

## **2010 PCA STRATEGIC PLAN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **QUESTION 1: What exactly was passed by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly?**

The 38th General Assembly passed the three Themes and Goals of the 2010 Strategic Plan. The Themes approved were:

- Theme #1: “Civil Conversations”
- Theme #2: “Increased Involvement”
- Theme #3: “In God's Global Mission.”

All of the Means proposed for implementing the Themes also passed, with the exception of Means #4 under Theme #2 (“Establish standards for voluntary certification of men and women for specific non-ordained vocational ministries”).

Please go to [www.pcaac.org](http://www.pcaac.org) and click on “Strategic Plan Proposal/Items Approved by 38th GA” for a complete list of the Means and Goals.

Important for our discussion here, the amendments to the *BCO* 14-1.4 and *BCO* 14-2 necessary to implement Annual registration Fees for the financial support of the PCA Administrative Committee passed by a strong positive vote, which appeared to be approximately 75% for and 25% against, or to express it another way, by a vote of 3 to 1.

### **QUESTION 2: What comes next in the process?**

First, the amendments to the *BCO* 14-1.4 and 14-2 necessary for implementation of the new funding proposal of Annual Registration Fees to be used in the Funding of the PCA Administrative Committee will be sent to the presbyteries for consideration and voting. The amendments must pass two-thirds of the 79 PCA presbyteries by a majority vote in order to be brought to the 39<sup>th</sup> General Assembly for a second vote, which vote must achieve a majority vote before the amendment process is properly completed.

Second, the items in the plan which were proposed for further design and preparation will go to the respective groups for developing the means and details to move toward completion of the Goals associated with each Theme.

### **QUESTION 3: Why do we need a new system of funding for the Administrative Committee (AC)? What are the flaws of the current system?**

The Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC), mindful of biblical principles (see Question 9) and of our historical practices, after due consideration kept the system of Partnership Share giving in place for all participants except the PCA Administrative Committee. But given the

historical reluctance and seeming inability of the PCA to fund her Administrative Committee mandates through the current system, the group unanimously and wisely proposed a small change. One third of 1% (0.334%) of tithes and offerings of each PCA church would go to support the connecting ministries of the PCA assigned to the Administrative Committee.

The new funding system only affects a small fraction of church tithes and offerings. Churches will manage 99.6% of their funds as they have done in the past. (For additional safe-guards, see Question 4.)

In the PCA, at the General Assembly level, we have the unusual phenomena of isolating "administrative expenses" and raising the funds to cover them as separate monies. The current funding plan in effect for the PCA is particularly difficult for the PCA Administrative Committee for several reasons.

- Not a few remember abuses of their prior denominational connection, where administrative persons held control over local churches and their members, and unscriptural actions were taken without regard to grass-roots intentions. By God's grace and help, however, should we not get over the distrust of our brothers and fellow elders in Christ and free ourselves to be more eager and vigorous in the work of the kingdom?
- Another problem for the PCA AC is the structure by which churches allocate their funds to causes. Most put the request for PCA administrative cost in the hands of missions committees, who are rightly looking at support for church planters, missionaries, campus ministers, and perhaps also mercy ministry. With all these worthy needs before them, the request for administration expenses is often relegated to the category of "expendable" or seen as an expense that "others" will need to cover. This is not lack of generosity; a system that works well for the good cause of "mission," however, is failing us on the cause of connecting our church via healthy services—a very minor cost, relatively speaking. Annual Registration Fees for participating churches and pastors to cover connecting expenses will represent a very small percentage of our total ministry expenses for the PCA.
- Currently in the PCA we have the inconsistent posture and practice of mandating services to the Administrative Committee without ensuring that the ministries required have the necessary funding. Our churches, through the General Assembly, assign to the AC the funding of the Standing Committees, funding of the Standing Judicial Commission, planning and execution of the General Assembly, operation of the PCA Office Building, data and communication responsibilities, operation the Historical Center, and a host of other administrative tasks. Yet the belief prevails that these same churches should help cover the cost only as each thinks it should. Thirty-six years of the current practice have proven this approach to be unwise, impracticable, and even unethical. If unethical seems a strong word, consider that our current practice may actually tempt and even train the leadership of our churches toward an attitude of entitlement to unpaid services, a habit of which none of us would approve. Asking people to help pay for critical services (especially when exceptions are made in cases of special need) is not unbiblical.

Our PCA people as a group are quite generous. God has blessed us also with an evangelistic fervor which appears to be from God's Spirit. Over the years the PCA has grown significantly in

works of missions and church planting, and in works of compassion and mercy. These are good and great blessings! Yet we have not learned to fund the expenses of keeping together the PCA we love.

We have great blessings, but to stay together and contribute in a united way to the progress of the gospel and the work of the kingdom, we must pay, and pay cheerfully, the connecting cost. These connecting costs are not expensive, considering our material blessings. The PCA (her people and churches) is estimated to be giving away two billion dollars per year. The cost of connecting her, encouraging her fellowship and worship, maintaining justice, providing good communications, and otherwise assisting her ministries through the PCA Administrative Committee is about two million dollars per year. As stewards of our spiritual and our material blessings, we ought to gladly pay these connecting expenses. Administration, one of the gifts given to the church for ministry (I Corinthians 12:28), should not be neglected.

The 2010 Strategic Plan's new AC Funding Plan Model, proposed unanimously through the CMC and adopted by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, will be much more effective for the PCA and more honorable to God. After considering many ideas and several models at length, this one appears better than anything else proposed in our near 37-year history. Please remember that the Funding Plan is proposed as an exception clause to our *Book of Church Order* and that it has safe-guards (see Question 4) to prevent it from becoming too expensive and expansive. Moreover, the proposed plan is not unbiblical in itself; indeed, it is based upon biblical principles (Question 9). The CMC has performed a good service for us in working toward this Funding Model.

**QUESTION 4: What safe-guards are in place to insure that the AC Funding Plan Model is limited and affordable in its scope?**

A careful reading of all the materials will show that the proposal is quite limited in three ways, providing railings to keep down expansion of two types.

- **First Safe-Guard**

The Committee and Agency Coordinators, the Cooperative Ministries Committee, and the PCA Administrative Committee after much discussion have unanimously concluded that only the Administrative Committee should be the recipient of this consideration. They have safe-guarded their intentions by approving proposed *Book of Church Order* changes which clearly make the AC funding plan an exception to the rules for gathering contributions in the PCA. Funding of the other PCA Committees and Agencies is not affected by the proposed change.

