

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
February 5-7, 2014
Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW Ministry Area

ITEM D.107
FOR ACTION

<i>FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY</i>			
	A. Finance		E. Corporate Property, Legal, Finance
	B. Justice		F. PC(USA), A Corporation
	C. Leadership		G. Audit
X	D. Worshiping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

Subject: **Measure for Measure: Assessing the Effectiveness of *Hearing and Singing New Songs to God.***

Recommendation:

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board on behalf of the Women of Color Consultation team recommends that the 221th General Assembly (2014):

1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to plan a Women of Color Consultation (WoCC) that focuses on the inclusion of women of color of all ages in leadership and decision-making in presbyteries and synods and/or their successor bodies. The next WoCC shall be held no later than the fall of 2015 and be reported to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) with recommendation for further action and study.
2. Direct the Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW ministry area to make available print and electronic resources on cultural competency, antiracism, and antisexism to mid-councils and the larger church.
3. Direct mid councils to provide training and education on cultural competency, antiracism, and antisexism to its Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry with an expectation that issues which are addressed in this training will be disseminated throughout the presbytery at least once every three years beginning in 2015.
4. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to collect information from mid councils on the implementation of cultural competency, antiracism, and antisexism training for Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry and to report its findings to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).
5. Direct mid councils to promote gathering opportunities for women of color within synods and presbyteries for prayer, study, fellowship, and networking by providing financial, technological, space, and other support.

Rationale

2012 Referral: Item 10-16. Women of Color Consultation Committee Report. Recommendation 4. Direct the Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW Ministry Areas, in Consultation with the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, to Plan a Women of Color Consultation (WoCC) That Focuses on the Inclusion of Women of Color of All Ages in Leadership and Decision-Making in Presbyteries and Synods, and/or Their Successor Bodies. the Next

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WoCC Shall Be Held No Later Than the Fall of 2013 and Be Reported on to the 221st General Assembly (2014)—From the General Assembly Mission Council (Minutes, Part I, pp. 61, 75–76, 854–57 of the CD; p. 230 of the printed copy).

Women of Color Consultation Committee Report

“Measure for Measure: Assessing the Effectiveness of ‘Hearing and Singing New Songs to God’” was the theme of the 2013 Women of Color Consultation held at the Presbyterian Center and the SpringHill Suites/Fairfield Inn Hotel in Louisville, KY, on Friday, October 11 to Sunday, October 13. The consultation fulfilled the action of the 220th General Assembly (2012) to call for the creation of a fourth Women of Color Consultation to “be held no later than the fall of 2013,” and was conducted through the Office of Gender and Racial Justice in the Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministry Area in consultation with the Joint Working Group of the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns and the Advocacy Committee for Racial and Ethnic Concerns.

The goals of the consultation were:

- To lift up and affirm the voices, vision, and leadership of women of color in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as the church celebrates the 2009-2022 season of *Hearing and Singing New Songs to God: Shunning Old Discords and Singing New Harmonies*, which calls for the transformation of the church by focusing on the intersections of race, gender and class in its common witness,
- To identify both areas of progress and continuing challenges in the transformation of the church as a beloved community that models equity, mutuality, justice, and accountability,
- To build community, promote healing and wholeness, and foster professional, spiritual, and personal networks among women of color.

These goals supported the objectives of developing a report to the 221st General Assembly (2014) that would include recommendations for furthering the work of equipping the church at all levels to fulfill its gospel witness of equity and inclusion.

Thirty-four women of color served as participants in the consultation. Participants represented a nearly equal representation of African-American, Asian-American, Latina/Chicana, and Native-American individuals from all regions of the United States. Roughly ten participants represented first- and second-generation immigrant groups, and over half were fluent in languages other than English including Korean, Spanish, Mandarin, and Portuguese. They included teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, leaders in mid council/national Presbyterian Women, seminarians, and lay leaders of caucuses and councils. Twelve attendees were young adult women ages 21-40; two were teaching elders honorably retired. Another twelve participants were first-time attendees; the remaining number participated in previous General Assembly-sponsored Women of Color Consultations in 2004, 2008, and/or 2011. Additional personnel included four keynote presenters, a consultation chaplain, two preachers for opening and closing worship, a staff consultation coordinator, and an administrative assistant.

The format of the consultation embodied four key elements: worship, presentations, dialogue, and fellowship. Opening worship Friday evening featured the Word proclaimed by the Rev. Dr. Diane Givens Moffett; Saturday and Sunday opened with devotions shared by participants Mary Jane Miles and Danielle Palomino, and a closing worship service marked the end of work completed by the consultation and included a sermon delivered by the Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter. The Lord’s Supper was celebrated on each day of the consultation. Contributing a ministry of presence and counsel was the role of a chaplain for the event, fulfilled by the Rev. Un Joo Kim.

