

GUIDELINES FOR PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEES ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE MINISTRY

Albany Presbytery has adopted an affirmative action policy which says:

THAT NO CALL SHALL BE APPROVED UNLESS PRESBYTERY IS ASSURED THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE FIRST THREE CANDIDATES CONTACTED, INTERVIEWED IN PERSON, AND HEARD, IS IN AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY CATEGORY (MINORITIES, WOMEN, AND OVER AGE 55). (An interview at a Face-to-Face event does not meet this criteria.) This policy's purpose is to implement the provisions of Form of Government G-11.0502g.

The suggestions on these pages are for the purpose of assisting pastor nominating committees in understanding and implementing the denomination's policy on equal employment opportunity in the ministry.

Fair Employment and Affirmative Action: There is a basic distinction between them. In order to understand our Presbytery's policy of affirmative action, it is most helpful to begin with the difference between fair employment and affirmative action. Most simply stated, fair employment is the practice of hiring without regard to race, age, creed, national origin, sex, or marital status. The intent of fair employment practices is to end covert and overt discrimination in the hiring process by insuring that any qualified candidate who applies will be given equal consideration with all other candidates. But fair employment policies are not enough to overcome discriminatory hiring practices.

Affirmative action means more than an openness for all qualified applicants. The intent of affirmative action is to make equal opportunity a reality through the active recruitment and solicitation of persons in equal employment opportunity categories to the work force of a particular organization. Affirmative action is more than an open door policy in that it involves "positive action," "sincere effort," "screening in," and "inviting the interest of people who would normally not come to us." Further, it means that institutions keep a check of their record in this regard and report their results on a regular basis.

In our Synod and Albany Presbytery, we are seeking to follow concrete steps that will open new opportunity to those previously excluded. Therefore, affirmative action means the solicitation of names of minority, women, and over-age-55 candidates, interviewing them, hearing them in person, and making a decision on a new pastor in light of the entire exposure and experience. It does not, of course, mean that any person is going to be forced upon a church. But it does help the committee consider qualified persons it might otherwise disregard.

The affirmative action experience can be very rewarding, as well as helpful, in producing change. The nature of the experience will depend on the feelings and attitudes that each person brings to the work of the committee. The Presbytery's Committee on Ministry is willing to offer aid to sessions and pastor nominating committees in their efforts to assure equal employment opportunity.

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