- **Second Safe-Guard**

A proposed addition to the *Rules of Assembly Operations* limits to 0.40% any increase in the *percentage* used in calculating the Registration Fee *ranges* unless that percentage increase is approved by a special vote of both the General Assembly and the presbyteries. This stipulation prevents any extravagant increase in the funds being collected and spent by the Administrative Committee.

**Third Safe-Guard**

Each year the budget of the Administrative Committee will continue to be before the Assembly for approval of both the Income and Expense portions of the budget.

**QUESTION 5: Is the proposed Funding Proposal fair to Senior Pastors, Solo Pastors, Associate Pastors, or Assistant Pastors who have paid their registration fee and who are called to the pastorate of a church? Isn't it possible that their sessions might not pay the Church Registration Fee, thus making them ineligible to vote at the General Assembly?**

Please be aware that the PCA Administrative Committee has been and will continue to be in the position of encouraging elders to attend the Assembly and has no interest whatsoever in keeping them away or limiting the voting. For these reasons the AC staff work diligently each year to minimize the total costs of General Assembly for the Commissioners. Nevertheless, history proves that the PCA needs to be better disciplined in regard to the financial responsibility for her infrastructure.

As we discuss details, please remember the following important background points:

- The Registration Fee system is designed to support the entire work and related expenses of operating the PCA AC as constitutionally established (see *BCO* 14.1-12 and *RAO* 4-2), not just the annual General Assembly meeting.
- Pastors in churches are always working under the authority of the session (see *BCO* 12-5 for authority given to the session and *BCO* 21-5-5 for the vows taken by the pastor).

The question, or case study, assumes the most negative of circumstances and, at the same time, the ability of the pastor to pay his own way to the Assembly. This is not a common circumstance, but since it is theoretically possible we should discuss the situation it supposes.

Note that this case would require something like the following:

- (1) the pastor has paid his Annual Registration Fee;
- (2) he can afford the travel expenses to the Assembly and wishes to pay them himself;
- (3) he has not been able to persuade his session to pay the Church Annual Registration Fee;
- (4) this same session has agreed to let him go to the Assembly.

Let us point out that the session already can keep the pastor at home if they so wish in any given circumstance. For example, the session can assign preaching and teaching duties or pastoral care duties to be performed at the very time the General Assembly is convened. Or they can simply decide that they do not believe the pastor needs to attend in a given year. The point is that the session already makes the decision as to whether the particular pastor is available and free to go to the General Assembly.

Should a session decide not to pay the church registration fee, then yes, the pastor can only come to the Assembly as a guest with the potential to address the floor, but he would not have a vote in the Assembly. In such a case, there are avenues of help for the pastor:

- Any individual or entity, such as a presbytery, can pay the Church Registration Fee in the place of, or on behalf of, the session that is unable to pay or does not wish to pay.
- Should the session be willing to include a guest in their deliberations, the PCA AC would be glad to assist in finding an advocate to encourage the session to take on this responsibility.

Now let us consider a question implied by the specific question regarding the fairness of the funding plan to pastors – namely, the fairness of the Church Registration Fee itself. Since the fee is based on a percentage of tithes and offerings (0.334%), the fee is a reasonable amount that is attainable by all churches. We believe the proposed system of funding for the AC is fair and equitable to all churches because it asks (yes, requires) all churches who want to participate in decision making at the denominational level to help pay the cost of that connectedness. A majority of the PCA sessions have for years neglected to carry their weight in covering the expenses of the PCA AC. In fact, in a typical year only 45% of the churches contribute anything to the AC; the highest percentage of supporting churches ever known to be reached is 48%.

The PCA is charitable, and most of our sessions are charitable, but we hold in our culture the unbiblical concept, apparently held over from the PCUS years, that administration is suspect by the very nature of its existence and perhaps even viewed as evil. Within God's word, however, administration is viewed not only as a normal part of accomplishing ministry but even in the noble position of being a gift from God! (See, for example, I Corinthians 12:4ff, II Corinthians 8 & 9, and Romans 12:6ff. Please refer also to Question 9.)

If we do not include the Church Registration Fee in our rules, too many sessions, diaconates, and perhaps even pastors will take the "loophole" approach, with the church sending only the pastors as commissioners who can represent the church for the pastors' Annual Registration Fee. The church's financial participation in our connectedness will again be neglected.

The Funding Proposal contained in the 2010 Strategic Plan gives the PCA the opportunity to correct what we believe to be a wrong practice; it provides a vehicle for changing our PCA culture on a point where our culture is revealed as broken and in need of change. Yes, it is possible that someone might implement the rule in an unjust or unfair fashion, but the injustice will be the fault not of the rule, but of those who abuse the rule. In the case put before us, the session will be the ones deciding not to give their pastor the vote by virtue of failing to accept the responsibility of paying the Annual Church Registration Fee.

Shouldn't we take a more positive view of the Funding Proposal? The PCA can be stronger by its implementation. When the PCA is stronger, by God's grace she is positioned to accomplish more ministry for the advance of the Kingdom and to the glory of our King!

**QUESTION 6: What about a TE who has a call but is without a church? And what about a TE without a call?**

A TE who has a call but is without a church will be asked and encouraged to pay the Pastor's Annual Registration Fee of \$100. The TE without a call will also be asked to pay the Annual Registration Fee of \$100. A "hardship plan" is available to any who have serious difficulty paying the annual Registration Fees.

**QUESTION 7: What would a “hardship plan” look like?**

Special cases would be handled by a policy statement passed by the Administrative Committee and brought before the General Assembly for approval. An example of what a “hardship plan” might look like follows here:

**PCA Annual Registration Fees  
Policy Statement for Hardship Cases and Negotiation of Delinquent Fees  
[EXAMPLE]**

**Churches and Pastors**

Hardship Cases:

1) A local session (or a teaching elder) would decide that they cannot pay the registration fee due to financial hardship. The session or teaching elder would then submit these reasons in writing to their presbytery asking for assistance and/or confirmation that a need exists in the particular situation.

2) The presbytery takes the request into consideration through any structure they prefer (perhaps a committee which already exists, like a membership committee, facilitating committee or such). Presbyteries are encouraged to explore the possibility of meeting or helping to meet the financial obligation by means available in the local region. Ideally, the presbytery or others within the presbytery will have some means of addressing the hardship by direct financial assistance to the church or teaching elder. Or, the presbytery in its wisdom may advise the applicant on other possible solutions including that they are able to afford the registration fee. Nevertheless, the presbytery will at least verify the hardship claimed by the church or teaching elder and recommend that the AC exercise favorable consideration of the particular request.

