

President's Report  
*National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC)*  
**Board of Directors Annual Meeting**  
*January 27, 2020*

**Peace Sisters and Brothers,**

I pray that all is well with you and your families. I am encouraged about the work that continue to lay before us. The issue that confronts us today is the division that exists not only in society but in the body of Christ. Especially the division that continues to divide the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC(USA)). We continue to experience division by race, gender identification, religious practices, economic status, cultural proficiency, and country of origin.

PC(USA) Foundations of Presbyterian Polity **F-1.0403** *Unity in Diversity* states, "The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution."

The question for NBPC is how do we, Black Presbyterians navigate the Church's emerging life such that our work guarantee's full participation of the Church's diversity? I believe what challenges us in our role as NBPC members is how do we know when we have achieved **full participation**? How do we **guarantee** full participation of our diversity in especially the governance of the church? NBPC is reminded that its purpose is to achieve not only our foundation principles but to be a prophetic voice for involving people of color in the formation of public policy, monitoring the implementation of policies by the church that impacts the quality of life of people of color. The General Assembly (GA) has given NBPC direct access to the GA through our membership in REAC in which we have the opportunity to submit resolutions that witness to the realization of F-1.0403.

NBPC will not only be submitting resolutions that impact our diverse membership but must witness to these resolutions in our presbyteries to ensure their successful implementation.

During the past three (3) years I discovered that we must take our work seriously in order to realize our mission and purpose. The gap between what we desire, and our current state is wide and deep. So, in lies the problem. I am concerned that we do not have the critical mass to solve these problems if we are to leave future generations a better community. One without racism and hatred of people of color.

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As we meet tonight, I pray that our hearts are so moved by what we see and hear that we as witnesses to Jesus and justice are moved to *engage the powers that be* to realize God's beloved community! Can I get a witness?

**Meetings** – Participated in the following meetings with:

- NBPC Executive Board
- Finance Committee
- Revive Renew Restore (RRR) Team
- Vice President – Elder Doris Evans
- NBPC 05-09 Resolution
- Cross-Caucus, Stated Clerk and Executive Director of PMA – Covenant of Understanding Regarding the Role and Relationship of Caucuses Representing Communities of Color within the PC(USA)

**Chapter and Region Relations**

*Chapter and session involvement* – Improve communications from NBPC board directly to Chapter and session leadership.

**Region Representatives Annual Report**

See President's letter (November 12, 2019) to Region Representatives.

Region Representative Ruling Elder John Etheredge will effort to establish reporting format.

- Region and Chapter Officers
- Presbytery Membership
- Three (3) issues that adversely affect the black members for each presbytery
- Status of voice and vote and full participation in the presbytery governance – committee membership and leadership
- # of churches without installed pastoral leadership among member churches
- List two (2) annual chapter goals
- How can NBPC help chapter attain goals?
- What can NBPC do to assist you in your ministry

**2021 National Biennial Convention**

- Co-Chairs not assigned.

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- **2019 Feedback** – *“After careful review it is the recommendation of the Committee Co-Chairs that the Board consider a different location other than Charleston, SC for the 2021 Conference because of expensive hotel and travel cost and holding the Biennial Conference during Big Tent or General Assembly. This would result in an enormous cost savings for the organization and the members and could potentially increase attendance of conference participants. The Chairs are asking the Board to consider conducting a survey through the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Research Services to achieve maximum participation and results.”*

**Theme:** *“The Black Church Family in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Navigating Identity, Equity and Economics.”*

**NBPC Board of Directors President Assignments**

- **224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly NBPC Overtures** – Thomas H. Priest, Jr.
- **Bylaws Committee** – Ruling Elder John Etheredge – M-ARegion and Ruling Elder Natalie Toombs – M-SRegion
- **Finance Committee Chair** – Vacant
- **223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly NBPC Overture 05-09 Follow-up** – VP Ruling Elder Doris Evans
- **Policies and Procedures Manual** – Teaching Elder James Thomas
- **Youth and Young Adult Liaison** – Vacant

**National Black Presbyterian Caucus – PC(USA) email address: “NBPC@ pcusa.org**

**Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)**

- Meeting: January 7-10, 2020, El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
  - Met with Amanda Craft, Manager of Advocacy, Office of Immigrations Issues, Office of the General Assembly.
  - Met with Teresa Waggener, Manager of Legal Resources, Office of Immigration Issues, Office of the General Assembly.
  - Received greetings from Rev. Matt Miles General Presbyter, Tres Rios Presbytery.
  - Walked across the border with the staff of Abaras Immigration Ministry, El Paso, TX and met with COESPO (Chihuahua State Council of Population).

