

ASSOCIATION OF STATED CLERKS

**Analysis of Amendments to the Constitution
Proposed by the 218th General Assembly (2008)**

INTRODUCTION

As in prior years, the Association of Stated Clerks is publishing this *Analysis of Amendments* to assist presbyteries in studying and acting on the amendments proposed by this year's General Assembly.

Our purpose has been to present all arguments made in favor of and against each amendment both in meetings of the assembly committee that considered the overture leading to the amendment and on the floor of the General Assembly. It is not the role of the Association to make a recommendation either in support of or against any amendment.

Many presbyteries provide copies of this booklet to their committees responsible for making a recommendation on presbytery action, and we understand that this has assisted those committees as they have done their work. We are glad that these materials are used in that way. Please note that you are free to use them as you wish. We assert no copyright and do not require advance approval of their use.

Also note that regarding the Ecumenical Statements in Amendments 08-K, 08-L, 08-M and 08-N reference is made to comments made by the Presbyterian Outlook in its October 12, 2008, issue. Presbyteries may want to access this article written by Bill Lancaster as a further source of information in their analysis.

Finally, there are two amendments concerning Certified Christian Educators (08-F and 08-I). The Association has included at the end of this analysis a table and comments prepared by the Office of Constitutional Services which attempts to sort through the effect of the various combination of votes on these two amendments.

Thanks to the ASC members who diligently attended committee meetings and provided information about what the pros and cons were for each amendment and to the Office of Constitutional Services for their assistance.

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Presbytery of the Northern Plains

**Amendment 08-A
Vows of Membership
On Amending G-5.0200**

Brief Description

The Presbytery of Mission proposed an amendment to G-5.0200 that contained three questions to be asked of new members and specific answers to those questions. The Assembly Committee on Church Polity produced an alternate recommendation which was sent to the General Assembly and was approved. The Directory of Worship presently contains language that largely accomplishes the goal of the original overture. The amendment makes reference to those questions contained in W-4.2003.

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Church Polity recommended approval 50/2/0
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments Supporting an Affirmative Vote

- The *Book of Order* needs to be explicit about requirements of membership. Membership is in a congregation, but reflects entrance into the larger church.
- This expands and standardizes the core questions and vows as entry to membership.
- Keeps questions from becoming too narrow and legalistic.
- No one should be admitted into membership of the Church without a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Arguments Supporting a Negative Vote

- This prohibits flexibility of sessions as governing bodies as they consider new members.
- These vows are included in general in the *Book of Order* already.
- This requirement is too legalistic, and such a matter should be left to each session under guidance of the Spirit

**Amendment 08-B
Ordained Officers
On Amending G-6.0106b, G-14.0240, and G-14.0450**

Brief Description

The amendment proposes to strike the language in G-6.0106b and to insert new text and to add text to G-14.0240 and G-14.0450. The amendment was proposed by the Presbytery of Boston and included as part of the rationale that "Our church thus has bound itself to a hierarchy in which we are to obey Jesus Christ its Head, and additionally, to heed first the Scriptures and then the confessions, to the extent that they accurately bear witness to Christ's will. This fundamental hierarchy of authority is accurately and eloquently reflected in the first three of the constitutional questions, the assent to which is required of each candidate for ordination and/or installation.

“Although the hierarchy of the church’s authority is clear, it is subverted by the current language of G-6.0106b, which substitutes for our obedience to Christ two concepts that are foreign to Reformed understanding: “obedience” to Scripture and “conformity” to the confessions. The proposed amendment would remove this paragraph and substitute new language, which (1) reflects the church’s understanding of where its authority is to be found, and (2) affirms the church’s reliance on the examination of candidates by its governing bodies as the principal means by which to ensure the commitment of its ordained officers to the duties of faith.”

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Church Orders and Ministry recommended approval by a vote of 41/11/0, with this comment: “Presbyteries are strongly encouraged to consider this overture using a process of listening and discernment.

