

MEMORANDUM

To: Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk and Rev. Barbara Gaddis, Chairperson of Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

From: Rev. Larryetta Ellis, Elder Marco Grimaldo and The Moving Forward Implementation Commission

Re: Fulfilling the mandate of the 223rd General Assembly

Date: April 30, 2020

God bless you all and thank you for your service to the church in these unusual times. We give thanks to God for your work and pray that we can continue to work together for the good of our church and our world.

On behalf of the Moving Forward Implementation Commission (MFIC), we write to request that the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) reconsider its recommendation to the 224th General Assembly to dismiss the Moving Forward Implementation Commission. Instead, we urge COGA once again to recommend to the Assembly that the MFIC continue its service until its actions and recommendations may be considered and possibly affirmed by the 225th Assembly.

We believe that the recommendations we made for consideration by the 224th General Assembly are urgent enough to meet your standard for critical business. In some cases, they reflect concerns that you yourselves (COGA) asked the commission to consider. One example is the request that MFIC call for a unified budget process for the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Administrative Services Group (ASG). When you came to us at our meeting last fall, you made it clear that this request was so urgent that it could not wait until June, 2020. MFIC took direct action to settle the challenges of the upcoming budget shortfall by compelling the relevant agency and committee/board leaders to work together. One of the pending recommendations from MFIC is meant to affirm the recommendation of the Special Committee on Per-Capita and Financial Sustainability that we require such a unified budget in the future. This kind of direct action in service of our General Assembly mandate seems to be what is called for in the challenging days ahead and would allow the Moving Forward Commission to complete its work and present to the 225th Assembly.

The work of the Moving Forward Implementation Commission is the culmination of many years of study and prescient action by previous agency review committees (2014-2016), by the All Agency Review Committee (2017-2018), the Way Forward Commission (2017-2018) and the corresponding assemblies (2016 and 2018) that empowered these entities. Some of us, and

some of you as well, have been working to strengthen the church for six or more years through these processes, and we are concerned that COGA's current recommendation to dismiss the MFIC and delay any action on our recommendations stops far short of those mandates .

When MFIC began its work we understood our mandate in the following ways:

- To improve agency culture, especially within the Mission Agency.
- To support the work of the Special Committee on Per-Capita and Financial Sustainability .
- To support the implementation of the newly organized Administrative Services Group and the reorganized A Corp.
- To support the work of the Diverse Voices Table including the diversity and inclusion audits conducted by the agencies.
- To assess agency culture and improve the effectiveness of PMA, OGA, ASG, their staff and management

If the recommendations of the MFIC are not able to be heard and acted on by the 224th General Assembly, we believe it is imperative that our service time be extended until the 225th General Assembly so that we can not only shepherd the current recommendations but also adapt and shape them as conditions change in the next two years. In other words, context matters, and we fear that simply referring our current recommendations to that assembly would mean that they would not be in alignment with the context that emerges over the next two years. Furthermore it would mean that little or no progress would be made to address these critical concerns in the interim years.

Our concerns merit a little bluntness and we understand the sensitive nature of sharing them in this manner. We are deeply concerned by what we have seen over the course of many years including a history of management missteps at PMA and problems within PMAB that have complicated the day-to-day operations of the agency. Though we are grateful to see the improvements that have emerged since Rev. Diane Moffett began her service as president of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, we believe there is much more that needs to be done. Similarly, there is evidence of real challenges related to ensuring diversity and inclusion across all of the agencies and entities of the PC(USA). MFIC is also concerned about the financial well being of the church, which we made evident in our recommendation that Mission Engagement Services (MES) become a part of the Administrative Services Group (ASG) and thus available to answer the financial sustainability concerns of both PMA and OGA. These are not abstract concerns, but rather they represent urgent realities that continue to evolve in the context of the unpredictable background of a global pandemic.

MFIC recognizes your concerns that we need a shorter, abbreviated assembly that is primarily focused on the financial and legal priorities of the PC(USA). We should be concerned about how much a virtual assembly can responsibly take on in a short period of time as well as the costs of the assembly itself and of the cost implications of decisions that the 224th assembly will make. We respect and share your concerns.

The Moving Forward Implementation Commission would not need much if any financial support. The majority, or all, of our work can be conducted via Zoom and the only thing we imagine is the provision for two of us to represent the work of the Commission during the 225th General Assembly. Without question, the future is unclear and we cannot predict the impact of the current pandemic on people and churches in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Our primary concern is now and always has been, the health and well being of the PC(USA). Almost two years ago, we answered a call to serve God in a new way, the sometimes thankless way of representing the interests of the 223rd General Assembly in the years ahead. We believe we are uniquely prepared to not only help shepherd this work, but also to work with PC(USA) boards and agencies to help navigate the church through the urgency of the next two years.

We understand our role and want to respect our appointment by the moderators of GA223. If it is your determination that we should be dismissed, we will share what we have learned and what we recommend with the wider denomination at large in hopes that whomever is called to this work next will have the benefit of our experience.

In closing we pray that God's peace be with you. Do not shy away from what is difficult. Face it head on and proclaim God's glory today and always.

In peace,

Reverend Larrayetta Ellis and Elder Marco A. Grimaldo