

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP IN TROUBLED TIMES

THE PRESBYTERIAN LAY COMMITTEE

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Introduction

In the fall of 2003, the Presbyterian Lay Committee issued a “Declaration of Conscience” regarding faithful stewardship by members of the Presbyterian Church (USA). That statement said:

We believe that God has called us individually to be faithful stewards of all that he has entrusted to us, and has called us as officers of our congregations to ensure that offerings are consistently used to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and carry out his Great Commission. ... We encourage all individuals and sessions to exercise their stewardship responsibility and right to determine how money entrusted to them is spent.

The underlying theme of the “Declaration of Conscience” is that mission gifts should be directed to ministries at home and abroad that are demonstrably faithful to the gospel. To that end, the Presbyterian Lay Committee encourages “prayerful study” among individuals and sessions to determine which ministries are deserving of their support.

Since the “Declaration of Conscience” was issued, there have been many requests for a resource offering general guidelines on how to exercise faithful stewardship that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ and carries out his Great Commission. This handbook is the result.

It is organized in a sequential format so that anyone beginning to research whether to support a particular ministry – be it a local, regional, national or international missionary or mission project – can follow an orderly, step-by-step process before making a decision.

This handbook begins with a theological framework for making stewardship decisions; looks at the current trends affecting mission giving today; offers a list of questions for consideration before making a decision on mission giving; and provides a glossary defining the terms used in the process for mission giving.

Finally, it provides the full text of the “Declaration of Conscience,” which concludes by saying:

We urge all who share continued commitment to Holy Scripture as the

infallible rule of faith and practice to work together for the glory of God and the strengthening of his witness in the world.

Theological Framework

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Matthew 28:16-20

Scripture first calls on all of us to proclaim Jesus Christ alone as the Savior of the world, preaching his Word and making disciples of all nations. Second, the Bible calls on us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, minister to widows and orphans and reach out to those suffering in other ways:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Matthew 25:31-46

This is reaching out to the world with both hands – evangelism and social righteousness. In order to properly carry out the Great Ends of the Church:

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

Book of Order: G-1.0200 2.

During America's early history, tending to the needs of the poor was primarily a function of the church. Over time, however, largely due to the public influence of churches, the U.S. government developed an extensive welfare system to address the needs of the poor. Today, entitlement and welfare programs consume a major portion of the federal budget. Churches continue to administer services of compassion, of course, but they no longer play a commanding role in the nation's war on poverty.

In their own compassionate ministries to the poor, then, it is critical that congregations recognize their unique calling to address human needs with the unambiguous proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ – salvation through his spiritually transforming love and grace. It is this proclamation that the church alone can make, and the church should not forfeit it by settling for programs that offer a mere supplement to the otherwise secular national welfare system.

This requirement clearly, and repeatedly, is stated in Scripture (Matthew 25; John 13; Phil. 2; Matt. 28; Acts 1; Luke 4:14-21). This balance between a Scriptural understanding of mission and witness should be the goal of any individual or session determining what projects it should support, and the manner in which these projects will be administered.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor. ...

Isaiah 61:1-2

Current Trends

Several trends have emerged in recent years regarding support for mission projects, both within the Presbyterian Church (USA) and outside it. These trends clearly identify a change in how mission is viewed – moving away from strictly social service to more projects that balance that service with the proclamation of the gospel in the fulfillment of the Great Ends of the Church.

This is not an exhaustive listing of those trends, but highlights of the major forces that seem to be defining mission today. Those trends include:

- More designated support.
- More local support.
- The unambiguous proclamation of the gospel.
- A ‘less is more’ approach.
- Working together.
- Directed mission support.
- Extra Commitment Opportunities program.
- Validated mission support groups.
- Ecclesiastical fees.

More Designated Support

The mission support budget in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in fiscal 2003 totaled \$123.6 million. Of that total, \$89.3 million (72.2 percent) was donor restricted, meaning that it was designated for specific projects. The unrestricted, or undesignated, portion was \$34.4 million (27.7 percent).

This trend continues a movement away from undesignated giving and toward designated support for specified mission projects. Many members in congregations across the country desire more accountability in determining where their gifts go, and directing funds toward mission projects that are meaningful to them provides a connection with those projects.

