

Fathers and Brothers

In this paper are some of the alternative plans to fund the Administrative Committee of the PCA. These articles are found on the web-site of The Aquila Report (<http://theaquilareport.com/index.php>). You are encouraged to read other articles on this topic found on byfaith's website (<http://byfaithonline.com/>).

"The vote of Presbyteries on the BCO 14 amendments as of January 31 is 36-27 against adopting the amendments.

For the amendments to be have been approved 2/3 of the 79 Presbyteries (53) had to vote in favor. Now that over 1/3 of the Presbyteries (27) have voted against approving the amendments, they have not been consented to or adopted."

The Presbyteries voting in favor of adopting the BCO 14 amendments include:

1. Calvary
2. Central Florida
3. Central Georgia
4. Eastern Canada
5. Evangel
6. Georgia Foothills
7. Heritage
8. Houston Metro
9. James River
10. Korean Capital
11. Korean Southeastern
12. Korean Southern
13. Metro Atlanta
14. Metro New York
15. Missouri
16. New Jersey
17. North Florida
18. Northern California
19. Northern New England
20. Ohio Valley (only on BCO 14-1)*
21. Pacific
22. Pacific Northwest
23. Potomac
24. Providence

25. Southwest Florida
26. Susquehanna Valley
27. Western Canada

The Presbyteries voting against adopting the BCO 14 amendments include:

1. Blue Ridge
2. Central Carolina
3. Eastern Carolina
4. Eastern Pennsylvania
5. Fellowship
6. Grace
7. Great Lakes
8. Gulfstream
9. Illiana
10. Korean Eastern
11. Korean Northwest
12. Louisiana
13. Mississippi Valley
14. New River
15. New York State
16. Northwest Georgia
17. Ohio
18. Ohio Valley (only on BCO 14-2)*
19. Palmetto
20. Philadelphia
21. Philadelphia Metro West
22. Pittsburgh
23. Rocky Mountain
24. Savannah River
25. Siouxlands
26. South Coast
27. South Florida
28. Southeast Alabama
29. Southeast Louisiana
30. Southern New England
31. Southwest
32. Suncoast
33. Tennessee Valley
34. Warrior

- 35. Westminster
- 36. Wisconsin

Note: Ohio Valley Presbytery split its votes, voting in favor for BCO 14-1 and against for BCO 14-2.

**SESSION OF OHIO PCA CHURCH
PROPOSES AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN TO FUND THE AC**

Written by Staff Tuesday, 25 January 2011 00:00

*CORRECTIONS MADE TO OVERTURE (RECOMMENDATIONS) ON JAN 25 AT
3:00PM*

The church proposes a Study Committee to determine the best way for the Presbyterian Church in America to communicate with presbyteries, churches, elders, deacons, congregants, fellow evangelicals...and, to recommend a funding mechanism that is a permanent solution to the Administrative Committee funding,

On Monday evening, January 24, the session of Grace Presbyterian adopted the following overture to be considered at the February 5, 2011 of the Ohio Presbytery, to be held at Redeemer PCA in Hudson, Ohio.

The full text of the overture follows:

Whereas, as a denomination, we are committed to the peace, purity and unity of the church,

Whereas, as a denomination we have set up our denominational structures as “para-church” agencies, in order to avoid a hierarchical structure,

Whereas, we recognize the vital importance of the Administrative Committee to the functioning of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and thus recognize the need to support the Committee in its functions — providing the essential legal, administrative and support services needed for our connected churches,

Whereas, we recognize the continuing importance of community that is modeled for us in Holy Scripture, which is opposed to the “rugged individualism,” so characteristic of 21st Century American culture,

Whereas, the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter I, Section 6) encourages us to use reason and the light of nature to guide us,

Whereas, we have the advantages of being Presbyterian Church in America churches and should seek therefore to fulfill all our responsibilities,

Whereas, the PCA budgets about \$750,000 on communications within the church and outside the church,

Whereas, the Ohio Presbytery voted not to approve the BCO Amendments 14-1 and 14-2 regarding the proposed funding plan,

Whereas, the Administrative Committee has struggled financially with pay cuts and has depended for many years on budget cuts and the generosity of a few individuals and churches, due to the lack of voluntary gifts from the churches,

Be it resolved that a study committee be appointed by the 2011 General Assembly to consider the best way for the Presbyterian Church in America to communicate with presbyteries, churches, elders, deacons, congregants, fellow evangelicals and — most importantly — the Gospel message to those who have not yet been called into Christ’s kingdom, and

Recommend a funding mechanism that is a permanent solution to the Administrative Committee funding.

