



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



***223rd General Assembly---Day 7***

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

**UPDATES AND REFLECTIONS**

**We come to Friday, the last full day of working through the work and recommendations of the committees. In every General Assembly, while there are many important issues that are discussed, prayed over and resolved, yet there are always a few issues that draw the most attention inside and outside of the Assembly. This year, a couple of those issues were to be discussed on Friday. One of those issues would be overtures centered on possible divestment from fossil fuel companies. As was the case in the previous Assembly, there was significant disagreement over our faithful stewardship of God's creation and our relationship to fossil fuel industries.**

**Most of the morning was spent considering, revising, and debating issues related to the specific proposals that emerged from the committee as its recommendation AND a minority report from the committee. The committee recommendation was to direct the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Foundation to divest from any securities held in the fossil fuel industry. The minority report reaffirmed the work of Mission Responsibility through Investment Committee and called for further engagement with companies**

**within this industry. For those not familiar with parliamentary procedure, this required "perfecting" the committee motion AND then the minority report (substitute motion) before actually voting on the "perfected" (amended or not) motions.**

**Through many attempted amendments, efforts were made to redirect some elements of each report, most of which proved unsuccessful. Followed by a break for worship and lunch, the Assembly members advocated for and against the minority report (substitute motion). After passionate discussion over the strategies and tactics of divestment, the substitute motion was favored as the main motion (332-178) and ultimately, was affirmed by the body by a vote of 409-106. This minority report called for ongoing engagement by the Mission Responsibility Through Investment and use of their Guideline Metrics during proxy seasons and report back to the next General Assembly. That report may include divestment recommendations if companies are not moving toward compliance based upon the criteria approved in the 2016 General Assembly.**

**So, a summary of today's actions at the General Assembly include the following:**

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

**-The final approved resolution directs the MRTI (Mission Responsibility Through Investment) to continue its engagement process with deliberate haste and utilize its Guideline Metrics with corporations in the 2019 and 2020 proxy seasons and report back the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. (08-08)**

**-Directed the Presbyterian Mission Agency to support congregations in advocacy with elected officials on climate action including just carbon pricing such as carbon fee and dividend.**

**-Promote the advocacy for education and assistance for congregations in understanding the impact of climate change and a commendation for what has been done by the agencies, MRTI, and the earth care congregations, and others within the PCUSA.**

#### **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**-Continuing the Racism Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a Special Committee on Racism Truth and Reconciliation.**

**-Commissioned a study of the research on disparities of black girls and women, including the results of the report, "Girlhood interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls Childhood." Published by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality with the intention of intersecting and expanding the work that is already being done around the national church in the area of racial justice to include the particular lived experiences of black women and girls. Propose an action plan that acknowledges and takes the**

**disparities seriously and develop programming and resources that participates in addressing these disparities.**

**-Educational resources and praying for a movement among all of our congregations in nation-wide action against gun violence**

**-Continue the previous position of the PCUSA on declaring for a moratorium on the imposition of the death penalty....**

**-Confess our failure to listen to long-silenced voices of survivors of clergy sexual misconduct. Creation of a task force of survivors and advocates for survivors in the implementation of the recommendations while undergoing an examination of Presbyterian polity, judicial process and rules of discipline.**

**-Initiate study of the social impact of the international automated technology crisis and the pertinent disruptive technologies that have the potential to radically impact society, the church universal and the PCUSA.**

#### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES**

**-Disapproved an initiative that would have modified the standing rules in order to reduce the number of theological student advisory delegates.**

**-Disapproved an initiative that would have limited overture advocates to the first concurring presbytery with a submitted overture.**

**-Directed the Office of the General Assembly to investigate adaptive and technical issues around cost-reduction measures for future meetings of the General Assembly and to report back in 2020.**

**-Referred a proposal that would give the Young Adult Advisory Delegates a vote in the election of the moderator(s).**

**-Approved a per capita budget for 2019 and 2020 based upon a 10% increase for 2019 and no increase additional increase in 2020.**

#### **MID-COUNCILS**

**-Disapproved an overture to modify the Book of Order to permit members of session to moderate the meetings in the absence of the moderator.**

**-Approved an authoritative interpretation regarding requirements for any non-Presbyterian serving in a pastoral relationship to serve as moderator.**

#### **CHURCH POLITY AND ORDERED MINISTRY**

**-Disapproved an overture to require changes to the Book of Order to have to meet a two-thirds requirement.**

**-Disapproved an overture to require the "trust" clause to conform with individual state laws.**

**-Recommended the creation of a task force to work, study, pray and discern on paid family leave and to implement a faithful response with all the challenges associated with this. The task force would consist of six members with additional representatives for voice, but without vote from other advisory committees. Several other overtures on the same subject were referred to the task force. One additional overture passed urging congregations to adopt family leave policies of at least twelve weeks paid leave.**

**-Disapproved a proposed amendment to G-2.0301 to allow congregations to electing ruling elders without requiring them to serve on session.**

**-Approved an amendment to the Book of Order clarifying that every Minister of the Word and Sacrament should receive permission to work in validated ministry that is outside the geographic bounds and should receive consent from the presbytery where the ministry is located.**

**-Approved an amendment to the Book of Order Rules of Discipline removing the five year time limit for bringing charges of sexual abuse.**

#### **MIDDLE EAST ISSUES**

**-Approve affirming the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as was done in 1998 and to advocate with the U.S. government to advocate with Israeli counterparts to cease all actions that block equal access of all citizens in Israel.**

**-Approved a substitute motion affirming the place of grassroots organizations in Palestine or Israel working for systemic change and make known these organizations and ministry to PCUSA congregations for support and encouragement.**

**-Expressed grief and sorrow for families for all Palestinians killed in the Great March of Return protests at the Gaza border. The Assembly also does not condone inciteful discourse that inserts acts of violence into a massive peaceful demonstration.**

**-Urges its congregations, presbyteries and staff units to reach out in open, truthful dialogue with our Jewish colleagues, engaging the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.**

**-Urging ReMax to stop facilitating sale and rental of property in Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.**

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**These are just some of the specific actions, but the work of the Assembly is really in the "whole." While tiresome and lengthy, commissioners (like our own) gather from around the country, give up a week of their lives that they might seek God on our behalf in reviewing, responding and deciding how God might be leading us as a collective body as a denomination. Such decisions are difficult and will not represent the desires or will of all individuals or all congregations or all presbyteries, but they signify the important actions of our highest council on all our behalf.**

**In this way, we owe each and everyone of these people our gratitude and appreciation for their efforts to "seek the kingdom (kindom) of God and God's righteousness" and we join them in trusting that "all these things (whether provision or security) will be given to us as well."**



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