This connection, arising out of the Great Commission, enables them to deter-

mine if there is a balance between service and witness in a specific project, if that balance is providing good value for their funds, and if the service project – whether a local hospice care facility, a national disaster relief effort or sending missionaries abroad – also is fulfilling the Great Commission.

As the trend toward designated giving (primarily toward Worldwide Ministries projects and support of missionary personnel) has increased and denominational officials find they have fewer undesignated dollars to work with for non-evangelistic tasks, they are diverting undesignated money that once supported world missions into other, less popular programs. The desire for accountability plays just as important a role in this area, and congregational members may decide that, after careful investigation and prayerful consideration, they want to direct some of this undesignated money if they find they object to the programs being funded.

Of the mission budget's \$123.6 million income, the denomination's Worldwide Ministries Division received \$42.8 million (34.6 percent). Of that \$42.8 million, \$36.8 million came from donor-restricted dollars and only \$6 million came from the unrestricted portion of the budget.

The Worldwide Ministries Division spent \$14.4 million of its budget on mission personnel – or, to put it another way, 2.8 cents of the dollar in the total budget was allocated to missionary salaries. In addition, it costs an estimated 6.2 cents of the dollar to provide training, deploying and maintaining mission personnel.

More Local Support

There is a growing movement that is providing less “general support” for denominational, synod and presbytery mission projects and providing more “local support” for mission projects.

In many cases, congregations are more willing to fund and support local social service and outreach programs – programs in which they can establish a personal connection and better accountability for their gifts.

Unambiguous Proclamation of the Gospel

A greater importance is being placed on an unambiguous proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through mission projects. Across the country, many members of congregations identify the Great Commission as the key ingredient in a balance between service and witness, between evangelism and social righteousness.

Subsequently, they want their gifts to support mission projects where the explicit witness to Jesus Christ is very clear, whether or not the project is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

'Less Is More' Approach

As these congregations gain more accountability as to where their gifts go, and direct their funds toward mission projects that are meaningful to them, they are moving away from big mission staffs and numerous mission committees and

toward a “less is more” approach in mission projects. This approach more and more looks at strengthening mission networks and partnerships.

Developing a personal connection with mission projects, and working on networks and partnerships, has enabled them to streamline the process for directing funds and participating in projects. Funding a local hospice care facility and volunteering a few hours a month at the facility, for example, has much more immediate impact in service and witness than sitting on a presbytery’s health care committee.

This direct, “hands-on approach” to mission projects has more tangible results than participating in committees that simply discuss the subject of mission.

Working Together

As many members of congregations turn more and more toward a “hands-on approach” to mission projects, there is a growing trend of congregations cooperating with one another in working on various local, regional and global mission projects that, in many instances, are too big for a single congregation to support. Mission trips that are sponsored by one or a cluster of several congregations are an increasingly popular activity.

These group efforts, for the reasons cited above, bypass denominational structures in favor of a more efficient approach that produces immediate and tangible results.

Directed Mission Support

In response to the growing desire of congregations to restrict their gifts, the General Assembly established a budget category called “Directed Mission Support.” In essence, this program assures donor congregations that they can channel their gifts into selected programs within the mission budget.

Many congregations assume that this method allows them to support parts of the budget that they endorse, while not funding those programs within the budget that they oppose. In terms of the overall administration of the Directed Mission Support program, this assumption is incorrect.

Suppose, for example, that your congregation designates its mission support gift to the Worldwide Ministries Division because it does not wish to support the Washington Office, which is in the National Ministries Division. Your gift will be directed as you request. But another congregation’s gift, which was not restricted, may be channeled 100 percent into the Washington Office, with none of it going to Worldwide Ministries.

This budget shuffling mitigates the effect of your directed mission gift. Your congregation may experience a good feeling about having named the program that it favors but, because it used the Directed Mission Support approach, your congregation’s choice will have a practical effect only if all mission funds from other congregations also are directed. After the shuffling takes place, each program will receive exactly the amount that was specified in the approved budget.

The Directed Mission Support Pledging Process

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has established a set of guidelines for pledging Direct Mission Support to projects outside a local congregation's area. They are offered here for informational purposes.

The denomination publishes a Direct Mission Support catalog that is mailed to each church, presbytery and synod in September. Free copies also can be obtained by calling the Presbyterian Distribution Service at (800) 524-2612.

