

Sustaining Our Witness

Report from the Special Committee on Per Capita and Financial Sustainability

Greetings, my name is Valerie Young, Ruling Elder member of Central Presbyteria Church in Waxahachie, TX and, I serve as Synod Leader and Stated Clerk of the, Synod of the Sun

Hello, my name is Laura Mariko Cheifetz, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I am a Teaching Elder, in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee in the Synod of Living Waters, assistant dean of admissions, vocation, and student life at Vanderbilt Divinity School, in Nashville, TN.

We began as co moderators of the Special Committee on Per Capita and Financial Sustainability in March of 2019. Today we come on behalf of the entire special committee to say the following: We as the Presbyterian Church (USA) have abundant vision. We have creeds and statements and guiding principles. We have theology. We have a legacy. We have resources. We are a very wealthy church. Our problem that we seek to address through our recommendations is one of allocation of resources. We need appropriate allocations to support the sustainability of the witness of the PC(USA).

The Per Capita and Financial Sustainability Committee, agreeing with previous General Assembly commissions and committees: the All Agency Review Committee of 2010 & 2016; The Way Forward Commission of 2018; and the Moving Forward Implementation Commission of 2020, recommends that the 225th General Assembly :

1. Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency through formation of a commission in order to be aligned in mission, purpose, and the use of resources
2. Experiment with potential funding models through formation of a Funding Model Development team to develop, recruit, implement, and provide oversight of possible experiments

We've been asked: Why form a Commission?

1. URGENCY – the Church cannot wait for either recommendation to happen on its own. The recommendations on unification and per capita are both urgent and need to happen for the sustainability of the denomination as a whole.
2. Why a separate committee for recommendation #2? We believe in setting up both of these efforts to succeed and two different bodies will enable both to do significant work expeditiously.
3. We are also aware of the tendency of the systems to push back, preserve the status quo, slow down, and re-consider, which is a perfectly understandable reaction. That is why previous recommendations to similar effect have not been undertaken. The Special Committee believes that a commission for recommendation one (unification), and a Funding Model Development Team for recommendation two as set forth in our recommendations, are less likely to be interrupted by push back.

[slide 2- committee people]

Introduce the rest of the committee members

- Carmen (Janira) Colón, Ruling Elder in Central Florida Presbytery - active in the first half of the work
- Debi Davis, Ruling Elder in Tropical Florida
- Paul Helphinstine, Teaching Elder in the Holston Presbytery in Eastern Tennessee and congregational pastor
- Mark Hong, Teaching Elder, Synod Executive and Stated Clerk in the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii
- Diane Kenning, Ruling Elder in the Presbytery of Plains & Peaks
- Scott Lumsden, Teaching Elder, Co-Executive Presbyter in the Seattle Presbytery
- Sarah Moore-Nokes, Teaching Elder and former General Presbyter in Winnebago Presbytery
- Joseph Ngalle, Ruling Elder in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina - active in the first half of the work
- Timothy Ngare, Ruling Elder in the Presbytery of Detroit - active in the first half of the work
- Jeanne Radak, Teaching Elder and Presbytery Leader of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey
- Jose Rosa Rivera, Ruling Elder in the Presbiterio de San Juan
- Audrey Toombs, retired Stated Clerk and office administrator of the Presbytery of the Mid-South
- Kevin Velduisen, Teaching Elder, Mission Coordinator and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of South Dakota

A brief word on diversity and representation

- As you can see, membership of the special committee was diverse by geography, spanning the lower 48 plus a synod leader accountable to Hawaii and a member from Puerto Rico. We are a mix of Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders. We have mid council leaders, accountants, finance personnel, people serving in validated ministries within large systems such as a Research 1 university. We had an IRS employee.
- You will notice that the committee is majority white, particularly in the iteration of the committee between July 2020 and July 2022, with four notable exceptions. As this work dragged on due to the pandemic, we lost a few folks to resignations, and it was not advisable to bring on additional members to a moderator-appointed committee, considering how deep into the work we were. Such a move would have been about looking good rather than doing right by the committee members and the charge - and looking good is a white supremacy strategy.
- We would also like to thank all those committee and board chairs and vice chairs who reached out to us in the course of our work. We made ourselves available as possible on weekends, evenings, and during the work day, having been called to meet with past and

future moderators, vice moderators, co-moderators, and members of the Presbyterian Missions Agency Board and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, as well as the A Corporation.

