



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CONFESSION OF BELHAR

September 2, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

One of the most significant long term actions taken by the 221st General Assembly this past summer was the overwhelming approval of the recommendation to add the Confession of Belhar to our *Book of Confessions* and to submit this action to the presbyteries for their concurrence. We believe this will also be one of the most significant actions to be taken by your presbytery over the next few months.

Concerned that the last time this Confession was before the church it was not adequately studied before the time for voting, the General Assembly asked the members of our Special Committee to continue our service in order to assist presbyteries in engaging in a full and serious consideration of the Belhar Confession. We are pleased to do that. Given the new urgency in our church and society to overcome racism and to build a church that reflects God's call to unity, justice, and reconciliation, we believe that the Belhar Confession is rightly before our church for "just such a time as this."

Our Committee has prepared a number of materials that we believe you will find helpful as you engage in studying Belhar in your presbytery and congregations. Those resources, including resources for worship, can be found at and downloaded from our website, www.pcusa.org/belhar. Some of the most significant, which you can access directly from these links are:

- The Belhar Confession in English, Spanish, and Korean - <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/>
- The Confession of Belhar on video - <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/>
- Frequently Asked Questions about Belhar - http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/belharbrochure.pdf
- A booklet on The Bible and Belhar - http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/thebibleandbelhar.pdf
- A Workshop Design on the Confession of Belhar - http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/belhar_workshop_design.pdf
- "Why Belhar, Why Now?," An accompanying letter from the Special Committee - http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/why_belhar_why_now.pdf

Please feel free to download and make use of these materials as you engage in study of this important Confession. We also have a limited number of hard copies of these materials if you need to order such from us.

Beyond printed and electronic resources we also want to make “people resources” available to you and your presbytery. Members of our Special Committee, who have studied this confession in depth, are available to speak at your presbytery on Belhar and to lead and participate in conferences and workshops on the Belhar Confession. We also have until the end of the 2014 calendar year limited funds to cover the cost of travel for such conferences and events. Please let us know if you would like for one or more of our members to join your presbytery for such a study opportunity.

Conferences on Belhar are already being planned in Montreat (Oct. 17) and in upstate New York (in early January), but we hope there will also be many more opportunities to study and be inspired by the Confession of Belhar across our church and nation. This is certainly a time in which Belhar’s message of unity, justice, and reconciliation is good news, and we hope it will be embraced by the PCUSA as we seek to be engaged in Christ’s ministry in our time.

We close by sharing with you the opening paragraph of the Special Committee’s message to the PCUSA about Belhar that expresses why this focus on Belhar is so urgent:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is again facing a critical time in its history. We are rent apart by division and schism, we have yet to directly confront and confess the racism that has been a significant force in our own history, and we have shown a failure of resolve to make courageous stands for justice. We believe that the Confession of Belhar, a profound statement on unity, reconciliation, and justice in the church, comes to us as a word from God for this particular time and place for the PC(USA).

Please let us hear from you as to how we can work together and be a resource to your presbytery as we together seek to engage the Confession of Belhar.

Grace and peace,

Mati and Cliff

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