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Keynote presentations focused on each of the four themes lifted up in 2008 report, *Hearing and Singing New Songs to God: Shunning Old Discords and Sharing New Harmonies*. The themes and keynote speakers included:

- Gender Lens and Intersectionality – *understanding gender-specific needs and realities as they intersect with race, class, and other social realities* by Laura Cheifez
- Making Visible the Leadership of Women of Color–*developing, nurturing, and supporting the leadership and gifts of women of color within the church—beyond token representation* by Elona Street-Stewart
- Church as a System of Privilege and Discrimination– *recognizing and dismantling the ways that the church perpetuates systems of privilege within its own structures and ethos* by Gloria Tate
- Commitment to Inclusivity with Justice – *promoting equity and mutuality as elements of a whole and welcoming beloved community that fosters shared power and access to opportunity* by Magdalena García

Each 45-minute presentation was followed immediately by hour-long roundtable dialogues that explored the keynote themes in depth. The dialogues centered on a series of two-to-three questions developed by the keynote presenters, and the substance of these dialogues was recorded by note-takers identified among participants at each roundtable.

Questions explored at roundtable discussions included:

On Intersectionality:

- How does it transform your relationships to see others and ask to be seen in the fullness of all your identities?
- What kinds of coalitions/collaborations would women of color be able to build if we were moving forward out of an understanding of the mutual constitution of oppression?
- What are concrete recommendations for action?

On Making Visible the Leadership of Women of Color:

- Recognize your own expertise:

Where have you been able to use it in the Church?

- Where has it been denied?

On Church as a System of Privilege and Discrimination:

- What forums have been created or exist in your area (Presbytery/Synod), which provide an opportunity for interaction of women of color? How are you involved? If not, why not?
- If there are not any forums for women of color, in or near the location of your ministry, what barriers have created this void?
- Are there remedies that can be employed, individually, collectively, via middle governing bodies or General Assembly?

On Commitment to Inclusivity with Justice:

- How can we *practice truth telling* without losing hope? What are some *truths* that the church resists? What are some *illusions* that need to be *destroyed*?
- How can we build a church that is a beloved community: *divested* from greed and *invested* in the common good?
- How can the church *foster cultural transformation* through its leadership, policies, structures, and processes?

The roundtable dialogues generated valuable responses and insights. The content was both descriptive, in the form of sharing stories and illustrations drawn from personal experiences, and proscriptive, calling for the transformation of church and society to dismantle systems of oppression and to support systems of and efforts toward inclusion.

The following themes emerged as sources of positivity, transformation, and hope for women of color— as individuals, in relationships with others, and within the structures and systems of church and society:

**“When We Are Telling the Truth, We Are Keeping Hope:”
The Value of Sharing Our Stories**

Participants overwhelmingly celebrated the opportunity to tell their stories, hopes, fears, and joys, unencumbered by concerns for “politeness,” yet committed to the preservation of a “safe space” in which they could “speak the truth in love.” In the words of one participant, “Truth-telling isn’t losing hope. When we keep truth silent then we are dead inside. If we don’t share it, our bodies spoil inside. When we are telling the truth, we are keeping hope.” Of particular significance was the positive effect of intergenerational dialogue. Young adult women expressed appreciation for hearing the wisdom and experience of older participants, while women of advanced ages treasured the perspectives and commitment of younger women to the church. That each roundtable was comprised of women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds made for meaningful cross-cultural exchanges. On the community-building nature of telling and listening to stories, one participant remarked, “I do feel that people call me back to ‘home’.”

Though truth-telling often involved sharing painful stories, it also fostered jubilation over the progress and accomplishments made within the life of the church since the ordinations of the first African American woman, Katie Geneva Cannon, in 1974; the first Latina clergywoman, Blanqui Ontario-Rivera, (1975); the first Asian-American clergywoman whose ordination was received by the denomination (1979), Elizabeth Kwon, and the first Native American clergywoman, Holly Haile-Davis (1986).

