MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOINT MEETING WITH
PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
February 3, 2016
The Brown Hotel
Louisville, KY

Wednesday February 3, 2016
The joint meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) Board Executive Committee was convened by Marilyn Gamm at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday February 3, 2016 in the Gallery Ballroom at the Brown Hotel in Louisville, KY.

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL
The following persons present for all or part of the meeting were:

COGA Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Leah Johnson
Wilson Kennedy
Eileen Lindner
Carol McDonald
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Virginia Rainey
Vincent Thomas
Heath Rada
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Marcia Mount Shoop
Larissa Kwong Abazia

PMA Board Executive Committee Members:
Marsha Zell Anson
James Ephraim, Jr.
Marilyn Gamm
Chad Herring
Melinda Lawrence Sanders
Nancy Ramsay
Josephene Stewart
Tony De La Rosa
David Shinn

Excused:

OGA Staff:
Tom Hay
Joyce Lieberman
Toya Richards
Angie Stevens
The opening worship was led by Marilynn Gamm.

Gradye Parsons brought greetings to the joint session on behalf of the Office of the General Assembly.

Tony De La Rosa brought greetings to the joint session on behalf of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The joint session of COGA and the PMA Board Executive Committee heard from John Wood, who provided an overview of the Per Capita Budget, including financial performance from 2015, changes in budget planning for 2016, and projected budget for 2017-18.

He identified that Per Capita cannot fulfill the financial needs of the organization. The proposed Per Capita Budget reflects this forecasting, which includes an emphasis on additional fundraising and an increase in the Per Capita rate for 2017-18.

Beginning in 2016, the use of reserved funds will be included in the management of operational expenses.

John presented the following recommendations for approval by COGA and PMA Board Executive Committee to be referred to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

- Revised 2016 Per Capita Expense Budget totaling $12,434,777.
- 2017 Per Capita expense budget totaling $12,647,185 and the 2018 Per Capita budget totaling $12,738,784.
- Approval of an amount of $1,365,540 be designated from the 2017 Per Capita Budget for the 223rd General Assembly in 2018.
- Approval of the designated budget expenditures of $1,830,588 for 2017 and $2,071,838 for 2018.

The joint meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Executive Committee -

**VOTED** to approve the proposed recommendations to be referred to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

The joint session of COGA and the PMA Board Executive Committee heard from Gradye Parsons, who shared a suggestion to the joint session
for COGA and the PMA Board create a comment in response to the items of business being presented to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that call for a merger of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and PMA. Two of those items of business suggest that a committee be formed to explore the possibility of a merger between the two agencies.

Gradye is concerned that the recommended number of participants is too small, laying a significant burden on one individual who is representing COGA and the PMA Board. He suggested that COGA and the PMA Board comment committees create a joint comment requesting that the General Assembly consider increasing the number of representatives from each board.

Tom Hay reviewed the response to a referral from the 221st General Assembly (2016). Staff from OGA and PMA developed a policy on how the PC(USA) works with hotels, being sensitive to the rights of hotel workers when planning events. The intention of the policy is to trust the judgment of meeting planners in their efforts to determine the feasibility of honoring the policy in some circumstances. For example, the state of Kentucky does not have any hotels that have established hotel worker organizations. This would not preclude Louisville from hosting meeting and events. The meeting planner will have some flexibility to do what is best for the church in those scenarios.

A motion was heard and seconded.

The joint meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Executive Committee -

VOTED to approve the proposed policy regarding hotel workers’ rights, as presented.

The joint meeting of COGA and the PMA Board Executive Committee heard from David Gambrell, who provided an overview of the purpose and history of the Directories for Worship. Certain challenges and opportunities have emerged, which prompted revisions beginning in 2004. The Office of Theology and Worship submitted a first draft of the proposed Directory for Worship to the 221st General Assembly (2014), requesting further study and revision. Upon approval by the 221st General Assembly (2014), studies and revisions were conducted to prepare a new draft of the Directory for Worship for referral to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

The study included an invitation to comment and provide feedback on the draft in several forms, including social media. Comments were received requesting that the size of the Directory for Worship be reduced by 1/3, making it much easier to follow and utilize according to current needs by congregations, mid councils and other bodies.

