##### GACOR Comment

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) welcomes the recommended actions in this report, particularly those that strengthen mid council collaboration on translations of materials and the formation of the planning team for the conference on race, ethnicity, racism, and ethnocentricity in 2015. The GACOR reminds commissioners that the responsibilities of all councils above session to demonstrate work on participation and representation (G-3.0103) and unity in diversity (F-1.0403), is accomplished most easily through the work of committees on representation. The complementary nature of the topics directed by the recommendation will provide helpful and coordinated vision for the PC(USA). The short timeline given for this work is our only concern. The GACOR suggests the recommendation make clear the responsibility to report to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) or another designated assembly.

*The General Assembly Committee on Representation is made up of 16 persons, elected by the General Assembly, who are drawn from ruling and teaching elders from across the church. Its mandate and functions are described in G-3.0103 of the Book of Order (Form of Government).*

5/18/2015

Additional Resources

Language - Korean

[National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force-Korean.pdf](#)

Language - Spanish

[09-14.pdf](#)