- We are grateful to COGA and PMAB for inviting us to present our initial conclusions and work at their February 2020 joint meeting.
- Thank you particularly to MFIC, and its members Marco Grimaldo, Mathew Eardley, Eric Beene, and Debra Avery for their collegiality.
- And a special word of appreciation for all of the presbytery and synod leaders who took time to talk with us and share their perspectives.

[slide 3 - charge]

The original scope of the work is as follows:

The Per Capita & Financial Sustainability Special Committee was tasked with the charge to “provide a comprehensive resource projection analysis and summary assessment” of national church assets and income. In addition, we were tasked to address “how we can better resource our congregations and mid-council bodies and their work on the ground”; and “to review the current per capita based system of funding the ministry of councils higher than session for financial sustainability into the next ten years.”

Operational Values

- Commitment to connection
- Curiosity
- Discernment

[slide 4 - MFIC]

Members of the Moving Forward Implementation Commission attended meetings of the Special Committee and THEN charged the Special Committee to convene the first meeting of agency executives. Their charge reads, in part, as follows:

The Moving Forward Implementation Commission moves to assign to the GA Committee on Per Capita and Financial Sustainability item (GA 223 04-04, Item 5) to, “Instruct the six agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to engage in a collaborative self-study of the per capita model and its’ ability to adequately fund the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency in the immediate and longer-term future and to explore alternative and creative funding resources for both.”

[slide 5 - earth]

The work of fulfilling those charges led us to the recommendations - we followed what we heard and what we learned . .

- The problem as set forth in the work of the full committee is one of sustainability of the witness of the PCUSA = sustainability of our witness into the future

- This is a conversation about systems and their relationships, the way we do our work together, not about specific people or roles. The committee has said, and we will continue to say some things in a straightforward way, some things that might be difficult to hear. This is by no means any kind of commentary on current leadership or the work each agency has done to improve. Our message to this committee, and to the General Assembly is NOT an effort to supplant individuals in any way.
- This report and our conversations are about improving a system to better serve the witness of the PC(USA) from the General Assembly to congregations .
- We on the committee find the missions of the national church to be inspiring and it is why we are here.. We love the church and the people called to serve.
- Laura is a part of the church and in ministry only because of the national ministries of the church. Laura's presbytery is a Matthew 25 presbytery.
- The Synod of the Sun, where I am privileged to serve, is a Matthew 25 synod.

We commend the vision of Matthew 25 and are also inspired by the Stated Clerk's vision for the 21st century, which values relationship building and radical reconciliation.

We are here working toward sustainability for these similar visions.

- Our problem isn't a lack of vision - we have abundant vision. Our problem is our witness and how we sustain that witness into the future to be healthy and effective, and how we provide access to the revenue that already exists. We did not delve into cutting costs, identifying fresh streams of revenue, or tweaking the visions that are not ours to tweak - but at using the resources we have in sustainable ways.
- While some have commented that we should have focused on increasing membership, we were aware that particular angle was outside of our charge, and truth be told, we do not prefer to speak of "increasing membership" as if we were a subscription service. We are not Netflix. We do not believe that our primary mission as a church is to seek unending growth, as though it were the best measure of faithfulness. We are seeking faithfulness with who we are and what we have already above all else.

When we began our work as a full committee, like good Presbyterians, we split into subcommittees. One focused on financial sustainability and one focused on per capita, we continued to bring our findings back to the larger committee. Both subcommittees found compelling, interdependent information for the church. Each subcommittee's work informed the other, and these recommendations come from the committee as a whole for consideration. We believe that both recommendations are vital to the sustainability of our witness as a denomination.

[slide 6 - timeline]

You can see the detailed timeline in Appendix C, but in case you did not memorize that particular work of literature, here is a brief recap:

- June 2018 - The General Assembly votes to form two special committees, one on per capita and one on financial sustainability

- March 2019 - full committee meets by zoom
- May 2019 - first committee meeting in person
- The committee both as a whole and in its subcommittees spent 2019 consulting with mid councils, the six agencies and Administrative Services Group, or A Corporation, staff and boards, including executives of five agencies, a staff representative of the sixth agency, and the executive of the Administrative Services Group/A Corp
- February 2020, the full committee report was submitted for the General Assembly and presented to a joint meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly/Presbyterian Mission Agency Board
- June 2020 - report goes to the 224th General Assembly and its review is moved forward to the 225th General Assembly
- Throughout 2021, the special committee regrouped and engaged in follow-up meetings with mid councils, agencies, and boards
- Revisions and rewrites were made to the recommendations and report
- February 2022 full committee report submitted for the General Assembly
- July 2022 - report presented to the GA

