

1 **Present, Monitor and Report Team (PMR) and Advisory Team (AT)**
 2 **Final Report to the Synod of the Northeast Council and Assembly – September 2011**
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 11 **I. Charge to the Presbytery of New York City (PNYC) Intervention Teams from 2009 SARC**

12 **Charge to the Present, Monitor and Report (PMR) Team:**

- 13 1. To make an initial presentation to PNYC of the Synod Administrative Review Commission
- 14 (SARC) report
- 15 2. To monitor the presbytery's response to the SARC directives
- 16 3. To report to the Synod Council and Assembly

17 **Charge of the Advisory Team (AT):**

- 18 1. To support and encourage the work of the presbytery's General Council as it claims its
- 19 representative authority and responsibility for leadership in the presbytery.

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 21 **II. Current Members of the Present, Monitor and Report (PMR) and Advisory Teams**

22 **The PMR Team:**

- 23 Elder Perry Smith - Moderator (Boston)
- 24 Rev Kathy Nealand-Vice-Moderator (Long Island)
- 25 Rev Edward Castner (Southern New England)
- 26 Elder Gloria Browne-Daly (Newark)
- 27 Elder Judy Wussler (Elizabeth)

28 **The Advisory Team:**

- 29 Rev. Rick Otty (Albany)
- 30 Rev. Nancy Thornton (Hudson River - Inactive)
- 31 Elder Dr. Luberta Mays (New York City)
- 32 Rev. Kathlyn Nealand (Long Island) – Bridge person between the teams
- 33 One unfilled vacancy

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 35 **III. Outline of the way in which we worked**

- 36 1. On Tuesday, December 8, 2009, the PMR team presented the SARC report to a special meeting
- 37 of the Presbytery of NYC.
- 38 2. Since December 2009, the PMR team was present at 10 stated and 4 special meeting of the
- 39 presbytery.
- 40 3. Since February 2010, the PMR team served as a back up to the Advisory Team in its role of
- 41 encouraging and supporting the work of the presbytery's General Council. Members of both
- 42 teams attended 18 General Council meetings.
- 43 4. The PMR team was available to consult with the leadership of the presbytery, including the
- 44 successive Moderators, the successive chairs of the General Council, the temporary Acting
- 45 Executive Presbyter and the current Interim Executive Presbyter (IEP).
- 46 5. The PMR's first task was to develop a Covenant Agreement and Benchmarks for monitoring
- 47 progress. These were written in consultation with the Advisory Team (AT) and the General
- 48 Council.

- 49 6. At the Synod Assembly held on Saturday, October 16, 2010, the body approved a motion for
- 50 the PMR to have authority to interact with the presbytery in consultation with the AT in order
- 51 to assist the AT in encouraging and supporting the work of the presbytery’s General Council as
- 52 it claims its representative authority and responsibility for leadership in the presbytery.
- 53 7. At the stated meeting of the presbytery on Tuesday, November 16, 2010, the AT/PMR, with
- 54 recommendation from the Synod Council, presented a one-year status report to the presbytery.
- 55 8. Members of the AT/PMR attended three healing sessions and one problem-solving event held
- 56 by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. One healing session took place during the Saturday,
- 57 March 26, 2011 stated meeting of the presbytery.
- 58 9. On Saturday, April 9, 2011, Ned Castner and Kathy Nealand from the AT/PMR met with the
- 59 IEP, current chair of the General Council, and current moderator and vice-moderator of the
- 60 presbytery to review the SARC recommendations with the current and future leadership in
- 61 preparation for the turnover of leadership in June 2011. We discussed their accomplishments,
- 62 their challenges and their plans for the future.
- 63 10. In April 2011, a new proposal for the mission and structure of the Presbytery of New York City
- 64 was e-mailed to members of the presbytery. A group of presbyters independent of the General
- 65 Council developed what became known as the “Proposal.” In conjunction with the
- 66 development of this proposal, the proponents held hearing sessions to which the presbytery was
- 67 invited. The AT/PMR discussed whether we had a responsibility to attend these sessions, and
- 68 decided we did not. Even if these had been presbytery-sponsored gatherings, such as those for
- 69 the mediation process, each of us had limits as to the amount of time we could commit to our
- 70 work with the Presbytery of NYC.
- 71 11. On May 10, 2011, prior to an evening General Council meeting, team members met
- 72 individually with staff members, including the Interim Executive Presbyter, the Stated Clerk,
- 73 the Controller and two support staff. In addition, we met with the chair of Personnel
- 74 Committee, and the new chair of the General Council.
- 75 12. On August 2, 2011, even though the outlined work of our respective teams did not involve
- 76 seeking out or meeting with members of the presbytery, we sent out an email to all members of
- 77 the presbytery, with General Council approval, inviting input as to their thoughts and feelings
- 78 on the status of the presbytery. We received twenty-one responses.
- 79 13. On August 23, 2011, the PMR/AT teams gathered in NYC to begin working on this final report
- 80 by reviewing all previous reports, responses from presbyters, discussions with leaders, reports
- 81 from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, and our collective observations.
- 82 14. Throughout our work, we remained focused on “monitoring” the presbytery meetings and
- 83 “advising” the General Council. However, we were always accessible to the members of the
- 84 presbytery for individual conversations. Such conversations with leaders and members of the
- 85 presbytery also inform this report.
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87 **IV. Detail on Recommendations A-J of the 2009 SARC Report (A-J)**

