ASSOCIATION OF STATED CLERKS

Analysis of Amendments to the Constitution Proposed by the 222nd General Assembly (2016)

INTRODUCTION

As in prior years, the Association of Stated Clerks is publishing this *Analysis of Amendments to the Constitution* to assist presbyteries in studying and acting on the amendments proposed by this year's General Assembly (2016). The analysis includes a Brief Description of the amendment, the committee and Assembly Action, Arguments Supporting an Affirmative Vote, and Arguments Supporting a Negative Vote. There are two proposed amendments with subsections: 16.C. has eight subsections and 16-D. has two. Regarding those two amendments the argument for and against are listed below the Brief Description and apply to all subsections. You will note that some of the proposed amendments were approved by a voice vote or consensus on the floor of the assembly.

Our purpose has been to present arguments made in favor of and against each amendment both in meetings of the assembly committee that considered the overture leading to the amendment and on the floor of the General Assembly. It is not the role of the Association to make a recommendation either in support of or against any amendment. This analysis is best used in conjunction with the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution published by Office of the General Assembly. Many presbyteries provide copies of this analysis to their committees responsible for making a recommendation on presbytery action, and we understand that this has assisted those committees as they have done their work. We are glad that these materials are used in that way. Please note that you are free to use them as you wish. We assert no copyright and do not require advance approval of their use.

Please note that the entire proposed new directory for worship is included in the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet (25 pages). Additional background information on any of the proposed changes can be found at http://www.pc-biz.org.

Thank you to the ASC members who diligently attended committee meetings and provided information about what the pros and cons were for each amendment and to the Office of Constitutional Services for their assistance.

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

16-A Child and Youth Protection Policy
On Amending G-3.0106 (Item 05-09)

Brief Description

This amendment originated as a recommendation from the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns. If approved, it will require all councils to adopt and implement a child and youth protection policy.

Assembly Action

The Assembly Committee on Mid Councils (05) amended and approved Item 05-09 with comment by a vote of 41/0. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) then approved a motion to reinsert [sexual misconduct policy and a] in the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 and then approved Item 05-09 with amendment by a voice vote.

Arguments Supporting an Affirmative Vote

- Needed to prevent sexual harassment and for protection of children and youth

Arguments Supporting a Negative Vote

- There was concern over adding another policy to the Constitution
- Belief it should occur as a policy requirement outside the Book of Order
- May not be necessary for some smaller churches

16-B. Parity in Committees
On Amending G-3.0109 (Item 06-05)

Brief Description

This amendment would create flexibility in filling the membership of committees above the session level by not requiring "at least one half being members of congregations." The amendment as submitted would have just deleted the above language. The amendment deleted this language and added the phrase "in numbers as nearly equal as possible."

Assembly Action

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) amended and approved Item 06-05 by a vote of 46/13. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation as amended by consensus.

Arguments Supporting an Affirmative Vote

- The overture advocate restated the rationale in the overture noting that the current language is particularly burdensome for committees of counsel

Arguments Supporting a Negative Vote

- The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) reiterated their opposition (See Advice from the ACC in the proposed amendments booklet)
- ACC trying to maintain an important constitutional principle
- Should retain the default position of more ruling elders than teaching elders

16-C Ordered Ministry Titles
(Item 06-08, Recommendations 1 through 8)

Brief Description

This amendment proposes to change the ordered ministry titles back to their form before the Book of Order was amended in 2014: "teaching elder" changed back to "Minister of Word and Sacrament"; "ruling elder" to "elder"; and "commissioned ruling elder" to "commissioned lay pastor." There are eight recommendations which are presented separately for presbytery consideration.

Assembly Action

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) amended and approved item 06-08 by a vote of 56/3. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation as amended by a vote of 320/218.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Few prefer to be called Commissioned Ruling Elders rather than Commissioned Lay Pastor
- "Minister" is the most common term both historically and culturally; it serves well both ecumenically and in secular situations
- Titles we currently use are not functionally helpful to the ministry of Word and Sacrament
- Sending this for a vote allows the Church as a whole to determine which titles are most comfortable to us
- I was called to be a minister, not a teaching elder
- One person noted that a colleague was not authorized to marry because she was identified as a "teaching elder" (not "minister") and the state did not understand
- "Teaching elder" does not translate into other languages the way "minister" does; and "minister" means "servant"

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- ACC – The title "Teaching Elder" does not need to be changed; they can be pastors, evangelists, professors, counselors, chaplains, …
- Abandoning Commissioned "Ruling Elder" for Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) disempowers and removes the historic parity of teaching and ruling elders – since

CLP does not imply that the person is a ruling elder

16-C.1. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending F-3.0202 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 1)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.2. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0102 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 2)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.3 Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0301 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 3)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.4. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.05 and G-2.0501 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 4)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.5. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0701 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 5)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.6. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastors
On Amending G-3.0307 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 6)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.7. Minister of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastor
On Amending the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline
(Item 06-08, Recommendation 7)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-C.8. Minister of the Word and Sacrament On Amending W-4.4001a (Item 06-08, Recommendation 8)

Brief Description
See specific language change in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet.