[slide 7 - Vehicle]

So, let's start with the Per Capita Team

History of per capita -

- According to pcusa.org first mention of per capita is in minister letters from 1734
- Over 150 years later, Carl Benz applied for a patent for his “vehicle powered by a gas engine.”
- Suffice it to say that, Per Capita was designed for a different Church.
- We are looking toward increased fuel efficiency and sustainable resources as fuel. . .

2 early decisions:

The Per Capita Team began by reviewing the specifics of our charge. In doing so, we made two decisions that would further direct our work together – those were:

1. That we would stay true to our charge - our work was limited to councils above that of the session. We would not be working directly with or conducting listening sessions directly with congregations. . . as tempted as we were.
2. That we were committed to the voices of Mid-Council leaders being heard throughout this process.

[slide 8 - map - PUSH PLAY]

Listening Sessions (Summary in Appendix D)

A questionnaire was constructed to provide consistency for our conversations and data gathering. Those questions and more are found in Appendix D.

In all, members of the PC Team conducted over 20 separate listening sessions with well over 100 presbytery leaders, primarily through the facilitation of synods.

Additional listening sessions were conducted at in-person events like the Mid Council Leaders Gathering and the Mid-Council Finance Network – So, we spoke with more than Executive Presbyters, there were also treasurers, Stated Clerks and some council moderators involved in these sessions.

PC SUMMARY

[slide 9 - fulcrum]

As a denomination, we are experiencing attrition - membership is declining and small churches are closing. ..

Smaller and Fewer congregations mean smaller presbyteries. As one presbytery leader in the Synod of the Sun explained, “In order to sustain the structure, per capita has to go up, that means people staying have to pay more. That’s a concern.” . .

Well, we think so too!

Think of a presbytery as a fulcrum to the denomination - YES, we are a giant lever for ministry! Literally the place at which all levels of the denomination are supported.

- Because all things cost money - Supporting congregations and local ministry more in the current system means that there is less funding available for the national expression of the church
- Supporting the national level of the church more financially through per capita, means that local support and ministry suffers.
- So, when decisions of funding at the presbytery level have to be made, which way is a presbytery to exert effort?

The videos produced by the committee have explained the “Presbytery Squeeze” and the two year delay on the assessment of per capita to presbyteries. Here’s one of many examples we heard about how the effects are played out in the levels of the church:

One presbytery in the Synod of the Trinity

- Has a history of paying 100% of per capita to OGA
- In 2018 when calling a Transitional Executive to help them discern the future of the presbytery and its ministry to resource congregations
- They had to use investments AND raise their own Presbytery Per Capita by \$4 in order to hire a staff person and make up for what is uncollected from other congregations
- AND this presbytery is in the process of sharing staff with another presbytery because they each on their own can’t afford to provide salary and benefits for staff
- ALL while paying 100% per capita to OGA for their congregations - even those congregations who are unable to pay

This could be almost any presbytery. Other presbyteries, perhaps for lack of reserve funds and human resources, have made the decision to do no more than what is required by the Book of Order - rather than extend their own per capita increase to congregations.

[slide 10 - Squeeze]

We learned a LOT more about presbyteries than we could begin to convey here. Including that presbyteries have different interpretations of and different ways to communicate (or not) per capita's impact to congregations. Almost every presbytery has a different way of collecting funds to pay per capita developed over the years and ingrained in their respective systems and culture. It looks different in almost EVERY presbytery.

The full compilation of data from our listening sessions is found in Appendix D – but, here's some more of what we heard in those sessions:

- There is a correlation between increases in per capita and a decrease in Mission Giving (to PMA) – when per capita goes up, mission giving goes down.
- We learned that a majority of presbyteries give to PMA by a percentage of income.
- Some of you may be surprised by this, but some congregations refuse to – or are unable to pay per capita. Presbyteries are still assessed per capita on those members, and that exacerbates the squeeze for presbyteries. Often those who are unable to contribute, are the ones who need the resources and networking of the presbytery the most.