Pledge forms are included in the catalog. These forms should be sent to the Gift Administration Office to assure that gifts are properly recorded.

1. The Pledge Process

The people (individuals, officers, those on the congregation's mission committee, the pastor, etc.) responsible for mission support should review the catalog to identify likely projects.

A. If a congregation has pledged to support projects in the previous year, and those projects are continued for the present year, they may renew their support for those projects by sending the completed form by the date listed in the catalog, usually mid-February. After the published deadline, pledges will be accepted up to the project limit as they are received. The Gift Administration Office cannot accept pledges greater than the previous year's amount if the project is fully subscribed or funded.

B. If a congregation is selecting a project to support for the first time, those conducting the review process should note that projects appearing with a shaded background in the catalog traditionally are fully subscribed/funded and do not need additional support. Projects that appear without a shaded background are not fully subscribed or funded.

C. A congregation is encouraged to choose alternative projects during its selection process. These projects should be listed in the "Alternate Project Selection" section at the bottom of the pledge form. This will assist the Gift Administration Office staff in processing pledge requests.

2. After A Pledge Is Submitted

A. Once the project is selected and approved by the session, send the completed pledge form to the Gift Administration Office (the address is listed on the form. This is not the same as the basic mission support pledge form required annually by the presbytery. Do not send checks with the pledge form.

B. When the Gift Administration Office receives a pledge form, staff members check the selections for availability. If all the selections are available, a copy of the pledge form will be returned to the congregation.

C. If a congregation has chosen a project or projects that is/are unavailable (fully subscribed/funded, no longer current) and have indicated alternate projects, the alternates will be checked for availability and accepted if possible. If alternate projects are accepted, a copy of the pledge form will be returned to the congrega-

tion. If alternate projects are unavailable, the partially accepted pledge form will be returned to the congregation for the selection of different projects. The form then should be re-submitted.

D. If a congregation has chosen only one project without listing an alternate selection and that project is unavailable, the pledge form will be returned to the congregation for the selection of another project.

E. If a congregation has chosen several projects without listing any alternates and one or more are unavailable, the partially accepted pledge form will be returned to the congregation for the selection of different projects. The form then should be re-submitted.

F. Congregations are advised not only to obtain copies of the accepted pledge form and a receipt, but also to notify administrators of the recipient project to ensure that their gift is properly tracked.

G. A congregation also has the option of having its funds go to the shared portion of Basic Mission Support.

H. A copy of the accepted pledge form will be sent to the congregation's synod and presbytery. A copy also will be given to the appropriate General Assembly ministry division so that the congregation will be added to the mailing list for any mission service worker(s) for whom its pledge is accepted.

3. The Process For Remitting Funds

A. The person responsible for writing checks for the congregation should receive a copy of the accepted pledge form.

A congregation is reminded not to send funds until it has received notification from the Gift Administration Office that the pledge has been accepted.

B. The congregation should send a check to its regular receiving site (presbytery, synod, or central receiving office of the General Assembly). The check should indicate what project number(s) the congregation is supporting. When sending gifts, indicate what year the project support covers.

C. Do not send funds to the Gift Administration Office. Send all funds to a congregation's regular receiving site.

D. If a congregation sends funds in support of a project, but has not pledged to that project, the Gift Administration Office cannot guarantee that the funds will be directed to that program. If that program is fully subscribed/funded, then the funds will be redirected to a similar project by the Gift Administration Office's staff.

E. Congregations are advised not only to obtain copies of the accepted pledge form and a receipt, but also to notify administrators of the recipient project to ensure that their gift is properly tracked.

Extra Commitment Opportunities

Another designated gift program established by the denomination is called "Extra Commitment Opportunities." In this program, congregations are offered

the opportunity to specify restricted gifts via a catalog of nearly 1,000 projects. As the title implies, this program is designed to facilitate extra or over and above giving.

Denominational officials hope that congregations will fund projects in the catalog only after they have made undesignated gifts to the general mission budget, but there is no requirement that they do so. Donors are assured that if they include the appropriate form for a particular Extra Commitment Opportunity project with their gift, only that project will be funded and it will not be equalized by the budget shuffling procedures that occur in the Directed Mission Support option described on pages 13-15. We advise donors who use this option not only to obtain a receipt that specifies their restriction, but to notify administrators of the recipient project in order to ensure that their gift is properly tracked.