16-D. Relationship to the PC (USA) of a Person Who Has Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church (Item 06-10, Recommendations 1 and 2)

Brief Description
G-2.0509 was amended in 2014 to create a permanent ban on teaching elders who had renounced jurisdiction while in the disciplinary process from working in or for a church under jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in either a paid or volunteer position. This amendment proposes to remove this restriction by requiring the former teaching elder to rejoin the church and to resubmit to the disciplinary process. Recommendation 2 adds a new paragraph which removes any statute of limitations regarding the alleged prior offense.

Assembly Action
The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) voted to answer Item 06-10 with an alternate resolution by a vote of 31/26. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) did not approve the committee's recommendation but instead amended and approved Item 06-10 by a vote of 474/78.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Provides more explicit guidance on the way back into the PC (USA) and ensures that judicial process resumes
- One person preferred deletion of this section but if retained, believes current language modifies it toward the possibility of reconciliation and restoration
- Permits reconciliation and retains limitations of those who put themselves outside of the church's discipline

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- The amended version has removed the teeth and put the onus on the church, rather

than the individual

- ACC – currently the statute of limitations in the Rules of Discipline does not apply to instances of sexual abuse of another person, D.2. removes the time limit for all offenses

16-D.1. On Amending G-2.0509
(Item 06-10, Recommendation 1)

Brief Description
See above

Amendment 16-D.2. On Amending D-10.0401
(Item 06-10, Recommendation 2)

Brief Description
See above

Amendment 16-E. Certified Service Requirements
On Amending G-2.1101 (Item 06-15)

Brief Description
The proposed amendment originated from the Committee on the Office of General Assembly. It would delete the language in G-2.1101 which refers to a "handbook."

Assembly Action
The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) voted to approve Item 06-15 by a vote of 59/0. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation by consensus.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Many of the relevant certifying bodies do not have handbooks and should not be required to have them
- "Handbook" is an antiquated term

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None

Amendment 16-F. The Ministry of Members
On Amending G-1.0304 (Item 09-11)

Brief Description
This amendment proposes to add the phrase "caring for God's creation" to G-1.0304.

This change is intended to show the importance of earth care issues and action.

Assembly Action

The Assembly Committee on Immigration and Environmental Issues (09) voted to approve Item 09-11 by a vote of 43/11. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation by a vote of 429/120.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- We are part of the earth
- Climate change and lack of water in Peru show lack of care to God's creation
- Need to be more explicit that climate care is part of our calling
- Glaring omission if not in the Book of Order
- Incorporates a value

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Some wanted more explicit language and amendment to do so was defeated
- Already covered in Directory of Worship; no compelling reason to add

Amendment 16-G. Access to the Lord's Table
On Amending W-2.4011a. and b. (Item 14-03)

Brief Description

This amendment would make Holy Communion available to developing Christians who have not yet made the baptismal declaration. This is the same language in the new Directory for Worship (Amendment 16-H).

Assembly Action

The Assembly Committee on Theological Issues and Institutions (14) voted to approve an alternate resolution by a vote of 73/3. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation on the alternate resolution by a vote of 516/45.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Holy Communion is routinely open to all who profess faith in Jesus Christ, without any mention of having been baptized
- Welcoming to those being nurtured by a congregation

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Baptism is important prior to partaking in Holy Communion

Amendment 16-H. Directory for Worship
On Replacing the Current Directory for Worship (Item 14-04)

Brief Description

Amendment proposes to replace the current Directory for Worship with a new Directory for Worship. The proposed new Directory for Worship is reprinted in its entirety in the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution booklet (pages 15 – 40). Discussion in committee centered on Holy Communion and baptism. See Amendment 16-G.

Assembly Action

The Assembly Committee on Theological Issues and Institutions (14) amended and approved Item 14-04 by a vote of 77/0. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- No discussion in committee or plenary about overall merits of proposed changes

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- **None**