“I Empty Myself Before I Relate With Others, So That I May See Them More Fully:” The Value of Authenticity and Trust

Along with worshipping the divinity of Jesus Christ, participants drew inspiration for developing trust-based, authentic relationships with one another from the personhood of Jesus. “Jesus had real relationships with real people, but [the church] often removes Jesus from his incarnation,” shared one participant. To be transformed by the personhood of Jesus Christ was seen as a model for the power of Jesus to transform human relationships with one another, as people recognize and regard their authentic selves. “Being authentic is risky,” was a sentiment acknowledged among many participants, but the risk of vulnerability was regarded overall as valuable in building community, especially among women of color. The processes of truth-telling and story-sharing required participants to demonstrate courage in speaking out, as well as energy and commitment though listening actively to one another. As one Native American participant observed, “I draw strength from being here. All of our stories are so different yet we’re [persevering]. We laugh, we cry, and we know the Indians have different ways of doing things. This type of getting together is curious for me, I want to know what my sisters are going through. We are telling our story. We need to understand ourselves. We don’t need to be paid for our home. We need to let people know who we are. We need to be proud of how we are. We are proud of our descendants.”

To the extent that trust-based, authentic relationships foster solidarity, one participant remarked, “mutual support and love is what will make things transformed, and transformative love is the most compelling thing. Full support of one another makes it possible for love to win.” In the words of another participant, “our common humanity is our call.”

“Seeing Life Through Various Lenses:” The Value of Differences

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Opportunities to learn more about other cultures and to celebrate their contributions to the life and witness of the connectional church were considered major benefits to consultation participants. Unity, as opposed to uniformity, emerged as a desirable goal, not only as the bedrock of solidarity among women of color, but also for the church as a whole. The concept of intersectionality, deepened to explore the notion of *mutual constituencies*, added to the ways in which participants perceived and understood aspects of their identities. Many participants recognized the value of differences, both among groups of people and contained within individuals, given that individual identities are made up of many parts that include such things as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, class, and physical and mental ability. Said one participant, "I value the lenses through which others perceive themselves and my own lenses of self-perception; we gain much when we see one another as multi-dimensional beings."

The mutual support required for valuing differences was affirmed in another's reflection: "to be asked to be seen in my fullness requires of others to be accepting of the "other" on all levels and dynamics of social constructionism...it would require them to accept me as an equal, created in the image of God, no less, no more, than another..."

The following themes emerged as pernicious sources of challenge and opposition for women of color—as individuals, in relationships with others, and within the structures and systems of church and society:

“I Don’t Know What I Don’t Know:” Sources of Non-Disclosure and Lack of Guidance

Many participants illuminated personal experiences of receiving incomplete, incorrect, or even no information about navigating the systems and structures within the church. This was most often experienced at every stage of preparation for and engagement in ministries as teaching elders, though this was also true for those involved in other leadership capacities. "There seems to be this 'hidden' network of 'secret' knowledge about being mentored to move through processes that my white male colleagues somehow receive to which I've never been exposed," expressed one participant, a sentiment reiterated by many others.

For women who worship and/or serve in predominately nonwhite congregations, the impact of the disconnection between some presbyteries and some racial/ethnic congregations compounds this "knowledge vacuum." While a number of programs and initiatives exist throughout the church that lift up opportunities for mission and service that may be of particular interest to women of color, many women lamented the fact that they are rarely mentioned, advertised, or promoted within their contexts.

**“We Are Always Forced to Compete for the Crumbs Under the Table:”
The Fear of Scarcity of Resources**

Nearly all participants lamented the lack of support networks, particularly within Presbyteries. More than a few participants recalled networks, groups, organizations, and programs that existed previously for and were created by women of color, but noted that with shrinking budgets and frequent restructurings, many of those opportunities and initiatives disappeared. Mid councils have experienced difficulties in recent years in maintaining and/or supporting ministries that equip women of color in overcoming isolation and marginalization within the systemic structures of the church. What little financial or other resources that *are* allocated often position marginalized groups in competition with one another for limited offerings.

On the notion of dwindling resources, one participant voiced dismay that the problem, as she experienced it in her context, was *not* that resources were scarce within her mid council, but that the way in which it manages resources was what was crippling its witness among marginalized people. Similarly, one seminary student cited "how we distribute scholarship money in seminaries – [I'm] always amazed by the fact that my really wealthy friends get the same financial aid as friends who have to work two full-time jobs and be full-time students to attend seminary." A sentiment expressed by more than a few participants was concern about what they perceived as the "corporatization" of the church, in that it

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appears to them to rely too heavily on corporate models for direction (with “the bottom line *as* the bottom line,” so to speak) instead of a sense of an ecclesiological mission rooted in the promotion of the realm of God.

Yet another perspective that resonated among many was the impact of shifting demographics within the United States on the “culture of fear” perceived among those in the church who belong to the dominant culture. Many sensed a reaction of panic, anxiety, jealousy, and fear among some in the dominant culture as the country becomes populated increasingly by Latino, Chicano, Asian, Black, and other nonwhite groups, as the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. is currently 91.8% White. These reactions are seen as fueling a “hoarder” mentality that, as one participant observed, “reinforces a myth of scarcity instead of recognizing the God of abundance. God’s love and grace are sufficient.”

