

**Executive Committee Report
February 8, 2018**

Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee

Pittsburgh Presbytery's Executive Committee met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at the Presbytery Center. Co-Chair Rev. Lance Chapman opened the meeting with prayer.

Items for Information

1. Election of Committee Chairs

The Executive Committee approved the following chairs for its subcommittees for calendar year 2018:

Rev. Melany Hamilton and Rev. Jodi Flack as Co-Chairs of the Ecclesiastical Committee

Elder Dan Beckstrom as Chair of the Finance Committee

Elder Barbara Prevost as Chair of the Personnel Committee

The Chair of the Property Committee is yet to be determined.

2. Vacancies on Subcommittees

The Executive Committee reports that there are vacancies on the Ecclesiastical Committee and on the Nominating Committee. There is a particular need for ministers and elders from the south and north for Nominating Committee. Anyone wishing to suggest names for service on these committees should contact the co-chairs of the Ecclesiastical Committee via the Stated Clerk's office.

3. Minutes Reading Committee

The Presbytery Minutes Reading Committee for calendar year 2018 will consist of Ministers Eric Dennis, Trent Hancock, Sheldon Sorge, and Steven Werth, and Elders Carla Campbell, and Cathy Nelson.

4. Lord's Supper during Calendar Year 2018

The Executive Committee authorized all ministry teams, commissions, committees, task forces of Presbytery and related organizations, camps and conference centers affiliated with Presbytery, celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at meetings and events during 2018.

5. Reformed Communion within Bounds at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

The Executive Committee again approved the following celebrations of the Lord's Supper by the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary within bounds of the Pittsburgh Presbytery:

Pittsburgh Presbytery confirms the permission granted by General Assembly to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and grants PTS permission to invite ordained clergy from other denominations to preside over the table, provided that the celebration does not contradict the Reformed understanding of the sacrament.

6. Elected Treasurer

The Executive Committee elected Elder Chris Martin (East Liberty) Treasurer of the Presbytery for calendar year 2018.

7. Forgiveness of Per Capita

The Executive Committee approved the request of Pleasant Unity United Presbyterian Church for forgiveness of past due *per capita* in the amount of \$48,794.65.

Items for Action

1. Consent Motions

The Executive Committee recommends that the following items be approved by consent:
4 and 5.

2. Referred Motion on Per Capita Remittance

At the December 2017 presbytery meeting, Rev. Dr. Don Dawson moved that “Pittsburgh Presbytery only remit the amount of *per capita* monies to the General Assembly and Synod that have been received from the congregations of the Presbytery.” The motion was treated as new business and the matter was referred to the Executive Committee for study and recommendation as required by the Manual of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

For the reasons set forth below, the Executive Committee unanimously recommends that the presbytery NOT approve the motion because the proposed action is unconstitutional.

The Executive Committee notes that in 2011, the Synod of the Trinity Permanent Judicial Commission ruled in Green v. Presbytery of Pittsburgh that a similar amendment to the Manual of Pittsburgh Presbytery was unconstitutional and directed Pittsburgh Presbytery to rescind it. The Stated Clerk reported to the Executive Committee that the prior General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission decisions relied upon by the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission remain precedential.

The Stated Clerk reported to the Executive Committee that should the presbytery take such action; Elder David Green has advised that he will again file a remedial action with the Synod. Defending such an action would require expenditure of presbytery staff and financial resources with no hope of a favorable outcome.

3. Request for Concurrence to the Overture of the Presbytery of Newton

The Executive Committee recommends that the presbytery concur with the overture from the Presbytery of Newton: On Appointing a Team to Review the Current Per Capita Based System of Funding the Ministry of Councils Higher Than the Session (copy attached). Concurring with this overture provides a constitutionally-appropriate means to ask that the General Assembly review and reassess the *per capita* method of funding.

***4. Waiver of Six-Year Limitation on Terms – First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights**

The Executive Committee approved and forwards to Presbytery for its approval, a waiver of the six-year limitation on terms for one elder of First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights to serve for an additional term in the class of 2020.

***5. Finance Reports – October and November – 2017**

The Executive Committee recommends Presbytery receive and file for audit the Presbytery Financial Statements for the months of October and November 2017.

[OVT-018] On Appointing a Team to Review the Current Per Capita Based System of Funding the Ministry of Councils Higher Than the Session—From the Presbytery of Newton.