218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation and comment by a vote of 380/325/3.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- The current language of G-6.0106b is inconsistent with Reformed understanding by requiring “obedience” and “conformity,” and elevates the Confessions to an inappropriate standard. In the words of the overture advocate, the current paragraph “misplaces our obedience ... confuses the nature of ordination and has withheld from our church a strong and loving service.”
- The suggested change holds out obedience to Christ as the ultimate standard for church leaders, and reserves for governing bodies the right to select their officers, subject to review.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Current language provides a strong moral statement and witness to Biblical standards.
- Covers old ground on issues the denomination has voted on several times in the last few years and made its position clear, and continuing to send overtures undermines trust and will cause further defection from the PC (USA).

Amendment 08-C Replacing the Word “Sympathy” with the Word “Compassion” On Amending G-6.0202b and G-6.0401

Brief Description

This amendment came from the Presbytery of Albany and proposed to replace the word “sympathy” with the word “empathy” in G-6.0401. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) saw little difference between these words and suggested the word “compassion” as a preferred alternative. The ACC also suggested that G-6.0202b be amended as well as it refers to the work of the deacons as a “ministry of sympathy”. The Assembly Committee on Church Polity adopted the recommendation of the ACC.

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Church Polity recommended approval as amended 54/3/0
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- "Compassion" more appropriate, since "sympathy" can imply condescension (from GA).

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Why bother with such a minor nuance?

Amendment 08-D General Assembly Mission Council Name Change On Amending Throughout the *Book of Order*

Brief Description

Amendment 08-D proposes that the name of the General Assembly Council be changed to General Assembly Mission Council throughout the *Book of Order*. The proposal came from the General Assembly Council.

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Mission Coordination and Budgets recommended approval 57/1/3
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Name more clearly identifies the work of the General Assembly Council.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed.

Amendment 08-E Non-Geographic Presbyteries On Amending G-11.0102 and G-12.0102k

Brief Description

This amendment expands on G-12.0102k which allowed for the creation of non-geographic presbyteries within a synod by allowing a congregation to join a non-geographic presbytery in another synod with the approval of the General Assembly, the synod to be joined, and the geographic and nongeographic presbyteries affected. The amendment further provides for the formation of such presbyteries based upon language only and that a sunset date should be added at the formation of any such nongeographic presbytery.

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on General Assembly Procedures recommended approval 44/0/1
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Moves the goal of multi-cultural churches forward.
- Alternative to creating specific ethnic-language denominations.
- There should be a sunset provision for a specific period of time in order for first-generation immigrants to belong to a church where their native language is utilized.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed generally but regarding the sunset provision that there will always be a new first generation.

Amendment 08-F* **Membership of Certified Christian Educators** **On Amending G-11.0407 and G-14.0730**

Brief Description

These amendments would answer the questions posed by the stated clerk of the Presbytery of Santa Fe about presbytery membership for Certified Christian Educators: (1) "Is there any input requested from presbytery such as a review, reference checking, and/or examination prior to certification?" and (2) "Is certification, once conferred, permanent?"

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Church Polity recommended approval 58/0/0
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by consensus

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Clarifies the historic right of Presbytery to determine its own membership including who speaks at its meetings, and limits the privilege to Certified Christian Educators in active service.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Seems unnecessarily restrictive of Certified Christian Educators, who have much to contribute to Presbyteries.

Amendment 08-G
Synod Membership on Permanent Committees
On Amending G-13.0107, G-13.0108, and G-13.0202a

Brief Description

This amendment came as a request for constitutional clarification from the Assistant Stated Clerk, Manager for General Assembly Nominations and Moderatorial Staff Services. The amendment to G-13.0107 of the *Book of Order* offered by the General Assembly Council to the 217th General Assembly (2006 - Birmingham) was intended to only affect membership on the General Assembly Council. However, the approval of the 2006 amendment called into question whether all the permanent committees of the General Assembly are now required to have representation from and be populated directly by each of the synods. This amendment seeks to clarify the intent of the original amendment.

