

“BEYOND PROJECT SUPPORT” Report of the COGOS Mission Task Group

THE ISSUE:

“Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:36)
“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (The Judgment of the Nations: Matthew 25:40)
“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
(What does the Lord Require: Micah 6:8)

The original COGOS Committee noted in its report, under “Evangelism: Beyond Member Recruitment,” that there was a need to move beyond “truncated tasks” and to find a way that “speaks to the fullness of the human condition...” We must strive as Christians, congregations and a presbytery to maintain a holistic understanding and practice of the gospel.” [COGOS, page 22] We believe that Presbytery mission must strive for the same holistic goal of the Gospel, responding to the whole person, body and spirit. The call in COGOS not to “truncate the gospel ministry” is a challenge for us to hold mission and witness of the Gospel together. It has often been said that “mission puts flesh on the Gospel,” it enables us to demonstrate God’s love through Jesus Christ in praxis as well as in proclamation.

The current COGOS report intentionally omitted some significant areas in the life of the Presbytery that were seen as “...areas of strength, such as Social Action, Finances, and Mission. That report was largely generated in response to the impending retirement of the Presbytery’s long term Executive Presbyter, Dr. Herbert Valentine.

In the year 2004, four years after the retirement of the Executive Presbyter, and now having a new Executive Presbyter, called with the charge to lead the Presbytery into the new millennium towards transformation, the Council has charged three task groups to complete the COGOS report by creating a report that defines, challenges, supports and energizes the Presbytery of Baltimore in the areas of Mission, Social Justice, and Finance.

The COGOS Mission Task Group worked within the framework of the current COGOS Goals and Objectives, identifying those areas with mission implications, and noting the underlying, and often quoted, goal of the Presbytery to “do together in mission what no one congregation can do alone.” [Page 9 of COGOS]

DATA:

The Manual of the Presbytery defines the duties of the **Mission Committee** in 8 areas:

a) To establish and exercise oversight of a permanent subcommittee for the **Self-Development of People** Program, a nationally defined program of the PCUSA.

- b) Oversee the distribution of the mission funds of the Presbytery, and be the point of contact within the Presbytery for all organizations receiving such funds. *(This does not appear to happen with funds received for Global Mission Committee, nor do Global Mission Funds all cycle through the Presbytery)*
- c) Develop, as part of the budget process, the mission budget of the Presbytery, and recommend changes to it as funds from churches and other sources become available.
- d) Develop ministries to communities of special need, including experimental and special ministries.
- e) Budget for Flex Grants and approve them in accordance with the Manual (XXI.5).
- f) In cooperation with sessions, develop strategies for mission of the particular churches of the Presbytery.
- g) Receive applications from particular churches of the Presbytery seeking to receive support to supplement their operating budgets from the Mission Budget of the Presbytery, and grant such applications in consultation with the Committee on Ministry by including such churches in the Mission Budget or providing unallocated, budgeted funds. *(This responsibility was largely transferred to the Church Enhancement program of Vision 2000, now called Church Growth and Evangelism. There are no aid-receiving churches in the 2005 Mission Committee budget.)*
- h) Designate one of its members to serve on the Global Mission Committee.

The Manual also includes a description of the **Global Mission Committee**. The Committee membership includes one representative from the Committee on Mission, but there is no other contact or coordination between the two committees. They function and fund their missions in completely different styles. The Global Mission Committee has the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. Seek to increase understanding within the Presbytery and its particular churches of the church universal, and promote the mission of the global church within the Presbytery.
- b. Coordinate the participation of the Presbytery and its particular churches in the programs of the Global Mission Unit of the General Assembly.
- c. In cooperation with the Committee on Youth, sponsor international experiences for young persons of the Presbytery.
- d. Interpret to the Presbytery and its particular churches the international and global mission programs of the PC(USA).
- e. In consultation with the Council, coordinate the ecumenical relationships of the Presbytery with churches outside of the United States.
- f. In consultation with the Council, provide international mission and educational experiences for members of the Presbytery and its particular churches.
- g. Through cooperation with the Peace and Justice Committee, insure that Presbytery programs relating to specific nations or regions of the world are consistent and coordinated.
- h. Consult with and be a planning resource for all agencies and subagencies of the Presbytery which plan or sponsor travel outside the United States. [Manual VIII:8]

