

Foothills Overture #9:

Recommendation:

Foothills Presbytery overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to create a General Assembly Reform Coordinating Committee with the aim to reform, renew and refresh the practice of our Reformed polity for the 21st century. The General Assembly Reform Coordinating Committee will:

1. Coordinate with Synod and Presbytery Stated Clerks and Executives to organize regional gatherings of the commissioners to the 222nd and subsequent General Assemblies, plus Ruling Elders, Teaching Elders, Deacons, Educators, Presbytery and Synod Staff persons and lay persons, to come together to study the core principles of our historic polity, to reflect upon the sweeping religious, political, cultural and social changes in which we find ourselves, and advise the GA Reform Coordinating Committee regarding the content and organization of the Constitution, the creation of a strategic ten year shared denominational mission plan, and to devise the most effective structures to faithfully and boldly uphold our Reformed polity and practice.
2. Study and devise a strategy to most effectively use the modern communication that is afforded to us through the internet and social media.
3. Receive, organize and report to the 223rd and subsequent General Assemblies faithful summaries of the regional gatherings.

Rationale:

Foothills Presbytery, affirming G-3.0501 that, *The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love and witness,* has submitted eight overtures with the aim of engaging our denomination in the sustained work of reform, renewal and modernization. These individual overtures represent key strategic changes in our recent practice that we believe will instigate the Church to enter a new era of reform. Binding these diverse overtures together are the following principles:

1. **Stability of Identity:** The PC(USA) needs a stable Constitution that is undergirded by renewing the Constitutional Principle above the Democratic Principle. (Overture 007)
2. **Change through Building Broad Consensus:** The PC(USA) needs to move away from seeking change by legislation, and rather move to broad consensus building in and between the Councils of the Church. (Overture 003)
3. **Holistic Witness:** Through a balanced focus upon *The Great Ends of the Church* (F-1.0304) at the Meetings of the General Assembly, the PC(USA)

needs a more holistic and faithful practice of living out the breadth of our Calling. (Overture 003)

4. **Focus and Depth:** The PC(USA) needs to improve and deepen its commitment to and practice of meaningful social witness by moving away from the practice of pushing “yes/ no” votes on highly partisan issues at the biennial Meetings of the General Assembly, and rather work to engage every congregation and every Council of the Church to find deep and rich consensus. (Overtures 004 and 005)
5. **Mutual Interdependence:** As Presbytery administrative leaders are in the unique position of relations between congregations and all higher Councils, the PC(USA) needs their wisdom and perspective as Advisory Delegates to the Meetings of the General Assembly (Overture 006)
6. **Adaptability and Nimbleness:** As the world of the 21st Century is rapidly changing and as bureaucratic structures, once established and funded, tend towards outliving their original purpose, the PC(USA) needs the regular input of presbyteries into the issue of best practices and most fitting structures of the national Church. (Overtures 009 and 010)
7. **More than Yes or No:** As complex and multifaceted issues are often made simplistic by simple “yes” or “no” choices, the PC(USA) needs to create a third category of voting that allows for the message, “no, not now.”

Believing the whole Church and every level of Council in the Church must be engaged in this work of reform, renewal and refreshment, the creation of a GA Coordinating Committee is the best method to engage in serious season of reform that is neither too hasty nor too tardy, but will help the PCUSA reform, renew and modernize its practice in a manner that upholds the venerable standard, “let it be done decently and in order.”