

A BRIEF HISTORY of the PCA STRATEGIC PLAN

[When they] departed from the position of plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible, and weakened doctrinal integrity, the PCUS evolved into a more theologically diverse, and ecclesiastically hierarchical denomination.

- Roy Taylor & John Robinson

A Plea for Effective and Efficient Cooperative Ministry in the PCA, 2005, p.3

INTRODUCTION: ROOTS vs. ANCESTRY

Consider the heritage of the mainline Presbyterian Church today, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. They, in fact, share the exact same heritage as those of us in the Presbyterian Church in America, up to the beginning of the 20th Century, at least. But as far as the PCUSA is concerned, all that "stuff" from prior to 1900 is simple heritage. In the current website of the PCUSA, under the section for their history, they say this: "The Presbyterian church traces its ancestry back primarily to Scotland and England."

But it is simply ancestry, or heritage, if you will. The doctrines for which many were willing to die, and for which many did die--the doctrines of the pre-Reformers, Luther, Calvin, the Swiss Reformers, Knox, the covenanters, Cranmer, the British reformers, the Puritans, the "Log Cabin" and Princeton Seminary theology--all of that is simply "ancestry" to the PCUSA. But in the PCA, those are our roots...A root is part of a living organism and is, in fact, a part without which the plant will die. So it is vital to the health of a plant (and therefore, vital to the health of the PCA) to be sure the roots are alive and functioning.

- Don Clements, *Historical Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America, A Presbyterian Primer, p.240*

THE TIMELINE: From PLANNING to IMPLEMENTATION and MANAGEMENT

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee, 2000-2003

Phase I: Mission, Vision, Strategic Priorities

2000

The Assembly approved the concept of the Committees and Agencies of the Assembly working together on Strategic Planning for a more effective coordinating of ministries. A report will be made to the Thirtieth General Assembly.

- Significant Actions of the [28th] General Assembly, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, pg.2

In 2000, the nine Coordinators of the Committees and Agencies recognized the need for the denomination, which had grown considerably since its inception almost 30 years earlier, to develop a plan for the future. They forwarded suggestions for developing such a plan to the Administrative Committee, which made specific recommendations to the General Assembly. The 2000 General Assembly elected a 24-person Strategic Planning Steering Committee composed of ten ruling elders, ten teaching elders and four women.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2204

2002

At the 30th General Assembly in Birmingham in 2002, the Steering Committee presented its report and the Assembly took three actions:

- It received the draft report summarizing the work to-date, and asked that the report be passed on to the presbyteries for further review and input.
- It asked presbyteries to report their reactions and findings to the Steering Committee by March of 2003.
- It authorized the continuing work of the Steering Committee over the next year, anticipating further discussion and possible action in the June 2003 Assembly.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2205

2003

At the 2003 General Assembly, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, working through the Administrative Committee, presented a booklet, Being Revived + Bringing Reformation which communicated the mission, vision and strategic priorities developed during the Phase I planning process.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2205

The Strategic Planning Committee, 2003-2005 Implementation of the SP

2004

Following the 2003 General Assembly, the Strategic Planning Committee began Phase II of the Planning Process to consider what changes would be needed in the PCA's structure, resources and leadership to implement the Strategic Priorities identified in *Being Revived + Bringing Reformation*. A subcommittee diligently worked to identify a few realizable and worthwhile goals among the many possibilities that had been suggested by those participating in the process.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2205

Immediately following General Assembly, the Steering Committee newly constituted itself as the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), accepted resignations and added 3 new members. To begin its work, pledges amounting to \$185,000 were secured. The Committee planned a total of seven two-day face-to-face meetings in Atlanta. It interviewed prospective consultants to aid in the process and selected one. The Committee divided its work and assigned task forces to address particular issues.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2206

In 2004, the Committee submitted a framework for Phase II. Among the many possible initiatives, the Committee chose three to begin the implementation process.

- 2005 Report of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Administrative Committee and 2005 PCA General Assembly, pp.2205

Ad Interim Committee on Strategic Planning, 2005-2006

Facilitate, Monitor, and Evaluate through the New Cooperative Ministries Committee

2005

The Assembly heard the report of the Strategic Planning Committee, that for five years has operated as a sub-committee of the Administrative Committee. The committee reported that it divided itself into various task forces to expedite its work: Survey (Opinions and Perceptions in the PCA), Statistics (statistical analysis of the PCA), Ruling Elder Engagement, Reaching the Rising Generation, Inter-Agency Collaboration and Funding, General Assembly Structure and Procedures, and External Benchmarking (how other denominations gauge progress). The SPC recommended two BCO changes, which will be sent to Presbyteries for a vote, 1) to amend BCO 15-4 to broaden the work of the Standing Judicial Commission, 2) to amend BCO 40-5 to simplify the language of that section. The SPC was constituted an ad interim committee to report its final

recommendations directly to the Assembly in 2006. Among its recommendations will be: 1) the expansion of the Bills and Overtures Committee to include two representatives from each Presbytery to increase deliberation and debate on vital issues and 2) the formation of a Cooperative Ministries Committee to improve inter-Agency collaborative ministry and funding. The Assembly will hold discussions in Presbyteries in the coming year prior to a vote on the SPC recommendations in 2006. See the Website, www.pcaac.org/strategicplan.htm. for details.

