



Merrick Johnson
 Carlisle Presbyterian Church
 Transylvania Presbytery
 August 6, 2022

Young Adult Advisory Delegate Report, 225th General Assembly

To the Transylvania Presbytery,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! The 225th assembly of our church was an incredible experience to attend, and I thank all of you for your support and belief in me as a representative demonstrating how God's love through Transylvania Presbytery has been taken to the national level of our denomination.

As a member of the Theology, Worship, and Education Committee, our work was predominantly focused on issues relating to our denomination's core beliefs, our rules and order for worship, and our continued support of Presbyterian institutions. Actions taken on overtures that are likely of interest to the presbytery and congregations at-large are:

- The groundwork for a new confession, "For Such A Time As This", was advanced and passed by Plenary. It will be a multi-year effort involving a team of theologians from diverse backgrounds, aspiring to decry racism and homophobia more formally in this important theological document.
- An overture attempting to broaden and codify the use of laying of hands in worship contexts was rejected, but "signs and symbols of blessing" may still be conferred at ordinations.
- The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. confirmed the election of Asa J. Lee as President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and likewise approved our affiliated higher educational institutions. An attempt was made to try and cut our support with the University of Tulsa due to their downsizing of the humanities; but that overture ultimately failed.

Representing us at the 225th General Assembly was a once-in-a-lifetime moment, and it was incredible seeing how everyone nationwide was able to come together to do the work of the church. I am especially excited for the future of this denomination, with the 1001 New Worship Communities initiative, and seeing how my generation is contributing to the movement. I am truly thankful for the opportunity, and I remain forever in gratitude to Transylvania Presbytery for their support of my experience at the 225th General Assembly.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Merrick Johnson, YAAD, Carlisle Presbyterian Church

JOHN WHITE General Assembly Report

This was my first time at the General Assembly and what a task it was! I met with the Polity Committee IN-PERSON and our collective work was thorough, thoughtful, prayerful, and we considered issues from a multiplicity of angles. When determining whether or not and what to send to the floor of the GA, we took into account a variety of theological perspectives, as well as the needs, interests and abilities of ALL Y'ALL in the pews.

The ON-LINE opening plenary session of the GA was devoted to ensuring that commissioners were better able to self-identify as those complicit in taking lands from indigenous peoples, in enslaving the peoples of Africa, in condoning gun violence, in not being sensitive to people whose gender is not theirs, and in devastating our natural resources. In the midst of what I found to be an endless “harangue,” Dr. Nelson, the clerk, at least mentioned the name of “JESUS” and said that our primary identity is in HIM.

GA business addressed all the above-mentioned grievances through the crafting of overtures & “declarations.” Opportunities were extremely limited for commissioners to speak either “for” or “against” what was being proposed. This was due to on-line technical glitches, to the moderators’ inexperience with parliamentary procedures, and to the moderators’ exercising their “discretion” to move to votes and by-pass commissioners’ attempts to “call the question”... which would have allowed those of us trying to generate more discussion the opportunity to vote on “calling the question.” Considering that these major issues received such extremely limited deliberations, I found that the on-line way of doing business at GA was not decent, it was not in order, and Philip had to “talk me off of the ledge” more than once.

At the very least, the GA voted to hold the next GA plenary sessions IN PERSON, Dr. Nelson talked some more about our identity in Christ and there was a cool video of a church in the state of Washington that is experiencing growth on account of people coming to a new-found faith in JESUS! Exasperated as I was with the on-line plenaries, I found the in-person committee work to be a pleasure, the GA staff to be extremely helpful, and yes, Jesus was present, either “directing” things to happen or “allowing” things to happen. That said, buckle up, ALL Y'ALL, for the overtures coming your way!

