



***WORSHIP AND WORK
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL***



223rd General Assembly---Day 6

*"But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness."
Matthew 6:33*

UPDATES AND REFLECTIONS

With the opening of the plenary session, greetings were offered by a rabbi and an opening prayer led by an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor. Additionally, the Stated Clerk spoke to the Assembly about the planning and purposes of the March on Tuesday, including addressing questions of its organization and implementation as consonant with the commitment and participation of other protest marches that continue to occur regularly on the streets of St. Louis.

In order to begin the day's work, financial implications were reviewed for both the per capita budget (OGA) and the mission budget (PMA) based upon the actions of this General Assembly as well as possible future actions in the next couple days. Some questions were raised both yesterday and today about the methods used for calculation of those estimated figures.

Of special concern to us in Redstone, the chair of the Peacemaking, Immigration and International Issues opened her report by introducing the overture on the South Sudan (09-02). Although it had passed overwhelmingly in committee and it could have been included on the consent agenda, she chose to include it in the action agenda in order to highlight the plight of the South Sudanese people and to publicly educate the gathered Assembly. This overture created and endorsed by Shenango, Redstone, and Pittsburgh presbyteries was affirmed with consensus acclamation by a voice vote by the Assembly.

So, the work of the gathered assembly began. Today would be the day that much of the internal issues of denominational structure and future implementation regarding the corporation and shared services would be addressed in the recommendations from the Way Forward Committee. Yet, many other substantial issues would be tackled as well. In summary (based upon the committee recommending), the following reflects most of the actions voted upon today.

Peacemaking, Immigration and International Issues

-Affirmed by voice the overture on support and prayer for the church the people of South Sudan.

-Endorsed the following affirmation and actions regarding the welfare of our nndeighbors in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (the Northern Triangle of Central America) and the Welfare of all migrants and refugees in the United States.

-Directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to develop a comprehensive study of the current socioeconomic and political in Central America and report its findings and recommendations to the next General Assembly.

-With the Executive Order from the previous day, the

Commissioner's resolution on the policy application of separation of children from families was revised and continued to address issues of indefinite detention and the use of children as either an incentive or deterrent to particular behaviors.

-Approved an alternate resolution from the committee concerning continuing to work toward peaceful resolutions in the Korean peninsula and foster an environment where civil liberties are retained and asylum seekers are treated humanely.

Social Justice

-Commended the congregations and presbytery connected in St. Louis for their creative and public witness to the gospel and offered lessons to congregations and presbyteries around the denomination engaged in being faithful in urban environments and addressing these issues which occur all around.

-Affirmed an overture from San Francisco Presbytery recognizing the legacy of Rev. Henry Highland Garnet who was a statesman, abolitionist and pastor (Grace Memorial in Pittsburgh, PA).

The Way Forward

-Approved the interim report, including guiding statement with additional comment, of the Vision 2020 Team.

-Affirming the recommendations of the Way Forward Commission with comments, the General Assembly which included the following:

- **Empowering the Stated Clerk to speak on behalf of the church between Assembly gatherings in accord with the**

beliefs, policies and actions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- **Creation and appointment of a twelve-person committee to provide a comprehensive resource projection analysis and summary assessment. Such a report would be forwarded to each of the six agencies, the 2020 Vision Team and the ongoing Moving Forward Implementation Commission.**
- **Establishment of the Diverse Voices Table and create a process to examine issues of equity and inclusion particular to agencies. Require personnel audits from each agency must be completed by January 1, 2019 and direct all agencies to incorporate race audits at least every four years. Require that translation services be staffed appropriately in order to provide translation services to all six agencies and be centralized in shared services.**
- **Create a Moving Forward Implementation Commission with the mandate and authority to ensure compliance and implementation of 2018 assembly action on recommendations from the Way Forward Commission and the All-Agency Review Committee. Coordinate with the Vision 2020 Team, report findings and make recommendations to the General Assembly (2020). Work together with the Stated Clerk and Executive Director of the PMA to address issues regarding "trust and transparency" and direct an evaluation of shared services and report to the next General Assembly.**
- **Approved the restructuring governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation ("A Corp.") and direct each of the agencies to amend by-laws of each of the agencies as appropriate based upon this action. The composition of the directors of this "A Corp" would be composed from the six agencies, a few advocacy groups and at-large members.**
- **Approved the report of the All-Agency Review Committee which called for a new openness and collaboration across agencies of the Presbyterian Church.**
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In the midst of "business," the Assembly paused near mid-day to spend time consciously in worship to our God. Although our work and worship are integrated, it remains important to engage in the liturgy("work of the people") of public rituals of worship expressing our dependence upon our God and lifting up praises, honor and glory to the Lord. Rev. Floretta

Barbee-Watkins preached on leavening of the "kindom" and our long and diligent process of "making biscuits."

Additionally, videos honoring the lives of Jack Rogers and Ben Weir (both former moderators) who died in the past year? Another video highlighting the recent documentary on Fred Rogers and the program, "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" was shown emphasizing, "won't you be my neighbor?"

As the afternoon of labor came to a close, Commissioners, Delegates and even staff were getting a "break" going into the evening with a free opportunity for dinner followed by a concert. Hopefully, everyone will be refreshed for much of the deliberations that will take place through the plenary sessions on the last full day (Friday) of the General Assembly.

"Glimpses of GA"
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