Many evangelicals, who criticize the fact that the General Assembly has addressed the problem of declining income by cutting support for missionaries, are looking at Extra Commitment Opportunities as a way to direct their gifts entirely to missionaries. Mission co-workers (missionaries) now can directly solicit funds to Extra Commitment Opportunities that have been set up for their direct accounts. This only has been set up for a few people, but the option is expected to be expanded.

In addition, mission co-workers recently began sending out requests to congregations and individuals for financial support for their ministries, accompanied by a supporting letter from the director of the Worldwide Ministries Division. The support requested is not for salary, but for program finances – travel, office and equipment.

Validated Mission Support Groups

There are three independent organizations, known as Validated Mission Support Groups, that raise money for missions and help the denomination select missionaries so that the Presbyterian Church (USA) maintains an evangelical voice in the mission field. Each of these organizations offers a catalog of mission projects. Some of these projects are funded directly by the organization (The Outreach Foundation), while others are contracted between the organization (Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and the Medical Benevolence Foundation) and the denomination's Worldwide Ministries Division.

The organization monitors each project and ensures that the money was spent in accordance with the donor congregation's directions. This monitoring activity ensures that the denomination will not divert the gift to support general mission purposes, such as hiring people who essentially do secular work while appearing to be missionaries.

The validated mission support groups are:

The Outreach Foundation
318 Seaboard Lane
Suite 205
Franklin, TN 37067

Phone: (800) 791-5023; (615) 778-8881
Fax: (615) 778-8887
E-mail: info@theoutreachfoundation.org

Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship
574 Prairie Center Drive
#135-313
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
Phone: (800) 720-4PFF; (952) 903-9PFF
Fax: (612) 869-1888
E-mail: info@pff.net

Medical Benevolence Foundation
International Headquarters
3100 S. Gessner
Suite 210
P.O. Box 770636
Houston, TX 77063-3743
(800) 547-7627

Ecclesiastical Fees

In 2004, the General Assembly Council voted to levy a five percent administrative fee on all designated gifts beginning Jan. 1, 2005. The money received from this fee goes directly into the undesignated budget of the denomination and may be used in any manner that is determined by the General Assembly Council.

There is no escape from paying this administrative fee to the denomination, although it is reduced to one percent when gifts are made through the Validated Mission Support Groups.

The three Validated Mission Support Groups handle administrative costs differently:

- Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship charges no administrative fees for handling donor-designated gifts, ensuring that 100 percent of a donor's gift (less the administration surcharge applied by the denomination) goes directly to the selected project.
- The Medical Benevolence Foundation charges a five percent administrative fee, to which is added the surcharge applied by the denomination.
- The Outreach Foundation applies 5 percent of each gift to its administrative budget, to which is added the surcharge applied by the denomination.

Questions For Consideration

As individuals, sessions and congregations consider whether to support a particular ministry, there are questions that should be considered in promoting, funding, shaping and overseeing evangelistic mission opportunities – whether in the local congregation, the presbytery, the synod or at the national or global levels.

Such questions were offered by the Pittsburgh Presbytery Mission Think Tank during a recent Gathering sponsored by the Presbyterian Coalition. This task force, comprised of Rob Weingartner, Don Dawson and Dave Hackett, described mission as “both the very essence of the local church and the most confusing element of the local church. Think of how easy it is to unite a church by noting how it needs to be more involved in mission. Who does not want to be involved in a church that is ‘committed to mission?’”

The task force posed the questions so that a complete and thorough understanding of a particular project is undertaken. Without such a review, it would be easy “to divide a church by talking specifically about changing the budget to incorporate a new mission commitment.” They offered the following example:

“I think we need to increase our giving to the local food pantry.”

“Excuse me, but we already give to local ministries; I think we need to start giving to church planting in Mongolia.”

“What do you mean? Our mission is to minister to this community, and we all know that the best way to do that is to provide the best child care center in the neighborhood.”

Instead, individuals and sessions are encouraged to ask such questions as:

“How are we going to be involved in mission either locally or globally?”

“Are we going to send food, people, or ideas?”

