

22-P — G-3.0106

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

G-3.0106 ADMINISTRATION OF MISSION (POL-10)

The 225th General Assembly (2022) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?
(Deleted text is in ~~strike through~~; added text is in *italics*.)

“G-3.0106 Administration of Mission ...

... “All councils shall adopt and implement ~~a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy~~ the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy.”

Background and Rationale

From Selma to Montgomery, from Tuskegee to Tuscaloosa, from Auburn to Anniston, from the Black Belt to Birmingham, the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley knows the pain of our racist history and the difficulty of changing behavior. We recognize the General Assembly’s call for “Facing Racism,” for study and action, and give thanks for the resource materials provided. Nevertheless, we see that councils have been slow to respond. Councils have adopted and enforced sexual misconduct policies and policies to protect vulnerable populations. Why have councils not been doing the work of “Facing Racism”? Why have councils responded differently? The responses regarding sexual misconduct and protecting vulnerable people have been directed by “shall,” while “Facing Racism” merely urges, makes available, encourages, and commends. This presbytery, whose very name reflects black and white, women and men, working together in mission for education and health care, calls upon the General Assembly to turn overcoming racism into a “shall” for all our councils.

Advice—From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the constitution is not intended to serve as a manual of operations. Generally, this would advocate against the creation of lists of requirements or rubrics on how to implement requirements.

Advice and Counsel—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) approve this item...The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley and other concurring presbyteries are to be commended for their sincere desire to see the PC(USA) implementing the “Facing Racism” policy (2018, renewing a 1999 version). If this overture is passed, it is important that there are both personal and shared outcomes for any antiracism policy and training. Training in and of itself does not mandate tangible action beyond certification that a training is offered, was attended, and completed. In a church that is 89% white and largely suburban, the amendment we propose is meant to encourage mid councils to be both visionary and realistic about the kind of training required to dismantle white supremacy and transform us into the Beloved Community in our particular areas.

Advice and Counsel—From the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC)

ACWC advises that the assembly approve this item. We concur with the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee and encourage the approval of including an antiracism policy with suggested language, but we also believe it should be included in a stand-alone manner separate from the mandate to have a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy.

Advice and Counsel—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) approve this item ... Over the years, the *Book of Order* has been reduced in scope and specific content. Noticeably absent is language related to addressing systemic and structural racism. Previous efforts to address racism in the church and society are not enough. Though they have brought awareness, they have not yielded the desired results for people of color. Facing racism and overcoming racism are only steps to achieving God’s beloved community of eradicating racism. White supremacy and other racist attitudes undermine the work of the church. Therefore, REAC advises the inclusion of “All councils shall adopt and implement a dismantling structural and systemic racism policy and training” as a stand-alone requirement.

Comment—From the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)

The General Assembly Committee on Representation believes that training in cultural proficiency, implicit bias, and antiracism are important at all levels of the denomination. The inclusion of such training in the *Book of Order* would ensure that members are equipped and aware of the implications of racism in their work. Training like this would be best if connected to the constitutional requirement of advocating for diversity in leadership and equipping the church.

With that affirmation, we also want to highlight the fact that mandatory stand-alone training around bias and privilege have been shown to actually reinforce bias when they are not accompanied by actual strategies for overcoming bias, structural commitment to undoing structural barriers to equity, etc. In other words, the “how” of a mandatory training matters just as much, if not more, as the “if”—without attention to this wider matrix of needs, including best-practices, required antiracism training risks becoming simply another box to check without any greater commitment to transformed interactions, norms and structures within our institutions and within the body of Christ.

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) was formed as a result of the 1983 reunion of the northern and southern streams of what is now the PC(USA). The vision for GACOR was to address the need for relationships and vision of a better way to embody the diversity of the church together. It is tasked with bringing attention and interpretation to representational access and norms around race, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, theological diversity, and more (G-3.0103). GACOR’s comments are designed to bring the richness and complexity of these intersecting realities into the conversation for the body of commissioners.

The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the overture language and then approved Item POL-10, 25/3. The 225th General Assembly (2022) amended and approved Item POL-10, 372/31.

For the full report on POL-10, go to <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/3000082/business>.