Whilst these deliberations are taking place, we urge all churches in our presbytery and denomination to consider all the functions of the Administrative Committee and voluntarily give, for, as Paul wrote in II Corinthians 9:5-8 (ESV)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Adopted this date, January 24, 2011, in Hudson, Ohio by the session of Grace Presbyterian Church of the Western Reserve

PCA AC FUNDING ALTERNATIVE PLAN NUMBER TWO: THE HEDMAN PLAN

Written by Martin Hedman Wednesday, 26 January 2011 00:00

Second in our series of Alternative Plans published on The Aquila Report. This one came from PCA Teaching Elder Martin Hedman and was entitled: A Viable and Voluntary Alternative to Fund the PCA Administrative Committee.

First Published September 14, 2010:

This past summer, the 38th General Assembly (GA) of the PCA approved a new funding plan for the denomination's Administrative Committee (AC). That plan includes required fees, paid by teaching elders, churches and Presbyteries. However, in order for the plan to be put into practice, the Book of Church Order (BCO)) must be amended, and those amendments have to be approved by two-thirds of the Presbyteries and the next General Assembly.

Others have written against the "tax" and given reasons to vote against the BCO changes. What I would like to do here is offer an alternative funding plan that, I hope, gives further reason to vote against the amendments to BCO 14-1 and 2.

I believe there is a funding plan for the AC that can maintain the voluntary nature of how the PCA funds its agencies. And since it would be voluntary, no amendments to the BCO would be required. The primary features of this funding plan are:

- Slightly modified, voluntary, fee payment table from the one presented and approved at GA. Each congregation decides, completely on its own, whether or not to pay this amount. The amounts continue to be based on tithes and offerings received, but are slightly higher. The higher fee is closer to the 2010 ministry askings of \$7 per member for the AC. Every church that contributes according to the modified table may send its BCO permitted compliment of commissioners to GA without further registration fees or charges. (Ed. Note – the fee is in place of support to AC and could (should?) be considered as a support budget line item.)
- A GA registration fee of \$2,000 per commissioner for Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders whose churches do not contribute to the AC. This high fee is deliberate. Smaller churches will be encouraged to contribute to the AC since that contribution will be significantly less than the commissioner registration fee. However, some larger

churches will decide to pay the commissioner fee instead, which will provide additional income to the AC from those large churches that do not regularly give to the AC.

- A registration fee of \$200 per commissioner for Teaching Elders without call, retired, serving out of bounds, serving as missionaries, chaplains or campus ministers. I would recommend some sort of hardship circumstances would qualify for this lower fee as well.
- No Presbytery fees.
- Any changes to the fee structure to be approved by General Assembly and a two-thirds majority of Presbyteries.
- Take byFaith magazine out of the AC budget, making the magazine a self-supporting work.

This fee structure and funding plan is based on detailed analysis of statistics that are published in the 2010 Yearbook of the PCA. I made certain assumptions based on the data in the Yearbook, which led to an AC budget for 2011 that produces \$1,699,583 in revenue and \$1,683,260 in expenses, with a net surplus of \$16,323.

For the detail behind these assumptions and the proposed fee table and 2011 AC budget, read here: <http://missionpca.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/ac-plan0139.pdf>.

Whether this proposal is the best alternative to the presently proposed AC Funding Plan can be debated, but it demonstrates that there are realistic and viable options that need to be considered that do not require amending the BCO in a way that appears drastic to many in the PCA.

TE Martin Hedman is a Teaching Elder in the PCA where he serves as pastor/church planter of Mission Presbyterian Church (PCA) in La Habra, Calif. This article first appeared in his blog (<http://missionpca.wordpress.com/>) and is used with permission

PCA AC FUNDING ALTERNATIVE PLAN NUMBER THREE: THE WESTMINSTER PLAN

Written by Dominic Aquila Thursday, 27 January 2011 00:00

Third in our series of Alternative Plans to the now-failed BCO 14 Amendments which were published on The Aquila Report. This one came from our Editor, Dominic Aquila, and was entitled: A Sensible Alternative to the PCA BCO 14 Amendments.

First Published October 18, 2010:

The 38th PCA General Assembly voted to send to the Presbyteries a number of BCO amendments. Presbyteries will vote on these amendments during this next year.

