

THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY & THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY a recommendation

Over the past several years there has been much discussion of whether the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), two of the six separate agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), should merge into a single agency. Recommendations and overtures to explore this possibility have come from several different directions.

The Way Forward Commission and the All Agency Review Committee have together examined the question of such a merger and have mutually agreed that at this time such a merger is neither feasible nor desirable. Given that the ongoing consideration of a possible merger has contributed to a high level of uncertainty about the future for the staff of both agencies, we are announcing this decision now.

As the All Agency Review Committee and the Way Forward Commission considered the merits of a PMA-OGA merger several considerations weighed against it:

+Both the Commission and the Committee are in the process of developing recommendations that strengthen our agencies and offer solutions to the variety of concerns each one is charged to address.

+The work and callings of the PMA and the OGA are sufficiently different from each other in nature and scope that few synergies in undertaking tasks together can be envisioned.

+The constitutional and judicial process of the PC(USA) resides with the Stated Clerk within the OGA. Maintaining the independence of the Stated Clerk's function is an important consideration for good order.

+The review and analysis of the PMA by the Committee and the Commission suggests that the PMA is already challenged by its broad and substantial responsibilities for providing many different critical services that require significant time and attention at the Board and management levels. Some of this time might better be devoted to the missional thinking and action that lies at the heart of the PMA mandate. To increase the number of responsibilities and services of a single agency would exacerbate this concern.

+Similarly, the OGA's responsibilities for working with mid-councils and its responsibilities for the biannual General Assembly create a rhythm and pattern of work quite distinct from those of the complex and multinational engagements of the PMA.

For these reasons, the Way Forward Commission and the All Agency Review Committee have agreed not to explore further the option of a PMA-OGA merger. The Committee and the Commission believe that any gains that might be achieved through a merger could better be realized through a broader and more comprehensive approach to structural renewal.

In sharing word of this determination, it is hoped that the staff and boards of these two agencies might be freed to pursue greater clarity in their present tasks and responsibilities.