

**F-1.0404: Openness**

*"In Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all creation, **the Church seeks a new openness to God's mission in the world.***

*In Christ, the triune God tends the least among us, suffers the curse of human sinfulness, raises up a new humanity, and promises a new future for all creation.*

*In Christ, Church members share with all humanity the realities of creatureliness, sinfulness, brokenness, and suffering, as well as **the future toward which God is drawing them.***

*The mission of God pertains not only to the Church but also to people everywhere and to all creation.*

***As it participates in God's mission, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) seeks:***

***- a new openness to the sovereign activity of God in the Church and in the world, to a more radical obedience to Christ, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;***

How does the agency demonstrate that it is open to God's activity in the church and in the world?

Book publishing is at the intersection of three major changes in the American society and economy: decline in mainline church attendance, decline in people studying religion in college and seminary, and fundamental changes in the bookselling industry. As a result, we and others in our industry have been forced to change and adapt, often multiple times, over the last decade-plus. The negatives are easy to see: declines in sales of books, hymnals, curriculum, and other resources to churches; declines in academic textbook sales, and declines in the number of bookstores to feature our titles. The positives are harder to see, but they are there: greater ability to quickly adapt and change, especially through the use of technology; less expensive investment in inventory thanks to print-on-demand technology; greater ability of motivated authors to drive sales of their own books through social media; and increased hunger for progressive resources around social causes, a staple of WJK for decades. The coming decades will not be easy, and we will need to continue to adapt, as we have this year by adding a children's book component to our offerings, but we believe we are well-suited to the challenge.

How does the agency engage in prayerful discernment as it seeks to be obedient to Christ?

Staff of PPC constantly makes decisions about what resources to publish, and this often leads to making decisions not to publish certain ideas. This is a process that requires much discussion and discernment. For every book we publish there are 100 more we wish we could publish, if we only had the staff, financial resources, and time to do so. We keep at the front of our minds in these decisions what resources will best respond to the needs of the church and academic religious communities. Sometimes these resources will sell enough copies to recover their costs, but often we publish books and other resources knowing that we will not see a return on that investment, but believing strongly that the idea or author is an important one.

What could the agency do to bring more joy to its staff, to members of the church, and to the world?

Our staff generally enjoys their jobs, but the uncertainty inherent in book publishing and religion these days often make that difficult. PCUSA members look to us for resources to help with their spiritual and worship lives, so continuing to publish resources for the church even as we search for new areas of growth will be important. And continuing to provide resources to people seeking peace and justice will eventually lead to more joy in the world. Finding ways to stabilize and grow our sales will increase our ability to bring joy to our staff members as well as the church and world. This includes seeking out new areas of publishing as well as continuing our focus on resources for the PC (USA) and academic communities.

*- a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity;*

How does the agency foster community within the agency? How can the agency build greater trust among the agency staff?

PPC emphasizes staff engagement through our many social events throughout the year and through our celebrations for staff that are experiencing marriage, the birth or adoption of a child, etc. We also have many cross-functional teams which help to build community between departments.

We build trust among our staff through treating them well, celebrating successes, and practicing transparency. We regularly communicate with all staff regarding how the company is performing, any potential organizational changes, and the progress of our strategic planning. Building greater trust can occur through even greater transparency and two-way communication between management and staff, so that all staff feel engaged and heard.

How does the agency promote unity and connectedness in the whole church? How can the agency build greater trust within the PC (USA)?

One of the key ways PPC promotes unity within the PC (USA) is through our publications that are committed to building up the health of the church and creating a common thread throughout all congregations. *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* is an essential resource that creates unity in worship throughout all congregations that have adopted it as they are all worshipping through similar song throughout the year.

In working to implement the PCUSAstore.com single source website for Presbyterian resources and in negotiating a transfer of Congregational Ministries Publishing to PPC, PPC attempted to conduct these project developments not only with passion for serving the church and constituents better but also by trying not to act on what might be easiest, less work or by protecting turf. If we

can all try our best to think and work in this way then we will better connect and build trust.

- What are your thoughts about white privilege in the PCUSA? How can the agency contribute to building a church that truly honors God, celebrates the diversity of God's creation by lifting up all people, and demonstrates that we are all one in Christ Jesus?

Because the PC (USA) is a predominately white denomination, awareness of white privilege and its impact on all is something to which all agencies should be attuned. As an agency, PPC regularly engages in cultural awareness events that help us to identify our own privilege and our individual biases. Building such awareness helps us as we engage with all throughout the church. We have also founded our publishing program with an emphasis on diversity; we intentionally ensure that we are publishing authors from all backgrounds and in doing so we help to lift up new voices within the church.