- Actions of the Thirty-Third General Assembly, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, p.3,4

Cooperative ministry within the PCA is a major focus of the Strategic Planning Committee's study.

- A Plea for Effective and Efficient Cooperative Ministry in the PCA, Roy Taylor & John Robertson, 2005, p.14

CMC Rationale:

If we do not have the commitment to labor together in the fellowship of Gospel ministry, our theological and ecclesiastical commitments will not be adequate to sustain a healthy denomination. Cooperative ministry within the PCA is a major focus of the Strategic Planning Committee's study.

CMC Mandate:

Facilitate integrated long-range planning that supports progress toward the overall mission and ministry of the PCA. Such planning should be with respect to matters that fall within the ordinary scope of the respective responsibilities of the PCA's Committees and Agencies, particularly with a view toward the mission of the PCA as a whole. Any matters requiring General Assembly action shall be referred to the appropriate Committee or Agency for its consideration and recommendation.

Monitor and evaluate the standards of effectiveness and efficiency of permanent Committees and Agencies, in light of the unique ministry of each Committee and Agency, with particular attention to inter-Committee-and-Agency performance with regard to communication, collaboration and cooperation.

- The Joint Task Force on Collaboration and Funding Final Report to the Strategic Planning Committee, 3/2005, pp.2282,2283

**The Cooperative Ministries Committee, 2006-Present
Manage Committees & Agencies**

2006

The 2005 General Assembly constituted an Ad Interim Committee for the purpose of presenting the final report and recommendations of the Strategic Planning Committee directly to the Thirty-fourth General Assembly.

- 2006 Report to the PCA General Assembly of the Ad Interim Committee on Strategic Planning, pp.2210,2211

The Ad Interim Committee considered its task to be the receipt of input from presbyteries and interested individuals, and to perfect the work of the Strategic Planning Committee, while honoring the broad principles of the Strategic Planning Committee. By April 2006, members of the original Strategic Planning Committee or Coordinators of the Committees and Agencies made trips to more than fifty (50) presbyteries to present the 2005 report, answer questions and collect formal and informal feedback. Other presbytery visits are scheduled in the months prior to General Assembly.

In March 2006, the Ad Interim Committee met in Atlanta for a two-day meeting to consider the feedback collected and modified the 2005 Strategic Plan's recommendations. Please see the 2006 report of the Ad Interim Committee which not only details the changes but presents the recommendations for consideration by the 2006 General Assembly.

The Ad Interim Committee will continue to collect presbytery reports and communications up through the pre-Assembly seminar on the Strategic Plan. It will then meet to review, consider and respond to this belated input. The Ad Interim Committee does not expect more than minor changes, as it does not want to surprise commissioners with further revisions they have had little time to consider.

- 2006 Report to the PCA General Assembly of the Ad Interim Committee on Strategic Planning, pp.2211

The item that occupied the largest amount of time and had engendered a great amount of interest was the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Strategic Planning (SPC) bringing to completion a six-year process. Though the process did not result in the restructuring of any denominational committees and agencies as other denominations have done (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Church of Scotland, Southern Baptist Convention, etc.) in their strategic planning, the final report of the SPC's final report was approved with several significant recommendations. The Bills and Overtures Committee was recast into the "Overtures Committee," (OC) composed of one Ruling Elder and One Teaching Elder commissioner from each of the seventy-five presbyteries. Most of the issues that require extensive deliberation come as overtures from presbyteries. The Overtures Committee will meet a day or two before the assembly as a

whole. Their meetings will be open to observers. The OC will be advised by the Committee on Constitutional Business in its deliberations.

The OC will report to the General Assembly which may approve, disapprove, or recommit the recommendations of the OC. The Committees and Agencies will continue to report directly to the General Assembly. An overture to postpone consideration of the OC proposal in order to prepare a recommendation for a delegated assembly failed by a considerable margin. The new OC arrangement is the PCA's attempt to retain a grass-roots assembly in which every church may send commissioners and also to have a deliberative body with parity of Ruling and Teaching Elders to consider substantive matters.

The assembly also approved the formation of a Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) composed of the chairmen of each of the ten assembly-level committees and agencies (C&As), the C&A coordinators and presidents, and six immediately past moderators of the General Assembly. The CMC is to foster cooperative ministry among the ten C&As, facilitate long-range planning, and serve as a forum to resolve inter-agency conflicts. The CMC has no executive or budgetary authority. The evaluation and recommendation of C&A budgets remains with the Administrative Committee. The Moderator of the General Assembly will serve as the moderator of the CMC at its annual meeting in January. The SPC considered its CMC proposal as an evidence of the PCA's maturing into a more trustful denomination and a means of promoting more collaborative ministry among the C&As of the General Assembly.

The SPC also recommended as priority items, "Preparing the Next Generation" and "Engaging Elders in Ministry." The SPC was dismissed with thanks.