Source: Presbytery

Event: 223rd General Assembly (2018)

Committee: Unassigned

Sponsor: Newton Presbytery

Type: General Assembly Full Consideration

Recommendation

The Presbytery of Newton respectfully overtures the 223rd General Assembly (2018) to do the following:

1. Direct the Moderator(s) of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Office of the Stated Clerk and the General Assembly Committee on Representation, to appoint a team of no less than six and no more than ten elders and ministers to review the current per capita based system of funding the ministry of councils higher than the session, for financial sustainability into the next ten years. The team will accomplish this by identifying the adaptive and technical challenges of sustainability in funding the ministry of councils higher than the session, consulting and receiving feedback/input from the leadership of the presbyteries, synods, and the Office of the General Assembly, as well as the Presbyterian Foundation.
2. Direct the team to make a final report of their work, along with recommendations and suggestions of potential experiments for changes to the system that funds the ministry of councils higher than the session, to the 224th General Assembly (2020). If the work requires more time, the team is directed to report to 225th General Assembly (2022), with an interim report to the 224th General Assembly (2020).

Rationale

Super Brief History

The earliest use of per capita was 1734. In 1857, the General Assembly adopted a plan to help defray the cost of travel and hosting the annual General Assembly. Each presbytery would contribute 5 cents per member of their presbytery to assist with the overall costs. Over the decades this basic structure has been our means of sharing the cost of being a community of missional ministry together.

Originally, per capita only funded the costs of the General Assembly meeting—particularly, providing a commissioners' travel fund, so presbyters of modest means could afford the sometimes weeks-long trip on horseback to serve as General Assembly commissioners.

Over the decades, since that time, the use of the per capita has funded administrative costs of the General Assembly, the Office of the General Assembly, and synod and presbytery work. Per capita (literally each head) has been based on the number of members per church so that all paid an equal proportional share of the cost of ministry together.

Through various authoritative interpretations and PJC rulings*, per capita apportionment has been seen as a voluntary benevolence for congregations. Yet, as faith communities, there is an ethical and high moral obligation to participate fully in the community.

Present Situation

Over the last few decades, the overall membership of our congregations/presbyteries has declined. Recently, with the loss of congregations to other denominations, the decline of membership is very steep. The cost of doing ministry has not decreased even though presbyteries may have fewer congregations and members.

Presbyteries have had to make, and are continuing to make, difficult and challenging choices of doing ministry together.

The Per Capita System of Funding Is Not Flexible Nor Adaptive

The *Book of Order* allows presbyteries to make their own determination of funding and methods of raising funds. However, because many of the synods and the OGA financial structure is based on per capita assessments, it is awkward, clunky, and difficult for a presbytery not to utilize the same structure. The per capita apportionment funding system, alone, is antiquated, and a financially defeating way to fund our ministry together through our higher councils.

The per capita system was a specific tool, with roots from a time when technical solutions, on their own, worked. We need to take a serious look at the adaptive challenges that face the future financial sustainability of our higher councils. The financial sustainability landscape of mid councils in our current context is multilevel and complex. We live in a time that calls us to address adaptive challenges with both adaptive *and* technical solutions.

Technical problems are those that have a clear cause as well as a clear process or procedure for “fixing” the problem. Adaptive problems or challenges are not clear. New learning or understanding of the context is required to address adaptive challenges. In such cases, many issues lie behind the presenting problems. Therefore, it takes consideration of many different possibilities to adjust, reframe, or shift the challenge.

Values and Ideals Reflected in Per Capita

We recognize and celebrate that the congregations and worshipping communities are, and should be, the leading edge in our missional ministry of announcing the Kingdom of God. We value the community nature of the per capita apportionment because all share in both the cost and the support of missional work. Sharing the cost of being the church is part of being a community. We appreciate having the different mid councils that provide support to the congregations and presbyteries in a variety of ways. We also understand that dismantling, changing, or supplementing the system of per capita apportionment is not a simple nor linear process but one that will take time, conversation, experimentation, and diverse recommendations. It is our hope that the team convened to study this issue can engage councils at all levels in a robust discussion of the challenges they face in achieving financial stability. From that conversation, we hope that a pathway will emerge that upholds the values of shared missional ministry, strong support for congregations and higher councils, and addresses broadly the sustainability challenges beyond the one tool that has historically been used.

Additional Resources

Language - Korean

018_Per_Capita-Newton_Korean.pdf