“Do we bring people to the United States to see our struggling churches?”

“Do we make three-year commitments to churches or people or nations, or do we make ongoing, unlimited commitments?”

“Should we be concerned with the possibility of creating new cycles of dependency?”

“Should we even intervene at all in the work of God in other countries? Are we, in the way we practice mission, really 21st century Christian imperialists?”

As a means of helping people in their discussions, the task force offered 10 areas for consideration to reflect on mission efforts and to make suggestions as to how money should be spent and how to encourage congregations to become more actively involved in mission. The areas are:

- *Christian mission is our participation in the Missio Dei: The mission of God.*

“The mission we are called to is God’s mission, not ours. Our God is a missionary (sending) God, actively working in the world to redeem all. Since God is already out there working in the world, it is the responsibility of the faithful to find ways to participate in God’s redeeming work, but it is not our job to initiate the work. Christian mission is a theological reality, something rooted in the nature of God. When we are involved in mission, we are representing God to the world. Faithful people are led by their theology and not by cultural norms, personal desires, or tradition.”

- *Christian mission is Trinitarian.*

“God the Father sends the Son. God and Jesus together send the Holy Spirit. The Triune God sends the church into the world. Christian mission involves sending and being sent in the power of the Holy Spirit. We affirm that the sending nature of God – going to reclaim the lost and to redeem the broken – is the very nature of God. God is the prodigal’s father in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son. And those who have “put on Christ” have accepted that new “going” nature. Are you a Christian? Then you have “put on” the missionary nature of Christ; the restless nature of one sent into the world.”

- *Christian mission is centered on witness to the coming kingdom of God.*

“Christian mission is centered on witness to the coming Kingdom of God, the reign of God in Christ expressed in communities of faith and obedience. Thus, there is content to our mission. Mission that does not clearly proclaim Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world may be mission, but it is not Christian mission. There must be clarity about this communication: God has done for us, in Jesus Christ, what the law (and all of our efforts) could not do. This is good news for the suffering and oppressed, as well as for the powerful and the oppressor. Through word and works, we proclaim the glory of God in Jesus Christ for the nations.”

- *The Good News of the Kingdom is for all people and all of creation.*

“The good news of redemption in Jesus Christ is available to all people and all creation. This is a radical message to a world torn apart by national and reli-

gious differences. Christian mission takes on the love and compassion of God for each ethnic group. Christian mission is extensive (for all), but it is also intensive (for each). In Christian mission, we resist racism and ethnic divisions; we also resist the ethnocentrism that will not share the “Pearl of Great Price” with other groups. No groups of people, no matter how far away, how near, how strange or “religious” or violent are to be excluded from the good news of the gospel. Often, those who seem furthest away are closest to the realm of God; and those who seem most resistant (most sick) are most in need of the great Physician.”

- *Christian mission must avoid reductionism and dichotomy.*

“Reductionism (oversimplification) and dichotomy (separation into opposing camps) often have misrepresented the witness of the kingdom of God. These two tendencies are both very easy to fall into and they are very “American” weaknesses. For example, the church often has been guilty of separating those with a passion for evangelism from those with a passion for social action, or those with a call to local mission from those who feel called to global mission, or those who are involved in peacemaking from those involved in proclamation. These separations are the result of sinfulness and tend to divide the church. Christians are challenged by the gospel to think more holistically about the fullness of the nature of Jesus Christ. Reductionism involves the tendency of some believers to reduce the whole gospel message to one element, whether it is peacemaking or evangelism, physical healing or spiritual nurture. When we reduce mission to feeding the poor or converting the heathen, we have turned the Gospel into an ideology; a single overriding issue that relativizes all other issues. This must never be, because the single overriding element is a person, not an idea. Jesus Christ is the mission of God.”

- *Christian mission involves continuing the suffering of Christ for the world.*

“We live in a culture that is rooted in the assumption that the primary drive in life is to avoid suffering. We believe that pain and suffering are sure proof that we are not doing God’s will, that we have done something wrong. The same often is assumed in mission. If mission is too costly (e.g. evangelizing in Islamic nations, planting churches in Cambodia, challenging oppressive governments), then we assume that the door is shut, and we redirect our efforts. Followers of Christ, though, can expect to suffer. Christianity is a dangerous religion. There are many places in the world where those who profess Jesus Christ put their lives in danger. Christian mission is not measured by productivity or the end result. Christian mission is measured by faithfulness. We are called to be faithful to the God of the nations, and often this is painful and costly. In fact, the pain-free mission we seek may be a stumbling block to God’s glory being revealed.”