- Actions of the 34th General Assembly of the PCA, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, p.1,2

2009

A discussion was held on Making the Denomination More Missional – Frank Barker introduced Carter Crenshaw and Randy Pope, who discussed possibilities for making the PCA a more intentionally missional, outward-facing movement. Among items addressed in general discussion were:

- Organizations tend to lose vitality after 25-30 years.
- Some believe the PCA has lost its original vision.
- PCA's previous efforts at strategic planning did not include systemic change.
- The PCA's structure and culture discourage leadership.

- Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, p.65

2010

Prior to the Assembly three issues stimulated considerable interest; (1) the Strategic Planning Report, originating in the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) and coming to the floor through the Administrative Committee (AC)...

- Actions of the 38th General Assembly, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, p.1

Strategic Planning (1)

Since 2000 the PCA has been involved in an ongoing process of Strategic Planning on how best to minister the Gospel in our changing culture. From 2000-2005 that was done through a sub-committee of the AC. For 2005-2006 there was an ad interim committee for that purpose. The General Assembly in 2006 created the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) and gave it the ongoing task of long range planning. The CMC is composed of the ten chairmen of the General Assembly Committees and Agencies, the ten Coordinators and Presidents of the General Assembly Committees and Agencies, and the six most recent moderators of the General Assembly (advisory members). The CMC is required to make recommendations to the General Assembly through a Permanent Committee or Agency. Since the Strategic Planning recommendations affect all ten committees and agencies, the recommendations came to the Assembly through the AC because all committees and agencies have voting members on the AC. The AC met on April the 8. After that meeting, the Strategic Planning information was posted on the AC web site (pcaac.org) and byfaithonline.com. (For fuller information on this and other issues, visit www.pcaac.org). Though there was discussion of the plan on some Internet blogs, less than a dozen contacts were made directly to the AC. AC members and staff conferred with contacts who had offered decorous and reasoned criticisms and initiated conversations with others. As a result, several clarifying changes to the report were made by AC permanent committee before the Assembly convened. The AC committee of commissioners met over a three-day period and considered the report at length. The document recommended that the Assembly focus in the upcoming year on three major themes and related goals, approve means to accomplish those goals, and authorize the responsible entities and persons to proceed with implementation. The AC also recommended that the means be voted on individually and that the funding proposal for the AC be voted upon separately. The three themes and related goals were:

- Theme #1: Civil Conversation Goal: Establish places to enter into civil conversations about best ways to advance the PCA's faithfulness to biblical belief, ministry, and mission.
- Theme #2: Increased Involvement Goal: Increase involvement by providing more opportunities to utilize a greater variety of people and life experiences (especially younger leaders, women, ethnic leaders, and global Church representatives) in discussions concerning PCA ministry direction and development.
- Theme #3: In God's Global Mission Goal: Find ways to participate corporately in

God's Global Mission with exemplary unity, humility, and effectiveness, bringing sound biblical understanding to the largest expansion of Christianity in world history.

Strategic Planning took more floor time than any other item at the Assembly (approximately six hours, requiring a rare late-night session). Overall, the Assembly voted over twenty times on parts of the Strategic Planning Report. Most of those votes were by obvious or substantial majorities. Two items required a counted vote, but were approved ("Formalize a CEP Women's Ministry organization for women in vocational ministries." [vote: 422-397]) and, ("Develop a credible and rigorous alternative credentialing process for men from disadvantaged constituencies, enabling them to attain the same ordination standards of a traditional M.Div. seminary graduate." [vote: 425-409]). One of the means, ("Establish means for voluntary certification of men and women for non-ordained vocational ministries"), failed in a close, but uncounted, vote. After the Strategic Planning portion of the AC report, Dr. Joseph Pipa, President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, entered a protest into the minutes, alleging that the report was deficient in biblical data and that RAO 7-3 c. required that the report come to the floor through each of the ten Committees and Agencies separately rather than only through the AC. One hundred twenty-eight of the registered commissioners signed the protest.

(1) Strategic Planning arose in a military context in WWII, was carried over into business, and has been used by other groups such as churches. "Strategic Management" is actually a more current term that is used to describe strategic adjustments to rapidly changing conditions.

- Actions of the 38th General Assembly, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, p.1,2

2011

Since 2000 the PCA has been involved in an ongoing process of Strategic Planning on how best to minister the Gospel in our changing culture. The 38th General Assembly approved three themes and related sets of goals and means to accomplish the goals.

The 39th General Assembly adopted a fourth theme, "Practical Presbyterianism." The goal of theme four is "to foster a cordial and practical commitment to the "formal values" of the PCA, i.e., the Doctrinal and Governmental Standards, for use in ministry, as opposed to merely theoretical affirmation in the vows of ordination and church membership." Means 1-4 for accomplishing this goal, which were approved, include having Assembly seminars annually on theological and church polity issues, working toward all newly planted churches participating in financial support of PCA ministries,

developing a curriculum on PCA doctrinal standards, and adding “proof” texts to the BCO. Means 5 and 6, which involve revising the BCO Rules of Discipline, as well as revising and approving as part of the Constitution the Directory of Worship section of the BCO, were recommitted for further study.