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89 **SARC Recommendations A, B – Regarding Placement of the Staff Position of the Stated Clerk**

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91 **Recommendation A. Direct the PNYC to redefine the position description of its Stated**

92 **Clerk so that duties required by the Book of Order are distinguished from administrative**

93 **staff duties, and responsibility for reporting and performance review is clearly stated.**

94 The Stated Clerk’s position description was rewritten in the summer/fall of 2010 with

95 the duties as defined in the Book of Order and as directed by the Synod. However, the position

96 description has not been brought to the presbytery for approval, and until the resolution of

97 ongoing legal proceedings (as noted below); we believe it unlikely a position description will

98 be approved until 2012.

99 At its June 2010 meeting, the Personnel Committee proposed and the presbytery
100 approved a drastic reduction in staffing. This included a reduction in the stated clerk position
101 from full-time to three days a week. The stated clerk filed a complaint with the synod
102 regarding this action to change his full-time contract, and in April 2011, the Synod Permanent
103 Judicial Commission sustained the complaint; however, the decision of the Synod PJC was
104 stayed upon appeal of presbytery to the General Assembly PJC. It is expected a decision on
105 this appeal will be rendered in early 2012.

106 As reported in our prior reports to the synod, during 2010, there were calls for the
107 Stated Clerk's resignation at several meetings, which led us to believe that the conflict around
108 the Stated Clerk involves issues of authority, functionality and interpersonal relationships.
109 Presenting a position description to the presbytery that clarifies the Clerk's authority and
110 functionality within the presbytery is essential; but again, until it is resolved whether the
111 position can be changed from full-time to three days a week during the current clerk's term, the
112 position description would seem to remain in limbo.

113 We would suggest that, given the current four-year term of the stated clerk ends in
114 2012, the presbytery could revise the position description for the term that begins in January
115 2013. We believe it best to do this in coordination with the planning for the presbytery's
116 mission, structure and staffing underway through a special sub-committee of the General
117 Council.

118 In terms of interpersonal relationships, we believe there has been some improvement
119 due to a healing session held in February 2011, where members of the presbytery and the
120 Stated Clerk were able to express their concerns in a healthy way. However, tension still exists
121 between members of the presbytery and the Stated Clerk.
122

123 **Recommendation B. Instruct the Stated Clerk of PNYC that in accordance with**
124 **G-9.0203 and Robert's Rules of Order (G-9.0302) the duties of the office include**
125 **recording motions and actions approved by the presbytery, and taking charge of editing**
126 **and filing of the presbytery's minutes.**

127 During the past year and a half, the PMR has observed the presbytery approve the
128 minutes with minor corrections or as presented. A few presbyters have suggested they have
129 given up raising concerns or corrections anymore. During the summer of 2010 when there was
130 a reduction in the Stated Clerk's hours and a reduction of support staff, there was a delay in the
131 preparation of the minutes from the May and June 2010 meetings, however this situation was
132 resolved by November 2010. At that time, the presbytery approved these minutes as presented.

