

ITEM D.300
ADVICE AND COUNSEL MEMORANDUM

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns offers the following advice and counsel on Item D.204 Middle Eastern Ministries:

Middle Eastern congregations are in need of staff resourcing at the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) who understand Middle Eastern cultures and Christianity and needs and who can assist congregational groups to start to thrive. This relationship with PMA would benefit the local Middle Eastern communities and strengthen the denomination. The need for a full-time Associate and office for Middle Eastern Ministries are particularly crucial in these times when an increasing influx of Christian Middle Easterners from the birthplace of Christianity into the United States.

Even though the present part time associate for Middle Eastern Ministries is performing heroically, we believe that the present situation of having a part time associate, hired for only 19 hours per week, without benefits, and having the position as an annual contract is indicative of insufficient support for this important area of ministry.

The office of the General Assembly (OGA) considers that a Middle Eastern ethnicity is of sufficient importance to keep statistics on Middle Eastern membership and assures nominations of Middle Easterners on various General Assembly committees. It is clear that the General Assembly and the Office of the General Assembly view ethnicity to be an important factor in the various ministries of the Church rather than limiting the church to the US Government census classifications of “race.”

We note the hiring of several associates for ministry for other ethnic groups by PMA after closing down the Middle East Ministries Office. We urge the PMA to demonstrate equity and fairness in restoring the Middle East constituency office, budget allocation, hiring of staff of Middle Eastern descent, including the hiring of a full time associate for Middle Eastern Ministries to support Middle East Presbyterian Caucus and Middle Eastern bible study groups, fellowships, and congregations in the United States.

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board to:

1. Hire a full time associate for Middle Eastern Ministries to support the Middle East Presbyterian Caucus and Middle Eastern bible study groups, fellowships, and congregations in the United States.
2. Restore the Office for the Middle East and the original office budget before the office was closed.
3. Hire one additional Field Staff who is fluent in the Arabic language and Middle Eastern culture.
4. Recognize “Middle Eastern” as a Racial/Ethnic category on all forms and reports.