

[02-084] A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee

Source: Committee

Committee: [02] Referral to the 225th General Assembly (2022)

Profile #: [COM-013]

Event: 224th General Assembly (2020)

Sponsor: Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

Type: General Assembly Full Consideration

Recommendation

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) recommends that the 224th General Assembly (2020):

1. Direct the Office of the Stated Clerk to address the PC(USA) policies establishing minimum compensation standards (*Book of Order*, G-2.0804) for pastoral calls to determine what obstacles these may create.
2. Strongly encourage mid councils to correct minimum compensation standards that directly and negatively impact a congregation's ability to call installed pastoral leadership.
3. Commend the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) for their analysis of the causes of the lack of installed pastors.
4. Strongly encourage mid councils to respond to the National Black Presbyterian Caucus's (NBPC) analysis of causes of the lack of installed pastors in predominately people of color congregations.
5. Direct the Office of the Stated Clerk to provide to the Office of the General Assembly current member and church statistics and demographics of people of color congregations. Data to be used to identify the number of predominately people of color congregations without installed pastoral leadership (*Book of Order*, G-2.0504a).

Rationale

What we must do...

To remain silent is to be complicit. REAC acknowledges that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a predominately white Protestant Christian denomination. The diversity of the PC(USA) is also determined by the number of its people of color members. For example, the number of black members is declining. Not only is the black membership declining the quality of life of its black congregations and communities in the PC(USA), but it is also deteriorating. Currently 80 percent of the PC(USA)'s predominately black congregations are without installed pastoral leadership. The same issue exists within other communities of color in the denomination. Therefore, REAC can no longer stand by and allow our people of color member congregations to suffer from the lack of installed pastoral leadership and pastoral care.

This is a call to action for the PC(USA) regarding issues and concerns detrimental to its people of color constituency. As members of the Presbyterian assembly, we have stated the obvious, repeatedly, in reference to our perspective on racism and injustice in this community of faith and in society.

The time has come to take action beyond dialogue, discussions, meetings, writing reports, and prayers. It is time to take tangible and measurable actions. We measure those metrics that are important like the number of members, amount of pledges, our budgets all related to quantifiable numbers. We don't measure how well we

do our mission, how well we witness to our faith, how well our congregations are witnessing to our faith principles.

It is time we measure other metrics we value such as the witness of our congregations and its ability to witness to God's call without installed pastoral leadership. They should not be penalized for their inability to meet the minimum compensation standards for pastoral calls.

The National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) utilizing the "Five Why Root Cause Analysis"[1] process determined that the root cause of why black congregations are without installed pastoral leadership is the inability to meet the minimum terms of call requiring pension and medical insurance payments.[2]

REAC recognizes the same issues are relevant to most people of color congregations. REAC determined that the primary cause is the inability of these congregations to satisfy the minimum compensation standards for installed pastoral leadership.

Many pastors providing pastoral leadership in people of color congregations are more fluent in their native tongue and/or are not ordained Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Therefore, they lack proficiency of the Presbyterian polity, thus diluting their participation and effectiveness in the governance of the church.

Without immediate intervention, it is the conclusion of REAC that many of these congregations will close or merge, thus contributing to the decline of participation of people of color in the life of the PC(USA). REAC believes that people of color congregations are marginalized by a structure that is not responding to the voices of its people of color for inclusion and equity. There is no current plan to address the lack of installed pastoral leadership in predominantly people of color congregations.

REAC recognizes our complicity, complacency, and compromise towards this issue. We acknowledge there are diverse views within the issue of inclusivity in our mission to dismantle racism in God's beloved community.

National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC)

5 Why Root Cause Analysis

February 19, 2020

Background

The Board of Directors of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus determined that in order to meet its mission and purpose the NBPC must fully participate in the governance of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all governing bodies. Therefore, the NBPC submitted Item 05-09, "*On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC(USA)*" to the 223rd General Assembly (2018).

While researching Item 05-09, the NBPC discovered that eighty (80) percent of the four hundred (400) plus predominately black PC(USA) congregations, were and continue to be without an installed pastor. Therefore, the NBPC determined it must submit the resolution, "*On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC(USA) Part II,*" to the 224th General Assembly (2020).

The NBPC board asked its members "why are eighty (80) percent of our member churches without installed pastoral leadership?" The first response was they could not afford one. The NBPC board decided that to correct this current reality it must advocate to the General Assembly something tangible such as a root cause so that corrective action may be taken. The NBPC did not want our request to be treated as a "*complaint*" to

be easily dismissed. We wanted our voice and participation to be taken seriously with the utmost concern for the welfare of our congregations. We also realized that it would be difficult for the PC(USA) to realize God's beloved community without healthy congregations.

Therefore, the NBPC board decided to use the "5 Why Root Cause Identification" process, a structured problem-solving methodology which identifies the root cause.

Analysis

The NBPC performed two (2) 5 Why Root Cause Analyses. The first was conducted at our face-to-face board meeting on September 21, 2018. The second was conducted on Thursday, June 27, 2019, at the NBPC 45th Biennial Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

The 5 Why Root Cause Identification process steps are outlined below:

- The plenary formed into small groups of seven (7) to ten (10) members with a total of nine (9) groups.
- Each group was given the main concern—*Currently of four hundred plus black congregations, approximately eighty (80) percent are without an installed pastor.*
 - Each group was instructed to answer the first "why" question. That answer was converted to a "why" question thus forming the second "why" question. This was continued until at least five (5) "why" questions were generated.
 - Each group decided which "why" was their top priority.
 - Each group presented their main "why" to the plenary (larger group).
 - The plenary (larger group) discussed each "why" and through consensus determined the main action to be taken to effect change on the main concern.