NOTE: In extraordinary cases, such as the occurrence of a tragedy like Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, the PCA as a whole will be going to the aid of her churches in the damaged area. In such a situation, the AC would likely forgive the fee and encourage attendance, and would also assist in securing housing in with local host families, etc.

3) The staff of the Administrative Committee will evaluate the request and decide whether to grant the request for a hardship that year. The staff will propose a settlement, and the church or teaching elder may agree, or negotiate directly with the staff for a mutual settlement. If an agreement is reached, the staff will report such agreement to the full Administrative Committee for matter of information and record. If the staff and church or teaching elder cannot agree, the staff is required to report the case to the full Administrative Committee for consideration at its spring meeting.

4) The full Administrative Committee considers the request (including any information provided by the church/teaching elder, presbytery and Administrative Committee staff) to either confirm the staff’s decision or to overrule

5) If the church or teaching elder finds the Administrative Committee's decision unsatisfactory, the church or teaching elder may appeal to a third party arbitrator (currently proposed is the Committee on Constitutional Business). The decision of this third party arbitrator will be final.

#### Negotiation of Delinquent Fees:

1) A local session (or a teaching elder) who has fallen behind in the payment of the Annual Registration Fee would simply give written explanation and request to the PCA Administrative staff. If they are able and willing to pay the delinquent Fees then the issue is ended. If they (or he) wish to report also to their presbytery they are encouraged to do so; this would, of course, be particularly necessary if the party envisioned asking for financial assistance and/or confirmation from the presbytery that a financial need existed in the particular situation.

2) The presbytery, if approached, would take it under consideration through any structure they preferred as noted above in the Hardship paragraph. But the presbytery would at least verify the situation being claimed by the church or minister and give any recommendation they might have to the AC on the particular request. Or, of course, they might advise the applicant on other solutions, if they thought it wise, including the possibility that the party could afford the Fee. Should it be apparent that the party cannot afford the full fee, a similar approach would be implement for some financial relief in the "back registration fees", i.e., the presbytery would review the request, help if they can, and send it to the AC with a recommendation as to their wisdom on the appropriate consideration. In every case it is hoped that the presbyteries would look into the possibility of meeting or helping meet the financial obligation by means available in the local region. Note: It is recognized that this would not always be possible, but the fees are based on a very low percentage of what a church has and are therefore very financially reachable in most cases.

3) The AC would have their staff evaluate the request and make some proposal appropriate in the particular case of "back registration fees" from previous years. If the proposal were not satisfactory with the party the AC should try to negotiate toward an agreement. If an agreement were reached the staff would simply report such agreement to the Administrative Committee for matter of information and record, but would have made contract, so to speak, on behalf of the AC. If the staff and church or pastor has not agreed, the staff is obligated to report the difference to the spring meeting of the Administrative Committee for the confirmation of their decision or the over-ruling of their decision.

4) Should the decision still be dissatisfactory to the church or the teaching elder they could appeal to a third party arbitrator (right now our best suggestion is to add this to the duties of the Committee on Constitutional Business as a secondary ministry they were providing for the Assembly). The decision of the third party arbitrator would be final.

**QUESTION 8: What about delinquent Annual Registration Fees?**

See Question 7.

**QUESTION 9: Is the proposed new system of funding for the Administrative Committee, and in particular the AC Funding Plan Model, biblical?**

As elders who lead in the church we are, as a group, very serious students of the Bible, so this question should be of great concern to us. God has not written down for us all the specific details of how we should manage the gifts that His people give toward the work of the kingdom. That means that as we think about how to fund the ministries of our church, we need to look at Scriptural principles that should guide us and apply them as carefully as possible, in dependence upon His Holy Spirit.

1) Paul encouraged and urged the churches to give from the heart, cheerfully and sacrificially. In II Corinthians 8 & 9 and in Philippians 1 & 4 we see how Paul funded the ministries of mercy and mission by urging and encouraging the churches to give. Encouraging our people to give out of a heart overflowing with gratitude to the Lord (cf. II Corinthians 8:1-5) will always be the first line in any plan for the funding of our PCA ministries, and in particular here, the Administrative Committee.

2) Administration is a gift given to the church for ministry. I Corinthians 12:28 tells us that administration is one of the gifts given by God for the building up of His body, the Church. In II Corinthians 8-9 Paul himself speaks of “administering” the gifts of the Macedonians (8:20). He plans, arranges, communicates, delegates, travels, manages, follows up, coordinates, coaches, encourages, and performs many other administrative functions that leaders must attend to for “acts of grace” to really come together. Undoubtedly, such services would have required some expenditures, but it seems clear that Paul viewed them as an integral part of the mission, not a separate ministry. Although at times Paul and others graciously supported themselves by tent making, normally they were sustained in all their work of evangelizing, teaching, mercy, and even administration by the contributions of the churches and of God’s saints.

The Administrative Committee, through its various assigned “administrative” functions, connects and supports PCA churches, presbyteries, teaching and ruling elders, lay workers, and ministries.

3) We are to count the cost (of discipleship, but also in every area of living – cf. Proverbs 24:27). When services and ministries are assigned to the Administrative Committee by the General Assembly, it is only right that provision be made for their funding. Those who assign the task have a responsibility to count what the cost will be and see that it will be covered. And it seems equitable that all who receive the benefits should gladly help cover the expense as they are able. (Please see Question 5 below.)

- 4) Material wealth should be handled honorably and wisely, in a way that will bring no dishonor to the cause of Christ (II Corinthians 8:21). There is room in our biblical and confessional life as the people of God, working together to advance His kingdom, to come together as elders to make an agreement about how to manage expenses. In doing so, we must be honest and apply the biblical truths we know to solve practical life situations (including finances) with effective strategies. (cf. Proverbs 8:12)
- 5) Needs being neglected should be addressed.  
(See the implications of neglecting to do the right actions in such passages as Matthew 23:23, Mark 7:10-13, and Acts 6:1-7.)

The present funding system for our PCA ministries works well for the good causes of church planting, missions, and mercy (and incidentally, administrative costs for these causes are covered by a portion of the gifts given). The system is failing us, however, on the cause of connecting our denomination via healthy services—a very minor cost, relatively speaking. In a *byFaithonline.com* interview, Ligon Duncan referred to our present funding system as “representation without contribution”!

We believe that the Cooperative Ministries Committee, charged with leading the PCA GA in planning, has addressed a neglect with a good, just, fair, equitable, and affordable solution. This solution has the happy potential of stabilizing the administrative ministries of the GA and making the PCA stronger in her effort to advance the gospel and contribute to the kingdom.