Assembly Action

General Assembly Committee on Mission Coordination and Budgets recommended approval 58/0/0 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by consensus

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Allows committees to be formed to meet the needs of the committee charge.
- Saves money by allowing smaller committees than 16 minimum members.
- Fixes an unintended consequence of previous actions by the GA.
- Frees synods from having to nominate for each and every committee, especially when each vacancy requires three names be submitted to GANC to allow for appropriate and required diversity and representation.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- May exclude some synods from equal representation across the spectrum of all GA committees.

Amendment 08-H
Five Ordination Examinations
On Amending G-14.0431

Brief Description

This proposed amendment came as a result of the Self-Study of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates. The amendment increases the flexibility of the presbyteries' committees on preparation for ministry in determining when such examinations are appropriately taken.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Review of GA Permanent Committees recommended approval as amended 39/3/1

218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- Committee should do what needed to be done to define the examinations as recommended by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed

Amendment 08-I* Certified Christian Educators On Amending G-14.0730

Brief Description

This amendment came as a response from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution to a question about the possible conflict between G-14.0730b and G-11.0407, from the Associate for Certification and Christian Vocation. The question was whether the reference in G-14.0730 to certified Christian educators applied to Certified Associate Christian Educators as well. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution noted that if the 218th General Assembly wished to limit the language in G-14.0730 to Certified Christian Educators only it may accomplish that purpose by amending G-14.0730c to capitalize the words "certified" and "educators" which is what this amendment does.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Church Polity recommended approval 46/12/0 with this comment: "That the inclusion of Associate Christian Educators be examined by the appropriate General Assembly committee or entity."

218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote.

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- This restricts the right of the floor at Presbytery meetings to CCEs.
- It also clarifies that other important privileges extend to Certified Associate Christian Educators as well.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- Associates should have the same privileges as CCEs.

Amendment 08-J
Alternative Forms of Resolution
On Amending D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h

Brief Description

These amendments came from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution in response to two of the questions asked by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of National Capital: “What is the meaning of “all parties” in D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h? and Do the Rules of Discipline give the accuser in a disciplinary proceeding veto power over an A[ternate] F[orm of] R[esolution]?” These amendments clarify that the use of the term “parties” in the Rules of Discipline is specifically and intentionally limited to those persons representing the governing body (i.e., the investigating committee or prosecuting committee) and the accused. No veto power over an AFR is accorded to an accuser.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Church Polity recommended approval 58/0/1
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee’s recommendation by consensus

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- This is a helpful clarification of a sometimes difficult procedure.
- Makes clear that the accuser does not have veto power over an AFR.

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed

Ecumenical Statements
Amendments 08-K, 08-L, 08-M and 08-N

Background

From time to time the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) enters into agreements with other churches; these are called Ecumenical Statements. In 2008 there are four such statements to be considered. Each particular statement will go into effect when the appropriate bodies have ratified it. When approved by the requisite General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries, each will be published as a Received Ecumenical Statement of Guidance.

Amendment 08-K
Ecumenical Statement with the Roman Catholic Church
On Ratifying a Common Agreement on Baptism

Brief Description

This ecumenical statement came from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. This statement affirms what is already the PC (USA) practice of recognizing the baptism of persons who have been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. It will not go into effect until it is ratified by a majority of the presbyteries.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended approval 59/0/0
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- The ecumenical statements represent incremental steps toward the unity of the Church universal. (Presbyterian Outlook, October 12, 2008)

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed.

Amendment 08-L Ecumenical Statement with the Episcopal Church On Adopting an Agreement

Brief Description

This proposal must be ratified by a majority of the PC(USA) presbyteries as well as by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2009; it will not be in effect until all parties have approved it. This agreement is not a covenant nor a full communion agreement. It does make provision for temporary or occasional service of ministers of both denominations in congregations of the other.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations recommended approval 58/0/1
218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- This is an important step toward reconciliation with the Episcopal Church. (Presbyterian Outlook, October 12, 2008)

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed.