133 There are often differences of opinion within presbyteries, sessions and other
134 organizations regarding the Robert's Rules mandate that minutes only include the basics (e.g.,
135 meeting place, time and attendees) and motions and actions of the body. Some read the
136 mandate as calling for minimal minutes, while others read the rule more as a minimum for what
137 is to be included. Few presbytery stated clerks record minutes with solely motions and actions;
138 for, in addition to (Book of Order) mandated inclusions, there is an understanding the minutes
139 of our church councils are a primary (and sometimes the sole) source for our church histories
140 and collective memories. Still, we do realize if minutes are too lengthy, or record too much
141 unnecessary discussion, the minutes can cause confusion and be cumbersome for presbyters to
142 review in anticipation of an action to approve or amend the minutes as presented.

143 Finally, each year the clerk of each presbytery of the Synod of the Northeast submits
144 her or his minutes for a peer review. This group is collegial in nature in that they share serving
145 in the office of stated clerk, but the review process itself is thorough and exceptions to minutes
146 are noted (along with commendations.) While the stated clerk of the synod could provide a
147 longer history of the reviews of the Presbytery of New York City's minutes, recent reviews

148 have not noted any exceptions that are out of the ordinary, and these are reported annually both
149 to the Synod and the presbytery.

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151 **SARC Recommendations C, D. Regarding Functionality of the General Council (GC)**

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153 **Recommendation C. Direct the PNYC to secure the assistance of outside professional**
154 **religious organizational development and management consultation service with facility**
155 **to address race relations in organizational systems to help the presbytery re-conceptualize**
156 **itself organizationally and relationally and as an instrument of Christian mission.**

157 At the Stated Meeting of the Presbytery on Tuesday, January 26, 2010, the presbytery
158 approved the hiring of Richard Blackburn from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center to be the
159 outside professional religious organization development and management consultation service
160 as directed by the Synod SARC Report. Over the course of a year and a half, the presbytery
161 was led in various phases of the mediation process, concluding with the problem-solving phase.
162 Section “I.” below, has more details pertaining to the mediation process.

163

164 **Recommendation D. Appoint an Advisory Team, including members from within the**
165 **presbytery, to support and encourage the work of the presbytery’s General Council as it**
166 **claims its representative authority and responsibility for leadership in the presbytery.**

167 The Advisory Team, in its initial months, dealt with a fluctuating membership, a lack of
168 clear direction of purpose, and sporadic attendance by team members at General Council
169 meetings. By late summer 2010, resignations for personal or scheduling reasons, made it so
170 only one member remained active from the originally appointed team of five. At this time,
171 there are three active participants on the team, including one who was appointed in the Fall of
172 2010, and one who agreed to do dual service on both the AT and PMR (originally, to serve as a
173 bridge between the two.)

174 The Advisory Team has been actively involved in meetings with the General Council,
175 and has been accorded time at meetings by General Council chairs. Over the past year, we
176 believe a good relationship has been built with members of the General Council and both our
177 presence and advice has been appreciated. In addition, members of the AT maintain
178 correspondence with the chair of the General Council offering reflections, insights,
179 encouragements and at times, advice; again, these contacts have been received well.

180 The perception of the General Council within the presbytery is varied around the word
181 “authority”. Simply put, there are those who see the General Council as exercising too much
182 authority and those who wish it would be more authoritative. As the presbytery moves ahead
183 in defining its mission and structure within this interim period, it will be important for the role
184 of the General Council to be clarified, including any authority delegated to it by the presbytery.

185 Our larger concern is a lingering sense of distrust with the General Council. We have
186 heard of incidents where presbyters have made requests of the General Council that were never
187 acknowledged, and work referred to the General Council that never came back to the
188 presbytery. This sense of the General Council being a group to which things go but never
189 return has been voiced, and it is our belief the current General Council will be more careful in
190 tracking items so they do not fall victim to this “black hole” effect.

191 A major responsibility given to the General Council at the June 2011 special presbytery
192 meeting was the referral of a proposal to restructure the presbytery to be considered along with
193 the current strategic plan, the results of the mediation process, and this report. At the General
194 Council meeting following this referral, several General Council members expressed this
195 referral was a serious responsibility and trust given to the General Council by the presbytery.
196 The responsibility was placed with a sub-committee of the Council, and as of this writing, it
197 has just begun its work, with a report due back to the presbytery in November 2011.