David Gambrell and those who have been part of this project were commended for the dedication and hard work it has taken to complete the new version of the proposed Directory for Worship.
Margaret Elliot shared an overview of the discussions that will take place at the upcoming COGA meeting. Most of the meeting will involve planning for the 222nd General Assembly (2016), including a conversation with the Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA) to get an update on their preparations for the General Assembly.

Marilyn Gamm reviewed the planned discussions at the upcoming PMA Board meeting, with will include a presentation of the proposed Interim Mission Work Plan for 2017-2018 and an update from the PMA Executive Director search committee. Grace Presbytery will provide a presentation to the PMA Board. The presbytery has recently committed to donate $2.8 million to the Presbyterian Mission Agency. A new fundraising initiative within the PMA, “Pillars of the Church,” will also be presented.

Begin looking at the PMA Board’s responsibility

Margaret Elliott moved for the joint session of COGA and the PMA Board Executive Committee to convene in joint session to discuss personnel and legal matters.

Having no further business, the joint meeting of the COGA and PMA Board Executive Committee adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
February 3-5, 2016
The Brown Hotel & The Presbyterian Center
Louisville, KY

Wednesday February 3, 2016
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) meeting was convened at 2:45 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 in Broadway A conference at The Brown Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

Welcome & Call to Order

Roll Call
The following persons present for all or part of the meeting were:

COGA Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Barbara Gaddis
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Leah Johnson
Wilson Kennedy
Eileen Lindner
Carol McDonald
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Virginia Rainey
Vincent Thomas
Heath Rada
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Marcia Mount Shoop
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Leon Lovell-Martin

Excused:

OGA Staff:
Joyce Lieberman
Kerry Rice
Thomas Hay
Sue Krummel
Toya Richards Jackson
Angie Stevens
Robina Winbush
Deb Davies
Andrew Yeager-Buckley

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly participated in opening worship, led by COGA vice-moderator, Jim Wilson. Meeting participants also shared joys and concerns.

Opening Worship
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Minor adjustments were made to the schedule to accommodate timing of other presentations to the PMA Board.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

VOTED to approve the proposed agenda with changes.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliot, who provided a summary of her work since the committee last met in October 2015. She met with the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) Review Committee in October, 2015, to discuss OGA’s work over the course of the past six years. She recalled that the committee was impressed by the dedication of OGA staff. In January 2016, Margaret participated in the meeting of PC(USA) agency chairs and executives. She was grateful for the rich conversation and opportunity to connect with other agency chairs.

On behalf of the COGA Nominating Committee, Virginia Rainey announced the nominees for COGA moderator and vice-moderator for the 2016-2018 term: Barbara Gaddis for moderator and Wilson Kennedy for vice-moderator.

Election of the nominees will take place on Friday February 5, 2016.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly convened in closed session to discuss personnel matters. The following OGA staff members were invited to stay for the closed session: Tom Hay, Sue Krummel, Beth Hessel, Joyce Lieberman, Kerry Rice, Robina Winbush, Toya Richards and Angela Stevens.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014), Heath Rada, who provided an overview of his work and travel. The NEXT church and Covenant fellowship have been very responsive to the current conversations taking place in the wider church. He has scheduled listening sessions in New York, Atlanta, Iowa, San Diego, and Princeton, NJ. Each listening conversation will have a different focus including, African-American leaders, theological institutions, and rural congregations. He will develop a Moderator’s report to the denomination, which will be presented at the 222nd General Assembly (2014).

Another focus of his work has been on the denomination’s relationship with our Jewish interfaith partners. A webinar will be held to continue the conversation to determine ways to work on our relationship.

The Moderator has traveled to many congregations and presbyteries and has been humbled by the high regard that is held for the role of the Moderator of the General Assembly. He also traveled to Taiwan and China in November 2015.

Heath has been invited to travel to Hungary with a delegation to visit and determine how to what the denomination can do to support the efforts for Syrian refugees.
The Moderator made the following recommendations to COGA as he approaches the end of his term.