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- Visited Pasos deFe Community Center and had lunch with asylum seekers from Cuba and Honduras.
  - Toured the federal ICE Montana Detention Facility and debriefed our border and detention center experience with Prof. Mark Lusk and Dylan Corbett, Director of Hope Institute
  - Discussed the following resolutions:
    - NBPC resolution *"A Resolution to Advocate for the **"Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Ecclesia in the PC(USA)"***
    - Immigrant Communities in the PC(USA)
    - PC(USA) Border Response
    - Joint resolutions with Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns
      - Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirits
      - Black Maternal/Infant Mortality
      - Transwomen of Color
  - REAC expressed concern about the failure of all of the agencies to participate in the same race audit as well as the Diverse Voices Table and Agency Head's decision to alter what was intended by the race audit (per GA mandate). REAC chair to contact Stated Clerk to express concerns.
- <https://atlantablackstar.com/2017/03/20/deportation-african-black-immigrants-quietly-increasing-no-one-taking-note/>
  - REAC continues to advocate for those impacted by structural and institutional racism.
  - Next Meeting: **April 22-24, 2020** - Chicago, IL.
  - NBPC - select replacement for Thomas H. Priest, Jr. Term expires June 2020.

**2020 Focus, Expectations and Goals - Reminder of the challenges that lie before us.**

- Complete requirements for Overture 05-09 "On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC(USA)."
  - The Office of the Stated Clerk to respond to the presbyteries that the NBPC identifies as not abiding by COR guidelines.

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- Board of Pensions seeking to collect people of color data to how BoP can support black churches in its ability to participate in the PC(USA) Board of Pension requirement for installed pastors.
- Make the number of vacant pulpits a discussion in member chapters presbyteries an issue in your presbytery meetings.
- Advocate for issues that adversely affect black congregations before a church reaches a point of no return.
- We have not because we ask not.
- Provide opportunities of youth and young adults to participate in the governance of the PC(USA) including education in systemic and institutional racism.
- Encourage black persons to speak out on issues that need to be addressed.
- Participate (caucus) around our own prejudices and complicity within the black church on issues of inclusion.
- Mission Statement - provides the unity - referred to Bylaws committee.
  - Requires updating/simplification.
  - Full participation in the emerging life of the PC(USA) with a strong focus on governance.
- What are the issues facing us? What is the current context of our member congregations? What is the state of the Black Presbyterian Witness in the PC(USA).
- Communication - Website
  - Electronic media, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Membership Focus
  - One thousand members - we need witnesses/voices/voters/participants.
  - Increase our metrics.
- Achieve Voice and Vote at each council level
  - *Sessions* (Membership)
  - Presbyteries
  - Synods
  - General Assembly
- Intergenerational Inclusion in membership and governance Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21.
- Establish Caucus Foundation based on our mission.

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- Establish our current state. What is the condition of our congregations and chapters?
- Leaving a sustainable Caucus for our legacy.
- Establishing a sustainable foundation.
- Relationship with General Assembly
  - Mailing/Email address – Response from Director, Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter.
  - Banking/Paying membership dues online
  - Communication resources

**Proposed Initiatives for 2020**

- Young Adult and Youth Summit in collaboration with Montreat, NC.

**Challenge:** NBPC Mission and purpose statement is not attracting a critical mass of Presbyterians to participate in the work of NBPC.

**Issue that adversely affects the lives of black people:** White supremacy and racism in the church and society.

**Caucusing Topic:** The lack of installed pastors in predominately black Presbyterian churches. The lack of the participation of black clergy and millennials.

Blessings with Justice and Equity at all times,

*Thomas H. Priest, Jr.*

Thomas H. Priest, Jr.  
President  
NBPC