

“WHERE ARE WE NOW?”

Various groups have suggested that, in the light of recent actions of commissioners at the General Assembly, congregations should withhold some or all of their contributions as a way of punishing the General Assembly. But, as the following article states, such actions may hurt their Presbyteries far more than the General Assembly. Please read and consider.

Excerpt from “Where are we now?”
(After the recent General Assembly)
by David R. Carlson
General Presbyterian in Idaho
from *The Presbyterian Outlook*
August 4, 2008

In truth, I think it might be said that the left has become as arrogant as the right, and that does not leave much room for grace. Those who have worked to hold the church together will face more challenges today than they did two years ago after the Peace, Unity, and Purity (PUP) report. Presbyteries may face the most difficult trial of all.

The problem is that presbyteries may be punished for the sins of the General Assembly. Most churches do not understand the way mission giving works. If churches stop supporting Basic Mission, presbyteries will be the big losers, not General Assembly. Up to 80% of Basic Mission giving presently supports the mission work of the middle governing bodies (especially presbyteries). If churches quit giving to Basic Mission, as Presbyterians For Renewal (PFR) says it will recommend, middle governing bodies will suffer the greatest loss. Mission administered by the agencies of the General Assembly do not depend on Basic Mission to the same extent. Two-thirds of GA’s income comes from endowments and another large amount comes through designated giving (i.e. Directed and Extra Commitment).

Consider the mathematics of this situation: If half of churches withhold Basic Mission Support and there is a 50% shortfall, total presbytery income could drop 40%, whereas General Assembly income would drop only 15%. If churches replace Basic Mission giving with designated (i.e. Special or Extra Commitment) the consequence could be a transfer of up to \$50 million from the mission of presbyteries to mission administered by a national agency.