

# Ad Interim Committee on Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church



## HPC Session Response

Adult Sunday School Presentation

May 6, 2018

# Report from GA, 2017



- The Interim Committee, composed of men and women from across the denomination, spent months attempting to determine an appropriate response to the various desires within different churches of our denomination and a general response to our culture.
- How should the PCA answer the questions concerning women in ministry? What is the Biblical understanding? We do not want to go beyond the Bible's teaching, and we also do not want to so limit ourselves to a culturally-restricted understanding that may have been our norm in past years.

# Report from GA, 2017



- This summary will present the Report's language on the recommendations, followed by the Heritage Session's response on how we will either accept or reject those recommendations.
- At no point does this report impose on the PCA any recommendation. It is for Presbyteries to decide to make overtures for the upcoming GA (and in years' following), either to accept, modify or replace any of the recommendations, or do nothing at all. Doing nothing will leave the PCA as it is now. However, individual sessions may enact any recommendation as it sees fit.

# Recommendation 1



- “That Overture 3 from Westminster Presbytery, “Declare that the 44th Assembly Erred in the Formation of an Ad Interim Committee on the Role of Women as not Being Properly before the Court, and Dismiss the Ad Interim Committee with Apology,” be answered in the negative.
- That is, accept the committee’s report as a report, and decide how to respond to its various recommendations.

# HPC Session Response 1



- HPC Session accepts. It's a moot point as far as we're concerned. The Report is finalized, much work went into this, and we might as well read through it and decide what to do with the recommendations.

# Recommendation 2



- That sessions, presbyteries, and the General Assembly recognize that, from the founding of the PCA, there has been a variety of views and practices regarding the ways in which women may serve the Lord and the church within scriptural and constitutional parameters, without ordination, and that such mutual respect for said views and practices continues.

# HPC Session Response 2



- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation. The key here is “within scriptural and constitutional parameters, without ordination”. These should be within the current constitutional parameters. Also, the Scriptures have a definite interpretation within the Reformed tradition, with widely accepted understanding of what they mean. We need to keep our current constitution (Scripture, Westminster standards) including what we have in the BCO, and outside of those structures, exercise freedom in the broad context of the regulative principle. We should allow other churches within the PCA to do the same.

# Recommendation 3



- That sessions, presbyteries and the General Assembly strive to develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge, and wisdom of godly women in the local, regional, and national church, and particularly consider overtures that would allow qualified women to serve on appropriate committees and agencies within the church.

# HPC Session Response 3



- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation in general, but recognizes there are limitations. Neither this report, nor the PCA in general, have defined what “qualified” means in this context. Or for that matter, what “qualified” men mean in serving the church, outside of ordination.

# HPC Session Response 3



- Some of the committees, boards and agencies currently require ordained men to ensure doctrinal purity. However, for other positions, we also need “professional skills”, such as financial management, knowledge of tax laws, personnel management, property management, fundraising, etc. Women as well as men who are non-ordained can and should serve on the appropriate committees (although as non-voting members at levels above the local church) and boards and agencies, and in fact, do.

# HPC Session Response 3



- The Session further thinks this Recommendation combines two separate ideas - serving in the local church, and serving on committees and agencies of the denomination.
- We should consider how we bring non-ordained men onto national committees and agencies, what makes them “qualified” to serve, if the positions truly do not need ordained men to fill them. These same qualifications should apply equally to women.

# HPC Session Response 3



- For HPC, we have the question of how to further implement the recommendation to “develop, recognize, and (use) the gifts, skills, knowledge and wisdom of godly women”. We do this already, on an informal basis. Women serve and lead on a variety of committees and stand-alone activities. The Session has and will continue to review the resources mentioned within this Report, to consider the practices of other PCA churches, and discuss what we at HPC can do.

# Recommendation 4 and HPC Session Response 4



- That sessions, if possible, establish a diaconate of qualified ordained men.
- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation and this is what we do at HPC. This should be the norm. The BCO defines for us what men “qualified to be deacons” means, at least in general. This does provide the qualitative distinctives, without demanding any quantitative requirements. This allows individual churches to decide how mature in the faith a man is to be considered eligible to be a deacon.

# Recommendation 5



- That sessions consider how to include non-ordained men and women in the worship of the church so as to maintain faithfulness to Scripture, as well as utilizing the gifts God has poured out to His entire church

# HPC Session Response 5



- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation, but will proceed carefully and judiciously with any implementation. If we are to expand this list of who will routinely assist in worship in any way, we will need to define “qualified” in this context.
- We now move on to asking ourselves, “What elements should be open to women? What proper worship elements, that we don’t currently use, should be available to the non-ordained?” Examples of such elements are: leading music, reading the WCF, giving testimonies, and the like.

# HPC Session Response 5



- Regarding our current practice during special services, we do have non-ordained members of the congregation stand and offer a prayer or praise (e.g., the Thanksgiving service). When we have these special services, we do in fact encourage women to share.
- Our first principle is having God-focused worship, which informs us in how we structure the worship service and then we look to how we might have non-ordained persons participate. Therefore, the question becomes, “How do we select people (men or women) in light of that principle?”

# Recommendation 6 and HPC Session Response 6



- *[This report recommends]* that sessions and presbyteries select and appoint godly women and men of the congregation to assist the ordained diaconate.
- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation. The Session encourages the diaconate to select godly men and women to serve as assistants on an as-needed basis or as on-going appointments. A need may exist that would require such assistants to have continual interaction with the deacons, especially those involving professional skills, where they would have a ministry more commensurate with their education and skills.

# Recommendation 7



- That presbyteries and the General Assembly consider an overture that would establish formally the right of sessions, presbyteries, and the General Assembly to establish the position of commissioned church worker within the PCA for qualified and gifted un-ordained men and women.

# HPC Session Response 7



- The HPC Session rejects this recommendation. There is no firm Biblical grounding for this commissioned position, which is far different in need and description from the commissioning of people in the New Testament to perform a task. We should consider it adequate to support those women who want to work for the church full time in ministry with current standards. This would fit the current Constitutional model. This “commissioned” model further moves away from the priesthood of all believers, creating another layer/tier of “ministry” privilege.

# Recommendation 8



- That sessions, presbyteries and the General Assembly consider how they can affirm and include underprivileged and underrepresented women in the PCA.

# HPC Session Response 8



- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation in principle, but has trouble with the language in the body of the report (which seems muddy, at best). We want the church to reflect all whom God has elected to salvation, regardless of race, sex, nationality, language or economic state. We want all such persons within our churches; we should not consciously create and develop “mono-cultural” congregations. We recognize that such developed more or less unconsciously from past years, and that the “historical” condition is often hard to overcome within the church body and within the local community.

# HPC Session Response 8



- God may bring many people of various cultures and conditions to our local congregations, we should accept them as equal members of God's household, and seek their growth in Christ, and encourage them to participate in ministries of the local congregations.
- The question before the Session is "How do we make things more encouraging?" We're looking at how we enfold the members of CR into HPC's life and ministries. This is where we are going, and we agree with the principle. We are interested in doing this, so our effort is how we implement.

# Recommendation 9 and HPC Session Response 9



- The committee humbly requests to be dismissed with thanks.
- The HPC Session accepts this recommendation, and amen.