198 Elsewhere in this report, we share our belief the presbytery should first come to a consensus on
199 its mission as a presbytery, and then formulate a structure and staffing rationale to match that
200 mission. We doubt if this process can be completed in full by November 2011.
201

202 **SACR Recommendations E, F. Regarding the Board of Trustees**

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204 **Recommendation E. In order to foster the mission of the PNYC, direct the Presbytery**
205 **General Council to provide oversight regarding the expenditure of funds gleaned from**
206 **money managed by non-profit instruments.**

207 At the Stated meeting of the presbytery held on September 25, 2010 the General
208 Council recommended to the PNYC that it consider the consolidation of the Council for
209 Administrative Support Services (CASS) and the Board of Trustees. Upon approval, the
210 Committee on Standing Rules and Overtures (SRO) was assigned the task to consolidate the
211 two boards. The SRO reported in January 2011 as to their progress and brought their final
212 recommendations to the Stated Meeting of the PNYC on March 26, 2011, at which time the
213 presbytery approved the SRO’s report. In between presbytery meetings, the Committee on
214 Standing Rules held open meetings so others could participate in the discussion. At the Stated
215 Meeting of the PNYC on May 17, 2011, the presbytery approved the new name of the
216 committee as the “Mission, Budget and Corporate Responsibility Council” and later in the
217 meeting elected its new members.

218 The leadership believes that this merger will alleviate the tensions felt between these
219 two boards over the years, will streamline and cause processes to be more effective and would
220 bring more transparency to their work. It appears that with the merger of the two committees
221 and the movement from apportionment to per capita and mission pledges for 2011, there is
222 improved confidence in the way the presbytery manages its fiscal responsibilities. The General
223 Council will now be in a better position to “monitor” the implementation and work of the new
224 consolidated committee.
225

226 **Recommendation F. Instruct the presbytery’s Committee on Representation and**
227 **Nominating Committee to assure that the leadership and membership of the Board of**
228 **Trustees are racial and gender inclusive, and representative of the various segments of the**
229 **presbytery’s congregations.**

230 Early in 2010, the General Council Chair affirmed the Committees on Nominations and
231 Representation are diligently working to ensure that there is a good representation of elders,
232 ministers, women, men, racially ethnic and congregations of all sizes serving on the Board of
233 Trustees. The Committee on Nominations in consultation with the Committee on
234 Representation will continue to ensure that the new committee be made up of a diverse
235 membership.

236 In our meeting with Presbytery leadership on April 9, 2011, it was discussed the issues
237 were not only about race and gender but also, about culture and control. One leader mentioned
238 that the Board of Trustees was lacking a variety of skill sets, as well. The congregations felt
239 that the Board of Trustees was not supportive to their needs, made the process of buying and
240 selling property complicated and lacked a pastoral approach. The Presbytery leadership will
241 need to continue to monitor the situation.
242

243 **SARC Recommendations G, H. Regarding a Breakdown of the Vision of the Presbytery Staff**

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245 **Recommendation G. Direct the Presbytery to work intentionally with an outside**
246 **professional religious organizational development and consultation service to explore and**
247 **correct existing dynamics within the current staff structure and relationships.**

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At a special meeting of the Presbytery on June 30, 2010, the presbytery approved a new staffing plan that involved a major reduction in staff from 11 full and part-time positions to four full and part-time positions. The AT/PMR understood this plan to be for financial reasons rather than design. Furthermore, we believe that due to the cuts in staff, whatever dynamics present two years ago have undergone fundamental change for the better. The current staff appears to be working well together, pitching in with the workload when someone is out of the office and during peak periods.

Considering the major downsizing of staff in June 2010, we find the staff to be positive and cooperative, and we commend the support staff in particular for their positive attitudes during these uncertain times. Councils, committees and commissions have taken on some of the work previously done by staff on their behalf, partially alleviating the workload of the current staff; however, as with any such downsizing, there is confusion as to what the current staff should continue to do and what will no longer be done. Clarity of job descriptions for all staff members will help with this, but there will also need to be a realignment of expectations on the part of the presbytery. In addition, with the understanding a new presbytery mission plan, and hence staffing plan, is in the works, there continues to be anxiety about job security.

Further, the financial situation that caused the reduction of staff in 2010 seems to have improved. Some of the churches that withheld apportionment in 2010 have begun making payments. Recent reports indicate that the presbytery’s financial situation has stabilized.

Recommendation H. Direct the presbytery to develop in consultation with the outside professional religious organizational development service a staffing plan to address future changes in staff.

