

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
February 3-5, 2016
Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries Ministry Area

ITEM C.103
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
X	C. Leadership		G. Audit
	D. Worshiping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

Subject: “Empowered & Hopeful” - Women of Color Consultation Report

Recommendation:

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board on behalf of the Women of Color Consultation planning team recommends that the 222nd General Assembly (2016):

- 1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency through Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries to continue to sponsor racial ethnic and women's leadership institutes to develop women of color leaders in the church, so that they will have opportunities to serve fully in ministry and leadership.**
- 2. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency through Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries to continue to provide and support opportunities for women of color to attend trainings and professional development events.**

Rationale

2014 Referral: Item 08-10. Measure for Measure: Assessing the Effectiveness of Hearing and Singing New Songs to God. Recommendation 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—From the Presbyterian Mission Agency (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp.14, 42, 518–22; p. 224 of the print copy).

Background

The Presbyterian Mission Agency planned a Women of Color Consultation, which was held on November 12-14, 2015, in Greensboro, NC. A planning team working with the Office of Women’s Leadership Development, Young Women’s Ministries, and the Office of Gender and Racial Justice in Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries met several times in the fall of 2015 to plan the consultation.

The theme for the 2015 Women of Color Consultation was “Empowered & Hopeful.” The focal scripture for the consultation is from Jeremiah 29:11: “*For surely I know the plans that I have for you, says the*

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
February 3-5, 2016
Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries Ministry Area
C.103

Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” The goals of the consultation were:

1. To build community, promote healing and wholeness, and foster personal, spiritual and personal networks among women of color;
2. To empower women of color to become transformational leaders as the church lives into the vision of God's intercultural community; and
3. To engage in dialogue through women's listening groups, share hopes and dreams, and work toward enabling the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide opportunities for women of color to serve in all levels of ministry and leadership.

The consultation celebrated the gifts of women of color at all levels in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and acknowledged that women of color have unique challenges in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Women of Color planning team finds great value in the racial ethnic and women's leadership institutes and urges Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries in the Presbyterian Mission Agency to continue to sponsor leadership institutes for women of color, in an effort to not only acknowledge the unique challenges of women of color in ministry and leadership but to work toward enabling the church to provide opportunities for women of color to fully live out their calls in ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Women of Color Planning team also values Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries' providing of opportunities and support for women of color to attend trainings and professional development events. While training and support are only one part of a larger system in need of transformation, some women of color have been called into greater leadership and ministry roles as a result of networking and training provided by these leadership institutes, trainings, and events. The church also shows, more importantly, through these trainings and events that it values women of color in ministry and leadership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Systemic racism, sexism, and homophobia have impacted the calling of women pastoral leaders to serve in local congregations, as well as the process of ordination and preparation towards ordered ministry. This has influenced the ability or inability of women of color to fully live out their calls in ministry and leadership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

It comes as no surprise to some that there are those in the church who are resistant to women of color in ministry and leadership. And more insidious, are those who choose to disregard racism, sexism and homophobia in the church and society. Choosing to disregard these unique challenges of women of color in their everyday lives and ministries, however, does not make discrimination go away. This simply allows persons to ignore discrimination and the disadvantages and lack of opportunities for women of color to fully flourish in the church and society.

The listening groups responses at the Women of Color Consultation have been compiled into a report, which is available from the Office of Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries. Over fifty-five women of color participated in the Women of Color Consultation listening visits, representing a diversity of ages and ethnicities. Participants included African Americans, Africans, Native Americans, Hispanics/Latinas, Middle Easterners, Asians, and Koreans. Teaching and ruling elders were present, as well as seminarians, mid-council leaders, national church staff, and leaders in Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA).

The format of the consultation focused on three key areas: worship, listening, and community building. Each session had a facilitator and a recorder. The listening groups were intended to listen to women of color and hear their joys and concerns. “The book of Jeremiah is about catastrophe and survival, destruction and rebuilding, grief and joy. Its themes echo and contradict one another to create a poignant symphony of tragedy and hope. Images of women abound in the book. . . , yet if women approach the

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
February 3-5, 2016
Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries Ministry Area
C.103

book critically, they may find that its sufferings mirror their own pain and its hope promises them a different future” (pg. 169, “Jeremiah,” Kathleen M. O’Connor In *The Women’s Bible Commentary*).

Conclusion:

The 2015 Women of Color Consultation focused on those who were in the room, namely the women of color. Though there were discussions of how to illuminate and address racism, sexism, discrimination and marginalization, this consultation focused on the women, themselves, and it was a joyous celebration of worship, dance, music, preaching, sharing, networking and becoming “empowered and hopeful,” as the church works toward becoming God’s intercultural community. These women of color participating in the consultation value difference, both within and outside of their ethnic and cultural groups. These women of color leaders expressed appreciation for being provided the opportunity to participate in the consultation.



Financial Implication Cover Sheet

Report to the General Assembly

2016

A Financial Implication Cover Sheet should accompany each Report to the General Assembly (RGA).

Report Name - "Empowered & Hopeful": Women of Color Consultation Report

Agency - Presbyterian Mission Agency

Date - February 3-5, 2016

Contact - Jewel McRae

1) Does the report include a recommendation(s) that has a financial impact? **NO**

a) Please identify each recommendation and the component(s) of its cost. *

R.1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency through Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries to continue to sponsor racial ethnic and women's leadership institutes to develop women of color leaders in the church, so that they will have opportunities to serve fully in ministry and leadership. Cost will be absorbed from office program budgets for leadership institutes.

R.2. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency through Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries to continue to provide and support opportunities for women of color to attend trainings and professional development events. Cost will be absorbed from office program budgets for women's empowerment, scholarships and transformational Leadership development.

*Meetings should detail the number of attendees, number of days and the year in which it will occur. Printed resources should detail the estimated page length and the intended distribution audience.

2) Has a General Assembly entity been asked to perform a task? If so,

a) Please identify the staff member that was consulted. Jewel McRae along with the Planning Team

3) Will the General Assembly entity absorb the costs associated with this RGA? If so,

a) What Program(s) will be discontinued? None

b) What additional sources of funding have been identified?

For Assistance Contact

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Presbyterian Mission Agency

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