- Encourage people to stand for Moderator of the General Assembly
- COGA consider the possibility of organizing a former Moderator’s board.
- Think of ways of communicating that we are a reforming body.
- Feel free to make mistakes and take risks.
- Find ways to reach out to help raise funds.
- Communicate who we are to the world, not just the church.
- Strategic church wide plan for spiritual guidance and growth.
- Theological foundations and polity of the church needs to be communicated in a way to connect with the laity.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly adjourned at 6:15 p.m. and gathered for dinner and fellowship at Marketplace restaurant. Virginia Rainey led the evening prayer and blessing of the meal.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for the night at 9:00 p.m.

**Thursday February 4, 2016**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was reconvened by Margaret Elliott at 8:35 a.m. in Conference Room A/B at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Leah Johnson led the morning prayer.

Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly, Larissa Kwong Abazia, provided a report on her work since her last visit with COGA in March 2015. She reflected on her journey since her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment in early 2015, noting how touched she has been by the prayers that have been lifted up, as well as the conversations she has had with other cancer survivors. She has been deemed cancer-free and is completing the final steps in her treatment.

Larissa was part of the planning team for the Church Wide Conversation on Race, Ethnicity, Racism and Ethnocentricity, which took place in November 2015. The conference included 50 participants. The key speakers included the Rev. Dr. Eric Barreto and Dr. Jennifer Harvey.

The time she has spent visiting congregations and other events has shown her the overwhelming hope that resonates throughout the denomination. She hopes that, as a church, we can find more ways to show who we are. There is more than one way to be the church.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott, who called the committee in to closed session. Once moved and seconded, the COGA meeting proceeded in closed session to include the follow staff members: Gradye Parsons, Cora Brown, Robina Winbush, Toya Richards, Tom Hay, Beth Hessel, Kerry Rice, Joyce...
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who provided an overview of the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016).

There will be 594 commissioners and 194 Advisory Delegates

Tom Hay provided an updated list of the committees for the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016). There will 13 committees, including Bills and Overtures:

1. Business Referral  
2. Bills and Overtures  
3. GA Procedures  
4. The Way Forward  
5. Mid Councils  
6. Church Polity/Ordered Ministry  
7. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations  
8. Middle East Issues  
9. Immigration and Environmental Issues  
10. Mission Coordination  
11. Social Justice Issues  
12. Peacemaking and International Issues  
13. Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Investment & Loan Program, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, and the Presbyterian Foundation  
14. Theological and Church Growth Issues and Institutions

Tom reviewed the proposed agenda for the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016), which will include Riverside Conversations and a vote to add the Belhar Confession to Book of Confessions. Events to acknowledge and celebrate Gradye Parsons’ service to the church as he retires as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly have also been planned.

COGA Members should plan to arrive in time to participate in the Stated Clerk’s reception on Friday June 17, 2016. COGA members will stay at the Doubletree Hotel, which is 2 blocks from the convention center. It is an easy walk/ride to the convention center.

Tom Hay requests the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly approve the following Standing Rule change for referral to the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016):

Recommendation - Add new item to Standing Rule B.5. with B.5.b. to be titled “Assembly Committee Moderators” with the following text:

“When the moderator of an assembly committee is not a commissioner to the current assembly (Standing Rule C.1.c.), they shall have voice and vote in committee and voice in plenary on business from their committee.”
The subsequent items shall be renumbered in sequence after item B.5.b., beginning with B.5.c. “Ecumenical Representatives.”

After further discussion, a motion was presented to strike “and vote” from the recommended new text. The text for this recommendation will be as follows:

“When the moderator of an assembly committee is not a commissioner to the current assembly, they shall have voice and vote in committee and voice in plenary on business from their committee.”

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

VOTED to approve the proposed Standing Rule change to be referred to the 222nd General Assembly (2016), as amended.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for lunch and fellowship with OGA staff. Jim Wilson led the blessing of the meal.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reconvened at 1:30 p.m. The Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA) joined the meeting via conference call and gave an update on the work they are doing in preparation for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

COLA’s subcommittees have worked diligently to make the upcoming General Assembly a great experience. Local tours have been organized and over 1,500 seats have been made available at local congregations for Sunday worship. COLA is exploring ways to make the transition between the airport and hotels as easy as possible using Portland’s public transportation system.

COLA acknowledged the support they have received from Tom Hay and Deb Davies during this process. COGA members extended their gratitude for COLA’s leadership and look forward to seeing them this summer.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who presented the key overtures for the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that would be of interest to COGA.