- 6) God’s servants should receive financial support so they can concentrate on their service. The proposed AC Funding Model saves money and delivers more service by cutting through some development cost and freeing staff to deliver needed services to the PCA. As one elder says, “If we are asking the staff of GA to support the work of our denomination, it is right for us to ensure their support in that work.”

Our *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 1, paragraph 6, expresses well the biblical call to order every aspect of life and ministry according to the principles of God’s Word: The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and governance of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. [emphasis added]

**QUESTION 10: In an earlier question you cited 2 Corinthians and Philippians (see Question #9) as justification for funding the AC through a mandatory financial assessment. Aren't these passages, though, examples of free-will offerings, not mandatory financial assessments?**

We agree with you that both the 2 Corinthians passage and the Philippians passage speak of free-will offerings. The Lord loves a cheerful giver! We referred to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 primarily as an example of the biblical principle that administration is one of the gifts given to the church by God for ministry. We pointed out that Paul includes his “administration” of the free-will gifts of the Macedonians as a necessary part of the “acts of grace” involved in carrying out this famine-relief project.

Some have suggested that the godly response to lack of funding would be to communicate the need to churches, encourage giving based on biblical principles, and pray that the Lord would give to his people hearts of generosity. The Administrative Committee agrees wholeheartedly, and has prayed and worked over the years to communicate well, within the limits of fiscal responsibility, its needs. Many churches have responded with liberality, and for that we are thankful! But fewer than half of our churches are now carrying the financial load for essential administrative services to the PCA as a whole. (Please see Question 12 for more on this.)

We would suggest that biblical principles of giving—even giving from the heart—include more than freedom and cheerfulness. God has not written down for us all the specific details of how we should manage the gifts that His people give toward the work of the kingdom. As we think about how to fund the ministries of our church, we need to look at all Scriptural principles that can guide us and apply them as carefully as possible, in dependence upon His Holy Spirit. (Please refer to Question 9 for some of these biblical principles.)

**QUESTION 11: Why does the funding plan call for “fees” rather than simply requesting “gifts”?**

The Annual Registration Fees for churches and pastors were named “registration fees” because we thought that to be the best name. The proposal was put forward to provide a fair and equitable system for all the churches and pastors to cover the connecting cost of operating the PCA. It was designed so that churches could pay according to what they actually have, a system that was thought to be more just than asking for per capita payment by churches. The funding proposal is a plan for utilizing a very small portion of the gifts of God’s people for the administrative work necessary to connect and serve the PCA as a whole.

We believe that churches and pastors are getting real benefits from the work done by the Administrative Committee, benefits that help and advance their ministries. Moreover, since churches and teaching elders have ordered these connecting ministries to be implemented, it does seem just for all to pay for them, and it seems unjust for some to take the benefits and put the cost on the others! Fair and reasonable registration fees for pastors and churches seem to be the best way to use a small portion of benevolences to cover administrative costs.

But should we not be framing the questions differently? Is it not better to be asking what can make the PCA stronger? How can we best take the church the Lord has given us and keep her strongly connectional and ministering most effectively for the Lord's kingdom? This proposed

funding system offers the potential to make the PCA stronger financially and to make us more morally responsible in dealing with each other. In this way it can strengthen the PCA for the work of God's kingdom.

We have worked to ensure that these fees are not burdensome or unreasonable for the PCA and that, with the safeguards proposed in the plan, they offer no undue risk or precedence in the PCA system of government.

**QUESTION 12: How can it be right to require financial support for many specific tasks undertaken by the Administrative Committee which are not mandated by Scripture?**

As in almost every area of our lives and ministries, God has not given us “chapter and verse” on how to carry out the specific commands that He has given. He expects us to look at the whole of His Word and glean the principles that will guide the conduct of our personal lives as well as our lives “in the world” and in His church, right down to how we fund our ministries.

Mandated?

The many tasks of the Administrative Committee (AC), though we believe them to be essential and useful in the Lord's work, are not specifically mandated by Scripture. The Bible does not tell us to have a General Assembly, a stated clerk (of the PCA or of a presbytery), a Standing Judicial Commission, various committees, a communication medium like *byFaith*, a Historical Center, or a PCA! But it does specifically tell us to “go into the whole world and preach the gospel, teaching. . .” And the AC has been created to connect and serve all the ministries of the PCA so that together we can work for the progress of Christ's kingdom.

The PCA Administrative Committee is designed to put in place the essential services assigned by *The Book of Church Order* and the ministries assigned by the General Assembly—services and ministries which provide a base for the operation of all our PCA ministries. **In the PCA we as a body have mandated that ministries be performed and provided by the AC.** Both the earlier Strategic Planning Committee and the Cooperative Ministry Committee in its current planning noted that the Administrative Committee connects and benefits the entire PCA and should be supported by all.

Funded How?

The Apostle Paul explains (for example in I Corinthians 9:3-12) that it is right for the expenses of a ministry to be paid. The PCA has assigned ministries to the AC. For 37 years, however, only 45-48% of the churches have given anything to the PCA Administrative Committee in any one-year time period. This means that that over half of our churches are accepting all the advantages of being in the PCA while neglecting to pay for the connecting cost and the blessings and privileges afforded to them. It also means that for 37 years these churches have benefited from a key ministry operating on their behalf while asking it to operate on an unwise financial margin.

The question has been asked for many years: "Is there a more reasonable way?" The proposed funding plan for the AC is the final development.

We believe that Scripture allows for elders to decide together how funds already put in their charge may be used to cover the administrative costs of the church at any level. This is what the AC Funding Plan Model proposes. The proposal is, in effect, asking for a contract between elders to manage the connecting expenses of the church at the General Assembly level. We believe the proposal falls well within all biblical principles and that it is also much wiser, more economical, and fairer than the current practice.

**QUESTION 13: Is the Proposed Plan for Funding the Administrative Committee unconstitutional?**

In a sense, one might argue that *any* change to the *Book of Church Order* is unconstitutional. But that is not a reasonable view because that would make the Constitution un-amendable. Every proposed amendment to *The Book of Church Order* is submitted to the Committee on Constitutional Business under *The Rules of Assembly Operations* 8-2.b.2), which states that the CCB shall: "Provide advice concerning the effect of any proposed amendment to the Constitution or to the *Rules of Assembly Operations*. . . ."

The CCB has met and considered the proposed amendments to *BCO* 14-1, and 14-2. The CCB opinion was, "In the opinion of the CCB, the changes the Administrative Committee has proposed to *BCO* 14-1 and 14-2 are **not** [emphasis in original] in conflict with other parts of the Constitution." The CCB vote was unanimous.

