



## IN THE LOOP

G.A. Special Edition 2

July 8, 2010

# News of Eastminster Presbytery

## There's a Whole Lot of Prayin' Going On

As promised, the work of the General Assembly is being framed in worship and prayer. In addition to the impressive worship services, the commissioners and observers have been invited to join in small group prayer, litanies, traditional hymns, and praise choruses. General Assembly doesn't feel like a political convention. It feels

more like...church. There are smiles and hugs and handshakes. Name tags hanging around necks identify that we are all family. Hospitality is the norm. A technical glitch (the voting key pads wouldn't work) resulted in the YAADS asking to spontaneously lead the Assembly in "Istanbul." It involved a variety of hand motions and

dance steps accompanied by lively music. The Assembly welcomed the opportunity...as a congregation would welcome its youth group to bring some life into an otherwise mundane function. Just like on Sunday morning, I sense that the Holy Spirit is here. It feels right and feels good.

Dan Schomer  
General Presbyter

## Nitty Gritty Actions

The General Assembly approved the creation of a 21-member **commission** to work collaboratively with middle governing bodies (presbyteries and synods) to explore options for the future and, at the request of presbyteries and synod, "to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing;" and "to approve the organization, division, uniting, or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods." It was made clear that the commission will act only at the invitation of the presbytery or synod.

An overture from Beaver-Butler Presbytery to permit congregations to choose to move to another presbytery in which it finds greater compatibility was soundly defeated.

A four-year participation in **Christian Churches Together (CCT)** was approved by the Assembly. CCT is "a hospitable space for growing together" that is "inclusive of the diversity of Christian families in the United States, including Evangelicals, Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, historic African American churches, and other racial and ethnic churches."

The commissioners overwhelmingly approved a report and its recommendations relating to responses to accusations that the **Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)** had actively recruited PCUSA congregations to leave and join the EPC. While acknowledging some questionable conduct by some, the report encourages dialogue between the denominations to address concerns.



By 88%, the Assembly voted to give **Certified Christians Educators** who are elders both voice and vote at meetings of presbytery.

For one hour and forty-five minutes, the Assembly respectfully debated a recommendation to replace G-6.0106b (the "fidelity and chastity" paragraph) with a new paragraph.

The new paragraph reads: **Standards for ordained services reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000).**

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### Fun Facts

So, what happens when the key pads malfunction and close votes are expected? The Assembly commissioners found out. The back up plan is *paper ballots*. Fortunately, after a brief recess, the key pads were back online and the time consuming task of distributing, collecting, and counting paper ballots was not necessary. Still, it's good to know that the General Assembly could make decisions by close votes before this age of technology!

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We're on the web:  
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I had a delightful lunch with Bryce and Phyllis Little, PCUSA volunteers with Spain and Portugal, who will be completing their work at the end of this year. They continue to have great interest in our partnership with Levante Presbytery.

## Nitty Gritty Actions *continued*

**The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates."**

A substitute motion that would have retained the current "fidelity and chastity" language, send a letter to all PCUSA congregations, and restore all previous authoritative interpretations was defeated by a 63% majority.

The final vote on the new paragraph was 53% in favor, 46% opposed, and 1%

abstaining. These proposed changes to the Book of Order will be voted on and require a majority of presbyteries in favor in order for the change to be made.

Two Committees focused on social justice. One focused on "promotion of social righteousness" and the other centered on the "exhibition of the Kingdom of God." The Assembly approved a long list of pronouncements and policy statements addressed from the perspective of the love and justice of God. A substantial debate focused on a proposed action relating to laws that affect immigrants such as the well known Arizona law. G.A. action included refraining from holding denominational meetings and gatherings in states that are discriminatory toward immigrants.

The Rev. Dr. Tom Taylor, previously the Executive Director for Mission of the General Assembly Mission Council,

## Quote of the Day

*The Rev. Landon Whitsitt, newly elected Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly, "wants the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be like Wikipedia, the open-source online encyclopedia. It's accessible to all, and anyone who wants to can make a contribution." Whitsitt defines an open-source church as "making sure that people can do the things they feel like they need to do to make church work for them."*

*If you are asking, "Huh?," you should know that Landon is an articulate 33-yr.-old pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Liberty, Mo. His words help us see the church through the eyes of a young and highly competent minister. For those of us who look at the church through aging eyes and growing cynicism, it's refreshing to hear the Vice-Moderator's hopeful words: "There is lots to be hopeful over. Our churches are full of wonderful, wonderful people who love Jesus Christ."*

*So it is!*

was elected as the President and C.E.O. of the Presbyterian Foundation.

The Assembly spent considerable time debating the majority and minority reports on Christian Marriage and Civil Union. In its report, the committee was not permitted to change the traditional definition of Christian marriage. In a surprise action, the commissioners voted to include the minority report with the majority report. The resulting study document covers a broad perspective of viewpoints for study and consideration. The commissioners voted by a mere 51% to have the study document serve as its action on a number of overtures from presbyteries calling for potentially controversial actions. In its wisdom, the Assembly chose study and further discernment rather than debate and action on this sensitive issue.

It is 10:54 p.m. and the Assembly has recessed for the night. At 8:30 a.m. commissioners will gather for worship and the business of the Assembly resumes at 9:30 a.m. Good night!