In both 5 "Why" sessions conducted by the NBPC, the root cause to the main concern was that the congregation could not afford to pay pension dues and medical plan premiums required by the PC(USA). Below is the result of our 5 Why Root Cause determination process.

Main Concern—"Currently of 400 plus black PC(USA) congregations, approximately eighty (80) percent are without installed pastors."

Why #1: "Why are eighty (80) percent of the 400 plus black congregations of the PC(USA) without installed pastors?"

Response: Because we cannot afford an installed pastor.

Why #2: "Why can you not afford an installed pastor?"

Response #2: Because it is too expensive.

Why #3: "Why is it expensive?"

Response #3: Because the minimum pastor compensation requirements include payments of pension and medical insurance.

Why #4: "Why does the minimum pastor compensation requirements include payments of pension and medical insurance?"

Response: Because the PC(USA) polity standards require pension and medical insurance for all installed pastors.

Why #5: "Why does the PC(USA) polity standards require pension and medical insurance for all installed pastors?"

Response: The answer to Why #5 was the basis for NBPC to request of the General Assembly to provide a solution to our main concern that *“Currently eighty (80) percent of the four hundred 400 plus black congregations in the PC(USA) are without installed pastoral leadership.”*

Listed below are a few examples of other first responses to the first “why” question that were not selected as part of our 224th General Assembly (2020) resolution:

- Because there is a lack of qualified black pastors.
- Because we are a small congregation.
- Because we are an extremely aged congregation.

Each of these first responses generated a different root cause outcome. After debate and discussion, the NBPC board chose to pursue the root cause, *“On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC(USA) Part II,”* identifying the inability to afford an installed pastor as root cause that would yield the most tangible long-term results.

The Reverend Dr. Thomas H. Priest Jr.
NBPC, President

[1]Courtney Seiter, “The 5 Whys Process We Use to Understand the Root of Any Problem” (14 September 2018) <<https://open.buffer.com/5-whys-process/>> (19 February 2020). ***“It’s just as it sounds: A discussion of the unexpected event or challenge that follows one train of thought to its logical conclusion by asking “Why?” five times to get to the root of what happened.”***

[2] The National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) analysis is included at the end of this resolution for reference.

Other Comments

Board of Pensions Comment on Item 02-84. A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee.

Prior to the passage of this overture, the Board of Pension took action.

Please see the Board’s Response to *2018 Referral: Item 05-09. Commissioners' Resolution: On the Challenge of Being Black in the PC (USA). Recommendation 5. Advise the Board of Pensions to analyze and report on the viability of African American Presbyterian Churches and the challenges of supporting installed pastoral leadership.* The conclusion of the response is reprinted as follows:

There is similarity among smaller churches struggling to find congregational leadership. There is a disparity with African American Presbyterian congregations with 101-300 members less likely to be served by leadership. To address this identified need, the Board has expanded the eligibility requirements for Pathways to Renewal, an incentive to employers to bring young ministers into the Benefits Plan with the full benefits of Pastor's Participation at substantially reduced dues. Effective February 7, 2020, African American Presbyterian congregations up to 300 members are eligible for Pathways to Renewal.

The Board continues to look forward to working with the church to ensure participation in the Benefits Plan for ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

General Assembly Committee on Representation Comment on Item 02-84, A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

This item has been recommended to be referred to the 225th General Assembly (2022). However, should the assembly determine that this item of business needs to be considered by the 224th General Assembly (2020), GACOR provides this comment.

The General Assembly Committee on Representation commends the work of the National Presbyterian Black Caucus and encourages them to continue such work with their sibling caucuses as a way to further the collection of data that reflects their unique communities. We also recognize the importance of diversity in pastoral leadership. Should this item be approved, we recommend research into data and statistics that represent the needs of all indigenous, immigrant, and other communities of color in order for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to best serve these congregations and contexts. GACOR regularly utilizes statistics in its work and welcomes the opportunity to engage in conversation for data that reflects the rich diversity of the denomination.

The General Assembly Committee on Representation is made up of sixteen persons, elected by the General Assembly, who are drawn from members and elders, ruling and teaching, from across the church in accordance with F-1.0403. Its constitutional mandate and central functions are described in G-3.0103 of the Book of Order (Form of Government).

The Office of the Stated Clerk Comment on Item 02-84, A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

COGA has recommended that this item be referred to the 225th General Assembly (2022). However, should the assembly determine that this item of business is core and critical to our governance and sustainability, and needs to be considered by the 224th General Assembly (2020), OGA provides this comment.

This item directs that the Office of the Stated Clerk address the PC(USA) policies establishing minimum compensation standards (*Book of Order*, G-2.0804) for pastoral calls to determine what obstacles these may create. The Stated Clerk works through the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and so OGA requests that the referral/recommendation be made to the Office of the General Assembly.

This item also directs the Office of the Stated Clerk to provide to the Office of the General Assembly certain statistics and demographics. As mentioned above, the Stated Clerk works through the Office of the General Assembly so that this recommendation is a tautology requesting that the same office will provide to itself certain statistics and demographics. The assembly could request that OGA solicit such statistics and demographics from the larger church.