- Actions of the 39th General Assembly of the PCA, L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, pg.3

COMMENTS: The TRANSITION From GRASSROOTS to HIERACHY

[G]rowing out of [the PCUS] context, there was such a longtime feeling of distrust and betrayal, along with a lack of biblical and theological integrity with the PCUS, that the National Presbyterian Church (later the PCA) came into existence in a very definite but disjointed fashion. this was demonstrated by the vote to place the four permanent committees in separate locations. Even though there were some practical reasons for such an action that was not the main reason for such action. The original locations were chosen because of the location of the first coordinators who were chosen to lead those committees.

The work of the church was defined in the BCO as "one work," expressed through its committees and agencies. Its theology of understanding and implementing the Great Commission let the PCA to establish three ministry (or program) committees, Mission to the World, Mission to the United States, and Christian Education and Publications. However, many saw the new church's mission in less than a holistic light. Some of that was the result of not being taught the biblical nature of the church and its theology, and some was simply a reaction of not being able to support certain ministries in the mainline church because of liberal philosophy. Therefore, churches were to have the freedom to support parts of the church's mission and not the whole., if they so chose. Churches were not required nor obligated to support the work of the committees. This in effect meant that the committees were responsible to raise their own funds from the beginning. As a member of the first Administration Committee, we attempted to balance the parts with the whole, but only to finally realize that the committees' budgets tended to be locked on as "hunting licenses."

As one of the authors of the church's organizing principles in the BCO, I can affirm that our attempt was to create a theologically ecclesial unity...The work of the church was defined as "one work." However, connection between the committees was arbitrary. There was not Assembly-given structural mandate set in place to facilitate a close working together. As a matter of fact, when the recommendation to place the committees together in one city was made, one well-known commissioner stated in the debate that, "if we put them together, they might start working together."

- Don K. Clements, Historical Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America, A Presbyterian Primer, p.216,216

The present Committee and Agency structure and practice are the product of our origins. Due to a complex of factors involved in its formation, the PCA was begun without any structure or process that required the coordination of efforts and funding of its Committees and Agencies, and without a mechanism whereby effectively and efficiently to promote the well-being of the whole work of the General Assembly and its Committees and Agencies, as opposed to merely the parts. The denominational ministries were structured as quasi-independent ministries under the umbrella of the General Assembly (GA).

To elaborate, when the PCA was organized, it did not establish a structure designed to promote inter-Committee/Agency cooperation, but rather (in the light of the experience of the PCUS liberal denominational offices' deleterious effects on the Church) one to prevent a bureaucracy from exerting an unhealthy influence. Hence, the Committees were initially based in separate locations.

Though the work of the Church was defined in the BCO as "one work," expressed in its Committees and Agencies, the structure did not provide a mechanism for doing that in a holistic way. Committees and Agencies were responsible to raise their own funds from the beginning. The structure was such that Committees were not required nor organized to work together. For the first five years, the Coordinators of those Committees did not nor were they encouraged to meet together. It was not until Dr. G. Aiken Taylor was elected moderator of the General Assembly that Coordinators began to come together for "information and prayer" only.

In reality, the PCA General Assembly Committees and Agencies were not organizationally designed to be a team. Though the work of the Church was defined as "one work," the connection between the Committees and Agencies was arbitrary. The structure does not mandate, require, or organizationally require a working together. Tensions that have often developed for many reasons over the years have often done so because we are not in an organizational structure that encourages nor has procedures in place to encourage otherwise.

- The Joint Task Force on Collaboration and Funding Final Report to the Strategic Planning Committee, 3/2005, p.2289

APPENDIX A

The Way the General Assembly Passed the Strategic Plan Was Against Its Own Rules
by Jerry Koerkenmeier

As most readers will be aware, the 38th PCA General Assembly in Nashville considered a strategic plan proposed by the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC), and then approved and recommended by the Administrative Committee (AC).

After several hours of debate, the Assembly passed the themes, goals, and all but one of the means. The controversy surrounding the plan in the weeks before the Assembly carried over into the floor debate.

According to the L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the PCA, in his report on the actions of the 38th General Assembly, after the Strategic Planning portion of the AC report, Dr. Joseph Pipa, President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, entered a protest into the minutes, alleging that the report was deficient in biblical data and that RAO 7-3 c. required that the report come to the floor through each of the ten Committees and Agencies separately rather than only through the AC. One hundred twenty-eight of the registered commissioners signed the protest.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should make it clear that I write as one of the commissioners who signed the protest. While I found Dr. Taylor's report helpful and good overall, I do believe that this summary of the protest is incomplete regarding the first point and inaccurate regarding the second. Here is the text of the protest:

Protest to GA Action on Recommendations 16 and 17 of the
Report of the Committee of Commissioners on Administrative Committee

We the undersigned protest the action of the 38th General Assembly of the PCA in voting down the motions to recommit recommendations 16 and 17 of the Committee of Commissioners on Administrative Committee to the Committee on Administration.

Two reasons:

First, no scriptural grounds are given for the analysis or the Plan. Moreover, the debate was wrongly influenced when the court was told that the earlier editions of the plan in 2003 and 2006 gave the scriptural basis. Upon investigation there appears to be strong evidence that neither edition of the plan included scriptural basis.