It is expected the current sub-committee of the General Council working on a new mission and design for the presbytery will lead to the creation of a new staffing plan. Yet, given the large staff reduction in June 2010, we are not sure if the benefit of a consultant service would be necessary, except insofar as the General Council and its Personnel Committee might request help with position descriptions

SARC Recommendation I. Regarding Presbytery as a Christian and Nurturing Community

Recommendation I. Direct the PNYC General Council to work intentionally with an outside religious organizational development and consultation service to create a faith community that enables the presbytery to do the work to which we are called in faithfulness to Jesus Christ and the mission of the whole Church.

Part 1 – Report on the mediation process

As stated above, the presbytery has been involved in a mediation process since April 2010 through the work of Dr. Richard Blackburn of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. This process was selected by the General Council and approved by the presbytery in January 2010 prior to the start of the Advisory Team. At the time, the General Council felt that this was the best process available for developing a Christian and nurturing community. There were 81 Teaching Elders and 65 Ruling Elders present at the January 2010 meeting. The minutes indicate that the motion passed.

The original schedule for the process was to begin March 12, 2010 and conclude March 2011. There were no events scheduled from June to September 2010 and some healing/problem solving sessions were postponed due to the unexpected illness of Dr. Blackburn’s wife in December-January 2011. Therefore, the process was extended an additional four months. The mediation process concluded at the Stated Meeting of the PNYC

297 on Saturday, July 23, 2011. (Given its length, the Final Report of the mediation process, it will
298 be made available to the Synod Council and Assembly as a separate document.)

299 The design of the mediation process addresses interpersonal relationships through a
300 series of workshops, small group meetings, healing and problem solving sessions.

301 *The Information Gathering Stage* consisted of receiving 96 questionnaires, conducting
302 13 phone interviews and holding 10 small group meetings with 76 participants. During these
303 interviews and meetings, commonalities, issues and hurts were shared and recorded.

304 *The Education Phase* took place during the Information Gathering Stage. This
305 consisted of workshops geared to prepare participants to enter into the process in a healthy way.
306 Two workshops were held on “Healthy Congregations” and “Conflict in the Church: Entrusted
307 with the Message of Reconciliation”. Approximately 83 people attended both workshops.

308 *The Healing Phase* took place from October 2010 through March 2011 and consisted of
309 four sessions. Approximately 40 people each attended three of the sessions and 120 people
310 attended the last session. The last one was held after lunch at a Stated Meeting of the
311 presbytery. These sessions are intended to address unresolved hurts from the distant and most
312 recent past in a healing manner. Each session was three hours long.

313 *The Problem-Solving Phase* was held in two sessions: one in March 2011 with 46
314 participants and in May 2011 with 40 participants. At the first session, small groups were
315 formed to begin brainstorming how they could address concerns raised by participants
316 throughout the mediation process. In between sessions, each group worked independently on
317 developing covenant agreements on how they were to proceed.

318 Comparing attendance in the mediation process to regular attendance:

319 On average 75 out of 226 Teaching Elders regularly, attend presbytery meetings

320 On average 66 out of 128 Ruling Elders regularly, attend presbytery meetings

321 On average 52 out of 97 churches, send representatives to presbytery meetings

322 Based on these numbers, in the beginning of the process there were a majority of regularly
323 attending presbyters participating in the mediation process. Beginning in the fall of 2010,
324 however, there were only about one third of regularly attending presbyters participating in the
325 mediation process.

326 *What worked about the mediation process?*

- 327 a) It brought to the surface some of the underlying hurts and issues that participants
328 were carrying around with them for many years
- 329 b) Participants learned how to appreciate those they have had issues with and state
330 regrets for not handling a particular situation differently.
- 331 c) Many ambitious ideas on how to resolve issues within the presbytery were discussed
332 and put in writing for implementation
- 333 d) Those who did find benefit in the process have resolved to act on the floor in ways
334 that seek reconciliation instead of remarks or using parliamentary procedure to
335 injure others. People have resolved to stop negativity if they are able to do so to
336 keep business moving.
- 337 e) Holding a healing session during a presbytery meeting proved generally effective
- 338 f) Dr. Blackburn was professional in the way he communicated and was authentic and
339 pastoral in his approach to the presbytery’s issues
- 340 g) It provided some rich insights and treasures that can continue to be explored by the
341 presbytery.
- 342 h) Some have a better idea of how people interact with one another and the
343 misunderstandings that can arise amongst a diverse group of people.