It is customary for COGA to comment on overtures related to General Assembly issues and procedures. Writing teams will be created based on the overall themes of the overtures. COGA members interested in participating in the writing teams are to notify Margaret Elliott.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard Tom Hay, who reviewed the recommendation for the 225th General Assembly (2022) to be held in Columbus, Ohio from June 25 - July 2, 2022.

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -
VOTED to approve the recommendation for the 225th General Assembly (2016) to take place in Columbus, Ohio from June 25 - July 2, 2022.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Deb Davies and Teresa Waggener, who provided an overview of the proposed policy encouraging PC(USA) staff to choose businesses that are Code of Conduct participants for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, which was adopted by the End Child Prostitution Act (ECPAT).

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly –

VOTED to approve the proposed policy encouraging staff to choose businesses that Code of Conduct participants for the Protection for Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, as presented.

Molly Casteel provided an overview of the proposed recommendations created by the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR). These recommendations are presented to COGA for information and advice and counsel. on the definition of supplier diversity has been presented to COGA for advice and council prior to its final draft submission for consideration by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

The GACOR recommendation on the Affirmative Action & Equal Employment Opportunity (AAEEO) benchmarks for employment and supplier diversity. The benchmarks have not been updated in forty years. GACOR has created a two-tiered benchmark based on exempt and non-exempt employees with separate goals for those categories. GACOR is recommending that the benchmarks be reviewed and adjusted, if needed in six years.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Carol McDonald, who provided an update on the work of the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee. The demographics of the 13 applications were posted on the OGA website.

The committee engaged in conversation with the applicants and 6 of them have been selected to move forward in the application process. Face to face interviews will be held in Kansas City in March 2016. If second interviews are needed, they will take place April 7-8 at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Gradye Parsons, who provided a review of the proposed recommendation to elect Beth Hessel as Associate Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. Beth conveyed that she is honored for being recommended for this service.

A motion was heard and seconded.
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to approve the recommendation for the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016) to elect Beth Hessel as Associate Stated Clerk.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (2016) heard from Eileen Lindner, who provided an update of the work of the COGA statistics working group. She summarized the rationale of the need to change or modify the statistics form. Work continues and will be presented to COGA once the draft is finalized.

Gradye Parsons presented a summary of the recommended Standing Rule amendment to add Presbyterian Women (PW) to be added to the list of corresponding members at General Assemblies. PW Moderator will be the corresponding member.

It was clarified that this action will not be put into place until approval by the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016).

With no further discussion, a motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly –

**VOTED** to approve the proposed Standing Rule amendment to add Presbyterian Women to the list of corresponding members at General Assemblies, as presented.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Kerry Rice, who provided an update on the process for National Certifying Bodies. In October 2015, COGA approved the proposed process.

Three applications were received for certification from the following organizations: Administrative Personnel Association, Educator Certification Committee, and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians. If approved by COGA, the recommendation will be referred to the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016) to approve the three organizations as National Certifying Bodies. National Certifying Bodies will need to re-apply every two years.

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to approve (with latitude) the recommendation for the Administrative Personnel Association, Educator Certification Committee and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians to be recognized as Approved National Certifying Bodies. This item will be referred to the 222\textsuperscript{nd} General Assembly (2016) for final approval.

Joyce Lieberman presented a recommendation to amend Item G-2.1101 of the Book of Order as follows:

*Persons may be certified and called to service within*
congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.

This amendment will allow organizations to have more flexibility in the way their certification requirements are maintained.

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly –

**VOTED** to approve that the recommended Standing Rule change be referred to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Kerry Rice, who reviewed the names of the people who were granted educator certifications.

This year, only two certifications were submitted, which is a significant decline from prior years.

Jim Wilson provided an update on the work conducted by the Korean Task Force.

The task force last convened in late 2015. Discussions at the meeting focused on concerns about the inclusiveness of Korean congregations, especially from women who are concerned about their inability to serve their congregations in a higher level.

The Korean Task Force has identified two primary concerns:

- The ability of Korean churches to be comfortable to remain with the PC(USA). The task force will seek acknowledgement of their freedom of conscience to disagree with some church polity.
- Call for Korean churches and presbyteries to explore how they can be more welcoming, especially to Korean women pastor.