As Presbyteries consider these BCO 14 amendments, it is instructive to look at what Westminster Presbytery did. Although Westminster Presbytery voted overwhelmingly against the BCO 14 amendments, it also unanimously adopted a motion after their vote urging churches to support the Administrative Committee. The motion stated:

That a letter be sent by the Presbytery Stated Clerk to all the church Sessions of Presbytery, encouraging them to voluntarily give on an annual basis a minimum of one-third of 1% of their annual revenues and gifts to the Administrative Committee. Even though the vote was in the negative against the present proposal, Presbytery affirmed its belief that the Administrative Committee (including the work of the Stated Clerk) is important to the ongoing ministry of the PCA and that our churches need to support that work.

Instead of enshrining in the PCA constitution a requirement that churches and teaching elders must pay an annual registration fee as a way to fund the Administrative Committee, Westminster's action highlights a better way that is consistent with the present spirit of the BCO. What Westminster did was to alert and inform churches regarding the supportive and infrastructural nature of the AC for the PCA. With this information churches can voluntarily give because they realize now more than ever the unique role the AC plays in the ministry of the PCA.

Let us recall what is before the PCA Presbyteries: The two amendments, to BCO 14-1 and 14-2, will have the effect of changing the way the Administrative Committee, which includes the Stated Clerk's office, would be supported. It would also change the definition of "voting membership" for General Assembly meetings.

Specifically, if these BCO amendments are adopted, each local church, each teaching elder, and each Presbytery will be required to pay an "annual registration fee" in order to attend and vote at General Assembly meetings. Churches would be "required" to pay 1/3 of 1 % of their annual tithes and offerings to support the Administrative Committee. Teaching elders would be required to pay \$100.00 a year, and Presbyteries

would have to pay \$500.00 a year (these amounts are only proposed and have not yet been approved by the General Assembly; further, these amounts can be changed by any GA). If these amendments are approved, these annual fees must be paid ("required") each year; if not paid annually, these fees will accrue and all unpaid fees will have to be paid in full before elders could be seated as voting members of General Assembly.

We can all agree, as Westminster Presbytery's action strongly indicates, that PCA churches should financially support the work of all General Assembly committees and agencies, but especially the essential work of the Administrative Committee. The AC serves the PCA in so many helpful ways that it deserves the full support of our churches. I would urge all of the churches in your Presbytery to include the AC in their annual budgets.

However, having said this, I would urge Presbyteries to vote against the BCO 14 amendments. Yes, we should fund the AC, but this proposed approach is not the way to accomplish a good end. There are other reasonable and viable alternatives to fund the Administrative Committee that are not as drastic as amending the BCO in the manner proposed.

We should also take note that an e-mail from the AC office regarding the Funding Plan was recently circulated to some PCA churches and elders with the following claim: "It appears to us that fears and misinformation are leading to confusion as men discuss and begin to vote on the AC Funding Plan BCO Amendments."

We don't agree with this opinion that there are fears or misinformation leading to confusion on the part of PCA elders regarding the proposed Funding Plan. PCA elders take their responsibilities seriously and are studying the proposed Funding Plan carefully. In fact, elders from a number of Presbyteries who have already voted on the Funding Plan have reported that they adequately understood what they were voting on. There was no confusion on their part resulting from misinformation or fears. They read the proposed amendments to BCO 14-1 and 14-2 and concluded that amending this part of the PCA's constitution was not the way to provide funding for the GA Administrative Committee. (Blue Ridge Presbytery is an example of a court that went to the expense of hosting a debate between two teaching elders on each side of this issue. The three-hour debate, including questions and answers, was intended to inform the members of Presbytery on the issues before they voted. The debate was recorded and is available for purchase in DVD and CD formats [here](#).)

The testimony coming from some elders whose Presbyteries have already voted on the proposed amendments is this: The votes on the amendments came after a clear and

objective presentation of the Funding Plan by one or two elders, followed by a thorough discussion by the members of the court. These elders reported that there was no confusion about what they were voting on and they were not being driven by misinformation or fears.

Westminster Presbytery has led the way for other Presbyteries to follow (hence, the "Westminster Plan"): Westminster voted overwhelmingly against approving the proposed amendments, and that without misinformation, fears or confusion, and then voted unanimously to urge all its member churches to support the AC budget.