225th General Assembly Report – 2022
Ginny Shanda – Ruling Elder Commissioner

When considering how to fully report on the 2022 General Assembly, I struggled at first. My thoughts, interest levels, emotions, and energy ran the gambit over the weeks as we met online and in-person. Like the selected theme of “From Lament to Hope” for this General Assembly, my second as a commissioner and the fourth which I attended, I found this G.A. to be “both/and” and less an “either/or” gathering.

The business before us included both overtures and resolutions unique to this G.A. as well as items from the 224th G.A. (2020), which could not be completed due to the unexpected and quick pivot from fully in-person to a totally online assembly, caused by the start of the pandemic. We gathered online for our plenary sessions, the co-moderator elections, and worship, and came to the newly remodeled Presbyterian Center in Louisville to complete our committee work in-person, wearing facemasks and staggering our break times to lessen the potential spread of COVID-19. Discussions flowed easily and quickly at times, and others grew intense and sparked amendments, substitute motions, and motions to reconsider. Some business items were straightforward and were placed and approved as the consent agenda; others were complicated and required extended but faith-filled debate. Technology was both asset and hindrance, aiding in the process and creating challenges for it. The assembly with its hybrid structure provided opportunities for people to participate, and caused obstacles for others, which prevented them from engaging.

Personally, I was honored and disappointed with this General Assembly – honored to serve as a commissioner for this presbytery, and disappointed in the change in venue/location. Originally to be held in Columbus, Ohio, hosted by the Presbytery of Scioto Valley and Synod of the Covenant, this G.A. would have completed a circle for me, since in 2002, General Assembly was held in Columbus, and I was one of the many people who had the pleasure of welcoming and hosting. The work of this General Assembly’s Immigration Committee, on which I served, was shaped by worship and prayer, information and discussion, and spontaneity and preparation. Moments of levity such as telling jokes during breaks and pauses, were interspersed in our days as did the sharing of heartache and tragedy, especially the hearing of the news of the many lives lost in the abandoned semi in Texas. The plenary sessions engaged me and frustrated me at any given moment. Deciding how to vote was immediate and crystal-clear for some items; with others I struggled as I took into account the Equity Prime questions, which included one based on a ordination question, “Is this decision being made with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?”

No matter if we were running ahead or behind with our agenda, if we voted without discussion or only after significant use of Robert’s Rules, or if we were in worship or in debate, God was present and at work, whispering and calling us to be in relationship with God and with one another in word and in deed. The Holy Spirit blew through us as we met in-person and online as we discerned actions on immigration, gun violence, environmental concerns, budget unification, international engagement, and more. The gift of grace, manifested in Jesus Christ, permeated in all, through all, and with all our time together as it does each day with each of us and with us as the Church.

(See attached G.A. 225 summary report for highlights.)



A Summary of General Assembly Actions

Israel/Palestine, fossil fuel divestment, OGA/PMA unification
among major issues addressed

Rick Jones & Mike Ferguson
Office of the General Assembly



Church leadership

Key positions in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) were filled during the assembly. The Rev. Ruth Santana-Grace and Rev. Shavon Starling-Louis were elected co-moderators of the 225th General Assembly. The assembly confirmed Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett's re-election to a second term as president and executive director of Presbyterian Mission Agency. The assembly confirmed the re-election of the Rev. Dr. Tom Taylor as president and CEO of the Presbyterian Foundation, his fourth term. The assembly also confirmed the 2021 election of Rev. Dr. Asa Lee, president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Israel/Palestine

The General Assembly voted 266-116 to approve [INT-02](#), a "Recognition that Israel's Laws, Policies and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People." It declares that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) "recognizes that the laws, policies, and practices of the government of Israel regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid."

Fossil fuel divestment

General Assembly approved [ENV-10](#) calling for divestment from five oil and gas companies: Chevron, ExxonMobil, Marathon Petroleum, Phillips 66 and Valero Energy. The assembly said the companies were not doing enough to slow global warming.

[Mission Responsibility Through Investment](#) (MRTI) reports that this is the first time the PC(USA) has voted to divest from companies out of compliance with GA's environmental policies (which was established in 2018.)