We heard that there is a lack of clarity on the use of Per Capita - even with mid council leaders– which agencies get what and how much - in fact for many, per capita and mission giving to “Louisville” are merged. Some distinguished the difference, and others saw two revenue streams as part of “Louisville”. As one presbytery leader in the Synod of Mid America put it, “It takes considerable work to untangle per capita, what it is and what it is not”.

We heard common concerns from leaders around communication in ALL directions...

- Overall, there's a perceived lack of transparency regarding the budgeting process of OGA & PMA, especially related to use of Per Capita funds.
- Information comes from “Louisville”, but there's no real mechanism for communication from mid councils to reach “Louisville”.
- Generally speaking, it feels as though there is little understanding of the work of presbyteries or acknowledgement of their predicament.

Presbyteries have challenges in structure, communication, and leadership for both the presbytery and their congregations. Many lack the resources to “untangle” and communicate per capita at the local level.

Because of the pandemic, more of us now see that the per capita model is based on an outdated definition of membership. Growing communities of faith often BIPOC communities like, Fellowships and New Worshiping Communities aren't ‘members’ or represented in our government - YET people are joining congregations from their living rooms across the country thanks to YouTube . . . and new generations are more and more averse to becoming members of anything.

- A Side note: The Special Committee sees that
- This membership based structure serves to reinforce the message that "successful" ministry is about membership numbers, further reinforces a “pay to play” system and assumes a level of financial capacity among our members and churches.

- Faith is not about membership, but is about reflecting the grace and love of Christ in our communities. We don't believe that a congregation of 6 is any less faithful than one of 600.

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The listening sessions are where we began to hear the work of the two teams as interdependent (and it surprised us). . . what we heard repeatedly was that the PC(USA) does not have a unified vision, and that structural changes at the national level are needed before creating a new comprehensive funding strategy.

- While presbytery leaders in one synod called for “blowing up the system” - we are not advocating for that.
- Overall, Mid Council Leaders believe that a new model should be SIMPLE, based on REAL TIME, and reflective of a simplified national structure.

In contrast to what we heard from mid council leaders -- When we gathered the Agency heads as directed by the Moving Forward Implementation Commission for a collaborative self-study on per capita we provided them with a summary of our findings - Those are found in Appendix E - here's we heard in response:

- That - at the national level - the per capita system is working - People just need to pay their per capita.---- While OGA collects a majority of per capita that is assessed to presbyteries, there is a real hesitancy to look more deeply into how the current system is affecting presbyteries and its direct impact on congregations.
- There is a fear of other funding models and what might be 'lost' at the national level. Though, they did indicate that they were willing to coordinate on vision and mission.
- We acknowledge and appreciate that there is an understandable level of protection that comes with fiduciary responsibility to an organization. . . It is literally their job.
- We also acknowledge that, It can be difficult to see the forest for the trees. This committee had the advantage of seeing things from multiple levels because we listened, and thus - we are concerned about the structure for long-term health.

The Book of Order provides ample leeway for how a presbytery might meet its per capita commitment. Today's reality is that most presbyteries lack the capacity, and some the inclination, to serve as the funds development arm for per capita. Especially since the pandemic, presbyteries primary concerns are filling empty pulpits and resourcing congregations.

. . .

To be fair, presbytery leaders were very clear that they VALUE the connectional nature of per capita! However, the complexity of interpreting the work of presbyteries AND synod, and OGA to congregations is burdensome and something for which many feel ill-equipped.

The committee believes that there is a fundamental misunderstanding that the ecclesial work of OGA is not mission –A reminder that support for immigration of pastors, the call process, and general assembly gatherings themselves, most definitely are mission. The people who have worked tirelessly to put this General Assembly together ARE engaged in mission. Afterall - - - G-3.0501 “The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission

among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.”

We believe that a change in the denomination’s funding model is essential to sustaining the witness of all councils and, along with the alignment of OGA and PMA, has real potential to relieve pressure on presbyteries and (especially small) congregations. “Healthy Presbyteries make Healthy Congregations”

The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12, that all parts of the body need to work together, the head cannot work without the feet. As you see here, presbyteries are responsible for what is 98% of the OGA budget, and a portion of PMA’s undesignated budget – To truly be a connectional church, if the head and feet are connected to the body and working together - it follows that the voices of mid council leaders should be heard - and the cry for simplicity in structure and funding should be heeded.