For another case in which the *BCO* was changed to improve established procedures, consider the change made in *BCO* Chapter 15 with the establishment of the Standing Judicial Commission. Prior to the establishment of the *SJC*, all judicial cases were heard by *ad hoc* commissions of General Assembly Commissioners during the week of General Assembly. After a number of years in which many commissions spent a good portion of the Assembly week off the floor adjudicating cases, and *ad hoc* commissions composed of men with varying levels of understanding of the Constitution presented differing rulings on similar issues, the *BCO* was amended so that, "The General Assembly shall elect a Standing Judicial Commission to which it shall commit all matters governed by the Rules of Discipline, except for the annual review of Presbytery records, which shall come before the Assembly. . . ." The General Assembly is responsible to adjudicate wisely and well the judicial cases that are properly before it. The amendment to the *BCO* Chapter 15 that changed the way in which the General Assembly handled judicial cases was not a violation of the Constitution; it was an amendment to the Constitution.

Similarly, the proposed changes to *BCO* 14-1 and 14-2 are a change in the method of funding the Administrative Committee in its providing essential support services to the denomination. That change can only be brought about by amending, via the prescribed process, the *BCO* as it is presently written (*BCO* 26-2). The amendment process requires three steps: 1) the approval of the majority of commissioners present and voting at the General Assembly, 2) the advice and

consent of two-thirds of the Presbyteries, and 3) the approval and enactment of a subsequent General Assembly by the approval of the majority of commissioners present and voting. The proposed amendments to *BCO* Chapter 14 that would change the method by which the AC is funded are not violations of the Constitution; they are amendments to the Constitution.

**QUESTION 14: What happens if you don't pay? Can you lose your vote in presbytery?**

If a TE does not pay his annual registration fee (with the exception of retired teaching elders), he will not be allowed a vote at General Assembly. He will, however, be allowed to attend and will be allowed to speak. (In cases of true hardship, help will be available. See Question 7.)

If a church does not pay its fees for two years, this will be reported to General Assembly. It is hoped that being listed as a non-supporting church will motivate that church to participate. Churches affiliate with the PCA through membership in a Presbytery (*BCO* 13-1). The General Assembly cannot remove a church from the PCA. See Question 5 for a detailed discussion of how the registration fees of churches and of TEs are related.

A main argument against the funding proposal has been, in essence, that churches should be entitled to a vote at General Assembly whether or not they accept any financial responsibility. We would ask whether this idea of entitlement is just.

Please note that the Strategic Plan and the proposed AC Funding Model make no proposal at all regarding voting on the Presbytery level.

**QUESTION 15: How does *BCO* 25:8 (regarding church property) relate to the Annual Registration Fees in the AC Funding Plan Model approved by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly?**

This provision (*BCO* 25:8\*) was placed in the *BCO* to protect a church from having her assets taken away (or having any property or monies being taken from her against her will). *BCO* 25-10 clarifies this as the underlying purpose of *BCO* Chapter 25 with the following words:

The provisions of this *BCO* 25 are to be construed as a solemn covenant whereby the Church as a whole promises never to attempt to secure possession on the property of any congregation against its will, whether or not such congregation remains within or chooses to withdraw from this body. All officers and courts of the Church are hereby prohibited from making any such attempt.

The proposed AC Funding Plan Model in no way violates the provision of *BCO* 25:8. Notice that in the proposal the payment of the Annual Registration Fee does not force money from the church. Any church not paying the Registration Fee may remain in the PCA, function under the PCA 501(c) 3, use the name of the PCA, be involved in its presbytery, and participate in many other privileges and ministries. No one will come and take that church's property or money by any type of civil force or claim. The only function changed by this proposal is that Pastors and Ruling Elders of that church may not vote at the annual General Assembly unless the

prescribed Annual Registration Fees for churches and pastors have been paid. Historically, *BCO 25* has not been regarded as applying to registration fees of any kind, including our current system of General Assembly Registration Fees. So as far as we are aware, *BCO 25:8* is not being violated because no church is being forced to pay anything nor is its property being taken away.

The Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB), investigated this at their spring 2010 meeting, and found that the proposed *BCO* changes do not violate *BCO 25-8*. See Question 13 for more on the constitutionality of the proposed changes.

\* **25-8.** The corporation of a particular church, through its duly elected trustees or corporation officers, (or, if unincorporated, through those who are entitled to represent the particular church in matters related to real property) shall have sole title to its property, real, personal, or mixed, tangible or intangible, and shall be sole owner of any equity in any real estate, or any fund or property of any kind held by or belonging to any particular church, or any board, society, committee, Sunday school class or branch thereof. The superior courts of the Church may receive monies or properties from a local church only by free and voluntary action of the latter.

**QUESTION 16: What providential circumstances have brought the 2010 PCA Strategic Plan before the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and what assurances can be given that the work of planning was properly organized and executed?**

As this is really a two-fold question, our answer will also be two-fold. A considerable amount has been reported in conversations, on blogs, and in news releases about these questions, and these are important issues to resolve for good understanding and communication.

**Part One:** What are the providential circumstances that have brought the 2010 PCA Strategic Plan before the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly?

**The quick answer** is that the *Rules of Assembly Operations 7-3 (c)* assign a planning function to the Cooperative Ministry Committee (CMC), and the CMC is to report to the General Assembly through the appropriate Committee or Agency any matters requiring the Assembly's action.

*RAO 7-3 (c) [Responsibilities of the CMC]:* 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.

**The longer answer**, and very important for the best understanding of the 2010 Strategic Plan, is that the current plan is an outgrowth of the earlier 2006 Strategic Plan in at least two significant ways.

First, the earlier Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) proposed that a planning function should be carried out regularly by the newly constituted Cooperative Ministries Committee, a proposal approved at the 34<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (*Minutes 34GA*, Appendix O, pp. 614ff). The SPC's proposals were the fruit of work carried out beginning with the 2000 General Assembly (see

*Minutes 28GA*, p. 265, Recommendation 10) and continuing through the 2006 General Assembly. Before the CMC was established, the only major planning functions that had occurred in the PCA were the “Ad-Interim Committee to Study and Make Recommendations as to Structure and Procedure,” which reported to the 14<sup>th</sup> GA in 1986 (see *Minutes 14GA*, Appendix P, p. 425,) and then the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) constituted in 2000 as mentioned above. The SPC noted that such gaps in planning, one of about 13 years and another of almost 20 years, should not occur in the life of the Presbyterian Church in America and recommended the procedure of planning which the entire Assembly approved at the 34<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2006.