Unification and National Structure

On a vote of 321-54, General Assembly approved [FIN-10](#), which calls for the appointment of a commission to oversee and facilitate the unification of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) into a single agency. The assembly also approved [MOV-02](#), which moves Mission Engagement and Support (MES) from the Mission Agency to the Administrative Services Group, which supports both OGA and PMA.

Unified budget/per capita

The assembly approved [FIN-14](#), which includes unified budgets for the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Administrative Services Group of the PC(USA), A Corporation. The budget for the three agencies and entities totals \$88.3 million in 2023 and \$89.5 million in 2024. The breakdown of the budget will be 16% for OGA, 79% for PMA, and 5% for ASG.

The assembly voted to approve [FIN-13](#) which assesses a per capita rate of \$9.85 per member in 2023 and \$9.80 per member in 2024. The current per capita rate is \$8.98 per member meaning an 87-cent (9.6%) increase next year while the 2024 rate will drop by five cents (0.5%) in 2024. The per capita budget for 2023 was approved at \$15.2 million and \$15.6 million for 2024.

Immigration

By a vote of 340-25, the General Assembly approved [IMM-06](#), allowing the church to declare itself a "Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church." The assembly's Immigration Committee says the decision sends a message that the church is committed to working for justice in U.S. immigration policy.

Gun violence

General Assembly approved a motion that the church renew its commitment to end gun violence by developing a 10-year campaign, the Decade to End Gun Violence (2022 – 2032).

The assembly also voted to direct Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to engage with Walmart, Dick’s Sporting Goods and Kroger, three publicly traded companies held by either the Board of Pensions or Presbyterian Foundation, that sell guns not classified as semi-automatic and assault-based weapons.

Ukraine

The assembly also voted 374-1 to approve [INT-19](#), a commissioners’ resolution condemning the Russian military invasion of Ukraine and crimes against humanity, and calling for a cease-fire and the immediate resumption of internationally mediated negotiations.

Race and gender justice

Commissioners and advisory delegates approved several items of business from the Race and Gender Justice Committee (RGJ), including [RGJ-07](#): “A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA) — From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee” and [RGJ-08](#): “On Offering an Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy.”

A two-hour plenary ended with votes overwhelmingly approving both items, and with white Presbyterians reading aloud “A Litany of Repentance” found in RGJ-08, which begins with the words: “As white Christians we repent of our complicity in the belief in white supremacy.”

The assembly also approved [RGJ-12](#) calling for a new special committee to expose white supremacy within the denomination and make recommendations for improvement. In addition, the assembly approved [RGJ-13](#), directing the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation to “create educational resources for congregations to identify and interrupt practices and policies that perpetuate the adultification of Black girls and criminalization of adolescent behavior.” Commissioners and advisory delegates passed a resolution, [RGJ-14](#), denouncing violence against Asian women and Pacific Islanders.

The Church will form a committee to write a new PC(USA) confession.

226th General Assembly

The assembly [voted to change the format of the 226th General Assembly](#), whereby committee meetings will be held online, with in-person plenaries being conducted on site in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2024. The assembly is expected to cost approximately \$2.8 million.

Mid councils

Commissioners and advisory delegates approved [MC-10](#), which creates a task force to explore the theology and practice of ordination for ruling elders and recommend any changes to the 226th General Assembly (2024). The task force will include representatives who identify as BIPOC, immigrant congregations and New Worshiping Communities. Several amendments and motions were considered, but the overture was approved as amended by the committee.

Other

The General Assembly approved changes to the Standing Rules ([STAN-22](#)) that alter requirements for those serving as Young Adult Advisory Delegates to the assembly. YAADs must be:

- An active member of a PC(USA) congregation or participant in a new worshipping community or immigrant fellowship that has a relationship with a presbytery
- Between 18 and 23 years of age on the day the assembly convenes.

Read more news of the 225th General Assembly at <https://pcusa.org>.