We believe that the Per Capita Team has developed some possible experiments worthy of implementation. . .and there may be more! While I won't get into the weeds of those here and now, they can be found in Appendix A The Handoff Handbook and Appendix B outlining the Adaptive Challenges– and fuller development and implementation is the work of the next committee.

[slide 12 - Financial Sustainability]

Financial Sustainability

- Much of our work was informed by the learnings from the per capita listening sessions as well as extensive consultations with the six agencies
- Even mid council leaders aren’t always clear on the differences between the six agencies, which we explained in our video about the six agencies. Even mid council leaders sometimes are a bit fuzzy on who they are responsible to beyond the congregations in their mid council
- And if mid councils and their leaders get confused, then how are congregations supposed to manage the flow of information coming to them? Because this is how we are structured...
- According to G-1.0103 in the Book of Order: “The members of a congregation put themselves under the leadership of the session and the higher councils (presbytery, synod, and General Assembly).”
- We seek sustainability, which means we seek clarity for the church, with a particular focus on ensuring mid councils are able to provide guidance, and that means reducing confusion and multiple visions
- We did not look at cutting costs, such as eliminating redundancies (we did not get access to organizational charts that would have made any sense to us without wandering off of our charge and getting into the weeds - like the thought of us digging into job descriptions seemed a little not great), or cutting staff, or how we develop new

streams of revenue - that was not part of our charge. We were focused on sustainability and clarity. And our work on per capita led us to our conclusion.

- In fact we believe that unification in mission could make us much stronger, from the national councils all the way down to the local congregation
- Our problem isn't vision - we have abundance of vision. Our problem is witness, untangling it, and how we sustain that witness into the future.
- The timeline for our subcommittee's work began by requesting financial documents from all six agencies
 - We met with representatives of Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the newly formed Administrative Services Group
 - We met with representatives of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, the board of the Administrative Services Group, staff of the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board
 - We had a face-to-face meeting with heads of agencies and the Administrative Services Group in service of the Per Capita Collaborative (Six Agency) Self-Study
 - Throughout all of this, we met regularly with the Per Capita subcommittee to hear what they were learning and share our findings
 - We also met regularly with representatives of the Moving Forward Implementation Commission, which it was then before becoming a committee, some of whom attended our meetings, in the hopes that our data collection could be mutually beneficial
 - We sent many clarifying questions to staff of the six agencies - you can see questions and answers of our formal questionnaire in Appendix E.
 - One of our first products was a report that we provided to the required bodies (the Moving Forward Implementation Commission, Vision 2020, six agencies and one entity), the most recent version of which you can see as Appendix F in our report
 - We submitted the first final report to the General Assembly which was moved to the subsequent GA
 - We reconvened, requested updated financials from the Administrative Services Group for Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly
 - You can see per capita projections in Appendix G and A Corporation projections in Appendix H
 - Listened again to per capita subcommittee findings
 - Checked in with the Moving Forward Implementation Committee
 - We reevaluated what "urgency" means in light of the pandemic - and we found the slide has accelerated, in terms of sustainability, in terms of membership, in terms of overall transformation of what it means to be church
- In reviewing financial statements for all six agencies - they all have different ways of determining their resources available and presenting them, and how they do projections and planning is different. But we were able to parse out some larger themes.
- As you learned in our video on agency budgets, there are four agencies not dependent upon per capita, although all agencies share some financial interrelatedness and have indirect contact with per capita funds.

The focus of our work was narrowed primarily to the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, since they receive income from four main sources and are most susceptible to membership and markets: (1) unrestricted (Basic Mission or Shared Mission) and designated contributions from congregations and individuals, (2) apportionment income, (3) endowments, interest and dividends, and (4) sales of resources and program services. These four sources of income are currently allocated to the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly. For example, in 2019 Presbyterian Mission Agency budgeted to receive about \$14M from Foundation investments and Office of the General Assembly budgeted to receive about \$13M from per capita apportionment. The conclusion of this committee is that while the analysis predicts difficulty sustaining Office of the General Assembly in the near future, the primary concern is that the current allocation of funding between Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly is not sustainable.

While budgeting for Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly, and now the Administrative Services Group, has been done in such a way that each has its own budget, they all fall under the single legal entity of A Corporation, which receives all funds on their behalf. The overall annual expense budget for A Corp activities is approximately \$94 million (as of 2019 figures).