The second significant connection between the 2010 Strategic Plan and the Strategic Planning of 2000-2006 is that the 2010 proposals are flowing from work begun in that earlier planning effort. The implementation of this ongoing planning function by the CMC started in January of 2007 while the abundance of discussion materials and data from the original planning effort were still fresh and current with a large number of men who had experience in the first effort and were now participating in the ongoing work.

The proposal before the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly this year is the first formal planning proposal to come from the CMC (in this case through the AC). It is best understood as amendments and additions to the original 2006 Strategic Plan and not as a totally new direction for the PCA. For that reason, as the committee started the work, it reviewed the 2006 Strategic Plan approved by the General Assembly, but did not rework the Mission, Values, Vision, and Theology previously produced by the SPC and subsequently published in “Being Revived and Bringing Reformation.” Neither did the committee repeat the same research previously done in that effort and reported to the 2006 General Assembly, but rather saw as its assignment and task to build upon it.

It should be pointed out that the CMC has been reporting regularly to the General Assembly via their formal report and also by informal seminars at General Assembly, to which all have been invited.

**Part Two:** What assurances can be given that the planning is being properly organized and implemented?

First, we believe that a strong team is fielded for the job. We have referred in Part One to the General Assembly’s action in assigning to the CMC the responsibility for long-range planning.\* The CMC is composed of men who are all elected by the General Assembly; by design there is a gradual turnover of committee members. (See *RAO 7-1* for CMC membership.) These teaching and ruling elders, from many walks of life within the PCA, come to planning with a wide variety of experience, a strong mix of giftedness, and a high commitment to Christ and his kingdom. Many have worked in a variety of planning situations including education, commerce, and government as well as the church. Some, of course, may have been new to planning opportunities and experiences, yet even that reality brings a strength to the process; a fresh pair of eyes and a fresh mind may see differently the process and the substance and thereby make fresh inquiry, or fresh contribution to the whole.

Second, the materials and data available to the committee were reliable, detailed, and varied. Not only were the data and material from the previous SPC available, but also the current data from the PCA AC database provided annually by our churches and presbyteries, and, of course,

information from the ten Committees and Agencies in their various ministries. In these resources there is information from outside the PCA as well as from within, including that gathered from interviews made with the leaders of other denominations during the work of the SPC.

Finally, and crucial to the task, most committee members travel widely and interact with a variety of individuals and groups across the PCA and beyond. These small groups and the conversations they create, particularly at local church level and presbytery level, generate a strong pool of information and experience which comes to the planning table. The work of the CMC, as well as the work of the SPC, has not been carried out in secret nor operated in a vacuum. Advice and consultation has come from many quarters. The process has not been aloof or disconnected from our church or our grass roots. Opportunity has been, and should always be available for contributions and inquiries to the planning process from all parts of the PCA for all are members of God's church. The members of the CMC, who were all elected by the General Assembly, believe in these high standards and fair practices and have sought to employ them carefully.

There were, of course, some weaknesses (a limited budget and time limitations being perhaps among the main ones). No one would claim that any part of the process was perfect, but it was a good process and most members participating seemed to believe the Lord was in it, that a part of his church had designed and authorized it, and that the work of this process can greatly encourage and advance the PCA and in doing so further the Lord's kingdom. May God lead and help us all as we seek to carry out wisely the work of his kingdom for his glory.

\* It is worth mentioning that Strategic Planning has a long history from many cultures, military strategists, and business and educational interests, as well as many heroes like Alfred Chandler, Philip Selznick, and Igor Ansoff, all of whom have made contributions. There are therefore many schools of thought and quite a variety of models depending on whom you ask. As this planning discipline has matured and evolved in usage, systems of ongoing planning, similar to the PCA system we are working with now, have been recommended by organizational consultants and popular authors such as Peter Drucker and Ken Blanchard. Some prefer to call these ongoing planning systems "Strategic Management" in contradistinction from "Strategic Planning." To this writer's knowledge, no one has designed and packaged a planning system for evangelical and reformed denominations, but the PCA has in God's gracious providence somehow designed an ongoing planning system that appears to serve her well.

**QUESTION 17: The PCA was founded to be a Presbyterian and "grass-roots" organization. Are the Strategic Plan, and the proposed Funding Plan Model in particular, Presbyterian and "grass-roots" in their nature and structure?**

Yes! We believe that the 2010 Strategic Plan and the Funding Plan Model adopted by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly are decidedly Presbyterian and grass-roots in every respect.

**Presbyterian?**

First, let us address the relationship between and the 2010 Strategic Plan and the word Presbyterian. The founders of the PCA adopted the Presbyterian form of church government because they believed (as we still believe) that the leadership of our church should be under the oversight of spiritual men who are gifted, called by God, and chosen by the people to their office

– i.e., elders. (In fact, the word “Presbyterian” is derived from the Greek word for elder.) Such men have been developing this Strategic Plan from its inception all the way through to its present form. In fact, the strategic planning process was designed and established by ruling and teaching elders working in and for our General Assemblies as far back as 2000, and continuing to the present. (See, for example, *M28GA* [2000], 28-67, p. 265, and 2006 *M34GA* [2006], 34-22, p. 74.)

The process for developing the 2010 Strategic Plan was approved overwhelmingly by favorable votes of our General Assembly and presbyteries in 2006 with the creation of the Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC). It is thus estimated that more than 1,400 elders from across the PCA contributed to the design and establishment of the strategic planning process, a task assigned to the CMC!

In response to this assignment, the current strategic planning process was undertaken by the 25 to 30 men serving on the CMC. Each year the CMC is composed of the six most recent GA Moderators, the ten Chairmen/Presidents of our GA Committees and Agencies, and the ten Chief Administrative Officers of those same Committees and Agencies—all of whom are ruling elders or teaching elders in the PCA. These men have been closely evaluating the current state of the PCA, the challenges she faces, and potential directions for her future and, in response, have formulated the Strategic Plan you see before you today.

The very process by which the 2010 Strategic Plan has evolved illustrates the connectional nature of our Presbyterian system of government. Leaders at all levels—the local church, the presbytery, and the General Assembly—have worked together to develop the proposed plan, which will bring together in ownership and commitment our churches and leaders at all these levels of our structure. Commenting on the funding aspect of the Strategic Plan in a *byFaithonline* interview, Ligon Duncan, senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, has noted that although the PCA says it is connectional, its current funding structure does not reflect that connectionalism. “More than half of our churches make no contribution to the work of the PCA GA and yet are allowed a voice and vote. If our American forefathers had a problem with taxation without representation, we have the opposite problem—representation without contribution. This funding change is a step in the right direction, in the direction of Presbyterianism.”

