

## REPORT ON 224<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

A great many activities and traditions have been lost this year due to the need to protect people from the spread of COVID-19. The 224<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting of the General Assembly wasn't totally lost, but it was significantly different from Assemblies past. The meeting slated to take place in Baltimore, MD was convened through a combination of Zoom and PC-Biz. Instead of running from June 20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, with committee meetings, plenary sessions, and a variety of special events, the Assembly commissioners gathered virtually on June 19<sup>th</sup> to establish the docket and orient participants and June 20<sup>th</sup> for the election of the new GA Co-Moderators. The Assembly reconvened on June 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> for Plenary sessions and approval of necessary and critical business.

Because virtual meetings with nearly 500 people is not a well suited format to conduct controversial or in depth business, it was decided and approved to defer many actions to the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2022 and deal only with those items which required immediate action, such as administrative pieces, budgets, and elections. Though a couple of items concerning GA statements were discussed and approved. Here are the highlights of the meeting:

-Elona Street-Stewart and Gregory Bentley were elected as Co-Moderators on the first ballot. Elona is well known to us as she is the current Synod Executive of our own Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Rev. Bentley serves as a Pastor in Alabama.

-Later in the week, Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson was elected to a second term. Because General Assemblies now meet every other year, a single term for the Stated Clerk is 4 years. So, J. Herbert Nelson will serve until 2024.

-Because of financial conditions due to COVID-19 and economic implications the Assembly voted to set Per Capita rates as close as possible to current number, GA approved an increase of 3 cents over the next two years. The GA portion will increase from \$8.95 to \$8.98. They also approved a "Unified" budget, meaning Per Capita and Mission revenue will be used together rather than separately. The purpose was to make the GA Budget more flexible in this uncertain time and provide maximum protection from layoffs.

-The Assembly did address the issue of Racial Injustice which has sparked anger and protests in this nation and around the world. "Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action" is a statement which urges PCUSA congregations and presbyteries to approve anti-racism policies and requires GA entities to review future business items with regard to social witness policies. *This statement can be reviewed at [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org). A final copy clean of editing marks should soon be available to post.*

-A controversial item did come up early in the first plenary. San Francisco Theological Seminary was not granted a seat at the meeting because a recent merger with the University of the Redlands has raised a question as to whether or not they are still a PCUSA seminary. Obviously, many people including Alumni objected. The new Co-Moderators have vowed to establish a commission to address the issue and bring a recommendation to the next Assembly.

John Knox Presbytery was well represented by our commissioners RE Linda Stovall of Westminster PC in Dubuque and Rev. Don Best of Bethel PC in West Union, IA. We will be hearing more from them later. Thank you, Linda and Don!

Also, our own Alyson Janke completed her term of service as Moderator of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution. A very important position that insures all GA business is done decently and in order. Thank you for your service Alyson!!!

In this challenging time, there are many people and groups who require our prayers. Please include the General Assembly staff, commissioners, members, and clergy in your prayers as well.