

Report C.001  
Leadership Committee  
Presbyterian Mission Agency Board  
April 24, 2014

The Leadership Mission Committee met on Thursday, April 24, 2014 in Louisville, KY and forwards the following to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board:

I. For Consent: No items.

II. For Action

- A. That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve the comment on Overture 051, “On Distinguishing Between Biblical Terms for Israel and Those Applied to the Modern Political State of Israel in Christian Liturgy – From the Presbytery of Chicago” to the 221st GA (2014). ([C.102](#))

For Information

- A. Received and approved the February 6, 2014 Leadership Committee Minutes. ([C.101](#))
- B. Heard a report on Grace and Gratitude from Charles Wiley. ([C.207](#))
- C. Heard an update on the Small Church Residency Program (formerly named *For Such A Time As This*) from Cynthia Cushman. ([C.206](#))
- D. Heard an update on the work of the Office of Interfaith Relations from Christine Hong. ([C.208](#))
- E. Heard a report on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women from Rhashell Hunter. ([C.200](#))
- F. Heard a report on the June 18-21, 2015 Presbyterian Women Churchwide Gathering from Mary Jorgensen. ([C.201](#))
- G. Received an update on Cook Native American Ministries from Vince Patton. ([C.204](#)) The Committee approved sending a letter of appreciation to Suanne Ware-Diaz for her service as Executive Director of Cook Native American Ministries to be written by staff in Racial Ethnic & Women’s Ministries/PW.
- H. Received the September 16-18, 2013 and February 25-26, 2014 Minutes of the Committee on Theological Education, presented by Lee Hinson-Hasty. ([C.209](#) & [C.210](#)) Heard a brief update on the work at Union Presbyterian Seminary from Brian Blount, President.
- I. Heard a presentation on Racial Ethnic Leadership Development from Rhashell Hunter and Vince Patton. (Verbal)
- J. Reviewed Mission Personnel Actions for December 2013 – February 2014, presented by Nancy Cavalcante ([C.205](#)) and the Committee was invited to choose a name from the Mission Personnel website ([www.pcusa.org/missionconnections](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections)) and read that individuals newsletter.
- K. Kevin Yoho was appointed to the Mission Personnel Subcommittee.
- L. Participated in a RE&WM/PW Fast Facts Quiz, presented by Rhashell Hunter. ([C.202](#))
- M. Heard a report on RE&WM/PW GA Events from Vince Patton. ([C.203](#))

**Report C.001  
Leadership Mission Committee  
Presbyterian Mission Agency Board  
April 24, 2014**

- N. Heard an update on the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel from Ed Brogan and Lawrence Greenslit. (Verbal)
- P. Heard an update on conversations about considering new approaches to the Presbyterian Mission Agency's leadership development programs from Nancy Ramsay, Kevin Yoho, Chip Hardwick and Vince Patton. (Verbal)

**ITEM C.102  
 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
<b>x</b>	C. Leadership		G. Audit
	D. Worshiping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

**Subject:** Comment to the 221<sup>st</sup> GA (2014) - Overture 051 “On Distinguishing Between Biblical Terms for Israel and Those Applied to the Modern Political State of Israel in Christian Liturgy”

**Recommendation:**

**That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve the following comment on Overture 051, “On Distinguishing Between Biblical Terms for Israel and Those Applied to the Modern Political State of Israel in Christian Liturgy —From the Presbytery of Chicago” to the 221<sup>st</sup> GA (2014).**

**Comment:**

Integral to the narrative of salvation history in the Scriptures is particularity. Christians have long dealt with the so-called “scandal of particularity” that roots God’s relation with humankind as one mediated through particular individuals and peoples, most importantly through Jesus of Nazareth. This unfolding of salvation history means that God’s covenant with Israel cannot be dispensed with by contemporary Christians. *Israel* is part of our spiritual and theological vocabulary.

At the same time, the General Assembly has articulated a number of times that Christians should distinguish between the people Israel in the Scriptures and the modern state of Israel. The distinction between ancient Israel and the modern State of Israel is important, one that helps us make sense of our faith and its relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people.

The importance of these distinctions was recognized and articulated by our denomination in the document “A Theological Understanding of the Relationship Between Christians and Jews,” which was commended by the 199<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1987) for study and reflection. That document makes the distinction in this way: “Both Christianity and Judaism claim relationship with the ancient people Israel; the use of the ‘Israel’ in this study is restricted to its ancient reference. When referring to the contemporary State of Israel this document will use ‘State of Israel.’” (Section on “Definitions and Language”) In 2004, the 216<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted a resolution on Christian Zionism that expressed that “Christian Zionism does not represent the majority of American Christians and the faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” [<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/resolution-confronting-christian-zionism/>]. Among other things, Christian Zionism is the belief that Christians are required by their faith to support the policies of the modern state of Israel.

At the same time we must also be careful not to claim that God’s covenant is strictly limited to *ancient* Israel. While it is a danger to confuse the biblical narrative of Israel with the modern state, there is also a

danger in declaring that God's particular relationship with the people Israel ended in the time of the New Testament.

In our present situation congregations and individual Presbyterians will hear the language of "Israel" in multiple different ways. In some cases, "Israel" will be understood to be the present day State of Israel. In other cases, talk about "Israel" and the Old Testament narratives of the people of Israel will be a way of entering into God's work of deliverance from oppression, living life as sojourners, and God's promise of entry into a place of abundance.

This Overture is a call for educational help in having a clear understanding of important distinctions, the distinctions articulated in "A Theological Understanding of the Relationship Between Christians and Jews." The distinctions made in that document can help Presbyterians speak of "Israel" (both as an ancient people and a contemporary nation) with clarity, insight, and faithfulness. Any additional educational materials on this subject would need to be contextually sensitive to congregations and their particular conversation partners.