It seems clear that the strategic planning process and the resulting proposed Strategic Plan are both very Presbyterian in their intentions, their content, and their development.

### **Grass Roots?**

Second, as to grass-roots, it is important to determine exactly what we mean by the adjective “grass-roots.” According to Webster’s dictionary, “grass-roots” means “of the common or ordinary people, as contrasted to the leadership or elite” or it can mean “the origin or basis of something; the basic or primary concept, rule, part, or the like.” In the formative years of the PCA the designation “grass-roots” meant that unlike the old denomination in which the exercise of power was from the top down, the PCA would instead have the flow of power from the bottom up through elders from the local churches (i.e. the grass roots).

With our definition of “grass-roots” clarified, we can now apply it to the strategic planning process and the Strategic Plan itself. Both can be shown to be very much "grass-roots" in nature and structure. The power exercised by the presbyteries and the General Assembly is sourced in those who attend – who are essentially chosen at the “grass-roots” level. First, the men who vote in the sessions of local churches are elected by the congregations. The session then sends delegates to the presbyteries and General Assemblies. No one is dictating from above who attends; all teaching elders have the right to come, although they or their churches must pay the travel expenses and the GA registration fee; likewise the sessions elect the ruling elders who attend, and their expenses and GA registration fee must also be paid.

Clearly, the PCA system of government is intended to assure that decisions of the higher courts be based on the participation of those at the grass-roots level. Two illustrations of this are the assignment of the strategic planning process to the CMC and the development of the 2010 Strategic Plan itself. The teaching and ruling elders on the CMC who have worked diligently on this plan are gifted men who come from different walks of life; they are not elitists. Moreover, GA Moderators and Committee and Agency CAOs are elected or re-elected to their positions each year at the General Assembly by the “grass-roots” commissioners. Permanent Committee/Board members are elected through the nomination process which originates in the presbyteries.

Now let's look at the substance of the 2010 Strategic Plan to examine whether it encourages the grass-roots nature of our denomination. We believe a careful reading shows that it does. Consider the three themes of the Plan. The first two themes are designed to alleviate some internal concerns. The first theme, “Civil Conversations,” (originally "Safe Places") recommends that the GA and presbyteries provide environments where theology and concepts can be debated more informally and considered without the immediate threat of a vote or the presumption of guilt for opinions given or questions asked. The second theme, “Increased Involvement” (originally "More Seats at the Table") enables more voices from all areas of the church to participate in the process. These two themes would encourage grass-roots participation in the PCA, as both themes will stimulate discussion at a broader level, which is good for our church.

The third theme, "In God's Global Mission," challenges our PCA constituency to become more involved, calls for more discipleship and mentoring, and encourages us to focus more on moving the Gospel by word and deed to the ends of the earth. This is a call for total commitment by all to move the work of the kingdom forward in our time with more humility, unity, and effectiveness than God has granted us ever before in our short history. This challenge for all members of the PCA to participate in God's Global Mission is essentially a challenge for our organization to reflect more closely the grass-roots principles on which the PCA was founded.

Now consider the proposed changes in funding. The fundamental principles underlying the PCA funding system remain unchanged. The Plan only makes one exception to the current system and does so in a small financial way, given the totality of PCA finances. It is proposed that the funding of the AC expenses (which funds are expended to connect the PCA ecclesiastically and to provide the church with a civil entity) be by an Annual Church Registration Fee of 0.334% (1/3 of 1%) of tithes and offerings (excepting capital campaigns for facilities) and an Annual Registration Fee for pastors of \$100. All the rest of churches' funds given to the Committees

and Agencies can and should be distributed in any way they wish. The Registration Fees are calculated on percentage and limited in such a way as to be affordable to all. (In fact, the plan will save many churches money because their Annual Registration Fee would be less expensive than what they currently pay to register for General Assembly).

If churches or pastors do not give the Annual Registration Fees as prescribed, they are not permitted to have, or to be, voting commissioners at the General Assembly. At first glance this may seem incompatible with a grass-roots organization. Closer study, however, shows that the proposed plan simply requires a minimal commitment of all leadership, a commitment that secures the ecclesiastical operating process of the PCA and provides the connecting infrastructure of the church. The goal is to ensure that the PCA, the grass-roots organization we love, continues to exist and serve the local churches and presbyteries.

Who would really want our commissioners' seats occupied by voters who do not wish or intend to help pay the financial cost to keep the PCA connected? This new system is designed to maintain great freedom in giving while providing churches and pastors the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the PCA, heightening their sense of ownership of the denomination. Careful reflection on the Strategic Plan as a whole, we believe, gives ample evidence that the implementation of the Plan will only strengthen the grass-roots nature of the PCA!

**QUESTION 18: It has been suggested that the narrative portion of the Strategic Plan asserts that Unity in Mission requires Uniformity in Effort. Please comment.**

Please remember that the “Narrative” section of the Strategic Plan is for information only. The General Assembly was not asked to approve, agree to, or endorse that narrative section of the Strategic Plan.

To say that the Strategic Plan advocates that Unity in Mission requires Uniformity of Effort is, we believe, simply a false assertion. The Strategic Plan advocates that the nature and complexity of mission require cooperative (not uniform) effort.

**QUESTION 19: Are CEP, CTS, MNA, and MTW usurping the duty of presbyteries in credentialing and setting standards for ordination? [Theme 2, Specific Means #6] Isn't there already a method for presbyteries to ordain alternatively (with a super majority), and isn't this sufficient?**

CEP, CTS, MNA, & MTW are not usurping Presbyteries' rights and responsibilities for licensure or ordination. They are seeking to help prepare candidates to meet ordination requirements, not to dilute ordination requirements. With the ethnic diversification of America (by 2025 there will be no one ethnic majority), we need to be pro-active in training ministers who will be able to minister effectively within the ethnically diverse country the USA will become. Presbyteries retain the rights to license and ordain or to refuse to license or ordain candidates.

**QUESTION 20: What is intended by certified "non-ordained vocational ministries" for women? [Theme 2, Specific Means #4] Is this ONLY for women (and thus obviously a work-around the prohibition of ordaining women)? Why are CC and CTS involved in testing?**

Theme 2, Specific Means #4 was the only item of the 2010 Strategic Plan Themes, Goals, and Means that was not approved by the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Consequently, the first part of this question is actually moot.