The task force will meet again in Long Beach, California to continue their work and create a report to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) in response to the referral from the 221st General Assembly (2014).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tim Cargal, who provided an overview of a recommendation for the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to approve the formation of a special task group to...
explore the following questions:

- How is formal theological education and training vital to pastoral ministry in the PC(USA)?
- Should there be constitutional provisions permitting presbyteries to formally authorize individuals other than ruling elders to perform limited pastoral functions?
- How should presbyteries authorize historically pastoral ministry functions by non-teaching elders in forms of corporate witness other than congregations?

The commissioning of ruling elders to congregational ministries have leveled off, but there has been an increase in the request for ruling elders to serve as chaplains in healthcare, hospice, stated clerks of presbyteries, as well as the chair to Presbyterian Women.

The financial implications to carry out this work would be approximately $25,000.

Jim Wilson recommended that, in the event that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approves the creation of the task force, that the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) would be an excellent partner in the task force’s work.

A motion was heard and seconded.

After further discussion, Jim Wilson suggested to delay a vote in order for a group of COGA members to review the recommendation and either add or edit the recommendation to make it less restrictive.

A motion was heard and seconded to table the action to allow time for selected COGA members to amend the recommendation.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly –

**VOTED** to delay this action to allow for amendments to be made.

Jim Wilson, Virginia Rainey, Barbara Gaddis, Larissa Kwong Abazia, and Heath Rada will work on the amendment.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly took a brief break until 3:15 p.m.

Eileen Lindner offered prayer to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, lifting up the 4 precepts in preparation for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

Deb Davies updated COGA on the status of registration for the 222nd General Assembly (2016). Registration will begin in late February, 2016. COGA members should receive an email inviting them to register for the General Assembly online. She noted that a second communication will be received, requesting COGA members to book their travel.
Deb advised those COGA members who plan to arrive early or stay late to spend personal time in Portland to register as soon as possible to guarantee accommodations for the requested extra days. It is expected that the extra days will sell out quickly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard an overview of the OGA Review process from Gradye Parsons. OGA recently received a draft of the review. OGA and COGA are now given the opportunity to respond and offer clarification to the report.

Margaret Elliott acknowledged that this was an overall good review, though there were portions of the document the needed clarification around some misconceptions.

**Recommendation 1**
The biggest concern is that we should recommend to the General Assembly to approach the matter in broader terms of structure as opposed to merger. It is also important that a conversation on identity take place before a discussion on structure.

Gradye recommended that a comment on the review should be drafted in conjunction with the joint response on the recommended merger of PMA and OGA.

Eileen Lindner recommended that COGA provide a consistent response across the board to the OGA Review, as well as the overtures that are being submitted to the GA recommended merger.

**Recommendations 4&5**
Ginny Rainey recommended that OGA staff job descriptions are reviewed to make sure that all areas of OGA have sufficient staffing.

Unidentified tension - folks working way too hard. Need for mid council support. The deeper level that hasn’t been peeled away is that the church needs the resources of the OGA to maintain.

Gradye recommended that COGA include in its response to request what should be the correct framing questions when considering any structural change.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly received a report from Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) Executive Director, Beth Hessel.

The PHS Strategic Plan was created with a vision of becoming a historical resource without walls. The 2016 action plan for PHS includes fundraising as a priority, communication, collaboration, building relationships inside and outside of the PC(USA).

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**REPORT FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN**

**VOTED** to the PHS Strategic Plan, as presented.
Beth Hessel reviewed the nominating process for candidates for election to the PHS Board. The Presbyterian Historical Society requests COGA’s approval for the following candidates to the PHS Board:

- Gerald E. “Jay” Darling Moorestown, NJ - Class of 2020
- Cathy Criss Adams Birmingham, AL - Class of 2020
- Ben Chandler Woodford County, KY - Class of 2021
- The Reverend Dr. Peter Whitelock Lafayette, CA (suburb of San Francisco) - Class of 2020

Beth requested COGA members to contact her if they have recommendations for possible candidates for the PHS Board.

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

**Voted** to approve the candidates for the Presbyterian Historical Society Board, as presented.

Beth Hessel presented a request for COGA’s approval to create a PHS Advisory Council who would provide advice and support to PHS Board of Directors and PHS staff.