Second, the Assembly violated its Rules of Assembly Operations (17.3.c), which require recommendations from the CMC to come to the Assembly through respective Committees and Agencies, whose works are involved in the recommendation: "Any matters requiring General Assembly action shall be referred to the appropriate Committee or Agency for its consideration and recommendation."

- TE Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., Calvary Presbytery, et al.

As you can see in the first reason, Dr. Pipa does protest the lack of biblical data (a concern raised by many commissioners on several occasions during floor debate). However, the most important point of his rationale is that the Assembly was told that extensive biblical analysis had been done and was included in previous installments of the plan sent to the Assembly in 2003 and 2006. Upon reviewing those documents in the Minutes of the respective General Assemblies, he found no evidence of such analysis.

In the second reason, notice that Dr. Pipa's point concerning the Rules of Assembly Operation (RAO) 7-3 c. is not that it required the entire report (singular) to come to the floor through each of the ten Committees and Agencies separately. The point is that RAO 7-3 c. mandates that the various elements of the Strategic Plan which required General Assembly action be brought to

the floor through the appropriate Committee or Agency. That is precisely what RAO 7-3 c. says in describing this particular responsibility of the CMC, it is to:

c. Facilitate integrated long-range planning that supports progress toward the overall mission and ministry of the PCA. Such planning shall be with respect to matters that fall within the ordinary scope of the respective responsibilities of the PCA's Committees and Agencies, particularly with a view toward the mission of the PCA as a whole. Any matters requiring General Assembly action shall be referred to the appropriate Committee or Agency for its consideration and recommendation.

RAO Article 7 defines the Cooperative Ministries Committee, and RAO 7-3 details its responsibilities. First, notice that the CMC is charged with facilitating long-range planning. This point was raised repeatedly during the General Assembly by those defending the CMC's right and responsibility to develop this plan. For example, Dr. Taylor says "The General Assembly in 2006 created the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) and gave it the ongoing task of long range planning." I would merely point out that RAO 7-3 c. does not instruct the CMC to "do" the long-range (strategic) planning, but to "facilitate" it. Though it may be inconsequential, there is a difference. To facilitate is to make something easier, not to do it yourself. The CMC was not tasked by the Assembly to develop or carry out long-range planning, but to enable the various committees and agencies to do so cooperatively.

But more importantly, and to the point of the protest, note that 7-3 c. explicitly states that "any matters requiring General Assembly action shall be referred to the appropriate Committee of Agency for its consideration and recommendation."

This restriction in RAO 7-3 c. serves at least a couple of important purposes. The first is that it provides a check or restraint upon the CMC. It is important to remember that the voting members of the CMC are not elected according to the standard nomination and election procedure. For every other committee, men are either elected by their Presbyteries, or nominated by the Presbyteries, recommended to the Assembly by GA's Nominating Committee (itself comprised of men selected by the Presbyteries), and elected by the Assembly itself with opportunities for nominations from the floor. The CMC is different. The Presbyteries do not nominate the members directly, and no nominations come from the floor. Instead, the CMC is made up entirely of ex officio members, those who are members by virtue of holding another office (see RAO 7-1).

Furthermore, the CMC does not have its own Committee of Commissioners to review and approve its work. As a result, the CMC is not directly accountable to the General Assembly itself or to any other committee. It should also be noted that no committee of commissioners has ever reviewed the minutes of the CMC. RAO 7-3 c. (and RAO 7-6) requires any recommendation made by the CMC which requires General Assembly action to be referred to the appropriate Committee or Agency for its review, which if approved would in turn require further review and approval by a Committee of Commissioners before coming to the Assembly floor.

The strategic plan developed by the CMC contained matters which the CMC believed required General Assembly action. This is an interesting point in itself, since the Assembly was told repeatedly that apart from the AC funding model nothing in the plan was legislative, that most of these things are already being done today, and that the main point was to get feedback from the Assembly on whether these activities should be continued. One could argue (and many did) that apart from the funding plan, none of this required General Assembly action at all, but the CMC and AC disagreed.

The question is, why did every theme, goal, and means come through the Administrative Committee, and not the Committee or Agency responsible for its implementation? One argument that was made during debate is that this is permissible since all of the committees are represented on the AC; that all of the committees have a voice. Dr. Taylor made this same point in his Actions of the 38th General Assembly:

Since the Strategic Planning recommendations affect all ten committees and agencies, the recommendations came to the Assembly through the AC because all committees and agencies have voting members on the AC.

This leaves us to ask, however, if all strategic planning reports and recommendations may come to the floor through the Administrative Committee, regardless of which Committee or Agency is responsible for implementation, then why doesn't 7-3 c. simply say so? Why the specification that each matter shall be referred to the appropriate Committee or Agency? The last part of 7-3 c. makes it clear, and provides the second important purpose of this restriction: it was included so that the respective Committee or Agency could consider and recommend it. The value of this is obvious: it allows for input and approval by the committee or agency responsible for its implementation. Hence the protest: since every theme, goal, and means of the Strategic Plan came through only the Administrative Committee, most of the committees and agencies responsible have had no opportunity to consider and approve these matters at all!