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347 *What did not work well about the mediation process?*

- 348 a) There was not full participation in the process. Some opted out right from the
349 beginning for a variety of reasons and others came when schedules permitted.
- 350 b) Due to outdated contact information for presbyters, an attempt to contact presbyters
351 directly proved difficult.
- 352 c) There does not appear to have been direct mailings or postings on the presbytery
353 website as to dates and locations of events until the end of 2010. Announcements
354 were made at presbytery meetings.
- 355 d) Meetings were held on Saturdays and generally in one location in Manhattan
- 356 e) Those looking for a process that handled the structural and/or organizational issues
357 were disappointed.
- 358 f) There was a loss of momentum over the summer of 2010.
- 359 g) There was a large portion of the presbytery, particularly coming from those
360 congregations that do not attend presbytery meetings, who did not understand why
361 the presbytery was undergoing a mediation process.
- 362 h) The process became another dividing issue based on participation. Those who did
363 not attend felt their professional motivation and integrity questioned by those who
364 were attending regularly.
- 365 i) Some of those who attended the healing sessions felt like voyeurs listening in on
366 conversations between the individuals in the center of the circle
- 367 j) The mediation process is designed for congregational situations and may not have
368 been suitable for resolving conflict within a middle governing body
- 369 k) The process may not have adequately dealt with racial differences
- 370 l) Reoccurring behaviors discovered during the interview process may not have been
371 adequately addressed or resolved.

372

373 In summary, the mediation process seems to have been a faithful attempt to bring to the
374 forefront a new way for the presbytery and its members to look at themselves and deal with one
375 another. The learnings achieved by those who attended need to be continually practiced if they
376 are to have a far-reaching effect on this presbytery. The key will be how the agreements made
377 during the Problem-Solving stage are carried into the mission and staffing plan that will come
378 out of the work of the sub-committee of the General Council. The General Council will be
379 asking the presbytery to read the final report of the mediation process.

380

381 Part 2 – Report on the presbytery as a Christian and nurturing community

382 The learning that came out of this process was that it takes a lot of energy on the part of
383 the leadership to plan and execute presbytery meetings and this is particularly true in the
384 PNYC. The diversity of people and ideas makes for a rich environment but also, creates many
385 challenges. Success was realized, when the General Council, working with staff and
386 committees, did their work well. At times, the General Council over thought the reaction of the
387 presbytery and at other times the General Council members were at odds with one another over
388 what should or should not happen and this was reflected on the floor of the presbytery.
389 Sometimes the General Council was able to anticipate the needs of the presbytery and at other
390 times there were missteps. Unfortunately, when these missteps happen in front of the body, it
391 feeds into the anxiety and mistrust of those who believe that the General Council, committees
392 and staff are incompetent.

393 If a concern or misstep occurs on the presbytery floor, the General Council must
394 maintain enough corporate memory to bring back the matter to the next presbytery meeting,
395 with its resolution. If they do not do this, the presbytery stores the misstep in their corporate
396 memory, which accumulates over time, increasing anxiety and mistrust. The mediation process

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provided a way of relieving the pressure that had been building up over decades, and releasing some of that negative corporate memory, but the leadership must continue to provide a safe place where remaining issues still exist.

Perceived changes at Presbytery meetings:

- a) Beginning in late 2010, the presbytery moved from an agenda to a docket with assigned times, which serves as a guide for presbyters to know how much time has been allotted to each item.
- b) The use of a matrix for nominations showing the representation on each of the committees significantly reduced the discussion time on the floor of the presbytery when we compared the March and May 2010 meetings to the March and May 2011 meetings.
- c) There were more statements of appreciation spoken on the floor of presbytery in 2011 than in 2010. Some members of the presbytery seem more respectful to speakers than they have been before.
- d) The tenor of discourse has significantly improved.
- e) At two recent presbytery meetings, the presbytery affirmed the authority of the General Council by referring the Proposal to them for consideration (June 6, 2011) and giving them another chance to publish the Report of the Staten Island Fund (July 23, 2011).
- f) Worship is a high point in most meetings.
- g) The Interim Executive Presbyter ensures that the positive things occurring throughout the presbytery are given time on the floor of meetings and encourages fellowship time before and after meetings.