Nominations and selections for the Advisory Council would be based on the following skills and accomplishments: a leadership profile in their congregations and communities, major donors to their church and nonprofit organizations; access to and a relationship with potential major donors to PHS; and persons with good judgment, needed areas of expertise, and a willingness to devote their time and energy on behalf of PHS. Included among those possessing those qualities may be ruling and teaching elders of congregations in strategic locations, and persons who have served in other leadership and governing roles in their churches. In addition, consideration should be given to gender and racial ethnic diversity in selecting persons for the Advisory Council.

Concerns were shared that the advisory council criteria may be perceived to be exclusionary, not only as a consolation prize, but also diverse simply for the purpose of being diverse. In addition, having means or access to means could exclude racial ethnic nominees. Beth clarified that the nominees may not have to have the means or know someone who does, but could also have a well-established connection with their community in conjunction with a love of history.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly convened in executive session at 5:15 p.m.
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly adjourned at 6:15 p.m. and gathered for dinner and fellowship.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for the day at 8:30 p.m.

**Friday February 5, 2016**

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was reconvened at 9:00 a.m.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from

Margaret Elliott reviewed the nominees announced for COGA the moderator and vice-moderator on February 3: Barbara Gaddis (moderator) and Wilson Kennedy (vice moderator).

A motion was heard and seconded.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to approve the election of Barbara Gaddis as moderator and Wilson Kennedy as vice moderator of COGA for the 2016-2018 term.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the accomplishments of Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons.

Gradye reflected on the accomplishments he has seen in the Office of the General Assembly:

- PHS has come a long way over the years. Vince Thomas and Jim Wilson were a big part of the process. Please give time to that. We don’t want to lose momentum.
- Information Technology - We are in a much better place. We are working with people who are highly confident. Not only is the cost going to be more effective, the quality is better.
- The OGA leadership table is dedicated and confident.
- The reorganization in 2013 helped pave the way to long-term viability for OGA. OGA staff continues to grow into this change.
- OGA Staff is younger - 25% is under 45. A new energy is brought to the table.
- Collaboration with PMA’s Office of Public Witness focused on immigration issues.
OGA staff member, Randy Hobson, produced two short documentaries that have been entered and recognized at film festivals.

Ecumenical and interfaith relationships are fragile as institutions change and evolve. It is important to nurture the relationships we have and recoup the ones that have fallen away.

The 221st General Assembly in Detroit ended under budget, which is no small feat.

COGA expressed their appreciation for Gradye’s leadership, noting his ability to observe and support, as well as take initiative as a leader of OGA staff. It has been a privilege to be able to say that these are people of strong faith and integrity. There is no way to call their faith into question. Gradye’s model within OGA is that family is a priority.

COGA members have been impressed by the way Gradye handles the negative communications he has received with such grace and show such strength in a lonely position.

Challenges – Work to be Done

- Finding ways to work with our interagency partners - sometimes the simplest changes take place without notice. There are some fundamental business decisions that have been made that negatively impacted OGA.

What to pass on to the next clerk

- Look at the reorganization and see what needs to be adjusted.
- When Gradye is out of the country, there is no one here to step in.

Hope for himself and OGA

- Convinced that we are entering into a laity era of the church - thinking about the church being built on a professional church is coming to end. The church is going to be led by the people who are in it.
- We have undersold the people in the church for way too long. They are more capable of being much bigger Christians.
- Wish we had gotten beyond the concept of engaging in conversation with the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ.
- We do not have the resources to do everything we want to do. It will be important to remove the borders between us and the world. White privilege is a hard thing to get cured of, but it is something we need to wrestle with as a church.
- People need our voice to get to where they need to go.

COGA reviewed the proposed position description for Records Manager, which will report to PHS and will be located in Louisville, Kentucky.

With no further discussion, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly –

**VOTED** to approve the proposed description for the Records Manager.

**RECORDS MANAGER**

**POSITION DESCRIPTION**
Manager position, as presented.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Jim Wilson, who reviewed the status of the recommendation, for which there is currently a motion to vote. Jim has drafted a new response to the referral from the 221st General Assembly (2014) (Item 2-10).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to DISAPPROVE the recommendation - the motion does not pass.