Amendment 08-M Ecumenical Statement with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America On Adopting a Covenant Relationship Agreement

Brief Description

If approved this proposal will provide the same authority for the Korean Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to explore and carry out shared ministries that the "Formula of Agreement" provides for the four partner churches that adopted it.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations recommended approval 58/0/2

218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote with this comment: "The value of the covenant within these two denominations will depend in great measure on agreement about implementation, which will take place across all governing bodies of both denominations. Therefore, The General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations, the Office of the General Assembly, and the General Assembly Council are urged to consult with presbyteries and synods that have direct experience of working with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America."

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- U.S. Presbyterian missionaries planted the seeds for the Presbyterian Church in Korea, but as Koreans immigrated to America, language, culture, and other differences prevented their integration into existing congregations. This will enable the sister churches to begin bridging the gap. (Presbyterian Outlook, October 12, 2008)

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed.

Amendment 08-N Ecumenical Statement with the Moravian Church On Adopting a Covenant Partnership Agreement

Brief Description

This statement would create a covenant partnership with the Moravian Church. The Moravian Church and the four Reformed bodies which entered into the Formula of Agreement in 1998 see no obstacles, present or past, to covenant partnership. All five churches have histories of cooperative and ecumenical commitments. The General Synods of the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church will meet in 2010 to vote on this proposal; the agreement cannot be effective until after they have met and ratified it. Assuming approval at each step, a Process of Orderly Exchange (similar to that of the Formula of Agreement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ) will be jointly developed, detailing how the process will work.

Assembly Action

Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations recommended approval 60/0/0

218th General Assembly (2008) approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote

Arguments in Support of an Affirmative Vote

- In addition to Jesus' desire for unity this agreement allows the PC(USA) to draw closer to a denomination that holds love and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in high esteem. (Presbyterian Outlook, October 12, 2008)

Arguments in Support of a Negative Vote

- None expressed.

*** EFFECT OF APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS 08-F AND 08-I .**

	Pre-2007 revision	Post-2007 revision	If only 08-I passes	If only 08-F passes	If 08-F and 08-I pass
Certified Christian Educators	Voice, No Vote G-14,0705c		Voice, Vote, if elder (under G-11.0101b)		By vote, Pby MAY grant Voice only, or if elder, Voice and Vote (under G-11,0101b), both only while engaged in educational ministry under jurisdiction of Pby
Certified Associate Christian Educators	No Voice, No Vote G-14.0705c (2006)		No Voice, No Vote		No Voice, No Vote
certified (lower case) Christian educators 2008 AI now says this includes both Certified Christian Educators & Certified Associate Christian Educators		Voice, Vote, if elder (G-14.0730c)		By vote, Pby MAY grant Voice and Vote (under G-11.0101b), both only while engaged in educational ministry under jurisdiction of Pby.	

1. The 218th General Assembly approved an authoritative interpretation saying that “certified Christian educator(s)” referenced at G-14.0730 b and c refer to both Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators, granting all of them a service of recognition, minimum requirements for compensation, access to the COM, and privilege of the presbytery floor with voice. If they are elders, they would be granted vote as well.
2. If neither of these amendments passes, both Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators shall be granted voice at presbytery meetings and vote if they are elders, based on the new AI.
3. If only 08-I passes, the presbytery shall grant voice to Certified Christian Educators and shall grant vote to them if they are elders. No specific mention is made of voice or vote for Certified Associate Christian Educators; the AI will no longer be in effect for G-14.0730c.
4. If only 08-F passes, the presbytery may grant voice to both Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators, and may grant vote to them if they are elders *during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery*.
5. If both 08-F and 08-I pass, only Certified Christian Educators may be granted voice , and may be granted vote if they are elders *during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery*. No voice or vote for Certified Associate Christian Educators.