Westminster's action makes abundantly clear that instead of unnecessarily enshrining in the PCA constitution that churches and teaching elders pay a required annual registration fee to fund the Administrative Committee, its motion highlights a better way that is consistent with the historic spirit of the PCA as stipulated in the present provisions in the BCO.

A follow-up story on this plan was published on January 11, 2011, describing the success of this plan within Westminster Presbytery. Read the story at:

<http://bit.ly/h2v1zm>

PCA AC FUNDING ALTERNATIVE PLAN NUMBER FOUR: THE MIDWAY PLAN

Written by David W. Hall Friday, 28 January 2011 00:00

Fourth in our series of Five Alternative Plans published on The Aquila Report. This one came from TE David Hall and the Session of Midway PCA in Powder Springs, GA. It was entitled: An Overture to Fund the Administrative Committee by Voluntary Means.

First Published January 3, 2011:

The Session of Midway Presbyterian Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, on Jan. 2, 2011, adopted an overture proposing a simple and voluntary means to fund the General Assembly Administrative Committee. The overture will be presented to the Northwest Georgia Presbytery (NWGP) at its regular, stated meeting on January 29 to be forwarded to the 39th General Assembly, which will be meeting in Virginia Beach, Va., June 7-10, 2011.

TE David Hall, pastor of Powder Springs PCA, commented on the Session's proposal: "We hope that our Presbytery, which has already voted against the BCO 14

amendments (the AC Funding Plan), and many others will join in offering and embracing this overture as a positive alternative. We sincerely believe that other Sessions and Presbyteries would prefer to have an option comparable to the one presented in the overture, or even with some modifications, instead of feeling coerced either to approve the AC Funding Plan or else to abandon the Administrative Committee (AC) to face catastrophe. In fact, we believe that it would be preferable to try such a modified, voluntary approach prior to amending the BCO in order to institute the mandatory system recommended in the BCO 14 amendments.

“The Rules of Assembly Operations (10-10) permit a Session to forward an overture to the GA as long as it presents such first to its own Presbytery. Should our Presbytery not agree with this overture, after having been presented to the January 29 meeting, our Session intends to forward this to the 2011 GA in accord with RAO 10-10. Thus, we now announce our intention and offer to the broader church our best advice on this subject, hoping that many others will join with us to: (a) preserve a voluntary basis of giving; (b) allow fair and continued representation at the highest courts; (c) balance the AC budget; and (d) establish a reserve fund to avoid future shortfalls.

“We renew our recommendation that Presbyteries vote against adopting the BCO 14 amendments and seek improved formulations. Moreover, it is hoped that any Presbyteries which have not yet voted on the proposals will at least engage in deliberative study of this overture or other prudent alternatives prior to voting on the AC Funding Plan. We invite all Sessions and Presbyteries to continue these healthy discussions until we find a stronger consensus on better ways to fund our essential ministries.”

An Overture to the 39th PCA General Assembly

A Modest, Simple, and Fair AC Funding Proposal That Retains Our Voluntary Method, Balances the AC Budget, and Establishes a Reserve Fund to Avoid Future Shortfalls

Whereas, the 38th General Assembly (GA) of the PCA recommended^[1] an Administrative Committee (AC) funding method that may well not be ratified by the presbyteries for several reasons; and

Whereas, even if the requisite presbyteries support the suggested BCO amendments, the church might favor a method like the one below before adopting one with such sweeping changes; and

Whereas, the AC has seldom in its 38 previous years received all the funding it requested; and should that continue the AC, under the guidance of this GA, could address that shortage simply by lowering its total budget before seeking to change to an unproven funding method; and

Whereas, we all affirm our desire to fund vital ministries appropriately, while also remaining sensitive to congregational limitations and support thresholds; and

Whereas, the condition of the national economy and related cutbacks in many churches argues strongly against commencing a system of “pay-to-play” funding at this time; and

Whereas, it might be better to attempt less drastic changes, including reducing budgets as most families and churches have had to do recently, before seeking to enforce a sweeping and somewhat divisive plan which may not have widespread support from the congregations; and

Whereas, the congregations are annually the chief contributors to the AC work, and thus fairly should receive the most reasonable fees to GA—instead of a system that places more burden on faithful contributing units while favoring commissioners who do not generate annual askings; and

Whereas, there are many other ways to fund the work of the AC adequately—and the one suggested below seeks to achieve important stewardship goals as would ordinary families and churches when faced with shortfalls;

Therefore, the Session of Midway Presbyterian Church [and the Northwest Georgia Presbytery] overtures the 39th GA, other presbyteries, and the AC to join with us in embracing and approving the following numbered actions (notes and Rationale are illustrative or explanatory and not part of the Assembly’s approval), or to improve them, in order to achieve the critical goals of:

- a) balancing a reduced AC budget as well as;
- b) building an Administrative Reserve Fund (ARF) to protect the AC from downturns or shortfalls in the near future, while;
- c) retaining our healthy and clearly voluntary Askings plan from faithful congregations.