BACKGROUND:

The Mission Task Group developed a summary of survey results from the following sources:

- The original COGOS Report, as it impacted mission
- A comparison of the Presbytery Mission Budget with the reported over-all mission giving from the annual statistics sent to the GA
- Examples of mission funding by 5 other presbyteries (New Brunswick, Carlisle, Donegal, Giddings-Lovejoy and Chicago)
- A summary of the data from the “Minutes of the Mission Committee (2002)”
- The “Suggested Changes” document written by Julie Helms, and
- A summation of the presentation of Interim Executive, Ann Philbrick on “Doing Mission in the Post Modern World.”

Following discussion on the documents, the Task Group identified “focus items” that seemed to emerge:

- An emphasis on partnerships and covenants (ala the Chicago model) with congregations and agencies
- A time limit on most projects – sometimes with declining funding, often with a final evaluation that could include another funding cycle if merited
- The idea in “Suggested Changes” that smaller projects (with a grant smaller than \$5,000) be eliminated, or passed on to congregations that could fund the project, and the funds freed up by this move would enable the Presbytery to adopt a “unifying project” (Presbytery-wide) or “theme project” – such as Hunger, Homelessness, Children’s Needs, etc. with a move towards “hands-on” projects, where Presbytery involvement is more than money sent, but volunteers commissioned and sent out to work on the project.

The Presbytery and its member congregations currently engage in an amazing range of ministries of service and mission, ranging from dollars sent to members engaged in mission on the other side of the globe. The majority of those ministries take place with little or no presbytery networking, or coordination.

The Global Mission Committee is just completing a Presbytery-wide survey of global missions conducted by congregations of the Presbytery. It is an impressive array of ministry – mostly performed by congregations independently. The Presbytery has mission partnerships with three national/global partners: Guatemala, Cuba, and Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota. While the Presbytery’s mission budget shows commitments of \$260,000, these “global partnerships” operate outside that budget. The Guatemala Partnership alone exceeds \$100,000.

The partnerships are conducted by a local network of congregations, coordinated by the GMC, and provide volunteers, materials and funds for multi-year partnerships that terminate on a fixed date (or are renewed by vote of the Presbytery). When one adds the financial commitment made to these partnerships (\$100,000+) with that of the local mission budget (\$260,000), the amount is but a small fraction of the reported local and non-validated mission funding that is given by our member churches; in 2004 the Presbytery reported \$1,251,800 given to local missions of which \$506,649 was non-validated (other mission).

A comparison of the operations of the Mission Committee and the Global Mission Committee reveals a startling difference in their styles. The former operates like a funding entity (which in fact it is), and the latter operates like an enabling and coordinating entity, having no funds to disperse, but enabling the exchange of information from the networking churches, and facilitating planning. The Mission Committee has also developed a new grant program that seeks to encourage and facilitate church initiated new mission projects. Building on this new congregation-based initiative could be the emphasis for the future.

Throughout the PCUSA there is a definite move towards networking and formal partnerships. More than 100 presbyteries have international, multi-year mutual partnerships, and locally, congregations are partnering to achieve mission goals together that no one congregation could do alone (GEDCO, Cumberland Interfaith, Woodberry Crossing).

On a national scale, mission networks are being formed between presbyteries engaged in mutual missions in such diverse places as Guatemala, the Sudan, South Africa, and among the Kurds. (See *Presbyterians Today*, "In Praise of Partnerships," Jan/Feb 2005)

A number of presbyteries have applied that same concept of partnerships or covenants between the presbyteries and their member churches. For example, Chicago Presbytery conducts its local mission through covenants that are validated by the presbytery, and involve a three-way partnership between the presbytery, congregations, and the agency or project that is the focus of the covenant.

Baltimore Presbytery has been locked into a list of mission projects for decades. For example, the McKim ministry grew out of an initiative by Second Presbyterian in 1917, and became an ecumenical mission with the Presbytery and the Society of Friends in 1929. It continues as a presbytery project today.