- The Presbyterian Mission Agency receives gifts through Basic Mission/Shared Mission that are unrestricted, solicits gifts through direct appeals and special offerings, (some of which share designated revenue with congregations and mid councils) receives designated gifts, and bequests, endowments, sales of resources, and per capita giving.
- The Office of the General Assembly gets its revenues from fundraising (restricted only to the Historical Society) and raising per capita (which has to be approved by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and ultimately by the General Assembly), according to the Organization for Mission (which is a governing document outlining the relationships between the agencies, and is up for revisions at this assembly).
- Fundraising is a possibility for the Office of the General Assembly at large, but we fear that future per capita payments or other forms of remittances will be negatively impacted if Office of the General Assembly begins to engage in fundraising similar to that of Presbyterian Mission Agency, and indeed, they have begun to explore the possibility of fundraising. Note that this is part of the Office of the General Assembly budget in the committees' business for tomorrow. This would add an additional agency doing funds development among the 5 already out there.
- This structure sets the Office of the General Assembly at a disadvantage and puts it at risk of being unable to fulfill its mission in the long term.
- Unused budgeted dollars by all entities are typically maintained by each entity rather than returned to a pool of dollars that may be reassigned for maximum impact. It's really nice that the Presbyterian Mission Agency gifted Office of the General Assembly with an additional \$1.5 million to assist with its 2023-2024 budget, but this was a one-time grant, and does nothing to ensure greater equity and cooperation going forward, and also does nothing to address the structural barriers to more equitable allocation of resources.
- What we learned about Office of the General Assembly/Presbyterian Mission Agency

- At the time there was no set structural mechanism for mission coordination at all levels
- Moving Forward Implementation Commission called for a budget “summit” in 2019. Representatives from Administrative Services Group, Office of the General Assembly and Presbyterian Mission Agency (staff and boards) met in Chicago. What came from that was the (first ever?) unified presentation of the budget but NOT a unified budget. From that experience, Moving Forward Implementation Commission called for the implementation of a coordinating table as a way to keep the process moving toward a true unified budget.
- There were no regular budget meetings that we knew of. Now they have joint budget meetings and joint budget presentations and still not a shared budget, as demonstrated in real time this year by the grant given from Presbyterian Mission Agency to Office of the General Assembly’s 2023-2024 budget.
- There is no structural mechanism to ensure good faith behavior and cooperation between agencies - Moving Forward Implementation Committee is recommending the coordinating table be continued to assist in this effort, but we are unclear as to the authority of any body to ensure participation at this table
- Additionally, mission priorities are set by biennial assemblies comprised of elected commissioners who often have little understanding of the outcome and true financial implications of their votes. This leaves staff and boards scrambling to meet the discerned needs and priorities of the body. What happens when money runs out? Staff have to decide how to sunset ministries set up by prior General Assembly actions for which there is no available funding. While financial sustainability appears relatively stable, especially at the national level, for now, the structure is not set up for the projected needs of a 21st century church. And keep in mind, Office of the General Assembly is proposing an increase in per capita because things keep costing money and inflation hits everywhere.
- Our problem isn’t vision - we have loads of vision, our problem is how we sustain our powerful, historic, and mission-focused witness into the future.
- If Office of the General Assembly does not get another way to access needed revenue beyond raising per capita, the pressure on mid-councils will increase, which is a primary source of stress according to the committee’s research/data-gathering. Seeing Office of the General Assembly and Presbyterian Mission Agency as part of “One Church” instead of two competing agencies would help address questions of improving fiscal management and sustainability from a cultural and structural standpoint.
- When we say these two entities are facing huge inequities in how they are able to get revenue, this is what we mean

[slide 13 - OGA pie]

[slide 14 - PMA pie]

[slide 15 - two pie charts]

- A Corporation is the legal entity, but yet, these two agencies have two separate budgets and have only agreed to present their separate budgets together in the very recent past
- The joint presentation of the budget gives the appearance that unification has taken place, but the mere existence of a funds transfer between PMA and OGA earlier this year is evidence that the two remain separate entities with separate budgets and separate missions and visions.

[slide 16 - multiple visions]

VISION

Presbyterian Mission Agency has proposed that instead of moving forward on this commission, a group spend two years figuring out a vision. Based on our work, we do not believe vision is the issue.

We already have three visions.

- o [Vision 2020](#) (prayerful, courageous, united, serving, alive) - they want an implementation team
- o [Matthew 25](#)
- o [Stated Clerk's vision for the 21st century](#)

We didn't evaluate these, but we don't think they really are in conflict. The issue isn't the vision, it's the tangling up of them, the efforts to market them all at the same time, the requests for implementation, the sincere efforts of congregations, mid councils, and the General Assembly to conform to one or more of them.