Accordingly, we ask this Assembly to act as follows, without needing any BCO or RAO changes:

- 1) (1)To set an Essential Budget for the AC at \$1.5M for the next five years,[2] and adjust such by the amounts approved for Cost-of-Living Increases (COLA) annually.[3] Every five years beginning in 2016, the Assembly shall evaluate that Essential Budget to see if it should be adjusted in order to provide for desired, essential services and administration.
- 2) (2)Annual Askings will continue,[4] and this Assembly, thus, approves \$7.00 per capita as the Askings amount for AC for the coming year. [5]
- 3) (3)Churches that contribute Askings will receive a Reduced GA registration fee (not to exceed \$100 per capita as set by the AC) based on their giving, beginning in 2012 as below.
 - All eligible commissioners from congregations that contribute their full annual AC Askings may fully participate in that year's GA at a registration charge not to exceed \$100 per commissioner.[6]
 - All delegates from congregations which contribute a percentage of AC Askings may register their eligible commissioners at a discounted amount from the Standard Registration Fee (\$500) equal to the percentage of the Askings given by their congregation for that year, plus the registration charge not to exceed \$100 per commissioner.[7]
- 4) (4)All other eligible commissioners may fully participate in the annual GA by paying a Standard \$500 Registration Fee, or one approved by the GA.[8]
- 5) (5)All Permanent Committees and Agencies are requested by this General Assembly to make a one-time contribution of 0.33% of their annual budget by June 30, 2012[9] to create an Administrative Reserve Fund (ARF) for essential AC expenses.[10]

RATIONALE:

According to this Plan, using the 2010 AC projections (cf. pp. 349, 352), if the next budget is set for \$1.5M[11], the major sources of Askings income and other revenue are estimated as below:

- \$450,000 Askings and/or GA registrations from churches with under 500k budget.[12]
- \$620,000 Askings and/or GA registrations from churches with over 500k budget.[13]
- \$360,000 Registration Fees from TEs or REs, whose churches do not give Askings.[14]
- \$70,000 GA Exhibitors (estimated on p. 352).

- \$1,500,000 Essential Budget

In favor of this plan are the following strong values:

- a) In the present economic downturn, this does not substantially raise the participation-cost-basis for churches, who give consistently and should be encouraged by reduced GA fees.^[15]
- b) It clearly retains and strengthens the voluntary giving culture of the PCA since 1973, calling for no amendments either to the BCO nor RAO (which also spares divisive debates and many man hours on such so that we may be more about the mission of the church).
- c) It is common-sensical, simple, and accomplishes what we all agree is needed, i.e., to support the AC workers, who are worthy of their hire.
- d) It avoids any cumulative contribution basis; and requires no hardship cases or panels to determine relief for such.
- e) It does not threaten discipline or stigma for non payment of services, which some believe are non essential.
- f) It is a shared pastoral approach, with free market impulses, allowing all to participate and give.

[1] It is worth noting, however, that even some who voted for the Plan at the 2010 GA voiced the need for a significant alternative to the proposed funding plan when it came to presbytery discussions and voting.

[2] The line items for the News Office (\$450,000, p. 352, 2010 Handbook) and Stats/Publications (\$310,000) could be dropped immediately for a \$760,000 savings, or ca. 34% of the budget, with no other cutbacks if desired. Minutes, Yearbooks, and Printing henceforth may be provided for purchase at a reasonable cost (including staff labor) or posted online. Other publications may continue on a non-subsidized basis, after AC covers its essential services.

[3] If a surplus exists in any given year, the AC at its discretion may apply any portion to special projects, after fully funding the Essential Budget, or build up the Administrative Reserve Fund (ARF).

[4] After 2016, Askings may be determined by dividing the total number of members into the Essential Budget Amount and rounded up to the nearest dollar, with the addition of one dollar per capita to cover any lack of givings.

[5] For the present year, at the Asking figure of \$7.00/member, if at least 78% of the churches with 273,388 total members contribute Askings, the proposed Essential Budget would be balanced.

