

1 **EXTERNAL VALIDATION/BENCHMARKING TASK FORCE**
2 **FINAL REPORT TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**
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7 If you have any questions about the attached report, please email me at
8 waynepca@bellsouth.net.
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11 Wayne Herring
12 Chairman-External Validation/Benchmarking Task Force
13 1/25/05
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19 **TASK FORCE MEMBERS:**

20
21 TE Will Barker

22
23 TE Jim Bland

24
25 TE Charles Dunahoo

26
27 RE Bill Kuh

28
29 TE Roy Taylor
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37 [NOTE: This cover page is included on the PCA Strategic Planning web page, but will be
38 removed from the final report for inclusion into the *GA Commissioner Handbook*.]

1 **V. External Validation Task Force**

2 The External Validation/Benchmarking Task Force interviewed chief administrative officers of
3 four denominations (and extracted information from a report by a fifth), with some being similar to
4 the PCA, but with some being very different, in order to find out both how the PCA is perceived
5 and how these other denominations are addressing the kinds of issues the PCA is facing. The
6 denominations interviewed were as follows:

- 7 Christian Reformed Church (CRC)
- 8 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- 9 Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- 10 Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA)
- 11 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

12 The Task Force was pleased to find how open these various denominational leaders were in
13 allowing an interview and acknowledging candidly how they are wrestling with some of the same
14 issues. As a result, two documents have been produced: 1) the highlights that have particular
15 application to the PCA and 2) a detailed summary of the interviews (available upon request).

16 **Highlights from Interviews**

- 17 1. Developing a culture of trust is critical to denominational effectiveness and many denominations
18 struggle in this area. There are no easy solutions, including structural ones. Very often
19 fundraising and financial concerns are flash points for cultural tension within denominations.
- 20 2. Periodic and systematic self-studies are common and seen as valuable by most denominations.
- 21 3. Denominations have recognized the need for executive authority and have developed a
22 number of different organizational approaches to manage accountability and budgeting, to
23 review coordination/collaboration across diverse entities and agencies within their respective
24 denominations. Most solutions must balance the tension between centralized/decentralized
25 authority and the need for local autonomy. There were several examples of either an
26 Executive Director or Board functioning at a denominational level.
- 27 4. The understanding that Scripture does not support ordaining women to eldership is a clear
28 distinctive of the PCA that is recognized by the various denominations interviewed. The
29 Scriptural commitments in this area will help define the PCA's relations with other
30 ecclesiastical groups.
- 31 5. Multi-cultural ministry, especially among African Americans, is a significant challenge for
32 many denominations. This issue is not unique to the PCA or its geographical demographics.
- 33 6. Some denominations appear to have developed creative solutions for financial assistance
34 (capital support) for church planting and growth. The PCA might do well to emulate this.
- 35 7. Most denominations struggle to develop (positive) "denominational identity recognition," both
36 internally and externally.

- 1 8. Several denominations have developed explicit quantifiable systems for tracking/analyzing
2 performance, managing accountability, and broadly communicating results. Those that have
3 no such systems appear to be moving toward developing them. Most recognize the need for
4 balance between spiritual/biblical aspects and the more purely quantifiable measurements.
- 5 9. Most denominations are experiencing erosion in denominational loyalty and giving levels. At
6 the same time, they do not see denominations “going away.” Most are seeking solutions
7 rooted in a clearer description of mission/purpose, more clearly defining denominational
8 identity, and providing value to member churches.
- 9 10. Most denominations studied have a history of very strong expectations in denominational
10 giving (“no pay/no say”) and a high percentage of participation of churches in giving to their
11 respective denominations. The PCA is out-of-step in this regard. A disconcerting percentage
12 (37% in 2003) of PCA churches give nothing to denominational ministries.

13 The following particular ideas deserve consideration for possible implementation by appropriate
14 entities within the PCA.

- 15 1. Self-study is always an on-going process. The LCMS favors occasional studies on focused
16 issues rather than a comprehensive review.
- 17 2. The LCMS has a program to mentor its congregations. The President’s Office identified 10 or
18 12 categories of congregational activity (e.g., greatest annual numerical growth, most adult
19 confirmations, most young people recruited for professional church-worker careers, most
20 mission starts, most baptisms, etc.) and then identified the 10 or so congregations that were
21 most effective in each category. Leaders from each of those congregations were asked to
22 “mentor” the leaders of at least four other congregations to explain their accomplishment in
23 that category. These mentoring sessions, all of them personally attended by the LCMS
24 synodical President, have been conducted around the country for several months now.
- 25 3. The LCMS has a triennial convention, and it is mandated that an equal number of ministers
26 and laymen be represented.
- 27 4. The CRC is using The Balanced Scorecard, a model from the business community, to measure
28 denominational effectiveness. It helps identify the key strategic objectives for the CRC’s
29 ministries and the ways to measure them.
- 30 5. The CRC uses its denominational college, Calvin College, to perform statistical research. It
31 was highlighted by some of the denominations that statistical information about the churches
32 was critical to evaluating the denomination; in some denominations, there was an emphasis on
33 the submission of statistics by all churches.
- 34 6. The CRC and LCMS have a specific conflict resolution process in place.
- 35 7. A strength of the SBC is its Cooperative Program (CP) to fund denominational ministries on
36 the associational (county), state, and national levels. Churches are requested to tithe to the
37 denomination. Local church CP funds are sent to the State Convention, which then decides
38 how much to send up to the national convention and down to the county associations. No

1 church is absolutely required to give a specific amount. In order for a church to have a vote in
2 the county association, state convention, and the national convention, however, it must
3 contribute something (“no pay/no say”). In this way, a major ingredient in the glue that holds
4 the denomination together is its sense of mission and its cooperative ministry. The CP is a
5 means for every cooperating church to participate in the many ministries of the denomination..