In circumventing this requirement of 7-3 c. (however unintentionally), we have approved a plan which will be imposed upon our Agencies and Committees without their advice, approval, or even their official consideration. And this is despite the fact that the General Assembly has formed these committees for the specific purpose of handling those affairs relating to their respective areas of responsibility.

For example, the Assembly was asked to approve the following specific means:

Theme #2: "More Seats", Means (Specific) #5: "Formalize a CEP Women's Ministries organization for women in vocational ministries."

As far as I can tell, the CEP Committee did not consider or recommend this specific means. While I assume specific individuals were consulted, and that the representatives of CEP on the CMC and AC approved, the fact remains that the committee as a whole had no say, and

neither did the Committee of Commissioners for CEP.

Another example from the plan is in Theme #3:

Theme #3: "In God's Global Mission." Means (Specific) #1b: "Fund joint research of Covenant College and Covenant Seminary, CEP, MTW, and MNA re: the most effective centers of influence to engage the culture with Reformed thinking and leadership and how to multiply them beyond the PCA."

Again, as far as I can tell, none of these committees or agency boards had an opportunity to consider or approve of this research, and none of the appropriate Committees of Commissioners were able to make recommendations on this proposal. Do we know if each of these bodies agrees with such research? Are we sure they think it is important to their mission? Does it matter? According to RAO 7-3 c., the answer is "YES."

That is why the CMC is explicitly required to refer these matters to the appropriate committee or agency. It is the best way to get input from those with the most expertise. It is the best way to get approval from those explicitly charged by the Assembly with responsibility for each particular area. To borrow language from the Strategic Plan, there is no better way to "increase involvement by providing more opportunities to utilize greater variety of people and life experiences (especially younger leaders, women, ethnic leaders, and global church representatives) in the discussions concerning PCA ministry direction and development."

This is why I signed the protest. It's one thing to be required to follow the rules because they are the rules. As Presbyterians we strive to do all things "decently and in order." But this is a case where the spirit of the law is as important as the letter. RAO 7-3 c. is very clear, and it is very important. It places a limit on the authority of the CMC, and it gets the maximum number of people involved through the various permanent committees and agencies as well as their respective committees of commissioners, and involves those who have the most expertise and involvement. Therefore, its violation by the Assembly must be protested vigorously.

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APPENDIX B

A Confessional Alternative to the PCA's Strategic Plan from the NW Georgia Presbytery

NWGP's "Alternative Plan for PCA Renewal"

with a brief Preface by Rev. Dr. Jon D. Payne,
minister of Grace Presbyterian Church, Douglasville, Georgia.

Dear Friends of the PCA,

On Saturday, May 22, 2010 the Northwest Georgia Presbytery voted to send an "Alternative

Plan for PCA Renewal” overture to this year’s PCA General Assembly in Nashville, Tennessee. The “Alternative Plan” is not an attempt to cause further division in the PCA. On the contrary, the overture is simply meant to unite and renew our denomination in the theology and practice of Westminster Presbyterianism.

A majority of the members of the Northwest Georgia Presbytery believe that if our PCA churches and presbyteries return to the rich theology and practice of Reformed Confessionalism, as reflected in the seventeen point summary below, we will know and experience the spiritual renewal and reformation that we all eagerly desire. We believe that many PCA elders will identify more with this “Alternative Plan” and be pleased to have before them a positive, biblically-based alternative to the elaborate “PCA Strategic Plan” of the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC).

Recently, while reading D. A. Carson’s excellent little book entitled *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, it was hard not to think of our own denomination and the proposed “PCA Strategic Plan” when coming across the following section:

Western Evangelicalism tends to run through cycles of fads. At the moment, books are pouring off the presses telling us how to plan for success, how “vision” clearly consists in clearly articulated “ministry goals,” how the knowledge of detailed profiles of our communities constitutes the key to successful outreach. I am not for a moment suggesting that there is nothing to be learned from such studies. But after a while one may perhaps be excused for marveling how many churches were planted by Paul and Whitefield and Wesley and Stanway and Judson without enjoying these advantages. Of course all of us need to understand the people to whom we minister, and all of us can benefit from small doses of such literature. But massive doses sooner or later dilute the gospel. Ever so subtly, we start to think that success more critically depends on thoughtful sociological analysis than on the gospel; Barna becomes more important than the Bible. We depend on plans, programs, vision statements – but somewhere along the way we have succumbed to the temptation to displace the foolishness of the cross with the wisdom of strategic planning. Again, I insist, my position is not a thinly veiled plea for obscurantism, for seat-of-the-pants ministry that plans nothing. Rather, I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight. Whenever the periphery is in danger of displacing the center, we are not far removed from idolatry. (Carson, *The Cross And Christian Ministry*, 25-26; emphasis mine)

Dear friends, the remedy to our denominational maladies is not the implementation of what some see as a fairly complex, mildly therapeutic, sociologically savvy strategic vision. Rather, what the PCA needs – in fact, what every NAPARC denomination always needs – is a clear, uncompromising call to biblical and confessional renewal, renewal that is on God’s terms, not man’s. It really is that simple. Indeed, God intended it to be. This way, when the elect are converted, sanctified (renewed) and comforted by the primary means of 1) faithful preaching,

2) biblical administration of the sacraments, and 3) steadfast prayer, then God gets all the glory. “Therefore, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (I Corinthians 1:31; see also WSC Q. 88).