Continued concerns at presbytery meetings:

- a) Outbursts, even in the form of applause, do continue to occur depending on the situation and/or discussion, which lead to delineating “sides”. The more weighty or emotionally charged the topic, the more likely inappropriate outbursts will occur. There were times when outbursts occurred due to the inability of the moderator and/or the presbyters to hear properly due to the available sound system.
- b) Most regular and special meetings continue to go over docket. The docket allows for approximately 4-5 hours for business and 1 hour for worship. Two out of four special meetings ran over more than an hour from the docketed time. Five out of nine regular meetings ran over more than an hour and a half from the docketed time.
- c) The presbyters continue to bicker at meetings over interpretations of Roberts Rules of Order, Standing Rules and the Form of Government. Members do tend to use parliamentary procedure as a way to forestall reports and/or debates.
- d) There are continued tensions between the Stated Clerk and presbyters during meetings.
- e) There is a continued disconnect between congregations and the presbytery resulting in lower attendance and/or presbyters choosing to disengage from debates.
- f) Perceived divisions between race, ethnicity, culture and economics continue to plague the presbytery.

Summary

We have observed that debates, particularly regarding divisive subjects, or budget, even though lengthy and sometimes redundant, do result in well-informed decisions by the body. The members of this presbytery are very talented, educated and knowledgeable on a wide variety of topics, which makes for intense discussions. We hope there is an appreciation for

447 this diversity that will lead to working together for the greater good. For some teaching elders
448 and congregations, there seems to be a sense a separation from the presbytery is inevitable. On
449 the other hand, there are many who are hopeful that through the work of the Holy Spirit, a more
450 effective presbytery is possible.

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452 **SARC Recommendation J. Regarding welcoming new members.**

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454 **Recommendation J. Direct the PNYC to establish a program to welcome, orient and train**
455 **new members of the Presbytery.**

456 The General Council has discussed on a number of occasions the need for programs that
457 welcome, orient and train new members of the Presbytery. During the April 2011 PMR/AT
458 meeting with the presbytery leadership, five groups of people were identified:

- 459 1. New minister members
- 460 2. New chairs of council, committees and commissions
- 461 3. New presbyters serving on council, committees and commissions
- 462 4. New elders attending Presbytery meetings
- 463 5. New presbyters coming from other denominations

464 Recently those ministers or candidates who were to be examined at the July presbytery
465 meeting were encouraged to travel with other presbyters on the Long Island Railroad to get to
466 the meeting held in Far Rockaway. This was arranged to provide an opportunity for candidates
467 to get to know the people they will be working with in their new call as Teaching Elders. Other
468 Ideas for improving this area emerged from the mediation process and are now under
469 consideration by the sub-committee of the General Council.

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473 **IV. SUMMARY, NEXT STEPS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

474 **A. Summary.**

475 As outlined in the SARC recommendations, our teams were to be a presence within the
 476 life of the presbytery, with the Advisory Team being specifically related to the General
 477 Council. Our work over these two years has been defined by the words in our respective team
 478 titles: present, monitor, report, and advise. Within the limits of our personal time, we have
 479 sought to be faithful to this charge. We have considered it a privilege to come to know
 480 members of the presbytery, and for the most part, our presence has been welcomed.

481 We have sensed some envisioned us as, or hoped we would be a pseudo-administrative
 482 commission, with powers to impose change. We worked under the belief the Synod action of
 483 October 2009 was a statement the presbytery itself had the ability to enact needed changes.
 484 Others are looking for this report to make a bold statement, perhaps uplifting their opinion of
 485 required change, or even condemning an entity of the presbytery with which they have had
 486 problems; we suspect for them, this report will be disappointingly timid and too hopeful.
 487 While there continue to be tensions between members of the presbytery, and unresolved issues
 488 as addressed in this report, we believe the Synod confidence was correct; in spite of some
 489 strident and divergent views, the presbytery has the capacity to deal with its problems around
 490 mission and staffing. For our part, we do not apologize for being encouragers as we have gone
 491 about our work of being present, monitoring, reporting and advising.

492 It is clear structural change is needed in the presbytery; however, structural change
 493 alone will neither change historically divisive behaviors and relationships, nor ease tensions
 494 within the presbytery. As such, the mediation report, in spite of its limitations, will provide
 495 valuable guidance for relational changes. The current General Council sub-committee working
 496 to present a new mission plan is representative of the divergent views existent within the
 497 presbytery, and without putting more pressure on one group than is wise or appropriate, we do
 498 see hope for consensus-building coming from this group's work that will address both
 499 relational and structural change.