[6] It is clear (from p. 310 of the 2010 Handbook; all numbered page refs to this) that as the Assembly registration has increased, attendance has decreased. Thus, if we can decrease costs, attendance of REs may increase.

[7] If, e.g., 25%/50%/75% of Askings is given, the Standard Registration fee may be decreased by that same percentage.

[8] The Fee has been set at \$400 since 2006. The ministries or institutions for these commissioners may or often do cover a portion or the whole of this expense for their employees; thus allowing every TE or eligible RE to attend GA every year at a COLA-adjusted cost approximating what it has been for the past 5 years. For Honorably Retired TEs or REs, if unable to afford attendance at GA, presbyteries are encouraged to establish a Scholarship Fund to assist such.

[9] For this year, that would amount to ca. \$400,000 according to p. 310.

[10] Even if this voluntary sharing of essential services should not be met, the rest of this plan provides for balanced budgets and a smaller reserve, which depends on reasonable cost containment.

[11] This number may easily be derived from the subtraction of the nonessential \$760,000 (FN#1 above) from the total proposed (\$2,250,000—p. 352).

[12] According to the AC's own estimations [Handbook, 349], \$555,000 should be received for registrations from churches with under \$500,000 annual budgets, even if nothing is contributed from the 785 churches with less than \$100,000 budget. Thus, an estimated \$450,000 assumes receiving approximately 80% of that figure. Or if \$657,000 is received, including the projected amounts of the 785 churches with less than \$100,000 budget, then \$450,000 is ca 65% of that figure. Thus, none of this overture's estimates require 100% participation to balance this budget.

[13] According to the AC's own estimations [Handbook, 349], \$1,030,000 should be received for registrations from churches with over \$500,000 annual budgets. Thus, an estimated \$620,000 assumes receiving approximately 60% of that figure. If more funding is given from this sector, the AC may build its reserve more quickly or fund other projects.

[14] This figure includes the slight increase over the estimated \$300k (p. 352), due merely to the 20% increase for Standard registration.

[15] Note, a church of 125 members would only be asked to contribute \$875 for all AC services and then register all its eligible commissioners @ \$100 per capita for a given year. Churches with members of 72 or less could send all of its eligible commissioners for slightly less than \$500, plus the \$100 per capita reduced registration fee, according to this method.

David W. Hall is a Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America and serves as the Senior Pastor of Midway Presbyterian Church in Powder Springs, GA.

**PCA AC FUNDING ALTERNATIVE PLAN NUMBER FIVE:
THE CLEMENTS (WITH NEEDED REVISIONS)**

Written by Don K. Clements Saturday, 29 January 2011 00:00

It is the issue of ONLY VOLUNTARY support versus FEES for necessary functions that will have to be settled... Don't risk something that the Presbyteries are going to reject. As of today, the Presbyteries hold the real power.

Fifth and final in our series of Alternative Plans published on The Aquila Report. This one came from The Aquila Report Publisher, TE Don K. Clements. It was entitled: "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It". OK, But If It Is Broke, Fix It The Right Way"

The most debatable issue in Alternative Plan Number Five is whether or not the NECESSARY expense category (explained below) should be funded voluntarily or with fees. I first proposed fees; this is what the BCO 14 amendments argued for, David Coffin makes a Biblical case for it in the story on the CMC committee, and many others support the idea of fees.

But, Tom Hawkes powerful article opposing fees must be dealt with. It is this issue of ONLY VOLUNTARY support versus FEES for necessary functions that will have to be settled. I would personally recommend that during the next six to nine months, Presbyteries could adopt an overture to inform the General Assembly committees which side of this argument they stand on. Perhaps the AC/CMC folks could get a recommendation to the Virginia Beach GA asking for that. Then the next year it would be relatively easy to come to a final recommendation

In other words, don't risk something that the Presbyteries are going to reject. As of today, the Presbyteries hold the real power.

Here is the proposal as originally presented.

First Published January 5, 2011:

It seems to me that it is important that everyone involved in journalism ought to read the material they publish. And every once in a while, something you read might even cause you to change your mind. Such was the result of the case former PCA Moderator Ruling Elder EJ Nusbaum made in yesterday's The Aquila Report in his article supporting the proposed changes to BCO 14 in the PCA Book of Church Order.

Now, don't get too excited, I still believe the current proposals should be voted down. But saying 'no' is not enough. I think those who say no should, if possible, recommend a substitute.