Many believe that the current problems in the PCA have less to do with cultural irrelevancy and insensitivity, and more to do with a lack of confidence in the sufficient, efficacious means that God Himself has promised to bless for the health and extension of His kingdom. Perhaps we – the PCA – should examine ourselves, and ask ourselves some searching, even convicting questions – questions that may help us to recognize our current problems: Why the upturn in topical, loosely textual, media/story driven sermons? Why the downturn in exegetical, Christ-centered, lectio-continua Bible preaching? Why the upturn in focus upon missional broadness, social programs and eco-gospel ministry? Why the downturn in substantial prayer in public worship? Why the absence of congregational prayer meetings? Why the upturn in focus upon women possessing greater roles in worship and denominational leadership (“direction and development”)? Why the downturn in sessions boldly calling men to lead their families and Christ’s Church (i.e. public worship, family worship)? The main goal or plan of the PCA for the next forty years should be a courageous, God-centered, joyfully reverent return to Reformed Faith and practice, as set forth in the Westminster Standards and her sister confessions (e.g. The Three Forms of Unity). This is a call to renewal that we should all be able to get behind.

In conclusion, the CMC asserts that the PCA must provide “safe places” for discussing “new ideas” in order to “advance” our denomination’s faithfulness to “biblical belief, ministry and mission” (Strategic Plan, 17). This writer couldn’t agree more. However, what we must recognize is that there have been “safe places” provided for rigorous theological debate and denominational discussion since 1973. These “safe places” are called church courts, constituted of men whom God Himself has set apart for ordained leadership in His Church. Therefore, may this simple alternative overture to the CMC’s “Strategic Plan” be received as another voice at the PCA table, encouraging honest discussion on the best means to denominational renewal.

The following is the NWGP’s “Alternative Plan for PCA Renewal” overture. The 17 points for renewal are not meant to be a “strategy” or “vision” per se, but simply to turn our attention back to Reformed orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Some will identify several of these points below as growing weaknesses in the PCA and American Evangelicalism in general. The Scriptural and confessional references underscore that this call for renewal is unequivocally biblical and confessional.

Overture from Northwest Georgia Presbytery
“An Alternative Plan for PCA Renewal”

Whereas, the “PCA Strategic Plan” is a well-intentioned effort by the Cooperative Ministries Committee to address some of the perceived downward trends in the Presbyterian Church in America; and

Whereas, these apparent problems include a decline in membership, disunity and noncooperation, and a lack of vision for twenty-first century missions; and

Whereas, the framers of this “Strategic Plan” have worked diligently to set forth a proposal that they believe will make the PCA a stronger, healthier denomination; and

Whereas, many will join with us in believing that the “PCA Strategic Plan” is misguided in its program for spiritual renewal, and view the downward trends in our denomination as having less to do with the various factors described in the “Strategic Plan,” and more a consequence of our unwillingness, as elders, to give ourselves wholeheartedly to what God, in His Word, has promised to bless for the health and extension of His kingdom; and

Whereas, the “PCA Strategic Plan,” among other things, seeks to cultivate spiritual renewal in the PCA by promoting “safe places” for theological discussion, “more seats at the table” of denominational development for women, young people, and minorities, and a closer working relationship with the “Global Church” in the area of missions; and

Whereas, while some may view these strategic proposals as leading the PCA towards a stronger future, many others will be uncomfortable with this strategy, believing that lasting spiritual renewal can come only through the outwardly foolish and weak means to which God has attached His saving promises; and

Whereas, the various committees already have the ability to sponsor “safe” discussions (these have been occurring for years in General Assembly and presbytery forums and seminars), and the nominating process has an adequate method of recommending seats at various tables; thus, short of specific BCO amendments, any merited aspects of these targets may already be pursued; and

Whereas, presbyteries, sessions, and other regional conferences—instead of by a top-down committee process—are the prime places for healthy discussion and for the generation of methods to improve our corporate life, and frequently do so with less vested interests; and

Whereas, some believe this “Strategic Plan” will create even further division in the PCA; and

Whereas, the greatest and most urgent need of the Presbyterian Church in America is not a complex strategy, but a clarion call to renew our avowed commitment to the Biblical, Reformed, Confessional, and Presbyterian Faith – a system of doctrine which has, for centuries, cultivated God-glorifying unity, humility, worship, spiritual/numerical growth, mission, service, sacrifice, giving, and cooperation all over the world; and

Whereas, our present need as a denomination is to rekindle our commitment to foundational Reformed doctrine and practice, reflected, in part, in the seventeen points listed below; and

Whereas, it is our conviction that a faithful implementation of these biblical doctrines and practices into the life and ministry of our presbyteries and churches will yield an abundance of spiritual fruit; and

Whereas, renewal on God's terms cannot – and will not – fail;

Therefore, the Northwest Georgia Presbytery overtures the 38th General Assembly to call all its congregations and presbyteries to this simple, straightforward, unambiguously biblical call for renewal as an alternative to the complex and potentially divisive "PCA Strategic Plan," except for the funding proposal already presented by the Administrative Committee, which this overture wishes neither to condemn nor support. And let us trust that in the coming years God will enable us, by His Spirit, to faithfully employ the spiritual means that He Himself has already provided us.