- *Christian mission must be ecumenical, inclusive, exclusive and sacrificial.*

“Following Christ means removing denominational and national blinders. This is what it means to be truly ecumenical. Christian mission is ecumenical because it works with all Christians and all countries. It is inclusive in that all people are sinful and fall short of the glory of God. Everyone is equally in need of the salvation of Jesus Christ; no one is exempt. On the other hand, Christian mission is exclusive in that it is in Christ alone. Christian mission is not generic or non-specific. It is very specifically, even exclusively, about Jesus Christ. Mission is sacrificial in that we follow in the footsteps of Christ who sacrificed His life for our sake. All of these characteristics of mission will be costly and may be misunderstood. It is our own small-mindedness that has allowed divisions to develop in mission. We must resist un-Christian forces that tell us that we must be involved only in Presbyterian mission or only in local mission. Starting with an assumption of unity and wholeness, we are called to include all people in the mission of God.”

- *Christian mission must be done in bold humility.*

“Mission begins with confession and compassion; it continues with clarity and confidence. Christian mission involves recognition that listening and repenting may be more powerful gifts than money or knowledge. In mission, we serve as ambassadors or representatives of Jesus Christ. The Christian church is the body of Christ in the world. How mission is done always must reflect the person and character of the One who sends, the One who came to earth as a servant. The faithful person lives within the tension between serving humbly and acting boldly for the sake of the gospel. We must not believe the lie that says if we are bold we must be proud or arrogant. Jesus showed us differently. Neither should we believe the lie that says if we are humble, we must be shy and reserved. Jesus proves this wrong also.”

- *The local church is the missionary presence in each context, and the sending body to the world.*

“The local church is a missionary outpost in a world in need of salvation. Called to take initiative, the congregation is a missionary presence within its own community and a sending body for mission throughout the world. Each church, therefore, is both an institution and part of a movement. ... The goal in our missionary endeavor is to plant and encourage missional churches, “three-self” churches that are self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.”

- *Christian mission means crossing barriers.*

“Some traditional Presbyterians have been guilty of assuming that “real mission” must involve the crossing of salt water. We believe that Christian mission

does involve crossing barriers, but barriers come in many different shapes and sizes. An ocean can be a barrier, but so can language, race, age, class, mountains and religion. Therefore, we don't want to be too dogmatic about mission always being "over there." And yet, we want to resist the temptation of thinking that the activities offered in our churches and communities alone fulfill our commitment to Christian mission. It is too easy for us to avoid the global call to mission by this simplistic assumption. We have to be careful not to excuse ourselves from missionary activities because we are involved in local ministry. Mission must involve some "sent-ness." God is a sending God, and the church, to be faithful to God, must understand that it is SENT. Sometimes, the barrier we are called to cross is the barrier of our own personal comfort zones. Try to remember some incidents in Scripture where God challenges faithful people to 'go.'"

Glossary

This glossary provides definitions on many of the terms used in this handbook regarding gifts.

Basic Mission

This is the primary mission budget of the Presbyterian Church (USA). At the General Assembly level, Basic Mission Support provides dollars for mission personnel salaries and benefits, overseas partner churches, resources and services to congregations and middle governing bodies. It may take the form of:

- **Shared Mission Support:** Gifts and contributions, with no restrictions for the overall support of the adopted budgets of a session, presbytery, synod or the General Assembly. They enable the receiving governing body to determine priorities and allocate dollars to programs as they see the need.

- **Directed Mission Support:** Gifts, with restrictions, for use within the adopted budget of a session, presbytery, synod or the General Assembly. These monies do not increase the amount that has been budgeted for a particular project, but they do enable the congregation to specify where their dollars are going and may make it easier to interpret mission giving to their members.

Mission personnel who are compensated through Directed Mission Support are compensated (salary, benefits and expenses) at a particular level. This level is divided into two parts: 80 percent from pledges and 20 percent from Shared Mission Support. The 80 percent portion becomes the part to which Directed Mission Support donors pledge (this formula applies to all projects in this category).