Scarcity of material resources was not the only plague identified by participants. Tremendous strains on their time and energy were also identified as barriers to promoting networks and connections among women of color: “In my context in which I am over-worked and over-committed, especially as I am one of the only people of color in my mid council region, I have no extra time or energy free to give to building new networks.” Burnout was cited as a significant burden among many.

**“I’m Done Making Tacos for Christ:” Tokenism and the Lack of Accountability
for Inclusion and Equity**

“...I don’t mind, but I refuse to [make tacos at diversity potlucks] if we won’t have serious dialogue,” insisted one participant, speaking to the inclination of her worshipping community to strive simply for symbolic diversity instead of systemic transformation for the achievement of inclusivity and equity. Much frustration was expressed by participants over the disturbing trend among many structures within the life of the church to solicit one or two participants of color to serve, only to ignore their perspectives or fail to utilize their gifts or skills. In some cases, the opposite danger of under-utilization was over-burdening of the few women of color in predominately white contexts with multiple responsibilities for addressing “all things diversity-related.”

Another frustration voiced by participants was their invisibility within mid councils in the processes of nomination to committees and task forces dealing with mission and ministry *not* related to diversity: “I have an accounting degree and work in financial services and I’ve not once been asked to serve on the presbytery’s budget committee,” one participant expressed. Many others noted that Committees on Ministry and other “power” committees within presbyteries were not swift to include their participation. One of the most prevalent sources of discontent among participants was the lack of accountability within the systems of the church for upholding actions, policies, and commitments related to inclusivity and equity. While the denomination has denounced the sins of racism and sexism through various confessions and resolutions, some question to what extent the church recognizes the pain, violence, and harm that these “isms” inflict: “[Mid councils] have *not* neglected to implement mandatory trainings on clergy sexual abuse and child abuse policies, for fear that not doing so would make them liable to lawsuits. Isn’t discrimination abuse? Why hasn’t the church upheld trainings to prevent the abuses of racism and sexism? Is it that there hasn’t yet been a lawsuit that might cause worry? Is it only then that it will become a priority?”

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Financial Implications Cover Sheet for Reports to the General Assembly

Name of Agency Submitting Report: PMA Program: RE&WM/PW Date: 12/30/13

Contact Person: Rhashell Hunter Telephone#: 569-5494

This RGA cover sheet must be submitted with each Report to the General Assembly. Even if the report does not contain financial implications, the cover sheet must be attached stating that there are no financial implications. Any report received without the financial implications sheet will be returned. **If you have any questions about the form, please contact the Financial Implications Team: Chris Nicholas at 502-569-5411 for per capita, and Andrea McNicol at 502-569-5555 or Denise Hampton at 502-569-5575 for mission budget related financial implications.**

Name of Report: Women of Color Consultation 2013

1. Does this report include recommendations that have financial implications? YES X
2. If YES: (Attach extra sheets, if necessary)
 - a. Identify the area of the reports which have financial implications.
Recommendation 1
 - b. Define the components of the financial implications (basis for computation only). (For new committees/taskforces- please limit as far as possible to two face to face meetings, plus two virtual meetings & conference calls – from GA to next GA)
One Women of Color Consultation (consultation plus one in-person planning meeting with Joint Women of Color Working Group)
 - c. Identify the proposed source of funding, and the year it will impact (2014/ 2015/2016):
 - (1) Per Capita: OGA ___ Presbyterian Mission Agency X
 - (2) Presbyterian Mission Agency:
 - (a) **Unrestricted** or Restricted (Circle one)
 - (b) Restricted Source _____
3. If there are financial implications, are these being absorbed in the current year budget? NO X
If YES, what is the source of funding: _____
4. Have these financial implications received approval from the following sources?
_____OGA/Presbyterian Mission Agency (Circle one)
_____Presbyterian Mission Agency Program: (Theology, Worship & Education, Evangelism & Church Growth, Compassion, Peace & Justice, World Mission, Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministry/PW, Communications & Funds Development) (Circle one)
_____Other Entities (BOP, Foundation, PILP, PPC, CFD, SS) (Circle one)
_____Advisory/Advocacy Committees (ACSWP, ACEIR, ACREC, ACWC, Other _____)
5. If the action proposed in report involves another ministry area to do something, has this been discussed with the areas concerned? YES X (If Yes, give names)

EDO – Courtney Hoekstra, Associate for Advocacy Committee Support (staff liaison to Joint Women of Color Working Group)