17 Points for PCA Renewal:

A renewed commitment to the centrality of the God-ordained, efficacious means of exegetical, Christ-centered, application-filled, expository preaching (Is. 55:10-11; Ez. 37:1-10; Jn. 21:15-17 Mk. 1:38; Acts 2:42; 20:26-27; I Cor. 1:22-25; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; WLC 67, 154-5).

A renewed commitment to the centrality of the God-ordained, efficacious means of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Gen. 17:9-11; Ex. 12; Mt. 26:26-29; 28:19; I Cor. 10:16-17; 11:17-34; Col. 2:11-15; I Pet. 3:21; Rev. 19:6-9; WLC 154; 161-177).

A renewed commitment to the centrality of the God-ordained means of private, family and corporate prayer (Ps. 63; Mt. 6:5-15; Mk. 1:35; Acts 6:4; Eph. 1:15-23; Phil. 1:9-11; I Thess. 5:17; I Tim. 2:1; WLC 154; 178-196).

A renewed commitment to – and delight in – the Lord's Day (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Is. 58:13-14; Mk. 2:23-28; Jn. 20:1;19; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10; WCF 21).

A renewed commitment to worship on God's terms, according to Scripture (Ex. 20:4-6; Lev. 10:1-3; Deut. 12:32; Jn. 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; Col. 2:18-23; Heb. 10:24-25; 12:28-29; WCF 21.1).

A renewed commitment to private, family, and public worship (Ps. 63; Mt. 6:6, 16-18; Neh. 1:4-11; Dan. 9:3-4; Deut. 6:4-6; Eph. 6:1-4; Ps. 100:4; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10: 24-25; WCF 21.5-6).

A renewed commitment to wed our missiology to Reformed ecclesiology (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 14:19-23; 15:1-41; 20:17, 28; I Cor. 11:17-34; The Pastoral Epistles; Titus 1:5; WCF 25; 30-31).

A renewed commitment to loving, Word and Spirit-dependent, prayerful and courageous evangelism (Mt. 5:13-16; 28:18-20; Acts 4:1-13; I Peter 3:15-16; WLC 154-7).

A renewed commitment to biblical church discipline (Mt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:1-13; 11:27-29; II Thess. 3:6, 14-15; I Tim. 5:20; WLC 45; WCF 30).

A renewed commitment to biblical diaconal ministry (Acts 6:1-7; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8-13).

A renewed commitment to catechize our covenant children in our homes and churches

(Deut. 6:4-6; Prov. 22:6; Mk. 10:13-16; Eph. 4:12-13; 6:1-4; WSC).

A renewed commitment to biblical masculinity and femininity (Gen. 2:18-25; Deut. 31:6-7; Prov. 31:10-31; I Cor. 16:13; I Peter 3:1-7; Eph. 5:22-33; I Tim. 2:11-15; WLC 17).

A renewed commitment to entrust the leadership of the Church into the hands of the ordained leadership (Jn. 21:15-17; I Tim. 5:17; Heb.13:17; I Pet. 5:1-3; WLC 45).

A renewed commitment to the Reformed Confession which we have avowed, before God and men, to promote and defend as our system of doctrine (I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 4:14; 10:23; Jude 3; Westminster Standards).

A renewed commitment to the mortification of sin and worldliness (Rom. 6:11-14; 8:13; 12:1-2; I Cor. 6:12; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:20-24; I John 2:15-17; Gal. 6:14; WLC 76-7).

A renewed commitment to the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works of the law (Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 4:1-5; 5:1; Gal. 2:15-16; 3:10-14; Phil. 3:1-11; WCF 11).

A renewed commitment to rest, by faith, in Christ alone for salvation, without minimizing Gospel obedience (i.e. the third use of the law) / (Rom. 1:5; 6:1-2; 8:5-8; II Cor. 7:1; Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:1; 5:1-21; Phil. 3:12; I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 12:14; I John 5:3; WCF 19.5-7).

Furthermore, rather than having the Cooperative Ministries Committee propose additional structural changes, let us adopt this plan for renewal (reflected in the seventeen points above) asking our presbyteries and sessions, who are the best originators of denominational change, to study, discuss and implement it. Accordingly, this overture asks our appropriate elected leaders to represent and publicize this to our churches in writing or in counsel as the action of the 38th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. By taking this action, we, as elders, intend to send a clear and simple message to our churches, presbyteries, General Assembly, and the world, that the PCA will seek spiritual renewal on God's terms, trusting solely in His sovereign wisdom and grace.

Humbly and Respectfully Submitted by:

The Northwest Georgia Presbytery

May 22, 2010