Jim Wilson drafted the following response to the referral of Item 06-12.10 from the 221st General Assembly (2014) as follows:

> Having reviewed the findings in the response to referral 2014 06-12.10, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly commends the work of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency in response to the referral of the 221st General Assembly (2014) and commends it to the whole church for further study. COGA believes that the current provisions of the form of government are flexible enough to allow presbyteries to explore avenues for individuals other than teaching elders to form limited pastoral functions and to authorize historically pastoral ministry functions by non-teaching elders in forms of corporate witness other than congregations. COGA urges presbyteries to share their learnings in addressing these issues with the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and mid council ministries of the Office of the General Assembly and the Theology, Formation, and Evangelism ministry area of the Presbyterian Mission Agency to make those learnings available to other presbyteries.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to APPROVE the recommended response to the referral from the 221st General Assembly regarding pastoral ministry for non-teaching elders, as presented by Jim Wilson.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed minutes from the October 2015 meeting and conference calls that took place on December 10, 2015 and February 1, 2016.

Some edits were made to correct minor spelling and grammatical errors.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**Voted** to approve the meeting minutes, with minor changes.

Sue Krummel provided an update on the work of the Reconciliation Task Force. The work of the task force has been challenging, given that no
resources were allocated. The task force resolved to create a website and engage mid council leaders to discuss ways to help improve mid councils’ relationship with national staff. A concierge service was established to give people a single contact when in need of recommendations on who to invite to events and who to talk to when certain issues arise.

Reconciliation was also the theme of the 2014 Polity and Moderators’ Conferences. The PMA established a mid council engagement project, calling on senior leadership to create stronger relationships with presbyteries and synods. The format that was originally created was not effective. The project now calls for PMA leadership to reach out to presbyteries and synods prior to stated meetings to see if support from the national office is needed. A call will then be made to the presbytery or synod to see how the meeting went.

Sue Krummel reported that synod leadership gathered in Dallas, Texas to discuss the referral from the 221st General Assembly (2014) to reduce the number of synods; to study and determine how to best reorganize. The synod leaders determined that there are no plans to reorganize the synods at this time.

Gradye Parsons met with staff from the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel (PCCMP) in fall 2015. The PCCMP has requested that their ministry be moved back to OGA. Gradye would like to submit this to 222nd General Assembly (2016). However, the PCCMP has requested a second meeting for spring 2016, which will include a representative from the PMA Board and COGA to discuss the future of the PCCMP. Margaret Elliott will follow up with COGA once the meeting date has been established.

Sue Krummel reported on a recent action made by the PMA Board regarding the Presbyterian Mission Program Fund (PMPF). This reserve fund has been in place since 1997. The PMA Board voted to recommend to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to rescind the reserve agreement. A large amount of the reserve is being used for administrative costs at the PMA. The PMA Board recommendation would establish reserve funds for each ministry area. The ministry areas with restricted funds will have reserves and those ministry areas that do not will have time to build reserves. The Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of the PMA will set the reserves for each ministry area.

The recommendation to rescind the 1997 PMPF includes OGA, as part of the Presbyterian Church (USA), A Corp. However, OGA was not consulted.

GACEIR
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Leah Johnson, who represents COGA at the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (GACEIR). She recommended that the next COGA member to participate with GACEIR as a corresponding member should be willing to commit significant time in order to be fully engaged in the committee’s work.

The focus of the last two years in the committee has been on how to put the Interreligious Stance into practice. The work of the Ecumenical councils were an important part of the discussions among the committee.
Rick Ufford-Chase was at the meeting and is the new part-time associate for Interfaith Formation. The work will primarily be congregational support. Laurie Anderson has recently been hired to maintain relationships with Interfaith Partners.

Leah acknowledged Robina Winbush’s leadership and engagement with the committee. Her experience in this work has played a big role in guiding GACEIR in a way that helps them understand the possible impacts of decisions made. Robina Winbush expressed her appreciation of Leah Johnson’s commitment to the GACEIR this term.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly joined in closing worship, led by Vince Thomas.

Having no further items of business, the meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was adjourned at 11:49 a.m. The committee joined together for casual lunch in the meeting room prior to departing for flights home.

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Stevens
Recorder