A fully subscribed/funded project is one that has reached the 80 percent limit through pledges. Once a project is fully subscribed/funded, if a church or individual requests to give to that project, the Office of Gift Administration will notify them and suggest alternate projects.

Extra Commitment Opportunities

A catalog of specified mission projects that are outside the basic mission budget. Many of these projects complement or supplement mission personnel

funded through Directed Mission Support.

Per-Capita Funds

One of the primary sources of church funding is per-capita payments from each congregation. Per capita often is described as the “rent and utilities” budget that covers denominational overhead expenses. In fact, the stated clerk of the General Assembly also uses these funds to remit multi-million dollar payments to ecumenical councils that are deeply immersed in liberationist movements abroad and leftist politics at home.

Per-capita payments also underwrite meeting expenses and selected salaries in the program budget, including the salaries of those who superintend lobbying activities in Washington and other ventures that irritate Presbyterians in the pews. These payments also underwrite the salary and office expenses of the stated clerk.

Both the General Assembly and the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission repeatedly have affirmed that per-capita giving is voluntary and that local church sessions have the right to determine how the tithes and offerings of their members and worshipers are spent.

Those affirmations hold that sessions cannot be compelled to pay per-capita requests to support higher governing bodies and that ministers and elders cannot be punished for a failure to do so.

Validated Mission Support Group

Independent organizations that raise money for missions and help the denomination select missionaries so that the Presbyterian Church (USA) maintains an evangelical voice in the mission field. There are three such groups in the denomination.

Worldwide Ministries Division

This division within the Presbyterian Church (USA) administers programs for ecumenical partnerships, Global Service and Witness, missionaries and People in Mutual Mission.

A Declaration of Conscience

Board of Directors

The Presbyterian Lay Committee

In recent years, the Presbyterian Lay Committee has become increasingly concerned over the erosion of our denomination's faith and life. We have prayerfully considered what God is saying to us in the midst of this crisis.

With sorrow, we have concluded that spiritual schism exists within the Presbyterian Church (USA) because of a deep and irreconcilable disunion among its members over the person and work of Jesus Christ, the authority of God's Word written, and God's call to a holy life. We are two faiths within one denomination.

We grieve with our faithful brothers and sisters in the Episcopal Church (USA), whose General Convention rejected the clear teachings of Scripture and 2,000 years of Christian tradition by its recent actions.

We believe the same dynamics that precipitated this crisis in the Anglican Communion exist within the PCUSA. As a result, our denomination hovers on the brink of a comparable catastrophe. The Covenant Network already has announced that it will seek the repeal of the definitive interpretation of our ordination standards at the 2004 General Assembly and that it will support a full-scale assault on those standards at the 2006 General Assembly.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee believes that it is unconscionable to remain passive while some groups train their followers to subvert the Constitution and denominational officials undermine it by their refusal to require compliance. We believe that any compromise with proponents of a false gospel – no matter how laudable the desire for peace and unity that may engender such initiatives – will further erode our denomination's integrity and delay the day of decision that will ultimately come.

We believe that God has called us individually to be faithful stewards of all that he has entrusted to us, and has called us as officers of our congregations to ensure that offerings are consistently used to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and carry out his Great Commission.

We no longer believe that either the General Assembly per-capita budget or the unrestricted mission budget of the PCUSA is worthy of support. We encour-

age all individuals and sessions to exercise their stewardship responsibility and right to determine how money entrusted to them is spent. We likewise encourage prayerful study as to whether their General Assembly per-capita contribution should be redirected and/or their mission gifts restricted to ministries at home and abroad that are demonstrably faithful to the gospel.

At particular moments in history, God's people have been challenged to choose between the idols of their culture and faith in the living God. We believe this is such a time. We reluctantly conclude that, because of our spiritual division, without systemic change the PCUSA will collapse.

Therefore, we affirm and encourage the efforts of those who remain committed to reform and renewal of the PCUSA and those who are seriously studying new forms of our connectional life.

We urge all who share continued commitment to Holy Scripture as the infallible rule of faith and practice to work together for the glory of God and the strengthening of his witness in the world.

Adopted this 18th day of October 2003 by the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, meeting in Philadelphia, Pa.