Is the AC failing to raise the support it needs to do the necessary work of the committee? Of course they are. But are the current proposals to change the BCO the right way to fix the problem. I think not. But EJ gave me an idea that may find some middle ground.

Among the reasons the opposition to the changes offer is the fact that the current proposal brings in money for ALL the things the AC does; not just for General Assembly expenses. I think they still should take on the responsibility to raise funds for ministries not directly related to the General Assembly functions (such as the Historical Center, byFaith magazine, etc.) the same way the other committees do that – raise donations.

But for the rest of their work – which, of course makes up the heart of the budget – they should be allowed to find a more direct, more equitable way to receive that funding. And EJ's analogy yesterday was both new (to me, at least) and enlightening.

EJ wrote:

Currently, we have an inequitable division in the PCA:

Group I (roughly 45% of the churches) pays to support AC, receives the direct or indirect benefits and services provided by the AC, and for \$400 per authorized commissioner, they can vote at GA.

Group II (roughly 55% of the churches) pays nothing to support the AC, yet they also receive the direct and indirect services provided by the AC and for \$400 per authorized commissioner, they can vote at GA.

Both groups receive the same benefits, but Group II benefits at the expense of Group I.

That part of what he wrote struck a cord with me. Same benefits, but different levels of support, perhaps is not as fair as it should be. But I don't agree with his next sentence: The proposed changes would rearrange our denomination into a more equitable division

So – what might be better than the current proposals?

Here's the essential problem as I see it. The AC function can (not easily, but it is possible) be divided into three distinct parts.

A. Nice, but not necessary. Things like byFaith, Historical Center, placement services, some of Interchurch Relations function (like attend NAE, sending Fraternal Delegates, etc.) and these kinds of things are NOT the responsibility of every church to support. This is one reason, if not the essential reason that people are opposed to the current proposal.

B. Necessary, not just nice. We must have review of Presbytery Records, Nominations, Constitutional Business, SJC, publication of directories, etc. It is the responsibility of every church to provide funds to do this work.

C. Cost of Meeting. Things that pertain only to the annual General Assembly meeting. You figure this out by answering – if we were to not have an assembly meeting in 2013, how much money would not be spent? Not easy to figure, but you could get very close. I would include a percentage of staff salaries in this figure.

Now, based on these principles, how to you raise money?

For Category C, these expenses should be born by those who attend. This would resolve EJ's main point, with which I fully agree. It is not fair for people to attend who do not support NECESSARY (Category B) services for the same registration fee as those who do. Several possibilities here:

1. No free conferences/seminars. Either the attendees pay or the presenters pay (Metokos Ministries would be happy to pay in order to run a seminar each year; it's a great marketing tool.)
2. Raise money ahead of time from designated givers – churches, individuals, foundations, etc. – people who really see the need and are willing to donate to that need.
3. The rest has to be raised by Registration Fees. Once we see how big those fees would have to be, there will immediately be 14 Overtures coming to the next GA for delegated assemblies!

For Category A, well, here's your askings. You put out the need and you raise the money the best you can, and you do what your income allows. Just like every other PCA committee/agency.

As for Category B, I guess there is no easy way to put it. Here is the one place that 'you pay to play' will have to apply. We will have to develop a new category, probably called Membership Dues, which every church pays in order to be a member of the denomination. This category will not be so high that the dues will be restrictive. I suspect it will be less than \$1.50 per member per year, perhaps even less than \$1.00 per. But this is the only way to resolve EJ's very real problem - one that is shared by nearly everyone I've heard from who is in favor of the BCO change. (I think Presbytery's should be allowed to do the same thing, by the way.)

This solution maintains the Biblical principle of voluntary giving to ministry, as well as applies NECESSARY costs of doing business to everyone fairly.

So – my encouragement would be to Presbyteries to vote down the current BCO changes, and send in overtures to this year's GA to get the AC working on this kind of change. We may have to have a separate BCO change to impose the membership dues, but at least that will bring the debate down to one, central issue – and I suspect that change would overwhelmingly pass.

Thanks, EJ, for showing us this so clearly.

Don K. Clements is a Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. He is twice retired, from service as a U. S. Navy Chaplain and as a pastor of local churches. He now serves as an Affiliate Evangelist with PEF and Director of Metokos Ministries (www.metokos.org) which is his 'official' call, and also volunteers as the Publisher of The Aquila Report