Our problem isn't vision - we have an abundance of vision; our problem is witness and how we sustain that witness into the future.

[slide 17 - abundance scarcity]

We also understand that we are presenting things as though this is a zero sum game, in a mindset of scarcity.

We believe that the system as is, is a set-up for scarcity. We have a structural problem, an allocations problem, that does not allow us to live into a theology of God's abundance. We are an incredibly wealthy denomination in all the ways: in money, in people, in theological heritage, in ministry, in beauty, in hope, in vision. What we seek is a structure to better reflect our abundance, simpler, less confusing, with a clear witness to God's grace and love.

[slide 18 - status quo]

Our option is the status quo versus unification

Status quo situation is:

- Uneven finances

- Ambiguous long-term viability
- Confusing communication
- Weak coordination
- Ruptured vision

Unification would mean:

- Align mission
- Clarify purpose
- Streamline use of resources
- Stronger stewardship of financial resources

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly in its comments said: “Clarification of the goals and priorities is in the best interest of the whole church and will help with consistent messaging.”

You are at a crossroads. You have the chance to seek greater impact of our witness, instead of the status quo.

While this committee has been accused of proposing a rearranging of the deck chairs, we would say that the distinction is this: we do not see ourselves, the church, on a sinking ship. We see our church in the midst of massive change, seeking faithfulness. Change does not have to be a destructive iceberg. It can be an opportunity to share the gospel in new ways.

The General Assembly is already considering changes to the status quo. . . There are two pieces of business before the Mid Council Committee of this General Assembly that, given our current per capita funding model, present potential for unintended financial impact on New Worshiping Communities and immigrant Fellowships, . . .

- o I mention items MC-01 “On Recognizing Non-Chartered Fellowships as Churches” and MC-07 “A Resolution on Chartering Immigrant Fellowships” because we believe that there may be unintended financial impact on these communities, and their presbyteries – further demonstrating the pay to play system of per capita. To explain - When a church is chartered, the presbytery is then assessed per capita on membership. So, while this piece of business provides for representation vital in our system of governance, it may also provide additional financial expectation.
- o The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee states in business item RGJ-07 A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA) that “Across the denomination, congregations are struggling to provide sufficient income to installed pastors, leaving many congregations of color with the burden of persistent inequity and the lack of parity across the PC(USA).”

We must find other ways to sustain the national expression of the church that does not impede the growth and development of faith communities – especially those BIPOC communities - on the local and regional level. As a participant in the committees’ Riverside conversation webinar

put it, "I know each of you have presbytery-level and grassroots awareness. But we are hurting "out here".

J. Herbert Nelson, in an interview about this General Assembly, was asked "How will lament to hope be played out throughout the General Assembly?"

He said: "We've been in this time now of in a sense trying to figure out what does it mean to be a 21st century church. ... What are the things that we are actually going to lose that we have honored over the years? What are the things we might be able to keep, but we have to do it differently? ... We had to recalibrate and think through what does it mean now to put aside all of the things we became accustomed to, and then weigh them one at a time as to whether it's something that we can hold onto, or whether or not it's something we have to give up."

[slide 19 - 1Cor 12]

The Per Capita and Financial Sustainability Committee is asking that you help to demonstrate what it means to truly be a connectional church beyond money. We are asking you to listen and respond keeping in mind the whole of the church and the witness that we live out together. Our problem isn't vision - we have abundant vision. Our problem is how we sustain our witness into the future. That's what we're trying to solve. We believe in the witness of this church, and we seek a structure, financial and otherwise, that will support it for the 21st century church. Which would be:

1. Unify the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency through formation of a commission in order to be aligned in mission, purpose, and the use of resources
2. Experiment with potential funding models through formation of a Funding Model Development team to develop, recruit, implement, and provide oversight of possible experiments

We would be happy to take your questions, and would like to thank...

[slide 20 - Thank you]

all those agency staff members, heads of and representatives from agencies who resourced/sat in, called us for meetings, responded to our requests for conversations:

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Greg Rousos
Frank Spencer

David Dobson
Diane Moffett
J. Herbert Nelson
Jim Rissler
Mid council staff
Additional Presbyterian Foundation staff
And probably a few others