

[OVT-005] Call to Review the Restructuring of the PC(USA) World Mission

Source: Presbytery

Committee: Unassigned

Event: 227th General Assembly (2026)

Sponsor: The Cascades Presbytery

Type: General Assembly Full Consideration

Recommendation

The Presbytery of the Cascades overtures the 227th (2026) General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

1. To direct the Moderator or Co-Moderators to form a commission tasked with the following:

a. To review decision making processes employed and actions taken that resulted in the elimination of the PC(USA) World Mission and the termination of all appointed Mission Co-Worker positions of those who were serving in March 2025, and the formation of a new model of global engagement;

b. To determine the extent to which the decision making processes employed and actions taken by the Unification Commission and the Interim Unified Agency conformed to or violated policy mandates of the General Assembly including (but not limited to) Presbyterians do Mission in Partnership, Gathering for God's Future, CR-08 On Maintaining the International Presence of Global Mission Personnel to Embody Our Christian Witness, CR-10 On Reaffirming the Role of Mission Co-Workers in the Global Ecumenical Witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Reformed theological understandings of church found in the Constitution of the PC(USA);

c. To review comments, advice, and guidance that the former Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Interim United Agency, and the Unification Commission solicited or received from global partners concerning the revision of the PC(USA)'s model of global engagement during the period 2018-2025 (including but not limited to the series of global partner consultations held in 2018-2019, the consultations held in connection with the development of "Reflecting, Reimagining, and Making Space for Rebuilding" prepared by CounterStories Consulting in September 2021, consultations with the Global Partner Roundtable, and responses to the survey the Interim Unified Agency sent to global partners in December 2024) and to assess the extent to which partner input was or was not accommodated;

d. To report to the 228th General Assembly the findings of the commission, and to recommend appropriate actions of acknowledgement, confession, repentance, and reparation.

Rationale

Citing its commitment to redress the "historical harms of missionaries" and "help the church better engage," the Interim Unified Agency (IUA) of the PC(USA) announced the dissolution of PC(USA) World Mission in February 2025 and terminated the ministries of all Mission Co-Workers the following month. Without posting new positions and specific skills sought, the IUA hired some Mission Co-Workers as global and domestic ecumenical liaisons, positions that have yet to be defined, to take part in a new model of global engagement that violates the missiological principles of prior GA actions, causing division between those Mission Co-Workers who were offered a position in the new model and the majority of Mission Co-Workers, who were not.

For almost 200 years, Presbyterian World Mission provided the denomination, local congregations, and mid councils opportunities to connect with the global church, participate in God's mission around the world, learn from the faith and experiences of our siblings abroad, and receive leaders, such as the Rev. Syngman Rhee and the Rev. Jihyun Oh, and thus live out the church's calling to be connectional and apostolic. Stories about what God is doing among our siblings abroad, mission interpretation from mission co-workers, and the work of PC(USA) Mission Networks formed and informed the denomination's understanding of God, God's people, and God's world. The dissolution of PC(USA) World Mission has deprived the denomination of opportunities to connect with, to learn from, and to be led by the global church.

In its enthusiasm to cut costs, IUA's firing of the mission co-workers follows neither the mandate of the 226th General Assembly nor facilitates the denomination's global engagement. Instead, subcontracting our mission work to ecumenical agencies headquartered in Europe has weakened the bond between the General Assembly, local congregations and mid councils with our global partners.

By not communicating with local congregations, mid councils, and the Mission Networks engaged in many global regions, the IUA left much of the PC(USA) ignorant of decisions being made and how Presbyterians could respond. Congregations and mid councils who have faithfully donated funding for specific ministries, trusting PC(USA) World Mission as a reliable partner in mission, now find themselves betrayed by the denomination.

Ironically, in its eagerness to "decolonize" the denomination's "theology, missiology, and practical engagement," the IUA employed colonial, top-down strategies. 20 years of discernment in which global partners and Presbyterians engaged about mission theology and modalities was not consulted and the voices of our global partners were not heard. Surveys sent to global partners in December 2024, inquiring about the relevance of the current model of mission and the ministry of mission co-workers laboring with them, were responded to. But these were not received by the IUA before decisions were announced by the IUA about the withdrawal of all mission co-workers and a turn from incarnational ministries of appointed mission personnel living in community and solidarity with our partners. This created significant ministry disruption for many global partners and was received as completely insensitive to the relationship between the PC(USA) and our partner churches. Written communications sent to global partners announcing the termination of mission co-worker positions did not name those whose positions were eliminated, identify the ministries in which they were invited to take part, or thank the partners for hosting our mission co-workers. The decision to terminate mission co-workers was unilateral, and the communication about it proved to be paternalistic. By not consulting our global siblings and communicating very late, the IUA did not present itself as an equal ally, but as a dominant partner in a position of power, speaking to subordinates whose opinions were not needed for decisions to be made.

The process of eliminating this critical aspect of the church's calling culminated in the termination of the position of Mission Co-Worker in March 2025. Mission co-workers not only lost their jobs but were restricted from openly grieving their loss to continue the ministry to which they felt called by God. By employing them, PC(USA) World Mission had affirmed their calling and gifts for this ministry. Congregations and mid councils also affirmed their calling and gifts, as did our global partners by inviting and hosting them. In response to their call, mission co-workers identified themselves with and advocated for the least of our siblings abroad. They joined our global partners and represented the denomination's commitment to justice, reconciliation, and holistic transformation.

This overture calls for the processes by which these decisions were made to be investigated, to determine how the decisions conform with or violate PC(USA) GA actions, to review the years of global consultations and study results, and to report to the 228th General Assembly with appropriate recommendations.

Concurrence

Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery

Presbytery of the James

Lake Erie Presbytery

Pueblo Presbytery

Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery

Miami Valley Presbytery