A number of the current missions are highly dependent on the Presbytery. It will not be painless to change that process, but we believe a transition can be made with a negotiated time line for change, a re-distribution of support through the development of partnerships/covenants, and the creation of funding goals and timelines for commitments to the projects.

The Mission Committee could begin to shift its emphasis to the development of congregation/presbytery/projects in a way that could increase the participation of our church members in the missions, enable more "hands on" involvement locally (as now exists with the global partnerships) and raise the visibility of the presbytery's involvement in mission. This is not an issue of control, but a strategy to move holistically in mission, rather than piecemeal.

GOAL:

The Mission Task Group reviewed and tested goal statements that are all inclusive for both local, global and SDOP goals and objectives. After several consultations with both the Mission Task Group and the Mission Committee the following goal was adopted which emphasizes an incarnational theology (presence) and the need for both compassion and transformation:

“In response to God’s redemptive action in environment and humanity, Baltimore Presbytery seeks to incarnate God’s justice, mercy and love as an agent of support and transformation for its member congregations as they engage in mission, both locally and throughout the world, endeavoring to enhance the quality of life for all of God’s creation.”

STRATEGIES:

We could approach this goal by:

- Strongly encouraging three-way partnerships (covenants) between presbytery, congregations, and/or between congregations and non-congregational groups.
- Providing resources — financial, educational and informational — to meet congregations’ requests for assistance;
- Utilizing the collective wisdom available in local and global mission committees and in the SDOP committee for financial guidance and ongoing visioning in each of their unique areas of charge; and
- Developing a plan to phase in covenants with existing presbytery supported projects, and seek to connect missions to congregations where appropriate.
- Calling a Mission Coordinator to the Presbytery staff: we believe that a shift in emphasis from a funding group to a mission development and coordination team will require a staff member to be the point person for educational and informational resources and to facilitate the work of the local, global and SDOP programs. The Coordinator would also be able to help identify a major need that is not being met, that may serve as the basis for the development of a unifying mission for the entire presbytery.
- Maintain the current committee structure: Local, Global, and SDOP (a sub-committee of Mission), but change the way the current mission committee operates from a distributor of funds to the developer of a coordinating process that facilitates better communications and joint strategy among the committees, congregations and presbytery.
- Adopt the above strategies and begin the process with an all-presbytery consultation(s) for implementation. (This could be a Big Event in 2007 with workshops on covenant making, existing projects, volunteer training, and speakers from success models.

STEPS ACCOMPLISHED:

This document was taken to the Mission Committee, the Self Development of People Committee, and the Global Mission Committee for review and reaction.

The Committee sponsored a Presbytery-wide full day visioning seminar. This visioning seminar invited the participants to explore these strategies, and test our vision with the challenges and hopes for mission throughout the Presbytery. This consultation took place at Faith Presbyterian Church on April 9, 2005. Twenty-eight persons attended, representing every area of the Presbytery except Western Maryland and Ann Arundal. The COGOS Mission Review Team then reviewed the feedback from the three committees and the April 9th consultation and found strong encouragement to move forward. All present recognized that this report calls for a transformation in the way congregations and presbytery engage in mission and witness.

NEXT STEPS:

On April 11th the Council of Presbytery approved this document and voted to have it presented at the next meeting of Presbytery for consideration. We believe, upon adoption that the Presbytery should establish a new task group, or charge the existing committee with the task of engaging the whole presbytery in the creation of a transition plan to move to this new model of mission that goes beyond project support and challenges our members to develop new covenants of mission engagement, and help identify a unifying (theme) mission that will become part of the identify of Baltimore Presbytery.

The members of the COGOS Mission Committee are, John R. Sharp (Chair), Janice L. Trammell-Savin (Chair, Mission Committee), Donald Downing (Member, Mission Committee), Robert N. Ferguson (Global Mission Committee), Ken Kovacs (Global Mission Chair), Dwight Warren (Member, Self Development of People Committee), and Bernellyn Carey (Member at large, Elder, Madison Ave.)