If examined carefully, the books and resources published by WJK demonstrate a high sensitivity to valuing diversity and promoting inclusiveness and social justice. A new book on white privilege will be published by WJK this next year.

*- a new openness to see both the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God's activity in the world;*

- What are some possibilities in the agency which would allow the agency to be more faithful and useful for what God is doing in the world?

The transfer of CMP to PPC opens some very significant new opportunities to better serve the denomination for Christian Education resources. Only a small portion of PC (USA) churches currently use our curriculum. By finding out better what churches do use, want and value in study resources, PPC will better serve the church. PPC also has an important *reformed* voice and theology to bring to the world. Our new efforts in children's books to promote more diversity, inclusiveness can make a difference. WJK books published on issues such as social issues like race, human sexuality, civility, immigration and gender have already made a difference.

- What are some perils in the agency's institutional form which could inhibit faithful obedience to God?
- There is a natural culture that develops at a headquarters setting that tends to isolate and even good people begin to act in their own self-interest and do what protects their job and status rather than passionately looking outward to serve

the church which is the reason these institutions exist. We must constantly remind ourselves that we exist to serve others and not ourselves.

- What are the things you hold on to as essential and carry forward, even as you are open to the new?
- PPC has developed a leading reputation for providing resources that develop future leaders, that help equip current leaders to serve, that speak truth to power, that bring comfort to those in pain, that educate those who want to be stronger in faith and live better as Christians. We should maintain those goals as no one else provides that service quite like PPC. It is essential that we continue to try and make a difference in bringing the Kingdom closer.
- If you could change one thing within the agency which would create new opportunities to do the agency's job better, what would that be?
- Being a self-sustaining publisher in the arena where we publish is increasingly difficult, we must balance projects that have the possibility of being profitable with publishing resources that are needed and wanted by the Church but that will never pay for themselves. It is very important that we, as a denominational publisher, charged with serving the PCUSA and the larger Ecumenical Church, do these type of publishing projects that will never make money, but it is difficult to do that and be self-sustaining. Therefore, if we could change one thing within our agency it would be that we could develop funds that we could use to support this important publishing ministry that deserves to be funded, but is becoming much harder to do.

*- a new openness to God's continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be more effective in its mission."*

- What new ecumenical partnerships and collaboration have been most effective in accomplishing the agency's mission? What new ecumenical partnerships would help the agency be more effective in mission?
- Over the past 10-15 years we have developed partnerships with Seminaries on various projects. These have been mostly Presbyterian Seminaries (Columbia, Princeton, Union, Austin, etc.), but admittedly while these Seminaries are Presbyterian in name, they are most definitely serving the larger Ecumenical Church. These partnerships have enabled us to publish projects that would have been too expensive (in terms of money spent and effort to accomplish) for us to do on our own. These partnerships generally have the Seminary doing a lot of the up-front work to develop the material and then for us to take over when the actual Publishing and Marketing activities begin. When we finally get the project to market, we share in the revenue by paying the Seminary a royalty on sales,

allowing them to recover some of their development costs. This has proven to be a very effective way for us to publish.

In order for us to be more effective going forward, it seems more partnerships like this with not only Seminaries but larger churches and possibly even other denominations would be an effective way to fund projects that are large in scope and difficult to fund due to the large investment in time and money required. There seem to be many more publishing ideas and needs in the marketplace than there are publishers that can bring these to market. .

- What is your agency saying “no” to right now in order to focus energy on what you need to say “yes” to? What would the agency love to do but cannot?

We are trying to say "yes" to most everything at the moment, at least in an exploratory way. Obviously, we cannot do everything but it is helpful to consider most possibilities in the effort to serve the PCUSA and the larger Church. The types of things we are most saying "no" to at the moment have more to do with operational actions and tactics to try to become ever more efficient at publishing. We tend to spend as much of our available resources on product development, publishing and marketing and minimize costs of infrastructure, etc., to only the essential level. This practice has been followed for years, so this is nothing new, but it is an area where we often find ourselves saying no.

As far as what we would love to do but cannot, we would probably love to be more involved in the day to day life of the church. We have resources that can help in almost all areas of ministry, but a lot of people out in the Church don't realize what we have. We tend to spend most of our effort in promoting and selling our "front-list" books, those that have come out in the last year to 18 months. Once a book gets past that age customers have a harder time rediscovering the titles and they don't realize that we have a wealth of resources that can help them in all aspects of their ministry. Being able to lift these older resources up to make more people aware of them would be something that we would love to do but cannot with our limited resources in the area of marketing and the need to promote our new books aggressively.