501 **B. Stated Clerk**

502 There continue to be presbyters concerned with the work of the stated clerk, and others
 503 who continue to be supportive. Our assigned work did not involve making a determination one
 504 way or the other. We do recognize the current judicial complaint regarding the reduction of the
 505 clerk's days/hours, and the fact the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission will not
 506 render a decision until early 2012, makes it difficult to finalize a position description for the
 507 stated clerk at this time. Yet, given the term of the clerk ends in December 2012, and an
 508 election to elect or reelect a clerk must be held prior to that, we believe it is incumbent on the
 509 presbytery to ensure the nomination process for this election is completely clear to all
 510 concerned. We strongly recommend the Synod provide support to New York City Presbytery
 511 during this process.

513 **C. Mediation Process and the Life of the Presbytery**

514 Even among those who supported and found value in the mediation process, there were
 515 responses the process was more geared to interpersonal relations within a congregation than to
 516 a presbytery, and particularly not designed to deal with presbytery structure. We did find some
 517 "finger pointing" at those who did not participate fully, or at all, in the mediation process,
 518 though this seems to have been selective in that there was more than one "constituency" of the
 519 presbytery, which chose not to actively participate in the mediation sessions. In regard to the
 520 presbytery's life, we hope the interests listed in appendix 2 of the Final Report of the Mediation
 521 Process, will be thoughtfully considered by the sub-committee of the General Council, and the
 522 presbytery as a whole.

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Further, we would recommend the following:

- a) Annually, the Moderator-elect be strongly encouraged and financially supported to attend the PCUSA's Moderator's Conference.
- b) The Moderator, in coordination with the Stated Clerk, Interim Executive Presbyter and General Council chair, set a definite time to meet prior to each presbytery meeting to review all business coming to the meeting, anticipate, and prepare for potential possible parliamentary and polity issues related to business items.
- c) The leadership looks for ways to build trust between the presbytery and the work of committees. If trust is improved, the presbytery may be willing to give committees more authority to make decisions without always bringing them to the floor of presbytery for action.
- d) Support the Moderator in "calling out" inappropriate behavior on the floor of presbytery.
- e) The General Council engages those ministers and congregations not attending presbytery meetings.
- f) The General Council and committees consciously discuss how to be more transparent in their activities and actions.

D. Continuing Role of the Synod

The two years since the formation of the AT/PMR teams, has not been enough time for the presbytery and its leadership to accomplish all the recommended tasks of the SARC report, particularly with both a new Interim Executive Presbyter and reduced staffing. In addition, with the mediation process having just ended in July 2011, there has been insufficient time for the AT/PMR to witness any long-term effects of the mediation process. Finally, a report from the General Council that takes into consideration the Strategic Plan approved prior to Synod intervention, the Proposal for a new presbytery mission and structure, the final report from the mediation process, and any October 2011 Synod Assembly action on this AT/PMR report will not come before the presbytery until at least November 15, 2011.

In consideration of the above, we believe a continued presence of the Synod could be beneficial, particularly to "support and encourage" the General Council of the Presbytery of New York City. As such, we would we recommend:

- a) the current Present, Monitor and Report Team and current Advisory Team be dismissed with thanks by the Synod of the Northeast, following the presentation of this report and actions of the 2011 Synod Assembly to the November 15, 2011 meeting of the New York City Presbytery; and,
- b) the Synod consider, in consultation with the General Council of the Presbytery of New York City, continuing to support a "team" to meet and work with the General Council, and monitor progress on both the SARC recommendations and the work of the General Council as it develops a new mission plan to present to the presbytery. Given the difficulty of new persons entering into the midst of this ongoing work, if the Synod decides to continue this relationship, we suggest first asking current active members of the PMR or AT to serve for up to a year.
- c) As suggested in section IV.B. above, the Synod provide counsel and support to the Presbytery of New York City and its Personnel Committee as it begins the process of review of the Stated Clerk in preparation for the 2012 election of the office of the Stated Clerk, the term of which ends in December 2012.

Respectfully submitted

The Advisory and PMR Teams working with New York City Presbytery

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