Nevertheless, let us explain that certified non-ordained vocational ministries for women (Theme 2, Specific Means #4 and #5) could be positions like: directors of women's ministries, directors of children's ministries, directors of Christian Education, Christian counselors, etc. The Strategic Plan's reference to "vocational ministries for women" is not a back-door attempt at ordination of women ministers, but an opportunity for additional training and for certification to the PCA. Standards could be developed whereby women and men could receive certificates of competence when those standards have been met. Please note that Theme 2, Specific Means #4, speaks of certification of both men and women for non-ordained vocational ministries.

Covenant College and Covenant Theological Seminary equip women and men to be workers in education, counseling, and other fields that benefit the PCA. The experience of these institutions in the academic and training arenas qualifies them to help with any plans for testing.

**QUESTION 21: Some think the Strategic Plan has picked up the language and thought of identity politics. Is this true?**

The allegation that "identity politics" (a pejorative term of itself) is prevalent in the Strategic Plan is a false assumption. Few, if any, would dispute the fact that there are different perspectives, differing levels of toleration of theological differences within confessional boundaries, different styles of worship, different philosophies of ministry, etc., within the PCA. The Strategic Plan is not promoting division, but is promoting unity within diversity. For example, worship led by Tim Keller is not the same as worship led by Terry Johnson. But both men are orthodox ministers within the PCA.

**QUESTION 22: What is implied by "civil discourse"? Is this a thinly veiled criticism of the blogs?**

In our church courts, men should be able to discuss difficult issues responsibly yet creatively without being labeled as compromising the Gospel. In "civil discourse," men may talk about allowable differences within confessional boundaries and look at ways to implement the Pauline principle of becoming "all things to all men, to win some."

The Internet has certainly harmed civil discourse. Some blogs and e-zines tend to confuse sloganeering for objective analysis and clear reasoning, spread gossip as news reporting, and engage in unchristlike sarcasm under the guise of humor (see Prov. 26:18-19 and many other scripture verses regarding misuse of the tongue). No action of the General Assembly will shut down irresponsible blogs. Perhaps church courts need to hold elders just as responsible for what they publish on the Internet as for what they preach, teach, or publically state (WLC 143-145). Freedom of speech does not give a Christian the right to gossip. Freedom of press does not give a Christian the right to slander.

**QUESTION 23: Does the Strategic Planning Report recommend to the General Assembly that the PCA withdraw from NAPARC (the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)?**

The brief answer is “No, it does not” and “No, it cannot.”

No, the Strategic Plan *does not* recommend to the General Assembly that the PCA withdraw from NAPARC. A parenthetical statement referring to NAPARC (“Withdraw from organizations with whom we share doctrinal history, but not ministry priorities, draining our ministry energies [e.g. NAPARC]”) was originally included in the chart section of the Strategic Plan, under Theme 3: In God’s Global Mission. That statement was removed before the General Assembly voted on the Strategic Plan because it was never a recommendation to the Assembly. In light of the discomforts that some had regarding this hypothetical example, it was omitted.

No, the Strategic Planning Report coming through the AC *cannot* recommend to the General Assembly that the PCA withdraw from NAPARC. The Cooperative Ministries Committee and AC recognize full well that recommendations regarding the PCA’s participation in interchurch groups are within the purview of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC). Moreover, the IRC is *not* recommending that the PCA withdraw from NAPARC. (Please see Question 24 for IRC reporting regarding NAPARC.)

**QUESTION 24: What did the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) report to the 38<sup>th</sup> GA concerning the PCA’s participation in NAPARC?**

The major item for discussion in the IRC April 2010 meeting was the reason(s) for the existence of NAPARC. (Please see Question 23, third paragraph, for IRC’s role in interchurch participation.)

The IRC reported to the 38<sup>th</sup> General Assembly the following regarding NAPARC—

NAPARC was formed in 1975 with a two-fold purpose:

- To advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters, and
- To hold out before each other the desirability and the need for organic union of churches that are of like faith.

NAPARC was formed by denominations of relatively the same size (CRC, PCA, RPCES, OPC, and RPCNA). Concurrent assemblies/synods were held on the campus of Calvin College, in 1978, 1982, 1987 as church union discussions were being held. A five-way union was proposed. That five-way union failed, but there was a “Joining and Receiving of the PCA and the RPCES in 1982. The OPC and PCA on two occasions attempted formal union, but did not achieve the super-majorities necessary.

After the removal of the CRC from NAPARC, the PCA General Assembly asked the NAPARC Churches in 2003 for renewal of church union discussions. A chart was developed stating the similarities and differences of the various member denominations. That discussion did not bring about any definite proposal for a

merger of all NAPARC denominations, but did lead to some discussions among denominations with common historical-cultural roots.

At the 2009 NAPARC meeting a motion was approved that an ad hoc committee be formed to explore the nature and purposes of NAPARC in light of the constitution and the changes in the membership of the council. Mark Bube of the OPC will chair the five-man committee. Though the PCA comprises 68% of the membership of NAPARC and was a founding denomination of NAPARC, no representative of the PCA was appointed to the committee.

In short, when NAPARC was formed in 1975, it was composed mostly of denominations of relatively the same size that were all willing to consider seriously organic church union. The PCA has grown so that is now comprises 68% of the membership of NAPARC. The recent additions to NAPARC have been smaller denominations. Though several of the smaller denominations of common historical roots are in conversations, it will probably take a number of years before those conversations will result in church unions. It does not appear likely that any denomination in NAPARC will unite with the PCA in the foreseeable future.

One of the chief benefits to the PCA's participation in NAPARC is our being part of the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission [PRJC] for the endorsement of military and Veterans Administration chaplains.

Four NAPARC denominations make up the PRJC: Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA).

**QUESTION 25: If the Strategic Plan is adopted, in what way can a congregation exercise reverse discipline without withdrawing from the denomination? What is the Cooperative Ministries Committee's opinion on the PCA's secession from the PCUS in 1972/3? Does the CMC think the procedure was flawed?**

“Reverse discipline” is a term Morton Smith used to describe the PCA's withdrawal from the PCUS. Certainly, the hope of the CMC is that no one will leave the PCA over the Strategic Plan. We do hope that we can have a productive discussion of the plan that will lead to good understanding and better fellowship.

Admittedly, under the funding proposal there would be mild, informal discipline. Churches which did not give the annual registration fee simply could not have voting representatives in the General Assembly. They would not be “kicked out” of the PCA, and they would retain their normal standing in their presbyteries. The churches would continue to give whatever they wish to give or not to give to the other nine Committees and Agencies.

The CMC has not discussed whether or not leaving the PCUS was proper or whether the Protestant Reformation was proper. We take for granted that these were “tragic necessities” and move forward.